



# Preservation And Conservation Practices Of Print Materials: A Case Study Of College Libraries In Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal

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**Abstract:** This study examined the different methods employed to preserve and conserve library materials in several college libraries located in the Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. Specifically, it explores the causes and forms of deterioration, the strategies and techniques applied to manage them, the presence of preservation and conservation policies, and the challenges hindering effective implementation. The study adopted a survey method. A total of fifteen (15) college libraries were specifically selected. Data was collected using a mixed-structured questionnaire. Despite having preservation policies, the college libraries' established conservation and preservation techniques were not being applied effectively, according to the findings. The findings also revealed that the cleaning and dusting are the major techniques adopted for library materials. According to the study, there are books that tear, crack, and scratch are the greatest causes of deterioration of Library materials. Additional research revealed that the biggest problem to compelling conservation and preservation efforts at college libraries was a lack of financing. Recommendations were given to improve the libraries' conservation and preservation techniques in light of the findings.

**Keywords:** Conservation, Library resources, Conservation practices, Preservation strategy, College Libraries.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of libraries as memory institutions is to collect, organize, conserve, and promote the use of scientific and cultural heritage. As a repository of knowledge, the Library bears the responsibility of gathering, analysing, and sharing its information with the public. As a result of constant use, these materials deteriorate and tear. Preserving and conserving print resources at the Library is crucial to extending their lifespan. The best way to understand the term conservation is as a dynamic involvement in the repair of deteriorating or degraded items. To satisfy the information needs of its patrons, libraries purchase and maintain information-bearing resources, such as journals, maps, and so on. In order to preserve these items for coming generations, library staff must maintain them in excellent physical shape so that they can always be consulted and made available.

Preservation is the method of keeping things as close to their original state as feasible, or until they are no longer needed. Rufus Choate once said, "The book is the only immortally." As a result, it is the librarian's responsibility to ensure that rare books and archival materials are protected from ecological, physical, chemical, and biological influences. Gathering historical and contemporary records and preserving them so that both current and future users can access them is one of preservation's roles.

## Objectives of the study

The specific objectives are:-

1. To investigate the methods employed for preserving and conserving library materials in selected college libraries in Jalpaiguri district.
2. To assess the existence of any formal preservation and conservation policies in these libraries.
3. To identify the various types of physical damage or deterioration observed in the selected college libraries.
4. To analyse the extent of wear and deterioration of library resources in the selected institutions.
5. To uncover the barriers or challenges that hinder effective preservation and conservation of library collections in the selected colleges.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a survey research design. The target population consisted of selected college libraries in the Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the libraries included in the survey, based on preliminary visits which revealed that preservation and conservation practices were not uniformly evident across all colleges in the district. Consequently, a total of fifteen (15) college libraries that demonstrated some degree of preservation and conservation activity were intentionally chosen for the study. A mixed-structured questionnaire was designed and administered to the librarians in the few libraries. Data analysis was done using statistical techniques, percentage distribution and frequency counts, means and standard deviation were generated on most of the items in the questionnaire. Table 1 presents the list of the selected college libraries. Librarians were chosen as the primary respondents, as they were deemed the most qualified to provide essential information related to the focus of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure1 shows that majority or 6(40.0%) of the college based libraries were set up between 1980-1990. This is followed by those set up in the before 1980. Moreover, four out of the college libraries were set up in the after 2000. The remaining two of the college libraries were set up between 1990- 2000.

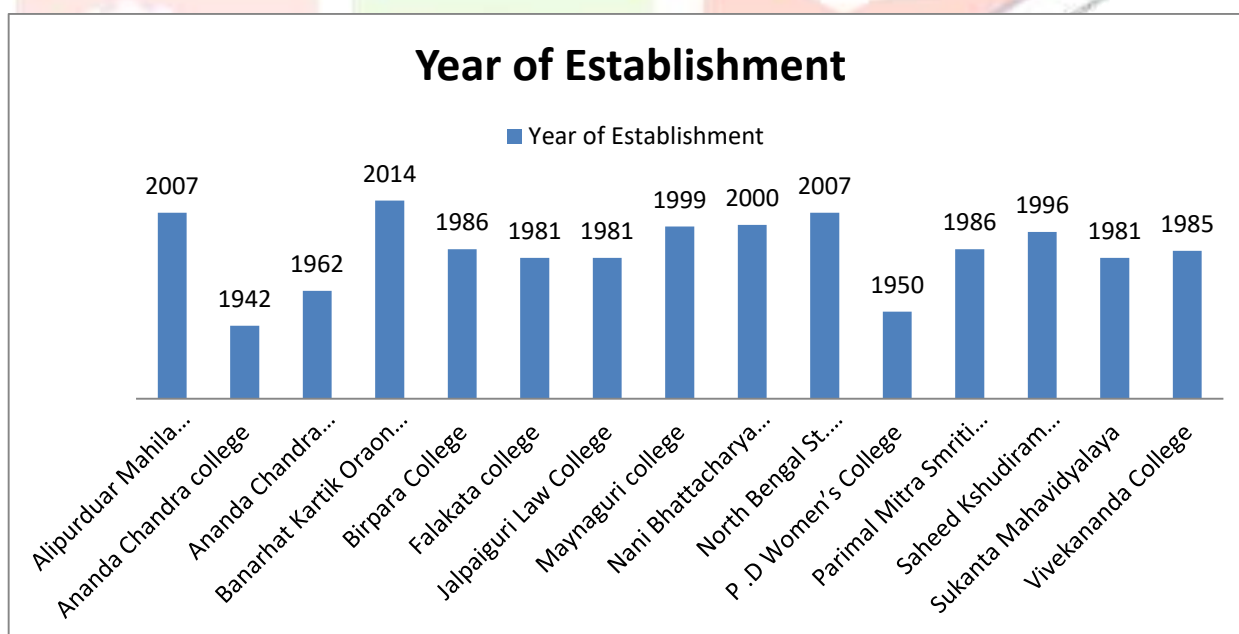
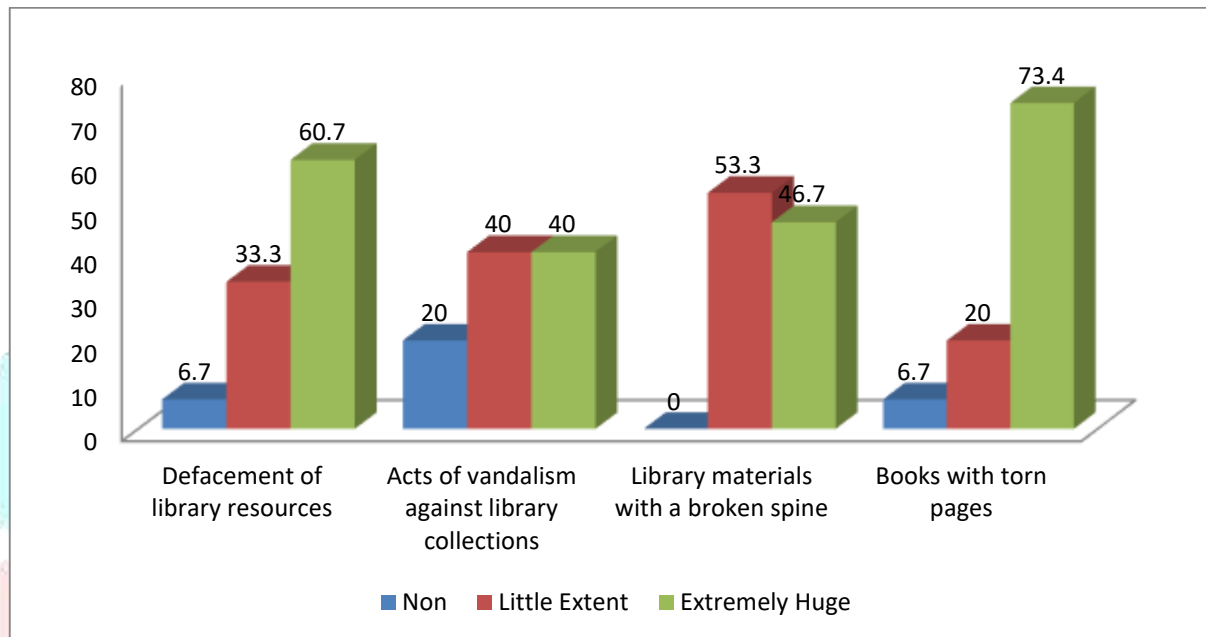


Figure 1: Distribution of the college based libraries by year of establishment

## Degradation Forms and Their Impact on Library and Print Materials

Table 2 below presents the results of the analysis regarding the patterns of degradation observed in print and library materials within the surveyed college libraries.

Patterns of material degradation in libraries	Non	Little Extent	Extremely Huge
Defacement of library resources	6.7	33.3	60.7
Acts of vandalism against library collections	20.0	40.0	40.0
Library materials with a broken spine	0.00	53.3	46.7
Books with torn pages	6.7	20.0	73.4



**Figure 2: Degradation Forms and Their Impact on Library and Print Materials**

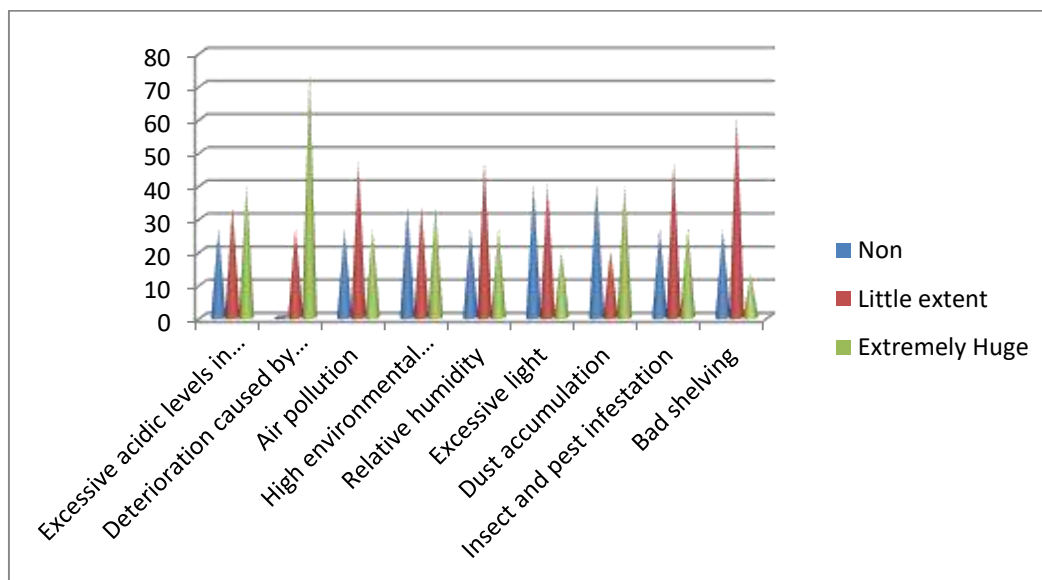
According to the findings, **books with torn pages** represent the most significant form of degradation affecting print materials in the college libraries. This is followed by **Acts of vandalism against library collections**, with **books having broken spines** coming next. Interestingly, **acts of vandalism** were identified as the least severe type of deterioration. This suggests that many of the college libraries maintain relatively effective preservation and conservation practices.

### Causes of physical decay in print resources

Table 3 presents the analysis results of the different factors responsible for the deterioration of print materials in the surveyed colleges.

**Table 3: Causes of physical decay in print resources**

Print Library Resources	Non	Little extent	Extremely Huge
Excessive acidic levels in materials	26.7	33.3	40.0
Deterioration caused by over-photocopying	0.00	26.7	73.4
Air pollution	26.7	46.7	26.7
High environmental temperature	33.3	33.3	33.3
Relative humidity	26.7	46.7	26.7
Excessive light	40.0	40.0	20.0
Dust accumulation	40.0	20.0	40.0
Insect and pest infestation	26.7	46.7	26.7
Bad shelving	26.7	60.7	13.3



**Figure 3: Causes of Deterioration of Print Materials**

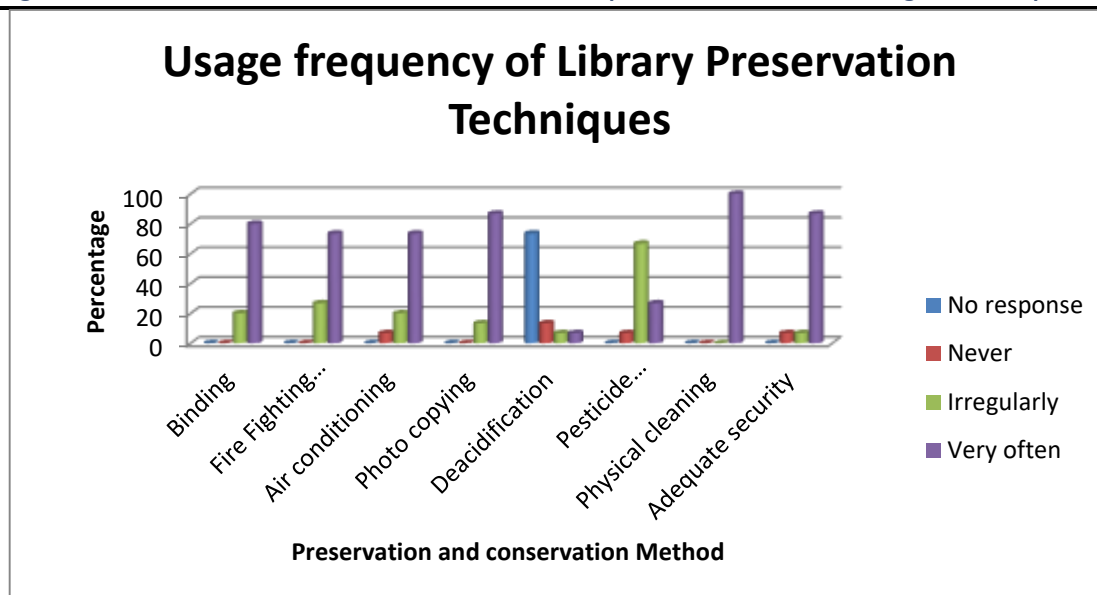
According to the findings in Table 3, "Deterioration caused by over-photocopying" is the main cause of the print materials' degradation in the Jalpaiguri district college based libraries. "Excessive acidic levels in materials" and "Dust accumulation" come next. "High environmental temperature" comes next, though. However, "bad shelving" and "excessive light" are the only significant causes of the destruction of print materials in the Jalpaiguri district college library.

### Preservation and conservation methods for print materials

Table 4 presents the results of the analysis regarding methods used for the preservation and conservation of print materials.

**Table 4: Preservation and conservation methods for print materials**

Preservation and Conservation Techniques	No response	Never	Irregularly	Very often
Binding	0.00	0.00	20.0	80.0
Fire Fighting equipment	0.00	0.00	26.7	73.4
Air conditioning	0.00	6.7	20.0	73.4
Photo copying	0.00	0.00	13.3	86.7
Deacidification	73.4	13.3	6.7	6.7
Pesticide application	0.00	6.7	66.7	26.7
Physical cleaning	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.0
Adequate security	0.00	6.7	6.7	86.7



**Figure 4: Preservation and conservation methods for print materials**

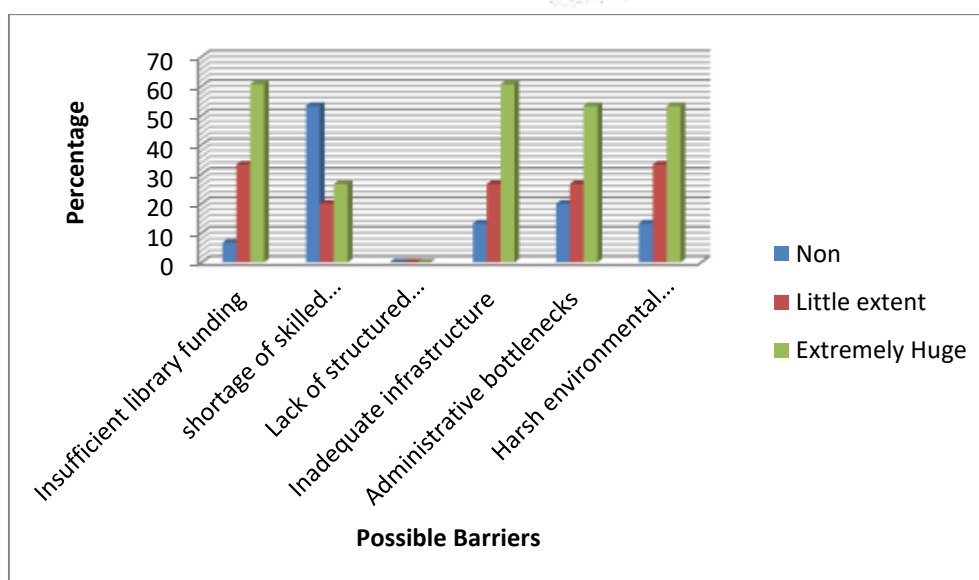
As shown in Table 4, the most commonly employed technique for preserving and conserving print materials in college libraries is “Physical cleaning”. This is followed by 'photocopying' to create duplicate copies, while 'binding' and 'ensuring adequate security' come next. On the other hand, the least utilized methods are 'deacidification' and “Pesticide application”. This indicates that Physical cleaning is the predominant method adopted for the preservation and conservation of print materials in these libraries."

#### **Barriers to successful preservation and conservation of library resources**

Table 5 presents the challenges hindering effective preservation and conservation of library materials in college libraries.

**Table 5: Barriers to successful preservation and conservation of library resources**

Possible Barriers	Non	Little extent	Extremely Huge
Insufficient library funding	6.7	33.3	60.7
shortage of skilled personnel	53.3	20.0	26.7
Lack of structured procedures for material maintenance	0.00	0.00	0.00
Inadequate infrastructure	13.3	26.7	60.7
Administrative bottlenecks	20.0	26.7	53.3
Harsh environmental conditions	13.3	33.3	53.3



**Figure 5: Barriers to successful preservation and conservation of library resources**



According to Table 5, "Insufficient library funding" is the biggest obstacle facing the libraries. "Inadequate infrastructure" comes next, and "Harsh environmental conditions" and "Administrative bottlenecks" follow all of the other restrictions. Nevertheless, "Lack of structured procedures for material maintenance" and "shortage of skilled personnel." are not regarded as limitations. In other words, the college libraries face administrative and infrastructure issues in carrying out their conservation and preservation efforts rather than policy or human resource issues. This has revealed that these libraries have very strong conservation and preservation strategies, and their staff members are highly qualified to manage library operations.

## Discussion

The study's findings showed that dusting and cleaning information items is the most often used practice and approach for conserving and preserving print library resources in college libraries, while using pesticide is the least frequently used technique. The findings also indicate that wear and tear, which is mostly caused by users photocopying information resources excessively and mishandling them, is a major factor in the deterioration of library materials. This result supports Olabode's (2005) assertion that deterioration of library resources is caused by wear and tear, excessive light, and dust. The survey found that while poor shelving and too much light are the libraries' smallest problems, materials in college libraries also experience high acidity and high temperatures. High humidity and temperatures accelerate the chemical degradation of materials. Some biological agents' ability to multiply is also significantly influenced by these variables. In addition to providing the moisture required to encourage hazardous chemical reactions in materials, high relative humidity also encourages form development and insect activity when combined with high temperatures. Certain materials may get parched and embrittled as a result of extremely low relative humidity. With respect to the nature and extent of deterioration in print library materials, the findings indicate that the most significant form of damage involves torn pages and broken spines. This type of deterioration is primarily caused by frequent and careless handling of materials. The greatest obstacle to effective preservation and conservation efforts is insufficient funding. Additional challenges identified include administrative inefficiencies and adverse environmental conditions, both of which contribute to the accelerated deterioration of library resources.

## Conclusion

The study revealed that while conservation and preservation techniques are acknowledged in the few college libraries of Jalpaiguri, these practices are not fully implemented due to several challenges, notably a lack of adequate funding. Based on these insights, the following policy recommendations and strategic measures are proposed: Libraries should be staffed with sufficient and well-trained personnel to effectively carry out preservation and conservation activities. This is essential because such efforts require professionals with expertise in both the physical and chemical properties of library materials. Additionally, the study identified insufficient funding as the most significant barrier to successful preservation and conservation efforts in the college libraries. In light of these findings, recommendations have been made to improve current practices in order to strengthen the preservation and conservation of library materials.

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