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TRUTH CHARITY
STELLA MARIS COLLEGE
(AUTONOMOUS), CHENNAI - INDIA

STELLARCHIVES

Combining Indigenous Practices and Modern Technology in the Conservation of Archival Material in Stella Maris College, Chennai: A Case Study

Stella Maris College



Stellarchives



Stella Maris Library



Stellarchives Collection

Paintings, College Magazines, Ephemerals, Journals, Manuscripts, Coins, Newspaper Clippings, Books, Slides, CDs, Theses, Photographs and Artifacts

Stella Maris College is a Catholic institution of higher education for women, founded by the Society of the Missionaries of Mary on 15th August, 1947 with 32 students. Today the college has an enrollment of 4200 students both from India and abroad. In 2011 Stellarchives was born out of the urgent need to preserve the history of the college. The archives endeavours to collect, preserve, maintain and make available the rich heritage of the institution for posterity.

Stellarchives continually attempts to integrate preservation and archival management, with a focus on safe handling and storage of material in a protected eco-media. In the light of environmental and climatic conditions (situated on the coastline, the city is subject to high levels of heat and humidity), all efforts are based on effective traditional practices, using native herbs in combination with modern technology.

Stellarchives

From its inception, Stellarchives has opted to use indigenous methods of conservation which offer significant eco-friendly advantages because they

- are not hazardous to human health
- do not damage or destroy archival material
- are inexpensive and do not require much expertise
- do not necessitate the use of sophisticated high-cost equipment and material

As a result of using a variety of indigenous practices over the past 5 years, we found that both the library and Stellarchives are free from pests. In addition the staff working in the stack areas no longer suffer from skin and respiratory problems. From this we conclude that the use of natural products not only ensures that documents and material are preserved, but also protects both students and faculty from harmful chemicals.

Indigenous Herbal Practices



- Vasambu (sweet flag) - 400 gms
- Karun jeeragam (black cumin) - 200 gms
- Omam (carom) - 200 gms
- Pattai (cinnamon) - 50 gms
- Karun milaugu (black pepper) - 50 gms
- Pachha karpooram (green camphor) - 100 gms

Lemon grass oil is used for cleaning the shelves & Dried Neem leaves in sachets are used to repel insects.

Modern Technology

- Air conditioner and dehumidifier:** maintains temperature and humidity control
- Hepa vacuum cleaner:** ensures dust and mite free environment
- Archival cds, external hard disc and cloud:** preserve digital material
- Acid free boxes:** protect from radiation & pollution
- Scanner:** transforms print to electronic format and makes the **Digital version** accessible to all readers
- LED lights:** lower heat & UV emission & deter insects



Sweet flag (acorus calamus)

Strong deterrent to all insects



Black cumin (nigella sativa)

Antifungal insect repellent (cockroaches, fleas and other insects)



Carom seeds (trachyspermum ammi)

Contains 50% thymol, an essential oil with strong anti bacterial & anti fungal properties



Black pepper (piper nigrum)

Insect repellent. Prevents insects and pests from laying eggs



Cinnamon (Cinnamomum zeylanicum)

Antibacterial & antifungal insect repellent



Green camphor (camphora)

Insect repellent & preservative



Neem (azadirachta indica)

Neem is the best naturally available pesticide, insecticide and germicide

Recommendation

Based on our personal experience, we recommend all libraries and archives to use local herbs to preserve their holdings and keep the environment green & safe.

LEMONGRASS OIL



- ☞ Lemongrass oil is a preservative with strong antifungal properties
- ☞ It is a powerful pesticide especially against silver fish and mites.

FRESH NEEM LEAVES




- ☞ Pluck fresh green Neem leaves and shade dry them
- ☞ Do not dry in the sun as this will cause most of the essential oil to evaporate and reduce effectiveness
- ☞ Make pouches of porous cotton (no synthetics or plastics) so that the essential oils of Neem can permeate the environment.
- ☞ Fill the cloth with coarse powder of dried neem leaves.