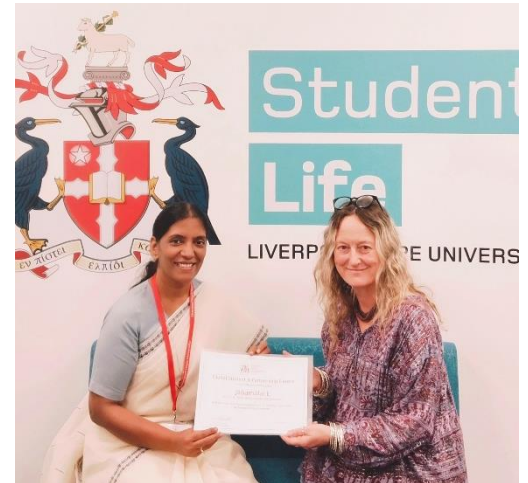


Beyond Borders and Mediums: An Archivist's Journey in Conservation of Paper, Glass, and Stone

(2024–2025)

This annual report documents the remarkable journey undertaken over the past year to enhance knowledge and skills in archival practices and paper conservation. Originating from Tamil Nadu, where opportunities for specialized training were limited, a fortunate connection with Dr. Wendy Bignold, Dean of Global Engagement at Liverpool Hope University, UK, opened doors to invaluable learning experiences for the Archivist. These experiences have enriched professional development and laid the foundation for future projects, including the establishment of a paper conservation unit. The following sections highlight key milestones, learning experiences, and future directions.



The Beginning of the Journey



Limited access to specialized paper conservation training in Tamil Nadu presented a significant challenge. However, a serendipitous outreach by Dr. Wendy Bignold provided an invitation to learn from esteemed UK archivists safeguarding manuscripts dating back over 400 years. This opportunity marked the beginning of a transformative journey in archival conservation.

The UK Experience: Liverpool Hope University

Arrival in the UK on 16th May 2024 preceded a residency at Liverpool Hope University from 17th June to 5th July. During this period, both learning and teaching roles were embraced. Care of Angola mission documents involved thematic and chronological segregation, providing invaluable hands-on experience in archival management. Visits to the Anglican Cathedral archives included meetings with Canon Val Jackson MBE and Mrs. Neil Sayer, offering insights into their collection and arrangement.





A notable highlight was learning the process of making archival storage boxes and understanding specialized materials used for preservation. Sharing knowledge with university library interns through workshops on creating archival envelopes and transparent enclosures proved mutually rewarding.

Further Learning at Liverpool Libraries

From 6th to 7th July, visits to the Central Library, Liverpool University Library, National Museum, and Maritime Museum broadened exposure to extensive archival collections and systems. Immersion in archival practices, cataloging, and preservation deepened understanding of meticulous care necessary for historical documents. Specific skills gained included mounting designs for exhibitions.

A Week at the British Library, London

The journey concluded with a week-long visit to the British Library and the Museum in London. This globally renowned institution offered exposure to advanced archival research methods and diverse materials handled by its departments. Despite limited time, the experience solidified conviction regarding the importance of archives and reinforced the aspiration to establish a paper conservation unit in Tamil Nadu.



Returning Home: Hosting an Exhibition



Upon return to Tamil Nadu, an exhibition was hosted on 23rd September to raise awareness about the importance of preserving historical documents within the college community. The exhibition successfully engaged students and faculty, highlighting the academic and cultural significance of archives.

Branching Out: Stained Glass Window Restoration Workshop

Participation in a free workshop on stained glass window restoration from 1st to 11th May expanded skills beyond paper conservation. The training focused on restoring the 208-year-old St. George Cathedral windows, covering making stained glass, cleaning, removal of broken pieces, design drawing, painting infusion, fixing glass in lead came, soldering, putty application, preservative coating, and sandwiching painted glass. The workshop was conducted by Dr. V. Jeyaraj, Director of Hepsibah Institute of Heritage Conservation, and Dr. S. Madhan, Proprietor of Heritage Conservation and Research Academy, Thiruvallur.



Faculty Contribution to Stellarchives: A Legacy Shelved, A Memory Honoured



On March 10th, 2024, Dr. Cynthia Jude, faculty member from the Department of History and Tourism, gifted a copy of her published works to be preserved in Stellarchives. This meaningful gesture reflects her desire for her academic contributions to be inscribed in the pages of institutional history and made accessible to future generations.

Looking Ahead: Establishing a Paper Conservation Unit

Inspired by international experiences and local outreach, plans are underway to establish a paper conservation unit in Tamil Nadu. This unit aims to safeguard valuable archival materials and manuscripts, while serving as a training center for aspiring archivists. Insights gained from Liverpool Hope University, the British Library, and other institutions will guide the creation of a facility prioritizing conservation practices and sustainable preservation methods.

The past year has been transformative, overcoming initial challenges to gain world-class archival conservation knowledge. The acquired skills and experiences are set to contribute significantly to archival conservation efforts in Tamil Nadu. Future endeavors will focus on expanding archival education, improving preservation techniques, and ensuring the safeguarding of cultural heritage for generations to come.