The Needs for Content Management with Special Reference to Manuscripts of Manipur

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Abstract

Manuscripts are one of the precious materials of our cultural heritage. They are valuable sources for the reconstruction of the history and culture of a country. They reveal their contemporary society and provide vital link to culture and knowledge. In order to manage and preserve our cultural heritage for use now and for future generation it is necessary to create the context in which cultural heritage agencies and organizations can pursue the rising standard of stewardship .A great deal of work has to be done to improve the level and profile. Ensuring that the public gets access to these information resources has become one of the priorities for those providing services. This paper highlights the importance of manuscripts collection and the necessity to preserve them for the future research and references. It also gives a bird's eye view on the existing conditions of the Manuscripts collection of Manipur. The central theme of the paper discusses the need for content management of these Manuscripts.

Keyword : Manuscript, Content Management

0.   Introduction

Manuscripts are invaluable source for the reconstruction of the history and culture of the country. These reveal their contemporary society and provide vital link to culture and knowledge. It was during the reign of Khagemba that manuscripts were taken seriously. Up to the close of the 17th century before the advent of Hinduism, a good number of manuscripts were written on different topics like chronicle, mythology, administration, astrology, pure literature dealing with romance and heroism. Unfortunately, this work does not carry the names of writers and dates of composition. The manuscripts are mostly written in Meitei script. In Manipur, a large number of manuscripts are still lying scattered in every known and unknown place in organized/Unorganized conditions. Many eminent scholars have collected the Meetei scripture of the early medieval period which are the Meetei counterparts of the epics, literary heritage and similar early written evidences of human civilization and they have even transcripted in Bengali script. The variety and richness of the historical literature is a striking feature of early Manipuri literature.

1.   Manuscripts of Manipur

The manuscripts of Manipur are found mostly in the private and public custody. The custodians keep the manuscripts as a sacred entity with proper care. They are not allowed to be used anytime we want. They did their own processing to differentiate the subjects with which they deal. Translation and transcription are done by some of the eminent scholars and published already and there are many more not yet published. Though the state archives and some museums collect the manuscripts they cannot estimate the number of manuscripts lying scattered in every known and unknown places. The custodians played an important role in safely keeping these invaluable manuscripts saving our cultural heritage. But there is scare that these manuscripts are slowly decaying and vanishing day by day and there is a need to take remedial measures for their preservation before they become totally useless. Preservation of these precious gifts presents a great challenge to us but still the IT offers the best solution for preservation and enhancement of them for wide access i.e. through digitization. The proliferation of development in digital

technology makes choosing the right method of digitizing collection an increasingly complex process for information organization. As the information age is creating a digital dilemma, the content management through digitization should be the best solution.

2.   Detailed Account of Manuscripts Available in Manipur

As per the catalogue published by Manipur Sahitya Parishad, Imphal and State Kala Academy, there are some 1000 manuscripts available at present in the custody of Manipuri scholars. Many eminent scholars have collected the manuscripts and kept them in their custody. Shri. N. Khelchandra, an eminent scholar, has collected about 500 Meitei scriptures of the early medieval period which are the Meitei counterparts of the epics, literary heritage and similar early written evidence of human civilization. Other scholars who had a good number of manuscripts collection are B. Kullachandra Sharma, M. Chandra Singh, O. Bhogeswar, R.K. Sanahal, T. Madhob, N. Indramani etc. Most of the works of the early medieval Manipuri literature contain no particulars about their author, compilers and editors. This omission is accounted for by the fact that it was then a literary tradition of not disclosing authorship of their works and some works whose authorship was dedicated by the writers to their royal patrons. The names of the authors and scholars have therefore to be ascertained form indirect sources like the Royal chronicles, Clan chronicles. Some of the works of the later medieval period contain particulars of their authors. The variety and richness of the historical literature is a striking feature of the early Manipuri literature. The subject coverage of the manuscripts available in Manipur, ranges from administration, arts and culture, astrology, charms and mantras, creation, lexicography, fine arts, earth science, genealogy, poetry, prediction, prose, religion and philosophy, Meitei scripts, supernatural stories, Meitei confederacy to family genealogies. Here I am enclosing some photographs of the Manuscripts with their brief description.
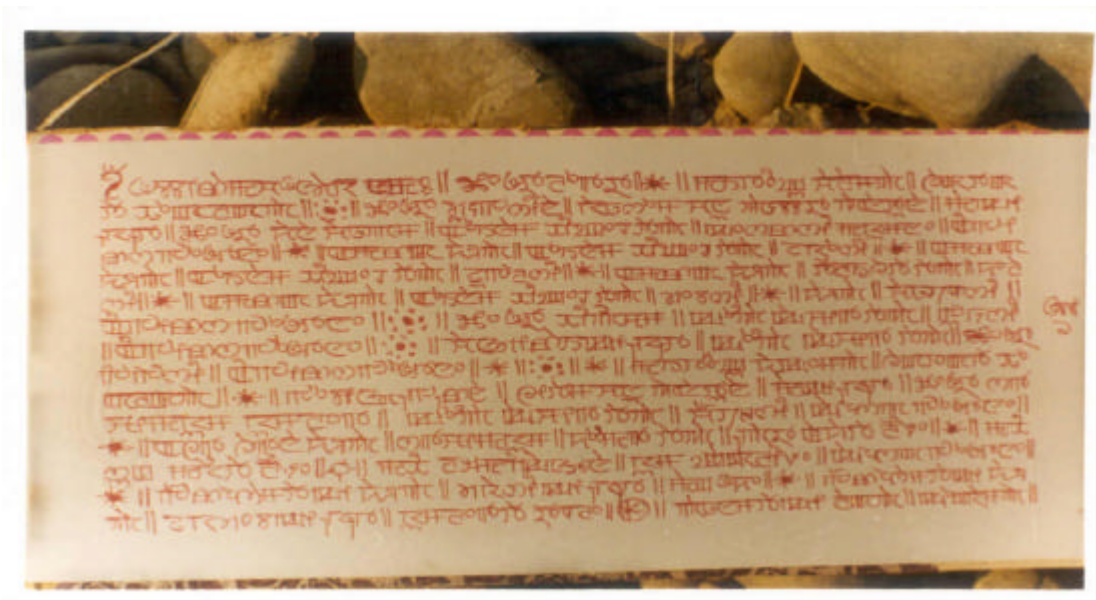

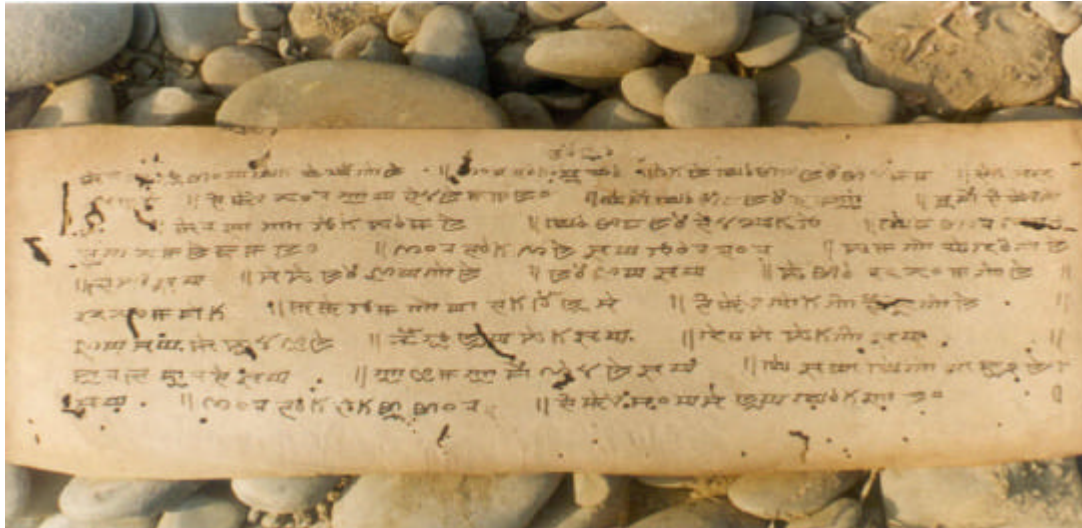*Fig. 1. This Manuscript deals with the Immigrants of the Kshetriyas*

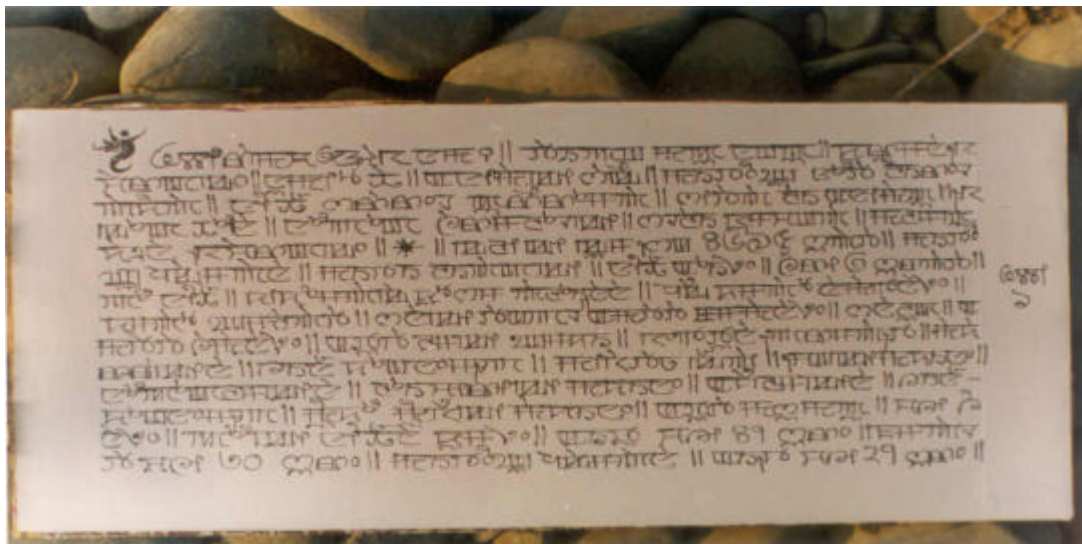*Fig. 2. It deals with the account of the Nongmaijing hills*

*Fig. 3. It is the account of division of land and exchange of cultural materials
between Meitei and the Shan*

3. Content Management

Content management is a framework to generate, administer, distribute and create possibilities of using and processing electronic content located on the Internet, Intranet or in corporation wide system. It also refers to the process of capturing, storing, sorting, codifying, integrating, updating and protecting any information. Documents have always been at the heart of the organization, originating from a variety of sources like traditional paper documents such as letters, invoices, orders, checks, and other structured business forms and today, many documents originate from electronic formats such as fax, e-mail, and images or data keyed into database, word processor, and spreadsheet files. No matter from where the document originates, the first priority of document management is to get it into a database— whether a relational or object database. Only then we can intelligently manage the document data. As a result, one of the biggest challenges facing document management vendors is providing a standard way of accepting document data from all of these sources and integrating it into one "hub" database for ongoing document management.

Content management involves managing the content through its entire life cycle from creation to archiving. Of course, between these two steps there are various intermediate activities like modification, replication etc. Document management solution aims to streamlines these activities and give users greater control over each one of them. Technology has made document management easy as well as difficult. The advantages of technology in this aspect are lower cost of maintaining documents over long period of time,safely from nature's wrath and easy searching and archiving. But the rise in the popularity of communication media like email etc. has meant that corporate communication is lot less structured than it used to be and thus keeping a track of it isn't always easy.

A typical paper document has three key events: receipt, review, and ready-to-file. These events represent the document life cycle in a nutshell. The transitional document life cycle or workflow of a document takes place in the review stage. This may involve moving the document from an in-box, then stamping, annotating, and linking it to other attachments. The document life cycle may also involve incremental changes and additions. In any case, the document is eventually batched with others and archived in filing cabinets or on microfiche.

4. Benefits of Content Management

- ✍ It provides direct cost benefits by cutting down on the cost of paper that is wasted in storing multiple copies of the same document.

- ✍ It frees up the precious real estate that is needed to store these documents

- ✍ It saves money and time. Any decent document management system would cut down the amount of time you spend digging through the archives looking for that elusive document

- ✍ It further saves time by making reproduction of documents faster than traditional means

- ✍ It also makes your document secure from unauthorized access while keeping them conveniently accessible to authorized users only.

- ✍ E- Document management system offers much better and faster recovery than those possible with paper based ones.

5. Essential Elements of Content Management

A decent content management solution can be significant investment to justify the management of rare documents. Here are some points to remember while going through solution from different vendors.

- ✍ Integration
- ✍ Scalability
- ✍ Easy to use
- ✍ Web Based
- ✍ Vendor Support
- ✍ Cost

After having all this essential elements we should justify each point and see whether we can go through the features we need.

5.1   The Features of content management:

Status reporting : This feature should be able to provide details like when the particular document was created ,who created and when it was modified by whom so that it will help the end user to identify the owner of the document and the various stakeholders in it.

Access Control : A user may have the full right to add, delete or modify a document but in access control we can limit the users on their access for a particular document.

Version control : Document management system should be capable of storing various versions of the same document by keeping track of the current and old.

Retention management : The important function of document management system is to provide an archive of the document for retention purpose.

Disaster Recovery : They should support taking regular backup and quick recovery in case of breakdown with minimum downtime.

6.   Content Management Lifecycle

All content management systems are focused on four keys processes which relate to managing each content throughout its life cycle.

- ✍ Input/bringing in document
  - Scanning
  - Conversion
  - Importing
- ✍ Storing Document
- ✍ Indexing Document
  - Index Field
  - Full text indexing
  - Folder/File structure
- ✍ Search/Retrieve document

Once the management life cycle is completed then we need to select the hardware/software to achieve the objectives of each of the above stages. Then only, the content management solution will be benefited.

7.   Conclusion

Preserving the contents of our world heritage in their original form for infinite future is not only difficult but rather impossible. Thus, we should at least work towards preserving these contents in different formats. Our locally owned collection having traditional formats will continue to be essential, so it is important to realize that the community is interested in this kind of special collection. It is in fact our cultural heritage, the story of our past, reflected in the things that were made by natural or social forces. The value of collection content derives from access and if we are not able to make the people know about the content available to user it is of no use. If it is of no use then there is no value. We have to move forward with a mechanism to support the work of the collection. Then only we are able to achieve our goal. Content management through digitization will change the way in which collections are used and accessed.

8.   References

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