Design and Development of Database for Church Archival Materials (DOCCAM Package) In India

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the aspects relating to design and development of database for records maintained in the Church Archives. Creation of Computerized database would facilitate for the effective bibliographic organisation of the information materials. It provides a means for the retrieval of the valuable information stored in the archives and have an easy access to the archival materials for research scholars, historians and church personnel etc. Therefore in this paper an attempt has been made, to create a database for Church archival material based on the guidelines suggested by Cook and Proctor in the work entitled 'Manual of Archival Description (MAD2).

0.   INTRODUCTION

Archives are often viewed as records that are old, decaying, and musty. Archives are written in indecipherable, ancient scripts on yellowing scraps of paper. They are perceived to be treasures waiting to be discovered or nuisances, jumbled in basements or piled high in attics. But one should remember that the Archives are the mirror of the society. Archives indicate an assembly of writings, papers, documents, photographs, sound recordings etc. They are from a variety of unconnected sources but which together

provide a body of evidence about an activity or way of life, which is either defunct or dying out and which, for this reason, have been purposely brought together in order to preserve the information they contain for future generations.

1.   ARCHIVES IN INDIA: A BRIEF NOTE

In India, the Portuguese claim the credit of first establishing the Archives. Tombo do Estado da India was started after the name of the principal Archives Office at Lisbon in Portugal namely Torre do Tombo de Lisba. King D. Filippe II appointed Diogo do Couto as the first Record Keeper in India. In 1930, the Governor General Joao Carlos Craveiro Lopes gave a fresh lease of life to the deteriorating precious record holdings. The name of the archives was changed to Arquivo Geral e Historico da India Portuguesa with the initial collection of about 1500 volumes only of the Secretariat of the Government in 1937, it was renamed as Cartorio do Governor Geral do Estado da India. It was developed into a separate Directorate of Historical Archives in 1953 and was named as Arquivo Historico do Estado da India which continued till liberation of Goa after which it was known as Historical Archives of Goa. Later the British established the Imperial Record Department at Calcutta in 1891.

The formation of the First Royal Commission of Public Records in 1910 by the British Government in England, was a milestone in history of Record Management in England as well as in India. The British issued a number of instructions to the Indian Archives pertaining to methods of preservation and publication of records. The transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911 was an important event in the annals of the National Archives. This also paved the way for the formation of the Indian Historical Records Commission in 1919. The Indian Historical Records Commission was urging both National and State Archives to encourage research by permitting bonafide research scholars to refer archival records and which was conceded to in 1939.

With the declaration of Independence for India on 15th August 1947, resulted in the renaming of Imperial Record Department as the National Archives of India. The archival legislation has been enacted in India entitled "Public Record Act, 1993". This legislation offers the National and State archives an active role in record management, records appraisal, record transfer and preservation.

Church Archives in India is as old as the creations of the dioceses. Earlier, the Portuguese started the Archive in India in 1595. Later the British started the Ecclesiastical Department in the Madras Presidency in 1818 to look after the affairs of the Christian Missionaries and their records reveal the socio-economic and political condition of South India for nearly three hundred years.   Therefore, the effort to preserve ecclesiastical material is gaining momentum in India besides the archival holdings of the ecclesiastical records in National and State archives, a number of Churches and Christian organisations have also maintained their own archives. In India a large number of such archives existed in the places where Christianity had a better footing. The documents preserved in the archives of the Catholic Church represent an immense and precious heritage. This is shown by the large number of archives which have been instituted by the presence and activity of Bishops in the Episcopal cities. As per the Catholic Directory of India 1998, there are one hundred

and thirty nine dioceses, six thousand two hundred and seventy seven individual Churches (Parishes) and two hundred and ninety five religious congregations in India, each having its own archives.

2.   SCOPE OF THE PAPER

The objective of this paper is to design and develop a database for records maintained in the Church Archives. This would facilitate for the effective bibliographic organisation of the information materials. It provides means for the retrieval of the valuable information stored in the archives and to have an easy access to the archival materials for research scholars, historians and church personnel, etc. Therefore, in this paper an attempt has been made, to create a database for church archival materials based on the guidelines suggested by Cook and Proctor (1989) in the work entitled "Manual of Archival Description", 2nd Edition (MAD2).

3.   DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF DATABASE FOR THE ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

Database of the archival materials contains references to manuscripts: (bound volumes and detached papers), palm leaves, parchment, genealogical records (baptism, marriage and burial registers), property deeds, rare and out of print books, journals / periodicals and cartographic and micrographic materials, etc.

3.1   Structure of *Doccam* **Package**

For the purpose of organising Church Archival Materials a Software package has been prepared using Microsoft Access as the back end with Visual Basic (VB) as front end. This package has been designed and developed keeping in view of the possible types of information sources being collected, stored and processed in Church Archives. This facilitates for the effective bibliographic organisation of church archival materials. This package is named as *DOCCAM*, which stands for "Documentation of Church Archival Materials". This package has 8 components as provided in Table 1. Each component deals with a specific type of archival materials.

Table 1

List of Tables used for DOCCAM Package

Sl.No.	Name of the Table	Description
1.	ACCOUNT BOOKS	Account Books data
2.	BOALMOHACO	Books, Almanacs, Monographs, Handbooks and Correspondence data
3.	DIARIES	Diaries data
4.	DIRECTORIES	Directories data

5.	JOURNALS	Journals data
6.	PROPERTY DEEDS	Property deeds data
7.	REGISTERS	Baptism, Burial and Marriage Registers data
8.	TRAVELOGUES	Travelogue data

Opening screen of this package displays Login with password ID, as shown in Fig. 1

Fig. 1 Application Login Form

The Login Administration Form permits the Administrator and the Supervisor to open with user ID and password which has to be filled on the screen. For others, provision has been made as guest users as shown in Fig2

Fig. 2 Login Administration Form

In the Login Administration Module, the Administrative staff can only 'Add', 'Modify' or 'Delete' users and provide other users with required rights and securities.

3.2   Input and Output Screen formats

The Input Screens and Output Screens for different components such as Account Books; Books, Almanacs, Monographs, Hand books and Correspondence (BOALMOHACO); Diaries; Directories; Journals; Property deeds; Registers and Travelogues have been designed and developed. A sample structure and output is shown in Fig. 3 and Fig.4 respectively

Fig. 3 Input for Account Books

Access Number :	1
Institution/Place:	Santhome Cathedral
Period:	1772-1807
Language:	English
Physical Form:	Bound Volume
Nature of Document:	Hand Written
Physical Condition:	Brittle
Diocese:	Madras-Mylapore
State:	Tamil Nadu
Restriction on use :	Accessible

Description :	It contains the day-to-day income and expenditure transactions.

Fig. 4 Output for Account Books

3.3 Features of DOCCAM Package

The salient features of this package are :

· User friendly and menu driven

· Indexed sequential organisation is used to save a record of information

· Tables that are used in this package is normalised. Hence redundancy of data is considerably eliminated.

· Indexed Sequential Access Method is used to seek a record of information.

· Information search is very fast and access time is equal for all types of records.

· Initial alphabets are enough in searching a record.

· Options are provided to add new materials, new states and new dioceses.

· Options are also provided to modify, delete and view data.

· Data Object is used to connect the client and the server.

· Output can be directed to the printer.

· Provides a security control by password check. It allows only legal users to access data.

· Provides a tool not only to backup and restore data files but also to restore them easily if necessary.

3.4 Feedback Survey

Any software or Information Retrieval Package once designed and developed, needs to be tested. In other words, a feedback survey is an essential component in an Information System design, development and evaluation. Accordingly, the designed DOCCAM package has been tested with the Church Archives users comprising of Church personnel and others like Historians and Researchers.

For this purpose, a Scheduled Questionnaire was prepared and administered to the sample of 75 comprising

of church personnel, historians and researchers.

Opinions on the Features of the DOCCAM Package

The respondents' opinions are presented in the following Table2.

Table 2

Opinion on the Features of DOCCAM Package

Sl.No.	Features	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1.	Ease of use	70 (93.3)	4 (5.3)	1 (1.4)
2.	Efficiency of Information Retrieval	68 (90.7)	7 (9.3)	__
3.	Retrieved Information is sufficient	60 (80.0)	10 (13.3)	5 (6.7)
4.	Reasonable time	64 (65.3)	11 (14.7)	__
5.	Easily Accessible	69 (92.0)	4 (5.3)	2 (2.7)
6.	Simple Design	65 (86.7)	7 (9.3)	3 (4.0)
7.	Familiarity with terminology	62 (82.7)	9 (12.0)	4 (5.3)
8.	No training is required for using the package	61 (81.3)	11 (14.7)	3 (4.0)
9.	Implementing the package in Church Archives suggested	69 (92.0)	6 (8.0)	___

Note : Numbers in the parenthesis represents percentage.

Table 2 reveals that about 80% of the respondents have expressed their satisfaction to the features of the DOCCAM package. The ranking of the opinions are given in Table 3

Table 3

Ranking of the Opinions on DOCCAM Package

Sl.No.	Features	Ranking

1.	Ease of use	I
2.	Easily Accessible	II
3.	Implementing the package in Church Archives suggested	II
4.	Efficiency of Information Retrieval	III
5.	Simple Design	IV
6.	Reasonable time	V
7.	No training is required for using the package	VI
8.	Familiarity with terminology	VII
9.	Retrieved Information is sufficient	VIII

It is seen from the Table 3 that the features "Ease of use" has been ranked first by 93.3% of respondents. This is followed by "Easily accessible" and "Implementing the package in Church Archives suggested", both sharing second rank by 92% of the respondents.

The above analysis of the feedback survey infers that, the proposed database design has been accepted by Church personnel and as well by Historians and Researchers in large numbers. Hence, this package has got a great potential for its use in the Church Archives in India at large, of course, may be used with customisation.

4.   CONCLUSION

In the context of changing trends in the ICT and its applications in the information handling and management, it is an urgent need to create databases for the archival materials which forms the primary information. Handling the database of the archival materials through this package offers three distinct activities such as Creation and maintenance of data files, Provision for interactive access and Facility for printing outputs. Thus, the objective of the study would be fulfilled if it serves as a catalyst to stimulate the people concerned to act in a constructive manner for the creation, maintenance and use of Church Archives.

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