

PLAN OF THE WORKSHOP
Introduction to the preservation and conservation of archival documents
November 2011, Guatemala.

FIRST DAY: Introduction to the world of preservation and conservation.

1/ Personal presentation, my background and career, experiences in different workshops.
Giving the idea of *specificity* of the subject and the idea of *diversity* of the places where conservation is required.

2/ Presentation and definition of the concepts of preservation and conservation.

- A. Preservation
- B. Preventive conservation
- C. Conservation

3/ Presentation of the ethical rules in conservation.

- A. Neutrality: about the intervention of the conservator (working in order to not modify the material and historical identity of the object), about the products and materials used for the treatment.
- B. Reversibility: of the materials and of the intervention (the intervention has to be “legible” and the new materials added can be taken off if necessary).
- C. Durability: stability of the treatment by using stable materials and by the manual quality of the intervention.

Presentation and reading of official documents introducing and codifying the intervention of the conservator. (Venice Charter in 1964, etc.)

- Why conserving?

The two main objectives are:

Put the document available to consultation, which was impossible because of its condition.

Stop the degradations and prevent that the document loses more elements which are parts of its identity and history.

Main issues of the professional: presentation of the behaviour of the conservator towards the documents and decision-making.

- What do we conserve?

Presentation of the **materials** the book and paper conservator work on: nature, constitution et main properties.

Presentation of the different **techniques of graphic art** that can be conserved: inks, engraving, watercolours, gouache, oil, etc.

Presentation of the different **types de documents** conserved and the typical **degradations**; communication of the specific vocabulary to describe the degradations.

Physical degradations: water, liquid, dirt, dust, etc.

Mechanical degradations: folds, tears, micro-organisms, losses, etc.

Chemical degradations: acidity, infection as fungi, etc.

Reasons of the deteriorations: external and internal.

Exercice 1:

In order that the participants understand the questioning of the conservators before any intervention, I introduce them to the **Condition Report**.

Presentation of its importance in order to follow and describe precisely the condition of the document and therefore identifying and concluding about the best treatment for the object.

Presentation of the form and writing of a condition report by the participants working on an object from the collections of the Archives of the University. Thanks to this study and this exercise, the participants can begin to think about the object and the treatment required.

Demonstration of the link between reason of deterioration - effect on the document - treatment to be done.

Exercise 2:

Practice of dry cleaning with brushes and rubbers. Presentation of the specific material adapted for this intervention.

Exercise 3:

Making of phase box with permanent or neutral paper. Explanation of the importance of the quality of the storage for the documents, especially when conservation treatments are rare because of the limited budget of the institution.

Discussion:

During the first day, I asked the participants to talk and expose their situation and reality in their studio: working space, material available, time to treat a document, storage conditions, budget, etc. We have been able to exchange our experiences, trying to give advices and find solutions that are suitable to their reality in Guatemala.

SECOND DAY : How treating the documents

1/ Conservation and storage conditions of the documents

Objective: stability et protection against factors of deterioration (external and internal).

- Environnemental conditions (humidity, temperature, light, etc.) : regulation et control, what are the optimal conditions (presentation of the measuring instruments).
- Adapted furnitures : structure of the furnitures and storage and reading rooms.
- Storage areas: conditions, structure, ventilation, etc.

2/ Movements of the documents

- handling of the documents
- duration of exhibiting the documents
- transport conditions
- politics of prevention and security: emergency plan, evacuation, etc.

We illustrate the presentation of these notions of preservation and conservation through photographs presenting concrete exemples of these ideas, the risks, the required monitoring etc.

3/ Conserving paper

- The Japanese tissue

Hand-making in Japan, explanation of the different steps.

Composition: presentation of the types of fibres (Kozo, Gampi...).

Samples of different densities of paper presented and recognition of Japanese tissue among other materials.

- How conserving with Japanese tissue

How to choose the suitable Japanese tissue: thickness, density, colour, etc.

Materials to use: paste, instruments and tools, etc.

Demonstration of a repair with Japanese tissue on an item; different techniques presented.

Exercise:

Small repairs with Japanese tissue on newspapers to practice this conservation treatment and get familiar with Japanese tissue.

Discussion:

The day begins with the presentation of the preservation and storage conditions of the collections; this brought a lot of questions and wonders from the participants. This debate was the essential point of interest of the day, sharing and comparing conditions and ideas in order to solve problems in their institutions with different profile.