

Chapter 2 : Preservation and Conservation

2.1 *Introduction*

The art of preservation is as old as human civilisation itself. In a way it may be said to derive from the instinct of self-preservation common to all animate beings (Kathpalia, 1973). In spite of everything it seems we want to keep the past alive. Yet, we have to keep in mind that the cycle of nature dictates that all things of organic matter will decay. Thus we can only expect to increase the life expectancy of our paper-based material heritage, the core of our archives and libraries.

Below we will pay attention to the confusing terminology in preservation, introduce the preservation pyramid and make some notes on preventive conservation. Preservation in developing countries is a profession in itself, not only because of the difficult climatic circumstances but also because the artefacts in non-western cultures are quite different in nature than the western ones. For example lamination is still quite popular in the tropics, although in many developed countries this conservation technique is out of favour. More attention to appropriate technology in conservation could contribute to solving the enormous problems archives face in the poorer countries. The importance of traditional conservation techniques that most local conservators are unfamiliar with, should not be underestimated. The application of traditional techniques would certainly add to the integrity of the records and would increase their life expectancy.