DOCUMENTATION HISTORY IN THE EGYPTIAN MUSEUM CAIRO AND ITS IMPACT ON COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT

Mahrous ELSANADIDY *

National Museum of Egyptian Civilization, Ministry of Antiquities, Egypt

Abstract

Egyptian Museum Cairo is considered one of the largest museums all over the world, containing ancient Egyptian antiquities telling the history of ancient Egyptians' lives; more one hundred sixty thousand objects are on display and the thousands else are in the basement and upper floor magazines. Those objects are representing different ancient periods from the lithic periods to Greco-Roman via Pharaonic periods.

ITRODUCTION:

The Egyptian Museum Cairo is one of the oldest museums among Egypt's museums. The first idea for its establishment dates back to the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha (1805-1849 A.D)[1]. when he had issued a decree to prohibit the illicit digging and trafficking of antiquities which increased in a horrible way, in particularly, after a French military campaign to Egypt (1798- 1801), and also as to the results of what was written by the scientists of Napoleon Bonaparte[2] about Egypt including its monuments[3] and solving the decipherment of ancient Egyptian language by Jean-Francois Champollion[4] in 1822. Hence, the ancient Egyptian monuments became popular goods in the European markets. Therefore, European consuls to Egypt like Salt, Drovetti, Anastasi and travellers activated to collect ancient Egyptian antiquities which are now forming principal collections of European museums[5]. This decree contained three articles as follows; Article1 describes "what is an antiquity thing?", Article 2, is for collecting old things in a certain place (Ezbekiyya museum), and Article 3 is prohibiting the export of antiquity things to outside Egypt[6]. Then Mr. Linnant Bey was entrusted by Youssef Zia Effendi, the first antiquities service director under a supervision of Elshiekh Refah Eltahtawy[7], to inventory the ancient sites and objects and to bring objects to a museum[8]. Then a large number of objects were collected at the civilian school existed in an old palace near from the Ezbekiyya Lake[9]. But unfortunately, these collections were gradually gifted by Egypt Governors as diplomatic ways with European elite Visitors. So a number of this collection began to reduce and it was finally moved to a hall in the ministry of public instruction at Salaheldin Citadel. In 1854, Abbas Pasha[10] put an end to the existence of the first Egyptian

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* *Corresponding author*: melsanadidy@yahoo.com

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museum of Cairo, when he gifted remains of its collection to the Austria Archduke Maximilian who was visiting Egypt[11] .

In 1858, Auguste Marriette convinced the Egypt Viceroy Said Pasha (1854- 1863) to build a new museum at Beaulaq on the eastern bank of the River Nile, which it was actually opened in 1863[12] at the reign of Khedive Ismael (1863- 1879). But, unfortunately again, it was destroyed by a high flood in 1878 which caused a big damage and loss of most objects. Afterthat, the rest of its contents were moved to a Giza palace[13] till the current building of Egyptian Museum at Tahrir square (former Ismaelia square) was inaugurated in 1902[14].

Now, Egyptian Museum Cairo is considered one of the largest museums all over the world, containing ancient Egyptian antiquities telling the history of ancient Egyptians' lives; more one hundred sixty thousand objects are on display and the thousands else are in the basement and upper floor magazines. Those objects are representing different ancient periods from the lithic periods to Greco-Roman via Pharaonic periods. As for, The sections of Egyptian Museum Cairo can be identified as follows; Section 1: Jewelry, Tutankhamun, and Royal Mummies, Section 2: Prehistoric Periods through Old Kingdom, Section 3: Middle Kingdom, Section 4: New Kingdom, Section 5: Third Intermediate Periods through Greco-Roman, Section 6-C: Coins, Section 6-P: Papyri, Section 7: Ostraca, Coffins, and Scarabs, Recently a new "section" was added to these sections called Section 8: Basement[15].

Documentation history of the Egyptian Museum Cairo:

The actual history for scientific documentation in Egyptian Museum Cairo dates back when Auguste Mariette was appointed as a director of Egyptian Antiquities service and Egyptian museum in1858. In the following year, he started to build a museum at Beaulaq quarter on the River Nile, and he set procedural steps for recording the collected objects from the discoveries through archaeological sites Egypt wide. So, as soon as possible the object arrives to a museum, it should be recorded in a register book called "Journal d'entrée". the **Journal d' entrèe" (JE)** is a main inventory register book which its pages are divided to columns with metadata about; Accession number (ID No), Position, Description, Material, Date, Dimensions, Provenance, Finder, Excavation number, Registration date, Remarks, and Illustration or Image which was added later when a camera became available[16](fig.1). Then, it was followed by publishing the first **Catalogue General** called Album du Musèe de Boulaq in 1872 [17]. When the current building was inaugurated in 1902, Gustin Maspero, Museum director, and his assistants started to publish a museum guide book and series of Catalogue General (CG) (fig.2). Later, to give objects more securing, and to ease its accountability and inventory, another register books were added for each section entitled "**Special register books**

(SR)". and if the objects| objet will stay for short loan shouhd be recorded in another register book entitled "**temporary register books (TR)**"[18].

In 2000, it was the first trial for a digital documentation Project in Co-operation with the Ministry of Communications, but it failed because of lack of funding.

In 2006, a digital documentation project called " Egyptian Museum Database Project" funded by the United States of Agency for International Development (USAID) and the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), using KE EMu system (fig.4) has started to record the displaying objects with creating a digital photos archive[19]. At the present, a number of objects recorded arrived for more 160.000 objects.

Registration steps in Egyptian Museum Cairo

The Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities through its laws, regulations and decrees listed several steps to register and document object through museums, as follows:

Step 1:

A decree by the Minster of Antiquities or the Secretary General of the Supreme council of Antiquities is issued for moving certain object or objects from its sites, magazines or museums to a certain museum. This decree is based on laws and regulations related to laws of Antiquities protection, an approval of a permanent committee, suggestions or recommendations of the sites, magazines, and museums managers, or Committees assigned to choose objects for a certain museum. a decree includes the procedural steps, roles, time tables, members, and how it will be carried out as well[20].

Steps 2:

Joint committee of two parts (sender and receiver) is formed of at least three archaeologists to record the object. . In the case of the objects/ object will be stay as permanent acquisition, it has to record in the **Journal d'entrėe (JE)** with the same data as aforementioned, and they/ it take/s a new accession number following to the last former number with writing it by black ink, then they/ it are/ is distributed to a special section according to its classification as aforementioned, where they/it take/s a new special number in a Special Register book (SR) following to the last former number with writing it by white ink[21] .

 If objects/ object will stay for a short loan in, they/ it will be recorded in a temporary register book (TR) with giving a new temporary accession number written in crossing form contains the receiving date and the last number of that day as follows; day/ month/ year/ the last number of that day (20/10/16/ 1) with the same data of the former owner, and some new information added such as; new position, registration date, former numbers, remarks and image or illustration (fig.3).

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Catalogues:

Egyptian Museum has series of catalogue general classified in accordance to themes or collections such as; the royal mummies[22], Statues et Statuette des Rois et de Particuliers[23], Canopics [24], Models of ships and boats[25], Anthropoid clay coffins[26]. In regarding to the Data mentioned in **catalogues**; Catalogue number, Object title, Dimensions, Full description, Techniques, if inscriptions, Condition of object, Illustrations. As for, writing a catalogue general number on the object, is usually written by red ink and sometimes by black or white ink[27].

Digital Registration

After the former step, a Registrar of Digital **Registration office** is transferring the entire data recorded in all register books on a prepared format sheet, then he / she inserts them on Database programme. This step is followed with a research phase about all information concerns each object or collection including reports, publications[28].

Information Categories and groups mentioned on Database system:

Each record consists of three principal parts: fundamental information about the object including ID numbers, title, dating, provenance, material, dimensions, and acquisition information; images of the object; and the object's permanent location.

Data of digital catalogue records; Title, ID number, Accession information, Sculpture, Physical description, Multimedia, Recorder, Location.

Data of Events; Event title, description, Event date, Dead line, Task, Request, Notes, security.

Data of Loans; Loan number, Loan direction (incoming/ outgoing), Loan status, Loan detail (browser/ lender, role, phone, fax, e-mail), Loan information (short name, title, associated, loan supervision), Date, Task, Finance, Multimedia, Note.

Data of Movements; Internal movement (object, location, curator in charge, purpose, committee head, registrars, security, date moved, time moved), Note.

Data of Locations; Identifier (location code, barcode), Location type (location, holder), Location hierarchy, Location supervisor, Holder.

Data of Bibliography; Publication detail (type, language), Book detail (title, abbreviation, author, edition, volume, page, publisher, Publication date, Publication city), Reference (reference type, reference detail), Published in.

Data of Parties; Party detail (Person detail, Gender, Source information), Organization, Address, Roles, Association, Biography, Synonymy[29].

Narratives; Narrative detail, Summery, Description, Related, Hierarchy, Association

Multimedia; Resource information (title, creator), Description, Type (image, drawing, facsimiles).

Valuations; Valuation (object valued, valued by, value amount), Valuation type (reason for valuation, valuation notes).

there are categories about Conservations, Insurance, Rights[30], Condition checks, Thesaurus, Groups as well[31] (fig.4).

Documentation impacts on collections management in the Egyptian museum Cairo:

Documentation has acted important roles in collections management of Egyptian Museum Cairo, since it was set registration and documentation systems in the second half of 19th century to now. It served a museum, collections, and users. It helped a museum in acquisition, accession (permanent or temporary), de-accession (permanent or temporary), preservation and accountability, conservation and information on the history of object conservation, exhibitions (permanent or temporary), interpretation, and loan in & out (resources for most regional museums and foreign exhibitions), resource of publication, method of educational programs, Archive to context and an access to data. In the recent years it has played an important role in repatriating hundreds objects stolen before, and during the 25th January revolution actions. Moreover, digital documentation helped the curators in quick inventories and accounting total numbers of the recorded objects at the risk time. As digital documentation helps a museum to outreach new public in Egypt and all over world, in particular, the researchers, and who are interested in Egyptology to visit the Egyptian museum or to communicate with it by e-mail to request data or digital photos (fig. 5).

Defects of documentation in the Egyptian museum:

In spite the Egyptian museum Cairo has a long history of documentation works, but there are still a lot of defects like; there are no a filing system or organized archive (paper or photos archive), a documentation manual guiding curators on how to document in Arabic register books, updates to information of old catalogues, available web site, or publications on/ off line. Many objects are still unaccountable or registered, especially existed in the basement storage, because of the complex governmental procedures. Some register books are written in French, or English only and the others written in Arabic. Many objects don't have old photos or new photos, and they have lack of information, in particularly, acquisition data, techniques data, provenance…. Moreover, a new digital documentation system is written by English only. There is no an accurate accountability for the researchers, public or staff who are using different types of documentation resources.

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Finally, there are many administrative, organizational problems and conflicting duties among the different departments charged in documentation with less co-operation and co-ordination among them, besides, there are lack of documentation specialists, facilities and equipment. But in spite of these defects, the Egyptian museum Cairo is one of the best museums in Egypt on documentation, because it has various types of documentation (paper, digital, and media), and some staff well trained in Egypt and abroad.

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[1] Muhammad Ali was Egypt 's governor under Ottoman Empire between 1805 and 1849 A.D.

[2] Napoléon Bonaparte (1769 –1821) was a French military and political leader who rose to prominence during the French revolution and led several campaigns including one campaign to Egypt in 1798.

[3] The French scientists accompanied Napoleon Bonaparte wrote series of volumes during a French campaign to Egypt (1798 - 1801) called "Description de l'Égypte " describe, and illustrate   Egypt; geographical, environmental, naturally, archaeological, economical commercial.

[4] Jean-Francois Champollion, French Egyptologist, is a god father of Egyptology who solved the decipherment of ancient Egyptian Language in 1822.

[5] Corteggiani, Jean-Pierre; *l'Egypte des pharaons au musėe du caire.* Paris, 1979.7- 9.

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[7] Elshiekh Refah Eltahtawy is one of a pioneer generation who travelled to France, and transferred the modern European sciences to Egypt and a leader of education renaissance at the time of Muhammad Ali Pasha to Ismael.

[8] Corteggiani, Jean-Pierre; *op.cit.* 10.

[9] ibid.10.

[10] Abbas Pasha was Mohammed Ali's successor and Egypt governor under Ottoman Empire between 1849- 1854 A.D.

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[18] *The Registration Collections Management and Documentation Department; Protocol Book, 2010.* 56.

[19] Ibid.17.

[20] صورة ضوئية من قرارالأمين العام للمجلس الأعلى للآثار رقم ٢٦٨٦ لسنة ٢٠٠٧ الخاص بجرد الآثار فى متاحف ومخازن المجلس الآعلى للآثار.

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[28] Information adopted from a survey with the curators of registration office of the Egyptian Museum Cairo.

[29] *The Registration Collections Management and Documentation Department; Protocol Book.* 44-6.

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[30] Ibid. 47.

[31] Ibid. 43.

[32] Ali Mohamed Ali SABRA, A TECHNICAL STUDY OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE SUBJECTS OF THE DISCOVERED ROCK DRAWINGS AND METHODS OF PRESERVATION IN ALIA NAJD AREA IN SAUDI ARABIA, International Journal of Advanced Studies in World Archaeology, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2018, pp. 1-6.

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