Applied Imaging in Architectural Conservation practice: Insights from the case studies

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Abstract

This paper highlights the importance of applied imaging in architectural conservation, particularly within the Indian context where visual documentation is often underutilised. It argues for a structured approach where (i) informed decision-making, (ii) clearer intervention strategies, and (iii) pragmatic change management are made possible through rigorous visual documentation. At the core of such understanding lies the necessity for meticulous, structured, and chronologically organised visual documentation, alias technical imaging. Despite the long-standing presence of photography and imaging technologies, India lacks a codified framework or set of guidelines for conservation-focused imaging, resulting in inconsistent documentation practices. Many projects rely on traditional survey techniques supplemented by occasional photographs, which often fail to capture the full complexity and evolution of heritage structures. This paper aims to examine the rationale for integrating rigorous visual documentation and research into heritage conservation and makes a case for it as both a technical requirement and an ethical responsibility. It also reflects on the challenges faced by heritage professionals in adopting and effectively utilising such tools—including access to technology, skill gaps, budgetary limitations, and the absence of established protocols. Drawing on a series of diverse case studies ranging from temples and dargahs to palatial complexes and colonial architecture, the paper shows how systematic imaging tools—photography, photogrammetry, aerial documentation—enhance heritage understanding and decision-making. It advocates repositioning visual documentation from a supplementary role to a core component of conservation practice and calls for the creation of context-specific guidelines and digital archival standards. Ultimately, it presents a compelling argument for the systematic and effective use of visual documentation to deepen site understanding, support research, and guide responsible heritage management.

1. Introduction

Documentation is the creation of a record – of the object or space that is under examination. The purpose for which the documentation is undertaken usually directs the method or techniques of documentation adapted to achieve the purpose/ results envisioned at the start of the process. For architectural spaces, documentation can be of several types, that includes drawings, sketches and photographs. In an architectural design project, drawings and sketches are created before the building comes into existence. Photography comes into picture predominantly when the finished product must be recorded. In comparison, an architectural conservation project is different as we deal with something that already exists. Photo (or visual) documentation becomes the first activity at a conservation site. Any conservation activity starts with first understanding the site and context, and documentation is the first step towards that understanding. Site documentation can and should cover a range of scales and details- from high-level aerial photography to the most detailed microscopic analysis of the wall paint traces. To achieve all the details requires a wide range of allied tools and techniques: sketches, drawings, models, documents, photographs, videos, etc.

Documentation in conservation projects also includes the careful collation of the previous recorded (i.e., available and accessible) history of the building. Unpredictability with the availability of the visual archives or historic documents, about the site, has generally given the conservators a tough time. Accessing the old documents or information about the heritage has always had its restrictions.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

This paper advocates for the critical role of structured and ethical visual documentation in architectural conservation, arguing that it is fundamental to making informed decisions, enabling meaningful interventions, and supporting sustainable change management at heritage sites. Through a strategic exploration of current practices, particularly within the Indian context, the paper highlights inconsistencies and limitations faced by heritage professionals in effectively applying visual documentation methods. It underscores the importance of continuous, detailed recording as a vital tool for understanding the history and condition of a site. The adoption of digital documentation brings both opportunities for conservators and challenges for ensuring long-term stability of conservation records, as established in recent literature [Beck, 2013]. The paper sets out to demonstrate the transformative potential of these methods through illustrative examples, ultimately building a case for their wider adoption. It calls for the standardisation of documentation practices as a necessary step toward improving heritage outcomes and stresses that proceeding without adequate research and records raises serious ethical concerns. By promoting thorough documentation not just as a technical task but as an ethical obligation, the paper argues that improved documentation can enhance research, support conservation decisions, and uphold the integrity of heritage management. Ultimately, the paper seeks to shift visual documentation from a supplementary task to a central pillar of conservation practice.

2. Significance of Visual Documentation of built heritage

2.1 Importance of Documentation

Starting from the moment of its creation, any historic site or object is constantly changing. The change can be broadly identified under three types.
   a) Change due to gradual deterioration of the materials
   b) Change due to use and, interventions during use
   c) Change due to conservation/restoration efforts
While the first type of change is natural, the second and third are deliberate. (Moore, 2001)

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Good conservation of our cultural heritage is based on informed decisions, and the right decisions can be made where complete information about the site or object is available. In most cases, the information is predominantly obtained using documentation and recording tools. The story of the site and the changes it has undergone usually holds the answers to 'the why' and 'the how' of many of the deteriorative conditions that are observed. A detailed and structured approach to analysing the history of use and interventions over the life of the site holds the key. This will enable to propose and implement optimum and impactful conservation interventions that address specific deteriorations.

For all this, documentation becomes important; it becomes the process through which we understand what the past is, and record what the present is. In this paper, we will examine how documentation can be enhanced through visual documentation, (using photography as a much-needed tool) with some exploratory examples from our practice.

2.2 Challenges in Visual Documentation practices
A conservation project of built heritage starts with the documentation with measured drawings, total station survey and recording of visual conditions. Photographs are used as secondary sources of information, generally to supplement the base drawings wherever necessary.

Archival research – textual and visual - may or may not be undertaken, depending on budget and time constraints. As a result, in many restoration projects in India, after very basic archival research, we are often obligated to assume many aspects of the site's history. Many conservators bemoan the lack of documentation from before the end of the 20th century, before conservation was established as a profession. (Pye, 2001).

In most restoration projects, documentation has predominantly been associated with recording the condition of the site immediately before and after the intervention. (Matero, 2003). Photo documentation is significant just to demonstrate the transformation of the site through 'before-after' photos. Projects often begin with measured drawings and sporadic photo records, lacking a structured imaging framework. The absence of standard protocols, budget constraints, and limited access to archival material contribute to inconsistent outcomes.

Despite its critical importance, visual documentation in Indian conservation practice remains informal and underdeveloped. This could be due to a variety of reasons – lack of knowledge of available technology, limited access to the technology and cost of it. Technology is available, yet not widely adopted due to lack of training, cost, and uncertainty regarding its effectiveness. Furthermore, conservators often rely on before-and-after photographs, missing opportunities for comprehensive, continuous documentation. These systemic gaps highlight the urgent need for both structured guidelines and professional capacity building.

2.3 Need for structured documentation
By the 1840s, John Ruskin was urging preservationists to seize "every opportunity afforded by scaffolding to approach [art and architecture] closely and putting the camera in any position that will command" it. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Camillo Boito established the now standard practice of systematically photographing all phases of restoration and archiving the pictures for future reference and to ensure the reversibility of treatments. (Casciato & Fifield, 2003)

During the first phase of the CIPA RecorDIM initiative that concluded in 2007, important gaps between the users and providers of heritage information for conservation were identified; one of the key issues identified in the heritage documentation process was the absence of adequate training to enable systematic and accurate documentation. Heritage documentation is defined by RecorDiM round table 3: "*Heritage Documentation is a continuous process enabling the monitoring, maintenance and understanding needed for conservation by the supply of appropriate and timely information. Documentation is both the product and action of meeting the information needs of heritage management. It makes available a range of tangible and intangible resources, such as metric, narrative, thematic and societal records of cultural heritage.*"

Good documentation should provide continuous information on the history of the site before it was taken up for conservation and during conservation. It should provide as much information as possible for further research and investigation in a manner that will support analysis of long-term trends and patterns of decay, as well as complete information to comprehend the effectiveness of any conservation interventions undertaken. This should ultimately lead to better conservation and management decisions about the site. (Matero, 2003).

To achieve this effectively, one needs to relook at the documentation methodology undertaken thus far and how advancement in technology can and should be effectively used to maximize documentation and the extent of details recorded. It is vital to ensure that it is practical both in terms of time and finances. Well-structured visual documentation can become a primary aid in long term monitoring of sites. A structured approach with defined guidelines for documentation can be used to record the details of the building over time. This will enable conservation professionals to gain a better perspective on the influence of surroundings, ambiance, the impact of decisions in other parts of the site, etc., and how these factors may be directly or indirectly affecting the deterioration observed on the site. Such documentation of the site thus also builds a continuous visual archive of the site that will aid in better decision making over time.

3. Role of photography in documentation

Photography has existed for more than 150 years, but only recently have advances in technology made high-quality cameras and devices readily available, affordable, and easy to use. Advancement in digital technology in the recent past has enabled professionals to take more pictures than ever before. Today heritage managers and conservators regularly and frequently use digital (and mobile) photography for the purposes of documenting all stages of their work. But how many conservators have understood the tool of photography completely? They do not become professional photographers either. We often see the lack or hesitancy in understanding the technology not allowing them to utilise it to full potential. In the field of architectural conservation, there are always situations where undertaking a measured drawing of a site can be rendered difficult owing to the height, or the profile, or access or similar situations. Photography can play a key role; it can become an indispensable tool, upon better understanding. Below are some illustrations on how photography and photogrammetry assisted in the documentation of historic sites. Aerial imaging, photography, photogrammetry, time-lapse imaging, giga-pixel

photogrammetry, video documentary, etc., were some of the visual documentation tools used to explore possibilities.

3.1 Case 1 – Documentation of Anjaneri Group of Temples, Nasik.

The Anjaneri Group of Temples, near Nasik, are a set of 16 temples and mutts dating to about 12th century. Built from the local basalt, these temples have been subject to the ravages to time and are in various stages of decay, with many of them having partial or large sections of collapse. The debris of the collapse lies strewn around the temples for several meters. With the condition of the decay being severe, undertaking manual documentation was found to be very intensive in manpower and time.

To achieve effective documentation with higher accuracy, a combination of technologies was used to complete the documentation. (i) Total station survey was undertaken to locate the temples exactly on the site and to identify some key markers for each of the temples. (ii) Manual documentation was undertaken to the maximum possible extent with intensive use of triangulation and tube levels to have high levels of accuracy (iii) orthographic aerial imagery was taken using a drone (DJI Mavic Pro). This was used to document the inaccessible part of the temple (owing to the fragile structural stability of the temples) –the roof, the fallen members, stones and surrounding rocks to complete the documentation. The aerial imagery played a significant role in completing the documentation.

Figure 1. Aerial Image. Anjaneri Temple No.6 & 7, Nashik, Maharastra, India, 2017. Source: Author

3.2 Case 2 – Documentation of the Dargah of Hazrath Shah Raju Qattal, Hyderabad

The Dargah of Hazrath Shah Raju in Hyderabad has a large dome (said to be the tallest dome in the country) whose layers of waterproofing were in a state of deterioration. It was possible to understand the general condition of the dome from images. It was impossible to prepare the drawings, that were required to quantify the repairs of waterproofing. Even with scaffolding, documentation would have been tedious and time-consuming.

Instead, a combination of measured drawing and aerial photogrammetry was used to develop the plans and profile of the dome. This made it possible to quantify the surface area of the dome comprehensively. Around 250 images were shot using a combination of an aerial drone with a camera and a full frame DSLR (Canon 5D Mark III with 100 mm macro telephoto lens). Photos were captured from multiple angles, exposing the maximum surface. These were used to build the complete volume of the dome. The 3D photogrammetry (Agisoft Photoscan software) model was built on the software. Ortho & scale rectified views in elevations and plan were acquired from

it. This also gave the profile in section, in ascertaining the accurate measurements, after superimposing with the available drawings.

Figure 2. Ortho photos, Hazrath Shah Raju Mosque Dome, Hyderabad. Source: Author

3.3 Case 3 – Documentation of the Jaisalmer Palace, Jaisalmer Fort

The Palace Complex of Jaisalmer has been constructed on the Fort wall at places and is several storeys high, where, in some areas, space is inadequate to even erect a scaffolding. It would have been a mammoth and an extremely expensive task to attempt to undertake accurate measured drawings of the same.
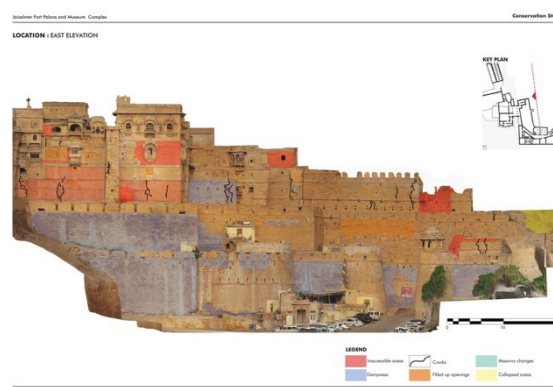

Figure 3. Ortho photo used for Graphic-Doc, Jaisalmer Fort. Source: Dr. Kailasa Rao, SPA Bhopal

A series of high-resolution photographs were captured on an Inspire drone fitted with a gimbal camera with LIDAR. These photos were then stitched on Agisoft Photoscan to achieve a high-resolution 3D photogrammetric model. This gave the orthographic with highly detailed external surfaces. With this high-resolution imaging, many of the deterioration, additions and alterations of the Palace Complex could be identified and analysed.

3.4 Case 4 – Documentation of the Ghanpur Group of Temples, Telangana

The town of Ghanpur, near Warangal, has a group of temples dating to the 13th century. The ground on which these temples have been built has, over time, undergone settlement, excavation and other interventions. All these factors, along with poor maintenance, and vegetation growth over time has caused distress to the structures.

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Figure 4. Aerial Image of Ghanpur group of temples, Ghanpur. Source: Author

As a result, these temples today are in various stages of decay; some of them have partial areas of collapse, while others have been dismantled. As a result, there are many stone members lying on the ground around the structures. The condition of the decay was extensive with dense vegetation on the ground. This reduced physical access, to undertaking manual documentation; it would have required an intensive and time-consuming, without sufficient accuracy to work with. To add to the constraints, some areas within the site were inaccessible. To achieve comprehensive documentation with better accuracy, a combination of technologies was used. Apart from manual documentation, orthographic aerial imagery and photogrammetry were used to document the roofs, the structurally fragile sections of the temple and physically inaccessible areas. Gigapixel7 Photogrammetry using a full frame DSLR (Canon 5D Mark 3) was done to understand more detailed information of the surface, texture and the context.

3.5 Case 5 – Restoration of the Durbar Hall, Osmania University College for Women (former British Residency), Hyderabad.

The former British Residency in Hyderabad is one of the largest Palladian villas built in India. Constructed in 1803-06, it has large spaces with many decorative features. One of the distinct features of this building is the decorative pressed paper ceiling that is fixed to a vaulted wooden ceiling in the central room of the building – the Durbar Hall. Made of a total of 651 panels in 18 typologies and located at a height of 18 metres above the ground, it would have been an enormous task to undertake an accurately measured drawing of this 180sqm of the ceiling and would have involved erecting scaffolding for the whole area for several months. To achieve a base map of the ceiling which would be high on accuracy and low of time and budget, different techniques were used to capture the ceiling. Initially, a Canon super wide-angle lens on a full-frame DSLR camera was taken to capture the whole ceiling in a single shot. While this gave a complete picture of the ceiling, it was not orthographically accurate. Next, the ceiling was captured in parts (8 rows and 5 columns), using a telephoto (Canon EF 100 mm Macro) lens. A total of 40 images were stitched in a photo editing software. The accuracy was around 90%, with some issues in merging junction.
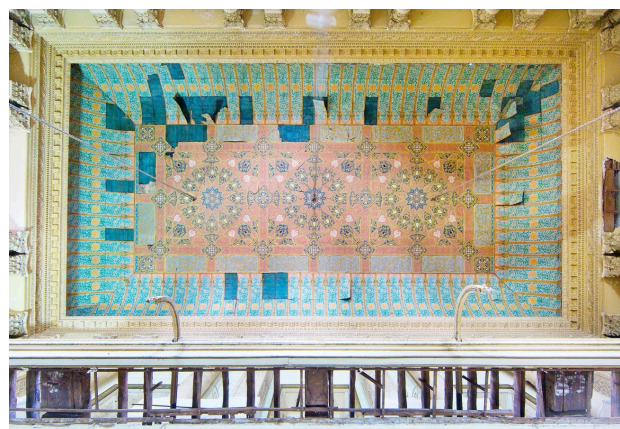

Figure 5. Wide angle image of the Papier Mache Ceiling, British Residency, Hyderabad. Source: Author

The same images were then utilized to build a photogrammetric model using the Agisoft Photoscan software. In addition to the surface plane, the software provided the contours and smaller changes. This ensured the ceiling was documented with the highest resolution and accuracy, in its current state. Besides, it gave the art conservators a greater advantage in making decisions without any gaps in information on the condition. Using this as a base mapping, the team identified the types of panels, the numbers, map the condition of the ceiling, and prepared a strategy for its conservation. The restoration process got over after 3 years of work, that heavily relied on the technical imaging for important decisions. Some of the vital junctures where the imaging tools were used were,

i. To record the ceiling before restoration.
ii. To understand the complete geometry and components that could be quantified, to be taken up for analysis.
iii. To quantify the number of parts, that were lost that had to be replaced, parts that were to be restored, parts that were to be conserved.
iv. To understand the change of colour, decaying levels of damage in every panel.
v. To record the process of restoration.
vi. To document the panels in 1:1 scale, to be reprinted to replace the lost panels, with archival canvas prints.
vii. To record the 'after' image of the restored ceiling.

Case Study	Site Type	Imaging Tools Used	Unique Challenge	Inferences
Anjaneri Temples, Nashik	Rock-cut temples	Drone imagery, total station, triangulation	Collapse debris, inaccessibility	Mapping of roof zones & layout
Shah Raju Dargah, Hyderabad	Monumental dome	DSLR + Drone, Photogrammetry	Difficult access to dome profile	Dome profiling & volumes
Jaisalmer Palace, Rajasthan	Fort & palace	Drone + LIDAR, Orthophoto	Scaffolding impossible, narrow spaces	Tracked changes & deterioration over time
Ghanpur Temples, Telangana	Multi-temple site	Drone, Gigapixel, Photogrammetry	Dense vegetation, stone dislocation	Documented structural instability & decay
British Residency, Hyderabad	Paper-mâché ceiling	DSLR, Macro lens, Photogrammetry	Ceiling height (18m), panel complexity	Planning, replication & evaluation

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4. Guidelines and best practices

Visual Documentation has grown to be one of the key tools in recording information about a site or object and hence an essential responsibility of the modern conservation professional. Many countries had formalized it and framed institutional policies as well as professional ethical guidelines. A well-structured and organized visual documentation can provide critical information that can inform and guide future conservators of previous work, allowing conservators to track the efficacy of treatments over time.

Internationally, there are guidelines available for a structured approach to documentation through drawings and a defined approach to structure the photographic documentation of a site. With the advanced technology that is available today, documentation of the change and interventions in a site can be achieved rather easily with practice. To address this, there is a need to develop the best practical method with a series of guidelines that are feasible for practicing conservators in our country. This method aims to reduce the time and economic costs required of best practice while minimizing risks to the conservation record. Such 'best practice' guidelines should be applicable across a wide range of professional contexts, from large public institutional conservators to independent private contractors. The value of these guidelines lies in their pragmatic approach, emphasizing small but critical improvements to current documentation practices that substantially enhance the preservation and accessibility of information over time (Beck, 2013).

There are many sources across the world that document 'best practice' when it comes to documentation, particularly photography. The American Institute of Conservation (AIC) published a guide to digital photography for conservators, which is the first of its kind aimed specifically at the field of conservation. There are a good number of guidelines and standards that were not developed for the heritage sector but are still applicable, such as the Universal Photographic Digital Imaging Guidelines (UPDIG) and guidelines published by the Scientific Working Group on Imaging Technology (SWGIT, 2010), guidelines for the Forensic Imaging Practitioner. The value of these guidelines lies in the complete understanding and identification of small changes to current practice.

The AIC Code of Ethics suggests that records must be created before and after treatment documenting condition, but should also detail examination, sampling, scientific investigation, and treatment (AIC, 1994). While this refers to all forms of documentation, not just photography, it illuminates the decision-making process for conservators. Photographs should be taken whenever written documentation could not succinctly describe the condition before, during, and after treatment. It becomes imperative to learn and adapt from various sources of available guidelines and rules worldwide. At CIPA Heritage Documentation, it is performed with defined responsibilities: keeping up with technology and ensuring its usefulness for cultural heritage conservation, education and dissemination. This role is complemented with its parent organizations: ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites) and ISPRS (International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing) as well. They have been trying to accomplish this through various means that include organizing and participating in conservation training programs and a bi-annual congress to provide a platform for information exchange, working with government bodies, non-profit groups and institutions; encouraging and sponsoring research and practical experience in both technology and cultural heritage; and working on guidelines and examples on good practices on techniques on documentation and management of information.

The UK Historic Environment Data Standard provides the following simple definition: "*A data standard is simply a list of what information should be recorded and how it should be recorded, to meet a particular objective*". Along with defining what information should be recorded, at a basic level, it is important to enlist the various categories of information that is to be recorded and their attributes. Learnings from best practices, along with collaboration between conservators and architectural photographers can enhance the detailing of specifications for photographic documentation required as the conservators are not trained professional photographers. Through such collaborative efforts, the documentation process can be guided to maximize the quality of the data captured and define the right techniques and technology to be used to achieve the desired results.

For example, in case study 5, it should be noted that the same camera was used in all the three stages. It is critical to understand how different techniques and processes can be used to capture the same details and achieve different results. This is the crucial part of good photographic documentation – application of the right technology to achieve desired results at highest accuracy. Another example can be documentation of colour of spaces – colour could be in terms of finishes of elements (walls, doors, windows etc), or of architectural ornament. It becomes imperative that for these spaces, that along with size scales, the images are captured with colour targets to ensure that the accurate colour temperatures are recorded. In addition to using a colour target, the digital camera should also be set to ensure that image captured represents the most accurate colour reproduction. There are various colour calibration softwares that can assist the conservators to record the exact details.

5. Setting up of Digital Archives

While rapid advancements in digital technology have enabled a wide range of possibilities in documentation, along with the ease of access also comes threats to the long-term stability of the conservation record. Technology makes visual documentation easy, compared to the analogue photography days; however digital technology plays a double-edged sword here. One does not want to end producing enormous amount data, that will leave us scrambling for information. Conservators should be competent enough to extract the optimum information from all the acquired data. In addition to the threat of excess information, digital documents can be subject to loss and decay just as physical or analogue records have been. The conservators need to keep themselves updated on the dangers of data corruption and the obsolescence of technology. It is necessary for conservators to understand the various options available to preserve records. Archiving digital records requires clarity on what is necessary to ensure that photographic records are preserved and finding a balance with what is feasible.

At this point it is important to note that along with a structured approach to visual documentation, it is critical to develop a structured method to access/retrieve the images captured. Tagging, adding metadata, segregation, the number of works undertaken, date of capture could all be parts of it. The absence of documented best practices, in India, has led to a gap in accessibility to effective and successful techniques on creating,

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storing and accessing the documentation. Maintaining and managing the digital archives requires not only appropriate knowledge to address storage medium, but also an understanding of the hardware requirements with appropriate retrieval software.

If one central database is not possible, photographs should be linked or associated in some way with all other records concerning an object. (Keene, 1998). The various types of records regarding an object, while providing a certain level of information independently, can, when viewed together, provide a more complete and holistic information. It is hence imperative to ensure that all the various records are linked to ensure any information or documentation regarding an object, once created, is lost. File archival framework and practice is another area of concern. Filing the data and retrieving it needs to have some awareness on the fraternity as a best practice.

6. Dissemination and Outreach

In 2002, the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) hosted a group of international experts to work together to explore ways of strengthening the documentation component of built heritage conservation. This group - Recording, Documentation, and Information Management (RecorDIM) Initiative - identified a series of priorities that could benefit the professional community responsible for conserving important heritage places. One of the priorities that this group identified was the need to publish guidelines for practical hands-on approaches to help conservation professionals design documentation strategies and implement them effectively. The conservators and researchers have an ethical obligation to at least attempt to document and disseminate their projects' findings and processes. It is natural to not document smaller projects, or projects of less 'value'. Recording and documenting the works and possibly disseminating among the fraternity is an important first step on the path towards knowledge translation and practice change.
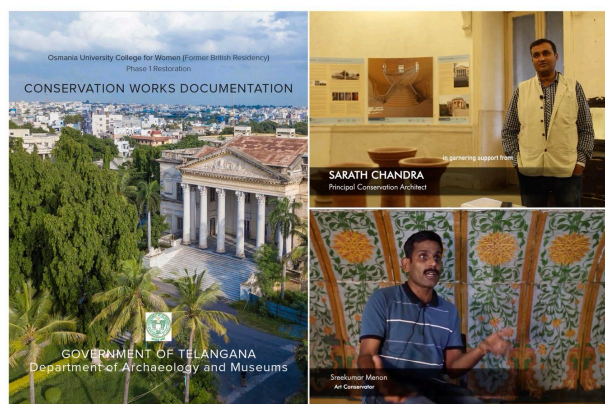

Figure 6. Screenshots from publication and documentary films respectively, British Residency, Hyderabad. Source: Author

"Where is the wisdom we lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we lost in information?" - T. S. Eliott.

Among the projects and practices stated as examples above, there have been attempts to utilize the documentation undertaken for purposes of dissemination. The Department of Heritage, Government of Telangana published the details of the conservation works undertaken in Phase 1 of the Restoration of the Durbar Hall, Osmania University College for Women (former British Residency), Hyderabad. In phase 2 the documentation was enhanced with WMF commissioning a series of short videos to record ongoing works, project

background and details. The primary objective of both these reaches the stakeholders, peers and the common public through the visual medium.

7. Capacity Building and Community Engagement

A critical but often overlooked aspect of successful heritage documentation is the investment in local capacity building. Several of the case studies discussed in this paper—such as the Ghanpur temples and the British Residency—incorporated training components aimed at empowering interns, students, and site personnel. Photography and photogrammetry workshops were conducted in collaboration with architectural colleges and conservation agencies, allowing emerging professionals to work hands-on with imaging tools like DSLR cameras, drones, and photogrammetry software. These workshops not only enhanced technical skills but also cultivated a deeper appreciation for heritage conservation among young practitioners. Furthermore, involving local residents and site custodians in documentation efforts helped bridge the gap between expert knowledge and on-ground understanding, ensuring continuity in maintenance and monitoring. Such inclusive and educational initiatives demonstrate how imaging can serve not only as a technical tool but also as a medium for collaboration, capacity building, and long-term community stewardship.

8. Conclusion

Understanding of the nature and extent of heritage places, along with its history and condition, is the first step towards their conservation. It must become a prerequisite to make visual documentation a normalised practice in the everyday activity of the conservation site. Visual documentation training should be undertaken in a consistent manner, equipping every team member of a conservation programme to understand, value and implement, via, well-structured visual documentation. Conservation professionals need to acknowledge that 'DIY' documentation has its limitations and metric techniques have wide-ranging benefits at the core.

In a country that has limited documentation of best practices, it has become critical for practitioners to share the experience of documentation, to learn from each other and to arrive at a strategy that will balance the requirements of projects with appropriate methods of capture. Conservators, interns and experts should be able to demonstrate the understanding of the procedure of documentation in built heritage. They should be competent enough in operating the specific recording technique(s) as well. They should empower to ideate photography in both objective and subjective requirements – pictorial photography, scale rectified photography and photogrammetry – this can enable photography to be a participant product in the conservation projects. Photogrammetry should be used to augment measured drawing (or total station). Every conservation project must be visually documented and packed for communication and dissemination among the common public and the conservation fraternity. With sufficient knowledge, the conservators should be convinced to push the allocation of budgets aiding continuous visual documentation.

Photographic surveying, documenting, and archiving campaigns such as the ones probed in this issue helped to institutionalize and professionalize preservation. They not only inventoried heritage efficiently but also helped shape public perception, concentrating attention on, and therefore changing

the cultural value of, a select group of buildings and objects. Preservation photography constructed and disseminated visual knowledge about, and appreciation of, historic buildings that were distant in place and in time. (Bergera & Pailos, 2013)

There is a pressing requirement to have a long-term institutional investment of resources for documentation of heritage. Any short-term investment in heritage documentation or inventory, no matter how well resourced and executed, will have limited effectiveness and the data collected may be obsolete beyond the immediate requirement if these endeavours are not strategized for the long term. The conservators need to think about carrying out the heritage recording as a process and not just for individual projects, based on budget. The documentation of our cultural heritage of historic buildings, structures, and sites is a critical and ongoing process. Though not a new activity in the last half-century, the importance and value of documentation have been increasingly recognised within the conservation community. The value of good documentation that is easy to retrieve and analyse plays a critical role in informed decision making and continued maintenance in good conservation practices.

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