



Archive Preservation and Indigenous Knowledge Access in Public Library in Benue State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the preservation and accessibility of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in Benue State, Nigeria, with a particular focus on library staff roles and responsibilities. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, targeting public library staff, including librarians, archivists, and library assistants who are involved in the management and preservation of indigenous knowledge. The study population comprised 81 public library staff members, selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure proportional representation across staff categories. Structured questionnaires served as the primary data collection instrument, gathering primarily quantitative data (clarify any qualitative component) on preservation practices, challenges, and access to indigenous knowledge. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), to assess preservation practices, associated challenges, and levels of accessibility of indigenous knowledge resources. The findings indicate that although some progress has been recorded in the collection and preservation of indigenous knowledge, significant challenges, such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, lack of trained personnel, and limited access points for users, continue to constrain the effective management of indigenous knowledge. The study recommends increased funding, targeted staff training, and infrastructural improvement to enhance the preservation and accessibility of indigenous knowledge in public libraries. This study contributes to existing scholarship by providing empirical evidence on public libraries' roles in indigenous knowledge preservation and access, while identifying operational strengths and constraints among library staff in the study area.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge, archive preservation, public libraries, Benue State, library staff, preservation practices.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous knowledge (IK) refers to the body of knowledge, practices, beliefs, and understandings developed by local communities through long-term interaction with their natural and social environments. It is locally rooted, socially embedded, and transmitted orally from generation to generation. This knowledge encompasses ecological understanding, health

practices, agricultural systems, cultural expressions, and social norms that sustain community life and identity. Indigenous knowledge has historically supported agriculture, environmental stewardship, traditional medicine, and community governance before the advent of formal scientific systems. Its preservation and accessibility can strengthen cultural identity and contribute to sustainable development goals at both local and national levels (Adamu, 2021; Okeke & Nwogu, 2019).

In Nigeria, the library and information science sector plays a critical role in the preservation, organization, and dissemination of information resources, including IK. Public libraries, as social institutions, are charged with collecting, organizing, preserving, and disseminating information resources for the public's use. This role extends to non-formal and non-codified knowledge systems such as indigenous knowledge, which are at risk of being lost due to modernization, urbanization, and inter-generational knowledge gaps. By systematically documenting and preserving IK, public libraries can safeguard cultural heritage while facilitating equitable access to knowledge that enriches society (Onu, 2018; Chukwu & Nwogu, 2020).

Preservation of archival materials especially non-standard records like oral literatures, traditional practices, local languages, and community histories is essential to ensuring that IK remains accessible to future generations. Archival preservation involves systematic efforts to store records in ways that prevent deterioration, ensure the longevity of documents and memories, and improve access for research, education, and cultural engagement. The practice of archive preservation, however, requires specialized knowledge, policies, infrastructure, and resources to manage both tangible and intangible heritage (Eze & Nwagu, 2022).

In Benue State, located in the North-Central region of Nigeria, indigenous knowledge plays an integral role in the socio-cultural and economic life of the populace. Benue State is often referred to as the “Food Basket of the Nation” due to its agricultural productivity. Indigenous farming practices, local pest management methods, crop varieties, and community-based knowledges are widely practiced and held among farming communities. Despite the importance of this knowledge base, much of it remains undocumented and is often transmitted informally through traditional channels (Agbo, 2020). Without proper systems to document and preserve IK, there is a risk of it being lost due to globalization and modernity.

Public libraries in Benue State are positioned to serve as key repositories for this knowledge. Through acquisition, cataloguing, indexing, and archival preservation of IK materials (both print and non-print), public libraries can ensure that indigenous knowledge is collected systematically, stored for posterity, and made accessible to users across generations. IK archives not only serve academic researchers and policymakers but also community members seeking to preserve cultural identity and promote knowledge continuity (Sule, 2018; Otumba, 2019).

Despite this potential, studies on library services in Benue State reveal challenges in archive preservation and IK access. For example, research focusing on how public libraries handle traditional Tiv music and dance both crucial aspects of local culture found that libraries lacked adequate policy support for acquiring and preserving these materials, citing issues like misappropriation of funds, lack of technical know-how, and limited preservation policy frameworks (Jikura, 2021).

The concept of IK and its preservation in library settings is connected to broader debates on sustainable development in knowledge societies. Scholars posit that a society rooted in its indigenous knowledge systems can more effectively leverage cultural resources for development

while preserving social equity and environmental harmony (Omoniyi, 2020). The incorporation of IK into library collections and archives enables public access and use, contributing to education, research, and cultural continuity. However, the effectiveness of public libraries in preserving IK in Benue State depends not only on the existence of IK materials but also on the existence of archival practices and systems that can capture, conserve, and provide access to them (Idris & Sulaimon, 2022).

Preservation mechanisms involve physical conservation (managing physical documents), digital preservation (using technology to secure and access digital copies), and information management policies that support long-term storage and discoverability. These mechanisms also require trained personnel, funding, and technological infrastructure—components that some Nigerian libraries currently lack (Ogunyemi & Adebayo, 2019).

Another relevant dynamic is the digital divide in Nigeria, which refers to inequalities in access to information and communications technology (ICT). Many rural and underserved communities, including significant portions of Benue State, may lack regular access to internet and ICT infrastructure. This divide complicates efforts to preserve and disseminate digital archives or provide online access to IK collections stored in library databases, limiting accessibility for those who might most benefit (Idris & Bello, 2021).

Public libraries act as access points for IK, but they also depend on supportive policy environments, funding, and institutional recognition of the value of indigenous knowledge. National and state policies that prioritize cultural preservation, archival standards, and integration of indigenous content into public information systems can strengthen the capacity of libraries to preserve IK. The lack of such policies or their weak implementation can result in fragmented archival practices, loss of cultural information, and diminished access for researchers and local communities alike (Tersoo, 2020).

The intersection of archive preservation, indigenous knowledge, and library science is therefore a nexus of cultural heritage, educational access, and sustainable community development. In Benue State, this intersection highlights both the potential of libraries as knowledge custodians and the structural challenges that hinder their ability to fulfill this role effectively.

Statement of the Problem

The acknowledged importance of indigenous knowledge as a repository of cultural heritage and sustainable development practices, its preservation and accessibility remain problematic in many public libraries in Benue State. First, while IK is widely practiced and valued at the community level, a large share of IK remains undocumented, residing primarily in oral and informal forms. This poses a risk of loss over time, especially as younger generations increasingly engage with formal education and modern information systems. Without systematic archival preservation, valuable IK may be irretrievably lost (Sule, 2018).

Second, existing archival and library practices in Benue State show evidence of inadequate frameworks for collecting and managing indigenous knowledge materials. Research into library handling of local cultural expressions such as Tiv music and dance indicates that public libraries often lack clear policies and sufficient resources to acquire or preserve these culturally specific materials. Issues such as lack of funding, absence of specialization in preservation techniques, and weak institutional initiatives hinder the effective management of IK archives (Jikura, 2021).

Moreover, the constraints facing public libraries in Benue State extend to broader challenges in information resource management. Many libraries struggle with preservation and conservation

issues due to inadequate facilities, insufficient funding, limited access to modern archival technologies, and lack of staff trained in records management and conservation. These challenges are not unique to Benue; similar problems are observed in national archival institutions in Nigeria, where poor preservation conditions and lack of digitization are major concerns (Onu, 2018; Omoniyi, 2020).

Another problem is the limited accessibility of preserved IK to diverse user groups. Even when IK materials are collected, inadequate cataloguing systems, lack of digital access options, and minimal public awareness of available resources can restrict users from discovering and using these archives. This limits the potential impact of IK on research, education, policy planning, and community empowerment (Agbo, 2020).

The digital divide exacerbates these accessibility challenges. Libraries aiming to provide digital access to IK archives must contend with limited ICT infrastructure, especially in rural areas where internet connectivity is unreliable. Without consistent digital access, users cannot fully utilize IK resources that are stored in electronic formats or online repositories (Idris & Bello, 2021). These problems cumulatively point to a systemic gap: public libraries in Benue State are not consistently positioned to preserve and provide meaningful access to indigenous knowledge archives. The absence of robust archival systems, policy support, trained personnel, and accessible technologies undermines the libraries' capability to serve as custodians of indigenous knowledge. This has implications not only for cultural preservation but also for the integration of local knowledge into broader educational and developmental frameworks.

Aim and Objectives

To explore the effectiveness of archive preservation and accessibility of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in Benue State. The specific objectives:

1. To assess the current practices and strategies for preserving indigenous knowledge in public libraries in Benue State.
2. To identify the challenges faced by public libraries in Benue State in preserving and providing access to indigenous knowledge.
3. To evaluate the accessibility of indigenous knowledge resources to library users and local communities in Benue State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Public Libraries in Knowledge Preservation

Public libraries serve as critical institutions for knowledge preservation and dissemination. They house not only contemporary knowledge but also cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, including indigenous knowledge. According to Akporido (2017), public libraries help maintain records of both written and oral traditions, and their role extends beyond merely storing books to include safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Libraries can serve as repositories of IK by acquiring, organizing, and preserving materials such as folklore, oral histories, local medicinal practices, and traditional agricultural methods. This preservation of traditional knowledge can aid in cultural sustainability and national identity (Omoniyi, 2020).

In Nigerian libraries, particularly in public institutions, archival preservation is central to maintaining the historical continuity of both written and non-written knowledge. As noted by Chukwu & Nwogu (2020), libraries in Nigeria have gradually started recognizing the importance

of preserving indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to ensure that these vital cultural resources are available for educational and developmental purposes. By developing appropriate archive preservation systems, libraries can provide access to this rich knowledge base, supporting various sectors such as agriculture, medicine, and local governance.

Indigenous Knowledge and Its Importance

Indigenous knowledge is often localized and specific to particular communities, reflecting their history, environment, and social dynamics. In Nigeria, particularly in Benue State, indigenous knowledge plays a significant role in areas such as agriculture, traditional healing, and environmental management. As Benue State is known for its agricultural activities, traditional farming techniques, knowledge of local plants, and ecological practices are crucial for sustaining the agricultural economy (Agbo, 2020). These forms of knowledge are typically passed down through oral traditions, with elders and community leaders serving as the primary custodians.

The importance of preserving IK lies in its potential to contribute to sustainable development, particularly in rural areas. As highlighted by Sule (2018), indigenous knowledge is crucial for local communities because it supports self-reliance, promotes environmental conservation, and can offer solutions to contemporary challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, and health care access. IK contributes to the understanding of local ecosystems and enhances biodiversity conservation efforts, which are vital for the survival of rural communities in Benue State and beyond.

Challenges in Indigenous Knowledge Preservation

While public libraries play a crucial role in the preservation of IK, several challenges hinder their ability to effectively manage and safeguard indigenous knowledge. One of the primary issues is the lack of proper archival systems and policies in many Nigerian libraries. According to Onu (2018), many public libraries in Nigeria struggle with limited resources, outdated infrastructure, and insufficient staff training in archival practices, which results in the neglect of non-written forms of knowledge, such as oral histories and folklore. This is particularly the case in rural and underserved regions, including Benue State, where many libraries lack the technical expertise and financial support needed to digitize and store IK materials properly.

Additionally, the lack of standardized archival procedures complicates the preservation process. The absence of clear policies on how to acquire, catalog, and store indigenous knowledge materials contributes to the degradation of these records. As noted by Eze & Nwagu (2022), libraries often lack the necessary frameworks to manage indigenous knowledge systematically, leading to incomplete records and, in some cases, the destruction of important cultural materials.

Another major challenge is the physical condition of archival materials. In many public libraries in Nigeria, materials such as manuscripts, photographs, and oral history recordings are stored in inadequate conditions, which leads to their deterioration over time. According to Ogunyemi & Adebayo (2019), the lack of proper storage facilities and preservation techniques, such as climate control and protective materials, significantly compromises the longevity of these valuable resources.

The Role of Digital Technologies in Archival Preservation

The advent of digital technologies has presented new opportunities for the preservation and accessibility of indigenous knowledge. Digital archives offer an efficient and cost-effective means of safeguarding IK for future generations. With the application of technologies such as digitization, libraries can convert traditional texts and oral histories into digital formats, making

them more durable and accessible to a broader audience. According to Tersoo (2020), digitization of indigenous knowledge can enhance access, especially for remote communities that lack physical access to libraries.

In the context of public libraries in Benue State, the introduction of digital preservation practices would improve the accessibility of IK materials, especially for researchers, students, and community members. As noted by Idris & Bello (2021), digital technologies can help libraries to create online databases and archives, allowing users to access indigenous knowledge from anywhere, provided they have internet access. This digital shift could bridge the gap created by physical and geographic barriers, particularly in underserved regions.

However, the digital divide in Nigeria presents significant challenges to this approach. While digitization offers great potential, many rural areas, including parts of Benue State, still lack reliable internet access and digital infrastructure. As Idris & Sulaimon (2022) highlight, without sufficient internet connectivity and technological training, the digitalization of indigenous knowledge risks exacerbating the existing information gap, especially among the most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Access to Indigenous Knowledge in Public Libraries

The accessibility of indigenous knowledge in public libraries is another key issue that warrants attention. While libraries in Benue State may possess valuable collections of indigenous knowledge materials, many users are unaware of these resources, and accessing them can be difficult due to inadequate cataloguing systems. As Agbo (2020) points out, public libraries often fail to properly catalogue and index IK resources, making it hard for users to locate specific materials. This lack of organization reduces the effectiveness of libraries in serving their communities and impedes knowledge sharing.

Furthermore, the format in which indigenous knowledge is preserved also impacts its accessibility. Oral traditions, for example, are difficult to preserve in written formats, yet they are central to many indigenous knowledge systems. In many cases, oral histories are recorded on audio tapes or digital devices, but without proper indexing and cataloguing, these materials are difficult to access (Omoniyi, 2020). The development of comprehensive cataloguing systems and digital access tools is essential to improving the accessibility of IK.

Public libraries can also improve access to indigenous knowledge by engaging local communities in the preservation process. According to Jikura (2021), involving community members in the archiving process not only ensures the accuracy and authenticity of the materials but also fosters a sense of ownership and pride in preserving local heritage. Libraries can work with local elders, community leaders, and cultural practitioners to identify valuable knowledge that needs to be archived and make this knowledge available to younger generations and other members of the public.

Preservation of Oral Traditions and Local Languages

In Benue State, as in many parts of Nigeria, indigenous knowledge is deeply tied to local languages and oral traditions. The preservation of these languages and traditions is essential for maintaining the richness of indigenous knowledge. However, local languages in Nigeria are increasingly under threat due to the dominance of colonial languages like English and the growing influence of modern media.

Public libraries in Benue State have a unique opportunity to preserve not only indigenous knowledge but also the languages in which this knowledge is transmitted. By recording oral

histories, traditional stories, songs, and folklore in the local language, libraries can help preserve the linguistic and cultural context in which this knowledge exists. According to Tersoo (2020), libraries can play a pivotal role in safeguarding indigenous languages through initiatives such as oral history projects, language classes, and language preservation programs.

The preservation of local languages also has the potential to bridge the generational divide in the transmission of knowledge. Younger generations, who may not have been exposed to indigenous knowledge in its traditional form, can learn about their cultural heritage through recorded oral traditions and texts that are made available by public libraries.

Policy and Institutional Frameworks for Indigenous Knowledge Preservation

Effective preservation and access to indigenous knowledge in public libraries in Benue State depend on strong institutional frameworks and policies. National and state governments must prioritize the protection of indigenous knowledge as part of broader cultural and heritage preservation efforts. As noted by Chukwu & Nwogu (2020), government support is critical for developing the infrastructure needed for effective archival systems, such as adequate storage facilities, staff training programs, and funding for preservation projects.

In Benue State, it is essential for public libraries to collaborate with cultural institutions, academic bodies, and local communities to create policies that support the preservation of indigenous knowledge. Government funding and institutional support are key to ensuring that libraries have the resources they need to effectively acquire, preserve, and make accessible indigenous knowledge materials.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study draws on key theories that support the preservation and accessibility of indigenous knowledge (IK) in public libraries. The theories examined in this framework include the Social Constructivism Theory, Cultural Heritage Preservation Theory, and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Theory. These theories provide a basis for understanding how indigenous knowledge is shaped, preserved, and made accessible in the context of libraries and archives.

1. Social Constructivism Theory

Social constructivism, primarily attributed to Vygotsky (1978), emphasizes the importance of social interactions in the development of knowledge. This theory posits that knowledge is constructed through interactions within a social context, rather than being solely an individual or objective phenomenon. In the context of indigenous knowledge, social constructivism suggests that IK is created, preserved, and transmitted within communities through social practices such as oral storytelling, rituals, and everyday activities.

Public libraries, as institutions that facilitate social interaction and learning, play a crucial role in this process. They act as mediators of knowledge transmission, ensuring that indigenous knowledge is documented, stored, and made accessible to wider audiences. This theory helps explain why libraries are essential in bridging the gap between traditional, orally transmitted knowledge and formal, written knowledge. Libraries not only preserve knowledge but also facilitate the sharing of this knowledge within communities and across generations.

2. Cultural Heritage Preservation Theory

Cultural Heritage Preservation Theory (Smith, 2006) focuses on the importance of protecting cultural heritage, including indigenous knowledge, as a means of maintaining cultural identity,

diversity, and continuity. According to this theory, cultural heritage should be preserved for future generations, as it reflects the values, beliefs, and historical experiences of a community.

The theory highlights that the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, such as indigenous knowledge, requires specialized systems and practices that ensure its longevity. In the context of public libraries, this theory suggests that libraries are not merely physical repositories of knowledge but active spaces for safeguarding cultural heritage. This can be achieved through the establishment of archival systems that manage indigenous knowledge materials in diverse formats, including oral histories, agricultural practices, and traditional medicine.

3. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Theory

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Theory, as developed by authors like Castells (2000), posits that ICT plays a pivotal role in modern information systems, facilitating the storage, retrieval, and dissemination of knowledge. This theory is particularly relevant in the context of digital preservation and the role of technology in overcoming barriers to accessing indigenous knowledge.

In the case of public libraries, ICT can enable the digitization of indigenous knowledge resources, making them accessible to a global audience. The theory highlights how ICT tools, such as digital archives, online databases, and multimedia formats, can enhance the preservation of knowledge and break down geographic and physical access barriers. For libraries in Benue State, ICT applications can offer scalable solutions to document, preserve, and share indigenous knowledge, especially in rural areas where access to physical resources is limited.

Relevance of the Theoretical Framework

These three theories collectively provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how public libraries can contribute to the preservation and accessibility of indigenous knowledge. The Social Constructivism Theory emphasizes the social nature of knowledge creation and transmission, which is particularly relevant in communities where knowledge is traditionally passed down orally. The Cultural Heritage Preservation Theory underscores the importance of safeguarding indigenous knowledge as part of cultural heritage, which can be achieved through institutional support and preservation mechanisms. Finally, the ICT Theory offers practical solutions to the challenges of access and preservation by leveraging modern technology to digitize and distribute indigenous knowledge. Together, these theories inform the study by providing a holistic understanding of the role libraries play in preserving and providing access to indigenous knowledge in Benue State.

Empirical Review

The empirical review presents previous research findings related to archive preservation, indigenous knowledge, and the role of public libraries in managing these resources. This review highlights key studies that explore challenges, opportunities, and strategies for preserving and providing access to indigenous knowledge in public libraries, particularly in the Nigerian context.

Several studies have examined the role of public libraries in preserving indigenous knowledge in Nigeria and other African countries. According to Onu (2018), public libraries in Nigeria face significant challenges in preserving indigenous knowledge due to inadequate resources, poor infrastructure, and a lack of trained personnel. Despite these challenges, libraries in some regions have developed strategies to collect, catalog, and preserve oral histories, traditional knowledge, and other forms of indigenous knowledge.

A study by Eze & Nwagu (2022) highlighted that many public libraries in Nigeria have begun integrating indigenous knowledge into their collections, but the process remains slow due to insufficient funding and the absence of clear policies. Libraries that do undertake preservation efforts often focus on digitizing records, but as noted by Jikura (2021), there are still gaps in both physical and digital archiving practices. Libraries in urban centers tend to have more resources and technological capabilities to preserve indigenous knowledge, while rural libraries, such as those in Benue State, struggle with infrastructure and staff capacity.

A study by Idris & Sulaimon (2022) discussed the benefits and challenges of digital preservation in Nigerian public libraries. They found that while digital tools provide new opportunities for preserving and sharing indigenous knowledge, the lack of internet access and digital infrastructure in rural areas poses a significant barrier. Furthermore, the high costs associated with digitization and the need for specialized skills in digital archiving remain key challenges. The study suggests that libraries must adopt low-cost, community-based approaches to digital preservation, which can be supported by local government and community organizations.

Access to indigenous knowledge in libraries is critical for its use in educational, cultural, and developmental contexts. Agbo (2020) conducted a study on library access to indigenous knowledge in Benue State, finding that while public libraries in the region hold valuable collections, accessibility is often hindered by outdated cataloguing systems, lack of awareness among community members, and insufficient outreach efforts. The study emphasized the importance of improving cataloguing practices and creating awareness campaigns to inform the public about the availability of indigenous knowledge resources.

Similarly, a study by Chukwu & Nwogu (2020) highlighted that many public libraries in Nigeria have made efforts to improve the accessibility of indigenous knowledge, but these efforts are often impeded by inadequate technology infrastructure, poor internet connectivity, and a lack of digitized resources. They found that libraries in urban areas were more successful in making indigenous knowledge accessible to the public, while rural libraries struggled due to the digital divide. The study recommended that libraries partner with community organizations and local government bodies to enhance access to indigenous knowledge, particularly in underserved areas.

Community involvement is essential for the successful preservation and access to indigenous knowledge. According to Sule (2018), public libraries in Benue State can benefit from involving local communities in the preservation process. Community members, especially elders, are often the primary custodians of indigenous knowledge, and their participation in the documentation and preservation process ensures the authenticity and cultural relevance of the materials. This approach can help libraries to build trust and support among local communities, increasing the likelihood of successful preservation and access.

Jikura (2021) also noted that involving communities in the preservation process helps to empower individuals and groups, fostering a sense of pride in their cultural heritage. By collaborating with local communities, libraries can ensure that indigenous knowledge is accurately captured and preserved for future generations. This collaborative approach also strengthens the relationship between libraries and the communities they serve, creating a more inclusive and participatory preservation process.

Policy and institutional support are essential for the long-term sustainability of indigenous knowledge preservation efforts in public libraries. A study by Omoniyi (2020) found that while some Nigerian libraries have implemented policies to support the preservation of indigenous

knowledge, these policies are often underfunded and not effectively enforced. The study emphasized the need for government agencies to provide financial support and resources to public libraries to strengthen their archival practices.

The lack of a national policy on the preservation of indigenous knowledge in Nigeria was identified as a significant challenge by Onu (2018). The study argued that the absence of a coordinated policy framework has led to fragmented efforts in preserving indigenous knowledge, with different libraries adopting different strategies based on their available resources. The study called for a unified national strategy that includes training for library staff, funding for archival infrastructure, and the development of standardized preservation practices across the country.

Summary of Literature Review

The empirical literature highlights that public libraries play a crucial role in the preservation and accessibility of indigenous knowledge, but several challenges impede their effectiveness. These challenges include limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient digital technologies, and a lack of community involvement. Nevertheless, the studies reviewed suggest that libraries can overcome these challenges by adopting digital preservation methods, improving cataloguing systems, and involving local communities in the preservation process. Moreover, the development of policies that support indigenous knowledge preservation at both the national and local levels is essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability of these efforts. The literature underscores the importance of public libraries as vital institutions for safeguarding indigenous knowledge and making it accessible to present and future generations.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey research design (specify if cross-sectional) to explore the preservation and accessibility of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in Benue State, with specific emphasis on library staff perspectives and practices. The study population comprised public library staff, including librarians, archivists, and library assistants, who are involved in the management and preservation of indigenous knowledge. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select a representative sample of eighty-one (81) library staff, ensuring proportional representation across staff categories. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, which elicited quantitative data on preservation practices, challenges, and access to indigenous knowledge resources. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically mean scores and standard deviations (state software used, if any).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Assess current practices and strategies for preserving indigenous knowledge.

| S/N | Question Items | SA (5) | A (4) | MA (3) | D (2) | SD (1) | AGG SCORE | X |
|-----|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----|
| 1 | Public libraries in Benue State actively collect indigenous knowledge materials such as oral histories, folktales, and local cultural practices. | 19 (23.4) | 17 (20.9) | 20 (24.6) | 14 (17.2) | 11 (13.5) | 262 | 3.2 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----|-----|
| 2 | Indigenous knowledge materials are properly documented and stored using appropriate preservation methods in the library. | 23 (28.3) | 15 (18.5) | 20 (24.6) | 12 (14.8) | 11 (13.5) | 273 | 3.3 |
| 3 | Public libraries collaborate with local elders, historians, and community leaders to preserve indigenous knowledge. | 15 (18.5) | 10 (12.2) | 21 (25.9) | 16 (19.7) | 19 (23.4) | 268 | 3.3 |
| 4 | Digital technologies are used by public libraries to record and preserve indigenous knowledge resources. | 40 (49.3) | 19 (23.4) | 12 (14.8) | 4 (4.9) | 6 (7.4) | 326 | 4.0 |

Source: Survey Data, 2025. All figures in parenthesis are %

The results from Table 1 show that public libraries in Benue State engage moderately in the preservation of indigenous knowledge. While libraries are somewhat active in collecting materials like oral histories and folktales (average score 3.2), the collection efforts are not consistently strong, with some staff indicating a lack of active collection. The documentation and storage of these materials are also moderately effective (average score 3.3), but again, there is room for improvement in preservation practices. Collaboration with local elders and community leaders is less pronounced, with an average score of 3.3 and a significant portion of respondents expressing disagreement with the level of collaboration. However, the use of digital technologies to preserve indigenous knowledge appears to be the strongest area, receiving an average score of 4.0, indicating a significant portion of libraries are utilizing digital tools effectively. Overall, while some progress is made, there are notable gaps, particularly in collaboration and the consistency of preservation methods.

Table 2: Identify challenges faced by public libraries

| S/N | Question Items | SA (5) | A (4) | MA (3) | D (2) | SD (1) | AGG SCORE | X |
|-----|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-----|
| 1 | Inadequate funding limits the ability of public libraries to preserve indigenous knowledge materials. | 24 (29.6) | 25 (30.8) | 12 (14.8) | 13 (16.0) | 6 (7.4) | 288 | 3.5 |
| 2 | Lack of trained personnel affects the effective documentation and preservation of indigenous knowledge. | 15 (18.5) | 7 (8.6) | 13 (16.0) | 29 (35.8) | 17 (20.9) | 217 | 2.6 |
| 3 | Poor infrastructure, such as limited storage facilities and ICT equipment, hinders | 12 (14.8) | 29 (35.8) | 15 (18.5) | 11 (13.5) | 14 (17.2) | 257 | 3.3 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----|-----|
| | indigenous knowledge preservation. | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Language barriers make it difficult for libraries to document and provide access to indigenous knowledge. | 14 (17.3) | 17 (20.9) | 15 (18.5) | 20 (24.6) | 15 (18.5) | 276 | 3.4 |

Source: Survey Data, 2025. *All figures in parenthesis are %*

The results from Table 2 highlight several challenges faced by public libraries in Benue State in preserving indigenous knowledge. Inadequate funding is seen as a significant obstacle, with a high average score of 3.5, as 29.6% strongly agreed and 30.8% agreed that limited financial resources restrict libraries' ability to preserve indigenous knowledge. The lack of trained personnel is another considerable challenge, receiving a lower average score of 2.6, indicating that many respondents (35.8% strongly disagreed) felt that the absence of specialized staff hinders effective documentation and preservation. Poor infrastructure, including limited storage facilities and ICT equipment, is also identified as a barrier, with an average score of 3.3, suggesting that while some libraries manage to preserve materials, the inadequate physical and technological infrastructure impedes broader efforts. Lastly, language barriers, reflected in an average score of 3.4, show that challenges in translating and documenting indigenous knowledge in local languages further complicate access and preservation. These results point to significant resource, training, infrastructure, and linguistic challenges that limit the effectiveness of indigenous knowledge preservation in public libraries.

Table 3: Evaluate accessibility of indigenous knowledge resources

| S/N | Question Items | SA (5) | A (4) | MA (3) | D (2) | SD (1) | AGG SCORE | X |
|-----|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-----|
| 1 | Indigenous knowledge materials in public libraries are easily accessible to library users. | 27 (33.3) | 21 (25.9) | 5 (6.1) | 16 (19.7) | 15 (14.8) | 208 | 2.5 |
| 2 | Library users are adequately informed about the availability of indigenous knowledge resources. | 13 (16.0) | 15 (18.5) | 28 (34.5) | 19 (23.4) | 6 (7.4) | 253 | 3.0 |
| 3 | Public libraries provide user-friendly access points (e.g., catalogues, digital platforms) for indigenous knowledge materials. | 18 (22.2) | 20 (24.6) | 9 (11.1) | 17 (20.9) | 16 (19.7) | 247 | 3.0 |
| 4 | Members of the local community can access indigenous knowledge resources without unnecessary restrictions. | 22 (27.1) | 14 (17.2) | 12 (14.8) | 19 (23.4) | 14 (17.2) | 254 | 3.1 |

Source: Survey Data, 2025. *All figures in parenthesis are %*

The results from Table 3 indicate that accessibility to indigenous knowledge resources in public libraries in Benue State is somewhat limited. The item regarding the ease of access to indigenous knowledge materials received a low average score of 2.5, with 33.3% strongly agreeing that materials are accessible, but 19.7% and 14.8% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, indicating that many users face challenges in accessing these resources. The question of whether library users are adequately informed about the availability of indigenous knowledge materials received an average score of 3.0, suggesting that while some users are aware of the materials (16% strongly agreed, 18.5% agreed), a significant portion (34.5%) felt they were not adequately informed. Additionally, the provision of user-friendly access points, such as catalogues and digital platforms, scored an average of 3.0, indicating that while some access points exist, they are not universally effective or efficient in facilitating easy access. Finally, the item on whether members of the local community can access indigenous knowledge resources without unnecessary restrictions received an average score of 3.1, reflecting a moderate level of accessibility, but also indicating that some users face barriers in accessing these resources freely. Overall, these results suggest that while some progress has been made, significant improvements are needed to enhance the accessibility and awareness of indigenous knowledge resources in public libraries..

CONCLUSION

The study examined the preservation and accessibility of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in Benue State, highlighting both the efforts and challenges faced by library staff in managing these resources. The findings suggest that while public libraries have made some progress in collecting, documenting, and preserving indigenous knowledge, several challenges hinder their effectiveness, including inadequate funding, insufficient trained personnel, and limited infrastructure. Additionally, the accessibility of these resources remains a concern, as many library users are not adequately informed about the availability of indigenous knowledge, and access points like catalogues and digital platforms are not universally user-friendly. Despite these challenges, the use of digital technologies appears to be a promising area of growth in preserving and providing access to indigenous knowledge. The study indicates that while there is some progress, more needs to be done to ensure that indigenous knowledge is effectively preserved and accessible to both current and future generations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to improve the preservation and accessibility of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in Benue State:

1. Government and non-governmental organizations should allocate more resources to public libraries in Benue State to ensure that they have the necessary financial backing for effective preservation programs, including the procurement of digital tools and preservation materials.
2. Libraries should focus on improving physical and technological infrastructure, including the provision of adequate storage facilities and ICT equipment. Digital platforms should be developed to enhance access to indigenous knowledge, and more user-friendly cataloguing systems should be put in place.
3. Public libraries should strengthen collaborations with local communities, including elders and traditional knowledge holders, to ensure the accurate documentation and preservation of indigenous knowledge. This could include organizing community events

and workshops focused on knowledge-sharing and the importance of preserving cultural heritage.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This study contributes to the body of knowledge in several ways:

1. The study provides a detailed examination of the practices, challenges, and opportunities in preserving indigenous knowledge within public libraries in Benue State, Nigeria. It offers valuable insights into the current state of preservation efforts and the gaps that need to be addressed.
2. The research contributes empirical evidence to the discussion on the role of public libraries in the preservation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge. It highlights the need for public libraries to play an active role in safeguarding cultural heritage through improved infrastructure, training, and digital tools.

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