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# Collection Development And Preservation Of Indigenous Knowledge In Selected Federal University Libraries In South West, Nigeria

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# COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND PRESERVATION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN SELECTED FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH WEST, NIGERIA

## Abstract

In view of the importance of indigenous knowledge in development process, this paper investigated the efforts of selected federal university libraries in South West, Nigeria in indigenous knowledge collection development and preservation. The study adopted a descriptive survey design that involved the use structured questionnaire, unstructured interviews and observation as instruments for data collection. Seventy six (76) professional librarians constituted the target population of the study; therefore seventy six (76) copies of questionnaire were administered to the professional librarians in the selected university libraries. The data collected using the questionnaire complemented by interview and observation were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings from the study revealed the tremendous efforts of selected university libraries in IK collection development and preservation in the libraries as the study revealed the existence of IK materials. It also established that dearth of fund and linguistic problem were the challenges facing the collection development and preservation of IK in the selected university libraries. It therefore recommended that the university libraries should liaised with the international bodies for financial support for the sustainability of IK resources collection development and preservation in the libraries.

**Key words:** Collection development, Indigenous Knowledge, Preservation, Libraries, Nigeria

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## Introduction

Indigenous knowledge (IK) plays a vital role in the development process of many societies. In the emerging global knowledge economy, a country's ability to build and mobilize knowledge capital is equally essential for sustainable development as the availability of

physical and financial capital (World Bank, 1997). The basic component of any country's knowledge system is its indigenous knowledge. It encompasses the skills, experiences and insights of people, applied to maintain or improve their livelihood.

Despite its importance and value, many IK systems are at the risk of extinction because of rapidly changing natural environment and fast pacing economic, political and cultural changes on the global scale. In Africa in particular, the aural nature of the society puts a great stress on the transmission of IK. IK passed from generation to generation through the oral process is fraught with a lot of problems and has resulted in the loss of vital components of the IK systems. IK is not yet fully utilised in various aspects of life in South Western part of Nigeria. This has led to overlooking potentials in local experiences and practices from global perspectives.

IK is the local knowledge that is peculiar or unique to a particular community, region or even culture. Kaniki and Mphahlele (2000) opined that IK is unique to a given culture or society; it is dynamic, innovative and of practical application. It is not easily modifiable for fear of loss of some essential properties. Mabawonku (2005) defined IK as knowledge or survival methods that are unique to a given society, culture or community. It refers to those ways of life that are often intertwined with the family, religion, nature and land with wisdom gained through generations of observation and teaching.

According to Anyira (2010), IK can be broadly defined as the knowledge that an indigenous (local) community accumulates over generations of living in a particular environment. IK is the sum total of knowledge and skills possessed by people belonging to a particular geographic area, which enables them to benefit from their natural environment. Knowledge and skills are shared over generations and each new generation adds and adopts in response to changing circumstances and environmental conditions. This suggests that IK is fluid and does not necessarily operate within the confines of formal organisations although; it exists within specific environmental boundaries. Nakata and Langton (2005) stated that IK refers to the knowledge, innovation, and practices of indigenous and local communities around the world, developed from experience over centuries, and adapted to the local culture and environment, transmitted orally from generation to generation. IK is collectively owned and existed as stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, cultural values, norms, beliefs, rituals, local languages, and agricultural practices, including the development of plant species and animal breeds.

IK is the totality of a people's way of life transmitted from generation to generation. The term IK is often referred to by various appellations such as oral traditions, traditional knowledge, folklore knowledge, cultural knowledge, farmer's knowledge or people's knowledge, local knowledge and traditional science. It is contrasted to and differentiated from western, scientific or modern knowledge, which may be developed by research institutes and universities. Camble and Aliyu (2008) stated that IK has played a vital role in agriculture, animal and human health, natural resources management, education and other activities.

In view of its importance, IK constitutes an important component of library collections. It is expected that as in other areas, the building of a library's collections should be extended to IK resources which should also be well preserved to meet the potentials of these invaluable materials for development process. There seems to be no clear cut picture as to the efforts of federal university libraries in South West Nigeria in IK collection development and preservation. It is against this background that this study investigated IK collection development and preservation in selected federal university libraries in South West, Nigeria.

## **Statement of the Problem**

African countries were generally rich in cultural and traditional practices. Despite this; Nigeria was globally seen as anti-cultural species. Some aspects of indigenous knowledge that made Nigeria, especially the South West, survive in the olden days were no more transmitted to the new generations. The nonchalant attitude of Nigerian elders and leaders had affected the life style of new generations in the acknowledgment of indigenous knowledge practices. Besides the collection and preservation of indigenous knowledge, particularly by libraries seem not to have been given the attention they deserve, a laxity that can have grave implication for the survival of indigenous knowledge system in Nigeria and Africa. What are the efforts being made by university libraries particularly the federal universities in South West, Nigeria in indigenous knowledge collection development and preservation? This is the focus of this study.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. determine the existence of indigenous knowledge collection development and preservation policy in federal university libraries in South West, Nigeria;
2. find out the existence of IK collections in the libraries;
3. establish the nature of IK collections in the libraries;
4. find out the preservation measures in place for IK collections in the libraries; and
5. determine the challenges facing the collection and preservation of IK in the libraries.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions posed in this paper are:

1. Is there an indigenous knowledge collection development and preservation policy in federal university libraries in South West, Nigeria?
2. Are there IK collections in the libraries?
3. What is the nature of IK collections in the libraries?
4. What are the preservation measures in place for IK collections in the libraries?
5. What are the challenges facing the collection and preservation of IK in the libraries?

## **Significance of the study**

The study will promote the collection and preservation of indigenous knowledge in libraries in Nigeria. It will also gear up the librarians or information professionals to their responsibilities of collecting and preserving indigenous knowledge in the libraries for the use of both present and future generations. The study will draw attention to and create awareness on the importance of IK collection and preservation in development process.

## **Literature Review**

Library collection development is the means of meeting the information needs of the people (a service population) in a timely and economical manner using information resources locally held, as well as from other organizations. According to the International Federation of

Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (2008), a collection development focuses on methodological and topical themes pertaining to acquisition of print and other analogue library materials (by purchase, exchange, gift, legal deposit), and the licensing and purchase of electronic information resources.

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) can be reflected in the form of beliefs of a community based on its religion and/or culture. IK is mostly concerned with community elderly people who live according to their culture and their own traditional practices. In Nigeria, the Yoruba (a prominent tribe in the South West) believed that when a woman's husband dies, the marriage has not discontinued. The younger brother of the dead will culturally take over the woman as a wife. Moreover, if there is sudden death of young ones in a given community, they believe that their ancestors or gods are angry and should be persified. They will quickly perform certain rituals in the event of death because they believed that death is a bad omen and brings bad luck to the entire community. When an elder dies, a library is burnt. Perhaps all of this Indigenous knowledge was not properly documented in the library; a lot of useful and indepth information like this might be lost to future.

### **Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge**

Stevens (2008) states that while libraries have not traditionally focused on these areas; it can be inclusive in its services by providing information resources in the field and experts in collection, organisation, preservation, and retrieval of IK. There is a growing appreciation of the value of IK. It has become valuable not only to those who depend on it in their daily lives, but to modern industry and agriculture as well (Odeku, 2014). It is available in virtually all aspects of human activity including agriculture (Mugwisi, Ochala and Mostert 2012). Okuneye and Ayinde (2004) added that small scale resource farmers have good reasons for sticking with their local knowledge and farming practices, because modern technologies can only be successful and sustainable if IK is taken into consideration.

Before the modern civilization in South West, indigenous people made use of local instruments for farming such as hoes and cutlasses in clearing the bush for bush fallowing and rotational farming practices. They cultivated series of crops such as maize, wheat, sorghum, beans, peas, orange and mango fruits. They detected various methods of preventing their crops from enemies of destruction through the use of iron trap, wire etc for catching bush animals;. One of the best modern approaches to preservation of traditional knowledge is the documentation of collected information in some permanent forms such as computer, CD, DVD, recording, ,video, leaflets (Abioye, Zaid and Egberongbe, 2014). All these need to be documented from the oral accounts of the elders so that the accessibility of the materials by the new generations will be made possible in the libraries.

### **Importance of Indigenous knowledge**

According to Odeku (2014) plants (roots and leaves) are amenable to physical and chemical modifications to modify their functional properties giving them wider applications. Some of these plants are underutilised and many are not be cultivated since they grow in abundance with little or no artificial inputs. Thus, the development of plants (roots and leaves) as excipients will definitely encourage farmers to cultivate such crops for economic purposes. Excipient is a substance mixed with a medicine to give it consistence, or used as a vehicle for its administration (Chambers twentieth century Dictionary, 1981). It will also lead to economic and technological advancement of the local farmers who can now earn a second

income from the sale of these products. Furthermore, it will provide cheaper and more readily available materials for the local industries in Nigeria.

IK had a room for aesthetic values. Decorative and utility products are made from wood, clay, beads, fabrics, soil and other local materials. The technologies and techniques used in each community are often unique and highly sophisticated. For example, the craftsman could easily utilize a log of wood to make a person's image (artifact). The image would be designed towards a target person, so resembled and identical. Likewise, the mortar and its pestle were made of wood which were used for making pounded yam in traditional methods. An artist could also use special types of clay soil for making specific types of pots for cooking soups, particularly in some areas in African countries such as Nigeria, Senegal, Egypt and also Republic of Guinea. Weaving activities were also classified as arts and crafts practices at a large scale, that is production of local clothes (*Aso-oke*) such as (*Sanyan, gbariye, dansiki, dandogo*) were nationally and internationally embraced for popular occasions. Likewise Guinea also had her own peculiar traditional clothe known as *Kampala wears*.

### **Library's roles in collection and preservation of indigenous knowledge**

Okore (2009) observes that libraries have made progress in the preservation of local culture in paper and digital format, and have promoted the exchange of information. Many libraries recognize IK as an important source of developmental information. Nakata and Langton (2005) opined that the library and information profession has a lot to learn if they are to meet the information needs of indigenous people and appropriately manage IK. According to Ngulube and Stilwell (2010) research libraries have not been particularly active in documenting indigenous knowledge. This may require libraries to move outside their comfort zone. The development of services is also demanding, requiring new disciplines, technologies, and collaborations. Indigenous people continue to be generous in sharing their knowledge with libraries, and so libraries must maintain the momentum (Nakata and Langton, 2005).

Collections are developed by librarians and library staff by purchasing or otherwise acquiring materials over a period based on assessment of the information needs of the library users. Library collection development includes:

- the creation of policies to guide material selection
- replacement of worn or lost materials
- removal (weeding) of materials no longer needed in the collection
- planning for new collections or collection areas
- cooperative decision-making with other libraries or within library consortia

According to IFLA (2008), libraries can help in:

- Collecting, preserving, and disseminating IK
- Publicizing the value, contribution, and importance of IK to both non-indigenous and indigenous people
- Involving elders and communities in the production of IK

- Encouraging the recognition of intellectual property laws to ensure the proper protection and use of IK

### **Indigenous Knowledge Technology**

IK could be traced to the local production of technological tools. The blacksmiths produced knives, cutlasses, hoes, traps including the production of baskets from the palm leaves. Okuneye and Ayinde (2004) opined that human beings can do a great deal with resources in their environment, particularly in traditional societies. For instance, traditional painting was much alive before the arrival of European paints. African women perfectly use cow dung (called *boto*) to decorate or paint the walls and floors of their houses to add more values. This act was associated with South Western Yoruba women of Nigeria.

On the other hand, the production of charcoal involves sophisticated technology. Charcoal producers have used fresh logs of specific trees, instead of dry wood. They collect the fresh logs and cover them with earth, leaving small spaces to allow oxygen into the “furnace” to burn the wood slowly. The process takes days to complete, but it allows combustion to occur slowly and produce charcoal, rather than reduce the logs to ashes. This is a transfer of IK technology.

### **Indigenous Education Process**

Indigenous educational process is regarded as the mother tongue education. It is otherwise known as an informal education. Africans developed their own methods or ways of educating their children. Young community members learnt about tradition itself. Parents educated their children on manner of respect and body values. The girls did greet their parents by kneeling down with the two knees on the ground while the boys will prostrate on the ground, flat their chest on the floor. Through constant mode of dressing, girls and boys gradually inherited the way of dressings, how they can add to their cultural way of life style. The use of language was being thought by due process, how to talk in a society, respect that is due to the elderly ones. The elders through observing the behavioural and seasonal migration of prey and the tell-tale, they can easily forecast the weather (time).

### **Indigenous human resources and economy**

In many African communities, especially in Nigeria traced to Yoruba land, kingship determines who should play a decisive role in community development and leadership. Traditionally, communities worked together as a team, guided by the chief or village headman (Kaniki and Mphahlele, 2000). The head of the community marshaled or could marshal resources within the community to assist those who were not able to look after themselves. This may partially explain the rarity or complete lack of destitute and homeless people in some traditional societies.

IK brought manual labours called “*aaro*”. This *aaro* is applicable in harvesting period among farmers. All farmers would come out in favour of one and only one farmer in a community. After harvesting all his crops, they will jointly go to another person’s farm to render the same service. This is how all of them will join hand in hand to overcome the burden of harvesting their crops. Economically, they did assist themselves in having or building houses or huts.

They would come together in a community and gather together their local tools for building mud house or if it is a hut that required cutting of bushes.

However, the library, as a repository of human knowledge, should strive in collecting, transcribing, documenting, preserving and digitizing all these indigenous practices for the benefit of posterity. The information professionals should give a second thought to the significance of IK in Africa; this will definitely revive our interest in IK practices that are beneficial and relevant to development process.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive survey design that involved structured questionnaire, unstructured interviews and observation. The population of the study was made up of seventy six (76) librarians in selected federal university libraries in South West, Nigeria. As a result of the small size of the target population, a total enumeration technique was adopted to arrive at a sample size of 76 respondents. Therefore, seventy six (76) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the professional librarians in the three selected federal university libraries in South West, Nigeria: Kenneth Dike Library (KDL), University of Ibadan with thirty two (32) respondents, 'Nimbe Adedipe Library, Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta (FUNAAB) with twenty four (24) respondents and University of Lagos, (UNILAG) Library with twenty (20) respondents. Out of the seventy six (76) copies of the questionnaire administered in the selected university libraries, seventy two (72) copies were completed, returned and found good for analysis, this having 94.7 percent return rate. Visitations were also made to the selected federal university libraries for IK observation and interview with the librarians in- charge of IK collections in the libraries. The responses obtained from the interview and the observations made were recorded and carefully collated for the use of this research. Data collected with the questionnaire were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) of frequency counts and simple percentages.

## **Findings and Discussion**

Findings from the field survey were presented in Table 1 while discussion and interpretation of data relating to salient research questions are as follows:

### **Existence of IK collection development and preservation policy**

The findings of the study revealed that the selected federal university libraries in South West, Nigeria had a policy for IK collection development and preservation as 68 (94.4%) respondents confirmed the existence of a policy while 4 (5.6%) respondents claimed that there was no such policy. The interviews conducted with some librarians in the selected university libraries also confirmed that local materials were being given much priority in their collection development policy as the price of foreign materials were exorbitant.



**Table 1: Indigenous knowledge collection development and preservation in selected federal university libraries in South West, Nigeria**

S/N	Statements	Yes	No
<b>Existence of IK collection development and preservation policy</b>			
1	Is there an IK collection development and preservation policy?	68(94.4%)	4(5.6%)
<b>Existence of IK collections in the Libraries</b>			
2	Are there IK collections in the libraries?	72(100.0%)	-
<b>Nature of IK collections in the libraries</b>			
3	Written form (Documents) such as textbooks, journal articles, projects, Dissertations, field observation, joint interpretation, case studies	66(91.7%)	6(8.3%)
4	Oral form (Recording tape) such as oral history, folk lore, folk tale, songs, interview schedule, traditional events such as dance, drama, coronation, traditional marriage, naming ceremony, house warming	49(68.1%)	23(31.9%)
5	Slide, transparency, audio cassettes, films, videos, compact disc	18(25.0%)	54(75.0%)
6	Flow charts, maps, pictures, calendars, matrices, plate, clay	62(86.1%)	10(13.9%)
<b>Preservation measures in place for IK collections in the libraries</b>			
7	Fumigation	47(65.3%)	25(34.7%)
8	Good house keeping practices	60(83.3%)	12(16.7%)
9	Dusting and regular floor mopping	72(100.0%)	-
10	Adequate security measures	36(50.0%)	36(50.0%)
11	Photocopying the original copies of IK documentation		72(100.0%)
<b>Challenges facing the collection and preservation of IK in the libraries</b>			
12	Lack of funds for IK collections and preservation	64(88.9%)	8(11.1%)
13	Little or no efforts of University Libraries in IK collections	40(55.6%)	32(44.4%)
14	Linguistic problem/Language barrier in IK collections	50(69.4%)	22(30.6%)
15	Poor infrastructure and dearth of human resources	6(8.3%)	66(91.7%)

It was found out that libraries particularly federal university libraries had a significant policy on objectives, funding, collection and preservation of indigenous knowledge.

### **Existence of IK collections in the Libraries**

All the respondents (72 or 100.0%) claimed that indigenous knowledge collections were in existence in their libraries. With this finding, there was no doubt that there were in existence indigenous knowledge collections in the selected federal university libraries in South West, Nigeria. The interview conducted as well as the observations made also confirmed the existence of IK resources in the libraries. It was noted that some of the IK materials cut across disciplines such as agriculture, education, pharmacy, medicine, communication and language arts. Findings also revealed that IK materials were kept in sections with different appellations in different libraries such as Nigeriana and Africana collections.

### **Nature of IK collections in the libraries**

The study revealed that most of IK collections in the sampled university libraries were in written format. This was the position of 66 (91.7%) respondents. The availability of the oral nature of IK materials in the libraries might have led to the increase in written format of indigenous knowledge whereby all information gathered from different sources particularly oral information will be recorded on tape, transcribed and documented as written format. Meanwhile 49 representing 68.1% respondents were in conformity with the oral nature of IK collections in the Libraries. Likewise 62(86.1%) respondents agreed that flow charts, maps, pictures, calendars, matrices, plate and clay were the nature of IK collections in the Libraries.

Despite the technological advancement in the global system; it was established that IK was not put in electronic format, Existence of IK in slide, transparency, audio cassettes, films, videos, compact disc was rated low by 54(75.0%) respondents while only 18 representing (25.0%) respondents agreed that IK collections existed in those media in the libraries.

### **Preservation measures in place for IK collections in the libraries**

Dusting and regular floor mopping together with services of photocopying the original copies of IK collections were the common preservation measures put in place for IK as all the respondents 72 (100.0%) agreed on these. According to Ossai (2010) “regarded indigenous knowledge as essentially tacit knowledge that is not easily codifiable”. Therefore, if the libraries that were regarded as the custodian of information resources can strive and put more efforts particularly on preservation of IK collections, Nigeria as well as Africa at large will not be at loss of its heritage. Moreover, libraries are in the best position for users in accessing needed information either back log or current issues, it is necessary for the libraries to preserve and manage all IK collections. In collaboration with the field data analysis, it was observed that IK collections were given special attention because the sections were under lock and key with assigned staff who will attend to the intended users. In other worlds, the IK sections were so tidy, conducive and accessible for all intended users.

### **Challenges facing the collection and preservation of IK in the libraries**

The most serious challenge facing the collection and preservation of IK in the selected university libraries in South West, Nigeria was dearth of funds as 64(88.9%) respondents agreed. Fifty respondents representing (69.4%) also agreed that linguistic problem/language barrier in IK collections was also a noticeable challenge. It might, of course, be possible as the most methods used in IK collections were based on oral process that will later be transcribing in paper formats. In view of this, language barrier might be a huge challenge or else an interpreter comes in-between the interviewer and the resource person. In regard to the research finding that there was an existence of IK collections in the selected university libraries, 40(55.6%) respondents were also agreed that little or no efforts of the university libraries in IK collections had contributed to the problem facing the collection and preservation of IK in the libraries.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, it is obvious that IK is extremely valuable and increasingly becoming relevant materials in South West, Nigeria and in Africa at large. Libraries particularly federal university libraries in South West, Nigeria had not been taken indigenous knowledge materials with levity as findings revealed that there were an existence of IK collection development and preservation measures in the federal university libraries in Nigeria. IK is applicable to all forms of life activities as in agricultural indigenous knowledge, Indigenous knowledge technology and indigenous human resources and economy. Therefore, if the libraries particularly federal university libraries sideline a step to develop a guideline policy on IK collection development and preservation, some cogent aspects of IK materials might not be catered for. As part of the objectives of the study, to determine the existence of IK collection development and preservation policy in the selected federal university libraries in South West, Nigeria, it was found that the federal university libraries in South West, Nigeria had constituted guidelines policy on IK collection development and preservation in their Libraries.

It is, therefore, necessary for all and sundry to support the sustainable growth of indigenous knowledge collection development and preservation in Nigeria and in Africa as a whole. University libraries across the nation should not only embrace IK collection development and preservation practices within the nation, but a drastic step should be taken in collaboration with international organizations such as The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), World Bank, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) who had advanced in collection, preservation and dissemination of IK materials for financial assistance. As the level of Information Technology is rapidly advancing on daily basis, IK information materials should also be taken into consideration by the librarians/ information professionals, as an effort put in place by the university libraries in modernizing the nature of IK collections in the libraries. It would also be an advantage, because of some potential in IK materials, if the libraries should also strive to put machineries in place to solve the linguistic/ language barrier by employing bi-lingual librarians who can easily interpret with the local people within and outside communities.

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