



## THE ROLE OF LIBRARY IN PROMOTING CULTURAL HERITAGE: PERSPECTIVE OF HISTORY UNDERGRADUATES.

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### Abstract

*This study focused on the need for library involvement in promoting cultural heritage, awareness of the community and major stakeholders on the role of libraries as custodians of these materials, the rate at which libraries feel responsible as agents of promoting historical materials, and the challenges encountered by researchers when trying to access cultural heritage materials in the library. The study population comprised one hundred and five (105) history undergraduates from the University of Ilorin, Obafemi Awolowo University, and Osun State College of Education. A questionnaire titled Library as an Important Agent in Promoting Cultural Heritage: Perspective of History Undergraduate (LIAPCHPUQ) was used. Descriptive survey research design was adopted, and simple random sampling was used in selecting participants. Ensuring validity, the instrument was reviewed by research experts from the University of Ilorin. Reliability was established through a test-retest method with selected respondents. Data collected were analysed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Findings revealed limited awareness, inadequate access, weak dissemination efforts, and suggested increased sensitization and stakeholder engagement.*

**Key word:** Cultural Heritage, History, Library, promotion, preservation.

## Introduction

Matar and Raudeliūnienė (2021) emphasized that in a growing world, knowledge acquisition cannot be underestimated, thereby calling for the need for us to dig deep into the knowledge reservoir, this in turn shifts us to need to understand the historical and cultural framework of every society or entity as a whole. This need for cultural enlightenment makes a library an unavoidable point of call as they are responsible for the acquisition, management and dissemination of information.

Culture is the groups of art, beliefs, knowledge, customs, and habits people ascribe to in life, it is often something we do not think about, as it is just a habit formed of the society that we live in (Inusa and Oba 2024). These by implication sum up the general way of life of a group of people, there by dictating their various behavioural attributes which serves as a distinguishing factor to other set of people. Whitaker (2016) explained that the key aspect of culture is that it is not passed on biologically from the parents to the offspring, but rather learned through experience and participation. Crowell (2021) believe that Cultural identity is those attributes, behavioural patterns, lifestyles, social structures and norms that distinguish a group of people from others.

Cultural heritage is defined as an essential part of being human. No one is completely without it; in fact, an individual can be part of many cultures (Crowell 2021). Wikipedia update of 2019 explained that the Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 21st of November 2001 proclaiming 2002 “United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage”. The cultural heritage of a people is the memory of its living culture. It is expressed in many different forms, both tangible (monuments, landscapes, objects) and intangible (languages, knowhow, the performing arts, music, etc.). As the concept of ‘cultural property’ is fairly static and mainly refers to tangible objects, the concept of ‘cultural heritage’ is a more dynamic and flexible notion that includes physical or material (tangible) elements, as well as immaterial

(intangible) elements (Jacob 2024).

Vassilakaki (2019) explained that libraries specifically aim at providing efficient retrieval service to all and sundry, thereby exploring different type of resources in delivering information service. This in turn requires not only the recent knowledge materials but resources of greater historical reference noting that the preservation and dissemination of such materials is a key and important part of promoting the longevity and existence of such materials.

According to Chigwada and Ngulube, (2023), libraries intentionally acquire materials based on their cultural value and societal relevance, ensuring that indigenous knowledge, artifacts, and historical records are available for future generations. This process is particularly vital in academic institutions, where students and researchers depend on curated collections to study cultural evolution. Okechukwu et al. (2024) emphasized that western influences have diminished local cultural visibility, further highlighting the need for libraries to intentionally acquire materials that promote indigenous heritage.

The management of cultural heritage materials includes cataloguing, classification, preservation, and conservation. Effective management practices ensure that cultural resources are not only safeguarded but can also be retrieved easily. Rafiq (2024) noted that libraries manage diverse information resources, both print and digital, to support user need. Ibeh and Usiedi (2024) emphasized the importance of policies and training in ensuring long-term preservation, especially fragile or rare cultural items.

Libraries serve as the agents of cultural education by sharing historical narratives with the public. Raghunathan (2022) identified various dissemination strategies used by libraries, including cultural displays, storytelling programs, and seminars aimed at increasing cultural awareness. Onunka and Onunka (2024) added that digitization has enhanced the reach of libraries, allowing broader access to cultural

heritage even in remote or underserved areas.

Acquisition, management, and dissemination of these materials defines the library's capacity to serve as a custodian of cultural heritage. Libraries that actively acquire and properly manage cultural materials are better positioned to disseminate them effectively. According to IFLA (2020), strategic planning across these functions enables libraries to fulfill their cultural mission, ensuring that both tangible and intangible heritage are preserved and promoted.

### **Aim and objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study is to investigate the role of library in promoting cultural heritage: perspective of history undergraduate. While the specific objectives of this study are to

- I. To ascertain the need for library involvement in the promotion of cultural heritage
- II. To ascertain the level of awareness of the community and major stakeholder in this field on the role of library as custodians of this materials.
- III. To ascertain if the libraries are really doing enough in the promotion of material of cultural heritage.
- IV. To ascertain the challenges encountered by researchers when trying to access cultural heritage materials in the library?

### **Research questions**

- I. What are the needs for library involvement in promotion of cultural heritage?
- II. What is the level of the awareness of the community and major stakeholders on the role of library as custodian of these materials?
- III. Are the libraries really doing enough in the promotion of cultural heritage materials?

- IV. What are the challenges encountered by researchers when trying to access these materials in the library?

## **Literature Review**

### **Concept of Cultural Heritage**

The concept surrounding cultural heritage involves a high level of preservation and maintenance, which by implication requires the involvement of information centres. The library carefully selects material based on the value to the society they serve (Ogbu et al., 2021) as the nature of our society has called for the promotion of our various cultural materials. Wahab et al. (2019) studied the effect of western colonisation and how it brought indigenous knowledge to a very low level, making our culture look inferior, thus calling for the involvement of the library as an information and knowledge-sharing institution.

Vrodljak (2019) sees cultural heritage as being associated with cultural identity and a sense of belonging to a community. Cultural heritage forms an important part of past beliefs, thereby giving a concrete overview of the past (Fraser, 2019). Giovanni (2021) stated that there are many aspects that define someone's cultural heritage, including customs, traditions, languages, values, places, and objects. He further defined tangible cultural heritage as physical artefacts produced, maintained, and transmitted inter-generationally in a society.

### **Promotion of Cultural Heritage by the Library**

Sweeney (2020) highlighted that libraries play a significant role in preserving knowledge and cultural heritage in society. They help ensure that the voices of all communities are represented. Therefore, what is needed is the development of a single access point for retrieval of information (Yarima 2024). Protecting cultural heritage is economical, as well as historical and also a cultural process (Hargrove, 2023). Many writers across the world believe that libraries have been influential in keeping cultural heritage till date. The role of libraries includes the provision of cultural materials for all sections of the host community,

sustaining local cultural activities, and ensuring that collections help people understand their environment. There are many aspects of sharing and reusing information and knowledge. Perhaps deeply rooted in our human instincts is the desire to preserve our culture for future generations. This is one of the most important features of the library.

### **The Need for Library Involvement in Promotion of Cultural Heritage**

Just like archival centres, public libraries keep societal participation in them because they come to access their cultural sources. On the other hand, if public libraries are store houses for cultural materials they will at the same time be attracting their communities to the library; this will mean that cultural sources in the library will call for usage by all including the elderly. Many museums have integrated libraries or research centres; and many libraries, particularly academic libraries, house archival collections and learning materials worthy of exhibition.

The part libraries play in promoting our cultural heritage cannot be underestimated. Libraries conjoined have had more realistic impact in keeping cultural heritage than any other academic body. Giovanni (2021) noted that cultural sources in libraries attract all, including the elderly. Sweeney (2021) mentioned that many museums have integrated libraries or research centres. Nwofor and Ilorah (2023) identified roles such as hosting storytelling, lectures, and seminars to disseminate cultural information. Tolstoukhova and Kryucheva (2021) emphasized ensuring that collections help people understand their environment.

### **Awareness of Library Users on the Availability of Cultural Materials**

There is moderate use of library resources with over half consulting books and journals and close to half borrowing college library books (Kishore, 2019). Advocacy highlights how libraries connect communities

to all forms of cultural creation (IFLA, 2021). Igokwe et al. (2019) explained that the quantity and quality of information materials are fundamental to the survival of a library or information centre. Somimpam (2019) noted that awareness can be raised through heritage festivals, walks, and promotion in education. Key values upheld by libraries include access to information, education, and cultural heritage preservation (Clamugire, 2021) as A library is a collection of materials, books or media that are easily accessible for use and not just for display purposes, so awareness towards the usage of these materials should be increased through programs that can attract patrons to the library

### **Challenges on the Retrieval of Material of Cultural Importance**

The challenges of cultural heritage retrieval are numerous and requires a holistic approach to tackle it. Some which can be traced to the lack of digitization, as noted by Alehegn et al. (2019) lack of digitization plans, professionals, metadata knowledge, and equipment hinders the retrieval of information material and then cultural materials. Connie et al. (2015) emphasized that libraries should provide access to video shows of cultural activities and allow borrowing for educational use. Apart from the recent digitalization barrier the challenges of faced by researchers in the retrieval of cultural materials in the library can be traced to the other reasons such as Funding, intellectual property right, academic library curriculum and content difference. Funding of library basically militate the effectiveness of the promotion programs, majority of the library cannot boast of being able to preserve materials, this by implication makes it practically impossible to be retrieved by researchers (Chibuzor et al. 2020). Man power in library remains so important, from skilled professional to adequate number of staffs, it is said that majority of the researchers find it hard to get materials because the staffs do not have adequate knowledge over the subject matter (Ioiza 2020). Majority of researchers are from the academia, this by implication means a lot should be covered, but the negligence of a

lot of academic libraries to the field of librarianship reduces the effectiveness of this process (kelani, 2021. Furthermore, Protection of Intellectual property right has been a problem in most African countries especially Nigeria. In Nigeria, it is a common occurrence to see fake copies of peoples work on sale in the markets and this hinders the proper dissemination of authentic contents.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive survey design, which enabled critical observation of the concept of cultural heritage and how the library plays important role in the promotion of cultural heritage. The target population comprised 105 history undergraduates from three Nigerian institutions: Osun State College of Education, University of Ilorin, and Obafemi Awolowo University.

A simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample. Data were collected using a researcher- designed questionnaire titled *Library as an Important Agent in Promoting Cultural Heritage*. It contained six sections covering demographics, library roles, community awareness, library responsibility, efforts in heritage promotion, and hindrances to accessing materials. Validity of the instrument was ensured through expert review, while reliability was tested via the test-retest method. Data collection involved administering questionnaires across the three institutions, and analysis was conducted using SPSS with descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Ethical considerations included informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and exclusive academic use of the collected data.

## **Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings.**

### **Presenting the findings**

**Research Question One:** Needs for Library Involvement in Cultural Heritage Promotion.

4	S/ N	STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	M	SD
1		Do libraries need to be involved in the promotion of cultural heritage?	79 (75.2)	25 (23.8)	0 (0)	1 (1)	127	0.51
2		Do libraries play an essential role in the promotion of cultural heritage?	57 (54.3)	39 (37.1)	6 (5.7)	3 (2.9)	157	0.73
3		Should the duty of preservation of cultural material be an essential duty of library?	52 (49.5)	38 (36.2)	11 (10.5)	4 (3.8)	169	0.81
4		Should libraries be considered as a cultural heritage centre or institution?	43 (41.0)	31 (29.5)	24 (22.9)	7 (6.7)	195	0.95

**Weighted Mean = 162**

results revealed that, the needs for library involvement in promotion of cultural heritage by the respondents were: Do libraries need to be

involved in the promotion of cultural heritage? ( $\bar{x}$  = 127, SD = 0.51); Do libraries play an essential role in the promotion of cultural heritage?

( $\bar{x}$  = 157, SD=0.73); should the duty of preservation of cultural material

be an essential duty of library? ( $\bar{x}$  = 169, SD = 0.81) and should libraries

be considered as a cultural heritage centre or institution? ( $\bar{x}$  = 195, SD = 0.95).

**Research Question Two: Community and Stakeholder Awareness of Libraries' Role as Custodians.**

S/ N	STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	M	S- D
5	Does the society see the library as a major stakeholder in the promotion of cultural heritage?	16 (15.2 )	30 (28.6 )	41 (39.0 )	18 (17.1 )	2.58	1.94
6	Is the library communicating efficiently with the society on the growth of cultural heritage?	9 (8.6 )	42 (40.0 )	41 (39.0 )	13 (12.4 )	2.55	0.82
7	Should the library increase their level of sensitizing the people on the cultural heritage concept?	61 (58.1 )	40 (38.1 )	4 (3.8 )	0 (0 )	1.46	0.57
8	Is the library successfully communicating the importance of cultural heritage material to the people?	11 (10.5 )	43 (41.0 )	31 (29.5 )	20 (19.0 )	2.57	0.91

**Weighted Mean = 2.29**

The result revealed that, the level of the awareness of the community and major stakeholders on the role of library as custodian of these materials by the respondents were: Does the society see the library as a major stakeholder in the promotion of cultural heritage ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.58, SD = 1.94); Is the library communicating efficiently with the society on the growth of cultural heritage ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.55, SD= -0.82); Should the library increase their level of sensitizing the people on the cultural heritage concept ( $\bar{x}$  = 1.46, SD = 0.57) and Is the library successfully

communicating the importance of cultural heritage material to the people ( $\bar{x} = 2.57, SD = 0.91$ ).

**Research Question Four: Library Efforts in Cultural Heritage Promotion.**

S/N	STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	M	S-D
9	Acquisition	39 (37.1)	49 (46.7)	8 (7.6)	9 (8.6)	188	0.88
10	Preservation	51 (48.6)	45 (42.9)	6 (5.7)	3 (2.9)	163	0.72
11	Conservation and safeguarding of these material in order to extend their usefulness span	49 (46.7)	43 (41.0)	9 (8.6)	4 (3.8)	170	0.78
12	Branding	15 (14.3)	45 (42.9)	34 (32.4)	11 (10.5)	239	0.86
13	Presentation	20 (19.0)	45 (42.9)	32 (30.5)	8 (7.7)	228	0.88
14	Dissemination	20 (19.0)	38 (36.2)	20 (19.0)	27 (25.7)	251	1.07

**Weighted Mean = 2.01**

The result revealed if the libraries are really doing enough in the promotion of cultural heritage materials by the respondents were:

Acquisition (  $\bar{x}$  = 1.88, SD = 0.88); Preservation (  $\bar{x}$  = 1.63, SD=0.72); Conservation and safeguarding of these material in order to extend their usefulness span (  $\bar{x}$  = 1.70 SD = 0.78); Branding (  $\bar{x}$  = 2.39, SD = 0.86); Presentation (  $\bar{x}$  = 2.28 SD = 0.88) and Dissemination (  $\bar{x}$  = 2.51, SD = 1.07).

**Research Question Five: Challenges in Accessing Materials in Libraries**

S/ N	STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	M	S- D
15	Are these materials accessible in the library?	50 (47.6)	45 (42.9)	9 (8.6)	1 (10)	16 3	0.6 8
16	Are the materials useful to the research purpose of the users?	53 (50.5)	40 (38.1)	11 (10.5)	1 (10)	16 2	0.71
17	Are the materials easily accessible to researches?	31 (29.5)	54 (51.4)	16 (15.2)	4 (3.8)	19 3	0.7 7
18	Does the library give free access to these materials?	25 (23.8)	36 (34.3)	34 (32.4)	10 (9.5)	2.2 8	0.9 3
19	Are the library staffs efficient in carrying out reference service when it involves cultural materials?	21 (20.0)	28 (26.7)	26 (24.8)	30 (28.6)	2.6 2	1.10

**Weighted Mean = 2.02**

The result revealed that, the challenges encountered by researchers when trying to access these materials in the library by the respondents

were: Are these materials accessible in the library? ( $\bar{x}$  = 1.63, SD = 0.68); Are the materials useful to the research purpose of the users?.

( $\bar{x}$  = 1.62, SD= 0.71); Are the materials easily accessible to researches?

( $\bar{x}$  = 1.93, SD = 0.77); Does the library give free access to these

materials? ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.28, SD = 0.93) and Are the library staffs efficient in

carrying out reference service when it involves cultural materials? ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.62, SD = 1.10).

## **Discussion**

The need for library involvement in promotion of cultural heritage involve the promotion of cultural heritage, playing of essential role in the promotion of cultural heritage, preservation of cultural materials as an essential duty that the library must accomplish, making up for the question if the library should be considered a cultural heritage institution.

The level of the awareness of the community and major stakeholders on the role of library as custodian of these materials, investigated and justified if the society see the library as major stakeholder in the promotion of cultural heritage, if the library should increase their level off sensitizing the people on cultural heritage concept and if the library is successfully communicating the Importance of cultural heritage to the people.

The question if the libraries really doing enough in the promotion of cultural heritage materials can be answered by knowing if the library are doing enough in the aspect of, acquisition, preservation, conservation and safeguarding of these materials in order to extend their usefulness life span.

The challenges encountered by researchers when trying to access these materials in the library can be measured on if the materials are accessible in the library, if the material are accessible to researchers, if the library give free access to these materials and if the library staffs are efficient in carrying out reference services efficiently when it involves cultural materials.

Cultural heritage is an important part of our society, the essentiality of culture and our history can never be underestimated, in every society there is an history giving the in- depth view of what they stand for and where they are coming from historically.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study shows that libraries play a crucial role in the promotion and preservation of cultural heritage. The result agreed that libraries need to be actively involved in promoting cultural heritage and plays a key role in its promotion, and should be recognized as cultural heritage institutions. This suggests that there is strong institutional and public expectation for libraries to preserve and promote cultural identity and historical legacy.

Furthermore, the study reveals a gap in community and stakeholder awareness of the library's role in cultural heritage. It is noticed that some scholars believe libraries should intensify their sensitization efforts, many agreed that current communication strategies are insufficient, reflecting a need for outreach, advocacy, and public engagement.

On library efforts, activities such as acquisition, preservation, and conservation are being carried out, but other functions like branding, presentation, and dissemination are perceived to be less effectively handled. This indicates areas where libraries must improve to ensure a holistic approach to cultural heritage promotion.

Finally, the study exposed several access-related challenges. While most materials are available and useful, issues such as limited free

access and inefficiencies in reference services hinder user experience. Addressing these challenges will help the library in playing her role as accessible cultural heritage repositories.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- The library should set up policies that will aid the promotion of cultural heritage. Policies are important in any field, so libraries should create laws, policies, and guidelines that make cultural heritage promotion easier. This will strengthen the existing foundation and help in wider emancipation of cultural and historical heritage.
- Libraries should focus more on the acquisition, preservation, and dissemination of cultural materials to improve their availability. Researchers will seek these materials if they are sure the library has them. Efficient acquisition and dissemination will lead to wider usage and better societal understanding.
- Library personnel should use social networking sites to create awareness on the need for cultural heritage and use cloud-based services to upload readable historical materials online, so historical value is not forgotten as the world moves forward.
- Organize workshops to educate library personnel and users on the benefits of understanding historical background and preserving values. This will create alertness and promote better care for materials. The library should use exhibitions, workshops, and conferences.

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