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Abstract

Indigenous knowledge, Documentation and the Challenge of ‘Repackaging’ in Nigerian Museums

Indigenous Knowledge is knowledge that is unique to a given culture, community or society. It is not the knowledge gained at formal institutions, rather, it is a Knowledge system that encompasses all aspects of life, forming the basis of survival for the people who own the knowledge. It is a way of life. Documentation can be achieved through many processes including but not limited to religious practices, festivals, politics and institutions. Institutions such as the museums are constantly faced with the challenges of proper documentation methods for indigenous knowledge. In local Nigerian communities, indigenous knowledge is mainly preserved in the memories of elders. The knowledge often disappears when they die and, thus the knowledge is lost or distorted. This paper tends to examine the role that cultural and research institutions such as the museums play in the documentation of indigenous knowledge and the challenges encountered in the repackaging of same for proper dissemination. Have museums in Nigeria been able to maintain the long chain of indigenous knowledge made available to them by the people? Have they been able to infuse new information available into the longstanding ones for the sake of passing out authentic and true information to the public for which they were created? As official keepers of indigenous knowledge, what are the various methods of documentation and dissemination applied by museum professionals? How are they stored; what software tools can museums create to enable for the protection of cultures and knowledge through digitization? What are the challenges encountered in the documentation, dissemination and repackaging of indigenous knowledge by museum professionals in Nigeria. Can much progress be made with the participation of local communities in policy making? This paper will tend to give answers to the questions above and more and, also examine how such challenges have been overcome in other societies and how the museum in Nigeria can further address these issues.