


Chapter 9


Challenges in the Digital Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge in Southern African Countries

Kwanisai Mukwerete

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6761-5665>

University of South Africa, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Shadreck Ndinde

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8678-9265>

National University of Science and Technology, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the challenges faced in digitally preserving Indigenous knowledge concerning Southern African countries. It examined the significance of digitising Indigenous Knowledge, emphasising the processes involved in its digitisation. However, even though the digitalisation of Indigenous knowledge is a malleable idea, it has opened a 'Pandora's box' of challenges. The study used a desk study in which the researchers gathered data from the existing literature using literature reviews from books, journal articles, internet sources, and newspapers; this chapter will explore the need to preserve indigenous knowledge, although most of it is not preserved. This chapter identifies the barriers to the practical digital preservation of Indigenous Knowledge and offers insights and recommendations for creating sustainable and culturally sensitive digitisation strategies. The findings

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-0204-1.ch009

aim to contribute to academic discourse and inform policymakers, researchers, and practitioners seeking to bridge the gap between traditional knowledge systems and modern technological advancements.

INTRODUCTION

The digital preservation of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is a critical and timely subject, especially in Southern African countries where rich cultural heritage and traditional knowledge are at risk of being lost due to modernisation, lack of resources, and other challenges (Masenya, 2023). IK represents the rich traditions, practices, and wisdom developed by Indigenous communities over generations, often rooted in unique interactions with their environment, culture, and heritage (Bihari, 2023). Several attempts have been made to address the universal preservation challenges of digital materials. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) are prominent international organisations active in these global projects. The 2003 UNESCO General Conference's "draft charter" on preserving digital heritage was one such attempt. The charter serves as a statement of principles to help Member Nations create national policies for the preservation and accessibility of digital heritage (Osedo, 2013).

In Southern African countries, this knowledge is vital in agriculture, healthcare, environmental conservation, and sustainable living (Lwoga, Ngulube and Stilwell, 2010). However, as the world increasingly relies on digital technology, preserving this invaluable knowledge has become more urgent (Ngulube, 2025). Digitisation offers a promising solution, enabling the documentation, storage, and dissemination of IK to ensure its longevity and accessibility for future generations. Despite its potential, numerous obstacles jeopardise the sustainability and efficacy of digitally preserving IK in Southern Africa. Social dynamics, moral challenges, intellectual property issues, and insufficient technological infrastructure complicate digitisation. Furthermore, much of this knowledge is undocumented, making it challenging to gather and retain without running the danger of loss or misinterpretation.

This study focuses on African countries that are part of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which are usually the focus of digital preservation efforts for IK in Southern Africa. These include nations in the region, including Mozambique, Angola, Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Swaziland (Eswatini). Every nation's distinctive cultural heritage and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are essential to their sustainability and sense of self. For instance, with programs like the National Recordal System, South Africa has made considerable progress in digitising IK. Balogun and Kalusopa

26 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/challenges-in-the-digital-preservation-of-indigenous-knowledge-in-southern-african-countries/389095

Related Content

The Dimensions of Tacit & Explicit Knowledge: A Description and Measure

Michael A. Chilton and James M. Bloodgood (2008). *International Journal of Knowledge Management* (pp. 75-91).

www.irma-international.org/article/dimensions-tacit-explicit-knowledge/2728

Clustering and Profiling Consumer Buying Behavior: The Greek Case During Crisis Period

Lambros Nikolaos Tsourgiannis and Stavros Ioannis Valsamidis (2021). *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Organizations* (pp. 50-66).

www.irma-international.org/article/clustering-and-profiling-consumer-buying-behavior/267131

Types of Symbolic Tacit Indigenous Knowledge Capture Processes of a Bull as Intangible Cultural Heritage Among Isukha Community, Kenya

Elphas Muruli Ngaira, Ashah Owano and Lilian Ingutia Oyieke (2026). *Indigenous Knowledge Management in the Open Science Framework* (pp. 319-346).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/types-of-symbolic-tacit-indigenous-knowledge-capture-processes-of-a-bull-as-intangible-cultural-heritage-among-isukha-community-kenya/389099

Knowledge Management as a Discipline

Murray E. Jennex and David Croasdell (2007). *Knowledge Management in Modern Organizations* (pp. 10-17).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/knowledge-management-discipline/24980

Gender Stratification and E-Science: Can the Internet Circumvent Patrilocality?

Antony Palackal, Meredith Anderson, B. Paige Miller and Wesley Shrum (2006). *New Infrastructures for Knowledge Production: Understanding E-Science* (pp. 246-271).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/gender-stratification-science/27295