


Chapter 11


Ethical Priorities for Libraries Supporting Indigenous Knowledge in Selected Public Libraries in Zimbabwe

Notice Pasipamire

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5148-9975>

National University of Science and Technology, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Artwell Moyo

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0722-7879>

Judicial Service Commission of Zimbabwe, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines ethical priorities in Zimbabwe's public libraries regarding indigenous knowledge. Public libraries safeguard indigenous knowledge through community collaboration. Key concerns include acknowledging sources (intellectual property), project impact, and considering indigenous languages in classification. Public libraries recognize a moral duty to integrate indigenous and foreign knowledge. Collaboration with Indigenous elders is essential for language revitalization. The study highlights the importance of ethical standards in ensuring respectful engagement with Indigenous communities. By prioritizing ethics, public libraries can preserve and promote indigenous knowledge while respecting Indigenous rights.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-0204-1.ch011

INTRODUCTION

Public libraries serve as crucial institutions for the preservation and dissemination of knowledge within communities. Their role transcends mere storage of information to encompass active engagement in fostering cultural and intellectual growth. Globally, public libraries have implemented initiatives to document and integrate Indigenous Knowledge (IK) into modern information systems, as highlighted by Ranasinghe (2008) and IFLA (2002). In Zimbabwe, public libraries have a responsibility in safeguarding indigenous knowledge (IK), which includes the traditions, practices, skills, and languages unique to various communities. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2025) defines Indigenous knowledge as the “understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings.” This knowledge is integral to the identity, resilience, and development of indigenous communities.

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and practices are typically unwritten, relying on oral transmission and human memory. Libraries have focused on documenting and disseminating IK (Adeyemo & Adebayo, 2017), covering topics such as agriculture, traditional medicine, and cultural practices. Documentation methods include recordings and visual documentation, undertaken by library personnel. However, librarians often face ethical dilemmas in their daily work, lacking structured institutional support or training to address them (Hoffman, 2005; Luo, 2016). This challenge is exacerbated by limited familiarity with professional codes of ethics, as seen in Amoah and Yeboah's (2018) research at the Sam Jonah Library in Ghana.

The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance (Carroll et al., 2020) emphasize the need for ethical and culturally sensitive approaches when managing Indigenous data. Given that most Indigenous data is controlled by non-Indigenous institutions, there is a responsibility to engage respectfully with communities, ensuring data use supports capacity development, community data capabilities, and the preservation of Indigenous languages and cultures. By aligning practices with principles of equity and respect, institutions can protect the integrity of Indigenous knowledge and empower these communities.

Public libraries in Zimbabwe have emerged as anchor institutions in preserving these invaluable resources, collaborating with indigenous communities to document oral histories, folklore, and cultural practices, often archiving them in physical and digital formats. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2002) underscores the importance of Indigenous Knowledge through its statement on IK, advocating for its protection and integration into modern information systems. However, public libraries face multifaceted challenges in preserving this heritage. Librarians, archivists and curators are often not adequately trained on how to handle the indigenous knowledge components of their collection. It is very

18 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/ethical-priorities-for-libraries-supporting-indigenous-knowledge-in-selected-public-libraries-in-zimbabwe/389097

Related Content

Dilemma Between 'It's My or It's My Organization's Territory': Antecedent to Knowledge Hiding in Indian Knowledge Base Industry

Sonali Bhattacharya and Pooja Sharma (2019). *International Journal of Knowledge Management* (pp. 24-44).

www.irma-international.org/article/dilemma-between-its-my-or-its-my-organizations-territory/234377

Geographies of Open Source Biotechnology Innovation: Buzz, Pipelines, and Proximity in a Virtual Cluster

David Tamoschus (2012). *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Organizations* (pp. 21-39).

www.irma-international.org/article/geographies-open-source-biotechnology-innovation/65089

Enhancing Performance Through Knowledge Management: A Holistic Framework

Anne P. Mussey, V. Ramesh and Mitzi M. Montoya-Weiss (2005). *International Journal of Knowledge Management* (pp. 23-42).

www.irma-international.org/article/enhancing-performance-through-knowledge-management/2670

Corporate Semantic Webs

Rose Dieng-Kuntz (2006). *Encyclopedia of Knowledge Management* (pp. 67-80).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/corporate-semantic-webs/16935

Kantian Inquiring Systems: A Case Study

Ahmed Y. Mahfouz and David B. Paradise (2005). *Inquiring Organizations: Moving from Knowledge Management to Wisdom* (pp. 71-88).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/kantian-inquiring-systems/23866