



## THE ROLE OF GLAM INSTITUTIONS IN PROMOTING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums (GLAM) are responsible for safeguarding national heritage by collecting, preserving, and disseminating knowledge resources. Cultural heritage, no doubt embodies the identity, history, and memory of a people. In Nigeria, the preservation of cultural heritage is vital for fostering national unity, education, and research. However, the Nigerian GLAM sector, like others in Africa, faces numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited technical capacity, and funding constraints. Moreover, technological advancement has broadened the concept of cultural heritage beyond physical artifacts to include digital-born materials, such as websites, digital art, and social media content, which form an essential part of contemporary cultural identity. Thus, the role of GLAM institutions have evolved to encompass the management of both analogue and digital heritage, requiring new competencies in digital curation, metadata management, data preservation, and ethical stewardship. This paper therefore sets out to examine the roles of GLAM institutions in Nigeria as a way of promoting cultural heritage. Efforts were made to identify its dimensions and challenges, conclusions were made that community-based and participatory conservation is gaining recognition as institutions are increasingly collaborating with local custodians, artists, and cultural groups to ensure ethical, inclusive preservation practices. Therefore, it was recommended that governments should endeavor to update and harmonize heritage preservation laws to include enforcement mechanisms, funding provisions, and inter-agency coordination among others.*

**Keywords:** GLAM institutions, Galleries, Libraries, Archives. Museums, Cultural Heritages, Nigeria

## Introduction

Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums collectively known as GLAM institutions function as society's memory infrastructure. GLAM institutions acquire, conserve and mediate objects, texts and practices that define collective identity. GLAM institutions play a vital role in the transmission of cultural memory and knowledge across generations. They sit at the crossroads of memory, scholarship and public life. Their contributions have become a forefront response to the frailty of cultural heritage particularly in this digital era. GLAM institutions are cultural organizations that collect, preserve, and provide public access to knowledge, history and art. They also preserve and showcase cultural heritage. This is done by collecting, preserving, and making cultural and informational resources available to the public. This involves Galleries showcasing art exhibitions, Libraries with books and publications as the major stock in trade, Archives dealing with historical documents and records of permanent values and, Museums which are the hubs for culture, history, art and learning, as they deal with artifacts and exhibits. These institutions play a vital role in safeguarding, interpreting, and providing access to both the tangible and intangible cultural resources of indigenous peoples. Through their collections, these institutions document human creativity, innovation, and identity.

According to Akinola, Onifade, Koun, Adpoju & Olatunji (2025), cultural heritage embodies the identity, history, and memory of a people. In Africa, the preservation of cultural heritage is vital for

fostering national unity, education, and research (Ogunmodede & Popoola, 2022). Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums (GLAM) are responsible for safeguarding this heritage by collecting, preserving, and disseminating knowledge resources. Traditionally, these institutions relied on analog systems, but the emergence of digital technology has redefined their operations and increased accessibility to heritage resources (UNESCO, 2023). The Nigerian GLAM sector, like others in Africa, faces numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited technical capacity, and funding constraints (Alemna & Sam, 2021). UNESCO (2023) posits that cultural heritage refers to the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and transmitted to future generations; it encompasses tangible heritage such as books, manuscripts, artifacts, and monuments and intangible heritage such as folklore, oral traditions, and indigenous knowledge. Libraries and archives preserve documentary heritage, museums safeguard material culture, and galleries display visual arts and artifacts (IFLA, 2021). Collaboration among these institutions enhances cultural preservation and knowledge dissemination.

Cultural heritage represents the collective memory, knowledge, and identity of a society, encompassing tangible and intangible expressions such as artifacts, manuscripts, artworks, oral histories, and traditions. Traditionally, institutions such as Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums (GLAM) have served as custodians of these cultural resources, ensuring their

preservation, accessibility, and transmission across generations (Ngulube, 2021). However, the rapid evolution of digital technology in the 21st century has significantly transformed the way these institutions collect, preserve, manage, and disseminate cultural heritage. The integration of technology into GLAM institutions has become essential for advancing their roles in documentation, preservation, access, and engagement with diverse audiences. Historically, the preservation of cultural heritage relied heavily on manual processes such as cataloguing, indexing, and physical conservation, which limited access and endangered fragile materials due to physical deterioration and environmental factors (Trant, 2020). With the advent of the digital revolution, these institutions began adopting Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), such as digitisation, databases, and online repositories, to safeguard their collections and make them globally accessible. This transition marks a paradigm shift from the traditional custodial model of preservation to a digital heritage management model, where technology plays a central role in protecting and promoting cultural assets (Raja & Haneefa, 2022).

Libraries, as integral components of the GLAM ecosystem, have embraced technology to digitise rare books, manuscripts, and archives, enabling users to access cultural materials remotely. Through digital libraries, institutional repositories, and open-access platforms, libraries now contribute to the democratisation of knowledge and the promotion of cultural literacy (Adeleke & Onifade, 2023). Similarly, museums and galleries use interactive technologies such as augmented

reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and 3D scanning to enhance visitor experiences, while archives employ advanced data management systems for long-term preservation and retrieval of digital records (Terras, 2021). The convergence of these technologies under the GLAM framework promotes interdisciplinary collaboration and unified access to cultural heritage collections. The perspective global initiative to digitize cultural heritage has been driven by projects such as Europeana, the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), and UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme, which aim to safeguard endangered collections and make cultural heritage universally accessible. In Africa, and particularly Nigeria, similar efforts are gaining traction, although they are often constrained by funding shortages, infrastructural deficits, and inadequate digital skills among professionals (Onyancha, 2022, Kefela & Akpojotor, 2023). In Nigeria, for example, the legacy of the British colonial era saw the systematic dismantling and misappropriation of indigenous cultural practices, leaving behind a fragmented sense of identity. Moreover, the lack of a coherent national policy on cultural heritage preservation has compounded the issue, leaving many cultural practices and monuments vulnerable to decay and loss. Cultural institutions, such as museums and archives, are frequently underfunded and face administrative challenges, thereby limiting their capacity to protect and showcase Africa's rich cultural heritage (Adewuyi, 2023). The failure to properly preserve cultural heritage in West Africa has hindered the region's ability to leverage this asset for peace-building and nation-building in the post-colonial era.

The preservation of cultural heritage takes on even greater significance due to the country's diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious makeup. Cultural heritage, which encompasses both tangible and intangible elements, offers a platform for building a shared identity among diverse groups. During periods of pre-conflict tension, the preservation of cultural heritage serves as a potential tool for peace building by fostering mutual respect, dialogue, and understanding. However, despite the recognized importance of cultural heritage in promoting national cohesion, Nigeria has struggled to leverage this asset for pre-conflict peace-building. The lack of strategic policies aimed at using cultural heritage as a peace-building mechanism has contributed to ethnic and religious tensions that often escalate into conflict (Eghosa, 2021). Additionally, Nigeria's political leaders have often failed to integrate cultural heritage preservation into broader national development strategies, overlooking the role it can play in mitigating pre-conflict tensions and providing a foundation for conflict resolution. As a result, cultural heritage preservation, while acknowledged in theory, has not been adequately prioritized as a tool for promoting unity and preventing conflict. This neglect has left many communities vulnerable to divisions that could have been addressed through cultural engagement and shared narratives. Moreover, technological advancement has broadened the concept of cultural heritage beyond physical artifacts to include digital-born materials, such as websites, digital art, and social media content, which form essential part of contemporary cultural identity (Omoike & Ilogho, 2022). Thus, the role of GLAM institutions has evolved to encompass the

management of both analog and digital heritage, requiring new competencies in digital curation, metadata management, data preservation, and ethical stewardship. The transformation underscores the necessity for continuous adaptation, policy development, and investment in digital infrastructure to sustain heritage for future generations.

## **Conceptual Clarifications of GLAM Institutions in Nigeria**

### **Concept of Gallery**

Galleries are spaces or institutions dedicated to exhibiting of works of art, acting as crucial intermediaries between artists and collectors. They showcase various, often contemporary, artworks to foster and promote art. Galleries are places where works of art and cultural objects are displaced for public viewing, education, and appreciation. It usually exhibits paintings, sculptures, photographs, crafts, and other creative works which may be privately owned, operated by government or cultural institutions. Galleries in Nigeria help to preserve and promote indigenous artistic heritages, and as well function as spaces where artists present their works to the public, collectors, and critics.

### **Roles of Galleries in Nigeria**

The roles of galleries in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized; these range from its engagement in the exhibition of art works. Galleries display artworks to the public for the public to see. Understand and appreciate. They are also capable of promoting artists, thus helping them to gain recognition by showcasing their works of art to the collectors and art lovers. Galleries no doubt, ensure the preservation of cultural heritage and traditional artistic expressions.

Apart from the above, when it comes to issues relating to education and awareness, many galleries engages in organizing lectures, workshops, and guided tours as a way of educating the masses about art and culture. Galleries some of the time engage in marketing and sales, some do help artists to dispose their works and at the same time connect them with buyers. More importantly, when it comes to research and documentation, galleries sometimes keep records of artworks as well as artists for research purposes,

### **Prospects and Challenges of Gallery**

Basically, is an important cultural institution that promotes art, supports artists, and preserve cultural heritage as it attracts tourists interested in art and culture, engages in digital and virtual exhibitions which allows people to view artworks from anywhere in the world. Obviously, it has the capability to engage the youth in art, of which their increasing interests can boost gallery activities. It can facilitate international collaboration and as a result promote artists globally, more importantly; galleries can enhance economic opportunities as its market can create jobs for artists, curators and cultural workers. However, there are several constraints bedeviling galleries, inadequate funding owing to lack of sufficient financial support for maintenance and exhibitions. Low public awareness pose another challenges as majority are either not aware of galleries or do not frequently visit them. Other challenges include poor infrastructure, this could be either issues of limited space, outdated facilities or lack of proper storage. Apart from the foregoing, limited government support poses more challenges

to galleries and its operations in all ramifications.

### **Concept of Modern Library**

A library is basically a collection of resources in a variety of formats organized by information professionals or other experts who ensure the provision of convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access and offer targeted services and programs with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences with the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole (ALA, 2010). The library is a collection of books, magazines, newspapers and other materials made available for people to borrow or use for reference. Libraries have been around for thousands of years and are essential part of the society providing everyone access to information and knowledge, regardless of their background or financial means. They serve as a hub for education, research and leisure, allowing people to expand their horizons, explore new ideas and connect with others who share their interests. Libraries offer services beyond just lending books, including computer access, community events and educational programs. They are crucial in promoting literacy, intellectual freedom and cultural diversity, and are vital resources for individuals, communities and society. The evolution of libraries in Nigeria reflects the broader socio-political and cultural transformations within the country. From the early days of informal collection to the establishment of former library systems, the history of libraries in Nigeria is intertwined with the development of education, governance and national identity. Therefore,

before the advent of formal libraries, knowledge in Nigeria was primarily transmitted orally. Various ethnic groups maintained rich traditions of storytelling, proverbs and oral history, which served as repository of cultural heritage. In the context of Librarianship, a library is defined as an organization or an institution primarily set up to acquire, process, organize and make accessible to users, within the quickest possible time, all forms of information materials which they require. The systematic acquisition, processing, organization and dissemination of books and non – book materials, the intellectual and bibliographical control of these materials distinguish the library from either a reading room or a storehouse of books. Each library is purposely set up to achieve the informational, educational, cultural and recreational goal of its parental organization. (Ogundeji, 2012).

Ogundeji (2004) maintained that, there are some wrong conceptions some people have about what could be regarded as a library. Some regarded library as a very big hall that has been stocked with some information materials, but under lock and key, the materials within, not processed, not organized, this is not a library, but a mere warehouse. Another notion is regarding library as a place, just a room designated for reading newspaper within an organization, but there is a label at the door “library”, this is also wrong. Before an institution, organization or an arm of establishment could be qualified as a library, it must have the enumerated qualities as expatiated in the first paragraph above. Thus, such organization must also fall within the categories of library generally. Obviously, various definitions have been given to

libraries in consonance with their purposes and functions at various times. In ancient times their function was preservation of records which were not originally books. With the growth of learning and education, libraries became the agents for educational, social, economic and political change. The library has thus become a place entrusted with the acquisition, organization, preservation, retrieval and dissemination of information in whatever format it might appear. However, for ease of understanding, a few definitions of libraries will be offered here. A library has been variously defined by Fayose (2000), Prytherch (2000) and Adomi (2008) as:

A collection of books and other information bearing materials stored for reading study and consultation;. A place, a building, room or rooms set apart for keeping and use of a collection of books; A collection of books arranged for use and enshrined in a building which symbolizes the elevation of the human mind; which men associate with learning. Obinyan & Adebimpe (2004) rightly observed that if we define library mainly as a room or building containing books that can be locked at or borrowed, we will not be referring to the 20<sup>th</sup> century library, and neither could we have taken into consideration the works of Dewey, Library of Congress and Universal Decimal Classification exponents. As a matter of fact, we would not have done justice to the breakthrough heralded by information and communication technologies, and libraries like virtual, digital or electronic would have been miss-represented. This is the more reason why the World Book Encyclopedia (1971) states that: The simplest definition of a library is a collection of books... But long ago, the libraries outgrew the simple idea

that they are only warehouses for books. The most modern library has not only books, but also magazines, pamphlets, painting, motion pictures, phonograph records, photographs and an electronic computer tapes.

While corroborating this, Akinnu (1987) in Obinyan & Adebimpe (2004) submitted that the library is not just a room/building but it is also a collection of systematically arranged materials, which includes books, serials, and audiovisual equipment, organized and made available for use. The earliest libraries were obviously mere collection of books and records. However, over the centuries, the concept of library has undergone a metamorphosis. Libraries are no more regarded as mere collections of books but dynamic institutions providing societal information needs and preserving societal records in the most systematic and scientific manner.

Aguolu (1989) defines libraries as collection of records of human culture in diverse formats and languages, preserved, organized and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of individuals for information, knowledge, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment. Obinyan & Adebimpe (2004) were of the same opinion when they declared that library is therefore a collection of records of man's endeavours and culture in diverse formats and languages organized, interpreted, and preserve to meet the varying needs of individuals. The library can be viewed as a place where the dead are still living. This is because the ideas, knowledge and experiences fully documented and preserved continue to generate new ideas. The library can also be described as a social institution for the exploitation of knowledge contained in published matter.

## **Roles of the Library**

A different type of library exists to provide information resources and services to various categories of users in the society. These include school, academic, special, public, private, national and virtual libraries. Each of these has special or peculiar roles to play in the society. Meanwhile, some functions are common among them, these are discussed below:

### **Conservational Role**

A library acquires recorded knowledge and preserves it for posterity. This is the earliest and most basic function of the library. Therefore, the library acquires various types of communication records, published and unpublished, written or in recorded form, and stores them for later use. The library is the society's memory, standing in the same relationship as the human Source memory to the individual. The society draws upon it in the same way an individual draws upon his/her memory to meet his/her variety of information needs. The libraries through its restrictive controls over resources ensure that acquired materials are available for users in the present and future generations (Adebayo, 2020).

### **Information Role**

The role of the library is best in societies that value self-improvement and well informed citizenry. Different kinds of libraries provide different types of information geared towards particular needs; specialized needs as in the case of special libraries and heterogeneous needs as obtain in the public libraries. It is the responsibility of the librarian to identify the information needs of his clientele, and to acquire and

organize the information resources that would meet and satisfy user's demands and expectations especially in this digital age (Adebayo, 2020).

### **Educational Role**

The educational role of the library is reflected in its role as a disseminator of knowledge. For instance, the quality of academic programmes in an institution cannot be sustained without a functional library with well stocked materials for effective teaching and learning. Libraries are the pivot from which all intellectual activities revolve to all academic and research programmes. This implies that library feeds the intellectual of the students, encourage the research of the school/ faculty and unites all who enter its house to partake fully providing effective and efficient library services at all levels of educational development in Nigeria, in line with technological advancement cannot be overemphasized (Adebayo, 2020).

### **Recreational Role**

One of the basic functions of the library is to encourage recreation and constructive use of leisure time. It is most unfortunate that, this role is not properly played by librarians in many African countries because of low level of literacy. Hence only a few people have the time to derive recreational benefits from libraries. This is because, reading habits in Nigeria are for utility purposes, that is, users use the library for either preparation for examinations, or for improving technical skills. Readers ought to see the library as a place for entertainment, reading, viewing, or listening to relevant materials for their recreation (Adebayo, 2020).

### **Research Role**

Research is a systematic investigation aimed at discovering new knowledge; and a researcher usually commences his work by examining what has already been done or is being done in his area of research. This information is best obtained in the library (Adebayo, 2020).

### **Cultural Role**

Culture embodies the physical equipment (tools). Scholarship (accumulated experiences, beliefs, myths, legends, reasonable knowledge, imaginative creations and social organizations, institutions, agencies, mores and customs) of a given group of people. The library can help to promote or preserve the culture of the people in variety of ways. For example, in this era of democracy, the library can stock resources that can help the Nigerian citizenry to be familiar with democratic norms and practices towards effective nation building. Moreover, the library can also acquire materials to decolonize the minds of the people by imbuing the local readers with the appreciation of their cultural heritage and giving them correct perspectives about themselves, their abilities and achievements. The library is expected to serve as a centre for documentation of traditional values of the people and as an agency for the promotion of new literature pertinent to the cultural rebirth (Akinlubi, 2015).

### **National Archives of Nigeria**

The national archives of Nigeria established in 1954, play a crucial role in preserving nations historical, administrative, and legal memory. Based on the national Archives Act of 2004, the institution serves as the custodian of Nigeria's heritage,

providing essential, evidential, and research materials for public and academic use. The archives identify, acquire, and manage public and private records, protecting them from destruction by pests, environmental factors, and neglect. Archives hold crucial evidence for constitutional instruments and legal documents. They provide evidentiary value that affects individual, organizations, and the nation. They act as a repository of historical, economic, and social data used by scholars, policy makers, and historians to interpret the past and inform current policies. The archives ensure transparent administration by managing records of government agencies. The institution is increasingly focused on digitizing records to ensure long term preservation and improve accessibility for researches.

### **Key Roles of the National Archives**

**Preservation of national heritage:** the archives collect and protect public and private records from destruction (National Archives Act, 2004).

**Evidence and Legal Record Keeping:** it preserves constitutional and legal documents that serve as evidence for individuals and the nation ((National Archives Act, 2004).

**Support for Research and Education:** It provides historical, social and economic data for academic and policy purposes (National Archives Act, 2004).

**Enhancing Governance and Accountability:** It promotes transparency by managing government records (Council of State Archivists, 2013).

**Digitization of Records:** Efforts have been made to digitize records for preservation and accessibility (NAI Archivists, 2019).

### **Challenges Facing the National Archives**

The national Archives face significant challenges, some of which are listed below:

**Lack of Record Acquisition:** Public record acquisition has been limited since 1986, creating gaps in Nigeria's post-independence history.

**Overdependence on Colonial Records:** over 90% of holdings consist mainly of colonial-era records.

**Poor Preservation Conditions:** inadequate storage facilities expose records to termites, rodents, dust, and water damage.

**Shortage of Staff:** Staff numbers have drastically reduced, leading to closure of important units.

**Lack of Training:** Many staff members have not been able to receive modern archival training.

**Outdated Safety Equipment:** majority of safety equipment like fire extinguishers and emergency systems are not properly maintained.

**Insufficient Funding:** Lack of funding has limited maintenance, equipment replacement, and technological advancement (NAI Archivists, 2019).

**Failed Digitization Efforts:** Attempts to digitize records were unsuccessful due to obsolete equipment (NAI Archivists, 2019).

### **NCMM Nigeria (Nigeria Commission for Museums and Monument Nigeria)**

Nigeria's National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) operates under the Decree No. 77 of 1979, which mandates it to preserve, document, and conserve national heritage materials (NCMM, 2021). NCMM is responsible for preserving, collecting, studying, and presenting Nigeria's cultural heritage, its vision is to maintain a stable museum

system that integrates Nigerian heritage networks, its mission focuses on collecting and preserving both tangible and intangible cultural materials of Nigerians at home and abroad (NCMM, 2021). A stable museum system ensures the preservation of, and integration of the Nigerian cultural heritage within the local and national development process and the world heritage network. The systematic collection preservation study and interpretation of the material evidence (Tangible and intangible) of the development of the peoples of the country and those in the Diasporas

In an effort to reconnect with Nigeria's Ancient wisdom, museum uncovers the profound resilience and enduring optimism embedded in the heart of Nigerian culture museum. It provides an immersive and transformative journey and inventive citizens to explore the rich tapestry of traditions that have been passed down through generation through carefully curated exhibits, it reveals how these cultural practices not only inspires hope but also play a pivotal role in shaping personal and collection identities.

Major roles include;

### **1. Identification and collection**

The NCMM identifies and collects artifacts that represent Nigeria's cultural heritage through research archeological excavation and community collaborations, object of historical artistic and cultural significance are discovered, authenticated, and documented. There items are added to the National collection to preserve and protect Nigeria's cultural legacy.

### **2. Preservation and conservation**

The NCMM is responsible for preserving and conserving Nigeria's cultural heritage using advanced technologies, artifacts are protected from deterioration and environmental damage restoration and maintenance efforts focused on ensuring the physical and cultural integrity of each objet allowing for their continued study and public display.

### **3. Exhibition and presentation**

The NCMM designs and curate exhibitions to present Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage through permanent and temporary displays. Artifacts and historical narratives are3 showcased using both traditional and modern presentation techniques. These exhibitions provide the public with comprehensive understanding of Nigeria's cultural identity and historical milestones.

### **4. Public Engagement**

The NCMM facilitates public engagement through educational programs, workshops, guided tours, and community outreach. These initiatives promote cultural awareness, encourage dialogue and foster a sense of shared responsibility for preserving Nigeria's heritage, digital platforms and public events further extended access to cultural resources and information.

### **Cultural Heritage**

According to Akande, Anthony, Akoun, Agbenu, Adetiloye & Anne (2025), the term cultural heritage encompasses both tangible and intangible dimensions of human creativity and identity. Tangible cultural heritage refers to physical artifacts such as artworks, monuments, manuscripts,

and tools, while intangible cultural heritage (ICH) includes oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, languages, and craftsmanship transmitted through generations (UNESCO, 2003). The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage expanded the concept of heritage beyond monuments and collections to include living cultural expressions that embody community identity and continuity (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004).

Cultural Heritage refers to the contemporary society's use of the past. "Our cultural heritage" contributes to the shaping of national stereotypes and regional identity and it's a modern or postmodern reflection of the past. In Europe it is often associated with older city centers. In North America, it is strongly linked to national parks, museums and galleries in urban areas. In Australia and New Zealand, it is also associated with the indigenous culture, identity and landscape (Boyd & Timothy 2023). According to Carman & Sørensen (2019), the field of heritage studies developed from David Lowenthal's influential book *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), and uses methodology mainly from the social sciences to study interaction between individuals and heritage. Cultural heritage is "that part of the past which we select in the present for contemporary purposes, be they economic, cultural, political, or social" (Khakzad, 2020). Cultural heritage is inseparable from the social and spiritual relationships that sustain it. For Indigenous peoples, heritage is not an abstract legacy of the past but a living continuum that connects ancestors, present communities, and future generations (Brown & Nicholas, 2012). This holistic understanding challenges Western muse-

logical and archival frameworks that often isolate heritage objects from their cultural contexts. Consequently, GLAM institutions must engage with Indigenous heritage not merely as material to be preserved but as living heritage requiring ongoing community involvement and cultural validation.

### **GLAM Institution in Nigeria**

GLAM institutions in Nigeria; comprising Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums play a vital role in preserving the nation's diverse cultural heritage, fostering education, and promoting national identity. As custodians of both tangible and intangible cultural assets, these institutions are increasingly adapting to digital, open-access models to make Nigeria's history more accessible to the public and the world

### **Key roles of GLAM Institutions in Nigeria**

**Preservation of Cultural Heritage:** GLAM institutions act as custodians of Nigeria's history by collecting, protecting, and conserving artifacts, manuscripts, and historical records. Notable examples include the National Museum of Lagos and the Esie Museum, which house diverse Nigerian artistic and cultural treasures (Adeyemi, 2018).

**Knowledge Dissemination and Education:** Libraries and museums, such as the Arewa House Library and Museum and the host of others, provide essential resources for research and learning, serving as centers for community engagement and academic study.

### **Digital Transformation and Open Access:**

There is a growing movement to digitize Nigerian collections to bridge the digital divide and increase online visibility. Partnerships with platforms like Wikimedia Nigeria have enabled the digitization of archival materials and the use of Creative Commons licenses, allowing for wider, open access to cultural heritage (Adeyemi, 2018).

### **Fostering National Identity and Tourism:**

Museums and galleries promote cultural tourism by showcasing unique artifacts from over 300 communities, which helps to foster a sense of pride and a shared national identity (Adeyemi, 2018).

### **Advocacy and Public Policy Involvement:**

GLAM institutions and professionals are involved in advocating for intellectual property laws, such as the 2022 Nigerian Copyright Act, and fighting to preserve the public domain.

**Research and Documentation:** Archives and specialized libraries are critical for investigating and documenting Nigeria's social, political, and cultural history (Adeyemi & Ogundele, 2020).

### **Challenges facing GLAM Institutions in Nigeria**

Despite global advancements, GLAM institutions particularly in developing regions face persistent preservation challenges. Funding constraints remain the most critical. Preservation and conservation activities require specialized materials, equipment, and skilled personnel, yet these are often deprioritized in national budgets (Ezeani & Ezema, 2019). Many

African institutions rely on donor-funded or short-term projects, resulting in inconsistent outcomes. Climate and environmental factors also pose severe threats. High humidity, fluctuating temperatures, pest infestations, and poor infrastructure accelerate deterioration, especially in tropical regions (Ngulube, 2020). The absence of reliable power supply exacerbates these problems, making environmental control systems difficult to sustain. Technological obsolescence further complicates digital preservation. Hardware and software dependencies require continuous updates, migration, and monitoring (Harvey, 2020). Without consistent funding or trained ICT professionals, many digitization projects risk becoming obsolete or inaccessible. Moreover, policy fragmentation and institutional overlap hinder national coordination. In Nigeria, preservation responsibilities are divided among the National Library, National Archives, and National Commission for Museums and Monuments, often with limited inter-agency collaboration (Akinfolarin, 2020). Finally, human resource limitations persist. The shortage of trained conservators, archivists, and technicians limits implementation of even the best-formulated policies (Ezeani & Ezema, 2019).

### **Emerging Trends and Innovations**

In response to these challenges, several promising trends are reshaping the preservation landscape. Digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI) are revolutionizing how collections are managed. AI-powered image recognition assists in damage detection, while machine

learning supports metadata generation and risk modeling (Conway, 2020). Community-based and participatory conservation is gaining recognition. Institutions increasingly collaborate with local custodians, artists, and cultural groups to ensure ethical, inclusive preservation practices (Deacon, 2020). Sustainability and green conservation continue to evolve, emphasizing passive environmental control, renewable energy, and biodegradable materials (Cassar, 2021).

Regional cooperation through platforms like the African Heritage Observatory and West African Heritage Network is facilitating shared learning, pooled resources, and policy harmonization across borders (ICCRUM, 2020). Together, these developments signal a shift toward more adaptive, collaborative, and context-sensitive preservation frameworks that integrate both global innovation and local realities.

## Conclusion

The paper highlighted the unique roles of GLAM institutions in terms of its capability to preserve cultural heritage, digital transformation and open access creation, ability to foster national identity and promote cultural tourism, knowledge dissemination and education, advocacy and public policy involvement. It was equally established that the new trends in GLAM institution remains Digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI), these are revolutionizing how collections are managed. AI-powered image recognition assists in damage detection, while machine learning supports metadata generation and risk modeling. Community-based and participatory conservation is gaining

recognition as institutions are increasingly collaborating with local custodians, artists, and cultural groups to ensure ethical, inclusive preservation practices.

Sustainability and green conservation continue to evolve, emphasizing passive environmental control, renewable energy, and biodegradable materials. Regional cooperation through platforms are facilitating shared learning, pooled resources, and policy harmonization across borders. Together, these developments signal a shift toward more adaptive, collaborative, and context-sensitive preservation frameworks that integrate both global innovation and local realities, posing significant challenges including technological obsolescence which further complicates digital preservation. More importantly, hardware and software dependencies require continuous updates, migration, and monitoring.

## Recommendations

Based on the challenges facing GLAM institutions as enumerated in this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Governments should endeavor to update and harmonize heritage preservation laws to include enforcement mechanisms, funding provisions, and inter-agency coordination (UNESCO, 2020).
2. Efforts must be made to ensure commensurate funding and infrastructure investment, both public and private sectors must recognize preservation as a component of national development, as such, allocating consistent financial and infrastructural support should remain a priority.

3. There should be establishment of accredited conservation programs in universities and promote regional exchange programs to build technical expertise (ICCRUM, 2020).

4. The use of passive environmental control should be encouraged, this involves renewable energy, and locally sourced conservation materials suited to African climates (Cassar, 2021).

5. Government must facilitate the development of national digital repositories and adopt open-source software to ensure long-term accessibility and interoperability (DPC, 2020).

6. In order to strengthen partnerships between GLAM institutions and local communities to ensure inclusive, culturally sensitive preservation (Deacon, 2020).

7. Appropriate efforts must be made to support applied research in material science, environmental monitoring, and digital technologies adapted to African contexts.

8. The transformation of GLAM institutions underscores the necessity for continuous adaptation, policy development, and investment in digital infrastructure to sustain heritage for future generations, this therefore must become a blueprint.

9. Implementing these strategies would not only preserve cultural heritage but also strengthen identity, education, and social cohesion across generations.

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