

## Risk Management Strategies in Cultural Heritage Institutions in South-West Nigeria

**Adefunke Sarah Ebijuwa**

Olusegun Oke Library

Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso, Nigeria

fsebijuwa@lautech.edu.ng ; funkies\_2005@yahoo.com

**Oyelude, Adetoun Adebisi**

Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

aa.oyelude@mail.ui.edu.ng; toyelude@yahoo.com



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### **Abstract:**

*Archives, museums and libraries are part of our cultural and natural heritage. Acquiring, processing and providing access to recorded information are some of the reasons why cultural heritage institutions exist. The functions of the African Heritage Research Library and Cultural Centre (AHRLC), Adeyipo, the National Archive, Abeokuta branch and the Ife Museum of Natural History are no different. They are cultural heritage institutions with collections of African historical antecedents, repositories of natural objects and African heritage research library dating back to 1950, 1992 and 1971 respectively. That this heritage is worth preserving is the theme of this study. Although, some current preservation methods in place are indigenous, they are lacking in many instances the risk management expertise, focus and coordinated planning. A lot more needs to be done by way of providing the necessary resources, and the appropriate facilities supported by comprehensive institutional policies. Face-to-face interview and observation were the instruments used for the study. The strategies adopted for managing risks and preventing disasters, by the selected cultural heritage institutions in South-West, Nigeria was the focus. The efforts of three heritage institutions (1 library, 1 archive and 1 museum) to prevent disasters and manage their collections with as little risk as possible, even in the face of shoestring budgets are described. The disaster management strategies of the Heritage Library, Adeyipo, The National Archive, Abeokuta branch and the Ife Museum of Natural History are detailed. The advantages and disadvantages of the strategies chosen are highlighted and suggestions proffered for improvement.*

**Keywords:** Risk Management, Risk Management Strategies, Cultural Heritage Institutions, South-West, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

According to Knowledge Development Centre (2005), risk is the possibility that something harmful or undesirable may happen. Libraries, archives and museum are no exception to this risk because it is inevitable and no one can eliminate risk. Knowledge Development Centre

(2005) stressed that risk management is the term for the procedures that an organization follows to protect itself, its staff, its clients, and its volunteers. Essentially, it is a process of identifying potential risks in advance, analyzing them and taking precautionary steps to reduce and or curb the risk. Therefore, practising sound risk management is more than just looking out for potential problems, rather, it is an ongoing process.

A risk management strategy provides a structured and coherent approach to identifying, assessing and managing risk. It builds in a process for regularly updating as well as reviewing the assessment based on new developments or actions taken. Risks can come from many sources - financial risks, threats from project failures, legal liabilities, credit risks, natural causes and disasters, deliberate attack, events of uncertain or unpredictable root cause. There are many techniques to manage threats for example. Some are to avoid the threat completely, reduce the negative effect of the threat (risk control) or to transfer all or part of the threat to another party (risk transfer) (Ontario Schools Boards Insurance Exchange, 2016) and thus be free of the threat to a great extent.

The most important strategy in risk management is avoidance of the risk. The other strategies such as risk control involve taking proactive steps. Risk control enables calculated and informed risktaking to occur where the benefits of proceeding with an activity outweighs the much-reduced risks present. Risk transfer entails transferring the risks by law through written agreements or contracts, or through conventional insurance policy. Loss reduction is a response plan which states what will be done if a loss occurs. Examples of loss reduction plans are Fire Drills and Emergency Response plans.

Segregation of Exposure is yet another strategy usually employed which involves spreading the exposure to loss in different locations or isolating certain risks. Combustible materials for instance are kept away from other materials in steel fireproof cabinets and computer back ups or hard drives are stored off-site. Duplication of resources is another method used, thus providing back-up facilities or making contingency plans to replace items if damaged or lost. Self-retention is also a strategy used in the case of insurable risks.

Abioye and Adeowu (2013) studied security management risks in selected academic libraries in Osun State Nigeria. They found that the most prevalent security risks in the libraries in their study were theft, mutilation, defacing misuse/mishandling of library materials, insect attack, fire and flood. Inadequate funding, shortage of staff, erratic power supply and lack of institutional security policy or disaster plan were also discovered to be challenges. Bamigbola and Adetimirin (2014) examined the library services provision strategies of the African Heritage Library, Adeyipo for empowerment of rural women. They did not study the risk management strategies of the library.

Safeguarding our cultural heritage institutions through adequate risk management strategies is central to protecting a sense of who we are. These institutions disseminate information and cultural heritage resources to the public and academic communities. Infact, "many museums have integrated libraries or research centres; and many libraries, particularly academic libraries, house archival collections and learning materials worthy of exhibition" (Riley-Huff, 2009). As part of the effort to curb risk, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) developed some principles for its members in library-related activities of disaster risk reduction and in times of conflict, crisis or natural disaster (IFLA's Key Initiatives 2011-2012 programme). IFLA aimed to encourage safeguarding and respect for cultural property especially by raising awareness and promoting disaster risk management and to strengthen cooperation and participation in cultural heritage activities through

UNESCO, the libraries, archives, museums, heritage buildings and sites group. According to Kuzucuoğlu (2014) cultural heritage is the property of not only the host country but also all people. For safe conveyance of this heritage to future generations, it is an essential responsibility to take measures against risks threatening the cultural heritage.

### **The Value of Cultural Heritage Institutions as Repositories of African Historical Antecedents**

Culture represents the people's ways of life, norms, values, mores, ethos, ethics, and etiquettes and complete worldview (Adedimeji, 2009). He, however, posited that the peculiar Nigerian cultural values are being eroded by the pop culture brought by globalization. Greeting norms, cuisine, "appearance" (i.e. appearance and dress), custom, occupations, religion and other cultural components are giving way to acculturation, the suppression and subjugation of African culture... a tragic phenomenon of history that is fast destroying the original cultural complexion of not only the budding generation but even the adults. Adedimeji (2009) further identified seven distinct values of cultural heritage in any society as follows:

- culture functions as lenses of perception which reflects how people see themselves and see their environment.
- culture acts as a spring of motivation. What people respond to as incentives or disincentives for certain patterns of behaviour is a phenomenon which is greatly influenced by culture. For instance, many oral traditions (folk stories, lores, aphorisms, proverbs and songs) in Nigerian culture denounce indolence and indolent people while several others promote and advance the spirit of hard work. Cultural heritage serves as a standard of judgment especially when deciding what is acceptable as good or bad in a particular culture. In African culture, honour and respect are conferred on the elderly and their words are automatically associated with wisdom and experience in most Nigeria cultural practices.
- Culture also functions as the basis for stratification. Rank, caste and class are all profoundly conditioned by, if not created, by culture.
- Culture is valuable for serving the important role as a means of communication. It produces language and it is advanced by it.
- Culture defines production and consumption attitude of people. The Igbo tribe in Nigeria is noted for their daring entrepreneurship traits. A larger percentage of what is "made in Nigeria" is produced by the Igbos. While cultures may imbue productivity, other cultures may settle for consumerism. Attitudes to education are also culturally determined.
- Lastly, culture constitutes the basis of identity. Being Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Efik, Kanuri, Ijaw, Fulani, etc. in Nigeria is a function of cultural variables like lineage system, kinship and language. To be removed from one's culture is to be deprived of one's identity.

Munjeri (2009) posits that cultural heritage is valued in a number of ways and driven by different motives principally, economic, political, cultural, social, spiritual and aesthetic. He maintained that each of these values has varied ideals, ethics and epistemologies. As a result, different ways of valuing have led to different approaches to preserve heritage. However as valuable as these cultural heritage resources are, Ekwelem, Okafor and Ukwoma (2011) affirm that efforts to preserve resources on cultural heritage have gained new momentum throughout the world nowadays.

Nigeria is rich in immovable cultural heritage. Through the country's legislation, this heritage has enjoyed some measure of protection within the limits of the available resources. Nevertheless, there is a general outcry against the destruction and defacement of this heritage across the nation (Osuagwu, 2009). In Nigeria, the Yoruba race (a tribe inhabiting the South-West part of the country) has one of the richest cultural heritages and preserving these cultural heritages has generated lots of concerns from major stakeholders (Ola, 2015).

## **The Case Study**

### **African Heritage Research Library and Cultural Centre (AHRLC), Adeyipo.**

The African Heritage Research Library and Cultural Centre (AHRLC) is privately owned and located in Adeyipo, a village in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. It was first established in March 1988 at Ila Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria but later moved to Adeyipo the home village of the founder. The Centre (AHRLC) is the home of African culture and the Continent's first rural community-based research library. It is a depository and a clearing house for all publications on Africa and the African Diaspora. AHRLC was established to serve the educational needs of students, researchers, scholars, documentalists, archivists, and for the socio-cultural needs of the local community people; peasant farmers, petty traders, local artisans, craftsmen and women, all of whom the library registers free of charge. It is a special library which opens to users everyday of the week. It was chosen for this study due to its uniqueness of collection and services provided.

### **The National Archive, Abeokuta branch**

The National Archive, Abeokuta is one of the branches of the National Library whose headquarters is in Abuja. Located in the ancient city of Abeokuta, the branch houses a collection of documents on the Egbas; Chieftaincy records on kings, rulers, chiefs like Oba Alake, Olowu and so on are in the archives. The listing of the Egba records are not yet up on National Archives website because they are in preparation unlike that of the three zonal centres - Ibadan, Benin and Kaduna archives.

The management of the National archives is centrally done, but each branch has a head of branch, professional staff and clerical staff as well as support staff. The Abeokuta branch has 28 staff, 12 of them being professional staff. The branch was chosen for this study even though it is not a main Zonal branch like the Ibadan, Benin and Kaduna branches which have more functions and responsibilities. The rich cultural heritage collection it holds was the attraction to find out how risks to the collection are managed.

### **The Ife Museum of Natural History**

The Ife Museum of Natural History is the 8th Architectural Wonder of the World. The idea of having a Natural History Museum in the University came up in 1971. The University launched an endowment fund way back in 1973; one of the four main objectives of the endowment was the establishment of a standard type repository for scientific material in the University. In January, 1974, the idea of establishing a Natural History Museum and that which will be a leading natural history museum in the west coast of Africa was midwived this was to be an autonomous unit starting with the collection of the then zoology Department as a nucleus.

Apart from Institut Fundamental Afrique Noir in Dakar, Senegal, this natural history museum

was the only one in West Africa. This noble idea enjoyed every encouragement and support for the first two years during which a permanent architectural edifice to house the museum was designed by Jame Cubitt Adenuga Company and the building site chosen. (this design won an architectural award in London); the initial design was to cost about the sum of two million naira as at then.

Subsequently in 1982, the Natural History Museum was upgraded to a status of an autonomous institute. The Museum has been at the forefront of conservation research in Nigeria. Some major scientific researches have been conducted within the unit. The Museum serves as an important ex-situ conservation facility on Nigeria's biodiversity resources, important rocks, mineral and archaeology artifacts.

As part of the outreach programmes, there is a display of gallery having among others, the following major exhibitions: Archaeological exhibition consists of replica of the famous Ife potsherd pavements, traditional iron smelting techniques, different stone artifacts, and ritual objects. The Museum is also a manpower development center conducting training for middle level manpower in the Conservation and Tourism. It also offers M.C.s and PhD. Degree in Conservation Science and Biosystematics.



Fig.1: Ife Museum of Natural History

### **Statement of the Problem**

Libraries, archives and museums, like many other organizations are no exception to risk and disaster. Considering the economic situation in developing nations, Nigeria is highly at risk of management strategies in cultural heritage institutions in South-West, Nigeria. Despite the fact that there are current indigenous preservation methods in place, yet they are lacking in many instances. A lot more needs to be done by way of providing the necessary resources, and the appropriate facilities supported by comprehensive institutional policies.

### **Methodology**

The strategies adopted for managing risks and preventing disasters, by the selected cultural heritage institutions in South-West, Nigeria is the focus of this presentation. Three cultural heritage institutions (library, archive and museum) in South-West, Nigeria were used in the study. Face-to-face interview was used to collect information from the heads of each of the

cultural heritage institutions since they are the ones overall in charge of the disaster management strategies in each (library, archive and museum) based on the interview guide. Interviews were recorded and the recordings transcribed. The interviews were reinforced by observation. The data collected for the study was analyzed and is presented as the respondent gave the information and the results compared across institutions.

## **Findings and Discussion**

1. AHRL, Adeyipo has a well mapped out strategy for risk management. According to the founder, Chief. Adebowale, they recognise the fact that their collection “constitutes one important attraction for visitors from home and abroad. The visitors struggle to possess the items because of their artistic merits and political soci-cultural significance”. Their materials and equipment preserved are at risk as a result of the greed of some who do not stop at anything to steal or mutilate in a bid to acquire what does not belong to them. The unique collection in the AHRL, Adeyipo includes books, paintings and photographs, music, African Talking Drum Museum, and there are also other cultural structures like the Medicinal Herb Garden and the African Orchard.

The Centre faces several risks and challenges. They are:

1. Porous security network: Visitors can go in and come out at will unchecked because of the remote or rural location. Police stations and Security posts are far away. The nearest Police station is 5 kilometers away at Olorunda-Abaa.

2. Untrained security guards: The few security guards at the Centre are illiterate and not sufficiently trained in the art of detecting crime. They also do not have the necessary equipment to carry out their job properly.

3. Vehicular movement constraint: Bad roads leading to the Centre restrict movement to and fro, making transfer of books, carvings, artworks and sculptural pieces a risky venture. This is especially felt during the rainy season when gutters are flooded and bridges broken down by torrents.

4. Human factors: Some people look down on cultural materials as 'fetish', yet connive to steal or acquire such for monetary or selfish gain. They have low value and estimation for the items and thus are not interested in the preservation. Poverty level and or financial temptation sometimes makes staff collude with moneybag thieves to steal valuable collections.

5. Defective preservation techniques: There is a dearth of adequate facilities to prevent archival materials and cultural collections in the library from the invasion of termites, rats, bats and reptiles as well against unstable weather conditions such as heat and atmospheric pollution.

6. Lack of effective Legislation against pilfering/stealing of cultural materials by foreigners: There are no international laws promulgated to ban pilfering and carting away of cultural heritage items to foreign lands. When caught red-handed the perpetrators, sometimes turn round to be the aggressors harassing the owners and winning!

7. Inadequate retrieval strategies for stolen art materials: Other methods of retrieval of stolen art materials such as persuasion, lobbying, diplomatic negotiation, re-purchasing etc. are not used. This is a risk management strategy worth exploring.

8. Involvement of the rural community stakeholders in the production of artworks: Artisans in the rural communities are not being encouraged by government and other agencies through grants, subventions and such other mobilizations. Production of

masterpieces is thus few and far between if not that the art is dying out. Overpricing of the few artworks available puts artworks out of the reach of the average collector.

For the Management of the AHRL Adeyipo the challenges they identified are being addressed in several ways, some of them indigenous, and some conventional, with yet some, a mixture of methods.

The porous security network is tightened in AHRL Centre with the setting up of local vigilante and the inauguration of the Traditional Hunters Group who keep day and night vigil in the Centre and the forty neighbouring villages. These watchmen are all volunteers. In-service training is conducted for Security guards employed. They are provided with uniforms and some security materials like whistles, batons and lanterns. The Centre also has 'hot lines' of Police Officers at the 'nearby' Olorunda Police Station and even the Akobo Police Station in town, in case of emergency.

Government intervention is constantly sought for regular rehabilitation of the roads leading to the Centre, and for installation of rural electricity. This will assist in reducing risks to the collection in acquiring materials, and help in waving off threats to it.

Periodical workshops, seminars and lectures on preservation of cultural values and traditional ethics are arranged for the education and enlightenment of the Adeyipo and environs community. When they are enlightened and understand the importance of the facility, they are less likely to pose a threat or risk to a useful community asset.

For physical protection, the library does consistent fumigation to rid the premises of termites, rats, rodents, bats and reptiles. Indigenous methods are also sometimes used. To rid the place of termites that had damaged wooden door and window frames for example, five dogs were killed and the blood drained into five locations around the termite infested area. It is believed that the blood seeps into the soil and kills the termites deep down. Again, an invasion of bats was once handled by the hunters killing them in a 3 day siege using physical and temporal methods. Currently, finances are being sought to install air conditioners to assist in the preservation process of library and archival materials.

The Management of the Centre also urges visitors and people who have the influence to lobby the government to give attention to the roads and electricity as well as legislate against looters of artworks and other cultural materials.

2. In the National Archives, Abeokuta branch. Their risk management strategies follow simple preservation methods which emphasize the way they keep the records on their own.

### **How do they prevent the risk?**

There are measures to prevent flooding of the building as gutters are properly laid out and the roofing is secure. The plumbing system is also maintained well so water leakages are prevented.

To prevent degeneration of the book collection which has been previously treated via deacidification processes, they are dusted by archives staff. The other non-book paper-based materials are also deacidified. Users are prevented from bringing in food into the search room or other areas where the collection is kept. This is to prevent the attraction of rodents, roaches and other such organisms that could destroy documents in the archive.

The facilities are checked regularly to ensure the building and electricals are in order to prevent fire outbreak due to electrical faults. Staff are trained on proper handling of archival materials and are instructed on what to do in case of emergency or disaster.

Conservation routines are adhered to as regular fumigation of the facilities is done.

For physical security, Security guards are employed who guard the premises. Only persons who have permission to are allowed in the search room, outsiders are not allowed in without due authorization. The use of pencil only is permitted in the search room and there is a member of staff at least on the watch in the room.

***What does the archive do in case it happens and it is not prevented?***

There is a conservation unit in Ibadan in case of having to deacidify the records that are paper-based and to repair them if they are in any way damaged. The items needing attention are moved to Ibadan and brought back after processing.

***Is the Archive insured?***

The Archive is however not insured. Government properties are rarely insured in Nigeria.

***What are the steps taken to identify, assess and manage risk in the Archive?***

There are no specific policies in place concerning risk management, however, the National Archives Decree of 1992 is what is in operation.

***Do the strategies reduce negative effect or probability of the threat, transfer all or part of the threat to another party?***

Yes, as much as possible, the strategies used are effective. Where the branch cannot implement, the zonal office takes the responsibility.

***How regularly does the Museum update and review the assesment based on new development or actions taken?***

The decisions depend on directives from the headquarters in Abuja. This may not be too regular but normal routines are usually carried out.

***Given the prevailing economic condition of Nigeria, coupled with the shoestring budgets what effort does the Archive make to prevent disaster?***

The Archive branch follows directives from the central. All the necessary routines are followed. Staff also goes for training and conferences to update their skills occasionally. They are constrained by lack of funds though.

***Is there any indigenous way of preventing or managing risk in the Archive?***

There are no indigenous methods of preventing theft, destroying termites or managing risks. There are iron bars on the windows as security against breaking in, and use of fumigants to get rid of and prevent insects and rodents from destroying the collection. In the event of disaster, they follow the normal routines dictated by their training as archivists.

***What challenges does the Archive face in risk management?***



Duplication and self retention strategies are not yet in operation in the archive. Digitization has not yet commenced as the Abeokuta branch is not yet that strong. The headquarters of the National Archives in Abuja and the Kaduna branch have started digitization projects however.



Fig. 2: The Director of Ife Museum of Natural History with the Researcher (Ebijuwa) during the interview.

3. The Ife Museum of Natural History operates as a semi-autonomous unit within the Obafemi Awolowo University. The collections of the Museum cover a wide range of both natural and animal materials collected. The Museum according to the Director, Mr Adisa Ogunfolakan exists primarily to collect, organize, describe, preserve and make available for purposes of reference and research. The Director mentioned some of the risks such as: Water (flood, plumbing or roof leaks); Fire (flame, soot); Criminal ( robbery, isolated theft, vandalism); Pests (rodents, insects); Contaminants (dust, gases); Light and ultra violet radiation; Incorrect temperatures; Incorrect relative humidity and Custodial neglect (data loss, misplacement, sample mixing) Earthquake (physical damage from staff, vibration from drawers, repair work). The Director responded to the questions below in an interview session which was recorded and transcribed.

#### ***How do they prevent the risk?***

The Director reported that risk management strategies have been limited due to lack of fund but they do their best within the constraints of resources available to observe basic risk management practices. This includes among other things observing good housekeeping procedures. Aware of the conditions that favor risk and disaster of the Museum collections, the staff ensure that the Museum is always kept clean and tidy. Also, adequate measures are taken to guide the tropical nature of their collections. Air conditioning is installed which runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Museum does not have total control over temperatures and humidity because of lack of fund to install equipment to adequately monitor relative humidity. There is an evidence of an attempt to prevent sunlight from entering the Museum by the way the Museum is built and also by the use of opaque windows. Also, care has been taken to install fluorescent light with ultra violet absorbing filters to filter out harmful ultra violet rays of light. The Museum installs anti fire devices like smoke detector, heat sensor and fire extinguishers. The Museum consistently fumigates to rid the premises of termites, rats, rodents, bats and reptiles. There are uniform security personnel to prevent criminal risk as well as burglaries and CCTV cameras installed. Also, the Museum staff are

trained on implementing appropriate procedures. There is a routine physical inspection of the collections to monitor risk and curb it on time.

***What does the museum do in case it happens and it is not prevented?***

The Museum is yet to experience a serious risk.

***Is the Museum insured?***

Despite some positive initiatives to manage risk and to prevent it, the Museum is not yet insured due to lack of fund. Unfortunately, the Director is unsure of how soon this will be.

***What are the steps taken to identify, assess and manage risk in the Museum?***

The Museum has a scheduled approach by the staff in all the units towards physical inspection of the Museum daily, weekly and periodically.

***Do the strategies reduce negative effect or probability of the threat, transfer all or part of the threat to another party?***

To an extent it does but lack of fund leads to a detrimental effect on the animal specimen. Much can be done as funds become available.

***How regularly does the Museum update and review the assesment based on new development or actions taken?***

The Museum updates periodically.

***Given the prevailing economic condition of Nigeria, coupled with the shoestring budgets what effort does the Museum make to prevent disaster?***

The Museum is constriained financially therefore, the Director in his capacity ensures that things work well. However, he decried that Musuems are not much valued in Nigeria.

***Is there any indigenous way of preventing or managing risk in the Museum?.***

No. There are no indigenous methods of preventing or managing risk in the Museum. There are iron bars on the windows as security against breaking in.

***What challenges does the Museum face in risk management?***

Lack of fund.

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

The study concludes that there are efforts put in place to ensure risk is prevented in the selected cultural heritage institutions in South-West, Nigeria. The study maintains that the selected institutions are incapacitated by lack of funds and adequate risk management strategies. However, adequate funding by the institutions and the personnel managing the institutions to be able to carry out the activities must be intensified. If this is done, it is more likely that many risk associated with the institutions will be minimized.

The study recommends that: Nigerian government and corporate organizations should collaborate with cultural heritage institutions by providing fund and support. It is also suggested that, there should be periodic workshops, seminars and lectures on preservation of cultural values and traditional ethics for the staff of the cultural heritage institutions. Government should come up with legislation against looters of artworks and other cultural

materials. It is imperative that archives, libraries and museum are insured and adequate policies should be put in place concerning risk management.

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