

## Who Is Who among Folks: Nuances of Disparate Genealogical Information Sources in a Typical Southern Nigerian Setting

**Kathryn J. Philip**

Library, University of Uyo, Nigeria.  
(Volunteer community information worker)  
Email: kathphilip@yahoo.com

**Effiong E. Okon**

Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron, Nigeria



Copyright © 2015 by Kathryn J. Philip and Effiong E. Okon. This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>

---

### Abstract:

*The communal lifestyle of most native African societies, more often than not ginger knowledge about families either at inter-personal or collective level. Details of such resource therefore serve as veritable, authentic, handy and quick source of record on family relations and related issues. This paper therefore identifies ten (10) broad avenues by which family data in their assorted forms are generated with over forty (40) sub divisions listed. Significantly, some of these sources come into play during situational occurrences and special events as applicable to the Southern part of Nigeria. Literature is based on some documented family account, archival sources and personal encounters in local communities and chieftaincy affairs particularly as pertaining to the Ibibio ethnic group, with verifications from the elderly persons attuned to genealogical issues. Study notes that certain local and family records tend to be regarded and treated as personal property, therefore their not being considered for placement in public domain. This aspect so discussed is brought to the fore for librarians to explore following recommendations made.*

**Keywords:** Community, history, lineage, media history.

---

### Introduction

Family history and related account are ‘past’ knowledge which ironically and consequentially continues to impact meaningfully in present day. Whereas family information can be formally managed in most advanced and liberal societies, situation is other-wise in local traditional societies more inclined to retaining information in their minds and through unconventional avenues such as information signifiers/ signage. Some of these objects have special meanings attached to them in their local communities and families that create and used them. Such

knowledge however, stands the risk of being misrepresented or unknown long periods afterwards in the event where the initial users are not alive to attest to their meaning and significance. Way back in 1942, Joseph Wolf posited that every family/ home has memoranda of some sort: relics, diplomas, scrapbooks, old clippings, album, old letters and diaries, implying that every item can be useful to convey some information that provides link or clue to genealogical and related information.

This study therefore seeks to raise a consciousness of the need to harness relevant heritage information resources based on occurrences and events. It further notes that these tit-bits not only serve as information links, but are expressions of family ties which by extension, become community narratives as families make up local societies. Being situated around typical Southern part of Nigeria, the various conventional and unique information packages which encapsulate family stories are also portrayed in this work with a view to drawing attention to documentalist, librarians, archivist and other information experts to consider aspects of family information particularly around them and seek innovative ways to conscript, transcribe and package or organise them where necessary.

## **Aims**

The following objectives were considered in this study:

- i. To create awareness among families and local communities on the need to invigorate family history which already has traces in various forms, thereby nurture and preserve heritage knowledge;
- ii. To explore distinctive (aspects of) information resources and items which mirror genealogical and related issues among Akwa Ibom State indigenes of Southern Nigeria;
- iii. To find out reasons for the seeming scarcity of wholesome genealogical annals;
- iv. To suggest ways which encourage the creation of family information content particularly among librarians; and
- v. To recommend descriptions which support family information contents particularly in vernacular.

## **Motivation and rationale**

Sheer interest to search and discover unusual items which serve as links to family information played its part in this research. What also necessitated this study is the fact that majority of Christians in Southern Nigeria are aware of Biblical genealogy particularly from New Testament on the lineage of Jesus Christ which record names of people in ranks of descent and situated chronologically within a period or event. This consequently informed the lead author's consciousness to draw attention to the realities and relevance of generating related data in the present milieu, being the essence of this paper. Also, with previous academic background in arts and social sciences (aside librarianship), it became an added advantage coupled with growing up in a culture- attentive family background of a biological father who was an elder statesman and high ranking chief, *Otuekong Ikono* (The knight/warlord of Ikono). Ikono area is generally attributed historically as the cradle of Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State by several scholars. The co-author's background of having a father who was also a chief served as a boost.

## **Significance**

Genealogical surveys on tracing family history helps establish a people's heritage particularly in strong patriarchal societies of most Nigerian communities, while significantly making

contribution to knowledge and for the preservation of both local and family account. At present, there is yet no traceable record or research in the field of librarianship which treats genealogy or related data sources in the region understudied. This paper is therefore a modest attempt to fill the seeming gap and equally raise awareness of the need to generate community and family records' profile, through diverse tools, information kits and brochures. This on the long run would boost archival services and its unique potentials. Garwood-Houng, Alana in Nakata *et al.* (2013) encapsulates that without writing, human consciousness cannot achieve its fuller potentials and cannot produce other beautiful and powerful creations.

## LITERATURE

### **Ibibio Kindred: The Beginning**

The history of family (ies) was considered as separate field of history in the 1970s, with close ties to anthropology and sociology. Emphasis then was on demographic patterns (Hareven, 1991 and Comacchio, 2000) implying that genealogical study as a discipline is yet at nascent stage. An interesting account by some historians on the origin of Akwa Ibom State indigenes (the Ibibios collectively) is traced to the Jewish race, suggesting that the Ibibios are of Jewish descent (Offiong, 1991; Akongkor-Ekpe, 2000 and Udoeyen, 2000).

In a statement issued by the chairman, Council of Akwa Ibom Traditional Rulers and Religious Leaders, HRM Edidem Etimbuk Akpan in 2012, the Ibibio people are Jews from the Northern Kingdom of Israel who migrated to Ethiopia. They later settled in Usak Edet in South-western Cameroon to the lower Cross River Basin before spreading to the present places in Southern Nigeria. Later, they settled in Ibom in Orochukwu, now situated in Igbo area. In a discussion with Akongkor-Ekpe in April, 2014 by the lead author to further ascertain these facts, it was insightfully confirmed that certain Hebrew words in the Old Testament record of the Bible, are same as those of Ibibio dialect. Some expressions have same pronunciation among both groups, though with slight variations but convey same meaning. Words such as 'Isaac' 'Armageddon' 'Esau' 'Akata' are a few. From the foregoing, the family in perspective evolved from socio-ethnic kinship groups dating to pre-historic times. A family is viewed as co-residential group of persons that make up a household and share general survival goals. According to Mbiti (1990), an individual does not exist alone except corporately and in existence to other people including those of the past. In essence, whatever befalls the individual happens to the entire group he belongs.

### **Kindred in cultural context**

In my previous paper at IFLA WLIC 2014 GenLoc session, the nature of Ibibio family and kinship were buttressed as being viewed from the larger (extended) family perspective *ekpuk*, where each person is a part by origin rather than choice. Each *ekpuk* is headed usually by the oldest person who represents them in giving information (Offiong in Philip, 2014) and Ekong (2001). Men and women have separate houses grouped in compounds usually composed of a single household (being man, his wives(s), and other dependent relatives). Several of these make up a family (*nning*) and many such families make up a compound (*ekpuk*) while several families comprise communities, hence the preference for joint family system (nuclear and extended). With early marriage, women co-habit with the husband's family even to multiple generations and when widowed, a husband's kinsman would play the role of husband to cater and protect name of the deceased

(<http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Ibibio-Marriage-and-Family.html>).

As with neighbouring Igbo speaking ethnic group, personal property is inherited by a deceased father's eldest son who in most cases takes the largest share, then determines what to share among siblings.

To discuss kinship without mention of ancestors would be incomplete. Traditional Africans regard ancestors as the 'the living-dead' relatives which offer closest link with the physically and spirit world; through the living-dead the spirit world becomes familiar. They are deemed as still being part of their human families and people have personal memories of them (Mbiti, 1990).

### **Terms, Obligations and Limits**

Harnessing genealogical /family information requires considerations e.g. what sort of information can be derived on a particular family? Can it be so done without prior knowledge or consent of persons directly concerned as stakeholders? What are the limits or extent to which family information can be divulged? With respect to personal and cultural constraints, what family information can be termed sensitive?

Some family account reflects indigenous elements with community issues. It requires consultation, consent and opinion from families, individuals or persons concerned, before content is placed in public domain. This promotes interaction, goodwill, mutual respect and ethical conduct before use. Nakata *et. al.*, 2013 states that the reluctance to divulge family information is understood following certain personal, gender-specific, sacred and culturally sensitive information which are advised to not be widely available or circulated. Access to these type of materials or content, should be closely screened. Equally, sacred materials with esoteric applications for 'select' members are rejuvenated at special occasions e.g. mermaid initiations, rituals and worship by families. It is regarded that such content should rather be treated as 'restricted' and not fit for public places like libraries or public archives. Garwood-Houng in Nakata, *et al* (2013), offers guide to professional practice in harnessing information on indigenous people and materials. Since family lineage connects with one's indigenous root, the model was adapted and modified for this work to serve as guide to generating and documenting family history as follows:

- i. *Content and perspectives*: This area addresses the need to strike a balance in representation from Indigenous perspectives.
- ii. *Terms should be regarded when considering accessibility and use*, particularly with family information considered as personal.
- iii. *Description and classification of materials* of concern should accommodate content which tends to be *outdated* or appears inappropriate.
- iv. *Secret or sacred materials*: just because material has been published does not mean it is fitting to allow unrestricted access to such content, as placement in public domain implies it is open to any.
- v. *Offensive materials*: issues that are likely to be offensive, derogatory, or abusive to indigenes and families should be guarded against.
- vi. Education and training to equip for professional practice such as descriptive cataloguing

Brandt (2012) a family historian, encapsulates that personal data and family information recorded with the State have privacy acts that mandate restriction to the release of vital records against unauthorised use. However, access to recent records can be considered for access by immediate family members with proof of identity (The New York State Library, 2015).

## **Why Libraries?**

Why should libraries be involved in this work, which some see as the preserve of archives or museums? People's experiences and personal occurrences need to be gathered, documented and preserved for posterity else such information is lost with the passing away of the individual bearing the information. Documentation in this instance is the preparing, recording and organizing of source of knowledge systematically and by various means (Chopra, 2000). By this, cumulated store of learning is made available for advancement of knowledge. Skills acquired by librarians to deliver, organise, and facilitate access and engagement with information through creation of bibliographic tools and other retrieval aids, will enable contents of databases, registers and libraries to be easily verified and inventoried.

Collating these information bearing items go with the tasks of identifying and interpreting them based on purpose and context. In the long run, the documents serve as tools for scholarly interpretations of the past, and evidence for prevailing views on historical events whereby 'their readers empathize with the motives and feelings of people who lived in the past' (Arlen *et al.*, 2015). Care should be taken not to use ambiguous annotations and where necessary, explanations should be made clear as to the capacity in which the material is intended for use. Parker (1997) advised that in describing original, historical and special collections some require specialized cataloguing codes. This complexity however, allows for the creation of rich descriptive records, capturing the unique nature and characteristics of the materials. Parker furthermore recommends institutional websites which offer guidelines and models on these issues as follows:

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/gm/GraMatWP8.pdf>,

<https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/smiragli/www/dmm3.pdf>,

[http://www.rbms.info/committees/bibliographic\\_standards/dcrm/dcrmg/dcrmg.html](http://www.rbms.info/committees/bibliographic_standards/dcrm/dcrmg/dcrmg.html),

[http://www.rbms.info/committees/bibliographic\\_standards/dcrm/dcrmm/dcrmm.shtml](http://www.rbms.info/committees/bibliographic_standards/dcrm/dcrmm/dcrmm.shtml)

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study basically is a survey with study area focusing on Akwa Ibom State which has three major ethnic groups- Ibibio, Anaang and Oron. Intense search for relevant literature sources were sought for to verify content areas treating genealogical and related family issues available. Method of gathering data is highlighted including calibre of respondents who were purposively sampled to provide related answers during interview session aimed to verify arising issues.

Literature sources were scouted for to verify content areas treating genealogical and other family issues. Senior citizens also were purposively sampled to tender views through interview on related topic. Through interactive knowledge of the author with observations made over the years, enabled the compilation of resources stated in this paper.

### **Library contact**

Stated below are libraries which were physically contacted to explore holdings which contained nucleus of genealogical data.

- i) The Akwa Ibom State public library was consulted for any material on family data. With assistance of the reader services librarian, two items were however found on the biography of Sir E. Udo Udoma (1917 – 1998) former justice of Nigerian Supreme Court and Chief Justice of Uganda- 1963 to 1969 (Udoka, 1996). The work discussed his life and career as a top government official, with two pages relaying brief information about his parents and siblings were.

- ii) The mini-library at Bureau of Local Government/Chieftaincy: was scouted for community details with traces of genealogical information, or basic family data. Most of their collections were soft-read magazines covering activities which portray their endeavour.
- iii. The Africana section of University of Uyo (UNIUYO): being the only University in Akwa Ibom State offering post-graduate programmes to doctoral level, holds rich data sources to complement curriculum, boost research and foster learning. However, there was no wholesome data on the subject after thorough check with sectional head.
- iv. Theses and Dissertation Unit: Bibliographies of research works in this section of UNIUYO library were explored under Faculties of Arts comprising eight departments and Social sciences having six departments, none treated family lineage. Undergraduate and diploma research works on indexing with annotations made no reference to any genealogical source. The nearest in content scope were on cultural information sources.
- v. Center for Cultural Studies, UNIUYO: The immediate past director and professor in-charge expressed that there is no such record, more so as its library is yet to be fully established.

All library contacts were in second quarter of 2015 with the intent to track any new arrival/ edition on family record for inclusion in this paper. Most of the sources found were textbooks on Akwa Ibom history with focus on migrations and settlement, alongside socio-political, economic and religious background (Zaslavsky in Udoidem, 2012; Essien, 1982; Noah, 1980 and Udoh, 1983).

## DATA PRESENTATION

### Information Sources and Avenues

This aspect discusses both contemporary and traditional (trado-modern) resources and modes which convey genealogical information, basic family data and bits of historical information on families. Payne in Wilson (2015), states that African people in spite of their great ethnic diversity have been communicating among themselves in variety of ways for a long time.

The information bearing sources are as used operationally in the geographical area of this study; they constitute knowledge conveyed in: artistic/ creative, oral, objects, written, in recorded form or not. Ten (10) broad categories were identified and further sub-divided into over forty (40). In the context of this paper, they are categorised under various forms as follows: private documents, published sources, phenomenological issues, oral sources, extra-mundane insight, public records, broadcast media, legal minutes, web forms and symbolic representations.

#### **A.) Private documents**

- i.) Credentials:** Certificates of births, marriages, deaths (BMD), certificate of origin, honours/ recognitions and other milestones captured in CVs and profiles contain vital information of a person with inclusion of near or next of kin.
- ii.) Ephemeral sources:** such as personal letters, diaries, minutes from family meetings, files on family deliberations and resolutions
- iii.) Album:** Picture speaks volumes and so does family photo album.
- iv.) Wills:** though generally not disclosed till one's demise, a statement of will reveals a lot about affinity among family members.

## **B.) Publications**

- i.) (Auto) biographies** have families scripted along in the events of a person's life encounter e.g. 'Who is who' is reference tool about personalities and their achievement.
- ii.) Citation notes:** personal celebrations allow citation of one's pedigree, to eulogize family members for their meaningful contributions
- iii.) Newspapers / Magazines:** confer status on persons; reveals issues about individuals and families particularly if popular e.g. people's marital status, change of names or profile of a deceased person.

**C.) Official/Public records:** of agencies have vital demographic data though may not be accessed on individual basis on confidential grounds. Usual ones are:

- i.) Church record:** Denominations maintain church history account of family faithful and events involving them.
- ii.) National ID record:** Updating of data presently on-going for Nigerian citizens. Requisite is authentication from village head on one's root/ lineage (lead author involved).
- iii.) Hospital records** as National Health Insurance captures biometric and other nuclear family information (rather than individual record) for reference.
- iv.) Fiscal records:** e.g. from banks operate schemes for entire nuclear family with details about themselves.
- v.) Voters' registration** account: a civic responsibility that captures vital details of people. Nigeria in 2015 general polls, successfully accomplished this electronically.
- vi.) Immigration** and diplomatic dossier: though exclusive, yet quite revealing about people's nationality, personality and background.
- vii.) Population census report:** contain demographics for genealogical tracing of citizens.

**D.) Broadcast media:** mass media such as television networks and radio portray life and current issues about people and their relations.

- i.) Films:** historical films buttress life stories and rekindle facts about people, communities and events.
- ii.) Performances:** broadcast presentations such as reality shows etc, feature couples and families; community festivals relay cultural essence of people and families.
- iii.) Documentaries:** are informative/ educative based on narrations about a place, persons or things. Presently running weekly on Akwa Ibom television is 'My root, my pride' showcasing rich cultural heritage of each local community in the state. In some of the episodes, family heads are listed towards family portrayals.
- iv.) Interviews:** politicians/statesmen at interview sessions reveal antecedents to underscore their capability and knowledge and interests.
- v.) News/current affairs:** any kind of information worth making headlines can be reported on, from stories of landmark events, to heart-rending ones as conflicts and disasters with their effect on families
- vi.) Reality and Talk shows:** people discuss any topic including interesting bits about their personal and family life e.g. 'Maltina Family Dance' featured few years ago ([www.dailyindependentnig.com/2013](http://www.dailyindependentnig.com/2013)).

**E.) Phenomenological issues:** desirable and undesirable circumstantial more often reveal past family stories which consequently, set heritage findings in motion.

- i.) Bequeaths:** claims to property and matters of inheritance are common ways by which people suddenly become conscious of their pedigree, with polygamous families more susceptible.

**ii.) Ascendancy:** during change in traditional rulership and quest for enthronement, coronation and installation of new ruler, tracing family background for prospective candidates is automatically set in motion to ascertain suitability. This becomes even more sensitive where the incumbent is not of royal descent. In a one of the Ibibio communities, a village head was stripped of his chieftaincy position after facts about his lineage was made known that he was an immigrant, though he had lived in same community for over 80 years!

**iii.) Obsequies:** burial booklets are always issued to crowd of attendees thronging in to pay last homage to the departed; becomes more elaborate if the departed was advanced in age, or had impacted people/community positively. His entire life history even to fourth generation would be buttressed. Ironically, death records are more often used for official notification of bereavements for compensations and entitlements rather than for family record.

**iv.) Nuptials and parentage:** Re-marriages when spouses are not widowed, **male** child adoption and foster-families are sometimes undisclosed since their acceptance is yet to be fully reckoned with in strong patriarchal societies. This can create a ‘disconnect’ in family tree where they belong. Change in names and marital status have to be synchronized for future links.

**v.) Land disputes:** landed properties are priceless commodities, for it defines a man’s economic status in local communities. Family history is usually rekindled during land purchase or contention. During such moments, community leaders stand as surety/ witnesses of the real owner(s) in a family, traceable to forefathers who were progenitors.

**F.) Oral sources:** Human channels of information through direct contact on genealogical and other related family issues, they range as follows:

**i.) Eye-witness account:** Nothing seems more convincing than true account by a participant-witness. In communal societies, people love to gist about events, other people and what goes on with families.

**ii.) Family heads:** Significantly they are at the fore in terms of any official information required of families.

**iii.) Village heads:** Being traditional rulers resident in their community, they work with heads of families and oversee affairs of their communities comprising various families.

**iv.) Local leaders:** involved in decision making for economic and social wellbeing of community members, by extension the larger family (community). They also assist village council on administrative duties and are informants.

**v.) Storytelling:** This form of popular leisure among traditional societies is distinctive and essential information medium (Bruner, 2003; Hsu, 2008). Stories which cover a generation past should not be overlooked, else forgotten.

**G.) Extra mundane sources:** In attempt to find answers to situations which defy human and scientific explanation, some family members seek recluse through encounters with immortals or the dead particularly ancestors. Others are:

**i.) Prophecies:** Religious groups through a ‘prophet’ offer spiritual revelations and insight, answers to unexplainable family circumstance and through divination, of several years past to douse repercussion.

**ii.) Traditional healers/diviners:** Also known as native doctors, they function in similar ways as above

**iii.) Magic & sorcery:** Still very much in practice though not openly demonstrated due to dominance of Christianity.

**iv.) Personal revelations:** Persons gifted in spiritual insight e.g. dreams and visions do profess how hidden family cases have been revealed or unravelled, e.g. claims of discerning who a witch is.



**H.) Symbolic representations:** Cultures and communities have used various objects and symbols to convey messages, signs and meanings to denote history of descent; the totem poles of indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest were the symbolic representation of their ancestors and a family identity, in addition to being ties with spiritual world (Hareven, 1991)

**i.) Archaeological remains and monuments:** Provides uncommon source of geographic information such as settlements and community/ family involvements. A statue in central part of Akwa Ibom state capital city is situated where certain group of family members were known to be buried during the Nigerian- Biafran Civil war.

**ii.) Artefacts and relics:** For instance pictures, musical notes of folk songs tell stories, drawings and inscriptions e.g. ancient tattoos (not tribal marks)

**iii.) Significant landmarks and natural objects:** a rare shrub or trees planted during agreement made between families can have deeper meaning than expected, or items that represent historic family/ community events.

**iv.) Ancient writings/inscriptions** at community centres, village squares and olden day buildings offer great insight into genealogical facts.

**v.) Tombstones:** Tombstones either bear full names of deceased, years on earth, marital and maiden, origin and good qualities of the deceased.

### **I.) Social Networking Sites**

Their primary function is to post contacts, private or public messages (Krasnova *et al.*, 2010; Tow *et al.*, 2010). Social media platforms have revealed much about what occurs around individuals and families. They are presently numerous; as popular media of communication and socialization. The Instagram for instance, plays similar role as diary.

**J.) Legal cases:** Records of court proceedings e.g. customary court (Islamic court inclusive) have transaction records and rulings for persons, couples and families on issues as the purchase of landed property, agreements, unlawful deeds, invasion/ destruction of property in a community, displacement of people e.g. wives and wards and others serve as historical sources for family account. Philip (2000) corroborates that in harnessing the aforementioned tools, experiences are also enlivened, through languages (oral expression), symbols (signifiers), mores and folklores (stories and myths for life's lessons), norms (community standards) and values (that which importance is attached to)

From these discussions, primary sources in particular are tools for interpretations of the past and evidence for prevailing views on historical events. Life is not static, so are information bearing items therefore other resources not reflected in this study should furthermore be explored.

### **Key Outcome of Interview**

Oral sources usually stem from eyewitness account of past experience and helps bring out stories from the past in terms of how individuals and communities experienced the force of history, particularly of changing pattern and what has stayed the same overtime (Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 2014). Below is a report of the interview with informants. At the initial, most of them expressed surprise as to why someone would want to reveal issues about his/ her family. When duly informed of the research purpose, their consent to publish their views was granted, including their personality. Their first names are stated in Caps in the table below.

**Table 1: Respondent's Opinion**

S/N	Respondent's profile	Reasons for non- documentation of family data
1.	Chief ETIM of Edohoema-Oyoku Village, Urueofng-Oruko LGA; Royal father; Male; Oron ethnic group.	Most information passed down orally from one generation to another; Low literacy level of families made their history not to be considered for displayed. Family history known thru gossips at community social gatherings. People with bad background like stealing (armed robbery) and witchcraft refuse to disclose.
2.	CHIEF EYO of Afahaeme Eyo-Eyoabasi community; Royal father; Male; Oron LGA. Oron ethnic group.	Non-indigenes posing as indigenes for long period wouldn't want their family identity disclosed & those born out of wedlock for fear of stigmatization. Family information- by oral tradition, not to be made public. Birth is recorded; sometimes new plot of land acquired by a family or palm plantation are recorded.
3.	PRINCE MBEKE E. of Obio Etoi, Uyo LGA. National President, Ibibio National Assoc., Male; Ibibio ethnic.	It hasn't crossed the minds of people to write things about family. It is the culture: since our forefathers did not do so, then people wouldn't to avoid problems (repercussion).
4.	MADAM AGNES E.; Ikono clan, Uyo LGA. Erstwhile Woman leader / politician; Ibibio ethnic group.	Because of culture & tradition, dynasty, ancestry and deities i.e. there were rituals in time past which used to affect presently if one discontinued, so no one would want to trace anything.
5.	OKON U., Member of Ikot Osute village council; Male; Anang ethnic group	We know ourselves and the family each person belongs to. Such things are not hidden, so record is not necessary.
6.	AKPAN-Ita U. Family head; Male. Anaang ethnic group	Family account not documented but oral. It's common knowledge among community members as they are known by family names and compound of residence.
7.	SIMON U. Oldest man in Amaeze, Nsukka in Enugu State. Male, of Igbo ethnic Group	Obenike culture in our area makes it so (forbids it). Our fathers made it so & it goes on to other generations; revealing can lead the family to risk of attack, but during marriage /coronation by Igwe (Igbo Chief), community gathers to verify suitability based on lineage. Of recent, this may not be so; times have changed.

Field survey, 2015

### Summary of Findings

This study investigated an array of materials and mechanisms in which genealogical or other family information could be derived, with the goal to implore the indulgence of librarians and other information experts to consciously generate and organize vital family data. This survey also revealed the obvious that there are no secondary data sources such as indexes or bibliographies to locate related resources in the region surveyed. This paper also buttressed that unlike modern media platforms with global appeal, most local sources which convey family stories of some sort are indigenous based. Their meaning and peculiarities cannot be divorced from the environment they are identified with, which in turn limits their application. However with wide coverage and knowledge management, they would

consequently be made known, preserved and reckoned with. Documenting and tracing family history as established in this paper accords credibility and suitability, not just for kinship and pedigree chart, but entitlements e.g. allocation of rights and property.

Tracing ancestry account is basic to genealogical research, but this cannot be meaningfully achieved with prevailing believes mystifying dead people as influencing the living.

From the outcome of interview conducted, oral histories obviously are still prevalent in tracing ones family background. Using familiar conventional sources including unique ones and bits of other information enables evidence and connections for prevailing views of historical events and for scholarly interpretation of the past. Most of the informants interviewed attested that genealogical/family history generally is not documented outright for personal and cultural reasons. However, their receptiveness, willingness to disclose identity and relays their views suggested that the quest for family data is welcomed; only requires who to take the bold step.

### **Challenges, Recommendations and Conclusion**

Traditional societies in Nigeria are mostly patriarchal, whereby family inheritance is entrusted to the males and men are the decision makers with dominant positions. This rather becomes conflicting since most official records on demographics require often, personal data of a person's mother.

The population and housing census in Nigeria holds demographic data for socio-economic and political planning of a country, to aid in the allocation of funds, resources and infrastructure (Census in Nigeria, 2013). In essence, the thrust is not on family identities or links, but on citizens as a whole. Census demographics are classified information and yet to be within public reach. They contain mostly information in the last few years, as data of several years past are not digitally organised.

Every librarian belongs to a family, so one can start personal research at home coupled with the aid of many resources online to prepare archives for family and community history collections steadily. Some librarians are yet to come to terms with the need for ethnological and related research other than library issues; colleagues who were contacted to collaborate in this research were not really keen, but felt genealogical research was not a core area of librarianship. With diligence, persistence, imagination, interest and innovativeness, what it takes to set the ball rolling is half achieved, while bearing in mind that genealogical issues and pedigree charts may not interest some people.

Librarians, documentalists and allied professionals require specialized training on how to identify, encode and assign descriptions to non-textual and unique sources bearing family's past details, particularly subject specialist librarian. Also, entries for vernacular contents should be strengthened through the creation of a thesaurus, thereby increase content's visibility and identity Genealogical studies at various educational levels should be institutionalized.

Co-operation with public record office for referrals is recommended. Equally, it would be laudable for librarians to be employed at public record offices to manage files. In addition, librarians and other information specialists need to take a cue from museum experts, those in the humanities and social science fields to broaden family research base/heritage projects.

To reduce constant handling of original source, recordings whether films or photographs should be captured in digitized form, or reproducing multiple copies, scanned or microfilmed. Tracing one's ancestry requires recording direct lineage/ descent with considerations to the enlarged family structure prevalent in cultural societies, statistical information such as dates and places of birth, death and marriage can offer a base. It is advisable to proceed from the present to the past because more is known about recent generations than earlier ones to minimize tendency to derail. Finally, Conference of Village Heads was inaugurated about five years ago in Akwa Ibom State; an official statement is recommended for their approval to encourage families/family heads to have their concerns documented and in legible form for future reference.

## References

- Akongkor-Ekpe, Udo (2000). *The House of the Forest*. Ikeja, Lagos: Lordstime International Ltd.
- Arlen, S., Melissa, J., Clapp, C. and Craig, L. (2015). Producing Tutorials with Digital Professionals: Primary Sources, Pirates, and Partners. *Journal of Library Innovation* (6) 1.
- Brandt, Kathleen (2012). *Genealogical research vs. privacy restrictions*. Retrieved from [www.articles.com/expert/brandt.kathleen](http://www.articles.com/expert/brandt.kathleen)
- Bruner, J. (2003). *Making stories: Law, literature, life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Census in Nigeria (2013). Developing a computer-based census in Nigeria. Retrieved from <http://www.articlesng.com/census.nigeria-development>
- Chopra, R. N. ed. (2000). *Dictionary of Library Science*. New Delhi: Anmol publications, pp. 237-238.
- Comacchio, Cynthia (2000). The History of US: Social Science, History, and the Relations of Family in Canada, *Labour / Le Travail*, 46:167-220, with very thorough coverage.
- Ekong, Ekong (2001). *Sociology of the Ibibio: A study of Social organization and change*. Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Modern Business Press, pp. 21-42.
- Essien, A. J. (1982). *Ibibio Profile*. Lagos: Paico Press.
- Garwood-Houng, Alana (2013). Protocols: Meeting the Challenges of Indigenous Information Needs. In: Nakata, Martin and Langton, Marcia (eds.) *Australian Indigenous Knowledge and Libraries*. Australian Academic and Research Libraries. Retrieved from [www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com) on February, 2015.
- Hareven, Tamara K. (1991). The history of the family and the complexity of social change, *American Historical Review*, 96 (1): 95-124.
- HRM Edidem Akpan, Etimbuk (2012). Address by Chairman, Council of Akwa Ibom Traditional Rulers and Religious Leaders in FCT, Abuja. Retrieved from <http://councilofakwaibomtraditionalandreligiousleadersinfct.yolasite.com/>
- Hsu, J. (2008). The secrets of storytelling: Why we love a good yarn. *Scientific American Mind*, 19(4): 46-51.
- Kraskrasnova, H., Spiekermann, S., Koroleva, K. and Hildebrand, T. (2010). Online social networks: why we disclose. *Journal of Information Technology* 25(2): 109–125.
- Mbiti, J. S. (1990). African Tradition and the Promotion of Community. Retrieved from [www.africaworld.net/community.html](http://www.africaworld.net/community.html)

- New York State Library (2015). *Vital Records: Genealogy*. Retrieved from [www.nysl.nysed.gov/vitrec.html](http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/vitrec.html)
- Noah, Monday (1980). *Ibibio Pioneers*. Uyo: Scholars Press.
- Offiong, Daniel A. (1991). *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Magic and Social order among the Ibibios of Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth dimension publishing Co. Ltd.
- Parker, Elisabeth Betz (1997). *Graphic Materials: Rules for Describing Original Items and Historical Collections* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997), <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/gm/GraMatWP8.pdf> (accessed May 15, 2012).
- Philip, Kathryn (2000). Impact and significance of literacy on cultural modifications: A case study of Atai community. B.A. Research project, Vision Christian College and Seminary, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, pp. 17, 21.
- Tow, W., Dell, P., and Venable, J. (2010). Understanding information disclosure behaviour in Australian Facebook users. *Journal of Information Technology* 25(2): 126–136.
- Udo, E. A. (1982). *Who are the Ibibios?* Onitsha: African FEP publishers.
- Udoeyen, Udoeyen J. (2000). *African Linguistic Root: Footprints*. Uyo, Akwa Ibom: African Root Publishers.
- Udoidem, Iniobong (2012). *Ibibio history: Implications for the Future Generation*. A Paper presented at *Ibibio People's Union 2012 Global Congress/ Celebration of Ibibio Day* at Atlanta, USA, August 3-5, 2012.
- Udoka, Ini A. (1996). *A Portrait of History*. Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Footsteps Publications.
- Wilson, Desmond (2015). *Ethnocommunicology, Trado-modern Communication and Mediamorphosis in Nigeria: An iconoclast's demystification of some communication traditions*. 44<sup>th</sup> Inaugural Lecture of University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, University of Uyo Press Ltd.
- Wolf, Joseph (1942). Tools and technique of genealogical research. Retrieved from <http://www.digiserve.com/heraldry/tools.htm> on May 15, 2015.