

## Digital Storytelling Archives

*A Comparative Analysis of Intergenerational Transmission and Language Vitality in Nama Communities*

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Received: 07 May 2013 | Accepted: 22 August 2013 | Published: 07 September 2013 | DOI:

[10.5281/zenodo.18943330](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18943330)

### ABSTRACT

The Nama language is critically endangered, with intergenerational transmission severely disrupted by historical marginalisation and socio-economic pressures. Digital archives are increasingly promoted as tools for linguistic and cultural preservation, yet their specific efficacy in supporting lived, intergenerational practice within small, dispersed communities remains under-researched. This study comparatively analyses the impact of two distinct digital storytelling archive projects on intergenerational knowledge transfer and language vitality in Nama communities. It evaluates their effectiveness as perceived by community members across different age cohorts. A comparative case study design was employed, using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with elders, adults, and youth in communities engaged with each archive. Thematic analysis was conducted on transcripts to identify patterns in usage, perceived benefits, and barriers. Archives designed with structured intergenerational collaboration, where elders and youth co-created content, showed markedly higher engagement and were associated with increased use of Nama in domestic settings among participating families. In contrast, archives built primarily through external documentation were valued as repositories but did not stimulate the same level of active language use. A key theme was the importance of the process of creation over the archival product itself. Digital archives can support language vitality, but their design and implementation methodology is critical. Archives that embed and facilitate intergenerational co-creation are more effective catalysts for knowledge transmission than those focused solely on preservation. Future digital preservation initiatives should prioritise participatory, process-oriented methodologies that mandate intergenerational collaboration. Funding bodies should support not only technological infrastructure but also the sustained community facilitation required for co-creation. language revitalisation, digital heritage, indigenous knowledge, participatory archives, Namibia, oral history This paper provides novel empirical evidence that the process of co-creating digital archives is a more significant driver of intergenerational language transmission than the existence of the digital repository alone, offering a critical framework for evaluating cultural preservation projects.

**Keywords:** *Southern Africa, intergenerational transmission, language revitalisation, digital archives, indigenous knowledge systems, oral history, comparative methodology*

#### Article Highlights

- Process of co-creation is more significant for transmission than the archival product alone.
- Structured intergenerational collaboration led to increased Nama language use at home.
- Archives built through external documentation did not stimulate active language use.
- Design and implementation methodology are critical for digital archive efficacy.

#### Core Finding

The study provides empirical evidence that participatory, process-oriented methodologies mandating intergenerational collaboration are more effective catalysts for language transmission than preservation-focused archives.

*This analysis offers a critical framework for evaluating cultural preservation projects.*



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