

Guardians of Memory: An Ethnographic Study of Libraries and Archives in Preserving Madagascar's Intellectual Heritage

T, o, v, o, n, a, n, a, h, a, r, y, R, a, n, d, r, i, a, m, a, l, a, l, a, ,, F, a, n, j, a,
A, n, d, r, i, a, n, t, s, i, f, e, r, a, n, a, ,, L, a, l, a, t, i, a, n, a, R, a, v, o, l, o, l,
o, n, d, r, a, m, i, a, r, a, n, a, ,, R, a, k, o, t, o, m, a, l, a, l, a, A, n, d, r, i, a,
m, a, h, a, z, o, s, o, a

| Abstract

Background: This ethnographic study examines the critical, yet under-researched, role of institutional repositories in safeguarding Madagascar's intellectual heritage within the Arts & Humanities from 2021 to 2026. It addresses a gap in understanding how libraries and archives on the island contend with contemporary pressures to preserve African and Malagasy knowledge. **Purpose and objectives:** The primary purpose is to document and analyse the contemporary practices, challenges, and adaptations of these institutions. Its objectives are to identify key operational constraints, record local preservation innovations, and propose a refined agenda for both scholarly research and cultural policy. **Methodology:** The research employed a qualitative, ethnographic methodology. Data were collected between 2023 and 2025 through sustained participant observation, in-depth interviews with archivists and librarians, and documentary analysis within selected national and regional repositories in Madagascar. **Findings:** Findings reveal that institutions operate under significant structural constraints, including chronic underfunding, environmental threats to physical collections, and uneven digital infrastructure. However, the study also documented resilient, locally grounded innovations, such as community-led digitisation projects and the integration of oral history practices, which are actively mitigating these challenges. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that the preservation of Madagascar's intellectual heritage

is characterised by a tension between systemic vulnerability and grassroots agency. It argues that effective preservation must be underpinned by context-specific strategies which acknowledge this complex reality. Recommendations: Stakeholders should prioritise sustainable investment in environmental controls and digital capacity. Furthermore, they must develop inclusive policies that formally support community-based preservation initiatives and improve data transparency regarding collection conditions and preservation outcomes. Key words: archives, libraries, intellectual heritage, preservation, Madagascar, ethnographic study, cultural heritage, Arts & Humanities. Contribution statement: This study provides an empirical, contemporary analysis of heritage preservation practice in Madagascar, contributing grounded evidence to inform both regional cultural policy and global debates on decolonising archival practice.
