



Managing Traditional Knowledge Heritage in the Digital Age: A Case Study of Gedong Kirtya Library in Singaraja City, Bali

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ABSTRACT

Traditional knowledge management has been practised in various cultures to manage and transmit knowledge for generations. One of the institutions tasked with managing traditional knowledge is the library. Singaraja City has a manuscript library that manages various types of manuscripts (lontar) with diverse contents. This study explores knowledge management practices practised by Gedong Kirtya Library to manage, share, and socialise it with the broader community in the context of the digital era. The research method used in this study combines qualitative and cultural research. The results showed that the Gedong Kirtya Library maintains traditional management in the digital era, as the Dutch first established it. Gedong Kirtya's knowledge management includes identifying, developing, storing, and sharing knowledge with the community. In addition to Gedong Kirtya's lontar knowledge management, the staff also identified and preserved lontar belonging to the community. The general public will come to Gedong Kirtya and invite Gedong Kirtya to read and care for their lontar. Information Technology, which is developing rapidly, has not been utilised optimally by this library for various reasons, including the lack of human resource capabilities, traditional services, and the belief that lontar exposed to radiation will be easily damaged. The knowledge management practised by this library distributes lontar knowledge to schools and villages.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Heritage, Traditional Knowledge, Lontar Library.

INTRODUCTION

The preservation and management of traditional knowledge in the digital age is a critical endeavor to sustain cultural heritage while leveraging modern technologies. Traditional knowledge, often stored in manuscripts, oral traditions, and artifacts, serves as a repository of cultural identity and local wisdom that informs sustainable practices and societal values (Gupta, 2021). As digital tools become more pervasive, they offer transformative opportunities for



cataloging, preserving, and disseminating such knowledge to a global audience. However, integrating these technologies into traditional practices presents challenges, including resource constraints, cultural sensitivity, and the risk of eroding the authenticity of heritage materials (Smith & Dugmore, 2022).

Libraries play a crucial role in bridging this gap between tradition and technology by serving as stewards of cultural preservation. For instance, initiatives in several regions have successfully digitized ancient manuscripts, ensuring their accessibility while mitigating risks of physical deterioration (Jones et al., 2023). However, cultural contexts often dictate the extent to which such technologies can be adopted. Traditional knowledge custodians sometimes hesitate to embrace digital methods due to concerns over losing the symbolic significance of the original formats (Kumar & Thakur, 2020). Exploring case studies, such as the management practices of the Gedong Kirtya Library, can provide valuable insights into balancing the dual objectives of preservation and innovation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the management and preservation practices of traditional knowledge in the digital age. Qualitative methods are particularly effective for examining complex social and cultural phenomena, enabling in-depth insights into the processes and challenges faced by heritage institutions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data collection methods included interviews with library staff, content analysis of manuscripts, and field observations. This triangulation approach ensures the reliability and validity of findings by capturing diverse perspectives and cross-verifying data (Patton, 2015).

The research also incorporates a case study design, focusing on the Gedong Kirtya Library in Singaraja, Bali. Case studies are valuable for studying unique contexts and generating detailed accounts of specific practices, particularly in cultural and heritage settings (Yin, 2018). To understand the role of technology in traditional knowledge management, the study analyzed the library's digitalization efforts and its engagement with the community.



Data analysis followed a thematic approach, identifying recurring patterns and themes related to knowledge preservation, digital integration, and community participation. NVivo software was utilized to organize and analyze qualitative data, enhancing the study's methodological rigor (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Results

The findings of this study highlight several critical aspects of traditional knowledge management in the digital era, as observed in the case of the Gedong Kirtya Library. Three key themes emerged: (1) traditional knowledge preservation strategies, (2) challenges in digital integration, and (3) community engagement in knowledge dissemination.

Traditional Knowledge Preservation Strategies

The Gedong Kirtya Library employs a combination of manual and semi-digital methods to catalog and preserve lontar manuscripts. These practices align with traditional preservation philosophies, emphasizing the physical maintenance and symbolic significance of the original texts. Staff reported using locally sourced materials for restoration, which helps maintain the manuscripts' authenticity while ensuring their longevity. Similar preservation approaches have been reported in studies on other heritage institutions, emphasizing the importance of aligning preservation methods with cultural values (Kumar & Thakur, 2020).

Challenges in Digital Integration

Despite recognizing the benefits of digitization, such as enhanced accessibility and protection against physical deterioration, the library faces significant challenges. Limited funding and technical expertise were identified as major barriers, echoing findings in similar studies where heritage institutions in resource-constrained settings struggled with adopting advanced technologies (Smith & Dugmore, 2022). Additionally, cultural hesitations about the impact of digital exposure on lontar manuscripts further impede progress, as some staff members believe that frequent digitization could compromise their spiritual essence.



Community Engagement in Knowledge Dissemination

Community involvement emerged as a vital component of the library's operations. Outreach programs, such as mobile exhibitions and educational workshops, have successfully engaged local schools and villages, fostering a deeper appreciation of Balinese cultural heritage. These findings align with Jones et al.'s (2023) study, which highlights the role of community-focused initiatives in promoting sustainable heritage management.

Discussion

The findings underscore the complex interplay between tradition and modernity in managing traditional knowledge. While the Gedong Kirtya Library demonstrates commendable efforts to preserve cultural authenticity, its limited adoption of digital tools points to a broader issue faced by many heritage institutions globally. Previous research suggests that effective knowledge management in the digital age requires not only technological resources but also cultural sensitivity and community collaboration (Gupta, 2021).

The library's approach to community engagement serves as a model for other institutions, highlighting the importance of integrating local stakeholders in knowledge preservation. However, addressing the challenges of digital integration necessitates strategic investments in capacity-building and technology transfer. Partnerships with academic institutions and non-governmental organizations could provide the expertise and funding required to bridge this gap (Jones et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable heritage management by illustrating how traditional practices can coexist with digital innovations. The reluctance to fully embrace digitization reflects deeper cultural concerns that must be addressed through participatory and context-sensitive approaches, ensuring that digital transformation respects and enhances cultural heritage (Kumar & Thakur, 2020).



CONCLUSION

This study highlights the intricate balance required to manage traditional knowledge in the digital era, as demonstrated by the case of the Gedong Kirtya Library in Singaraja, Bali. The findings reveal that while traditional preservation strategies remain vital for safeguarding cultural heritage, integrating digital tools can enhance accessibility and ensure the longevity of fragile manuscripts. However, challenges such as limited resources, technical expertise, and cultural hesitations underscore the need for tailored approaches that respect local traditions while leveraging modern advancements.

The library's strong emphasis on community engagement provides a model for how traditional knowledge institutions can involve local stakeholders in preservation efforts, ensuring that cultural heritage remains a living, shared resource. Addressing the barriers to digitization, however, requires strategic investments, partnerships with technology providers, and capacity-building initiatives to enable sustainable knowledge management.

This study contributes to the broader discourse on cultural preservation by emphasizing the importance of integrating traditional and modern practices in a manner that honors the cultural significance of heritage materials. Future research could explore the potential of participatory digitization models and the role of international collaborations in overcoming resource limitations. Ultimately, the success of traditional knowledge management lies in its ability to adapt to contemporary challenges while staying true to its cultural roots.

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