FROM DECLINE TO DIGITAL REVOLUTION IN KADUNA STATE'S CULTURAL HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS, 1957–2025

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Abstract

Research Problem: *The presence and availability of cultural heritage institutions in Northern Nigeria from the late 1950s to the post-colonial period had showed concern regarding the recovery, preservation, modernization and accessibility in the 21st century. The institutions faced policy and legal framework challenge for cultural heritage management and modernization, while the existing law remains largely ineffective to meet the global standard. Therefore, sustainability of theseinstitutions became key paramount in the 21st century for national identity and economic development, and transmission of collective memory.*

Methods Used: *Using qualitative, historical and descriptive methodology, this techniques which were purposely selected aided the study to classify the record collections, digital utilization, identify the preservation techniques and investigates the trajectory of four selected centres in Kaduna State; the National Archives Kaduna, the Northern History Research Scheme, Arewa House, Kaduna, and National Museum Kaduna from their periods of existence to their current state of diminished capacity.*

Results: *Through a digital divide lens, the study revealed that lack of policy and legal frame work, funding; infrastructural decay, poor staffing and technical knowhow, digitization and digitalization problem have created a significant digital divide, disconnecting the institutional resources from the younger generations immersed in global digital environments.*

Conclusion: *This study concludes that collection, preservation and conservation activities were being carried out at the four selected centres in their early stage of development, but these was not enough as some point, funding and digitisation has stop and majority of their records continue to deteriorate. Hence, the need for the National Assembly and the Executive to formulate a new Laws and policy regarding the modernization of these institutions to meet up with the international standard and other sources of funding.*

Key Contribution to Knowledge: *This study has brought to the limelight of the trajectories facing the four selected centres of preservation in Kaduna State. This is totally different from what other researchers' portrait, as it views the centres beyond just preservation and conservation, but with a wider outlook of digital divide, policy and legal frame work, and fundingalternatives for modernization and sustainability to compete with counterpart globally.*

Recommendation*: The study recommended for a sustainable roadmap rooted in comprehensive national policy framework on preservation and conservation, access to local and foreign grants, seminars and conferences; staffing and training, funding through Tertiary Education Trust Fund, Education Trust Fund, Petroleum Trust Development Fund, Ministries, for capacity building, and innovative digital humanities strategies.*

Introduction

The preservation of cultural heritage plays a significant role in protecting the history of a nation for future generations. To preserve cultural heritage, countries around the world established historical institutions, such as archives, museums, and historical research and documentation centres. Preserving cultural heritage involves protecting and maintaining history because it plays a crucial role in nation-building, national cohesion, development, and integration. It is through cultural heritage we understand our cultural diversity, intergroup relations, and previous generations' successes and failures to serve as lessons to future generations.[i] Historical records we equally to be understood on how people of different civilisations maintain the progress they inherited from their previous generations over time. The knowledge of cultural heritage as history provides skills in dealing with contemporary problems of national development.[ii] These attest to the significance of the preservation of cultural heritage.

However, the institutions for the preservation of cultural heritage in northern Nigeria are in state of critical condition due to underfunding, staffing shortages and infrastructural decay, even as rapid advancement in the field of digital technology have emerged as the dominant global paradigm for storing, documenting and disseminating of historical records. While Kaduna State, which was once the capital city of Northern Nigeria, significant numbers of these institutions were established toward the end of the colonial period, and early post-colonial period, such as the National Archives Kaduna 1957 (NAK), Northern History Research Scheme 1964 (NHRS), Arewa House Kaduna (1970) and National Museum Kaduna 1975 (NMK) there is no comprehensive framework for their long-term maintenance and modernization (I.e. National policy). Allowing these institutions to collapse is at the detriment of our history and constitutes irreparable loss to

[i] Obaro Ikime,(2006),*History, The Historian and The Nation*, (Ibadan: HEBN Publishers Plc.)

[ii] Wilfred Terlumun Uji, (2025)*History and the Historian Craft*, (Lafia: Danicom Publishers).

Nigeria's historical memory and national identity. Therefore, exploring the decline and revival of cultural heritage preservation centres is very crucial. This study focuses on the above four mentioned centres in Kaduna State.

Research of Problem

The Northern part of Nigeria is rich in various kinds of cultural heritage, preserved in both public and private institutions. The resources and their preservation have attracted scholarly attention within and outside Nigeria such as Gwadabe's and Salisu Bala works[iii] discussed the State of Arabic manuscripts in NHRS and Arewa House Kaduna in the year 2009, pointing out some of the challenges facing the institutions. Additionally, Hamman, Mohammed, Alegbeleye and Tukur discussed on the challenges in procurements and preservation of Arabic manuscripts in Arewa House. There works highlight some of the lesson derived from the workshop organized by Arewa House in the recovery of manuscripts in northern Nigeria.

[iii] Gwadabe's M. M and Abdulkadir Adamu (2010) State of Arabic Manuscript in Northern History Research Scheme (NHRS) ABU Zaria Nigeria, (Arewa House Conference Proceedings, Prime Publicity Nig. Limited)./Salisu Bala,(2010) The State and Preservation of Ancient Arabic Manuscripts in Northern Nigeria: An Insight into Arewa House Public Repository, *Arewa Houses Centre for Historical Documentation & Research, Ahmadu Bello University.*

The presence and availability of cultural heritage institutions in Northern Nigeria from the late 1950s to the post-colonial period had showed concern regarding the recovery, preservation and accessibility in the 21st century. Especially, on the policy and legal framework for cultural heritage management and modernization in Nigeria, that was initiated seventy years ago, remains largely ineffective to meet the global standard, due to outdated laws that lack adequate sanctions, protective measures, and modernization, independence of the institutions especially in term of conservation and preservation protection of the resources. The laws which traced back to 1952 resulted into the establishment of first Museums in the country. This was followed by the 1974 Act and subsequently replaced with the Decree No 77 of 1979 that led to the establishment of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments in Nigeria. These laws were not able to control the illicit trade in antiquities, and also make significant changes in utilization of digital technology for sustainability in the country, as well as staffing, research and training.

Despite the presence of the above mentioned works on the state and preservation of the centres, none of these pays attention to digital divide of the heritage centres. Whereby, the vast and invaluable heritage at the centres, faced significant threat hampered by numerous daunting challenges (digital divide), leading to the decline and collapse. The study explores the decline and the digital divide within the context of the selected cultural heritage preservation centres in Kaduna State and their long term sustainability.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify and systematically analyze the primary causes of the decline of the selected centres,
2. To identify the digital technology and infrastructural gaps that contribute to the decline of the centres,
3. To propose for comprehensive, multi-stakeholder framework for the sustainable digital solution that can bridge the digital divide.

Conceptual Clarification

The term preservation is sometimes confused as it has meaning synonymous to the word conservation which can be used interchangeably. Though, some scholars viewed the two concepts differently. In line with the above statement Walker[iv] defined Preservation as 'all managerial, technical and financial considerations applied to retard deterioration and extend the useful life of materials to ensure their continued availability. Similarly, Ovowoh and Iwhiwhu[v] opined that Preservation is the action taken to anticipate, prevent, stop, or slow deterioration. It can also be defined as the process of anticipating and preventing decay. According to Osayuwa-Odigie and Eneh[vi] sees preservation as any activities that serve to prolong the life of information resources in an archives and library's collection.

Asogwa and Ifeanyi[vii] posited that preservation is a branch of library and information science that deals with maintaining and restoring records and it accessibility in archives or library. It is the study, treatment and prevention of deterioration, decay and damage collections in cultural heritage institutions. Another comprehensive definition given by IFLA Principles for the Care and Handling of Library Material[viii] Preservation to include "all the managerial and financial considerations including storage and accommodation provisions, staffing levels, policies, techniques,

[iv] Walker A. (2013) The Preservation Advisory Centre: Basic Preservation. Johnson & Alcock Ltd. Available at http://www.bl.uk/blpac/pdf/basic.pdf Retrieved on 25/5/13

[v] Ovowoh R.O and Iwhiwhu B.E. (2010) Preserving Information Bearing Material in Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria.Library Philosophy and Practice.Retrieved 21st January, 2026.

[vi] Osayuwa-odigie H.T and Eneh A.C.(2011) Preservation and Conservation of Non-Book Materials in the University of Benin and Delta State University Libraries.*Journal of the Nigerian Library Association,* 44,(1).

[vii] Asogwa, B.E. and Ifeanyi J. E.(2012) The Challenges of Preservation of Archives and Records in the Electronic Age.*PNLA Quarterly 76:3*. Available at http://unllib.unl.edu/LPP/PNLA%20Quarterly/asogwa-ezema76-3.pdf retrieved on 14/06/2026

[viii] IFLA (2010) Principles for the Care and Handling of Library Materials, International Preservation,*Issues, Number One*. Retrieved On-line on 22nd June, 2026 from http://archive.ifla.org/VI/news/pchlm.pdf./

and methods involved in preserving library and archival material and the information contained in them." Thus, Preservation is the process by which information resources/records are protected from all forms of deterioration, mutilation and lost, for the use of present and future generations.

Ngulube[ix] see conservation as a field of knowledge concerned with the coordination and planning for the practical application of the techniques of binding, restoration, paper chemistry, and other material technology and the preservation of information resources. Conservation in other words deals with all the activities that involve physical treatment of individual item by professional conservator or conservation technicians. Asogwa and Ifenyi defined Conservation on the other hand as the treatment and repair of individual items in the collection in order to slow their decay and damage and to restore them to a usable state.[x]

Methodology

This paper adopts qualitative, historical and descriptive methodology which involves the utilization of primary and secondary sources in oral and written forms respectively. The oral sources comprised of long, intensive, and relatively unstructured oral interviews, whereas the written sources used include books, pamphlets, journals, memoirs, committee reports, government records, dissertations. Apart from the interviews, sourcing of relevant documents on the topic of discussion, the researcher closely analyses and examines the available resources in the key four selected centres of preservation. This process aided the study to classify the records collection as well as identify the preservation techniques and access the level of utilization of digital technology of the institutions.

Through purposive sampling, the researcher selects centres storage rooms to identify and examines the storage facilities and techniques, preserved catalogues, damage records, and Arabic manuscripts from the centres. This couples with a snow-balling technique, which enabled the researcher to identify the interim reports written of the NHRS from 1962-1970, committee and annual reports of the NAK, and NMK, and Arewa House Administrative reports, which no doubt gives basic information about the sourcing, management and preservation of the institution.

Discussion

The four selected centres of preservation located in Kaduna State has their historical roots with the establishment of the National Archives

[ix] Ngulube, P. (2003) "Preservation and Access to Public Records and Archives in South Africa". Unpublished doctoral thesis submitted to the School of Human and Social Studies,University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. Retrieved June 21, 2026 from: http://www.infs.ukzn.ac.za/thesispn.pdf

[x] Asogwa, B.E. and Ifeanyi J. E.(2012) The Challenges of Preservation of Archives and Records in the Electronic Age .PNLA Quarterly 76:3. Available at http://unllib.unl.edu/LPP/PNLA%20Quarterly/asogwa-ezema76-3.pdf retrieved on 14/06/2026

Kaduna. It started as the Federal Public Records Office at Kaduna in 1953 at No. 6 and 13 Keffi Road, however, the No. 6 bungalow was later withdrawn in 1957.[xi] By 1960s-1970s, some institutions and states started establishing historical institutions. The idea for the establishment of the Northern History Research Scheme (N.H.R.S.) was first conceived in 1960 by Kenneth Onwuka Dike.[xii]

However, project was set up to document the history and culture of the northern Nigeria people. Within the period 1956-1965 it was under preliminary work for launching. By 1962 the commencement of the operation of the scheme coincided with the establishment of ABU and was located in Zaria. Thus because of its location in Zaria the Northern Regional Government transferred the scheme to the University. By 1964, when the University became fully operational the Scheme commenced its activities as a joint project with the University.[xiii]

While the NHRS was consolidating, Arewa House was founded to write the history of the communities of the Northern Nigeria. The history of Arewa House as a Centre for Research and Historical Documentation goes back to the year 1970, some years after the first military coup in Nigeria. Hence, in 1970, a 'History of Northern Nigeria Committee' was set up with the aim of writing a book on the history of Northern Nigeria.[xiv]

By 1972 the Interim Common Services Agency (ICSA) gave formal approval for the utilisation of the Residential Quarters and Office Complex of the late Premier as a Centre for Research and Historical Documentation, named Arewa House (i.e. Northern House). With the abolishing of the Interim Common Services Agency, Arewa House was transferred to the Ahmadu Bello University in 1976 on order of the Federal Military Government.[xv]

The Nigerian National Museum came into being after the discovery of Nok Head artefacts during tin mining, on 28 July, 1943. Kenneth Murray became the Nigeria's first Surveyor of Antiquities in the newly created Nigeria Antiquities Service (which became the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments in 1979). By 1957 the first Nigerian Museum was found in Lagos and Bernard Fagg served as the Director.[xvi] The Kaduna Museum

[xi] NAK/AR1/31/, Second Report of the National Archives, 1957-1958.

[xii] Professor Dike was *then the Vice-Chancellor, University of Ibadan.* For detail refer to *NorthernHistory Research Scheme (N.H.R.S) First* interim Report, February *1966, P. 2. This document is available in the* library section of the *NHRS, Department of History, Ahmadu Bello* University, Zaria.

[xiii] NHRS First Interim Report, February *1966.*

[xiv] ADM/11/65/AH/37.1 (Vol.I) Arewa House Statute

[xv] Ibid.

[xvi] Abdulfatah Abdulrahim, (2016) "Reservation and Conservation of Records in the National Archives And National Museum, Kaduna," A Thesis Submitted To The School of Postgraduate Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

was opened in 1975 following the donation of the old Northern People's Congress (NPC) building by the North Central State Government.[xvii]

Results

Record Collections and Preservations

The main objectives of these institutions are to collect, document and preserve records of historical significant for national interest, value and future generation. These institutions put so much effort to acquired records through the constitution of mobile teams who tour communities, provinces, locals, states and offices of the federation in the various regions in the country. For instance, the National Archives Kaduna assembled and preserved all the records in northern Nigeria by touring the following places between 1959 and 1960: Kano, Katsina, Minna, Bida, and Zaria, in which over 160,000 documents were acquired in these exercises.[xviii]

N.A, Kaduna also organised another tours from 1961 to 1962, to Kano, Yola, Makurdi Provincial Offices and the Keffi District Office for acquiring official records of historical value from the Ministries of Land and Surveys, Agriculture, Animal Health and Forestry, Finance, Local Government, Trade and Industry and Health.[xix] Statistics of the records acquired within the period 1961-1962 are captured in table below.

the Award of Master's Degree in Records and Archives Management Department of Library and Information Science, Faculty of Education.

[xvii] Ibid. p.48.

[xviii] NAK/AR/31/, Annual Report of the National Archives of Nigeria, 1959-1960.

[xix] NAK/AR1/31/, The Sixth Annual Report.

Table 1.1: Statistics of Officials Records Acquired at the National Archives, Kaduna, 1961- 1962

S/No.	Place of Acquisition	Quantity of Records
1	Kano High Court	1,447
2	Provincial Office, Yola	492
3	Provincial Office, Makurdi	3,073
4	District Office, Keffi	595
5	Ministry of Land and Survey, Kaduna	219
6	Ministry of Agriculture, Kaduna	1,421
7	Ministry of Finance, Kaduna	818
8	Ministry of Local Government, Kaduna	666
9	Ministry of Trade and Industry, Kaduna	541
10	Ministry of Health, Kaduna	12,000
Total		21, 272

Source: NAK/AR1/31/, The Sixth Annual Report of the Work of the National Archives of Nigeria, 1961-1962, p. 5-6.

Therefore, an estimated of 21,272 new official records were acquired from the various agencies and provinces in northern Nigeria, which were processed and preserved in the National Archives, Kaduna. Furthermore, the staff of the Kaduna branch of the National Archives engaged in re-arrangement and re-listing of the 50,000 official records of the Northern Provinces Secretariat for easy accessibility.[i] The bulk of the records in the National Archives Kaduna were classified as files of the Secretariat of the Northern Provinces, Ministries and Departments, and Provinces of northern Nigeria such as Bauchi, Bornu, Kabba, Nassarawa, Munshi, Muri, Nupe, Yola, and Zaria.[ii] Within the same period of 1961-1962, 902 official records were received from the National Archives headquarters, see table 1.2 below.

[i] Ibid. p. 7

[ii] Focus Group Discussion with Othman Mudassir Garba, Principal Archivist, Head of Searcher Room, 46 years; Jibrin Abdullahi Yahaya, Principal Archivist, 43 years; and Maimuna Aliyu Ahmed, Archivist II, 43 years, at Search Room, National Archives Kaduna, 7th April, 2026.

Table 1.2: Statistics of Officials Records Returned to the National Archives Kaduna from the National Archives Headquarters, 1961-1962

S/No.	Agency	Quantity of Records
1	Ministry of Works, Kaduna	293
2	Ministry of Health, Kaduna	226
3	Provincial Office, Ilorin	32
4	Prison Department, Kaduna	341
5	Department of Agriculture, Kaduna	10
Total		902

Source: NAK/AR1/31/, The Sixth Annual Report of the Work of the National Archives of Nigeria, 1961-1962, p. 6.

Furthermore, like other historical official records, Arabic manuscripts are also acquired after tours and through gifts and purchases. From 1959 to 1960, about 1,000 Arabic manuscripts were secured through gifts and purchases and preserved in National Archives, Kaduna.[i] For example, two boxes of Arabic and Hausa manuscripts were purchased from the late Major Edgar, who served with the Northern Nigeria Administrative Service, at a cost of £75.[ii] Also, from 1961 to 1962, the Manuscript Division of the Kaduna Archives embarked on extensive tours for acquiring Arabic manuscripts in Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Bornu, and Sardauna provinces.[iii]Some of these manuscripts were also purchased at the cost of £241:17:6d in the period.[iv] This resulted in the acquisition of 1,286 Arabic manuscripts.

By far the largest and the most important research facility are the library and the archives of Arewa House which are housing Government publications, Colonial Records, and Arabic/Islamic Manuscripts belonging to Northern Nigeria people and societies. The archive houses invaluable records relating to the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period. The entire Newspapers and Magazine produced in Nigeria are preserved in there, including government publications and periodicals. Also preserved are the parliamentary debates of the Federal, and Regional Parliaments (Northern, Western and Eastern regions); Hansards of the second republic; the Laws of Nigeria from colonial period to date; the intellectual properties of the Sokoto Jihad leaders, and other scholars of West African sub-region and beyond in the form of Arabic and Ajami manuscripts.[v]

[i] NAK/AR/31/, Annual Report of the National Archives of Nigeria, 1959-1960.

[ii] Ibid. Pp. 11-12

[iii] NAK/AR1/31/, The Sixth Annual Report, p. 4

[iv] Ibid. Pp. 14-15

[v] LG49/A263 I26CI, Bashir Ikara, (1987) Arewa House Profile: A Synopsis of Research Promotion and Development in the Centre for Research and Historical Documentation, ABU Zaria. In Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the ABU Zaria (5th Oct, 1962-4th Oct, 1987).

These materials continue to attract international communities to partner with the Centre, which underscore their importance as source material for the generation of new knowledge.

The Archive section of Arewa House like in NAK also contains essentially a large number of Arabic manuscripts and hand written texts of the Qur'an and other Islamic Literature dating back to over three hundred (300) years. They also include copies of manuscripts of the works of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio, his brother Abdullahi and his son Muhammad Bello, the famous trio who, as Muslim intellectuals and revolutionaries in the northern Nigeria. There are also a number of correspondences in Ajami/Arabic scripts between the various Muslim rulers of the Caliphate before been subdued bythe British colonial domination in 1903.[vi] It is to be noted however that some of these Arabic and Ajami manuscripts are declassified.

The National Museum Kaduna policy on preservation and conservation was set to have been covered by the Degree No. 77 of 1979 to utilize and preserve all strategies in the museum. However, this policy was subjected to review when the need arises and majorly caters for their artifacts and therefore give little room for records preservation. The museum holds and display collections such as; material culture, government document/records, historical documents, accession forms, conservation reports, trustee approval, Arabic manuscripts, documents attached to artifacts, photographs, reports, and maps.[vii]

The NHRS as a scheme tasked with the retrieval and preservation of historical resources for the reconstruction of Northern Nigeria history. The centre contains resources in form of Arabic and Ajami Manuscripts Knowledge. In the process of this research paper an analysis was made to the contents of 1,933 Arabic and Ajami manuscripts in the Northern History Research Scheme of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. This covers the areas like Administration/Politics, Astronomy/Geography, Biography/History, Diplomacy, Education, Ethic, Jihad, Jurisprudence, Language, Medicine, Poetry, Praise/Tribute, Sermon, Sociology, Sufism, Supplication, and Theology and they are preserved in brown envelops with handwritten information about them, the details of which are represented on the card-catalogues.

Techniques of Processing and Preservation of Records

Before the preservation of acquired records, they have to be processed at the repository section of the archives. The repository section is the most significant unit of the preservation centres and holds the responsibilities of administrative and mechanical services of records.[viii] Some of the acquired records are not

[vi] LG49/A263 I26CI, Bashir Ikara, (1987) Arewa House Profile: A Synopsis of Research Promotion and Development in the Centre for Research and Historical Documentation, ABU Zaria. In Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the ABU Zaria (5th Oct, 1962-4th Oct, 1987)

[vii] Abdulfatah Abdulrahim, (2016) "Reservation and Conservation of Records in the National Archives And National Museum, Kaduna,"……..p.53

[viii] NAK/AR/31/, Annual Report of the National Archives of Nigeria, 1957-1958.

in good condition; as they are either infected by fungus or insect pests or are kept in an unfavourable environment before acquisition. Therefore, records received in such conditions would not be preserved in that state. Such records have to be examined, cleaned and fumigated before they are checked; sorted and repaired those require repairing.[ix]

It is after these processes that documents are stored for permanent preservation. These techniques of processes, preservation and conservation are the same across the Centres under study in Kaduna State. However, prior to the preservation, the records are sorted based on different values. For instance, to be classified based on administrative, education, legal, cultural, religious, and traditional values.[x] This is followed by a list and description of the records, binding those that need to be bound and putting them in cardboard boxes known as 'acid-free box' before being taken to the storage room for permanent preservation.[xi] Pictures 1 and 2 in figure 1.1 show the processed bound and file records in the acid-free box produced for the purpose of permanent preservation of documents and preventing chemical degradation of stored records. The cardboard box protects the records from any unfavourable circumstance such as records deterioration and damage.[xii] Picture 3 shows the storage room with iron shelves on which the cardboard boxes are arranged.

Even the very fortunate records preserved in cardboard boxes cannot be safe from existential threat. This is because some of the records are more than 100 years old and ageing; therefore, paper documents are deteriorating, as shown in picture 3. Picture 4 captures thousands of unbound newspapers of records, which, whenever a researcher requests them, would be instructed to be used with care, as the papers are weak and often tear when they are used.

[ix] Ibid. p. 4.

[x] Interview with Salawu Olatunji Nafiu, Head of Repository Section, National Archives Kaduna, 28th January, 2026.

[xi] Ibid.

[xii] Interview with Othman Mudassir Garba, Principal Archivist, Head of Searcher Room, 46 years, 9th April, 2026.

Figure 1.1: Selected Photos of Preserved Records in Storage Room



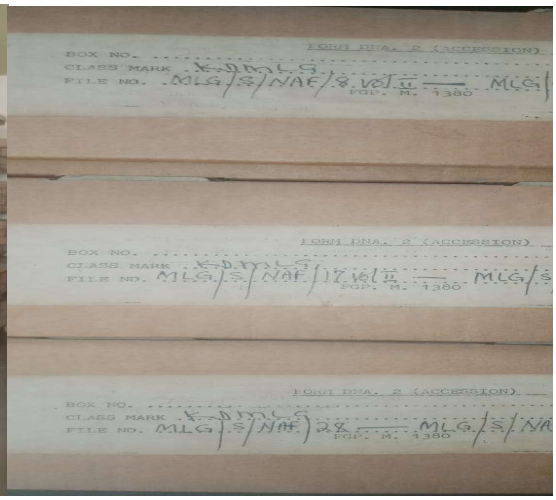
Picture 1: Bound records in Acid-free box



Picture 2: Files Records in Acid-free box



Picture 3: Storage room with records



Picture 4: Each capture class mark and file preserved in Acid-free boxes on the Acid-free boxes

Source: Field Work, National Archives, Kaduna, 8th April, 2026

Pictures 5 and 6 capture the conditions of the Nigerian gazettes, which are in a deplorable state, as the majority of them are torn up without repairs, and allowing them without repair would lead to damage.



Picture 5: Nigerian Gazette



Picture 6: Nigerian Gazette

Source: Field work, 15th April, 2026

Though there is a repair and binding section in both of NAK and Arewa House archives, and National Museum but they could not render any assistance because, in the NAK, it is no longer functioning,[i] while in Arewa House and NMK the section stop receiving the centres financial support for decades, while NHRS has nothing of such nature. The equipment in the sections are those which were supplied since the last century, have become obsolete and auctioned off by the archives.[ii] Unfortunately, they are not replaced during the period of this study.

Another example is drawn from Pictures 7 and 8 capture the catalogue records of the archives which are known as 'Simple List'. Though they are bound, they are not in good physical shape and some of the text papers tore up.

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[i] Interview with Salawu Olatunji Nafiu, Head of Repository Section, National Archives Kaduna, 28th January, 2026.

[ii] Ibid.



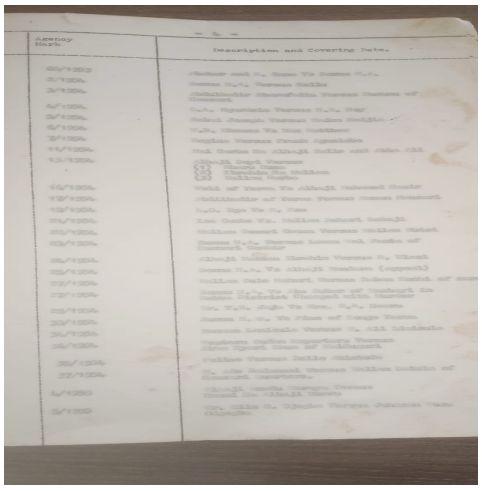
Picture 7: Catalogue Records (Simple List) A



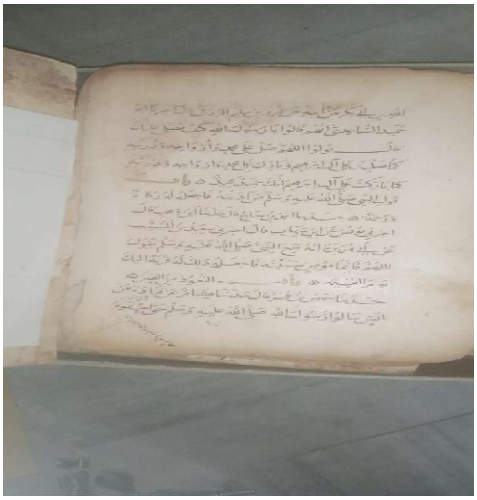
Picture 8: Catalogue Records (Simple List) B

Source: Field work, 15th April, 2026

In addition, some of the written texts of the simple lists are faded and could not be comprehended, as shown in picture 9. The Arabic manuscripts have the advantage of a hardcover, but the paper of the written text is weak and deteriorating as captured in picture 10 because some of these manuscripts were written since the early nineteenth century.



Picture 9: Text of Catalogue Records



Picture 10: Text of Arabic Manuscript

Source: Field work, 15th April, 2026

Digitalization of Records and Cultural Heritages Collections

The first unknown attempt made to digitalize the archival records was in the 1980s and 1990s when the Cultural Centres in Kaduna utilised the micrographics technology that records information as miniaturized in film. The technology has been available since film technology became cost effective around 1900. Microform is a generic title for anything containing micro-images. There are different microforms that serve various information needs. The following are some examples of the early technology used by the fours centres under study this include, CDs, Cassettes, Microfiche, Aperture cards and Microfilm.

However, the case of NHRS was opportune to have their first Microfiche machine in 1970s the same period with Ahmadu Bello University Library, and Arewa House,[i] though it has been quite popular among librarians and archivists in Nigeria for number of reasons. One of its advantages is that, to preserves the valuable information in the original document and back-up copies are available if the original is damaged. Second it is economical way of storing large numbers of original documents at the centre. While, researchers are allowed to use the microform copies rather than the original which therefore save unnecessary handling of the original documents.[ii] Microfilm compared with other storage media like paper is very compact and portable. For instance much of the Arewa House Archival records that were in the form of microform are now available at Kashim Ibrahim Library, ABU, Zaria. This was the first stage of digitization of records among the archival centers in Kaduna state.

Computer Technology

Following the usage and adoption of microfilm and microfiche to preserve the records of the libraries and archives, a more advanced technology emerged which prove for the records to be more secure and for the researches to be more accessible. This shows advancement in the field of technology in the global academic system. However, with the proliferation of ICT and internet since 2000, these centres turn to explore it advantages for academic purposes. For instance, Arewa House made attempt to digitalize it archival records were in 2007. The Centre received two set of computers and scanners (see the pictures below), which were used to scan colonial and post-colonial files, and newspaper retrieved when the centre was founded in 1970. This aimed at in order to actualize the transformation of hardcopies archival records to digital form. This was consequential following the hosting of International Conference organised by Arewa House, Centre for Historical Documentation and Research of Ahmadu Bello University, Kaduna in collaboration with the United State Embassy in Abuja.[iii] It was held on March 7th 2007 to kick start a major project on the procurement, preservation, conservation and digitization of the rich Nigerian ancient Arabic/Ajami manuscripts Heritage for the development of new knowledge.

[i] Bashir Maiwada, (2021) A History of Computing and ICT in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria 1967-2015, M.A Thesis, Department of History, ABU, Zaria.

[ii] Interview with Suleiman Mohammed, Arewa House, Head of Repository, 51 years, 20th April 2026.

[iii] Ibid.



Picture 11: First Digital Computer



Picture 12: Computer UPS



Picture 13: Scanner



Picture14: Scanner/CPU/Preservation box

Source: Field work, 15th April, 2026

Preservation through Digitization

Initially, soft copies of documents are preserved in microfilm and disk in the archives despite not having enough space to contain information. However, with the introduction of Information Communication Technology (ICT), the National Archives, Kaduna, opened an ICT section, which transferred documents preserved in microfilms and disks to computers.[39] In 2018, the National Archives, Kaduna, obtained an industrial scanner and commenced scanning documents for digitisation. It was the initiative of the National Archives management to embark on digitisation of archives for researchers around the world to have access to the accumulated documents in the Nigerian archives. However, being a huge project, the National Archives,

[39] Interview with Salawu Olatunji Nafiu, Head, Repository Section, 52 years, National Archives, Kaduna, 28th January, 2026

Kaduna, only scanned a few documents due to a shortage of staff dedicated the project.[40]

As of the period of this research, the National Archives, Kaduna, has a functional website and able to upload a few simple lists (catalogues) indicating the kind of archival materials available. Despite the efforts to digitise its archives, the National Archives in Kaduna faces significant challenges in scanning all of its documents. The situation is further compounded by reliance on a single scanner and a severely limited number of staff.

In an effort to utilize digital technology for digitization and digitalization of Arewa House resources, a was survey conducted by Dr. Angel Batiste of the Library of Congress Washington DC, in 2007 has buttressed the finding of earlier researchers that there are hundreds of thousands of original Arabic/Ajami manuscripts in private/public repositories in various parts of northern and south-western Nigeria. Some of the original manuscripts were written centuries before the outbreak of the Sokoto Jihad in 1804 and there are also many manuscripts written by Sokoto Jihad leaders.[41]

In May 2009, another conference was held on Arabic Manuscripts organised by the Arewa House in collaboration with the Ford Foundation Office for West Africa Sub-Region. The conference was held in order to review the various Programs developed and supported by Arewa House on preservation and conservation of ancient Arabic manuscripts that are stored in public and private repositories.[42]

However, it was unfortunate that Arabic/Ajami manuscripts received less attention in term of digitization until 2007 onward, when an independent Unit was established. Following it establishment, the Unit began to realise it set aim and objectives on the procurement, preservation, conservation and digitization of the rich Nigerian ancient Arabic/Ajami manuscripts Heritage for the development of new knowledge.[43] As mentioned above, the digitization effort was stagnated when the 20 CD plates of the digitalized records were discovered corrupted following their poor handling and care.[44] This raise a serious concern regard to digitization method earlier adopted, i.e. scanned and stored in CD plates for public used. The failure convinced the management to seek the alternative of hosting a websites where the scan copies in the form of digital can be display. This is the global standard of any modern archives.

Earlier on, Arewa House was opportune to have it first internet networking facilities in 2003-2005[45] by 2014 the Centre achieved its goal of having a website. The installation of internet aimed to transform and strengthen the

[40] Interview with OthmanMudassir Garba, Principal Archivist, Head of Searcher Room, 46 years, 9th April, 2026.

[41] Interview with Suleiman Mohammed, Arewa House, Head of Repository, 51 years, 20th April 2026.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] *The Five Years of Mahdi Administration, 1999-2004,* "Computerization and Internet Connectivity", Office of the Vice Chancellor, ABU Press Limited, 2004.

centre to compete among its global peers with particular interest to accessing the archival holdings from anywhere around the world. When the Arewa House installed internet, it did so after acquiring tens of set of computers and Laptops for it Units and Offices which were meant to shift away from heavy reliance on typewriters. The Centre also acquired modern photocopy machines and color printers for office uses.[46] The photocopy machine has been utilise for duplicating copy of archival record or file needed to be acquire by researcher for his research purposes.

It is important to note that the success in the digitization of Arewa House was as a result of collaboration, support from local and foreign donors such as British Library, Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCCA), Istanbul, Turkey, ECOWAS, TETFund Nigeriaetc. The supports make Arewa House visible among the other centres in term of digitization and digitalization, and revenue generation among others.

The field survey conducted in the National Museum shows that, there is minimal utilization of digital technology at the centres were most of its historical document, conservation reports, reports and photographs are still exposed to threats.

The NHRS digitization of their resources is at zero level. The manuscripts have been in critical condition since the decline of the project in the 1980s. Even the once preserved in the microfilm machine are exposed to danger. The system collapsed due to poor funding, lack of experience archivist of preservation and conservation. This left the centre with thousands of manuscripts in hard copy, microfilm, cassette and CDs, while on computerisation of the centre for preservation or conservation of the resources. The only computers operating in the centres are for administrative purposes and currently the space has turn out to be a Post-graduate Library in the Department of History.

Challenges

Despite the effort put forward by the management of these Centres in collection, documentation, preservation and conservation of the cultural heritage and historical records. However, the state of the records in the National Archives, Arewa House, National Museum and NHRS Kaduna needs urgent attention and a total overhaul to address the ageing and deterioration situation of the paper documents. The origin of these paper documents now become a government records were of high quality; that is why the records last for more than 100 years and are still in use. Majority of the records, due to ageing, have deteriorated. Some of them either have faded text or have breaking paper, which could lead to damage and loss of these significant records. A sample of the condition was drawn from the records of the National Archives see. Figure 1.2 below captures some of the conditions of the records. Pictures 1 and 2 captured some parts of the section of files' records in the storage room which are not in good condition and covered with dust. Some of the records indicate ageing and lack of care.

The centres did not have enough staff and specialization in modern ways of preservation and conservation in order to be assigned the task of taking care of these significant historical records. For example NHRS only has a librarian not an archivist. In all the centres majority of records in are not preserved in cardboard boxes. There are thousands of such records which

[46] Interview with Suleiman Mohammed, Arewa House, Head of Repository, 51 years, 20th April 2026.

unfortunately are not processed due to lack of manpower and allowing them lie on the ground, leaving them in this condition would be damaging.[47] In addition, lack of funding is also among the major challenges facing the centres and lack of preservation policy the suit the global standard of modernization of the centres.

With the exception of the NAK and Arewa House, and little attention to National Museum, the Northern History Research Scheme as a project has virtually collapsed since the late 1980s. This is because it no longer receives any funding from the State Governors of the Northern states of Nigeria i.e., successor states of the Northern Regional Government, as the region disintegrated into 19 states, or from Federal Government either directly or through one of its ministries agencies or even from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. It is now directly under the History Department as a Post-graduate library with "ceremonial" Director.

Recommendation

Review of the national policy framework on preservation and conservation in order to allow the centres to adapt to modern means of preservation and digital collection, as well as to bid for funding, assign clear staff responsibility, organize seminars and conference and to protect the valuable cultural heritage.

ICT has brought a lot of revolution in the way records are stored, processed and disseminated. With the adaption of digital technology their records can now be created electronically, the old manual records can now be digitized and stored electronically. It is in this light that the firsthand information found that none of the above mentioned records of the National Museum Kaduna were digitally preserved as of 2020. Even those with digitized copies are only accessible within the computers of the centres, not online. There is no arrangement to upload neither the scanned records online nor a standard website for researchers' accessibility globally as in the case of Vatican Museum, British Museum, The Acropolis in Greece, among others.

Additionally, there is urgent need to resuscitate NHRS as a research scheme with funding from Government and donor agencies both local and foreign. These materials are vital for ongoing historical and cultural research, are still on papers which are rapidly decaying, and stored in the microfilms;however, due to the obsolescence of microfilm readers, CDs, and Cassettes, researchers no longer want to access due to unclear texts. The Scheme as is presently constituted should commence an immediate emergency programme of saving the Arabic and other manuscripts in its position from complete damage so that it could be restored and properly stored for posterity and sustenance of research. Also, there is need for sufficient storage and facility as the current building is too small for the centre.

Generally, there is need for a total overhaul of the National Archives, Arewa House, National Museum and NHRS, Kaduna to save the historical records from existential threat, and the only effective and sufficient way out is digitisation and digitalization of the records. Converting these records to digital form is the only solution to ensure continuing preservation of these historical records for a long time period, protect them from environmental hazards and misplacement and mishandling by humans, and enhance accessibility to far and near researchers

[47] Interview with Othman Mudassir Garba, Principal Archivist, Head of Searcher Room, 46 years, 9th April, 2026.

who could not afford to visit Kaduna. This would improve the source of revenue to the archives by programming the records to be accessed only after making payment. Digitisation and digitalisation does not mean the original documents should be destroyed; the original should be kept to checkmate internet manipulation.

To achieve digitisation and digitalisation, there is a need for the procurement of high-impact digital scanners, which could capture big maps and graphics, a functional website.[48] Thus, there is a need for funding to procure adequate digital equipment and other infrastructure that will aid the digitisation and digitalisation of these significant historical records. Lack of adequate funding, insufficient infrastructure and manpower are the reasons for the present deteriorated state of records among the four centres of the cultural heritage and historical documentations institutions in Kaduna state.[49]

Thus, for successful digitisation and digitalisation of these records, the government (TETFund, ETF, PTDF, State and Local government etc.), private organisations, and individuals have to come to the rescue of the historical records through adequate funding and provision of infrastructure for digitisation and the manpower to carry out these huge tasks. The private sector and individuals also have a role to play by providing some of the infrastructure needed for these vital tasks through interventions.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Interview with Salawu Olatunji Nafiu, Head of Repository Section, National Archives Kaduna, 28th January, 2026.

Conclusion

In the light of the findings of the study, it is concluded that collection, preservation and conservation activities were being carried out at the National Archives, Arewa House, NHRS, and National Museum, Kaduna there early stage of development using the early technology of microfilm and microfiche, scanners, computers but not adequately enough to cover the whole resources due to lack of funding, qualified staffing, inadequate facilities and preservation policy. Using qualitative, historical and descriptive methodology the paper identify the above mentioned challenges and revealed that some measures were taken to curtail the deterioration, but this was not enough as some point the digitisation has stop and some of their records continue to deteriorate. Hence, the need for a well written preservation policy to meet up with the international standard and other sources of funding through advocacy, solicitation, endowment, consultancy, organizing seminars and workshops especially at the NAK, NMK and NHRS that will address the deficiencies identified in the findings of this study.

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