

Positioning Africa in the New Frontiers of Film Archiving: An Exploration of the Impact of Digital Technology on Contemporary Film Preservation and Access Practices

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed contemporary filmmaking, preservation, and access practices, creating new possibilities for global film archiving. However, Africa remains largely marginalized in these transformative shifts, with many countries still grappling with outdated technologies and infrastructure in their film archives. This paper explored how Africa can position itself within the new frontiers of film archiving as part of the impact of digital technology on film preservation and access. The study adopted a qualitative approach, utilizing content analysis and case studies from Nigerian archival initiatives, including the Nigerian Film Corporation's collaboration with German institutions. It questions the sustainability of these initiatives and their long-term impact on local film preservation efforts. The theoretical framework drew on Cultural Preservation Theory and Technological Determinism, analyzing how technological advancements intersect with cultural heritage management in the African context. Key findings indicate that while digital technologies hold significant potential for African film archiving, challenges such as financial dependency, inadequate infrastructure, and the absence of cohesive national policies persist. The reliance on foreign expertise and funding raises concerns about the sustainability and autonomy of African film archives. Additionally, the study highlights the need for stronger governmental involvement and the establishment of a comprehensive national framework for audiovisual preservation. This paper contributes to the discourse on African film archiving by offering recommendations for integrating digital preservation practices into national cultural policies, fostering local expertise, and ensuring sustainable archival development across the continent.

Keywords: *Film Archiving, Digital Technology, Film Preservation, Access Practices, African Cinema.*

Introduction

The introduction of digital technology in modern filmmaking, laboratory, and access practices has opened a world of new possibilities in film archiving. These advances have fundamentally transformed how film archives operate globally, offering innovative methods for preservation, restoration, cataloguing, and public access (Fossati 63). However, the question remains: is this technological transformation equally evident in Africa? In many African countries, even those few that can boast of

functional film archives are still grappling with obsolete technologies and inadequate infrastructures (Idyo and Methuselah 131–145). Where, then, and how can Africa be located within this emerging global dynamic of digital archiving? Will African film archives remain a shadow of themselves, or can they be repositioned to embrace and integrate these new technological opportunities? Furthermore, do African governments truly understand the significance of film archiving and digital preservation? Are they prepared to make the massive investments necessary to adopt and sustain these evolving technologies?

In Nigeria, these concerns are particularly pressing. If the ongoing interventions from German institutions were to be withdrawn, would the Nigerian government through the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) still prioritize film archiving, digital restoration, and preservation? Would programmes like the Master's in Film Culture and Archival Studies at the National Film Institute Jos survive beyond external sponsorship, or would they quietly collapse? These pertinent questions underscore the fragility of current efforts and the urgent need for a locally-driven, sustainable approach to archival development across the continent. Again, as it has been over the years, the Nigerian Film Corporation has just hosted a workshop titled “Preservation of Audiovisual Materials and Archival Practices” from April 1st to 11th, 2025, at the National Film, Video and Sound Archive (NFVSA) in Jos as reported in *The Gleamer Newspaper* (3).

While this represents a significant step in enhancing archival skills, suffice it to say that, strengthening national commitment through sustained investment, developing a robust framework for skill application and evaluation, and embedding audiovisual preservation into Nigeria's cultural policies and educational programmes are essential steps toward ensuring that the benefits of such trainings truly endure. Without deliberate efforts to internalize and institutionalize these practices, Africa risks remaining on the margins of the global advancements in film archiving. This paper therefore explores how the advent of digital technology has reshaped the global landscape of filmmaking and film archiving, and interrogates Africa's place within these emerging dynamics, emphasizing the urgent need for homegrown policies, sustainable investments, and strategic actions that prioritize the continent's audiovisual heritage.

It is essential to acknowledge that, several scholars have contributed significantly to the discourse on film archiving and preservation in Africa, particularly in Nigeria in this instance; offering valuable insights into archival principles, institutional frameworks, and policy recommendations. Ailakhu's course guide on records management and archives administration (2012) presents foundational archival knowledge, while Akintunde (1992) and Okwilagwe (1992), writing within the framework of Nigeria's national film policy discourse, emphasize the necessity for a viable national film archive and a corresponding policy to support film preservation.

Sokomba (2001) explores the technical considerations in transitioning from video to cine film, highlighting early concerns with format obsolescence.

More recently, Ajayi (2025) documents the Nigerian Film Corporation's ongoing efforts at building archival capacity through training initiatives. Idyo and Jeremiah (2021) assess systemic weaknesses in Nigeria's archiving landscape and propose functional strategies for reform, while Idyo and Ademiju-Bepo (2023) examine the specific challenges posed by digital technology to preservation practices in Nollywood. Although these works, among others, offer significant foundational and policy-driven perspectives, there remains a critical gap in examining the *contemporary impact* of digital technology on both film preservation and access. This current study addresses that gap by investigating how digital transformations are reshaping the practices, accessibility, and sustainability of film archiving in real time.

Methodological Approach

The methodology employed in this study is qualitative, focusing on content analysis and case studies to explore the impact of digital technology on contemporary film preservation and access practices in Africa. The research examines how digital technologies are being integrated into African film archiving efforts, particularly in Nigeria, and evaluates the challenges that arise as the continent struggles to keep pace with the rapidly evolving technological landscape. Content analysis is utilized to assess published materials, official reports, and archival records related to digital archival initiatives. This approach enables the study to examine the effectiveness of current practices in preserving audiovisual materials and improving access, while also identifying the limitations faced by African film archives in adopting new technologies. The case studies provide a closer look at specific archival projects, showcasing both the potential benefits of digital technologies and the significant obstacles, including outdated infrastructure, financial constraints, and a lack of national policies that hinder Africa's ability to fully integrate these advancements.

Theoretical Underpinning

The theoretical framework for this study draws primarily on two interrelated theories: Cultural Preservation Theory and Technological Determinism. Cultural Preservation Theory, which emphasizes the need to safeguard cultural heritage for future generations, is essential for understanding the significance of audiovisual materials in preserving cultural identity (Bortolotto 299). This theory is particularly relevant in the African context, where film archives serve as repositories of a continent's rich cultural history. Technological Determinism, on the other hand, posits that technological advancements drive societal changes and shape cultural practices (McLuhan 45). In the context of African film archiving, Technological Determinism is

useful in exploring how digital technologies, such as digitization and restoration tools, have revolutionized the ways in which cultural heritage is preserved and accessed. By applying these two frameworks, the study examines how Africa can integrate digital technologies into its archival practices while addressing the challenges posed by infrastructure, funding, and policy gaps.

Digital Technology, Film Preservation and Access Practices

A brief conceptual review of the key concepts that are driving this study and the interaction between them is essential at this point. These concepts are digital technology, film preservation and access practices. To begin with is the concept of digital technology. Johnstone, Kervin and Wyeth refer to digital technology as “tools, systems and devices that can generate, create, store or process data” (n.p). Taking it further, they maintain digital technologies refer to “devices such as personal computers and tablets, tools such as cameras, calculators and digital toys, systems such as software and apps, augmented and virtual reality, and less tangible forms of technology such as the Internet” (n.p). Thus, digital technology means electronic tools, devices, systems, and resources utilized to process or store data and complete many other functions. Examples include digital cameras, personal computers, and all devices that utilize increasingly fast data transmission speeds and that store or process data using digital signals. Ciarli et al., “digital technologies permeate and restructure all facets of economic and social activities” (3) and this include the field of film preservation and access.

The second concept is film preservation which according FIAF means “duplicating, copying, or migrating analogical and digital films to a new format, generally in the cases in which the life expectancy of the original elements is limited or unpredictable” (FIAF 1). In this approach, as observed by Marín, preservation is understood as a safeguarding and reproduction activity through technical and technological processes that include storage, controlled temperature (conservation), and training of personnel handling original film materials and copies (65). Usai equally defines it as, “the set of procedures, criteria, techniques, and practices necessary to maintain the integrity, restore the content, and organize the intellectual experience of a moving image permanently” (1037). Overall, film preservation is a process that aims to protect and maintain the physical condition of film and ensure its accessibility for future generations. It involves a range of practices, including careful storage, duplication, and restoration, to safeguard film from degradation and damage.

Speaking of access, Edmondson avers that, “Access is any form of use of a memory institution's collections, services or knowledge, and reference to related sources of information and the subject areas they represent” (3). Going further he maintains access can be proactive (initiated by the institution itself) or reactive

(initiated by users of the institution) (3). Access practices therefore refers to the various ways through which archives make preserved films accessible to users and through which users access these materials including the procedures and general principles surrounding it. Interestingly, suffice it to say, as captured in the words of Wengström, that “the *raison d'être* of film archives, film museums, or any other entity dedicated to the preservation of film heritage, has always been giving access to the collections” (126). This corroborates FIAF Technical Commission's position as they state, “Access is the ultimate goal of the archive: the purpose of conservation, preservation and restoration is to achieve this objective (3).” Even more strongly, Wengström asserts, “without the prospect of access, all other activities of an archive – acquisition, cataloguing and preservation – would be meaningless” (126). Since access is primary in the objectives of institutions of preservation, the practices surrounding access are therefore important.

Moving forward, it bears stating that, the invention of digital technologies has significantly impacted the field of film preservation and access practices by with the inclusion “digital” in the processes. Thus, from film preservation and access, we now have digital preservation and access. For clarity sake, in the context of film preservation, the term “digital preservation” highlights the use of digital technology for the transfer of films from 8 mm to 70 mm in size to digital carriers, as well as all practices for ensuring the longevity and access to digitized or digitally born film materials. On purely technical and practical terms, digital film preservation stands for a domain specific subset of digital curation practices (Conrad 27–43). The same impact of digital technology can be said of access, which actually goes hand-in-hand with preservation. Wengström acknowledges and corroborates as he posits that, “the transition from analogue to digital technology has radically changed the potential access to film heritage” (127). In the succeeding part of the study however, is a broader and in-depth analysis of the impact of digital technology on film preservation and access therefore.

Impact of Digital Technology on Contemporary Film Preservation and Access Practices

It goes without positing that, this is a new era for the archives—there have been significant changes in the way film archives operate. In other words, over the years of film archival practice, there have occurred several significant developments that have altered the face of archival practices. One of such changes is the introduction of digital technology in modern filmmaking, in laboratory, as well as in access practices, is changing the way film archives operate. Digital tools have already been partially introduced in film archives' everyday practices related to access and restoration. However, while digital technology has become a part of the film production and digital is gradually but surely integrating with traditional analog technologies in all types of

audiovisual media, film archivists, because of their background and know-how, continue often to think in terms of analog vs. digital. Unarguably, film archival practice is changing very rapidly and, with it, the way we look at the preservation of our film heritage. Fossati in the influential book maintains:

New forms of (digital) archives are being developed via the Internet that make use of participatory media to provide a significantly wider and more open form of access than any traditional archive has ever offered before. As a consequence, film archives and film museums are struggling with questions about their role. As a response, they could either close their doors to new media, or accept them and challenge some of their views and assumptions about the film medium. Whatever the choice, it will determine their future. (15)

The introduction of digital technology in modern filmmaking, in laboratory, as well as in access practices, is changing the way film archives operate. Digital tools have already been partially introduced in film archives' everyday practices related to access and restoration. However, while digital technology, as we have discussed earlier in this chapter, has become a part of the film production and is gradually but surely integrating with traditional analog technologies in all types of audiovisual media, film archivists, because of their background and know-how, continue often to think in terms of analog vs. digital (Fossati 63).

Given that in the last years, more and more films have been made through digital technologies at one stage or the other, especially since the recent introduction of the digital intermediate process, film archives are confronted with the need of accepting "digital elements" as the "original" masters of new film productions (Fossati 63). Wengstrom of the Swedish Film Institute shares a whole lot of facts on the transition from analogue to digital technology in archival practices. The advent of digitization has opened up new opportunities and possibilities in the realm of film archiving, significantly transforming how film heritage is accessed and preserved. Wengström highlights that the shift from analogue to digital technology has "radically changed the potential access to film heritage," (127) making it possible to create digital copies without harming the original materials. These high-quality digital reproductions can be used for theatrical presentations that closely replicate the appearance of a 35mm print, while also providing formats suitable for television, computers, tablets, and mobile phones.

This advancement means that scholars, researchers, and the general public can now access archival treasures on a scale that was previously unimaginable. Furthermore, Wengström emphasizes that the digital revolution allows archives to make available parts of their collections that were once "hitherto unseen and unheard of," thereby expanding public engagement with historical and cultural resources. By

offering access in digital formats, archives not only preserve delicate originals but also democratize cultural heritage, ensuring that it reaches broader audiences across various platforms. This shift underscores the transformative role of technology in bridging gaps between archives and the wider world, promoting greater appreciation and utilization of film heritage collections (127). Wengstrom emphasizes the significant potential that the transition from analogue to digital technology offers to the world of archives. This shift, as Wengstrom reveals, opens up new possibilities for enhancing archival practices, particularly in film restoration and preservation.

Digital technology allows for more efficient and effective restoration methods, providing archivists with tools that significantly improve the quality and accessibility of archival materials. Fossati expands on this idea, noting that "specific digital tools for film restoration are improving by the day" (Fossati 63), and many archivists are adjusting their perspectives based on the successful outcomes of recent digital restorations. The continuous improvement of these digital tools enables a more refined approach to preserving film, which, according to Fossati, is as crucial as maintaining traditional photochemical techniques for film duplication. This ongoing evolution in digital restoration not only broadens the technical capacity of archives but also encourages archivists to stay updated with both digital and analogue techniques, ensuring a balanced and effective approach to preservation.

In addition to its impact on restoration, digital technology also plays a pivotal role in enhancing access to archival materials. Fossati further explains that "digitizing film collections for access purposes is becoming today as urgent as preserving our film originals in the best possible and most sustainable way" (Fossati 63). The shift to digital formats has made it possible to increase the accessibility of film collections, enabling easier sharing and distribution across different platforms. However, this move also reflects the growing expectations from both users and funding entities for archives to leverage digital tools for improving access. Fossati highlights the role of broadcast archives in this shift, stating that "broadcast archives are especially active in this direction," with the migration of video originals to digital media becoming "a common practice in most video archives, even on a massive scale" (Fossati 63). This widespread adoption of digital technologies for archiving and distribution demonstrates the increasing urgency and importance of digital preservation in meeting contemporary demands for accessibility and sustainability in film archiving.

Film archives preserve materials of significant cultural heritage. While current practice helps ensure 35mm film will last for at least one hundred years, digital technology is creating new challenges for the traditional means of preservation. Digitally produced films can be preserved via film stock; however, digital ancillary materials and assets in many cases cannot be preserved using traditional analog means. Strategy and action for preserving this content needs to be addressed before further content is lost. It is necessary however to try to understand the current perspective of the

film archives, especially in regards to the film industry's marked hesitation to embrace digital preservation and equally the current approach to curation and its hesitation to move to digital technologies for preservation. These are important areas for further research hence the focus of this study may be unaccommodating of such dimensions of the discourse. Wengström, earlier cited, in the same article further deepens the discourse on the opportunities and possibilities that digital technology has created particularly in terms of disseminating film heritage. But also makes the case for the urgency with which funding is required to exhaustively utilize the potentialities of the new carrier for the archives—digital technology.

Going forward, Wengström argues that digital technology has created "unprecedented opportunities and possibilities" for making film heritage—both familiar and previously unknown—accessible to a wider audience than ever before. Previously, archives often had to decline most access requests because "the borrower [was] incapable of handling or projecting the prints in a correct way" (134-135). However, with digital cinema copies, films can now be shown in almost any cinema without risking damage to the originals. Beyond theatrical exhibition, Wengström notes that "high-quality digitization also means that film heritage can be made available in other windows or from other platforms," such as streaming services or mobile devices. Nevertheless, Wengström cautions that realizing the full potential of digital technology depends critically on timely investment. He stresses that "funding needs to be made available before it is too late," warning that "it is becoming too late very soon." Without the necessary resources, the opportunity to preserve and share vast portions of film history could slip away, making urgent action essential to safeguard this cultural heritage (134-135).

Christensen and Kuutti discuss the challenges that film archives face in adapting to digital technologies, emphasizing the need for archives to evolve into hybrid systems that manage both analogue and digital collections. They argue that while traditional archival practices will continue, a new set of operations must be established to handle digital films, from acquisition and long-term preservation to providing access in various digital formats. They predict that within a few years, even old collections will require digitization for external access, such as projections. Establishing digital repositories represents a significant shift for archives, demanding different technologies, skills, and staff mindsets compared to traditional film archiving. Existing staff must be trained in digital technology, and new staff or long-term partnerships will be necessary to set up and maintain IT systems. Christensen and Kuutti stress that securing substantial, permanent funding is crucial for this transition (n.p).

The digital era has not come without its attendant challenges that threaten its very effectiveness in the archival experience. Discussing some of the challenges of the digital era of film archiving, Christensen and Kuutti clearly identifies them to fall under

some broader categorizations to include curatorship, preservation, screening, distribution and programming, access and contextualization, funding and copyright (2-4). However, in spite of these challenges film archives must go digital to be able to serve their clients and users so as to meet the current demands of archive users. In whichever case, traditional film archiving will have to be continued. It must be reiterated at this point on the whole that, digital archiving is a fundamentally different operation from traditional film archiving, and needs new skills, technology and funding.

Another necessary measure in addressing the challenges raised above so as to continue to serve the growing needs of modern archive users, film archives must secure the human, technological and economic resources for the above enumerated challenges. Film archives would also require working to create forums in which member archives can acquire the skills and intellectual and practical requirements of current and future access, archive technology and strategic planning. Another important innovation in the archival development process would be for film archives to work to ensure diversity in access to film and other cultural heritages like *Kwagh-hir* under discourse here. The performances are recorded on digital video in the first place, as such will not require so much work to be done on them to become digitized copies. It is however; all dependent on the estimation of those in control of government machinery who will determine the significance of the cultural heritage art form in question.

Undoubtedly, the preservation of Nigeria's cultural heritage resources like *Kwagh-hir* is very important to the development of the various cultures and national life as well. These cultures are all a witness of where we have come from as a people, where we are and where we are going. According to William:

Preservation of cultural heritage resources is essential to sustainable development. It recognizes the importance of cultural continuity and of human history in nourishing social cohesion, a sense of self, of belonging, and of place in a context within which to understand the past and to contemplate the future. (20)

Efforts to preserve resources on cultural heritage have gained new momentum throughout the world nowadays. Protecting cultural heritage is economical, as well as historical and also a cultural process. While cultural heritage preservation has not yet become firmly rooted in the Nigerian consciousness as football is, a great number of people and organizations see cultural resources as critical to the nation's economic development through tourism. Cultural heritage is based on the aspects of our past that we cherish, want to keep and pass on to future generations and outside world. However, the economic benefits of preservation are secondary to the intrinsic value of that heritage which is been preserved. Also, in recent times, digitalization has played major parts in the preservation of precious materials. Making high quality images available electronically can reduce wear and tear of fragile items. It is unarguably true that we

live in an increasingly digital world in recent times. Hundreds of libraries, museums and archives have recently launched projects designed to digitize their collections and place them on the web. In tandem with the changing times, this trend is both auspicious and ominous for cultural heritage institutions like archives, museums and libraries to say the least.

Cultural institutions in many parts of the world are investing on digital projects for several reasons which may include; providing access, reduction of over-handling of materials, and assisting in promoting the collections and visibility of the institutions. In an answer to the question “Why digitize (archival collections in Africa)?” Jones, project coordinator, Illinois Digitization Institute writes that, digitization enhances access and improves preservation. By digitizing their collections, cultural heritage institutions in Africa can make information that was previously available to only selected localized group of researchers accessible to many (n.p). Stating categorically the reasons for digital preservation, Jones further avers that:

The main reasons to digitize are to enhance assess and improve preservation. By digitalizing their collections, cultural heritage institutions can make information that was previously only available to a select group of researchers accessible to all. Digital projects allow users to search collections rapidly and comprehensively from anywhere at any time. (n.p)

Digitization converts materials from formats that can be read by people (analog) to a format that can be read only by machines (digital), such as read-only scanner, digital cameras, planetary cameras and a number of other devices which can be used to digitize cultural heritage materials (Jones n.p). The primary, and usually the most obvious, advantage of digitization is that it enables greater access to collections of all types. All manner of materials can be digitized and delivered in electronic formats and the focus of the contents that are selected for digitization varies across institutions. The conversion into bits and bytes opens up a completely new dimension of reaching traditional and new audiences by providing access to cultural heritage resources in ways unimaginable a decade ago.

Thus, archives, museums, libraries and other cultural institutions would have to commit increasing amounts of time and money to digitization in order to improve access to their collections. In the bid to ensuring the development of digitization, several operational structures, systems, facilities and new skills-set for the staff are required. To this end, it is necessary to put forward that, preservation of cultural heritage resources have long been a challenge for archives. Numerous articles discussing training of archivists on preservation role is now recognized as one of the major processional responsibilities of archivists. The most significant reason for this reorientation of attitudes is the way manner and rate our cultural resources are

deteriorating and fading away, amongst which is the *Kwagh-hir*. Nonetheless, it is high time that proactive measures be taken to confront the challenges.

Adapting to the Digital Era: Overcoming Barriers to Film Archiving and Preservation in Africa

The advancements in digital technology have revolutionized the film industry, opening up new possibilities for the preservation, access, and dissemination of cultural heritage materials. This transformation presents an opportunity that Africa, and particularly Nigeria, can no longer afford to ignore. As the global film and archival industries increasingly embrace digital tools to enhance restoration and broaden public access to previously inaccessible collections, Africa faces an urgent need to adapt its practices to avoid being left behind. Digital technologies offer unprecedented advantages, including better preservation of fragile materials, improved access to archival content, and enhanced distribution across diverse platforms, such as mobile phones and digital cinemas. These tools not only offer potential benefits in filmmaking but also in safeguarding Africa's rich cultural heritage, ensuring its relevance in the global digital economy.

However, embracing digital archiving and filmmaking in Nigeria and other African nations comes with significant challenges. One of the foremost obstacles is the lack of adequate infrastructure and resources to support large-scale digitization projects. Many African archives still rely heavily on traditional analog methods, which are ill-equipped to handle the growing volume of digital content or meet the evolving technological demands of the digital age. Furthermore, the expertise required to manage and maintain digital archives is often scarce, as many archivists are trained in analog methods. As Idyo and Ademiju-Bepo note, the transition from analog to digital film archiving and preservation is an ongoing process fraught with challenges, a reality that is not unique to Nigeria but shared globally. They emphasize that the National Film, Video, and Sound Archive Jos (NFVSA) has yet to fully explore the potential of digital technologies, a point underscored by the lack of development in the very objectives that led to the archive's creation (184).

To overcome these challenges, African governments and cultural institutions must invest in robust infrastructure and provide ongoing training for archivists and filmmakers. It is also crucial for these institutions to secure substantial funding for long-term digitization initiatives. This would not only support the preservation of archival materials but also ensure that Africa's cultural heritage is accessible to future generations. As digital technology advances, it also presents an opportunity to modernize the archiving sector, creating a more sustainable model for film preservation in Africa. Another key issue is accessibility and the democratization of cultural heritage. Digital technology allows for unprecedented levels of access, enabling

materials to reach a wider and more diverse audience. Digital archives provide an opportunity to break down geographical and logistical barriers, making cultural resources more widely available to global audiences. For Africa, this means not just digitizing traditional film materials but integrating the continent's diverse audiovisual cultures into the global digital space.

Preserving forms such as *Kwagh-hir* theater performances and indigenous languages is essential for maintaining cultural continuity and fostering social cohesion. While recent efforts to transition from analog to digital services at the NFVSA have been commendable, Idyo and Ademiju-Bepo caution that these efforts have not yet fully realized their potential. They argue that meaningful change can only occur with a sincere commitment from the relevant government agencies to address the existing challenges (184). The situation in Nigeria is further complicated by a lack of formal archival policies, which exacerbates the struggles to preserve the nation's cinematic heritage. As Idyo and Methuselah note, the NFVSA operates without a policy statement guiding its operations, leading to a lack of direction in preserving Nigeria's film history. Furthermore, the government's low prioritization of the film sector, particularly its archives, reflects a broader societal undervaluation of cultural preservation. This neglect is evident in the inadequate funding allocated to the archives, which limits their ability to adequately safeguard Nigeria's film heritage (Idyo and Methuselah 131–145).

Additionally, another pressing issue is the lack of modern technologies for film restoration and preservation in Nigeria. The country's archiving system lags behind global standards, with the NFVSA possessing only around 2,000 cans of films, many of which are in poor condition. By comparison, the British Film Institute's vast holdings highlight the potential that Nigeria could aspire to, illustrating the considerable gap in resources and technology (Idyo and Methuselah 131–145). This situation severely limits Nigeria's ability to protect its cinematic heritage for future generations. Without the necessary investment in modern restoration technologies, the risk of losing irreplaceable cultural artifacts increases.

Ultimately, Nigeria and the broader African continent stand to gain significantly from embracing digital technology in filmmaking and archival practices. Digital technology offers powerful tools to address traditional barriers to film restoration, preservation, and access. However, to fully realize these benefits, it is crucial for African governments, cultural institutions, and the private sector to collaborate. This involves strategic planning, investment in infrastructure, and the development of human capital. As Idyo and Ademiju-Bepo argue, without a coordinated and sincere commitment to addressing these challenges, efforts aimed at digital archiving and preservation will be thwarted (184). By overcoming these barriers and leveraging digital tools, Africa can ensure that its cultural heritage not only survives but thrives in the digital era, contributing to global dialogues on cultural diversity and heritage preservation.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the positioning of Africa, specifically Nigeria, within the evolving landscape of film archiving, with a focus on the transformative impact of digital technology on contemporary filmmaking, preservation, and access practices. The paper has underscored the potential of digital technology to not only preserve but also expand access to Africa's rich cultural heritage, providing new platforms for its dissemination. While digital technology presents unprecedented opportunities for preserving and disseminating Africa's rich cultural heritage, significant challenges persist. These challenges include inadequate infrastructure, financial limitations, a lack of unified national policies, and a dependence on foreign expertise, all of which impede the continent's ability to fully leverage digital advancements in film archiving. Such barriers hinder the potential of African institutions to develop self-sufficient and culturally relevant digital archiving systems. Addressing these obstacles requires a dedicated and collaborative effort involving African governments, cultural institutions, and the private sector. It is only through these collective efforts that sustainable and impactful solutions can be realized to ensure the preservation of African film heritage for future generations.

The study has emphasized the urgent need for sustained investments in robust infrastructure, continuous training for archivists and filmmakers, and the development of comprehensive national frameworks for audiovisual preservation. Such investments would create the necessary foundation for effective digital archiving and the long-term preservation of cultural heritage. It is crucial to cultivate local expertise and ensure that digital preservation practices are integrated into national cultural policies. By building capacity within local communities, African nations can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility toward preserving their own cultural materials. Furthermore, the research has highlighted the importance of accessibility and the democratization of cultural heritage, advocating for the incorporation of Africa's diverse audiovisual cultures into the global digital space. Making African cultural content widely accessible will enhance its global visibility and promote greater intercultural dialogue. Without addressing these critical issues, Africa risks remaining marginalized in the global advancements in film archiving, potentially leading to the loss of irreplaceable cultural artifacts. This would further exacerbate the imbalance in the global representation of diverse cultural narratives and heritage.

Moreover, the lack of formal archival policies and the low prioritization of the film sector by the government further complicate the preservation efforts. Without a structured policy framework, film archives are left without clear direction, limiting their ability to establish sustainable practices and secure long-term funding. The dependence on external funding and expertise raises concerns about the long-term sustainability and autonomy of African film archives. Relying on foreign assistance not only affects the independence of African archives but also risks reinforcing a cycle of

dependency that undermines local capacity-building efforts. The limited resources and outdated technologies available to institutions like the NFVSA in Nigeria highlight the considerable gap between Africa's current capabilities and the potential for preserving its cinematic heritage. These institutions are often forced to operate with minimal financial support, making it difficult to acquire the necessary tools and technologies to restore and digitize films effectively, which further hinders the preservation of the continent's cinematic legacy.

Ultimately, embracing digital technology in filmmaking and archival practices offers a transformative opportunity for Africa to safeguard its cinematic heritage and contribute to global dialogues on cultural diversity. By digitizing and preserving African films, the continent can ensure that its rich history and unique perspectives are accessible to future generations and can influence global cinematic trends. However, realizing these benefits requires a coordinated and sincere commitment to addressing the existing challenges. Stakeholders must work together across governmental, institutional, and community levels to build a unified approach to film preservation. By prioritizing strategic planning, investing in infrastructure, developing human capital, and fostering collaboration, Africa can ensure that its cultural heritage not only survives but thrives in the digital era. A long-term vision that integrates these elements will help overcome existing barriers and create a more resilient and innovative film archiving system. This will pave the way for more sustainable and autonomous archival development across the continent, securing its rightful place in the new frontiers of film archiving. As African archives evolve, they can become a source of inspiration for other regions, establishing Africa as a key player in the global film heritage conversation.

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