



# **LIBRARY RESEARCH JOURNAL**

**Volume 6, 2021**

# Library Research Journal

Volume 6, No 1, 2021.

## Library Research Journal Authors Guideline

Library Research Journal is an annual publication of Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

### **Format for Submission**

Manuscript submitted for publication must not have been submitted or published elsewhere. Articles should not be more than 14 pages. Manuscripts should be typed on A4 sheet using MS word (Times New Roman, 12 points, double-spaced). The title, author's full name, institutional affiliation, position, phone number and e-mail address should appear on the first page.

Submissions should include an informative abstract of not more than 200 words. Four to six keywords should be included. Tables and graphs should be included in the body of the work (where necessary). The APA 6th Edition (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association) referencing format should be used throughout the manuscript. All submissions will be peer reviewed.

### ***All manuscripts to be submitted as email attachment to:***

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## EDITORIAL BOARD

Library Research Journal is an institution based journal from Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. It is an online peer reviewed Google Scholar journal, published in the month of September. This edition is a compilation of research reports from various institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. The research reports cover a wide array of issues in Library and Information Science. This volume addresses topical issues in librarianship such as NgRen, Competency Appraisal of law cataloguers as well as law students' profile as a correlate of library use. Emerging concepts in librarianship such as MOOC's, parenting styles and readership were part of the compilation. Research reports from Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library focused on library practices in the Circulation Department, Information Literacy, Zik Research Centre and reprographic services in the library.

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# SAVING IGBO LANGUAGE FROM EXTINCTION: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS IN IGBO LAND

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## **Abstract**

*This paper discussed Igbo language as an endangered indigenous language in Nigeria. The paper also highlighted the probable factors affecting the use of Igbo language in Nigeria. English language is the official language in Nigeria. It is the language of instruction in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Nigeria was a former British colony and part of our colonial heritage was the use of English language as our lingua franca. Even the Ibos who are the original owners of the language shy away from grooming their children at home with their mother tongue. The resultant effect is that these children grow into adulthood not speaking their mother tongue. Thus their language of communication both at home and in the school is English language. The paper equally discussed the role of libraries and librarians in the preservation of indigenous language. It suggested strategies through which libraries and librarians in Igbo land can preserve and promote Igbo language thereby saving it from possible extinction in future. Strategies suggested include collecting and documenting oral histories, provision of adequate information resources for Igbo studies, organizing lectures and programmes and deploying ICTs for promotion of Igbo language.*

**Keywords: Igbo Language, Indigenous Language, English Language, Libraries, Librarians, Igboland.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Language is a unique feature which distinguishes man from other animals. Language is an instrument for identity, communication, socialization, political, economic and other purposes. IFLA (2019) observe that language is essential to culture, community and daily life. Through language, people not only express their history, traditions, memory but more importantly construct their future. Yet, many indigenous languages are going into extinction due to a variety of factors. Wamalwa and Oluoch (2013) posits that over 6,000 languages, (one third of them are from the African continent) are endangered.

Unfortunately, Igbo language is among the category of endangered languages.

Igbo language is one of the three major indigenous languages in Nigeria. It is the language of the people of the Igbos who live in South Eastern part of Nigeria with over 40 million population both in Nigeria and other countries. Clearly, English is the official language in Nigeria. The negative effect of the use of English language on Igbo is becoming glaring. Even the original owners of the language, the Igbos fail to groom their children with their native tongue. Both in the primary and secondary schools, Igbo is not the

language of instruction. In tertiary institutions, the situation is not different as students who have chosen Igbo as their course of study are regarded as unintelligent by their school mates who wrongly believe that Igbo studies is a cheap course. This has affected student enrollment in Igbo studies. This may have affected authors of Igbo language literature. The resultant effect is the inadequacy of information resources on Igbo language both in the market and in our libraries.

Okeke and Okeke (2016) posits that the truth is that “Igbo language is fast deteriorating in its attributes of a big language... this language is undergoing enormous difficulties as no active steps are being taken by anyone including native academics and government to effectively position it to face the ever increasing challenges”. The Out Subakwa Igbo, an initiative by the former Vice Chancellor of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka is a step in the right direction. However, it has not gathered the expected support of Igbo stalwarts in Nigeria and at diaspora who will champion the cause. Libraries and librarians have a role to play. Librarianship is at an intersection with other disciplines.

These days, libraries are not just custodians of language but also curators of knowledge. Partly, libraries are in the forefront of preservation of knowledge.

Linus, Fagbemi and Kersha (2020) observed that public libraries do not collect and preserve IK resources from the communities they are situated in. The university libraries are not making significant efforts too. In some of the academic libraries in South East Nigeria, information resources for Igbo studies are not adequate (Ezejiofor and Ndanwu, 2016). Even librarians are not helping matters as majority of them are lukewarm in preserving indigenous languages. Stevens as cited in Aboyade and Adeyemo (2019) observed that librarians focus more on preserving western knowledge than African indigenous knowledge. This could be invariably extended to African languages. This paper is focused on the how of preservation of Igbo language which is gradually going into extinction. It sought to identify ways through which libraries and librarians

in Igbo land can contribute significantly towards revitalization of Igbo language.

### **The Role of Libraries in The Preservation and Promotion of Indigenous Languages**

Libraries and librarians have a crucial role to play in the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages. Libraries can keep record of indigenous cultural heritage, knowledge and language. Libraries can promote cooperation in the field of culture and information services to indigenous communities (IFLA, 2019). Lor (2012) also posits that libraries can contribute by serving as resource centers for the collection and documentation of indigenous language materials. This implies collecting and organizing published and unpublished account of missionaries, early travelers, ethnologist and administrators who wrote comments on the language they heard and produced early wordlists, dictionaries, grammars, Bible translations, and collected stories and poems. Libraries can also become centers for publishing and reprinting of books in local language as well as provide reading resources for rural communities. Generally, libraries collect, catalogue, classify materials written in indigenous languages. Lor (2012) pointed out that smaller libraries can also contribute by “recording oral history, indigenous knowledge and traditional stories, poems and songs in audio and video formats, in partnership with community representatives and scholars”. Chisita as cited in Eneh and Anyaoku (2017) averred that it is not enough for libraries to catalogue, abstract, classify, index and digitalize materials to facilitate access but what is needed is for libraries to collaborate with indigenous communities. This means that librarians need to partner with the native communities. Most of these functions are performed by librarians who are supposed to design collection development policies, collect, organize and document indigenous languages with ICTs and provide information service for rural communities. Librarians are supposed to be experts in information gathering and preservation, Jain and Jibril as cited in Linus, Fagbemi and Kersha (2020) assert that because of the skills and expertise to organize, access, disseminate and facilitate engagement with information, librarians are best placed to manage and preserve indigenous knowledge. Libraries and librarians may not

accomplish these tasks without hindrances. Olaifa (2014) identified some of the challenges associated with library effort in the preservation of indigenous languages as ICT related issues, inadequate library buildings, lack of maintenance culture and mismanagement of library funds.

### Measures Which Libraries and Librarians In Igbo Land Can Adopt To Revitalize Igbo Language

For Igbo language to be revitalized, libraries and librarians in Igbo land can adopt the following measures:

- Libraries should provide adequate information resources for the study of Igbo language particularly in academic libraries in tertiary institutions.
- Librarians should develop library acquisition policy that would give special attention to Igbo language collection. Libraries can maintain a separate section called *Igboana*.
- Libraries should provide space for Igbo cultural works, acquire and display the artefacts particularly materials that reflect the culture of the community where the library is located. For instance, libraries in Awka can display carving and blacksmithing artefacts...*Ikpuzuzi*
- Libraries should collect and document oral histories, rare manuscripts, photographs of prominent Igbo citizens and places of interest. For instance, Igbo museum, Ogbunike cave, Agulu lake. Histories of towns, events, festivals for instance, *irijiofuu*, *ichiozo*, *igbuichi*, *iguaro*.
- Libraries should document Igbo language with active participation of the language holders.
- Libraries should organize lectures and seminars on Igbo language. This will provide a platform where issues concerning Igbo language can be discussed and intellectual papers presented.

- Libraries should organize storytelling sessions, riddles, proverbs, folk tales, music and dances. Some these activities are slipping away especially with the youths who are affected by the forces of globalization. They prefer to watch television and play with phones than engage in cultural activities.
- Libraries should help Igbo communities to patent their indigenous materials such as music and dances.
- Libraries should maintain Igbo language committees involving librarians who are proficient in Igbo language. Librarians who are proficient in speaking, reading and writing Igbo can teach those who are deficient in the language.
- Libraries should provide translation services involving language holders
- Libraries should deploy ICTs for preservation and promotion of Igbo language, for instance CDs, Video tape and Podcast. They should create Igbo language website and promote Igbo language through social media.

### Conclusion

This paper has attempted to suggest strategies which libraries and librarians in Igbo land can adopt for the revitalization of Igbo language. Some of the suggested strategies include provision of adequate information resources for the study of Igbo language, documentation of Igbo language, organization of Igbo language programmes and the creation of *Igbana* section. Igbo language extinction is, however, not an issue which only libraries and librarians can tackle. All stake holders must be involved. Universities, other tertiary institutions and members of the academia should contribute in one way or the other towards promoting Igbo language.

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