

Transcending Theories of Preservation in Library and Archives: The Perspective in the ESARBICA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The discourse of understanding how things work, why they work the way they are, and what has to be done in order to improve how things are is centered on theories. Theories are a set of propositions that specify reasonable relationships between characteristics of a phenomenon that can be measured and defined. Theories are crucial in development of cultural heritage and its allied functions such as preservation. Despite a significant improvement in execution of preservation functions, the more incumbent challenge observed in literature is the lack of understanding of the meaning, principles, and application of theories in preservation in the ESARBICA. This chapter unpacks the theories of preservation through establishing the definitions of preservation, determining principles and uncertainties experienced, and identifying interrelated concepts of relationships and disciplines that contribute to preservation. The chapter concludes by offering a perspective for redefining a framework for preservation in libraries and archives in ESARBICA.

INTRODUCTION

Developing appropriate theories and adopting them in academic research work, public activities and social community is critical. Theories play a crucial role in modelling day-to-day activities in societies and informing research with specific reasonable relationships between characteristics of a phenomenon. Consequently, continuous re-shaping and defining of theories is important. Theories are also critical in guiding cultural heritage institutions. As a result, various activities in heritage institutions such as libraries and archives adopt various theories to guide their collection development, protection and preservation of collections. Notwithstanding a significant improvement in the execution of preservation functions, the more incumbent challenge observed in literature is the lack of understanding of the meaning, principles and application of theories in preservation in the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of International Council on Archives (ESARBICA). Therefore this chapter, guided by the principles of defining theory formulated by Kerlinger (1986) supported by Nieswiadomy (2014), Collins and Hussey (2014), and Ngulube, (2018), discusses theories of preservation in the context of the definitions of preservation, principles and uncertainties experienced in preservation, and identifying interrelated concepts of relationships and disciplines that contribute to preservation. The chapter also redefines the theory on preservation and provides a perspective for future directions on preservation theories in ESARBICA. The chapter unpacks the theory of preservation based on the following specific objectives:

- To establish the definitions of preservation in libraries and archives in the ESARBICA
- To determine a set of conceptual principles of preservation
- To identify relationships and disciplines that contribute to preservation
- To determine the uncertainties on preservation and redefine a theory for preservation in libraries and archives

BACKGROUND

Theories are a combination of different concepts that give a picture or a common understanding of how human perceive things. A theory is a complex view of “a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relationships among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena” (Collis & Hussey, 2013; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). It is a set of reasonable relationships between characteristics of a phenomenon that can be observed or measured. Theories are propositions

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