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# PRESERVING OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE: BOOK PUBLISHING AS A TOOL FOR LITERACY IN IMO STATE

**BY**

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**Abstract**

***Purpose:*** *This paper examines book publishing as a means of preserving the cultural heritage of Imo State while supporting literacy development. It considers how locally relevant publications can document and transmit indigenous languages, oral traditions, histories, beliefs, practices and knowledge to present and future generations.*

***Design/methodology/approach:*** *The paper adopts a conceptual, opinion-based approach informed by literature cited in the manuscript on cultural heritage, literacy, publishing, libraries and indigenous knowledge. It discusses the relationship between publishing and cultural preservation, identifies implementation challenges, and proposes actions for stakeholders in Imo State.*

***Findings:*** *Book publishing can support cultural preservation and literacy when authors, publishers, libraries, schools, universities, government agencies and communities collaborate. Culturally relevant books can encourage reading, strengthen cultural awareness and make local knowledge available for education and research. These benefits may be constrained by inadequate funding, high production costs, limited distribution, weak support for local authors, gaps in publishing infrastructure and changing reading habits.*

***Originality/value***: *The paper frames book publishing not only as the production and circulation of reading materials but also as a practical means of documenting cultural memory and making indigenous knowledge available across generations. It emphasizes locally grounded publishing, community participation and cooperation between print and digital preservation initiatives.*

***Implication:*** *The effectiveness of publishing should ultimately be judged not only by the number of books produced but also by the accuracy, availability, use and continuity of the knowledge those books preserve.*
*Paper type: Conceptual/opinion paper.*

***Keywords: Book publishing; cultural heritage; cultural preservation; literacy; indigenous knowledge; Imo State.***

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Culture encompasses the beliefs, values, languages, traditions, customs and practices through which a community understands its identity and organizes its collective life. It distinguishes one society from another while providing members with a sense of belonging, continuity and shared memory. Culture is not static; it is learned, interpreted and transmitted through family life, education, community institutions, creative expression and everyday interaction. Okpoko (2011) describes culture as a way of life acquired

within society and transmitted across generations. Cultural heritage therefore includes both tangible resources, such as books, manuscripts, artworks and historical objects, and intangible resources, such as oral histories, folklore, music, rituals, indigenous knowledge and language. In Imo State, these resources are closely connected to Igbo cultural expression, community histories, festivals, proverbs and customary practices. Their preservation matters not only for historical record but also for education, identity and intergenerational learning. The challenge is to sustain this heritage in social conditions shaped by migration, urbanization, globalization and rapidly changing communication practices.

Book publishing offers one practical response to this challenge because it turns research, oral accounts, creative expression and community knowledge into materials that can be preserved, circulated and revisited. Printed books can provide durable records, while electronic books and other digital publications can extend access beyond the communities in which the knowledge originated. Publishing can also support literacy by supplying relevant reading materials that connect learners with familiar languages, experiences and cultural references. UNESCO (2019, 2024), as cited in the manuscript, is invoked to support the relationship between literacy, cultural diversity and the preservation of heritage; the precise publications should, however, be verified in the final reference check. Publishing alone cannot guarantee preservation: materials must be accurately documented, ethically produced, discoverable, accessible and maintained over time. Authors and publishers need the participation of knowledge holders to ensure that representations of community life are credible and contextually appropriate. Libraries, schools and universities can then collect, teach, preserve and provide access to these resources. This paper discusses the cultural heritage of Imo State, explains the contribution of book publishing to literacy, considers practical applications and challenges, and recommends coordinated action by relevant stakeholders.

## *2. Preserving Cultural Heritage in Imo State*

Cultural heritage functions as a community's shared memory and a means of connecting past experience with present life and future aspirations. It includes physical records and objects, but it also encompasses practices and knowledge that may not exist in a written form. Intangible heritage is sustained through use and transmission, and communities may

reinterpret it as circumstances change. UNESCO (2024), as cited in the manuscript, is used to emphasize that cultural heritage and cultural diversity require active preservation and community participation. Across Nigeria, many traditions have historically been transmitted orally, making their continuity dependent on interaction between knowledge holders and younger generations. Oral transmission remains valuable, but it can become vulnerable when social patterns change or when custodians die before their knowledge is recorded. Documentation can reduce the risk of irreversible loss, provided it does not treat written records as a substitute for living cultural practice. A sound preservation strategy should therefore combine oral transmission, community participation, documentary recording and appropriate access arrangements.

For Igbo communities, cultural heritage is expressed through language, proverbs, folktales, music, festivals, masquerade traditions, indigenous governance, agricultural knowledge, customary practices and communal values. Proverbs and oral narratives convey moral reflection, social expectations, historical memory and local philosophies in concise and memorable forms. The proverb “Nku dị na mba na-eghere mba nri” expresses the idea that a person’s contribution can benefit the wider community, illustrating how language carries cultural knowledge. Imo State’s cultural life includes the New Yam Festival (Iri Ji), traditional marriage ceremonies (Igba Nkwu), masquerade displays, age-grade systems, wrestling competitions and moonlight storytelling. These practices should not be understood merely as entertainment; they may also serve as settings in which histories, values, responsibilities and community identities are communicated. Nwankwo (2024) are cited in the source manuscript in relation to indigenous knowledge preservation and cultural sustainability, although the bibliographic details should be checked before publication. Recording these traditions in books can make them available for study and teaching, while consultation with relevant communities can help prevent misrepresentation. The purpose should be to support cultural continuity and understanding, not to freeze a living culture into an unchanging description.

One challenge is that opportunities for intergenerational cultural learning may be reduced when family structures, work patterns, schooling and media habits change. Children and young adults may have fewer opportunities to participate in storytelling, community gatherings or

other settings in which cultural knowledge has traditionally been shared. The growing use of digital media is not inherently harmful to cultural transmission, but it can alter how people allocate attention and encounter information. The more important issue is whether culturally meaningful material is available in formats, languages and channels that people can use. Book publishing can help by recording oral histories, biographies of community leaders, local histories, folklore, traditional practices and indigenous vocabulary. It can also support bilingual and age-appropriate materials that connect younger readers with their heritage. Such publications should be developed with the involvement of elders, language specialists, historians, authors and other knowledge holders. Where knowledge is restricted, sacred or sensitive, publishers should respect community protocols and obtain appropriate consent before recording or circulating it.

Libraries have an important role in preserving documentary heritage because they collect, organize, safeguard and provide access to resources that record the knowledge and experience of communities. Their collections may include locally published books, manuscripts, photographs, maps, oral-history recordings, newspapers and other cultural materials. Digitization can support preservation and improve access to fragile or geographically dispersed resources, but a digital copy is not automatically secure or permanent. Institutions need appropriate metadata, storage, backup procedures, file management, rights information and long-term maintenance plans. Oyelude and Alonge (2023), as cited in the source manuscript, address digital preservation practices and cultural heritage resources in African libraries; the source details should be independently checked. For Imo State, digital projects could document oral histories, preserve out-of-print indigenous publications and create electronic resources in Igbo and English. Such resources could serve local learners, researchers and members of the Igbo diaspora, subject to access rights and community preferences. Digital preservation should complement, rather than displace, the preservation of physical originals and the continuation of living cultural practices.

The preservation of cultural heritage cannot be assigned to government agencies or cultural institutions alone. Traditional rulers, community leaders, authors, publishers, librarians, researchers, teachers, language experts, families and young people all contribute knowledge,

skills or access to relevant audiences. Universities can support documentation through research on Igbo language, history, folklore, indigenous medicine, governance and cultural practices. Schools can make locally produced books part of reading activities and culturally responsive teaching. Publishers can transform research and community knowledge into accessible formats, while libraries can acquire, describe, preserve and promote those publications. Collaboration is especially important because no single organization possesses all the knowledge and resources required for a complete preservation programme. The process should include transparent decisions about authorship, consent, attribution, copyright, access and benefit-sharing where appropriate. A coordinated approach can connect the cultural knowledge of communities with the professional expertise needed to preserve and disseminate it responsibly.

### *3. BOOK PUBLISHING AS A TOOL FOR LITERACY*

Literacy involves more than the ability to decode written words or produce text. It includes understanding, interpreting, evaluating and communicating information, as well as applying what has been learned to everyday situations. Literacy supports educational participation, informed decision-making, employment and engagement with social life. Access to appropriate reading materials is therefore an important element of literacy development. Book publishing contributes by making books available for different age groups, educational levels, interests and language communities. When books reflect readers' experiences and cultural environments, they may help make reading more meaningful and encourage sustained engagement. Locally relevant publications can introduce learners to familiar names, places, histories, stories and forms of expression while also expanding their knowledge beyond their immediate environment. Publishing should thus be viewed as one part of a wider literacy ecosystem that also requires effective teaching, accessible libraries, supportive families and opportunities to read.

Books also preserve knowledge and make it possible for ideas, research findings, histories and creative works to circulate beyond the time and place in which they were produced. A published account can be consulted by learners and researchers who were not present when an event occurred or when an oral narrative was first recorded. Aina (2024), cited in the manuscript, is used to support the role of publishing in information dissemination;

the exact bibliographic record should be verified. For Imo State, locally produced storybooks, dictionaries, biographies, historical accounts, folklore collections and educational texts could provide content for classroom use and independent reading. Publications in Igbo can support language learning and cultural continuity, while bilingual editions may help readers move between Igbo and English. High editorial standards remain essential: cultural relevance should not excuse factual inaccuracy, weak writing, poor production or inadequate age suitability. Authors and editors should work with language specialists and knowledgeable community members to check names, meanings, translations and context. In this way, publishing can support both reading development and responsible cultural documentation.

Libraries strengthen the relationship between publishing and literacy by ensuring that books are collected, organized, discoverable and available to readers. Academic, public and community libraries can develop local-content collections that include works by Imo State authors, publications about the region and materials in indigenous languages. Librarians can collaborate with publishers, schools, cultural associations and university departments to identify gaps in collections and encourage the production of needed resources. Reading clubs, storytelling sessions, author talks, book exhibitions and community reading programmes can connect collections with the people they are intended to serve. These activities are particularly important where the cost of purchasing books limits individual access. A well-managed local collection also provides a resource for research into language, history, cultural practices and social change. Libraries should evaluate the use and relevance of such collections rather than measuring success only by the number of items acquired. Their contribution is strongest when collection development, preservation, outreach and literacy programming reinforce one another.

Digital publishing expands the possible reach of locally produced material through electronic books, online catalogues, institutional repositories and digital libraries. These formats can help preserve rare or fragile cultural materials and allow readers outside Imo State to discover them. Oral histories, photographs, manuscripts, traditional songs and folklore may be digitized or adapted into multimedia publications where permissions and technical resources allow. Digital access, however, depends on electricity, connectivity, suitable devices, digital

skills, accessible design and the continuing availability of files and platforms. Digital resources should therefore be designed with the needs of local communities in mind, including users with limited connectivity or disabilities. Print and digital formats are best treated as complementary options rather than competing solutions. Publishers and libraries should also consider copyright, privacy, consent, attribution and culturally appropriate restrictions before placing materials online. With these safeguards, digital publishing can widen access while supporting the long-term visibility of indigenous knowledge.

Book publishing also has potential economic and professional benefits because the production and circulation of books involve authors, editors, translators, illustrators, designers, printers, booksellers, librarians and digital specialists. A stronger market for locally relevant books could create opportunities for these participants while increasing the availability of educational and cultural resources. Such benefits are not automatic: publishers need viable production models, reliable distribution, readership, professional skills and a framework that protects legitimate rights. The source manuscript identifies high production costs, limited distribution networks, restricted access to publishing technology and inadequate institutional support as challenges facing indigenous publishing. It also notes that publishers may struggle to find experienced translators, editors and language specialists for indigenous-language materials. Competition from short-form digital content may further influence reading habits, but it can also motivate publishers to develop e-books, audiobooks and mobile-friendly formats. These innovations should be selected according to readers' needs and the nature of the material, not adopted simply because they are technologically fashionable. Sustained literacy development depends on a dependable supply of relevant, affordable and well-produced reading materials in formats that intended audiences can use.

## *4. IMPLEMENTING CULTURAL PUBLISHING IN IMO STATE*

A practical programme for cultural publishing in Imo State should begin with a community-informed assessment of what has already been documented and what remains at risk of being lost. The assessment could identify local histories, oral narratives, indigenous-language resources, biographies, traditional knowledge and out-of-print publications that warrant attention. Community elders, traditional institutions, researchers,

language specialists, librarians, teachers, writers and young people should participate in setting priorities. The process should record not only the subject matter but also the location, custodianship, language, provenance, permissions and any restrictions associated with the material. This information can help prevent duplication and guide the selection of suitable publication formats. A phased plan is preferable to an uncoordinated collection of projects because it allows institutions to match ambitions with available expertise and funding. Pilot projects could focus on a limited number of communities or themes before being expanded in light of lessons learned. Success should be assessed through both preservation outcomes and evidence that the resulting materials are being used.

Community-based documentation should place knowledge holders at the centre of the process. Researchers and publishers can work with elders, historians, traditional rulers, cultural associations and other relevant custodians to record oral histories, folklore, local practices, agricultural knowledge and community experiences. Interviews should be documented carefully, with names, dates, locations, language choices and contextual notes recorded where appropriate. Participants should understand the purpose of the project and how their contributions may be edited, published, stored and shared. Where material concerns sacred practices, restricted knowledge or personal information, the project should establish clear limits on access and dissemination. Translation and transcription should be reviewed by competent language users and, where possible, checked with the people who supplied the accounts. Contributors should receive appropriate acknowledgement, and agreements should clarify ownership, permissions and possible benefits. Such procedures can strengthen trust and improve the accuracy and ethical quality of publications.

Educational institutions can make cultural publishing part of a broader strategy for literacy and curriculum relevance. Primary and secondary schools could use locally produced storybooks, Igbo-language materials, biographies, folklore collections and local-history texts in reading programmes and related classroom activities. Teachers should select materials for accuracy, age suitability, readability and alignment with learning objectives. Universities can support more advanced research and publication on language, history, education, library and information science, anthropology and cultural studies. Research findings should be translated into formats that are accessible to non-specialist readers, rather than remaining

available only in academic journals or technical reports. Partnerships between universities, publishers, libraries and community organizations can help move reliable research into the public domain. Student projects may also contribute to documentation when supervised appropriately and conducted with informed consent. These measures can strengthen literacy while encouraging learners to see local knowledge as a legitimate subject of study and intellectual contribution.

Libraries in Imo State can provide an institutional foundation for collecting and sharing the resulting publications. Academic libraries can build special collections on Igbo language, local history, oral literature and cultural practices, while public and community libraries can make materials available to broader audiences. Collection policies should include locally produced books and other documentary resources, and acquisition decisions should be supported by systematic identification of relevant authors and publishers. Libraries can organize exhibitions, book discussions, storytelling sessions, reading competitions and community history activities to increase use of their collections. They can also collaborate on cataloguing standards, preservation guidance, digitization priorities and shared discovery tools. Digital projects should include backup, metadata, rights management and a plan for ongoing maintenance, rather than ending when scanning is completed. Where resources are limited, institutions can begin with a manageable, prioritized collection and expand as capacity grows. Through these activities, libraries can function as active cultural and literacy centres, not merely as repositories.

Government agencies and relevant cultural bodies can create a more supportive environment through funding, policy coordination, grants, training opportunities and procurement of locally relevant publications. Support should be transparent and guided by clear criteria for quality, community value, accessibility and preservation need. Schools and libraries can help sustain demand by purchasing suitable local publications and incorporating them into reading and learning programmes. Publishers, in turn, should develop realistic production and distribution strategies, including cooperative arrangements where these reduce costs or improve reach. Professional development in editing, translation, design, rights management and digital preservation can address skills gaps affecting indigenous-language publishing. Stakeholders should also consider

affordable pricing, accessible formats and distribution channels that reach rural communities and readers with limited internet access. Copyright protection is important because authors and publishers need a fair opportunity to benefit from their work, although rights management should be balanced with lawful access for education, research and preservation. The Nigerian Copyright Commission and relevant professional bodies can contribute through rights education and enforcement, but specific claims about policies or programmes should be supported by verified official sources.

Partnerships among community organizations, universities, publishers, libraries and schools can make cultural publishing more sustainable than isolated initiatives. Each partner brings different strengths: communities provide knowledge and context; researchers support documentation; editors and publishers shape manuscripts into usable publications; libraries preserve and provide access; and schools help connect materials with literacy development. A coordinating group could agree on priorities, assign responsibilities, establish ethical procedures and monitor progress. It should also identify funding sources and plan for the costs of editing, translation, printing, digitization, storage, distribution and future maintenance. Evaluation could consider the number and quality of materials produced, languages represented, community participation, library availability, readership, educational use and the condition of preserved resources. These indicators should be interpreted alongside qualitative feedback from contributors, teachers, librarians and readers. Regular review would help the programme adapt to changing needs and avoid investing in resources that are produced but rarely used. A coordinated framework can connect cultural preservation with measurable educational and public benefits.

## *5. CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS*

Funding is a central constraint because responsible cultural publishing involves more than printing a manuscript. Costs may include fieldwork, recording equipment, transcription, translation, editorial review, illustration, design, printing, digitization, metadata creation, storage and distribution. Where funding is uncertain, projects may produce incomplete records or fail to maintain digital files and physical collections. Public funding, institutional support, grants, partnerships and carefully designed revenue models may each contribute, but no single source should be assumed to be

sufficient. Planning should distinguish one-time production costs from recurring preservation and access costs. Small pilot projects can test workflows and establish realistic budgets before a programme expands. Transparent financial management and clear selection criteria can also help build confidence among funders and communities. Sustainable publishing requires long-term planning, not only the launch of individual books.

A second challenge concerns editorial and linguistic quality. Indigenous-language publishing may require specialists who can handle spelling conventions, dialect differences, translation, terminology and culturally specific meanings. Inconsistent editorial practices can make a publication difficult to read or undermine confidence in its accuracy. Quality assurance should therefore include language review, fact-checking, copy-editing, proof-reading and consultation with appropriate knowledge holders. Where dialects or interpretations differ, editors should document the choice made rather than presenting one version as universally authoritative. Bilingual publications can increase reach, but translations should preserve meaning and context instead of substituting literal wording that distorts the original. Authors and publishers should also make the intended readership clear and select a suitable style and level of explanation. Professional standards are particularly important when a publication is intended for schools, libraries and future researchers.

A third challenge involves distribution, affordability and changing reading habits. A book may be well researched and carefully produced but have limited impact if it is unavailable where readers live or too expensive for schools and families. Publishers and institutions should consider school and library supply, community events, book fairs, local booksellers, print-on-demand options and digital channels where these are practical. Electronic publishing can reduce some barriers, but it does not eliminate problems related to connectivity, device access, digital skills or platform continuity. Audio formats and mobile-friendly publications may help reach some readers, including those who prefer listening or face reading barriers. Such formats should complement rather than replace print where print remains the most accessible option. Reading promotion is also necessary: clubs, guided reading, storytelling and author engagement can help people discover and use local publications. Demand should be developed alongside production, with attention to the interests and needs of the intended audience.

Ethical, legal and preservation issues require equal attention. Recording community knowledge may raise questions of consent, privacy, ownership, attribution, cultural sensitivity and the rights of contributors. Publishers should clarify permissions and intended uses before publication and should not assume that information shared orally is automatically free for unrestricted reproduction. Copyright and other applicable legal protections should be respected, while libraries and researchers should also consider lawful preservation and access provisions. Some knowledge may be unsuitable for public circulation, and community protocols should guide decisions about recording, translation, access and reuse. Digital materials can be copied and distributed widely, making rights information and access controls especially important. Long-term preservation also requires more than uploading files: formats, metadata, backups, security and ongoing stewardship must be planned. A responsible programme balances the public value of cultural documentation with the rights and interests of the people whose knowledge is being preserved.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

### *6.1 Establish a coordinated cultural publishing programme*

Relevant government agencies, universities, libraries, publishers and cultural organizations should establish a coordinated programme for documenting and publishing the cultural heritage of Imo State. The programme should begin with a needs assessment and a register of existing publications, collections and documentation projects. Priorities should be selected transparently, with community participation and attention to materials that are poorly documented or at risk of loss. A phased implementation plan should specify responsibilities, resources, timelines and expected outputs. The programme should include both print and digital publication, while recognizing that different materials require different preservation methods. It should also set standards for consent, attribution, editorial review, metadata and long-term access. Progress should be reviewed periodically, and lessons from pilot projects should guide expansion. This coordinated approach would reduce duplication and strengthen the connection between cultural documentation, publishing and public use.

### *6.2 Support authors, publishers and indigenous-language production*

Publishers and authors should be encouraged to produce high-quality materials in Igbo and other locally relevant formats, including children’s books,

dictionaries, folklore collections, biographies, histories, educational texts and bilingual publications. Universities and research institutions can contribute by supporting researchers to transform reliable findings into books and accessible community resources. Language specialists, editors, translators, illustrators and designers should be involved early enough to improve both quality and readability. Training and mentoring could help strengthen skills in manuscript development, publishing workflows, rights management and digital production. Financial support should be directed through clear criteria and should encourage affordability, diversity of subject matter and appropriate distribution. Publishers should also consult prospective readers to ensure that new titles respond to actual educational and cultural needs. A stronger indigenous publishing ecosystem can expand reading choices while creating a more durable record of local knowledge. These measures should be accompanied by periodic assessment of readership and educational use.

### *6.3 Strengthen libraries as cultural heritage and literacy centres*

Academic, public and community libraries should develop collections that represent the histories, languages, literature and cultural practices of Imo State. Collection development policies should identify locally produced publications and relevant materials held by community organizations, researchers and individuals. Libraries can work with publishers and cultural associations to acquire, preserve, catalogue and promote these resources. They should also organize reading programmes, exhibitions, storytelling sessions, book discussions and author events that make collections visible and useful. Where digitization is appropriate, projects should include metadata, rights information, secure storage, backups and a plan for continued maintenance. Inter-library cooperation can help institutions share expertise and improve discovery of scarce publications. Libraries should evaluate both preservation quality and actual use, ensuring that heritage collections contribute to education, research and community life. Cooperation among these libraries can also help identify gaps and reduce unnecessary duplication.

### *6.4 Integrate local publications into education and reading promotion*

Schools should make appropriate locally published materials available through classroom libraries, reading clubs, literacy activities and relevant curriculum topics. Teachers should select resources that are accurate, readable, age-appropriate and

respectful of the communities they represent. Educational authorities and school leaders can work with publishers and libraries to identify gaps in available materials and encourage the development of suitable titles. Universities can support the initiative through research, student engagement and public scholarship, while teacher education can include strategies for using local literature in learning. Reading promotion should involve families and community groups as well as formal institutions. Activities such as storytelling, book fairs, reading challenges and meetings with local authors can help sustain interest in books. Evaluation should examine whether learners can access, understand and use the materials, rather than relying only on the number of books purchased. Schools should seek feedback from learners and teachers to guide future selection and development.

### *6.5 Invest in ethical documentation and sustainable digital preservation*

Cultural documentation projects should follow clear procedures for informed consent, attribution, permissions, privacy and culturally appropriate access. Knowledge holders should be consulted about how their contributions are represented and whether particular materials should be restricted or withheld from public circulation. Projects should maintain contextual records so that future readers understand the origin, language, date and circumstances of the material. Digitization should be accompanied by quality control, appropriate metadata, secure storage, redundant backups and a documented preservation plan. Libraries and universities should collaborate on technical standards and staff development to avoid creating isolated digital collections that cannot be maintained. Digital formats should be selected with long-term usability and accessibility in mind. These measures can make preservation more reliable while protecting the rights and interests of communities and contributors. These safeguards should be documented so that future custodians can understand the conditions under which materials may be used.

6.6 Improve funding, copyright awareness and evaluation

Government institutions and partners should explore sustainable funding for research, editing, translation, production, distribution and preservation. Support may include competitive grants, institutional allocations, library purchasing, partnerships and other transparent mechanisms suited to local circumstances. Authors and publishers should receive guidance on copyright, licensing, permissions and lawful reuse, while the public should be educated about the effects

of unauthorized reproduction on creative work. Any enforcement or policy claims in future editions should be grounded in current, verified official documents. Programme evaluation should track outputs such as publications produced and collections preserved, as well as outcomes such as readership, classroom use, language engagement, community participation and access over time. Findings should be used to improve project design and allocate resources to the most effective activities. Regular reporting can support accountability and demonstrate the educational and cultural value of investment in local publishing. The resulting evidence should inform future funding decisions and programme priorities.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Cultural heritage is a vital part of a society's identity, shared memory and continuity. In Imo State, Igbo language, oral narratives, festivals, customary practices, local histories and indigenous knowledge form a rich body of cultural resources that deserves careful documentation and transmission. Yet cultural knowledge can become vulnerable when intergenerational learning is disrupted and when oral accounts are not recorded in appropriate ways. Book publishing offers a practical means of preserving these resources in forms that can be consulted by learners, researchers, libraries and future generations. It can also contribute to literacy by making reading materials more relevant to the language, experience and cultural environment of intended readers. Its value, however, depends on editorial quality, community participation, accessibility, ethical practice and sustained preservation. Print and digital publishing should be used as complementary means of documenting and sharing knowledge, rather than as substitutes for living cultural practices. The effectiveness of publishing should ultimately be judged not only by the number of books produced but also by the accuracy, availability, use and continuity of the knowledge those books preserve.

A sustainable approach requires collaboration among government agencies, publishers, libraries, schools, universities, cultural organizations, traditional institutions and local communities. Government and institutional partners can provide enabling policies, funding and coordination, while publishers and authors can produce relevant, affordable and well-edited materials. Libraries can acquire, preserve and promote these works, and schools can use them to support reading and culturally meaningful learning. Universities can strengthen the evidence

base through research and help make scholarly findings accessible to the wider public. Communities must remain active participants in deciding what is documented, how it is represented and under what conditions it is shared. Digital initiatives should be supported by realistic plans for rights management, storage, security and long-term maintenance. With clear priorities, adequate resources and responsible partnerships, book publishing can help preserve the cultural heritage of Imo State while contributing to literacy, education, research and cultural continuity. Long-term commitment will be essential if these publications are to remain accessible and useful.

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