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# DIGITAL PRESERVATION STRATEGY FOR FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY OF MALAYSIA'S ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

The diverse file formats and rapid technological advancements present significant issues for Archives, Libraries, research institutes, and allied organizations in maintaining the accessibility and usage of materials in the long term. The research aims to explore experts' perspectives on digital preservation strategies for oral history collections. A purposive sampling approach is employed. The panel of experts will be chosen through a peer survey rather than a random selection from a population. This pilot study is being done to assess the possibility of a full-scale investigation of the digital preservation of Malaysia's oral history collection. The research aims to investigate several variables: (1) the Expert Panel's experience and knowledge of oral history and digital preservation; (2) the technology utilized for digital preservation; (3) platforms, formats, and mediums of oral history collections; (4) allocation of funding for digital preservation initiatives; (5) short-term and long-term strategies; and (6) existing policies regarding the treatment and digital preservation of such collections. The pilot project was conducted with four (4) custodians of the Oral History Collections selected around Malaysia. The pilot study's findings are analyzed based on several variables: (1) the Expert Panel's expertise in oral history and digital preservation; (2) the technology utilized for digital preservation; (3) the platform, formats, and medium of oral history collections; (4) allocation of funding for digital preservation projects; (5) short-term and long-term strategies; and (6) current policies regarding the treatment and digital preservation of such collections.

**Keywords:** oral history, digital preservation strategy, cultural heritage, Malaysian's oral history collection,

## INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, the topic of digital preservation, which is a significant challenge in many parts of the world, has not been addressed according to a prior study by Zuraidah et al (2010). The increasing accumulation of digital resources necessitates not only accessible and efficient transmission but also, crucially, the long-term preservation of these items for the benefit of future generations. The study primarily focuses on oral history collections, which make a substantial contribution to the resources stored in Archives, Libraries, and similar organisations. To ensure the sustainability of collections for future generations, it is important to develop and implement strategies that facilitate the transition from analogue to digital formats, as most collections are currently in analogue form but becoming more accessible in digital audio format. Digital preservation is all the different methods that are needed to keep digital things safe for a long time especially in managing information in the digital age (Ahmad, et al., 2024). Merely safeguarding electronic records is inadequate if the emphasis is solely on the tangible storage devices. It should focus on ensuring continued access to the information within the records. Preserving electronic records involves adapting to ongoing technical advancements to provide long-term access to the records. Oral history collections in Malaysia are in danger due to the decay of analogue sound carriers and the progress of digital recordings. (Irwin, 2016). Technological advancements are impacting the Oral History collections, and access to them may diminish due to the declining market support for analogue audio technology. Advancements in audio technology have resulted in the creation of various new audio formats and devices available on both discs and tapes. Due to the outdated nature of vintage playback technology and the absence of coordinated efforts in managing and preserving these collections, there is a pressing requirement for a digital preservation plan for oral history recordings. This study aims to examine the future sustainability of oral history collections in Malaysia.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

The findings and results of this study concluded into three important parts according to the criterion 1) expert panel, 2) technology and platforms and 3) funding, strategy and established policy as tabulated in Table 1.

**Table 1 Discussion Summary according to the criterion of this study**

Criterion	Summary
<b>Expert panel</b>	The institutions have numerous oral history collections, but its expert panel is ineligible for the study due to limited knowledge in the field and digital preservation. The individuals in charge of administering the collections only have experience in handling the collection. Additionally, the responsibility was assigned to a clerk instead of an officer with oral history and digital preservation expertise.
<b>Technology and Platforms</b>	The institution does not implement digital preservation programmes, and all collections are stored on audio cassettes that can only be utilised with analogue cassette players. No modern technology was used because the digital preservation initiative is not implemented.
<b>Funding, Strategy and Established Policy</b>	The oral history collection Institutional culture and heritage were organised and administered similarly to library items. Unfortunately, the institutions are not disclosing the number of oral history collections. As digital preservation strategies were not entirely executed, no cash was granted for collection preservation. Not all oral history recordings were transcribed to preserve knowledge in a systematic fashion. The lack of a developing strategy and set policy for digital preservation projects is evident.

The result of discussion on short-term and long-term strategies; and existing policies regarding the treatment and digital preservation of OH collections are tabulated in Table 2.

**Table 2 Discussion summary on the strategies and policy on this study**

List of respondents	Result					
	Preservation Strategies		Policy Document			
	Short term Preservation	Long-term Preservation	AES22-1997 (r2008)	AES28-1997 (r2008)	AES38-2000 (r2005)	AES41-2009 (r2005)
Panel A	/	/	/			
Panel B	/	/				
Panel C	/					
Panel D	/		/			

Based on the result presented in Table 2, it is found that all of the respondents have strategized short-term preservation, and only Panels A and B have strategized long-term preservation measurement. Hence, only Panel A and D has complied the policy AES22-1997 (r2008). It shows the need for more awareness of digital preservation among all the custodians of oral history collection in the selected organizations.

## CONCLUSION

A preservation plan provides a way to preserve and access current and archive electronic records for as long as needed. A preservation plan is necessary to ensure long-term preservation of

electronic documents, which are more easily manipulated and altered, resulting in decreased faith in their dependability and validity. Therefore, the preservation plan should guarantee the accessibility of electronic record information. Most oral history recordings are analogue, although digital audio is becoming more prevalent. Libraries and archives must not only store and provide access to resources, but also ensure their long-term preservation. Proper preservation is essential for future retrieval and access, requiring a seamless transfer between analogue and digital environments.

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