

Exploring the Intersection of Cultural Preservation and Education in Academic Library Museums: A Case Study of the National Museum of Tanzania (NMT)

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Abstract: Academic library museums serve as dynamic institutions where cultural preservation and education intersect to enhance learning, research, and heritage awareness. This study explores the intersection of cultural preservation and education in academic library museums, using the National Museum of Tanzania (NMT) as a case study. The primary aim is to assess how academic library museums contribute to preserving cultural heritage while simultaneously supporting educational objectives within higher education institutions. Despite the recognized value of cultural heritage in academic settings, there is a notable gap in understanding how library museums function as both educational tools and preservation centers. In Tanzania, limited research exists on how institutions like the NMT integrate academic and cultural roles to serve university communities. This study addresses this gap by investigating the strategies employed, challenges faced, and the perceived educational impact of NMT's library museum services. Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to 80 academic staff, students, and museum professionals. The findings revealed that NMT significantly supports experiential learning, cultural literacy, and interdisciplinary engagement, though it faces challenges such as inadequate funding, limited digitization, and insufficient collaboration with universities. The results underscore the importance of developing integrated policies, enhancing staff training, and fostering academic-museum partnerships to strengthen the educational and cultural mission of academic library museums. The study contributes valuable insights into the evolving role of library museums in Tanzania and calls for greater institutional support to harness their full potential in higher education and national development.

Keywords: Academic Library Museums, Cultural Preservation, Experiential Learning, National Museum of Tanzania (NMT).

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I. INTRODUCTION

Academic library museums serve as critical institutional spaces where cultural preservation and education intersect. These hybrid entities combine the curatorial functions of museums with the scholarly mission of libraries to support both the conservation of heritage and the enhancement of learning outcomes (Boylan, 2019). In the context of higher education, such institutions play a pivotal role in fostering interdisciplinary learning, promoting critical inquiry, and preserving indigenous knowledge systems. As the demand for experiential and culturally grounded education grows, academic library museums are increasingly recognized as vital resources for curriculum development, research, and public engagement (Latham & Simmons, 2020).

The National Museum of Tanzania (NMT), though primarily a national heritage institution, has cultivated strong linkages with universities and research institutions, functioning in part as an academic library museum. It houses diverse collections including ethnographic artifacts, historical manuscripts, and scientific specimens that reflect the country's cultural and historical trajectory. Through collaborations with academic institutions, NMT has facilitated access to primary sources, fostered object-based learning, and supported research in anthropology, history, and museology (Mushi & Mbise, 2023). Its educational programs and exhibitions have not only preserved Tanzania's cultural identity but also contributed to formal and informal learning processes.

This case study explores the dual role of NMT in cultural preservation and academic education, highlighting how it embodies the potential of academic library museums to bridge the gap between heritage conservation and knowledge production. By examining the institutional strategies, partnerships, and challenges faced by NMT, the study aims to provide insights into how academic libraries and museums can collaborate more effectively in promoting sustainable cultural and educational development in Tanzania and beyond (Koda, 2022). Understanding this intersection is essential in a global context where cultural heritage is under threat and educational institutions are seeking innovative pedagogical approaches.

➤ Statement of the Problem

Academic library museums serve as unique spaces that blend cultural preservation with educational functions, offering rich opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, heritage engagement, and academic enrichment. Despite their growing significance, the role of these hybrid institutions in bridging cultural heritage and formal education remains underexplored, particularly in the context of developing countries like Tanzania. The National Museum of Tanzania (NMT), which operates within an academic and cultural framework, presents a compelling case to investigate how academic library museums contribute to both preserving cultural artifacts and enhancing educational outcomes. However, challenges such as

inadequate integration into academic curricula, limited collaboration between museum professionals and educators, and underutilization by students and researchers hinder the full realization of their potential. There is a pressing need to understand the extent to which NMT fulfills its dual role and the factors that influence its effectiveness in this capacity. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the intersection of cultural preservation and education in the operations of NMT, thereby informing strategies for maximizing the educational impact of academic library museums in Tanzania and similar contexts.

➤ Objectives of the Study

- To examine the role of academic library museums in cultural preservation.
- To investigate how academic library museums support education in universities.
- To identify the challenges facing academic library museums in fulfilling their dual roles.
- To suggest strategies for improving the integration of cultural preservation and education in academic library museums.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic library museums serve as custodians of cultural heritage, housing rare artifacts, documents, and artworks that embody historical and cultural narratives. These institutions help preserve national identity and collective memory through careful curation and documentation of tangible and intangible heritage (Ngulube, 2012). In the context of Tanzania, institutions like the NMT play a vital role in safeguarding indigenous knowledge systems and traditional practices that might otherwise be lost due to globalization and modernization pressures (Chikati & Katunzi, 2020). As cultural repositories, library museums not only collect but also contextualize artifacts, linking them with educational content that supports cultural continuity. Library museums provide experiential learning environments that enhance cognitive and emotional engagement with history and culture. They promote constructivist learning approaches where students explore primary sources, participate in exhibitions, and critically engage with artifacts (Hein, 2006). The integration of library resources with museum exhibitions creates multidisciplinary educational platforms that benefit both academic communities and the general public. In Tanzania, academic partnerships with the NMT have allowed students in archaeology, anthropology, and library science to gain hands-on experience and better understand cultural heritage management (Mkenda & Manda, 2021). In African contexts, cultural preservation and education have often operated in separate institutional silos. However, recent scholarship calls for a more integrated model where cultural institutions contribute directly to curriculum development and academic research (Nseka & Kankwenda, 2019). The NMT's collaboration with Tanzanian universities illustrates a shift toward this integration, where museum

collections are increasingly used in course instruction and research projects. This intersection fosters decolonized pedagogies that center African narratives and values in academic discourse (Kasuka & Chagutah, 2022). While academic library museums hold immense potential, they face challenges such as underfunding, inadequate policy frameworks, and limited digitization (Mutula & Wamukoya, 2009). These constraints hinder the effective use of museum resources in education. Nonetheless, digital technologies offer opportunities for expanding access to collections and enhancing interactive learning. In Tanzania, efforts are being made to digitize parts of the NMT's archives and incorporate them into virtual learning environments, thus broadening their educational reach (Mosha & Mwaimu, 2023). Strengthening institutional collaborations and investing in capacity-building remain critical to realizing the full potential of academic library museums.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design using a case study approach to explore the intersection of cultural preservation and education in academic library museums, with a specific focus on the National Museum of Tanzania (NMT). The case study method was selected to allow an in-depth investigation of a single institution that integrates cultural heritage functions within an academic framework. A structured questionnaire was used as the sole data collection instrument to obtain relevant information from participants. A structured questionnaire was designed and administered to collect

quantitative data. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions

➤ Population and Sample Size

The target population comprised museum staff, academic librarians, university lecturers, and students who engage with the NMT for educational or research purposes. A sample size of 80 respondents ($n = 80$) was selected through purposive sampling, which ensured that only individuals with direct experience or interaction with the museum were included in the study. This approach helped to collect specific insights from key stakeholders relevant to the research objectives.

➤ Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaires were distributed in person and via email to selected respondents affiliated with the National Museum of Tanzania and its academic partners. Participants were given a period of two weeks to complete and return the questionnaires. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, and confidentiality was assured.

➤ Data Analysis

Data collected from the completed questionnaires were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages to summarize the findings. The analysis aimed to identify trends, patterns, and respondent perceptions regarding the intersection between cultural preservation and educational practices within the museum setting.

Table 1: Institute Details

Name	Region/City	Year of Establishment	URL
National Museum of Tanzania	Dar es Salaam	1961	https://www.nmt.go.tz/

Source: Field Data, 2025

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

➤ Roles of Academic Library Museums in Cultural Preservation

Table and Figure 2 explains, academic library museums are critical in cultural preservation because they keep historical artifacts, rare books, manuscripts, and other objects that represent culturally significant items that portray the legacy of a given society. They are both educational and research institutions who can access and learn cultural treasures. Their

mutual aim is to educate, raise awareness about cultural approaches, encourage the art of acceptance of varied traditions, and make sure that physical and non-physical cultural heritage will become the part of the future generations due to the exhibitions, digitization projects, and the programs of interaction with the community. They are also libraries and museums and, as such, their dual responsibility serves as a special opportunity to connect knowledge to the cultural memory.

Table 2: Roles of Academic Library Museums in Cultural Preservation

Particular	f	%
Archiving indigenous materials	22	27.5
Conserving rare manuscripts	18	22.5
Hosting cultural exhibitions	20	25.0
Digitization of historical content	20	25.0
Total	80	100

Source: Field Data, 2025; Note: F - Frequencies, % - Percentage; n=80

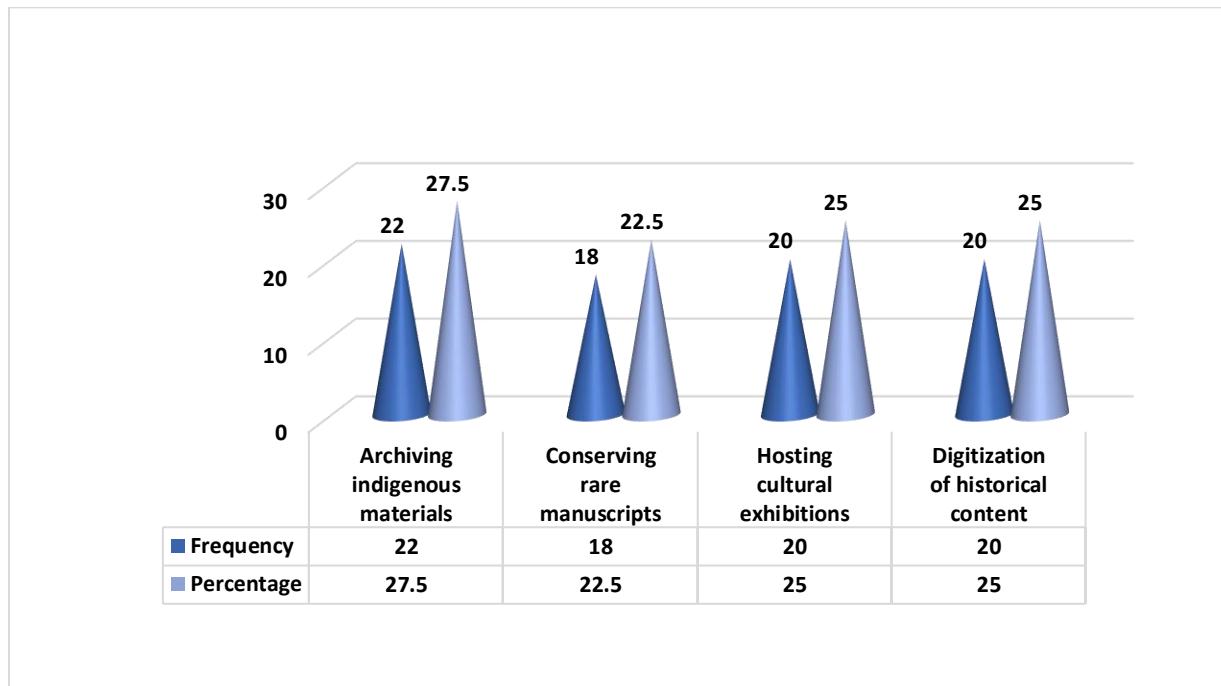


Fig 1: Roles of Academic Library Museums in Cultural Preservation

Source: Field Data, 2025

The results in Table and Figure 2, show academic library museums have several functions in preservation of the culture. Among 80 respondents, 22 (27.5%) have stated that one of the core areas is to preserve indigenous materials, and this signifies the efforts of preserving traditional knowledge and cultural heritages. 18 (22.5%) have mentioned that it is also important to preserve rare manuscripts and the same has demonstrated that there are efforts to preserve historical records. 20 (25.0%) have noted that cultural exhibitions are needed and this statement has reflected that culture should be preserved and presented before the academic communities. On the same note, 20 (25.0%) cited as a key operation the digitization of historical content and thereby the increasing importance of technology in preservation and due access to cultural resources.

➤ *Educational Support Activities by Library Museums*

Table and Figure 3 shows the library museums are highly important in the field of education as they create a dynamic learning experience as it provides access to the historical items, curated exhibitions, as well as information sources all gathered at one area. The activities these institutions offer include guided tours, hands-on workshops, lectures and other displays that are complementary to official education and facilitate the idea of lifelong learning. With the assistance of visitors of all ages, the library museums learn more about history, culture, science, and arts, becoming inquisitive and critical thinkers. They also work together with the schools and teachers to synchronize the actions with the curriculum, and thus, they offer themselves to be helpful tools in academic development and community learning.

Table 3: Educational Support Activities by Library Museums

Particular	f	%
Curriculum support through artifacts	20	25.0
Guided educational tours	18	22.5
Research support services	22	27.5
Outreach and workshops	20	25.0
Total	80	100

Source: Field Data, 2025; Note: F - Frequencies, % - Percentage; n=80

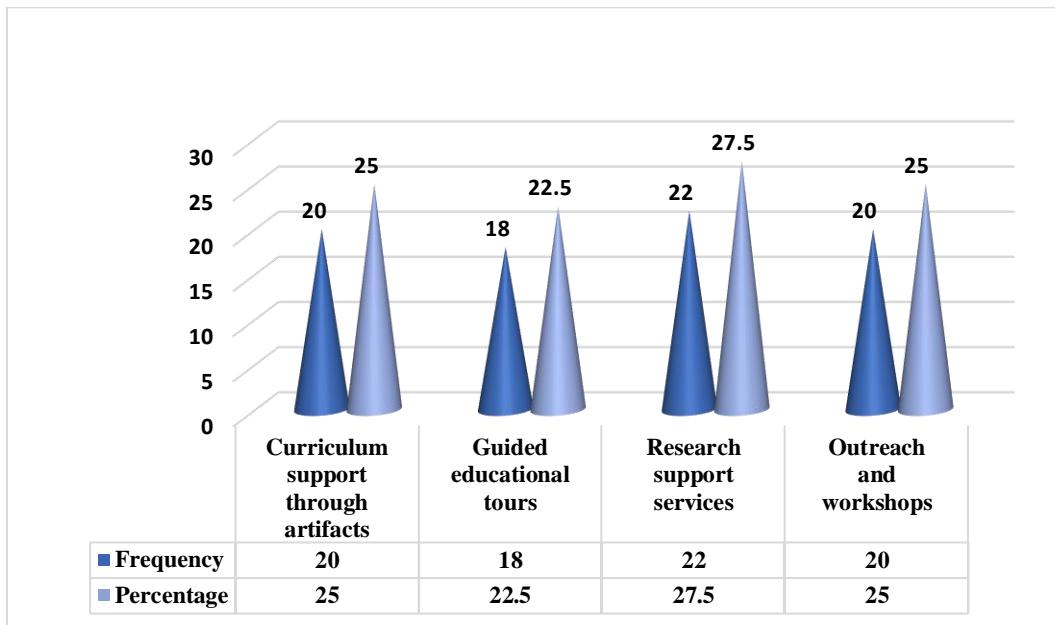


Fig 3: Educational Support Activities by Library Museums

Source: Field Data, 2025

According to Table and Figure 3, although the sample size of the respondents was large by 80, 22 (27.5%) of them claimed that the most prevalent educational activity of library museum was research support services. It is then followed by curriculum support via artifacts and outreach as well as workshops, which both have 20 (25.0%), reflecting their value as equally valuable towards the provision of learning in academics and community outreach. The educational tours according to 18 (22.5%) are also among the most utilised educational aids. On the whole, the answers can help us understand that the academic library museums provide a wide variety of educational support functions which can play a crucial role in the enhancement of the research and studying environment in the university.

➤ Challenges Facing Academic Library Museums

Table and Figure 4 examines; the academic library museums have a number of setbacks that inhibit their performance as well as expansion. These are low resources and funds, which are a factor to acquisitions, personals, and developing exhibitions. They frequently have trouble juggling curatorial and educational practices and learning how to combine the use of digital technologies in preservation and outreach. Space limitations in university environments, poor visibility or notability among academic stake holders and absence of specialized workforce adds to the complication of operations. There are further challenges as achieving a synergy between their purposes and those of institutions and remaining relevant in a fast-evolving scholarly landscape.

Table 4: Challenges Facing Academic Library Museums

Particular	f	%
Inadequate funding	26	32.5
Lack of trained staff	18	22.5
Poor digitization infrastructure	20	25.0
Low institutional priority	16	20.0
Total	80	100

Source: Field Data, 2025; Note: F - Frequencies, % - Percentage; n=80

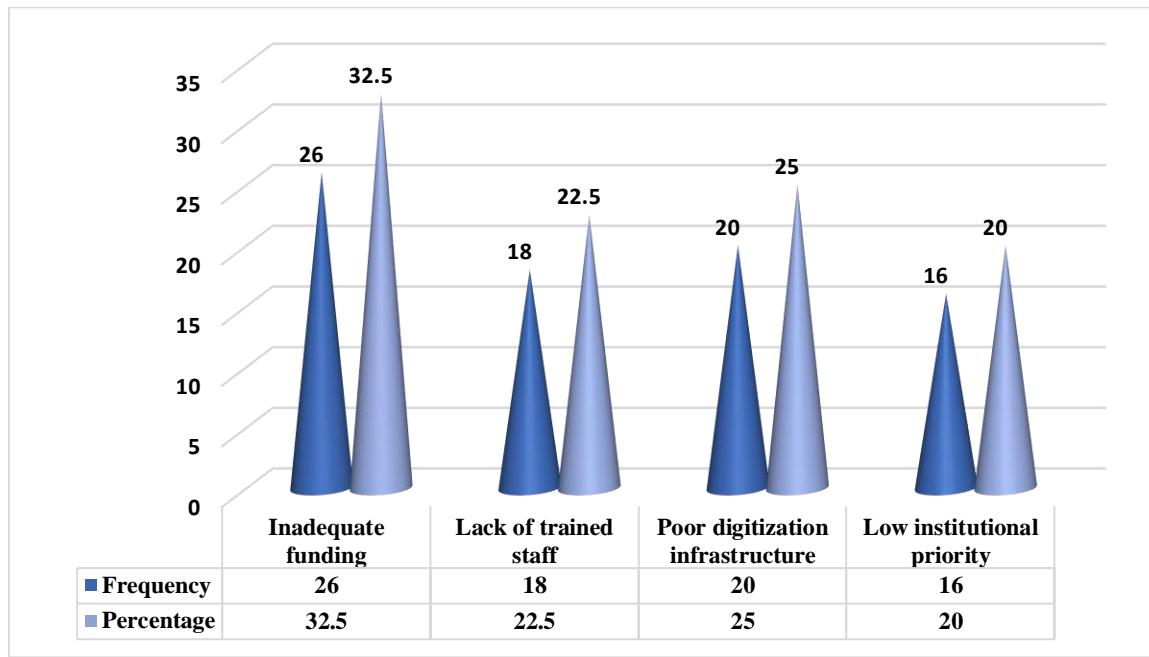


Fig 4: Challenges Facing Academic Library Museums

Source: Field Data, 2025

The results in Table and Figure 4 indicate that the academic library museums have a number of important issues that hinder their performance. The largest proportion of them was reported poor funding, which was the case of 26 (32.5%) respondents indicating the need to have more funds to run and expand operations. It was followed by the lack of good digitization infrastructure, where 20 (25.0%) pointed to such an issue that shows the inability to modernize and keep the collections in digital form. The shortage of trained personnel was stated by 18 (22.5%), meaning that there is the lacking expertise in human resources required in managing in museum functions successfully. Finally, 16 (20.0%) mentioned low institutional priority, that is, the tendency of libraries to be poorly served by their parents and thus enjoy insufficient recognition and support. All these problems point out toward the importance of strategic actions to reinforced the purpose of academic library museums.

➤ Proposed Strategies for Improvement

Table and Figure 5 indicates the suggestions on ways of improving the academic library museum are proposed and they relate to accessibility, interaction and educational gain. There are making collections more accessible and preservable by digitizing them, incorporating museum resources into academic programs, collaborating with scientists and scholars across disciplines, and using interactive technology, including tours and augmented reality. Further, outreach can be enhanced by providing community programs, exhibitions, and collaborating with other culture entities to widen the reach. There is also a need to have capacity building of staff and sustainable methods of funding so as to maintain long term development and relevance in providing support to research, teaching and lifelong learning at the academic circle.

Table 5: Proposed Strategies for Improvement

Particular	f	%
Staff training in museology	26	32.5
Increasing digitization efforts	20	25.0
Policy integration and budgeting	14	17.5
Academic-museum collaborations	20	25.0
Total	80	100

Source: Field Data, 2025; Note: F - Frequencies, % - Percentage; n=80

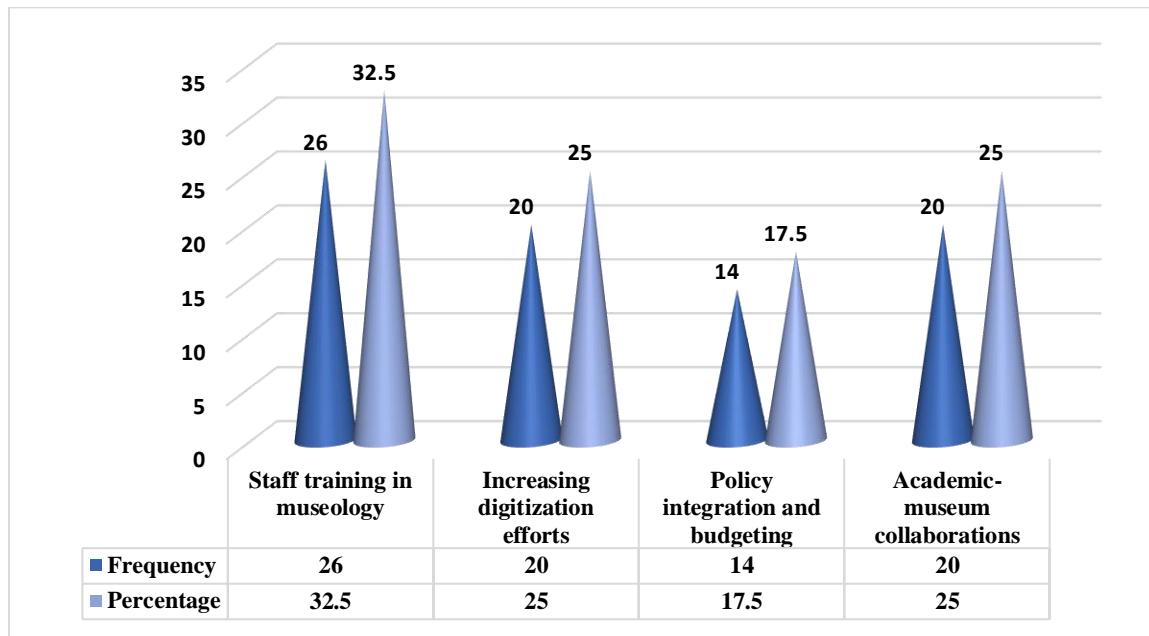


Fig 5: Proposed Strategies for Improvement
Source: Field Data, 2025

Table and Figure 5, results unveil some of the suggested methods of enhancing the success of academic library museums. Most of the respondents 26 (32.5%) pointed out training of the staff in museology as one of the areas that need improvement. Next came the enhancing the digitization process, and the collaboration between academia and museums, both of which were proposed by 20 (25.0%) each. Meanwhile, the feat of policy integration and budgeting was made by 14 (17.5%) of the total. These findings indicate that the improvement of capacity amongst the staff and the utilisation of the digital tools can be regarded as the most effective of the factors that can enhance the dual purpose of both cultural preservation and education in the academic library museums.

V. DISCUSSION

The current evidence of the assertions of the crucial role of academic library museums in the persistence of culture heritage has discovered that they still play important roles in preservation of the culture heritage through archiving, conservation, and display of the collections and education through arts based teaching, as well as guided tours, which is within the comprehensions of the experiential learning theories (Hein, 2000; Nnyanzi & Omona, 2023). These roles endorse the previous knowledge by Okello-Obura and Kigongo-Bukanya (2011) on preservation of indigenous knowledge. Nevertheless, they are hindered by the lack of funding, proper digitization infrastructure, and personnel with the necessary expertise to make the most of them, as problems that affect application to the museum sector in general, promoting underinvestment in academic cultural institutions (Buser, 2016; Kamoga & Nabukenya, 2024). It is suggested to overcome such shortcomings through such interventions as special training,

investment in digital technologies, and such directions as interdisciplinary collaboration, which is consistent with the global trends in heritage management (Kalfatovic et al., 2008; UNESCO, 2023).

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the role of academic library museums in cultural preservation and education, several strategic actions are essential. Firstly, universities should prioritize capacity building by investing in training programs for library staff, equipping them with skills in museum management and cultural preservation techniques. This professional development ensures that staff are well-prepared to manage both physical and digital collections effectively. Secondly, digitization projects must be advanced to facilitate broader access to cultural resources and safeguard historical materials through digital archiving. These initiatives not only preserve fragile items but also make them accessible to a global audience. Thirdly, there is a critical need for a robust policy framework wherein academic institutions develop integrated policies that formally acknowledge and support the dual function of libraries as both knowledge centers and cultural repositories. Finally, cross-disciplinary collaborations should be encouraged, promoting partnerships between academic departments and library museums. Such collaborations can enrich teaching and research, foster inclusive learning environments, and integrate diverse perspectives into academic discourse.

VII. CONCLUSION

Academic library museums are critical institutions that bridge cultural preservation and education. They enrich academic environments by providing experiential learning resources while safeguarding cultural memory. However, their effectiveness is hampered by structural challenges, resource limitations, and insufficient policy support. This study underscores the importance of strategic investment and collaborative practices to maximize the potential of academic library museums. By strengthening these institutions, universities can ensure that cultural preservation becomes a living component of the academic experience.

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