

Safeguarding Basotho heritage: the role of Lesotho National Library Services in the digital preservation of national collection

Wole Michael Olatokun¹ and Mamoeletsi Cecilia Monyane²

wm.olatokun@nul.ls ORCID: 0000-0003-2780-2161

mc.monyane@nul.ls ORCID: 0000-0002-6338-4622

Received: 15 March 2025

Accepted: 9 March 2026

This paper investigates how the Lesotho National Library Services (LNLS) safeguards Basotho cultural heritage through the Lesotho Collection and the challenges it faces in sustaining effective digital preservation. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews, document analysis, and archival review, the study reveals gaps in legal frameworks, staffing capacity, technological infrastructure, and funding that collectively constrain preservation efforts. Interview evidence highlights the critical roles played by both internal staff and external partners in shaping the future of the collection. The paper argues that strengthening digital preservation requires a coordinated approach involving legal reform, targeted staff development, improved infrastructure, and strategic collaboration. These measures are essential for ensuring that the Lesotho Collection remains accessible, resilient, and relevant for future generations in an evolving digital environment.

Keywords: Lesotho collection, Lesotho National Library Services, digital preservation, Basotho cultural heritage

1 Introduction

In 2024, Lesotho commemorated a landmark achievement, the bicentennial of the Basotho nation's existence. This celebration not only marked 200 years of cultural endurance and identity but also provided an opportunity to reflect on the Basotho people's rich heritage. The formation of the Basotho nation under King Moshoeshoe I in the early nineteenth century established the foundation for a unique cultural and historical narrative that remains relevant today (Giles 2022). As the Basotho celebrated this significant milestone, it became essential to acknowledge and preserve the historical records that document their journey (Motinyane 2019). The Lesotho National Library Services (LNLS) stands at the forefront of these preservation efforts.

The Lesotho National Library Service (later renamed Lesotho National Library Services) was established in 1976 and began operations in 1978, located on Kingsway in Maseru in a purpose-built structure linked to an older sandstone building formerly used as a residence for a bank official. The acquisition of the British Council Library's collections in 1978 significantly strengthened LNLS holdings, although the institution faced financial challenges from the outset (Forshaw 1980). The establishment of the LNLS also catalysed the formation of the Lesotho Library Association in 1978, which, for a time, published *Lesotho Books and Libraries* (Lesotho Books and Libraries 1980; Lesotho Books and Libraries 1999).

Over time, both the new and old library buildings developed structural problems, leading to their demolition in 2003 with a temporary relocation of staff and boxed collections to the Maseru Industrial Area. As a result, Maseru lacked a functional public library service for three years until the State Library (housing both the National Library and National Archives) was completed and opened in April 2006. Beyond the main library, the LNLS also oversees branch libraries across several districts, with some initiated through community or donor efforts (Lesotho National Library News 2004).

The establishment of the LNLS reflected the government's recognition of libraries as essential resources for cultural, educational, and national development (Mathabathe 2020). In 2023, the LNLS was placed under the Ministry of Information, Communications, Science, Technology and Innovation, further reinforcing its dual mandate as both a national and public library. Central to this mandate is the Lesotho Collection, a curated assemblage of tangible and intangible heritage materials documenting the cultural, political, linguistic, and social evolution of the Basotho people. The collection includes about 20,000 items and is governed by objectives to preserve national literature, compile a national bibliography, set library standards, and provide information for decision-makers.

The Lesotho Collection is more than a repository of historical materials; it is a living archive that continues to inform contemporary identity and scholarship (Thamae 2021). It comprises tangible materials such as traditional clothing, artefacts, historical documents, and architectural heritage, as well as intangible elements, including oral histories, folklore, music,

1. Wole Michael Olatokun is Professor in the Department of Library and Information Studies at the National University of Lesotho, Roma
2. Mamoeletsi Cecilia Monyane is Lecturer in the Department of Library and Information Studies at the National University of Lesotho, Roma

dance, rituals, and the Sesotho language itself (Guma 1967; Thabane 2002a; 2002b). Preserving this unique cultural resource in the digital age requires deliberate strategies that safeguard materials for future generations.

Accordingly, this paper seeks to examine the role of the LNLS in the digital preservation of the Lesotho Collection, assess ongoing efforts, identify barriers, and propose strategies for strengthening preservation initiatives. To guide the inquiry, the study was driven by the following research questions:

- What is the role of the Lesotho National Library Services (LNLS) in the preservation and management of the Lesotho Collection?
- What activities and initiatives has the LNLS undertaken to support the digital preservation of the Lesotho Collection?
- What challenges hinder the effective development, preservation, and digitisation of the Lesotho Collection?

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section presents a review of relevant literature on digital preservation in libraries, drawing on lessons from other national contexts and highlighting common preservation challenges. This is followed by a description of the methodology that guided the study. The results are later presented, then the discussion. The paper concludes with recommendations aimed at strengthening and sustaining digital preservation efforts within the institution.

2 Review of literature

This section presents the literature review

2.1 Digital preservation in libraries

Digital preservation has become a central concern in contemporary librarianship, particularly as libraries transition towards digitally mediated knowledge environments. Harvey (2018) defines digital preservation as a series of managed activities aimed at ensuring enduring access to digital materials for as long as necessary. This long-term perspective is especially critical in an era marked by rapid technological obsolescence, increased reliance on digital platforms, and the proliferation of born-digital content (Conway 2020). Digital preservation safeguards collections against data corruption, hardware and software failures, format obsolescence, and physical deterioration. Current literature identifies several key strategies integral to effective digital preservation. Digitisation, the process of converting analogue materials into digital formats, enables broader access while protecting fragile originals from wear and tear. Migration, another core strategy, involves periodically transferring digital content from outdated formats or systems to newer, more sustainable ones. Emulation seeks to recreate obsolete software and hardware environments, thereby enabling the continued rendering of digital objects in their original form (Digital Preservation Coalition 2023). These strategies are increasingly supported by digital repositories, adherence to standards such as the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) model, and the use of preservation metadata schemas such as PREMIS (Lavoie 2022). National libraries have a unique mandate to preserve their nation's cultural, intellectual, and historical records. Smith (2019) underscores national libraries' role as custodians of documentary heritage, noting their responsibility to collect, preserve, and provide equitable access to culturally significant materials. Through its Lesotho Collection, the LNLS performs this national memory function by safeguarding manuscripts, books, oral histories, photographs, and artefacts documenting Basotho culture and nationhood (Thamae 2021). The digital preservation of such materials is vital not only for research and education but also for fostering national identity and cultural continuity.

Several global institutions offer instructive examples of effective digital preservation practices. The National Library of Australia (NLA), for instance, has implemented a comprehensive digital preservation strategy anchored in its Digital Preservation Policy, preservation repositories, and regular data integrity checks (Brown 2020). Its Trove platform exemplifies how large-scale digital aggregation can foster access and long-term preservation. The British Library (BL) has similarly established a robust digital preservation ecosystem. Its strategy integrates large-scale digitisation of manuscripts, newspapers, and sound recordings; the application of rigorous metadata standards; and the deployment of automated workflows for ingestion, preservation, and access (Jones 2019; BL 2023). The BL's approach underscores the importance of institutional policy frameworks in guiding preservation actions.

The National Library of New Zealand's (NLNZ) digital preservation programme is also widely cited. The institution adopts a proactive, risk-based framework that includes detailed preservation planning, international collaboration, and ongoing staff training (Anderson 2019). The NLNZ's experience demonstrates the value of integrating human capacity development, community partnerships, and technical infrastructure into a holistic preservation model. These cases illustrate that sustainable digital preservation requires strong policy foundations, ongoing resource investment, and alignment with international best practices.

2.2 Digital preservation in Africa

Digital preservation efforts across Africa are shaped by unique infrastructural, financial, and policy challenges. Nonetheless, several African institutions have made notable progress.

2.2.1 South Africa

The NLSA is recognised as one of the continent's leaders in digital preservation. Its initiatives include the digitisation of historical manuscripts, government publications, photographs, and legal deposit materials. The NLSA maintains digital repositories and adopts international metadata standards to ensure interoperability and longevity (Ngulube 2019). The South African National Bibliography exemplifies how digital preservation enhances national documentary heritage. Collaborative projects with continental and international partners further strengthen NLSA's technical capacity.

2.2.2 Kenya

The Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service (KNADS) has implemented extensive digitisation projects targeting fragile historical records, including colonial-era documents and post-independence governmental archives. KNADS prioritises high-resolution imaging, detailed metadata creation, and staff capacity building (Wamukoya & Mutula 2020). Partnerships with universities and international bodies have helped bridge resource and expertise gaps, highlighting the importance of collaboration for sustainability.

2.2.3 Nigeria

At the University of Ibadan, the Kenneth Dike Library has digitised rare manuscripts, theses, archival documents, and cultural heritage materials. The institutional repository provides open access to digitised content, supporting knowledge dissemination and reducing physical strain on fragile items (Adeyemi 2019). The library's hybrid approach, combining local servers with cloud-based storage, enhances redundancy and accessibility.

2.2.4 Botswana

The Botswana National Archives and Records Services (BNARS) has pursued digitisation of photographs, maps, and audiovisual records susceptible to deterioration. Its initiatives adhere to international best practices, supported by training through UNESCO and the International Council on Archives (Ngulube 2020). Despite facing challenges related to funding and technical staff shortages, BNARS demonstrates steady progress in building a sustainable digital preservation infrastructure.

3 Challenges of digital preservation

While progress has been recorded across many settings, digital preservation remains constrained by several persistent challenges. One major challenge is the high cost associated with digitisation, including acquisition of scanning equipment, storage infrastructure, and long-term system maintenance (Digital Preservation Coalition, 2025). The continuous need for hardware upgrades, software updates, and security mechanisms further increases financial burdens. Copyright and intellectual property restrictions also complicate digitisation and access decisions. Khumalo (2020) notes that balancing legal compliance with public access can be complex, particularly in multicultural and multilingual archival environments.

Human capacity remains a critical barrier. Effective digital preservation requires expertise in archival science, information technology, metadata standards, and digital curation, skills that are in short supply in many African institutions (Tlali 2022). A lack of training and professional development limits the sustainability of preservation initiatives. Low public engagement and inadequate outreach also hinder the full utilisation of digitised collections. Public awareness, user education, and systematic promotion are essential for ensuring that digitisation investments yield meaningful cultural and educational benefits (Smith 2019). Despite these challenges, scholars argue that Africa's increasing digital connectivity, expanding ICT infrastructure, and growing recognition of cultural heritage's value present significant opportunities (Wamukoya & Mutula 2020; Lwoga 2021). Collaborative networks, donor support, and capacity-building partnerships offer viable pathways for strengthening digital preservation across the continent.

4 Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the role of the LNLS in the digital preservation of the Lesotho Collection. The qualitative approach was deemed appropriate because the study sought to obtain an in-depth understanding of institutional practices, contextual factors, challenges, and opportunities surrounding digital preservation

at the LNLS. Qualitative research enables the exploration of phenomena within their real-life context and allows the researcher to capture rich descriptive data from multiple viewpoints (Creswell 2014; Merriam & Tisdell 2016).

5 Data sources and collection methods

Three primary data collection methods were used: document analysis, archival review, and semi-structured interviews. The documentary analysis involved reviewing secondary sources, such as reports, policy documents, historical publications, and scholarly literature, relating to national libraries, digital preservation, and cultural heritage management in Africa. This approach allowed the researchers to contextualise the historical development of the LNLS, its mandate, and existing challenges documented by earlier scholars and practitioners (Ngulube 2019; Smith 2019; Harvey 2018).

An archival review was conducted in the archival section of the LNLS to examine the state, composition, and management of the Lesotho Collection. Catalogues, organisational records, classification systems, storage conditions, and access arrangements at the LNLS were inspected. The archival review provided direct insight into the nature of the collection, its level of organisation, and the extent of previous or ongoing digitisation efforts. Archival research is a commonly used method in studies of heritage institutions and facilitates an understanding of the operational and structural realities that influence preservation practices (Yakel 2015).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the months of June and July 2024 with five purposively selected staff members (one senior librarian, two librarians, one archivist, and one IT technician) of the LNLS who work directly with the management of the Lesotho Collection. The interviews allow for the collection of detailed narratives while also enabling flexibility to probe emerging issues during the conversation (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015). The interviewees provided information on existing preservation practices, institutional challenges, staff capacity, infrastructural limitations, and past attempts at digitisation. Their insights were critical in understanding the lived experiences of staff and the internal constraints that shape the library's ability to embark on digital preservation. Ethical considerations were upheld by securing informed consent from all five interviewees, ensuring the confidentiality of the data they provided, and properly acknowledging all sources consulted.

6 Data analysis

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying, coding, and categorising recurring themes and patterns across the interviews, archival notes, and documentary sources. The analysis was interpretive, consistent with qualitative research traditions, and aimed to produce a coherent narrative about the current state and future prospects of digital preservation at the LNLS. The paper thus adopts the narrative in discussing the role, activities, challenges, and recommendations for digital preservation of the Lesotho Collection by the LNLS.

The selected methodology was appropriate for this study because digital preservation in African libraries is a context-dependent and institution-specific issue. Scholars such as Ngulube (2020) and Wamukoya and Mutula (2020) emphasise that research in African archival and library environments requires approaches capable of capturing contextual nuances and complex operational realities. The reliance on qualitative sources enables the study to illuminate the historical, administrative, technical, and socio-cultural factors influencing the digital preservation landscape at LNLS. The triangulation of document analysis, archival evidence, and interviews helped to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

7 Results

In this section, the results are presented in line with the research questions that guided the study.

Research Question 1: What is the role of the Lesotho National Library Services (LNLS) in the preservation and management of the Lesotho Collection?

Findings from documentary analysis showed that the LNLS serves as the custodian of the Lesotho Collection, undertaking activities aimed at maintaining its relevance and accessibility. The collection is organised using the Dewey Decimal Classification and Library of Congress schemes. Despite the absence of a legal deposit framework, the library collects publications voluntarily submitted by authors and researchers who are aware of legal deposit practices. It manages the physical collection providing access to users and maintaining bibliographic control, although access is limited to on-site consultation and not available digitally. The LNLS, therefore, plays a central role in safeguarding Lesotho's cultural heritage and scholarly outputs, albeit constrained by legislative, technical, and infrastructural limitations.

Research Question 2: What activities and initiatives has the LNLS undertaken to support the digital preservation of the Lesotho Collection?

Findings from the interviews showed that efforts to support digital preservation at the LNLS have been minimal and largely exploratory. A respondent noted that

“...not much had been done in terms of embarking on a digital preservation project. It seems that we are not ready to embrace digital preservation techniques.” According to another respondent, a previous attempt by the Archives Section to digitise archival materials did not succeed due to inadequate project management, unclear staff responsibilities, and a lack of supporting infrastructure. He indicated that *“there was a previous attempt to digitise the collections in this library in 2021 but the project failed due to lack of expertise in ICTs by library staff. So, the project died a natural death”*.

Findings also revealed that internet access has been recently introduced through a corporate donation, enabling basic digital services, though systematic digitisation is yet to be implemented. As one respondent opined,

“We now have internet access in the library, but it is still very slow, and it is always a challenge to embark on any serious research. This limits our productivity, especially in providing services to patrons.”

The inference from these findings is that although the LNLS has recognised the importance of digital preservation in protecting historical documents and cultural artefacts and increasing access for a global audience, no formal preservation programme has yet been institutionalised.

Research Question 3: What challenges hinder the effective development, preservation, and digitisation of the Lesotho Collection?

The findings revealed the following challenges to effective development, preservation, and digitisation of the Lesotho Collection: The absence of a legal deposit framework was explicitly noted by the interviewees. One staff member explained,

“Only authors or publishers who know about legal deposit submit their publications; there is no law to compel others.”

Another interviewee highlighted copyright issues, stating that navigating copyright for older works is costly and time-consuming, particularly when determining the rightful owners of rare or archival materials. This underscores the legislative and policy gaps that impede systematic collection development and digital preservation. Another challenge identified was human resource limitations. The interviewees consistently pointed to a lack of qualified personnel. One archivist noted,

“We do not have enough trained staff in library and information science, and those with ICT knowledge are very few.”

Another added that the limited professional development opportunities make it difficult to build the necessary competencies for digital preservation. A third staff member emphasised that inadequate training directly affects the library’s ability to manage digitisation projects efficiently. Next was infrastructure and technological deficits, where interviewees highlighted physical and technological limitations. One participant said,

“Our space is not enough to accommodate the collection properly, and the equipment is outdated.”

Another interviewee mentioned that intermittent internet access and unreliable ICT infrastructure frequently disrupt digital preservation activities. These insights point to the tangible infrastructural barriers that hinder effective management of the Lesotho Collection. The lack of an adequate budget was similarly noted as a major impediment. As one staff member explained,

“Even if we have the will to digitise, the funds are not sufficient to purchase and maintain the necessary equipment and software.”

Another echoed that the library has no long-term financial plan to support digital preservation, which limits the sustainability of any initiatives. In addition, the interviewees observed that the Lesotho Collection receives minimal patronage, reducing its perceived relevance. One staff member noted,

“Very few patrons use the collection, and we are not open on weekends, which discourages potential users.”

This low engagement impacts not only the visibility and relevance of the collection but also its ability to attract resources and institutional support. A previous digitisation initiative at the LNLS failed due to poor management. One interviewee reflected,

“The digitisation project was badly managed; staff were not clear on what was expected, and infrastructure was lacking.”

Another added that this lack of structured governance and planning contributed to the project’s abandonment. These testimonies highlight the critical need for professional project management and operational clarity in future digital preservation efforts.

Research Question 4: What digital preservation strategies and techniques are most appropriate for safeguarding the Lesotho Collection?

Responses from LNLS staff emphasised the urgent need for a multi-faceted approach to preserve the Lesotho Collection. Interviewees consistently noted that digitisation is fundamental, with one staff member stating,

“Converting our physical documents and photographs into digital formats would ensure that they are safe from decay and accessible to a wider audience.”

Another added that digitisation could also facilitate interlibrary collaboration:

“Once digitised, our materials could be shared with universities and researchers beyond Lesotho, increasing their relevance.”

These insights illustrate that digitisation is not merely a technical task but also a strategic measure to enhance access and preservation. Encapsulation emerged as another critical technique. One archivist explained,

“It is important that when we digitise documents, we include detailed metadata so future users can understand the context and provenance of each item.”

A colleague reinforced this point, noting that poorly documented digital objects could lose their research value, especially for rare and archival collections. Such perspectives highlight the necessity of bundling digital objects with metadata and contextual information to ensure usability over time. Migration was discussed by interviewees in terms of maintaining compatibility with evolving technologies. A staff member shared,

“Even if we digitise today, the software or formats may become obsolete in a few years. We need to plan for transferring content to newer systems periodically.”

Another noted,

“Without migration strategies, our digital collection could become inaccessible, defeating the purpose of preservation.”

This underscores the importance of proactive measures to prevent technological obsolescence.

Emulation was also mentioned as a practical solution for accessing older digital content. One respondent remarked,

“Some of our older digital files may only open in legacy software. Emulation would allow us to recreate the original environment, so researchers can still use them.”

Another staff member agreed, highlighting that emulation complements migration, especially for formats that cannot easily be converted. Bit-level preservation was recognised as a fundamental safeguard against data corruption and loss. Interviewees emphasised regular integrity checks, redundancy, and the creation of multiple backups stored in different locations. One participant explained,

“We need to ensure that even if one copy is damaged, other copies exist so the information is not lost forever.”

Another added that geographically dispersed backups are essential given Lesotho’s vulnerability to infrastructure interruptions. Finally, institutional strategies were also considered indispensable. Staff highlighted the need for clear policies, workflows, and standards to sustain digital preservation efforts over the long term. One interviewee observed,

“Without proper procedures and a clear mandate, even the best technology cannot preserve our collection.”

Another noted that staff training, defined responsibilities, and institutional commitment are necessary for the continuity of preservation practices. The findings from the interviews suggest that safeguarding the Lesotho Collection requires an integrated approach that combines technical techniques such as digitisation, encapsulation, migration, emulation, and bit-level preservation with strategic and organisational measures. Staff insights demonstrate that while technological interventions are critical, they must be supported by structured policies, workflow systems, and capacity-building initiatives to ensure long-term sustainability and accessibility. The qualitative evidence points to a preservation strategy that is not only technologically robust but also institutionally embedded, reflecting both the realities and aspirations of LNLS personnel.

Research Question 5: What roles do internal and external stakeholders play in supporting LNLS’s efforts toward digital preservation?

Interview responses revealed that internal stakeholders, particularly LNLS management, librarians, archivists, and ICT personnel, are central to the operationalisation of digital preservation. One senior staff member explained that

“everything begins with us; if we do not prioritise the preservation work, no external support will make a difference.”

Another added that successful preservation depends on clearly defined roles, stating,

“Most of our delays happen because people are not sure who is supposed to do what. Once responsibilities are allocated properly, the work flows.”

Staff further highlighted the importance of capacity and skills, with a technician noting,

“Some of us need more training on digital tools, metadata creation, and file management if we are to handle digitisation confidently.”

These perspectives show that internal actors serve as the operational backbone, shaping day-to-day decisions, managing collections, and ensuring that preservation tasks are executed consistently and professionally. At the same time, interviewees emphasised that the sustainability of digital preservation cannot rest solely on internal actors. External stakeholders, including government ministries, the National University of Lesotho, regional library networks, donors, and private ICT firms, play significant complementary roles. One participant described the government’s role as foundational, stating,

“Without a national policy or dedicated funding, our digital preservation plans cannot move beyond ideas.”

Another staff member pointed to the support of academic partners, noting that *“the university helps us with technical advice and sometimes even equipment; they give us access to expertise we don’t have internally.”* Donors were also viewed as essential, with one interviewee explaining,

“Most of our big projects only happen when development partners support us, because our internal budget is very limited.”

The private sector was also mentioned as a potential collaborator in providing digital infrastructure and software support. The interviewees further pointed out that collaboration with external actors strengthens public engagement and advocacy for the Lesotho Collection. As one staff member stated,

“When stakeholders speak about our work publicly, it helps people understand why preserving our national memory matters.”

This creates broader community awareness and enhances patronage, which in turn reinforces institutional commitment. These findings illustrate that internal and external stakeholders play interconnected and mutually reinforcing roles in advancing digital preservation at the LNLS. Internal personnel provide the operational capacity, institutional knowledge, and daily stewardship required to maintain preservation activities, while external stakeholders contribute the enabling environment, through funding, policy frameworks, skills development, infrastructure, and advocacy, that supports long-term sustainability. The findings highlight that successful digital preservation is ultimately a collaborative endeavour, anchored in institutional leadership but dependent on strong and sustained partnerships across Lesotho's broader information and heritage ecosystem.

8 Discussion

The findings highlight that the LNLS plays a central custodial role in Lesotho's cultural and scholarly preservation, consistent with patterns observed across African national libraries where legal and institutional frameworks remain underdeveloped (Katuu 2021; Anyaoku et al. 2019). The lack of legal deposit and restrictive copyright laws reflects structural limitations that hinder collection completeness and digitisation efforts (Gracy & Kahn 2012; Kastellec 2012). Human resource constraints, particularly limited ICT expertise and professional development opportunities, are persistent challenges that mirror findings in South African and broader African contexts (Masenya 2018; Masenya & Ngulube 2020; Mothoka et al. 2021). Infrastructure and financial limitations compound these challenges, leading to stalled digitisation projects and service interruptions, as documented in other studies (Anyaoku et al. 2019; Constable 2008).

Digital preservation strategies such as digitisation, migration, emulation, encapsulation, and bit-level preservation are widely recognised as effective techniques for maintaining long-term access and usability of cultural materials (Greenstein & Thorin 2002; Lavoie & Dempsey 2004; Rothenberg 1999; NDSA 2017). Successful implementation requires structured project management, clear policies, and sustained collaboration with internal and external stakeholders (Uutoni 2024; Tlali 2022). In view of these, the LNLS must adopt a staged, strategic approach that integrates technical methods with human capacity development, stakeholder engagement, and legislative reform. This would ensure the Lesotho Collection remains accessible, relevant, and protected against the risks of physical degradation and digital obsolescence (Smith 2019; Khumalo 2020).

9 Conclusion and recommendations

The commemoration of 200 years of the Basotho nation underscores the importance of preserving the cultural and historical heritage of Lesotho. The LNLS plays a critical role in this preservation effort, particularly through its Lesotho Collection. This collection, comprising both tangible and intangible cultural artefacts, embodies the rich heritage and identity of the Basotho people. However, the LNLS faces significant challenges in maintaining and digitally preserving this collection. These challenges include inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, a lack of trained personnel, and the absence of a legal framework to enforce the deposit of national publications.

Despite these obstacles, the need for digital preservation is imperative. Digital preservation ensures that the Lesotho Collection remains accessible and relevant in an increasingly digital world. It protects valuable materials from physical degradation and broadens access to a global audience. The experiences of other national libraries, both in Africa and globally, provide valuable lessons and models that the LNLS can adopt to overcome its challenges and advance its digital preservation efforts.

(i) Development of a Legal Framework: There is a need to implement a comprehensive legal deposit law to ensure that all national publications are systematically deposited with the LNLS. This legal framework should mandate authors, researchers, and publishers to submit copies of their works to the national library.

(ii) Infrastructure provision and funding: There is a need to secure adequate funding from the government and international donors to support the acquisition of state-of-the-art digitisation equipment and the maintenance of digital archives. Investment in infrastructure improvements, including reliable internet access and secure storage facilities for digital materials, is pertinent.

(iii) Capacity building: Provision of extensive training for library staff in digital preservation techniques, metadata creation, and data management. This could take the form of fostering collaboration with international organisations to facilitate training programmes and exchange knowledge. The recruitment of qualified ICT personnel to manage and support digital preservation projects is also advocated.

(iv) Embark on digitisation initiatives: It is of utmost necessity to prioritise the digitisation of the most at-risk and significant materials within the Lesotho Collection. Develop a detailed digitisation plan that includes high-resolution scanning, metadata creation, and long-term storage solutions. A combination of digital preservation techniques such as digitisation, encapsulation, migration, emulation, and bit-level preservation can be employed to ensure the longevity and accessibility of digital materials.

(v) Collaboration and partnerships: The LNLS needs to foster partnerships with universities with success stories in digital preservation (particularly in the Southern African Development Community region), international organisations, and other national libraries to share resources, expertise, and best practices in digital preservation. Related to this is the need to engage with the Basotho community to raise awareness about the importance of digitally preserving their cultural heritage and to encourage the active use of the digitised Lesotho Collection.

(vi) Public access and engagement: Enhance public access to the Lesotho Collection by developing an online platform where digitised materials can be easily accessed by researchers, students, and the general public. In addition, the implementation of outreach and education initiatives to promote the use and significance of the Lesotho Collection, encouraging greater public engagement and readership, is of high importance.

It is believed that if these recommendations are implemented, the LNLS can digitally and effectively preserve the Lesotho Collection, safeguarding the cultural heritage of the Basotho people for future generations. The involvement of stakeholders is crucial for the success of digital preservation initiatives. The relevant stakeholders include government bodies, educational institutions, cultural organisations, and the public. Their support can provide the necessary funding, expertise, and advocacy to ensure the Lesotho Collection is digitally preserved for future generations.

References

Adeyemi, N. 2019. Digital preservation practices at the University of Ibadan Library. *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science*, 29(2): 120–135.

Anderson, J. 2019. Digital preservation strategies at the National Library of New Zealand. *International Journal of Digital Curation*, 14(2): 123–137.

Anyaoku, E.N., Echedom, A.U. and Baro, E.E. 2019. Digital preservation practices in university libraries: An investigation of institutional repositories in Africa. *Digital Library Perspectives*, 35(1): 42–56. [Online]. <https://doi.org/10.1108/DLP-10-2017-0041> (Accessed 9 December 2025).

Basutoland Book Club Catalogue. 1897. Maseru: Basutoland Book Club.

British Library. 2023. *Digital preservation strategy 2023–2026*. British Library Publishing.

Brown, T. 2020. Digital preservation at the National Library of Australia. *Journal of Library and Information Science*, 52(1): 45–59.

Catalogue of the Basutoland Public Library. 1907. Maseru: Basutoland Public Library.

Conway, P. 2020. Digital transformations and the future of memory institutions. *International Journal of Digital Curation*, 15(1): 1–15.

Constable, T.F. 2008. *Current development in preserving and making accessible the intellectual and cultural heritage of South Africa*. [Online]. www.liasa-new.org.za (Accessed 7 May 2025).

Creswell, J. W. 2014. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 4th ed. London: Sage.

Digital Preservation Coalition. 2023. *Digital preservation handbook* (3rd ed.). Digital Preservation Coalition. Retrieved 6 October, 2025, from <https://www.dpconline.org/handbook>

Digital Preservation Coalition. 2025. *Preservation issues* (Digital Preservation Handbook). <https://www.dpconline.org/handbook/digital-preservation/preservation-issues>

Forshaw, V. 1980. *Lesotho National Library Service: Second annual report of the Director, Jan.–Dec. 1979*. Maseru: Lesotho National Library Service.

Giles, R. 2022. The formation and evolution of the Basotho nation. *African Historical Review*, 47(3): 211–230.

Gracy, K.F. and Kahn, M.B. 2012. Preservation in the digital age. *Library Resources & Technical Services*, 56(1): 25–43.

Greenstein, D. and Thorin, S. 2002. The digital library: A biography. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 53(8): 616–631. [Online]. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.10082> (Accessed 9 December 2025).

Guma, M. 1967. *An outline of traditional Sesotho literature*. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot.

Harvey, R. 2018. *Digital preservation: a critical review of issues, models, and strategies*. 2nd ed. London: Facet Publishing.

Jones, M. 2019. Digital preservation strategies at the British Library. *Digital Preservation Journal*, 14(2): 77–91.

Kastellec, M. 2012. Practical limits to the scope of digital preservation. *Information Technology & Libraries*, 31(2): 63–71.

Katuu, S. 2021. Digital preservation in Africa: Challenges and opportunities for national libraries and archives. *IFLA Journal*, 47(2), 147–159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0340035220976213>

Khumalo, S. 2020. Digital preservation in African libraries: Challenges and strategies. *Journal of Digital Information Management*, 18(4): 213–226.

Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S. 2015. *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.

Lesotho Books and Libraries. 1980. *Maseru: Newsletter/Journal of the Lesotho Library Association*.

Lesotho Books and Libraries. 1999. *Maseru: Publication of the Lesotho Library Association*.

Lesotho National Library News. 2004. *Lesotho National Library News* (Vol. 1, Issue 2). Maseru, Lesotho: Lesotho National Library Services.

Lavoie, B.F. 2004. *The open archival information system (OAIS) reference model: Introductory guide*. Digital Preservation Coalition. [Online]. https://www.dpconline.org/docs/lavoie_OAIS.pdf (Accessed 9 December 2025).

Lavoie, B. F. 2022. The PREMIS preservation metadata standard (3rd ed.). DPC Technology Watch Report. Digital Preservation Coalition. [Online] <https://www.dpconline.org/handbook/technical-solutions-and-tools/metadata-and-documentation/premis> (30 July 2024)

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. 1985. *Naturalistic inquiry*. London: Sage.

Lwoga, E. 2021. Opportunities for digital heritage preservation in Africa. *Library Hi Tech*, 39(3): 722–739.

Masenya, T.M. 2018. *A framework for preservation of digital resources in academic libraries in South Africa*. PhD thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Masenya, T.M. and Ngulube, P. 2020. Factors that influence digital preservation sustainability in academic libraries in South Africa. *South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science*, 86(1): 1–14. [Online]. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7553/86-1-1860> (Accessed 9 December 2025).

Mathabathe, C. 2020. *The Lesotho National Library Services history*. Lesotho.

Merriam, S.B. and Tisdell, E.J. 2016. *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. 4th ed. Jossey-Bass.

Mothoka, N.J., Ogalo, J.O. and Wasike, J. 2021. Challenges of digital preservation of information: A case of Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service. *The International Journal of Business & Management*, 9(6). [Online]. <https://doi.org/10.24940/theijbm/2021/v9/i6/BM2106-041> (Accessed 9 December 2025).

Motinyane, T. 2019. 200 years of Basotho history: Celebrations and reflections. *Lesotho Cultural Studies*, 29(1): 97–110.

Ngulube, P. 2019. Digital preservation in Africa: The role of national libraries and archives. *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 40(1): 45–58.

Ngulube, P. 2020. Preserving Botswana's documentary heritage: Digital preservation at BNARS. *Botswana Journal of Library and Information Science*, 34(3): 98–112.

Rothenberg, J. 1999. Ensuring the longevity of digital documents. *Scientific American*, 272(1): 42–47.

Smith, A. 2019. The role of national libraries in cultural preservation. *International Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 25(3): 233–250.

Thabane, M. 2002a. *The architectural heritage of Lesotho*. Morija: Morija Museum & Archives.

Thabane, M. 2002b. Basotho oral poetry at the beginning of the 21st century. *South African Historical Journal*, 46(1): 216–232.

Thamae, N. 2021. The Lesotho Collection: A repository of Basotho heritage. *Lesotho National Library Services Quarterly*, 15(2): 58–75.

Tlali, P. 2022. Collaborative strategies for digital preservation in Lesotho. *Journal of Library and Information Science Collaboration*, 19(1): 67–84.

Utoni, W.E. 2024. *Digital preservation preparedness of the National Library of Namibia for digital preservation of documentary heritage: a case study*. PhD thesis, Department of Knowledge and Information Stewardship, South Africa: University of Cape Town. [Online]. <https://open.uct.ac.za/items/ca089d62-ef3f-48ce-a2ab-c005d568f808b> (Accessed 9 December 2025).

Wamukoya, J. and Mutula, S. M. 2020. Digital preservation strategies in Kenyan archives. *Journal of Information and Knowledge Management*, 19(4): 211–224.

Yakel, E. 2015. Archival research methodologies. In Hall, K. (ed.). *Research methods in information studies*. Libraries Unlimited, 123–145.