

Preserving the Knowledge of Displaced Communities: The Responsibility of Academic Libraries in Archiving Migrant and Refugee Narratives¹

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Abstract

Academic libraries have long served as custodians of knowledge, safeguarding texts and cultural artifacts for scholarly and societal benefit. In the 21st century, however, the growing displacement of populations due to conflict, climate change, persecution, and economic instability has underscored the urgent need to preserve the narratives of migrants and refugees. These stories, often marginalised or at risk of erasure, embody cultural memory, identity, and resilience. This study examines the responsibility of academic libraries for archiving displaced communities' narratives, highlighting the approaches, implications, and challenges involved. Using a systematic literature review guided by PRISMA standards, 99 articles were initially retrieved, with 23 meeting inclusion criteria for full analysis. Findings reveal that libraries increasingly adopt participatory and culturally sensitive archival practices, including oral histories, community collaborations, and digital repositories. Such approaches enhance inclusivity, representation, and intercultural dialogue, positioning libraries as agents of social justice and integration. Yet, significant challenges persist: ethical concerns around consent, confidentiality, and ownership; resource limitations; risks of misrepresentation; and difficulties in sustaining archives across diverse contexts. The implications extend beyond preservation, requiring libraries to balance accessibility with protection, foster partnerships with displaced communities, and train librarians in trauma-informed practices. Ultimately, academic libraries must evolve from passive custodians to active collaborators, ensuring that migrant and refugee voices are preserved authentically for posterity. This research contributes to policy, governance, and professional training, reinforcing libraries' role as vital institutions in safeguarding cultural heritage and human experience.

Keywords: Archives, Displaced Communities, Academic Libraries, Migrant and Refugee Narratives

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Préserver le savoir des communautés déplacées : la responsabilité des bibliothèques universitaires dans l'archivage des récits de migrants et de réfugiés

Résumé

Les bibliothèques universitaires ont longtemps joué un rôle essentiel dans la préservation du savoir, en protégeant textes et artefacts culturels au bénéfice de la recherche et de la société. Au XXI^e siècle, cependant, l'augmentation des déplacements de populations due aux conflits, aux changements climatiques, aux persécutions et à l'instabilité économique met en évidence l'urgence de préserver les récits des migrants et des réfugiés. Ces récits, souvent marginalisés ou menacés d'effacement, incarnent la mémoire culturelle, l'identité et la résilience des communautés déplacées. Cette étude examine la responsabilité des bibliothèques universitaires dans l'archivage de ces récits, en mettant en lumière les approches adoptées, leurs implications et les défis associés. À partir d'une revue systématique de la littérature conduite selon les normes PRISMA, 99 articles ont été initialement recensés, dont 23 répondaient aux critères d'inclusion pour une analyse approfondie. Les résultats montrent que les bibliothèques adoptent de plus en plus des pratiques archivistiques participatives et culturellement adaptées, telles que la collecte de témoignages oraux, les collaborations avec les communautés et le développement d'archives numériques. Ces approches favorisent l'inclusion, la représentation et le dialogue interculturel, positionnant les bibliothèques comme des acteurs clés de la justice sociale et de l'intégration. Cependant, des défis importants persistent, notamment des enjeux éthiques liés au consentement, à la confidentialité et à la propriété des données, des ressources limitées, des risques de déformation ou de simplification des récits, ainsi que des difficultés de pérennisation des archives dans des contextes variés. Les implications de cette recherche dépassent la simple préservation : les bibliothèques doivent concilier accessibilité et protection des données, renforcer leurs partenariats avec les communautés déplacées et former les professionnels de l'information à des pratiques sensibles aux traumatismes. En définitive, les bibliothèques universitaires sont appelées à évoluer d'un rôle passif de conservation vers celui de partenaires actifs, afin de garantir une préservation authentique et éthique des récits des migrants et des réfugiés pour les générations futures. Cette étude contribue aux réflexions sur les politiques documentaires, la gouvernance des archives et la formation professionnelle, tout en réaffirmant le rôle essentiel des bibliothèques comme institutions clés dans la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel et de l'expérience humaine.

Mots-clés : Archives, communautés déplacées, bibliothèques universitaires, récits de migrants et de réfugiés

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries have historically functioned as custodians of knowledge, preserving texts, manuscripts, and cultural artifacts for the benefit of scholars and society. In recent years, however, there has been growing recognition of the significance of preserving the stories and cultural memory of displaced populations, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, whose narratives are often at risk of loss due to displacement, marginalisation, or war. Patil's (2023) findings indicate that libraries are vital custodians of cultural heritage, safeguarding materials such as manuscripts, rare books, photographs, maps, and audio recordings for future generations by preserving them and ensuring their integrity and accessibility. The value of such narratives lies not only in historical record but in fostering identity, belonging, and resilience among displaced communities.

Institutions responsible for knowledge preservation are increasingly called upon to extend their mission to include these vulnerable voices, transforming libraries into more inclusive, socially responsive entities. Libraries, if well-funded and managed, reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the communities they serve. It can serve as the mirror through which the community's reflection can be seen, making the cultural heritage of a Nation/Community not to be toyed with or played with. It needs to be preserved for posterity (Chibuzor & Osadebe, 2009).

The scale of global displacement has increased dramatically in the 21st century, due to conflicts, climate change, political persecution, and economic instability. There must be library support for people in need across various categories. Gerasimidou et al. (2024) stressed that international bodies and library associations, such as the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, have begun issuing guidelines and frameworks for supporting displaced people. This emphasised the role libraries can play as safe, welcoming sanctuaries; agents of integration; and repositories of culture and memory for displaced communities. These developments reflect an awareness that library work must extend beyond custodianship of texts to preserve human experience and stories.

Archiving refugee and migrant narratives presents a complex set of ethical, practical, and methodological challenges. Stewart and Shaffer (2021) discuss how narrative archiving of refugee research projects in the UK navigates confidentiality concerns, anonymisation, decisions about access levels, and the preservation of the integrity of the stories while protecting vulnerable individuals. Romme and Chaer (2024) inferred

that these are not trivial issues: balancing transparency and open access with the protection of narrative ownership and safety requires careful archival policy and sensitive procedural frameworks. Additionally, when institutions fail to properly document or preserve such narratives, there is a risk of erasure of voices, distorted memory, or loss of cultural heritage.

Academic libraries are also uniquely positioned to collaborate with community archives, oral storytellers, and culturally displaced persons to ensure that narrative preservation is participatory and respectful of the knowledge-holders' agency. In fostering collaboration between research libraries and community archives to preserve the network of mutuality, the importance of partnerships is emphasised to avoid the marginalisation of lesser-heard voices and to benefit from local knowledge, trust, and context in collection-building and preservation efforts. Martinez and Tallman (2024) stressed that such collaborations also help academic libraries to bridge gaps in representation in more traditional archives.

With these developments, this research is motivated by the need to scrutinise the responsibilities and practices of academic libraries in archiving migrant and refugee narratives, which includes how policies are formed, how ethical issues are handled (e.g. consent, ownership, access), how narratives are collected (oral histories, testimonies, multimedia), and how libraries work with displaced communities to preserve authenticity. Understanding this will help institutions design better archives, promote social justice, and prevent loss of cultural heritage.

OBJECTIVES

This study is guided by the following specific objectives, which were formulated in line with the topic. The study seeks to:

1. To evaluate approaches used by academic libraries in developing accessible and culturally sensitive archival systems for migrant and refugee narratives.
2. To evaluate/analyse the implications of academic libraries in developing accessible and culturally sensitive archival systems for migrant and refugee narratives.
3. To highlight the challenges in archiving displaced communities' narratives

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The systematic literature review was conducted using the PRISMA guidelines. (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses) which provides new standards to identify, select and evaluate studies more reliably (Page *et al.*, 2021). Thus, the following section in the result will describe the eligibility criteria of the articles, sources of information and search strategies, the data selection and extraction processes, as well as the synthesis methods and those applied to assess the risk of bias

RESULTS

The results are presented following the tables below.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Literature Review

Include	Exclude
Articles published from 2020 and written only	Studies excluded included articles published in English before 2020 and non-English publication
Articles must be peer-reviewed empirical studies, books or literature	The following were excluded: opinion studies, case pieces, unpublished dissertations/theses reviews
Documents addressing refugees, misplaced communities, soles of libraries to migrant communities	Articles not addressing refugees, misplaced communities, roles of libraries to migrant communities

The following sub-section provides each step that occurred during the literature review.

Information Sources

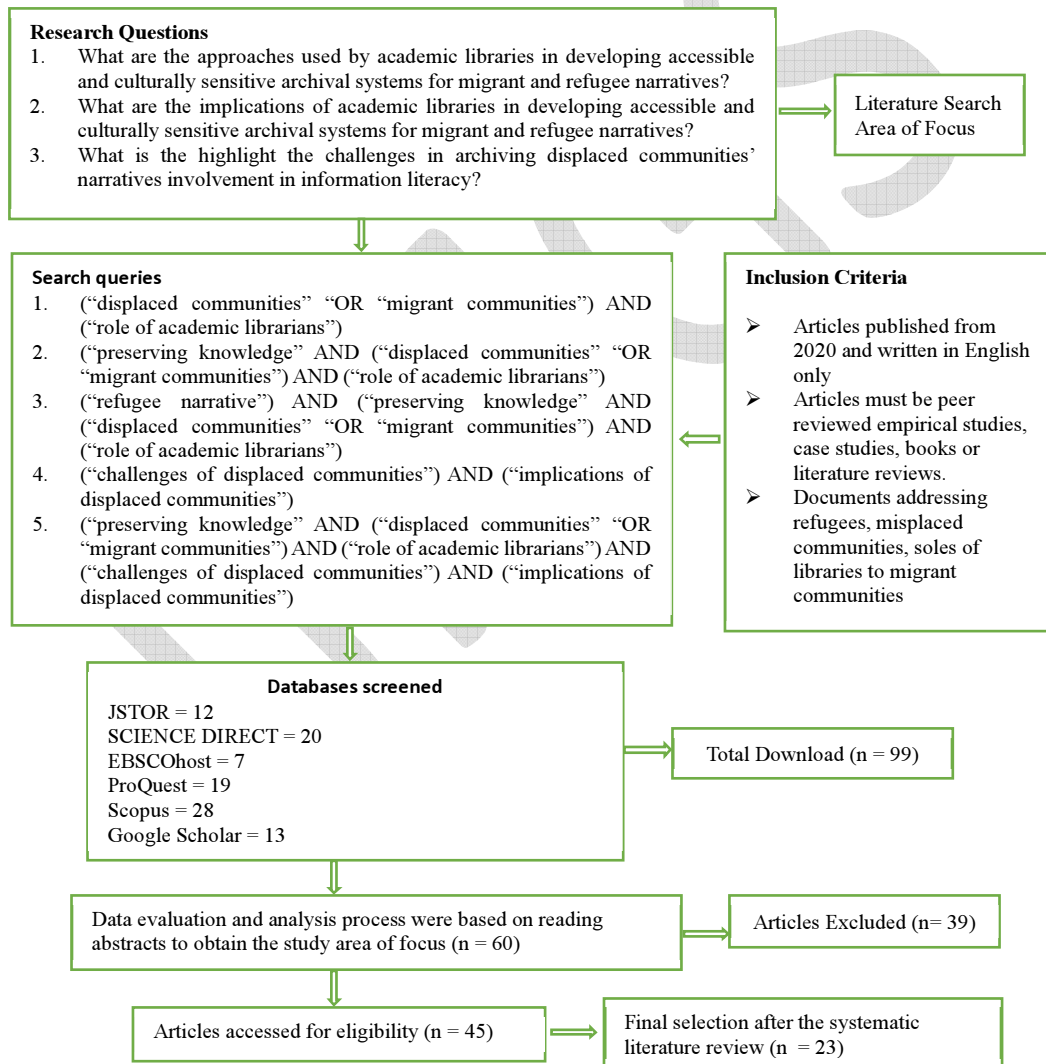
The search queries considered during the search process were:

1. (“displaced communities” “OR “migrant communities”) AND (“role of academic librarians”)
2. (“preserving knowledge” AND (“displaced communities” “OR “migrant communities”) AND (“role of academic librarians”)
3. (“refugee narrative”) AND (“preserving knowledge” AND (“displaced communities” “OR “migrant communities”) AND (“role of academic librarians”)
4. (“challenges of displaced communities”) AND (“implications of displaced communities”)

5. (“preserving knowledge” AND (“displaced communities” “OR “migrant communities”) AND (“role of academic librarians”) AND (“challenges of displaced communities”) AND (“implications of displaced communities”)

To systematically address the study objectives on preserving the knowledge of displaced communities: The responsibility of academic libraries in archiving migrant and refugee narratives, a structured strategy was employed, as illustrated in

Figure 1: PRISMA



The search initially produced 99 downloads. From the data evaluations, abstracts were screened to ensure that the research questions aligned with the remaining articles, resulting in the selection of 23 articles for full review. A data extraction table was developed to collect findings on preserving the knowledge of displaced communities. This process is a means to systematically generate findings to explain the issues surrounding the preservation and knowledge of displaced communities, the role of academic librarians in archiving migrants and refugee narrative.

The outcome of the literature search and screening process is presented in Table 2, showing the number of retrieved, included, and excluded articles.

Table 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Summary

Criteria	Count
Total Articles Retrieved	99
Articles Meeting Inclusion Criteria	23
Articles Excluded (Irrelevant to Study Focus)	73

Summary of literature search findings on library approaches, implications and challenges is shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Literature Search

S/N	AUTHOR (S)	Archival Approaches and Practices Adopted by Academic Libraries	Implications for Access, Representation, and Cultural Sensitivity	Key Challenges Libraries face in Archiving Displaced Communities' Narratives	Methodological Quality
1	AWWAD. G., DUNAGAN, L., GAMBA, D., Rayan – arXiv, T.D. 2025. Collective Memory and Narrative Cohesion: A Computational Study of Palestinian Refugee Oral Histories in Lebanon	The study employs community-based digital archiving, computational semantic analysis, multilingual access, and ethical stewardship to preserve Palestinian oral histories.	Enhance representation, thematic search, gender awareness, accessibility, and respectful handling	Libraries face challenges in building trust with communities, avoiding political bias, handling multilingual and technical complexities, upholding ethical standards, and ensuring narratives remain authentic without oversimplification.	The study demonstrates high methodological innovation and scalability through computational analysis, though cultural depth and qualitative nuance are more limited.
2	ABDALLA, M. Z., NDIRITIRO, R., OMAR, S., REED, K., & others. (2021). Opportunities and challenges of oral history research through refugee voices, narratives,	It adopts participatory, co-created oral history platforms that embed refugee lived experience into metadata and archival design.	- Promotes inclusivity and authentic representation of displaced voices, enhances cultural sensitivity and improves access to refugee-centred materials.	histories (consent, confidentiality, narrative ownership) - Risk of misrepresentation or erasure of refugee voices if archives privilege dominant narratives	The methodology is strong in participatory and interdisciplinary design, but constrained by limited resources and contextual specificity.

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	and memories: History dialogues		- Positions libraries as allies in academic freedom and social justice. - Supports epistemic diversity and challenges Western-centric archival norms.	- Practical difficulties in accessing displaced populations and ensuring inclusivity - Balancing academic mobility with the lived immobility of refugees - Limited resources and institutional support for sustained oral history projects- Ethical concerns in collecting refugee oral	
3	STROJA, J. (2022). Displaced persons' experiences of trauma and responses to contemporary crisis in Europe: An oral history of engagement with refugees.	The approach integrates oral histories of refugee trauma into library collections to support reconciliation, education, and empathetic access.	-Preserves lived experiences and fosters empathy-driven access to refugee narratives. - Addresses archival gaps and promotes representation of under-documented refugee communities.	- Ethical concerns in documenting trauma among displaced persons - Limited understanding of resettlement in regions with low cultural and linguistic diversity	The study offers rich qualitative depth and authentic oral histories, with moderate generalisability due to its context-specific European focus.

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4	OPFERMANN, L. S. (2024). Sharing stories, food and passports: Forced migration, museum and memory activism in contemporary Germany. <i>Journal of Intercultural Studies</i> , 45(1), 1–25	The study employs collaborative archiving with museums and activists, using digital platforms and material culture as memory artifacts.	- Enhances relevance and responsiveness of archives to current global displacement issues, Positions libraries as facilitators of intercultural dialogue and historical understanding.	- Lack of pre-existing refugee support networks in host communities - Risk of erasure of refugee voices if oral histories are not systematically archived - Balancing confidentiality with accessibility of narratives	The research shows high cultural and narrative insight through qualitative triangulation, though findings are limited in empirical generalisability.

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				- Multilingual and gender-sensitive access - Balancing activism with institutional neutrality	
5	HIGH, S. (2021). Oral history as creative practice at Concordia University's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling. <i>Bulletin de l'AFAS. Sonorités</i> , 46(1), 1–15	Community-centred archiving - Participatory curation with survivors & marginalised groups - Integration of oral histories into creative outputs (theatre, exhibitions)	Democratisation of knowledge - Empowerment of communities through co-creation - Interdisciplinary innovation bridging history, art, and media - Pedagogical impact: experiential learning for students	- Institutional tensions (oral history vs. traditional history) - Ethical responsibilities (consent, representation, safeguarding sensitive testimonies) - Sustainability of digital archives - Balancing creativity with accuracy - Maintaining community trust	Methodologically innovative and inclusive, the study excels in creative and community collaboration but has moderate traditional scholarly rigor.
6	CAO, J. (2021). <i>Relational bonds as method: Oral history and design within the</i>	The initiative fosters interdisciplinary partnerships and culturally resonant	Addresses invisibility and erasure of the Vietnamese diaspora - Empowers communities to	Limited representation in mainstream archives - Ethical concerns in handling trauma	The study is methodologically strong in innovation and decolonial

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	<i>Vietnamese diaspora</i> [Master's thesis, OCAD University]. Open Research OCADU.	archiving to preserve marginalised voices and transnational storytelling, positioning libraries as safe spaces for continuity and post-trauma engagement.	process and heal intergenerational trauma - Promotes inclusive design as a method for cultural preservation Democratises historical narratives by centering marginalised voices	narratives - Sustaining community archives and digital repositories - Risk of reductive or racist perspective if narratives are not carefully curated	design, though replicability and generalisability are limited.
7	CALABRIA, V. (2023). An exploration of the function of nostalgia in oral histories of institutional care. In D. Anderson & S. Jones (Eds.), <i>Memory, anniversaries and mental health</i> (pp. 145–162). Springer	Co-produced oral histories with ex-patients and retired staff - Archival preservation of lived experiences of institutional care - Emphasis on memory as both a personal and a collective resource	Nostalgia as a lens to understanding identity and belonging. - Offers therapeutic potential for participants reflecting on past care. - Contributes to mental health history by centering lived experiences - Challenges dominant institutional narratives by foregrounding	Risk of romanticising or sanitising institutional care - Selective remembering may obscure trauma or systemic issues - Ethical dilemmas in representing vulnerable populations - Balancing scholarly analysis with	The methodology is theoretically grounded and interdisciplinary, but selective memory and ethical complexity limit analytical certainty.

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		- Oral histories used to interrogate institutional narratives		participants' emotional needs	
8	AHMED, H. D. S. (2021). <i>Memory and identity: Inter-generational resilience and construction of diasporic identities among Somali refugees</i> [Master's thesis, University of San Francisco]. USF Scholarship Repository.	The study emphasises multilingual, culturally sensitive oral history archiving to support intergenerational knowledge transmission among Somali refugees	- Develop oral history archives and digital storytelling projects - Partner with refugee organisations to curate culturally relevant materials - Offer community programmes that encourage intergenerational dialogue - Train librarians in trauma-informed and culturally competent practices - Facilitate workshops on identity, resilience, and cultural heritage preservation	- Trauma from violence and displacement - Intergenerational struggles with identity and resilience - Youth issues: substance abuse, gang violence, depression - Loss of cultural continuity in diaspora - Reliance on oral storytelling traditions for memory transmission	The study demonstrates strong qualitative and comparative insight into identity and resilience, with moderate replicability.

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9	JAMIL, H. (2025). Cultural memory in the art of diaspora communities. <i>International Journal of Innovative Research</i> , 3(1), 45–60.	Archival preservation of diaspora art and cultural artifacts - Digital repositories to document migration narratives - Community-based oral history projects - Interdisciplinary cataloging	Strengthens collective identity and cultural resilience - Enhances intercultural dialogue and heritage awareness - Provides frameworks for memory transmission across generations - Encourages inclusivity in academic and public libraries	Limited resources for archiving diverse diaspora art - Risk of cultural homogenisation in institutional settings - Difficulty in capturing intangible heritage (oral traditions, performance art) - Political and social barriers to representation - Sustainability of community-driven projects	Methodological strength lies in creative and interdisciplinary integration, though reliance on qualitative methods limits generalisability.
10	CHOWDHURY, L. (2021). <i>Geographies of Memory and Spaces of Belonging: Journeys of the Mind and Displaced Populations – Words & Silences /</i>	The approach establishes narrative archives and storytelling spaces to document displaced populations' memories and	- Libraries as custodians of displaced communities' cultural memory - Need to document and archive refugee experiences across geographies	- Displacement leading to fragmented identities and loss of homeland connections - Negotiating belonging in new geographies while maintaining ties to	The study is methodologically robust in theory and discourse analysis, but limited by qualitative scope and contextual specificity.

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	<i>Palabras y Silencios</i> , KOHA, 2021)	belonging across geographies.	- Importance of creating inclusive spaces that foster belonging - Libraries must balance preservation of origin culture with integration into the host culture - Providing access to oral histories, migration studies, and memory scholarship	the memory of origin - Emotional and psychological struggles of refugees and displaced populations - Risk of erasure of cultural memory in host societies - Tension between personal memory and collective narratives	
11	BROWNLIE , S. (2022). Travelling memory, transcreation, and politics: The case of <i>Refugee Tales</i> . In M. Wolf & M. Baker (Eds.), <i>The Routledge handbook of translation and memory</i> (pp. 365–377). Routledge.	It archives refugee narratives through multilingual, transcreated texts and oral testimonies to mediate cultural and political memory.	- Libraries must curate multilingual and politically sensitive collections - Need to preserve refugee narratives in both original and translated forms - Libraries as mediators of cultural memory and political discourse Importance of	Translating and transcreating refugee narratives across languages and cultures - Navigating political sensitivities in representing refugee experiences - Ensuring authenticity while adapting oral/written testimonies,	The methodology is strong in theoretical and political analysis, but offers only moderate empirical depth given its literary focus.

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			archiving oral testimonies alongside transcreated texts - Providing access to scholarship on translation, memory, and refugee studies	Addressing ethical concerns in memory transmission - Balancing collective memory with individual voices	
12	OLUMBA, E. E. (2024). Preserving the future through the past: Collective memory and immobility in adversity. <i>Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology</i> , 30(4), 483–494	The initiative focuses on preserving collective memory by documenting communities facing adversity through oral histories, cultural artifacts, and digital storytelling, while positioning libraries as safe spaces for resilience and the transmission of identity.	Reinforces resilience by connecting past struggles to future survival - Provides frameworks for understanding immobility as cultural resistance - Strengthens collective identity in marginalised communities Offers educational resources for scholars and policymakers - Encourages inclusive heritage preservation	Limited resources for documenting marginalised voices - Risk of erasure or distortion of collective memory - Political and social barriers to representation - Difficulty in preserving intangible heritage (rituals, oral traditions) - Sustaining archives in contexts of adversity and displacement	The study shows high theoretical and cultural rigor, though qualitative reliance limits replicability.

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13	CHOWDHURY, N., SHOKRI, N., VALERA, C. H. (2024). Politics of the past: Understanding the role of memory, postmemory, and remembrance in navigating the history of migrant families. In <i>Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '24)</i> (pp. 1123–1135). Association for Computing Machinery	The approach preserves migrant family narratives using oral histories, cultural artifacts, and transcultural digital archives.	- Libraries must recognise and include marginalised migrant literatures - Need to archive and preserve “other” voices alongside mainstream works - Libraries as spaces for transcultural dialogue and representation - Importance of curating collections that highlight migrant identity and cultural hybridity - Providing access to scholarship on South Asian migration and transcultural studies	- Marginalisation of migrant voices in mainstream Bangladeshi literature - Struggles of migrants to assert identity and belonging through cultural production - Risk of erasure of “other” narratives in dominant national discourse - Tensions between local and global perspectives in transcultural humanities - Limited platforms for migrant communities to share their stories	Methodologically strong in oral history and postmemory analysis, but context-specific and limited in empirical generalisation.

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14	RUMBI, F. P., PALARI, Y. B., & RANDO, A. A. (2023). Collective memory, martyrdom monument, and Christian–Muslim reconciliation in Seko, North Luwu, Indonesia. <i>Dialog: A Journal of Theology</i> , 62(4), 345–360. Wiley Online Library.	It documents reconciliation through oral histories, monuments, and inclusive archival collections in interfaith contexts.	Strengthens interfaith harmony between Christian and Muslim communities - Provides a framework for peacebuilding through collective memory - Enhances cultural heritage preservation in conflict-affected regions - Offers educational resources for scholars of religion, anthropology, and peace studies	Political sensitivities in narrating martyrdom and reconciliation - Risk of selective memory or biased representation - Limited resources for documenting oral traditions and local monuments - Difficulty in sustaining reconciliation narratives across generations	The study demonstrates solid qualitative and interdisciplinary rigor, with limited scalability beyond its local context.
15	PARISH, N., & RUGO, D. (2021). <i>Memories from the margins: Violence and counter-narratives – Introduction</i> [Book chapter]. Brunel	The study archives counter-narratives of violence using oral histories and digital repositories to amplify marginalised voices.	Provides visibility to marginalised communities and their lived experiences - Challenges dominant historical narratives and promotes inclusivity - Strengthens	Political sensitivities in documenting violence and resistance - Risk of censorship or suppression of counter-narratives - Limited resources for grassroots	Methodological quality is high in narrative and interdisciplinary insight, though constrained by qualitative focus and contextual specificity.

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	University Research Repository		collective memory by integrating counter-narratives - Offers resources for critical pedagogy and social justice scholarship	archival projects - Ethical concerns in handling traumatic testimonies - Sustainability of digital repositories in resource-poor contexts	
16	SATARAVALA, S. (2023). Parsi identity: Myth and collective memories. <i>South Asia Research</i> , 43(1), 82–97	Archival preservation of Parsi oral traditions and mythic narratives - Cataloging of community manuscripts and religious texts - Digital repositories for collective memory and identity studies - Community-based oral history projects within Parsi diaspora	Strengthens Parsi identity through preservation of myths and collective memories - Provides frameworks for understanding minority cultural resilience - Enhances intercultural dialogue and heritage awareness - Offers resources for scholars of South Asian studies, diaspora, and religion	Limited resources for documenting minority voices - Risk of mythologisation overshadowing lived experiences - Difficulty in preserving intangible heritage (rituals, oral traditions) - Political and social marginalisation of small communities Sustainability of archives in diaspora contexts	The study demonstrates high methodological quality in cultural and theoretical insight through authentic oral histories and interdisciplinary design, but remains moderate in replicability and generalisability due to its qualitative, qualitative,

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		- Interdisciplinary approaches linking anthropology, religion, and cultural studies			context-specific approach.
17	BROWNLIIE, S. (2022). Travelling memory, transcreation, and politics: The case of <i>Refugee Tales</i> . In M. Wolf & M. Baker (Eds.), <i>The Routledge handbook of translation and memory</i> (pp. 365–377). Routledge.	The approach combines oral histories with transcreated literary narratives to archive travelling refugee memory.	Highlights the role of translation and adaptation in shaping refugee narratives - Strengthens awareness of asylum seekers lived experiences from Africa, Pakistan, and the Middle East - Provides frameworks for understanding how memory travels across borders and genres - Encourages libraries to act as mediators of cultural and political narratives	Political sensitivities in representing refugee voices - Risk of erasure of cultural memory when narratives are transcreated - Limited resources for documenting diverse refugee experiences - Ethical concerns in adapting oral histories into literary forms - Sustaining archives of politically charged narratives	Methodologically innovative in transcreation analysis, but constrained by qualitative emphasis and contextual focus.

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18	VIRDEE, P. (2022). Histories and memories in the digital age of Partition studies. <i>The Oral History Review</i> , 49(2), 207–220. Taylor & Francis.	It digitally archives intergenerational oral histories of Partition refugees through community-driven documentation.	Highlights the importance of collective memory in shaping community identity - Provides frameworks for understanding Partition through intergenerational refugee accounts - Strengthens inclusivity by integrating marginalised voices into historical discourse Enhances accessibility of Partition studies through digital platforms	Risk of digital divide limiting access to archives - Political sensitivities in narrating contested histories of Partition - Challenges in preserving oral traditions authentically in digital formats - Limited resources for sustaining large-scale digital repositories - Ethical concerns in handling trauma narratives	The methodology is strong in digital and theoretical innovation, though sustainability and access issues affect robustness.
19	GREEN, S., NGUYEN AUSTEN, A., & KANDASAMY, N. (2024). Refugee livelihood	The initiative preserves refugee lived experiences by building oral history archives and community-	Shows how individual and collective traumas can motivate refugees toward civic engagement - Strengthens	Ethical concerns in documenting trauma narratives - Language and cultural barriers in oral history	The study shows strong comparative qualitative design but lacks

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	perspectives: Post-traumatic growth in histories of Vietnamese, Bosnian, and Tamil refugees in Australia. <i>Journal of Refugee Studies</i> , 37(2), 471–485. Oxford University Press.	based ethnographic collections, integrating post-traumatic growth narratives into library resources, creating digital repositories for testimonies and civic engagement, and applying interdisciplinary cataloging that connects trauma, refugee, and memory studies.	understanding of resilience and adaptation in refugee communities - Provides resources for scholars in anthropology, migration, trauma, and livelihood studies - Encourages participatory knowledge production in libraries and archives	preservation - Limited institutional resources for refugee-centred archives - Risk of underrepresentation of smaller refugee groups - Sustaining long-term archival projects in politically sensitive contexts	quantitative validation.
20	SLEIMAN, H. (2023). History as a cautionary tale. <i>History of the Present</i> , 13(2), 215–232. Duke University Press.	It preserves Palestinian refugee memory through oral history interviews, community archives, and digital special collections.	Highlights how collective memory serves as a cautionary framework in contexts of displacement - Provides insight into the lived temporality of refugees and its societal significance	Political sensitivities in narrating Palestinian refugee histories - Risk of erasure or distortion of collective memory - Limited resources for documenting oral	The methodology is theoretically rigorous and narratively rich, though limited in generalisability due to political specificity.

S/N	AUTHOR (S)	Archival Approaches and Practices Adopted by Academic Libraries	Implications for Access, Representation, and Cultural Sensitivity	Key Challenges Libraries face in Archiving Displaced Communities' Narratives	Methodological Quality
			- Strengthens understanding of resilience and identity among marginalised communities - Offers resources for scholars of Middle Eastern studies, oral history, and cultural memory	traditions and lived temporality - Ethical concerns in handling trauma narratives - Sustainability of archives in contested political contexts	
21	KIM, J., ROESCHLEY, A., & BYUN, M. (2024). Building bridges and preserving voices: Key factors in community oral history stewardship. <i>Journal of Documentation</i>, 80(6), 1345–1362. Emerald Publishing.	The approach applies collaborative community stewardship models to develop digital oral history archives of refugee voices.	Strengthens community-building and intercultural dialogue through oral history stewardship - Preserves marginalised voices and lived experiences of refugees - Provides frameworks for inclusive archival practices - Enhances accessibility of refugee narratives for scholars and the public	Gaps in documentary and archival resources for refugee communities - Ethical concerns in handling trauma narratives - Limited institutional support for community-driven stewardship - Risk of underrepresentation of smaller refugee groups. Sustainability of oral history	Methodological strength lies in participatory stewardship and community engagement, with sustainability challenges affecting scalability.

S/N	AUTHOR (S)	Archival Approaches and Practices Adopted by Academic Libraries	Implications for Access, Representation, and Cultural Sensitivity	Key Challenges Libraries face in Archiving Displaced Communities' Narratives	Methodological Quality
			- Encourages participatory knowledge production in libraries	projects in resource-constrained contexts	
22	TAZZIOLI, M. (2021). Towards a genealogy of migrant struggles and rescue: The memory of solidarity at the Alpine border. <i>Citizenship Studies</i> , 25(3), 303–320. Taylor & Francis	It archives migrant solidarity practices using oral histories, activist documents, and grassroots digital repositories.	Highlights how citizen solidarity becomes part of collective memory at contested borders - Provides frameworks for understanding migrant struggles beyond state-centric refugee crisis narratives - Strengthens awareness of grassroots rescue practices and their historical significance - Offers resources for scholars of migration, citizenship, and cultural memory	Political sensitivities in documenting migrant solidarity against state narratives - Risk of erasure or suppression of activist voices - Limited resources for preserving grassroots archives - Ethical concerns in handling testimonies of vulnerable migrants - Sustainability of archives in transnational and contested border contexts	The study is methodologically strong in genealogical and oral history analysis, though context-bound and qualitatively driven.

S/N	AUTHOR (S)	Archival Approaches and Practices Adopted by Academic Libraries	Implications for Access, Representation, and Cultural Sensitivity	Key Challenges Libraries face in Archiving Displaced Communities' Narratives	Methodological Quality
23	VOGL, A. (2024). <i>Judging refugees: Narrative and oral testimony in refugee status determination.</i> Cambridge University Press	The study preserves refugee oral testimonies within legal and administrative archival collections supported by digital platforms.	Highlights how narrative and oral testimony shape refugee identity in legal processes - Shows how refugees are judged against cultural and political discourses of the receiving state - Provides frameworks for understanding the intersection of law, memory, and refugee lived experience - Enhances inclusivity in archives by preserving refugee voices beyond bureaucratic categorisation	Political sensitivities in documenting refugee status determination - Risk of reducing refugees to “productive others” within state discourses - Ethical concerns in handling testimonies tied to trauma and legal vulnerability - Limited resources for integrating legal and oral history archives - Sustainability of archives in contested political and cultural contexts	The methodology is robust in interdisciplinary legal–narrative analysis, with limited empirical replication.

The systematic literature review identified 99 articles, of which 23 met the inclusion criteria for full analysis. These studies provided a diverse range of perspectives on how academic libraries engage with the preservation of migrant and refugee narratives. Several key themes emerged from the analysis.

First, libraries are increasingly adopting participatory and community-centred approaches to archiving. Oral histories, co-created platforms, and collaborations with displaced communities, museums, and activists were frequently highlighted as effective strategies. Digital repositories, multilingual access systems, and creative practices such as theatre and exhibitions were also employed to ensure inclusivity and broaden representation. In some cases, trauma-informed methods were integrated into archival processes, allowing refugee experiences of displacement and resilience to be preserved with sensitivity.

Second, the implications of these practices extend beyond preservation. The reviewed studies emphasised that archives play a vital role in promoting authentic representation, cultural sensitivity, and social justice. By curating multilingual and culturally resonant collections, libraries foster intercultural dialogue, empower marginalised voices, and support identity formation and resilience among displaced populations. In this way, libraries are positioned not only as custodians of knowledge but also as agents of integration and allies in academic freedom.

Third, significant challenges were identified. Ethical concerns around consent, confidentiality, and ownership were common, particularly when dealing with sensitive testimonies and trauma narratives. Resource limitations, including funding and institutional support, hindered the sustainability of oral history projects and digital repositories. Other difficulties included risks of misrepresentation, political sensitivities, and technical barriers such as multilingual complexities. The challenge of preserving intangible heritage, such as oral traditions and performance art, was also noted, alongside the broader issue of ensuring that archives remain accessible and authentic across diverse contexts.

The methodological quality of the studies varied. While many demonstrated strong qualitative depth and participatory design, generalisability was often limited by context-specific focus. Innovative approaches, such as computational semantic analysis and interdisciplinary collaborations, showed promise for scalability, though they sometimes lacked cultural nuance. Overall, the findings reveal both the potential

and the limitations of current archival practices in safeguarding the narratives of displaced communities.

DISCUSSION

The findings from the reviewed literature reveal that academic libraries are increasingly adopting innovative, participatory, and interdisciplinary approaches to archiving the narratives of displaced communities. These approaches reflect a shift from traditional custodianship toward collaborative and socially responsive frameworks that prioritise inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and accessibility.

Approaches used by academic libraries in developing accessible and culturally sensitive archival systems for migrant and refugee narratives

Community-centred and participatory practices dominate the archival landscape. High (2021) and Cao (2021) emphasise participatory curation, where survivors and marginalised groups co-create archives to ensure that oral histories are preserved authentically rather than filtered through institutional biases. Abdalla *et al.* (2021) highlight the embedding of refugee voices in metadata and cataloging systems, thereby challenging Western-centric archival norms and promoting epistemic diversity. Digital innovations further expand archival possibilities. Awwad *et al.* (2025) introduce computational methods, such as semantic analysis and multilingual indexing, to enhance accessibility and scalability, while Virdee (2022) and Jamil (2025) emphasize the role of digital repositories and multimedia platforms in preserving intergenerational accounts and diaspora art. Interdisciplinary collaborations also enrich archival practices, with Opfermann (2024) and Rumbi *et al.* (2023) demonstrating how partnerships with museums and activists integrate food, artifacts, and monuments into archives, embedding cultural resonance and reconciliation narratives. Collectively, these approaches position libraries as active agents of cultural preservation and social justice. However, most remain context-specific, limiting scalability and generalisability (Awwad *et al.*, 2025; Stroja, 2022).

Implications of Archival Practices in developing accessible and culturally sensitive archival systems for migrant and refugee narratives.

The implications of these archival systems are profound, extending beyond preservation to representation, resilience, and identity formation. By centering displaced voices, archives foster inclusivity and challenge dominant institutional discourses (Parish & Rugo, 2021; Stroja, 2022; Calabria, 2023). Opfermann (2024) and Olumba (2024) argue that archives facilitate reconciliation and resilience by

connecting past struggles to future survival, while Ahmed (2021) highlights their role in supporting intergenerational resilience among Somali refugees. Rumbi *et al.* (2023) further illustrate how archives strengthen interfaith harmony by documenting narratives of reconciliation.

Libraries also contribute to knowledge democratisation and pedagogy. High (2021) demonstrates how archives empower communities through creative practice while enriching student learning, Abdalla *et al.* (2021) position libraries as allies in academic freedom and social justice, and Brownlie (2022) underscores their role as mediators of cultural memory and political discourse through translation and transcreation. Archives thus serve therapeutic, educational, and political functions, positioning libraries as agents of cultural continuity and social justice. Few studies provide quantitative evidence of impact, and sustainability in resource-poor contexts remains underexplored (Virdee, 2022; Olumba, 2024).

Challenges in archiving displaced communities' narratives

Despite these advances, significant challenges persist. Ethical dilemmas dominate, including issues of consent, confidentiality, narrative ownership, and the risk of romanticising trauma (Abdalla *et al.*, 2021; Stroja, 2022; High, 2021; Calabria, 2023). Political sensitivities complicate archival work, particularly in contexts of contested histories or reconciliation, where selective memory or censorship can distort narratives (Rumbi *et al.*, 2023; Virdee, 2022; Parish & Rugo, 2021). Resource limitations also hinder sustainability, with Ahmed (2021) and Olumba (2024) noting the difficulty of maintaining archives in contexts of adversity, and Virdee (2022) pointing to the digital divide as a barrier to equitable access. Institutional tensions between oral history and traditional scholarship further constrain innovation (High, 2021). Technical and methodological challenges add strain: Awwad *et al.* (2025) caution against reducing complex narratives to quantitative metrics; Jamil (2025) highlights the difficulty of capturing intangible heritage, such as oral traditions and performance art; and Cao (2021) and Opfermann (2024) note multilingual complexities and replicability issues.

CONCLUSION

Academic libraries are adopting participatory, digital, and interdisciplinary methods to preserve the narratives of displaced communities. These approaches strengthen inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and resilience, positioning libraries as agents of social justice and cultural continuity. By embedding refugee voices into archival systems, libraries challenge dominant discourses and foster authentic representation, while also

serving therapeutic, educational, and political roles that promote reconciliation, resilience, and dialogue.

However, significant challenges persist. Ethical dilemmas around consent, confidentiality, and ownership complicate archival practices, while limited resources hinder sustainability, especially in contexts of displacement. Political sensitivities risk selective memory and distortion, and methodological tensions between qualitative richness and scalability constrain replicability. These issues highlight the need for balancing innovation with cultural nuance to ensure archives remain authentic and accessible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Academic libraries should embed displaced communities into participatory, culturally sensitive archiving while leveraging digital innovations to ensure authentic, accessible, and scalable preservation of refugee voices.
2. Libraries must act as agents of social justice by integrating trauma-sensitive practices, fostering intergenerational dialogue, embedding refugee narratives in education, and advocating for policy recognition to sustain inclusive archives.
3. To overcome challenges, libraries should enforce ethical safeguards, secure sustainable resources, and embrace methodological pluralism, balancing technological scalability with cultural nuance to protect and empower displaced communities.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. All contributions were made solely for academic and research purposes, without any financial, personal, or institutional interests that could have influenced the outcomes of this study.

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