

Research on the Value and Development and Utilization of Intangible Cultural Heritage Oral Archives

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Abstract: This article focuses on the value and development of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) oral archives, exploring their significant role in enhancing the authenticity of historical records, constructing social memory, and preserving ICH culture. ICH is a vital component of China's rich traditional culture and a vivid testament to the enduring legacy of Chinese civilization. However, ICH oral archives face numerous challenges, including the issue of 'the art lives on as long as the person does, but dies with the person,' which has led to cultural gaps and the loss of skills. To address these issues, the article offers suggestions for expanding dissemination channels, innovating development models, and improving support mechanisms. The aim is to enhance the utilization of ICH oral history archives, support their protection and inheritance, and promote the continuation and development of China's excellent traditional culture.

Keywords: Intangible Cultural Heritage; Oral History; Social Memory

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

According to the definition in the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People's Republic of China, intangible cultural heritage refers to various forms of traditional cultural expression and the physical objects and places associated with these expressions, which are passed down through generations and considered integral parts of the cultural heritage of all ethnic groups. It serves as a vital link in connecting ethnic sentiments and maintaining national unity. China is home to the largest number of intangible cultural heritages in the world^[1]. Unlike tangible material culture, the transmission of most intangible cultural

heritage typically relies on oral traditions and personal demonstrations. Older bearers guide younger ones in learning traditional skills and etiquette, ensuring that young inheritors master the methods of expressing intangible cultural heritage. Generally, using written records to preserve intangible cultural heritage is limited, leading to the challenge that 'skills are passed down through individuals; when they die, so do their skills, and the transmission of skills heavily depends on individuals.' This situation can lead to cultural gaps and interruptions in skill transmission.

Archives institutions, dedicated to recording history and preserving excellent culture, actively engage in the enthusiasm of various sectors of society for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. They also actively participate in the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. The newly promulgated 'Archives Law of the People's Republic of China' (Chapter 4, Article 34) states that archives institutions are encouraged to develop and utilize their collections, and to promote the development of Chinese excellent traditional culture through activities such as thematic exhibitions, public lectures, and media promotion.

Therefore, with the support of relevant policies, archives institutions need to vigorously carry out the collection and arrangement of oral archives of intangible cultural heritage, so as to transform intangible resources into tangible resources by means of text, audio recording and video, record and arrange intangible cultural heritage, and realize the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage.

1.2 Research Significance

1.2.1 Theoretical significance

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) holds unique value for the nation, ethnicity, region, and individual, promoting the development of human cultural diversity. ICH oral archives transform dynamic and diverse materials into

tangible records, documented in specific formats on designated media, thus facilitating cultural inheritance. This paper focuses on ICH oral archives, exploring their value and construction process, analyzing existing issues, and proposing measures to enhance the utilization and development of these archives, providing theoretical insights for future scholars.

1.2.2 Practical significance

The oral archives of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) focus on the genuine experiences of ICH bearers and the general public, effectively filling gaps in historical records and aiding in a comprehensive portrayal of the history of ICH cultural transmission. This study clarifies the primary responsibilities involved, broadens the reach of ICH culture, and contributes to its preservation and continuation.

2. Value of Oral Archives of Intangible Cultural Heritage

2.1 Supplement the Authenticity and Integrity of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Given the unique nature of intangible cultural heritage, the preservation of tangible archives is often limited. However, oral archives can significantly address this limitation by providing valuable supplements to the content of intangible cultural heritage. By effectively integrating oral archives with traditional archival forms such as photographs and documents, both can complement and verify each other, greatly enhancing the completeness and authenticity of heritage memory. This, in turn, promotes a more comprehensive and profound understanding and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage^[2].

2.2 Enrich Social Memory

Part of the intangible cultural heritage, due to its unique nature, is primarily preserved in the personal memories of its bearers and is rarely documented in traditional archives such as written records. Therefore, collecting and organizing oral materials about intangible cultural heritage is essential for transforming individual memories into social memory. This process not only facilitates the transfer of these memories but also allows individual memories to reflect the specific manifestations of social lifestyles and social consciousness during

different historical periods, thereby further enriching and deepening the content of social memory^[3].

2.3 Inheriting Traditional Culture

Oral archives, as a vital means of preserving intangible cultural heritage (ICH), are preserved using physical media such as video and audio. This method effectively overcomes geographical and temporal limitations, allowing the deep cultural connotations and development threads of ICH to be clearly revealed. Not only does this approach promote the widespread dissemination of ICH, but it also provides strong support for the continuous inheritance and promotion of China's excellent traditional culture. Additionally, although China has the most ICH, many ICHs, especially those in ethnic minority regions, lack written records and are passed down orally from generation to generation. However, as time passes, the memories of the bearers gradually fade, leading to a shortage of successors and the loss of skills with the passing of the bearers. By developing oral archives of ICH, we can extract the relevant memories of the bearers, fully document their background, development, and the spiritual connotations they embody.

3. Construction of Oral Archives of Intangible Cultural Heritage

3.1 Problems Existing in the Construction of Oral Archives of Intangible Cultural Heritage

3.1.1 Authenticity

The authenticity of oral archives has always been one of the aspects questioned and criticized, and it is also the focus of attention in the collection and collation of intangible cultural heritage oral archives. Some intangible cultural heritage inheritors may have unclear or wrong expressions due to their age, memory, dialect and other reasons, resulting in deviations between the collected content and facts.

3.1.2 Easy to lose

Most intangible cultural heritage is preserved in the minds of its bearers through oral communication, without written records. This leaves the bearers at risk of being unable to continue passing on their skills due to physical or other reasons. Additionally, during the

transmission process, issues such as unclear memory can arise, leading to errors in the transmission.

3.1.3 Insufficient development and utilization
At present, the dissemination and utilization of intangible cultural heritage oral archives resources are relatively single, and digitalization and information technology have not been fully utilized, resulting in insufficient development and utilization of intangible cultural heritage oral archives and low influence of publicity and promotion^[4].

3.1.4 Insufficient attention

Some departments do not place enough emphasis on the protection of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) oral archives, lacking a robust organizational support system and neglecting the preservation of these archives. Additionally, there is insufficient financial and human resource support. Furthermore, the various responsible departments lack effective collaboration. The development of ICH oral archives is challenging and requires coordination and cooperation among relevant departments. Without cross-departmental and cross-regional collaboration, the collection and preservation of these archives cannot be effectively ensured.

3.2 Design of Oral History Collection and Sorting Process

As an important archival resource, the rational development and effective utilization of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) oral archives are of great significance for protecting and passing on ICH. Therefore, standardizing the collection process of these archives, including scientifically planning the content to be collected, reasonably selecting the subjects, strictly controlling the quality of the collection, and ensuring the legality and ethicality of the collection process, can lay a solid foundation for the development and utilization of ICH oral archives. This, in turn, promotes the inheritance and development of ICH culture, enriches social and cultural diversity, and enhances cultural soft power^[5].

The article summarizes the existing theories and some relevant practical research on the design of the collection and sorting process of intangible cultural heritage oral archives, and designs the collection and sorting process of intangible cultural heritage oral archives into five aspects: preliminary preparation, collection stage, follow-up sorting, signing legal confirmation letter and archiving, as shown in Figure 1.

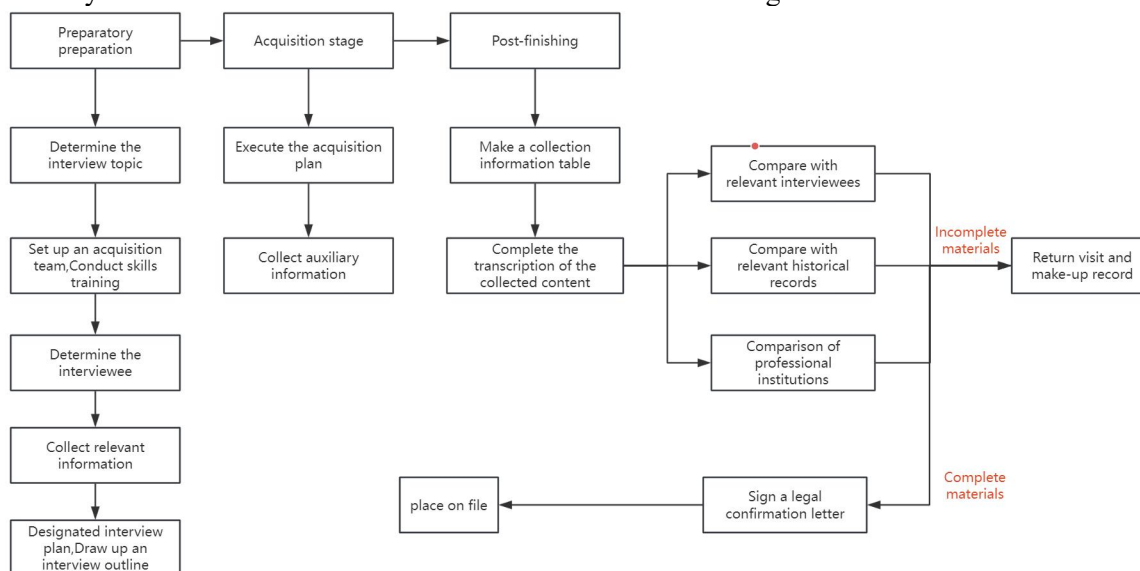


Figure 1. Flowchart of Collection and Arrangement of Intangible Oral Archives

3.2.1 Preliminary preparation

The preliminary preparation is an important beginning of the collection of oral archives of intangible cultural heritage, which determines the research direction of the collection work and lays a foundation for the follow-up collection work.

First, determine the interview topic.

Determining the interview topic is crucial as it marks the first step in preparatory work and significantly impacts the value of utilizing intangible cultural heritage (ICH) oral archives. The topic should meet the public's demand for archival culture, possess preservation and utilization value, and aim to preserve ICH culture, thereby better serving society.

Second, form a team for the collection of intangible cultural heritage oral archives. A well-organized team is essential for the successful completion of this task. Typically, the team should consist of professional archivists, technical experts, researchers from relevant fields, and support staff. Once the team is formed, all members should be assigned specific roles to ensure that the collection process proceeds smoothly and efficiently.

Next, select the interview subjects. Based on a preliminary understanding of their backgrounds, choose interview subjects that are relevant to the events and representative, to gain a thorough understanding of intangible cultural heritage. Additionally, after selecting the interview subjects, the team should further gather information. By communicating with the interview subjects in advance, based on their past experiences, it helps the interviewees to organize their memories and provide a more detailed account.

Finally, make an interview plan and draft an interview outline. The interview outline plays an important guiding role in the interview process. It can not only help the interview team grasp the key content of the interview, but also help the interviewees sort out the interview ideas.

3.2.2 Collection stage

The collection plan is the core of the entire intangible cultural heritage oral history collection process. The team must arrive at the interview location in advance to calibrate equipment and start work according to the plan. During the collection, it is crucial to monitor the machine's performance to prevent any issues. Additionally, the team should guide the interviewees to ensure they stay on topic and provide complete narratives. The team must also continuously gather additional information, paying attention to the time, events, and other details mentioned by the interviewees, and promptly confirm relevant information with them^[6].

3.2.3 Post-organization

The collection of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) oral archives primarily relies on the recollections of interviewees. However, as people age, their memory capabilities gradually decline, leading to biases and even the fading or forgetting of certain memories. During the collection process, the team may

gather a large amount of information, which might include duplicates or irrelevant data. Therefore, in the subsequent organization phase, collectors must carefully assess the reliability of the collected information. They should compare the collected data with interviews from other relevant individuals, historical records, or have a specialized institution verify the information. If errors are found, re-interviews can be arranged to gather additional information. Conversely, if the information is accurate, a legal confirmation document can be signed with the interviewees, and the archives can be completed.

3.2.4 Signing the legal right confirmation letter
In order to protect the interests of both respondents and collection units and facilitate the compilation, research and utilization of intangible cultural heritage oral archives in the later stage, collection units need to sign legal rights confirmation agreements with respondents and their families to clarify the legitimate rights and interests of respondents, their families and collection units.

3.2.5 Archiving

Archiving is essential for the enduring value of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) oral archives. Therefore, it is crucial to promptly archive and preserve the collected materials according to relevant regulations. This includes collecting thematic and informational records, ensuring that valuable materials are fully preserved for future research and utilization, thereby maximizing their value.

4. Development and Utilization of Intangible Cultural Heritage Oral Archives

4.1 The Subject of Responsibility shall Cooperate to Improve the Protection Mechanism

As the primary responsible parties for the protection of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), government departments can establish relevant laws and regulations to clarify the responsibilities of all levels of government in ICH protection, thereby providing a solid legal foundation for the development of ICH oral archives. Additionally, the government should develop plans for ICH protection, ensuring that the protection efforts proceed in an orderly manner, and provide financial support to facilitate the collection, integration, and utilization of ICH oral archives.

As the implementers of the development of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) oral archives, archival institutions must establish standardized management systems and archiving procedures in accordance with relevant requirements. These institutions should undertake the collection, integration, and storage of ICH oral archives to ensure their authenticity, reliability, and completeness. As the direct bearers and disseminators of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), inheritors should actively participate in the collection of ICH oral archives. They should accurately convey the skills and cultural essence of ICH to recorders through oral narratives and personal demonstrations. Additionally, inheritors should take on the responsibility of passing down their knowledge by taking on apprentices and establishing schools to nurture future generations. This ensures the living inheritance of ICH and contributes to the richness and diversity of ICH oral archive resources^[5].

Furthermore, the media should leverage its communication advantages to widely promote intangible cultural heritage (ICH), thereby enhancing public awareness and interest in ICH. By producing special programs on ICH and conducting reports on ICH culture, the media can present the oral archives of ICH in a vivid and engaging manner, thus increasing the appeal and influence of ICH. Additionally, the media can collaborate with archive institutions and ICH bearers to jointly advance the digitalization, networking, and intelligent development of ICH oral archives, ensuring the widespread dissemination and deep-rooted inheritance of ICH culture.

All responsible subjects should cooperate effectively in the development of intangible cultural heritage oral archives resources, so as to achieve more significant results in the development of intangible cultural heritage oral archives resources and make greater contributions to the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage^{[7][8]}.

4.2 Utilize Modern Information Technology to Realize the Value of Intangible Cultural Heritage Oral Archives

The core value of archival resources lies in their effective utilization, deeply exploring the potential value of archives to enable them to play a more significant role in social

governance. Oral archives of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) are rich in value and function. With the continuous advancement of science and technology, the Internet, new media, and virtual reality have provided opportunities for the creative transformation and development of ICH oral archives^[2]. Therefore, it is possible to integrate technological means with ICH oral archives in several ways: First, by using machine learning and natural language processing to uncover the current research status and theoretical value of ICH oral archives, helping scholars achieve theoretical innovation; Second, by designing documentaries and thematic exhibitions on various topics, utilizing VR and other virtual reality technologies to conduct immersive educational activities about ICH archives, thereby expanding their influence and reach, and realizing their cultural value; Third, by leveraging social platforms like short videos to re-create and disseminate ICH oral archive resources, making learning fun and engaging, and expanding the audience through modern entertainment formats.

4.3 Human and Financial Resources are Guaranteed to Promote the Development and Utilization of Oral Archives of Intangible Cultural Heritage

The development and utilization of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) oral archives require both talent and financial support. Talent is the key to any successful endeavor. Therefore, in the development of ICH oral archives, the overall quality of the collectors plays a crucial role in the quality of the collected resources. Archive institutions should strengthen their talent teams by training, research, and education to cultivate professional talent for the development of ICH oral archives. Additionally, they can organize training activities for the public, inviting experts from fields such as history, psychology, and journalism to learn collection techniques from a professional perspective. Through discussions and exchanges among professionals from different fields, they can understand relevant standards, learn from each other, and complement each other, ensuring the smooth progress of the oral archive collection work. On the other hand, the development process of ICH oral archives is complex and requires significant investment.

Purchasing necessary equipment is essential to ensure that the development of oral archives can be implemented quickly within a limited timeframe.

5. Conclusion

Modern Chinese historian Fan Hongye once remarked, "History comes alive through details, and the past is brought to life through oral narratives." The oral archives of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) enrich ICH culture by preserving valuable memories through the unique form of these archives. By uncovering the past experiences of bearers and stakeholders, these archives comprehensively document the evolution of ICH culture, uncover the spiritual and cultural elements embedded within it, and support the preservation of traditional culture. In recent years, as the importance of ICH culture has grown, related research has also increased annually. This article reviews existing research, summarizes the value and challenges of ICH oral archives, and outlines a process for their collection and organization.

Due to the author's lack of knowledge accumulation and theoretical accomplishment, the research on intangible cultural heritage oral archives is not comprehensive enough, the design of collection and sorting process needs to be improved, and the development and utilization measures need to be further studied.

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