Empirical Article

Power in University Archives: Imperialism and Disparities in Nigeria and the United States

Robert M. Cermak [a*]

[a] University of Louisville, USA

*Corresponding author: Robert M. Cermak   Email: robert.cermak@louisville.edu
Address: University of Louisville, Kentucky, USA

This article was not written with the assistance of any Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology, including ChatGPT" or other support technologies.

Abstract

This article examines the structural disparities between the archives at the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) and Michigan State University (MSU). While Nigerian archivists work to preserve their institutions' local content, they must contend with cultural and infrastructural constraints foreign to their American counterparts. To elucidate these differences, this analysis builds upon Stoler's 'archival turn' framework which shifts the gaze on archives to consider them as subjects of inquiry rather than mere sources of data. Reflecting on my own experience working with physical archives at UNN and MSU, along with digital artifacts from these institutions' websites, I analyze the contents and accessibility of hardcopy and digital collections at both universities. In conclusion, I argue that the ongoing and uneven footprint of imperialism, both socio-cultural and infrastructural, results in an unequal distribution of Trouillot's 'archival power' amongst global institutions like UNN and MSU. Additionally, I highlight means by which some Nigerian scholars have contested imperialism to reclaim ownership over their own archival contents and narratives.

Introduction

In 2019, as part of research on general education in Nigerian higher education (Cermak, 2021a, 2021b), I traveled

to the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) to explore documentary materials concerning that institution's general education curriculum—the General Studies Programme (GS)—preserved by various units and actors at UNN over more than half a century. The irony of this trip, costly as it was to myself, my Nigerian hosts, and my funders in the United States (U.S.), is that in a more equitable world, an in-person visit would not have been necessary. The materials I was interested in, such as departmental handbooks and academic catalogs, are neither rare nor sensitive, and more well-resourced institutions in the U.S. are typically able to make similar information freely available online. I contend that this imparity in what American research universities and their counterparts in developing nations can preserve, curate, and make accessible to the wider scholarly community represents an imbalance in "archival power," to use Trouillot's term, which determines what are (and are not) legitimate topics of research, and thus what deserves to be archived (2015, p. 99). Though this article addresses university archives broadly, I emphasize the documents and collections that deal explicitly or implicitly with GS as these informed my experiences conducting archival research in both Nigeria and the U.S.

My work at UNN was primarily about 'extracting' information about GS, that is, about "archive-as-source." In this article, I instead take Stoler's "archival turn" and consider the archives at UNN, as compared to those at Michigan State University (MSU) in the U.S., as the 'subject' of inquiry rather than as a mere source of data (2009, p. 44). By exploring what kinds of internal information these two very differently situated institutions choose, and are able, to preserve, digitize, and make accessible to internal and external audiences, I hope to delineate how they are differentially (and unequally) positioned to tell stories about themselves and be (re)interpreted by others. My analysis explores the contents and accessibility of both hardcopy and digital archival collections at these institutions in order to clarify two of the forces— socio-cultural imperialism (Okon & Ojakorotu, 2018) and infrastructural imperialism (Vaidhyanathan, 2012)—that influence disparities in archival power between universities in developing and developed countries.

Context: The Universities

UNN is a federal research university located in Nigeria's southeastern state of Enugu. It was founded in 1960 as Nigeria's premier post-independence university through the leadership of the nation's first president, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who had long been highly critical of British colonial rule in the country, and especially of the highly specialized system of higher education modelled on British institutions that reigned at the time (Pettit, 1969; Poloma & Szelényi, 2018). Azikiwe was "determined to found a university which would be strikingly different" from this prevailing model (Pettit, 1969, p. ii). Today, UNN is a nationally prominent university and economic hub that enrolls more than 36,000 students across four campuses in Enugu State (University of Nigeria Nsukka, n.d.). This research focuses on the main campus located in the town of Nsukka, Nigeria.

Among the many innovations championed under Dr. Azikiwe's early leadership was the introduction of Nigeria's first general education curriculum for undergraduates, which would function as a "formal liberal education" component in answer to the specialized courses of study which dominated elsewhere (Pettit, 1969, p. iii). Established at UNN in 1961 as the General Studies Programme (GSP), or General Studies (GS), this general education curriculum was designed specifically for the Nigerian context through the collaborative efforts of local scholars and foreign advisors from both Michigan State University (MSU) and the British Inter-University Council (IUC). While the curriculum thus represented a unique hybrid model of general education that drew upon diverse intellectual traditions, it has been repeatedly upgraded by subsequent generations of Nigerian educators to more closely reflect the Nation's values and priorities (Nwosu, 2017a; Pettit, 1969). Furthermore, since the GSP's genesis at UNN, the curriculum has since been nationalized across Nigerian higher education making it an important originator of general education in West Africa (Okafor, 2012). This unique history, along UNN's close historical ties to my then home institution of MSU, informed my selection UNN as the site of this research.

MSU is a state-level public research university located in the state of Michigan. Founded in 1855 as the Agricultural College of the State of Michigan, it was the country's first land-grant university and served as the prototype for the dozens of other land-grant institutions across America. Today, MSU enrolls approximately 50,000 students on its 5,300-acre East Lansing campus (MSU Facts, n.d.). In addition to extensive archival holdings detailing its own institutional history and productivity, MSU currently houses a large collection of documentary resources on UNN's early years due to its historic connection to UNN in the 1960s, the "University of Nigeria Program Records" collection (University of Nigeria Program Records, 2011). The records pertaining to UNN's genesis and early development represent a "migrated archive," or one that has been removed from its country of origin (Migrated Archives, n.d.). The presence of this migrated archive, and its

centrality to my research on GS at UNN, informed my selection of MSU as the comparison site for this inquiry. That said, the inequities, both of access and power, inherent in such migrated collections will be problematized in my findings.

Located as they are in the Nigeria and the United States respectively, UNN and MSU are differentially and unequally positioned in the global hierarchy of higher education institutions. A developing nation whose economy in reliant primarily on the export of crude oil, agriculture products, and minerals, Nigeria has a Real GDP of approximately $4,900 per capita as of 2021 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2023) and a 9% bachelor's degree attainment for those 25 years and older in 2006, the last year data is available (The World Bank, 2023). Conversely, the U.S. is an economic powerhouse boasting a highly diversified post-industrial economy, a Real GDP of approximately $63,700 per capita in 2021 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2023), and a bachelor's degree attainment of 37.5% in 2020 (The World Bank, 2023). Given that proxies for status among higher education institutions, such position in global higher education rankings, often reflect the "highly inequitable distribution of… public resources [such as] subsidies for student attendance and infrastructure development," Nigerian universities are much more at the mercy of imperialistic forces that lessen and delegitimize their archival power compared to their American counterparts (Pusser & Marginson, 2013, p, 558).

Literature Review

When one thinks of an archive, the vision that comes to mind is an old, venerable institution—often associated with a library, university, or government, or perhaps independent—staffed by professional archivists and filled with rows of books and boxes of files, manuscripts, and documents. This antiquated model still describes many archives around the world, but not all as it neither accounts for the diversity of institutions, the varied actors at play, nor the wide array of materials, information, and formats contained therein. In Africa, the archive is in some instances "perceived as a site of retrieval and representation, in others as a site of power, and in others it is viewed as a site where the production of history is already underway" (Lalu, 2007, p. 28-29). I take a broad view, in line with the late anthropologist Trouillot, in defining archives as any and all "institutions that organize facts and sources and condition the possibility of existence of historical statements... Archives *assemble*" (Trouillot , 2015, p. 51).

Such assemblages do indeed include more formal collections, such as those contained at UNN's Nnamdi Azikiwe Library and MSU's Main Library and Archives and Historical Collections, but also encompass what collective memory scholar Assmann calls "hidden deposits" (Assmann , 2011, p. 337). Assmann acknowledges that "archives are selective… they are in no way all-inclusive but have their own structural mechanisms of exclusion in terms of [power]," but fortunately for the researcher "there is not only [formal and] intentional but also [ad hoc and] accidental preservation when hidden deposits are discovered" (p. 337). Such hidden deposits became important to my research as will be described in the discussion of the hard copy archival collections at UNN.

Further complicating the vision of the conventional, paper-filled archive, African library and information scientists Fasae, Larnyoh, Esew, Alanyo, and Holmner explain that in the 21st century "digitization is rapidly becoming one of the standard forms of preservation for archival institutions, libraries and information centres of analogue materials" (Fasae et al., 2017, p. 5). At universities like those described in this article, digitization efforts often take the form of Institutional Repositories (IRs). According to librarians at UNN, IRs are open-access online forums for preserving and showcasing the local contents (LCs) of an institution (Ukwoma & Okafor, 2017). LCs can broadly be thought of as the "totality of the culture, values, heritage materials, and indigenous knowledge of a group of people with common interest in a given locality," but at universities typically include "research outputs, theses and dissertations, inaugural lectures, newsletters, examination question papers, course contents, etc." (Ukwoma & Okafor, 2017, p. 48). Which of these content types are prioritized, and why, in the IRs of UNN and MSU is a subject of analysis in my examination of the digital archival collections at these institutions.

Archival Power

As indicated by Assmann's statement about archives' criteria for inclusion and exclusion, these assemblages are not only sites of information and history, but also arenas of power. Trouillot (2015) insightfully coined the term "archival power" in acknowledgement of this reality. He expounds that archives, by merit of their selectivity, hold the power to determine what are and are not legitimate bodies of information and areas of inquiry, and thus constrain researchers' ability to drive research agendas, (re)interpret history, and choose stories worth telling (p. 99). Archival power is neither evenly nor equitably distributed around the globe. Trouillot explains that archives remain "products and symbols of neo-colonial

domination" and "unequal access to [them]… continue[s] to handicap" academics and research projects at institutions in the developing world to a disproportionate degree (p. 105).

The power differentials between university archives underscores the necessity for taking Stoler's "archival turn." Her framework is premised on the assertion that "to understand an archive, one needs to understand the institutions that it served" (2009, p. 25). Therefore, this analysis follows Stoler's "methodological shift: to move away from treating the archives as an extractive exercise to an ethnographic one" (p. 47). Here, I not only extractively examine the contents of the archives at UNN and MSU, but also explore social and structural forces that regulate archival power at these organizations, namely "socio-cultural imperialism" (Okon & Ojakorotu , 2018) and "infrastructural imperialism" (Vaidhyanathan, 2012).

Archival Culture and Socio-Cultural Imperialism

Archives are cultural bodies which cannot be divorced from the societal and institutional cultures, conventions, and priorities in which they are embedded. Historian Kristen Weld writes that "archival culture" determines what value a society or institution ascribes to documents and what it deems worth preserving and making accessible. For instance, Weld describes how the archival culture in Guatemala in recent decades branded documents as "*basura*—trash to be eliminated, not resources to be protected" (2014). Archival culture is heavily influenced by relations of power, as seen in Weld's research in Guatemala where state archives were devalued in large part because meaningful preservation and public access was not in the political interest of conservative elites, the military, and the National Police.

Similarly, power and status in the worldwide higher education community also influence the archival cultures of individual universities like UNN and MSU. In sub-Saharan Africa, universities' archival cultures are regulated by ongoing socio-cultural imperialism, or the devaluation of African cultural institutions and knowledge systems. For example, authors in Nigeria and South Africa note that "there is no African research methodology or source of knowledge which is acceptable in academic circles" (Okon & Ojakorotu, 2018, p. 240). Instead, African archivists must adhere to global norms, meaning those originating in the Global North, in order to be perceived as legitimate. While the existence of such norms ostensibly lends a degree of validity to archival practice across contexts and geographies, the logics determining which types of LCs deserve to be preserved and curated derive from a system of global socio-cultural imperialism that centers some nations and regions while relegating others to the periphery. This has the potential to rob Nigerian archivists and scholars of the agency to interpret their own history and tell their own stories.

Thus, Nigerian universities, who stand at a disadvantage compared to their more well-resourced and influential American counterparts, use archival resources, such as IRs, to pursue heightened "global visibility" and prestige in the international higher education sector (Ezema, 2013; Fasae et al., 2017; Ukwoma & Okafor, 2017). To do so, they typically concentrate their efforts and resources on preserving, digitizing, and showcasing content that speaks to a commonly cited proxy for institutional standing—research productivity. In the era of globalization, research has shown that socio-cultural imperialism is manifested in the outsized role that a university's research productivity and output plays attaining "World Class University" status (Deem et al., 2008) and positioning in global higher education rankings (Pusser & Marginson, 2013).

In Nigeria, several researchers have connected greater visibility of faculty, staff, and student research to increases in the citation impact of publications (Ezema, 2013) and the webometric ranking of higher education institutions (Ukwoma & Okafor, 2017). Furthermore, a survey of seventy-two librarians across seven Nigerian universities identified the three greatest perceived benefits of IRs as (1) increasing the visibility of the authors, (2) promoting the global ranking of universities, and (3) increasing the research impact of authors (Ezema, 2013, p. 330). The archival culture at UNN reflects this nation-wide emphasis on research outputs, with the vast majority of its IR (98.99%) being comprised of artifacts of research productivity, specifically theses, dissertations, journal articles, conference proceedings, books, and book chapters (Ukwoma & Okafor, 2017, p. 52). Meanwhile, this leaves the materials that concerned my research—institutional documents about GS and the program's curricular artifacts—undervalued, largely inaccessible, and often unpreserved to begin with.

Digitization and Infrastructural Imperialism

Differences in what universities are able to preserve in their archives, and the choices they must therefore make, reflect not only socio-cultural inequities, but also disparities in their infrastructural capabilities. In his book, *The Googlization of Everything*, media scholar Vaidhyanathan provides the concept of "infrastructural imperialism," an imperialism derived from the unequal distribution of the "pipelines and protocols of culture… the formats of distribution of

information and the terms of access and use" (2012, p. 109). In today's world, where technological sophistication and power are inextricably linked, access to and facility with the conduits of cultural and knowledge exchange—whether the internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs) broadly or specific information retrieval platforms such as Vaidhyanathan's subject, Google—positions some subjects, organizations, and societies as dominant to others. At the same time, these new technologies and mediums also force each of us to adapt as knowledge producers and consumers. Just as Vaidhyanathan argues that those of us in the U.S. have been "Googlized," it could also be said that archival practice and research has been "digitized" as Fasae et al. contend:

> In his discussion of the internet, Vaidhyanathan explains that those of us concerned with online retrieval of information about both hard copy and digital content, must confront the discrepancies of access and skills across the world. Often discussions of the effects of Internet and other communicative technologies… assume something close to universal access… In fact, fewer than one in five people in the world have domestic access to the Internet at speeds that allow the viewing of the simplest YouTube video. (p. 137-138)

Though now dated, Vaidyanathan's 2012 analysis of internet access still resonates with the lived experiences of Nigerians today. Survey studies of Nigerian university library users, namely students and researchers, and staff have reported results that highlight the deleterious impact of infrastructural imperialism on information accessibility.

Edem and colleagues' 2009 survey of more than 500 Nigerian undergraduates reported a perceived lack of computer resources as the area of greatest dissatisfaction, and these same students noted greater access to and education on ICTs as the most pressing need in order to produce effective consumers of archival information (Edem et al., 2009). In 2011, Igbo and Imo examined the experiences of users more like myself—150 plus graduate-level student researchers—in the same archival institution I visited, UNN's Nnamdi Azikiwe Library. These researchers reported general dissatisfaction across their respondents with the accessibility of library resources and recommended that UNN "support the library in stepping up efforts geared towards digitizing library resources and provide electronic infrastructures like computers with internet connectivity for easy access to… the content of the library" (Igbo & Imo, 2011). As recently as 2017, authors writing from Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa continue to cite the constraints of poor ICT infrastructure, low internet bandwidth, and an unstable power supply as limiting Nigerian librarians and archivists from making local contents accessible online (Ezema, 2013; Fasae et al., 2017). These infrastructural constraints hamper both uploading digital contents to IRs for immediate access and providing digital information on hard copy collections to guide researchers and incentivize them to visit Nigerian universities.

Methods

This comparative analysis stems in large part from critical reflections on my experiences working with hard copy archived documents at both MSU and UNN in 2019, along with a comparison of these institutions' archival presence online. Between March and July 2019, I spent several days going through the "University of Nigeria Program Records" collection in the MSU Archives and Historical Collections (University of Nigeria Program Records, 2011). MSU's stewardship of this sizable, migrated collection of administrative and faculty records, which documents UNN's genesis and early development between 1958 and 1970, is owed to the University's formative relationship with UNN in the 1960s. Over the course of 2019, I also familiarized myself with the holdings at the MSU Main Library to identify relevant materials kept in that institution's special collections and remote storage. Furthermore, I spent three weeks at UNN's Nsukka campus in August of 2019 identifying, retrieving, and assessing documents related to GS preserved at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library and the School of General Studies (SGS).

These forays into archival investigation enable me to make some evaluative generalizations about the contents and scope of the hard copy collections at UNN and MSU. I also rely on digital artifacts culled from the UNN and MSU websites and IRs, both of which I became familiar with throughout my inquiry, to compare the digitized archival collections that are openly accessible from each school. In doing so, I have two primary objectives in this critical reflection. First, I seek to interrogate how the constraints and logics of global imperialism impact archival power, and thus patterns of preservation and access, at UNN and MSU as representative universities of their respective world regions. Second, my original research at UNN was largely extractive, and therefore arguably risked reifying an inequitable "global academic division of labor" that positions African institutions and scholars as mere "'case' or 'data' producers for [use in] northern theory" (Ergin &

Alkan, 2019, p. 260). However, by taking Stoler's (2009) ethnographic "archival turn" I aim to the recenter personal agency and self-determination of Nigerian archivists.

The trustworthiness of the findings I offer below is bolstered by two common metrics of reliability in qualitative research, namely triangulation and member checking. First, my research on GS at UNN included multiple sources of data (Cermak, 2021b). In addition to the primary textual sources collected from archives at UNN and MSU, I also reviewed secondary sources on the history and makeup of GS, both at UNN and across Nigerian higher education, and conducted eleven semi-structured interviews with senior faculty across the GSP's constituent academic units at UNN. Thus, my interpretations of archival data were "triangulated," or cross checked, with the lived experiences of contemporary Nigerian stakeholders (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Furthermore, after initial findings were generated from these three data sources, a memo outlining the findings was provided to my faculty interviewees so they could "member check," or "confirm the credibility" of my work (p. 127). Ultimately, five of the original eleven interviewees were available provided feedback on my interpretations. They confirmed the credence of both my interpretations and my characterization of the state and scope of archival holdings at UNN.

Results

Hard Copy Collections

In this section, I begin my discussion of hard copy archival assemblages by reviewing my experience gathering documents on GS at UNN. I then consider how accessing, navigating, and working with MSU's collections differs. Over a three-week period in August 2019, I visited UNN to review and retrieve documents preserved by various institutional actors and units which reflect the current state and past iterations of the GS curriculum. I was especially interested in curricular artifacts detailing course contents and requirements at the SGS over time, such as student handbooks, academic catalogs and prospectuses, and departmental textbooks.

While, at the outset, I anticipated spending most of my time in the University's formal archival institutions, the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, I ended up having the greatest luck in the personal office libraries of SGS faculty and administrators. As shown in Table 1, the majority of pertinent documents (91%) came from these informal archives, and this included all (100%) of those materials dealing exclusively with the GS curriculum. I only ended up retrieving three (3) documents—university-wide academic prospectuses (or program catalogs)—from the library, and then was only able to do so with the help of a reference librarian. What is more, these prospectuses contained comparatively sparse information on the GS curriculum.

Table 1

Hard copy documents collected at UNN, August 2019

Documents	SGS Faculty & Staff Offices		Nnamdi Azikiwe Library	
	Number (N)	Percent (%)	Number (N)	Percent (%)
SGS Handbooks	7	100	0	0
Unit Textbooks	24	100	0	0
UNN Prospectuses	0	0	3	100
Total	31	91	3	9

The relative richness of the informal archives featured on bookshelves lining the office walls of SGS faculty and staff illustrates the importance of "hidden deposits" for redressing the innate silences of formal collections due to their inherent exclusivity and selectivity (Assmann, 2011, p. 337). I was fortunate to gain access to these deposits, and to find preserved what materials I did, as these privately curated assemblages are not open to the public in the same way the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library is. I had to know and build rapport with SGS stakeholders to negotiate entry to these deposits and, indeed, to even know they existed at all. Weld explains that "scholars of archival… science often link the accessibility of [institutional] archives to that [institution's] levels of accountability" (2014, p. 51). Thus, these ad hoc, personal collections speak to UNN's devaluation of and lack of institutional accountability for the preservation of curricular objects relative to relics of research productivity. This state of affairs reflects an archival culture at Nigerian universities that privileges the preservation of research outputs over curricular materials.

In the months prior to traveling to Nigeria I invested time at MSU's University Archives and Historical Collections going through the "University of Nigeria Program Records" collection. This collection constitutes a significant trove (87 cubic feet) of early UNN administrative and curricular documentation, especially concerning the role that MSU representatives played in the University's genesis (University of Nigeria Program Records, 2011). Despite its relative expansiveness compared to the deposits I worked with in Nsukka, the collection at MSU is highly accessible and easily navigable thanks to the availability of an online finding aid which directed my research. The finding aid is quite extensive (230 pages when converted into a PDF) and comprehensive, providing a wealth of guiding information in contrast to the greater ambiguity which characterized my time at UNN. Despite its size the finding aid is a searchable document, allowing me to focus in, via a keyword search (general studies, GS, GSP, SGS, etc.), on boxes and folders containing documents pertinent to my research. I was therefore able to quickly identify and review the most relevant materials and ended up photographing the contents of thirty-five folders from four boxes, accounting for a small portion of the total collection.

In a 2016 article, Hiribarren described working in a French colonial archive in the Republic of the Congo in Central Africa. While there, he set up a static website for the archive to inform and attract foreign researchers. While his website was problematic in a variety of ways and failed to meaningfully engage local stake holders, he crucially highlighted the need for similar resources, like the finding aid at MSU, to guide researchers' working in Africa. My experience at UNN resonates with his assertion that "many researchers do not actually undertake research in Africa because they do not know what to expect when they arrive in an archive… As research time is precious, a couple of hours in front of a screen might save time while physically in situ" (Hiribarren, 2016, p. 378).

Moreover, the greater ICT infrastructure at the MSU Main Library also facilitates the retrieval of materials that might more intuitively be envisaged at UNN's Nnamdi Azikiwe Library. For instance, compared to the three UNN prospectuses I identified in Nsukka with the help of a librarian (Table 1, Appendix A), I was able to personally find eleven similar UNN catalogs that had been removed, or migrated, from UNN through the MSU Library's online interface and requisition them for delivery from remote storage. These discrepancies illustrate ongoing socio-cultural imperialism wherein developing nations function as data-producers for northern archival collections. While the UNN course catalogs at MSU do not detail instances of colonial-era violence, and so might be viewed with less suspicion than other migrated archives from the colonial and early national periods in Africa (Badger, 2012), they nonetheless highlight the problematic discrepancies in archival power afforded to African university archivists relative to their counterparts in the U.S. It is also evident that infrastructural imperialism's uneven footprint has real effects on university researchers and archivists, even concerning hard copy archival collections. The relatively well-resourced position enjoyed by MSU empowers it to foster a more inclusive archival culture—to preserve more kinds of materials and make them readily accessible—than is evident at UNN.

Digital Collections

It has already been established that the archival culture which guides institutional repositories (IRs) in Nigerian universities, where local contents (LCs) are ostensibly made openly accessible to the wider online public, prioritizes institutional research outputs over other types of materials to increase visibility on a socio-culturally imperialistic global academic landscape (Ezema, 2013; Fasae at al., 2017; Ukwoma & Okafor, 2017). In 2017, Nigerian library scholars Ukwoma and Okafor reviewed the more than twenty-thousand documents then available on UNN's IR through OpenDOAR, a UK-based online listing of open-access IRs, in order to tabulate a typology of LCs. While Ukwoma and Okafor verified the predominance of research outputs (theses, dissertations, journal articles, conference proceedings, books, and book chapters), the inequities of infrastructural imperialism hampered my ability to confirm their findings as the link to UNN's IR was no longer accessible through OpenDOAR during my original research period in 2019. Nevertheless, the connection to UNN's repository has since been re-established and my subsequent review in turn bears out the privileged digitization of such research products (University of Nigeria Nsukka Institutional Repository, n.d.).

Conversely, MSU's IR is much more comprehensive both in terms of the raw number of contents and in their variety of types (Digital Repository Collections, n.d.). For instance, MSU's electronic theses and dissertations collection alone, totaling more than fifty-thousand discrete files, contains several times as many digital records as UNN's entire IR (MSU Libraries, n.d.). The complete IR at MSU is far larger still and contains a myriad of cultural artifacts in a variety of formats beyond such research outputs, such as audio files, newspapers, posters, and sundries like buttons, shirts, and other wearables. Moreover, outside of its IR, MSU also digitally archives historical information on its academic programs similar to what can be found in the SGS handbooks and UNN prospectuses, information which is undervalued and therefore available

almost exclusively in hard copy in faculty and staff offices at UNN. The Registrar's Office at MSU archives academic program descriptions from the past 20 years and course descriptions going back to 1970 (Archived Academic Programs, n.d.; Archived Course Descriptions, n.d.). Therefore, a researcher conducting a study of MSU's curriculum over much of the timespan that concerned my work at UNN would be able to conduct most of his or her research from anywhere in the world, provided an internet connection and a digital device. Overall, MSU's greater archival power in the digital sphere, driven by its greater ICT infrastructure and know-how and emboldened by its unrestrictive archival culture, far outstrips that of UNN.

Discussion

In this comparative analysis, I have taken Stoler's (2009) "archival turn" to show how UNN and MSU, as representatives of universities in their respective world regions, are differentially endowed with Trouillot's (2015) "archival power." Given the realities of socio-cultural imperialism (Okon & Ojakorotu, 2018), UNN, peripherally positioned on the global higher education landscape along with other African universities, enjoys relatively little agency in choosing which types of local contents to preserve and curate. Instead, UNN focuses the limited resources it has to leverage in fashioning its archives to almost exclusively showcase a single type of LC deemed most legitimate in the Global North, research outputs, over local heritage and curricular artifacts (Deem et al., 2008; Ezema, 2013; Pusser & Marginson, 2013; Ukwoma & Okafor, 2017). Thus, UNN has adopted a straitened "archival culture" (Weld, 2014), which regulates archival power according to the conventions of a world-wide tertiary education system designed by and for more powerful institutions.

Furthermore, UNN is also much more at the mercy of "infrastructural imperialism" (Vaidhyanathan, 2012) than its American counterpart. The inequitable distribution of the "pipelines and protocols… of information" (p. 109), namely internet connectivity and ICT infrastructure (Edem et al., 2009; Ezema, 2013; Fasae et al., 2017; Igbo & Imo, 2011), leaves UNN with an Institutional Repository (IR) many times smaller than MSU's (MSU Libraries, n.d.; University of Nigeria Nsukka Institutional Repository, n.d.). UNN is also hampered in disseminating online resources which might otherwise draw foreign researchers to its hard copy collections and on-campus spaces, such as Hiribarren's (2016) website in the Republic of the Congo and the finding aid I used in MSU's University Archives and Historical Collections (University of Nigeria Program Records, 2011).

The constraints imposed upon Nigerian universities by ongoing and pervasive imperialism negatively impact the experiences of local users and archivists as well as those of researchers from overseas who find themselves in Nigerian archives. These constraints signify an imperialistic imparity in access to Nigerian LCs whereby Nigerian histories and stories may actually be more visible in the U.S than in Nigeria, as evinced by my experiences working with "migrated archives" (Badger, 2012; Migrated Archives, n.d.) from UNN at MSU. For instance, I was able to independently find eleven UNN catalogs and scan thirty-five archival folders pertinent to GS at UNN with relative ease over a matter of days at MSU. Conversely, it took weeks and the help of numerous stakeholders to locate just thirty-one comparable records at UNN (see Table 1), mostly from "hidden deposits" (Assmann, 2011). Hence, the cultural and infrastructural inequities which act upon UNN limit the archival power of Nigerian universities in ways that keep them at a structural disadvantage to American institutions like MSU. This state of affairs reinforces an insidious 'global invisibility' rather than fostering the 'global visibility' Nigerian academics seek (Ezema, 2013; Ukwoma & Okafor, 2017).

Implications and Conclusion

One of my primary objectives in writing this manuscript was to contest the notion that African researchers produce only 'data' for others to interpret (Ergin & Alkan, 2019). Instead, the scholars I met at UNN are the authors of their own narratives and histories. It is then important, I believe, to highlight the agency of faculty and staff at UNN's SGS who bucked the university's restrictive archival priorities by preserving their curricular artifacts in the form of SGS handbooks and unit textbooks in their workspaces. By taking it upon themselves to preserve their curricular heritage, they have been able to tell their self-actualizing stories and celebrate their curricular innovations. They have done so in recent years by collectively authoring a book on the GS curriculum (Nwosu, 2017a) and hosting two international conferences on the role of GS in Nigerian postsecondary education in the 21st century (Agbo et al., 2019; Nwosu, 2017b).

These self-designated archivists in the SGS have done all this in spite of UNN's straitened archival culture, the restrictions of socio-cultural and infrastructural imperialism, and the limited archival power nominally assigned to them by

the University. Significantly, the 2017 book itself references several editions of the SGS handbooks that I found preserved on SGS office bookshelves. The owners of those bookshelves were also, in many cases, contributing authors to both the book and conferences in 2017 and 2019. These same documents in turn became yet another source of information in my own research, demonstrating the power inherent in this type of self-driven preservation. It was thanks to these individuals that I was able to move forward with my own research at UNN and I owe my Nigerian colleagues a debt of gratitude. I call for continued self-driven archival preservation primarily as a means to center the voices of the SGS faculty themselves, legitimize their power as archivists and storytellers, and contravene the persistent impacts of imperialism.

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Robert Cermak, PhD, is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Higher Education Administration at the University of Louisville, USA. His research interests include liberal arts and general education curricula around the world with a focus on sub-Saharan Africa. Email: robert.cermak@louisville.edu