Partnership in Paradise
The Importance of Collaboration for Handling Traditional Cultural Expression Material in the Pacific Islands

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Abstract
Access to cultural heritage materials in the Pacific Islands has increased along with access to technology. However, the availability of indigenous Traditional Cultural Expression (TCE) information causes concerns regarding the protection of cultural sensitivities. Digitization plays a major role in the accessibility of this material, as there is presently no control over its dissemination. This paper will first examine the structure and meaning of TCE. Collaboration with indigenous people is vital because solutions may reside in the development of mutually satisfying pathways for the future management of such valuable material. Since many of the cultural heritage organizations in the Pacific Islands constantly seek to develop new frameworks for caring and making accessible TCEs, this paper will then review possible strategies and guidelines that archivists in the Pacific Islands can utilize to better safeguard access and control.

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“E lauhoe mai na wa’a; i ke ka, i ka hoe; i ka hoe, i ke ka; pae aku i ka ‘aina”
“Everybody paddle the canoes together; bail and paddle, paddle and bail, and the shore is reached.”
--Hawaiian Proverb

1 From Huna Light Website: http://www.hunalight.com/Polynesian%20quotes.htm
Map of the South Pacific Islands
1. Introduction

Although traditional cultural expressions (TCEs) typically do not have precise guidelines, they are commonly accepted as works that reflect and identify a community’s history, cultural and social identity. They typically imbue values that are handed down from one generation to another, either orally or by imitation. They are often made by unknown authors, or by individuals within a community who are recognized to have the right, responsibility or permission to create them. TCEs are considered by native peoples to belong to the community in which they originate, and are integral to self-determination. This has never been more evident than in the Pacific Islands, where TCEs are often considered sacred and not meant to be shared outside the community.

The Pacific Islands possess diverse and vibrant cultures. Since their discovery in the late eighteenth century, they have attracted a myriad of people such as adventurers, evangelists, artists, and researchers-who described the Pacific Islands’ as a kind of a natural society unburdened by civilization’s problems and used it as a model and counter-point to advanced civilization. These people have captured TCEs creating an innumerable amount of material in the form of correspondences, field notes, film, photographs, audio recordings, journals, paintings, drawings, genealogies, and diaries. Since the advent of the Digital Age in the later half of the twentieth century, technology has made it easier for these people to repatriate them to cultural heritage organizations such as archives, libraries and museums, where accessibility and use of TCE material is done without consulting with indigenous groups, or acknowledging customary laws and intellectual property rights. In fact, when non-indigenous people own most of the material that documents indigenous people’s lives and traditions legally certain tensions arise. These tensions are expressed on matters relating to access and control.

The strengthening of communication and the building of new relationships between cultural heritage organizations and indigenous peoples and traditional communities depends on how actively both parties will develop, manage, and maintain strategies concerning the safeguarding and access to TCE material. This relationship is vital, as solutions may reside in the development of mutually satisfying pathways for the future management of such valuable material. Tradition-bearers can provide invaluable contextual information and personal narratives regarding collections about them. Indeed, indigenous peoples and traditional communities do have a legitimate interest in being part of the decision-making process regarding TCE material. Today, this voice is essential, as it can explain alternative meanings embedded within them. They can help outline the access conditions that respect the indigenous or traditional community from which those materials derive, as well as those of other users who are keen to learn and understand different cultures and cultural practices from them.

Indeed, in the past several decades there has been a publicized absence of trust between indigenous and traditional communities and the cultural institutions, as they feel that they have not been recognized as rights holders or acknowledged as having legitimate relationships with the material within the collections. Additionally, professional volunteers come from countries outside the Pacific Islands region.

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to work in a variety of ways at cultural heritage organizations. However, these volunteers may not understand all the nuances of working with TCE material that can be a source of conflict. As this paper will show, it will only benefit both indigenous and traditional community and the cultural heritage organization to work together beyond the risks and troublesomeness in order to understand how to best protect and make accessible their rich cultural heritage.

2. The Issues with Traditional Cultural Expression

TCEs embody know-how and skills, and transmit core values and beliefs. They are integral to the cultural and social identities of indigenous and traditional communities. As cultural and economic assets, their protection is linked to the promotion of creativity, enhanced cultural diversity and the preservation of cultural heritage. TCEs include music, art, designs, names, signs and symbols, performances, architectural forms, handicrafts and narratives. In many countries where knowledge is transmitted in oral form, particularly in the Pacific Island countries, traditional knowledge and expression of indigenous cultures are a living and evolving tradition. Such knowledge and expressions are socially based and communally owned because they have been developed for the benefit of the group as a whole. Often, it is a group that is the custodian of a particular item of heritage, and thus, the consent to authorize others to use indigenous cultural knowledge must be given by the group, through specific decision-making procedures which differ depending on the nature of the particular item.

As cultural heritage organizations in the Pacific Islands region are drawn into the digital age, managing access and use of collections inevitably involves intellectual property law, policy and practice. The very nature of traditional cultural expressions means that they occupy an ambiguous intellectual property status. Unique intellectual property issues are being raised regarding collections of TCE because of the certain qualities that make them different from other collections. Traditional knowledge and indigenous cultural expression is vital for the survival of the cultural identity of Pacific Island nations and there is a real need to protect local cultures to ensure that there is something to pass on for the future.

Contemporary negotiations over the rights of indigenous peoples’ and traditional communities’ and interests in their TCE raise a number of challenges for cultural heritage organizations. Often these challenges arise from the complex social, historical, cultural, legal and political conditions informing the collections of these organizations, and can manifest in a variety of ways. Firstly, researchers often collect TCEs without obtaining consent from the source communities, as indigenous people typically do not understand as to how the information will be used. These collections may contain secret or confidential material that may be subject to restricted use under customary laws and practices. Secondly, the legal status of TCEs under intellectual property law is often unclear. A good example of this is when a cultural heritage organization makes accessible material that they believe exists in public domain and considered free to be used by anyone, but, in fact, may be subject to certain restrictions according to the source community. Finally, indigenous peoples and traditional communities wish to be more directly involved in the decision-making processes related to the management of their cultural heritage. This involvement will help them reconnect with those elements of their cultural heritage, allow greater access for children

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and the community as a whole, and revive the knowledge systems associated with these elements. On the other hand, indigenous peoples may wish to regain full possession of their TCEs and bring them back to the community.

3. Secrecy and Sacred Material

The term “secret,” or “sacred” material is best defined as objects having a particular value for members of the originating community. There are both published and archival materials in many cultural heritage organizations of the Pacific Islands region that hold secret and sacred information which should not be made generally available. These objects command respect and therefore require special care or the observation of prohibitions, and thus the treatment of these objects by cultural heritage organizations and electronic media requires prior consultation. Often, Pacific Islanders have given secret information to respected researchers, not realizing that the information would be published and made available to the general public. Secrecy continues to be a double-edged sword that defends powerful knowledge but also imperils the reliable transmission of cultural information. Often, private knowledge and tradition are held by only a handful of anointed experts—those who are at the top of the social ranking, and who are trusted to pass their knowledge to the appropriate person(s). However, with their unexpected deaths, this knowledge and tradition can be lost. Ironically, in a surprising number of cases, information “stolen” by missionaries and anthropologists has saved indigenous communities from tragic cultural losses.

In the Pacific Islands, knowledge was traditionally held more valuable than material possession. While material goods held a transitory value and were distributed to everyone, information was nondistributed wealth, jealously guarded and passed down from father to son. Today, this is still true, and is especially practiced in governments throughout the region. For example, knowledge is strictly controlled by government hierarchies, as information flows from the bottom up, and orders for the information from the top down. Generally, senior staff must ask for information before it is offered. On the other hand, junior staff members do not volunteer or ask for information from superiors without permission to do so. Thus, the ministers control information within their sectors and lateral transfer of information is prohibited without special accord.

Indigenous peoples insist that documents contain sacred knowledge so authentic and powerful that access to them should be carefully controlled. Often, the distrust that many indigenous and traditional peoples feel towards cultural heritage organizations will deepen, as the dissemination of sacred material (deliberately or innocuously) happens. However, cultural heritage organizations making available online images of material in their collections without proper consultation with source communities run the risk of inadvertently displaying to the widest possible audience secret and sacred material that should not be publicly seen at all. On the other hand, it is clear that cultural heritage organizations perceive databases as a form of repatriation and not as forms of insult, offense and threat to traditional cultural values.

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As far as it is known, there exists no exhaustive list of “sacred” or “culturally sensitive” objects for any given community throughout the Pacific. Secrecy is inherently threatening the democratic process and to the public good except in a sharply circumscribed range of situations, for instance, when an Archive abides by a donor’s request that material be closed to researchers for a stated period of time. Additionally, the lack of such exhaustive lists may also indicate disagreements within the communities themselves, as community spokespersons should have the right to check everything that is to be shown and written concerning them, for example, historical details that they judge to be objectionable.

4. Who Then Owns Culture?

As indigenous peoples and traditional communities of the Pacific Islands desire access to existing cultural material so that it can be reinterpreted and given new meaning, the question as to who should be entitled to make decisions concerning such material is a contentious debate. Should the researcher, community or the cultural heritage organization be the rightful owner of the cultural material? This issue creates a bitter and intense atmosphere in relations with indigenous communities as well as with the cultural heritage organization that holds it. It is difficult on the organization, in terms of time and labor, but may also be considered quite unfair to the community that wants to use material that represents them and their culture.

It is clear that the concept of ownership (either by individuals, families or communities) in the Pacific Islands region of songs, dances and other forms of traditional knowledge and custom has been well established for a long period of time. In the past, knowledge of styles of singing and dancing, of sculpting slit-gongs or weaving mats, of myths of origin told in local languages, together with the associated rights of performance was a commodity exchanged between local groups. As Dr. Jacob Simet, Executive Director of the Papua New Guinea National Cultural Commission stated:¹¹

> We have had songs, traditional knowledge and so on for hundreds of years. There was no doubt as to who originally owned them— they were originally owned by one person who passed them on to his or her clan. There were clear customary laws regarding the right to use the songs and the knowledge. There was no problem in the past.

Today, confusion often arises when people living non-traditional lives claim to be indigenous and try to assert the special protection that might have been appropriate to the indigenous status of their ancestors. This particularly is an issue in Hawaii, as knowledge created in ancient times, belonging to an indigenous group as a whole, is held today by individuals who are fully assimilated into the American culture. Property rights, for example, belong to the people who own the property, and not to the property itself. Thus, intellectual property rights of an indigenous group are not written down in copyrights, patents, or trademarks; but need to be treated as though they were.¹²

Perhaps, the best answer to the question as to who truly owns TCE material exists in intellectual property rights, as any given item in a collection has an intellectual property status. TCE may or may not

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benefit from intellectual property, thus managing access to and use of material inevitably implicates intellectual property law, policy and practice. Be that as it may, cultural heritage organizations sit at the junction between tradition-bearers and the public. In their daily activities they have a unique opportunity to allow the public to access cultural heritage, and at the same time protect the TCEs and preserve the rights and interests of their bearers. Therefore, today, some cultural heritage organizations and communities in the Pacific Islands region have developed intellectual property related polices and practices concerning the access, ownership, control of content, and safeguarding of cultural heritage. The Vanuatu Cultural Center is exemplary in this practice, as precautions in the manner of forms must be completed and approved for access to certain kinds of TCE material.

5. Reasons for the Protection of Traditional Cultural Expression

Protection in the intellectual property sense is distinguishable from the “safeguarding” or “preservation” of cultural heritage and expressions, but can complement them. Safeguarding in the context of cultural heritage typically refers to identification, documentation, revitalization and promotion of real and virtual cultural heritage material in order to ensure its maintenance and essence. However, archiving, documenting, and recording are typically means in which protection of material is achieved. This will mean acknowledging and giving effect to the broader range of collective and individual rights that are linked to TCE. Additionally, there will be a need to build a capacity to support traditional creativity and the social structures that sustain and express them.

The question, ‘what do indigenous peoples seek to protect?’ is not easy to answer, as reasons for seeking protection will be specific to the particular information or knowledge for which the protection is being sought. For example, European connections with haka, a Maori traditional dance, are longstanding in New Zealand. Maori community leaders began to take a public role in supporting haka performances and to insist on correct usages in accordance with traditional custom. In fact, customary standards continue to exercise some control over limited roles for women in haka performance, over performances by foreigners, and over commercial uses. However, in recent years, certain perceived misuses of haka in advertising overseas have become a major source of contention. In New Zealand, the advertisements were widely thought to be culturally insensitive to Maori as well as to New Zealanders. And although Maori groups tried to intervene and ask the producers to change the advertisements, their supplications were mostly ignored.

When indigenous knowledge is removed from an indigenous community, the community loses control over the way in which it is represented and used. Nevertheless, a more general concern is not just with an individual sign, symbol, story, song, or artwork but also with the knowledge and cultural, spiritual and other significance that the material conveys and carries with it. In Australia and New Zealand indigenous people have voiced four major reasons for protecting of TCE material that would also be applicable to the Pacific Islands region in general:

- Safeguarding traditions that depend on secrecy, or cultural privacy. Access and use is available only by qualified people or with appropriate permission.

• Maintaining cultural associations in public eye, or cultural publicity. Use is sought to include acknowledgement of cultural associations and by qualified people or with appropriate permission.
• Commercial exploitation of resource or its application treated as commodity, or cultural property. Use is only for agreed purpose and usually on terms of compensation by qualified person or with appropriate permission.
• Maintaining guardianship of traditional culture as a whole. Any use of material must respect and be consistent with guardianship and be by a qualified person or with appropriate permission.

6. Recommendation Guidelines for Repatriated Material

Records relating to excavated or destroyed archaeological sites, societies that have fundamentally changed, life histories of individuals and communities, languages no longer spoken, cultural material that no longer exists, texts of oral renditions of historical events and statements of worldview, all constitute a tenuous link to knowledge that is otherwise irretrievable. Saving TCE materials involve ethical considerations aside from the responsibility for preserving the information they contain. Each cultural heritage organization must consider both access and confidentiality issues, as well as plan for legitimate access before transferring papers to cultural heritage organizations, or even posting digitized copies on the Internet. The scholar who gathered and created the materials must review them to note any sensitive items. Additionally, it is important to remember that situations do change; what is sensitive at a given time may not be later and vice versa. The needs of future researchers and members of the communities are important, but specific decisions will be based on the type of record and the original research purpose.

Cultural heritage organizations often hold original records that were created by, about or with the recommendations of particular Pacific Islands’ communities. Some records may have been taken from the control of the community. A practical strategy that allows communities to have more rights to material when historically they have had none is very important. Communities may place tremendous importance on particular records and request copies for use and retention within the community. Thus, to address this issue, cultural heritage organizations should:

• Respond sympathetically and cooperatively to any request from Pacific Islander communities for copies of records of specific relevance to the community for its use and retention.
• Agree to the repatriation of original records to Pacific Islander communities when it can be established that the records have been taken from the control of the community.
• Seek permission to hold copies of repatriated records but refrain from copying such records should permission be denied.

Cultural heritage organizations need to understand the importance of preserving and making accessible the various complementary forms of TEC materials. This understanding will require active participation with donors and the indigenous communities, as well as the consideration of rights of the

donor of the material and their wishes or the wishes of their heirs. Ready access to the records can be vital to the indigenous community’s knowledge of itself. It certainly is not uncommon for records to be held in distant, often unapproachable institutions where they are effectively alienated from the people to whom they are most relevant. This issue will allow an opportunity for collaboration between indigenous communities and the cultural heritage organization to consider the appropriate location for records with possible cooperation in the development of community keeping places like an archive, library or museum.

7. Recommended Digitization Guidelines

Digitization provides opportunities to improve Pacific Islands indigenous peoples’ access to historical and contemporary cultural indigenous knowledge materials that are currently dispersed in institutional collections across the region, and as well as across the world. However, easier access provided by digital technologies also increases the risk of breaching indigenous cultural protocols for the management of materials. Thus, developments in both the digital context and the indigenous information context indicate the need for a coordinated planning approach to deal with the issues. Guiding principles should include:

- Recognize indigenous communities as equal partners in future digital collaborations.
- Ensure cultural integrity.
- Uphold cultural intellectual property rights of communities.
- Interpret, analyze, and synthesize information for general users.
- Ensure that individuals should only access sacred, genealogical information after they have consulted with the relevant indigenous members.
- Ascertain that sacred information is not used in a manner contrary to indigenous communities’ values, or for commercial purposes.
- Ensure that information cannot be changed or altered unless after consultation with relevant indigenous people or communities.

Digital databases with potentially vast public access must use sensitivity in the development of their guidelines, determine which material will be made available and establish levels of access that can be implemented. These areas require much attention and discussion prior to the establishment of the digital database. However, as anticipated, the challenge for the development of the digital database remains the extent to which they accommodate the desires and expectations of tradition-bearers about access and control within their governing guidelines. Nevertheless, as technology constantly changes, the preservation of digital databases will also invariably change. Thus, it will be advantageous if the guidelines are flexible and can change with this technology so that it continues to fit the needs of the indigenous community.

Digitization can be an expensive and technically complex process, and it is not uncommon for cultural heritage organizations to fall behind on projects. Moreover, ancillary costs associated with establishing and maintaining an online presence to facilitate public access to images can become a major burden on an organization. Therefore, one bold strategy that will combat against this issue is through the development and maintenance of a distributed contextual information framework. This framework would

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be designed to link together sources of knowledge that may be of value to a future society.\textsuperscript{17} The mapping of these entities (such as, people, organizations, concepts, ideas, places, natural phenomena, events, and cultural artifacts) creates a network of nodes and arcs that mimic actuality. In other words, this creation and caretaking of digital cultural heritage resources utilizes the Internet that enables the linking and sharing of information. An excellent example of this is the Oceania Digital Library, focused on the culture and heritage of the indigenous peoples of the Oceania region.\textsuperscript{18} The use of this open-source technology will help cut costs, and can even include individuals with limited technological understanding.

Although these kinds of open-source databases are becoming more popular, very few are being created in the Pacific Islands region. Typically, these digital projects are a collaboration of universities that are inspired to digitize, preserve and provide searchable access to a range of cultural and heritage resources from research collections of partner institutions. Unfortunately, the extent of participation that indigenous communities are making towards these projects is uncertain. Nevertheless, there are a number of benefits in using an open-source database approach, which include:\textsuperscript{19}

- Making knowledge transfer easier and encouraging the sharing of experiences within and between organizations.
- Enabling existing knowledge sources to reside within a structured and visible system.
- Increasing visibility of knowledge sources that will promote their preservation and value.
- Introducing nonintrusive techniques that complement existing business practice.
- Supporting the decision-making process by making available a wide range of information giving a view of “the bigger picture.”
- Improving transparency within the cultural heritage community and for external observers (transparency is fundamental to building trust).
- Referring to sensitive information within the system without it being reproduced.
- Improving discovery, accessibility, and comprehensibility of resources.

As we live in a world of perpetual change, there is a very real threat that the accumulated knowledge that guides the digital cultural heritage resources today will be lost to the next generation. Nevertheless, on a positive note, there is no one body that has overall control or the responsibility for overseeing the placement of information on the World Wide Web. It is envisioned that contextual information framework would adopt this strategy, and thus evolve the robustness that comes with dispersed but shared responsibility. Therefore, indigenous communities could establish themselves with cultural heritage organizations as the principal nodes in the network, providing major resources for their communities and a management function in the area of standards.

\textsuperscript{18} See Website, http://www.oceania-digital-library.org/.

Indigenous cultural and intellectual property management must be articulated from the start of any digitization project. The main legislative deficiency affecting digitized projects is the temporary and individualistic protection that copyright offers to creators of TCE material. Cultural heritage organizations are in a unique position of being both copyright owners and copyright users. As a result, the primary rights of owners must be recognized. Thus, cultural heritage organizations need to:

- Become aware of the issues surrounding cultural documentation and the need for cultural awareness training.
- Create ways, including the recognition of ethical rights, to protect indigenous peoples and traditional communities.
- Develop proper professional recognition of the primary cultural and intellectual property rights of indigenous people and traditional communities.
- Share information on initiatives involving cultural documentation.

Personal information or culturally sensitive material should not be widely circulated. Typically, sensitive materials include those relating to family photographs, family trees or any recorded historical information and past histories. This type of material should be treated as sensitive and access to this information should be carefully monitored. In fact, appropriate management practices will depend on both the materials and the communities served by the cultural heritage organization. In implementing the processes through which such materials are managed, cultural heritage organizations should:

- Consult in the identification of such materials and the development of suitable management practices with the most appropriate representatives of the particular indigenous traditional community involved.
- Facilitate the process of consultation and implementation by developing effective mechanisms including liaison with reference groups at local and national levels.
- Seek actively to identify the existence of secret or sacred and sensitive materials by retrospectively surveying holdings and by monitoring current materials.
- Provide suitable storage and viewing facilities with limited access as may be required.
- Ensure that any conditions on access are understood by staff and users and are fully implemented.
- Support the establishment of a national database for the identification of publications with secret or sacred content and of suitable management practices.

Appropriate handling will typically mean making users aware of the contents before they open them. This might involve the need to create labels or notes in the database indicating that the contents are, for example, “For initiated males only,” or any kind of note that states who is allowed to look at the documents.

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It is inevitable in today’s current environment that TCE will be disseminated on the Internet in ways that will agree with the wishes of its custodians and in ways that will not. The Internet offers tremendous potential for people to learn more about indigenous culture. However, if respect is to be maintained, guidelines are needed to shape proper conduct in relation to TCE. Cultural heritage organizations must ensure that TCE material is not released unless it is in agreement with best practice guidelines. The development and implementation of guidelines for dealing with TCE materials is becoming an important means of ensuring that the rights of indigenous peoples are recognized. Guidelines will encourage ethical conduct and promote interaction based on good faith. Although protocols are not legally binding, they will establish practices that can, over time, come to be regarded as industry standards.

9. Awareness and Education for Professionals in Cultural Heritage Organizations

The cultural heritage organization’s role as an educational source will also benefit by addressing the concerns of scholars and academics regarding access. This, in turn, can help promote the vitality of indigenous peoples and cultures. Increasing awareness of indigenous communities and their TCE material will only contribute to a greater understanding between the indigenous communities and the cultural heritage organization. In pursuit of awareness, cultural heritage organizations should:21

- Be proactive in the role of educator, promoting awareness of indigenous peoples, communities, cultures and issues among non-indigenous people.
- Be proactive in acquiring materials produced by indigenous peoples and communities.
- Highlight indigenous content and perspectives through such means as oral history and record copying projects.
- Promote awareness and the use of indigenous related holdings, by such means as targeted guides, finding aids, tours and exhibitions.
- Promote the inclusion of indigenous community peoples to governing and advisory boards, councils, and committees.

Cultural heritage organizations will also greatly benefit by ensuring that their staff are appropriately prepared to deal with TCE material. All graduates of education and training programs for cultural heritage organizations should have gained an appreciation of Pacific Islander history and culture and of the issues relating to the documentation that they will handle in their future careers. Therefore, archives, libraries and museums of the Pacific Islands region should strive to:

- Provide indigenous cultural awareness training for every staff member, especially those who handle TCE material.
- Provide appropriate models for professional practice in acquisition, processing, and collection management on matters concerning indigenous peoples and traditional communities.
- Ensure that education and training programs involve indigenous peoples in both design and delivery.

• Support indigenous students in archive, library and museum education and training through such means as positive encouragement, mentoring and study leave.

Additionally, cultural heritage organizations can help indigenous people promote awareness and make available their histories and perspectives by a number of ways. First, is to mount displays that incorporate, or that are undertaken by indigenous people. A second way is for an archives, library, or museum to host guest speakers or hold community nights where indigenous people tell stories or present cultural performances. Finally, as publishers, cultural heritage organizations can help indigenous peoples to make available their histories and perspectives. Oral history, for example, can result in the publication of tapes, videos or books.

Finally, proper awareness and educational practices will ensure the involvement and participation of indigenous communities in governance, management and operation. It is now widely accepted that all cultural heritage organizations should adopt a client focus, and should respect and solicit the views of their clients. Indeed, these organizations have a certain responsibility to the communities and nations they serve which make it imperative that the communities’ interests are reflected in both their governance and management to ensure that all policies and practices serve the interests of the communities without discrimination.

10. Conclusion

Although indigenous people operate many cultural heritage organizations of the Pacific Islands region, there remains a need for archivists, librarians and museum curators to understand the different cultures, which their organizations encounter and represent, as well as be sensitive to their continual development to suit changing needs. Thus, archival development is a necessity if documentary records are to take their place alongside oral evidence in the fabric of island identity.22

Some of the materials placed online are of sensitive or secret nature that should require certain restrictions on access. Indeed, archivists, librarians and museum curators are caught in a dilemma, as calls for organizations to honor indigenous rules of secrecy have affected everyday practices in their repositories. In fact, some archivists confess privately that they have relocated sensitive records to storage areas that casual visitors are unlikely to find.23 Nevertheless, it should be the responsibility of each cultural heritage organization that holds TCE material to seek guidance on access, handling and storage. For example, the creation of simple permissions templates can be developed that details those that were consulted, what access was granted, and who should be contacted for further information.

Unfortunately, indigenous and traditional communities of the Pacific Islands are generally among the poorest and most disadvantaged in the world and concern over properly dealing with TCE is not simply an ethical issue.24 Therefore, it is recommended that cultural heritage organizations of the Pacific Islands region need:

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25 Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Institute, “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resources Networks Protocols,”
• Assistance in setting up clear institutional infrastructures and systems for collecting, recording, storing and interpreting cultural heritage material;
• Assistance in the training of staff in more up-to-date systems of collecting, storing and recording of cultural heritage material;
• Assistance in the training of staff on intellectual property issues, generally and specifically in relation to museums and archives;
• Assistance in developing and formulating good practices that will guide staff in collecting institutions about how to deal with intellectual property issues; and,
• Availability of funding for inventory projects.

Perhaps, one of the biggest themes found throughout this research was the importance of cultural heritage organizations’ interaction with indigenous peoples and traditional communities prior to placing digitized material in an online database. When it comes to digitization and the Internet, guidelines that deal with intellectual property and technology issues are needed for the sustainable management of indigenous materials. These guidelines will help cultural heritage organizations develop coordinated policy approaches. Undoubtedly, indigenous and traditional communities want to be more involved in the process. And as they have legitimate opinions about how TCE collections should be managed, they are beginning to help set guidelines, codes of conduct and protocols. They are even helping to set standards and safeguards for how research should be conducted, what intellectual property rights will remain with the community and where permissions for use in the future will be required. For many cultural institutions the problems arise because there is insufficient information about the source community. This hinders negotiations and consultations about the access and use of TCE material by third parties.

Heritage is not lost and found, stolen and reclaimed. It is a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past. By definition, heritage looks backward. It is something received from one’s forebears. Pacific Islands’ indigenous cultures continue to flourish today. Unfortunately, due to attempts at integration and assimilation of island peoples into Western culture, much traditional knowledge has been lost or diluted. However, material produced by traditional communities and captured by others will offer a rich source for Pacific Islanders to re-connect with their traditional cultural roots. In fact, they provide evidence of stories, dances, languages, and other traditional knowledge that may be at risk of disappearing. This risk becomes much more mitigated, as cultural heritage organizations work together with traditional communities and their TCE material.