



From Custodians to Facilitators

A Participatory Framework for Co-Curating
Ephemeral Heritage in Academic Libraries

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Presentation Roadmap

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The Problem

Why ephemeral heritage is at risk in academic libraries

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Kollezjoni Programmi tal-Festa at the University of Malta

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Mixed-methods longitudinal study across three phases

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The Co-Curation Model

A scalable, replicable framework for academic libraries

The Problem: Ephemeral Heritage at Risk

Too Parochial

Hyper-local materials fall outside international cataloguing standards such as LCSH, making them invisible to academic discovery systems.

Too Ephemeral

Festa programmes, community booklets, and grey literature are rarely prioritised by institutional archiving policies — and risk being lost forever.

Structural Gap

A critical disconnect exists between grassroots community archives and the rigid frameworks of academic institutions, with no operational roadmap to bridge them.

Town vs. Gown

Communities distrust institutions perceived as extractive, making donation and co-curation structurally difficult without deliberate trust-building.



Case Study: Kollezzjoni Programmi tal-Festa (KPF)

Launched 2019 at the Junior College Library, University of Malta



9,000+

Publications collected
(and growing)

200

New publications added
per year on average

77

Localities in Malta
and Gozo represented

UNESCO 2023

Maltese festa inscribed in
Intangible Cultural Heritage

The Collection: Physical & Digital

PHYSICAL



- Donated by band clubs, parishes & private collectors
- Retained in physical library alongside scan-and-return copies
- Includes publications from Malta, Gozo & Maltese communities abroad

DIGITAL



- Hundreds of open-access articles on OAR@UM repository
- Indexed by Google & Google Scholar for global reach
- Some early programmes exist only in digital form

Theoretical Framework: Social Exchange Theory

What is Social Exchange Theory (SET)?

SET is a theory that describes relationships as result-oriented social behaviour (Homans, 1958; Emerson, 1976).

According to SET, people choose to enter into and maintain relationships in order to **maximize the benefits** of these relationships, while **minimizing the costs** (rewards and punishment).



Cost–Reward Calculus

Participation occurs when perceived rewards outweigh costs — recognition, access, and identity validation are key rewards in archival contexts.

Trust as Currency

Communities contribute when they trust the institution acts as a 'reliable friend,' not a remote gatekeeper.

Reciprocity Loop

The institution must visibly 'return' value — through open access, social media acknowledgement, and the annual Rendikont report.

The Town vs. Gown Challenge

Town vs. Gown — a historically fraught relationship between university communities and local inhabitants, rooted in Medieval Europe.



Perceived as Extractive

Communities fear institutions will 'take' their heritage without giving back — feeding resistance to participation.

Neoliberal Pressures

Universities must justify collections in terms of research output and curriculum; hyper-local heritage is seen as lacking 'academic rigor.'

No Roadmap

Post-custodial theory celebrates community engagement but rarely provides a practical workflow for academic institutions.

KPF Solution

Embedded within community spaces (band clubs, social media groups), not imposing institutional processes — trust earned, not assumed.

Methodology: Mixed-Methods Case Study

Quantitative

- ▶ 48 articles uploaded to OAR@UM
- ▶ Split into LCSH control group vs. LSH variable group
- ▶ Access statistics collected at 9 fixed intervals over 24 weeks
- ▶ Normalized against overall repository traffic

Qualitative

- ▶ 13 semi-structured interviews
- ▶ Purposive sampling: local historians & active festa community members
- ▶ Conducted via Zoom / MS Teams
- ▶ All-male, aged 25–55 — reflecting community composition, not bias

Case Study Design

- ▶ Single longitudinal case study (Yin, 2018)
- ▶ Descriptive and exploratory orientation
- ▶ Convergent mixed-methods: data integrated at interpretation stage
- ▶ Observed across 3 distinct operational phases

The Three Operational Phases



**Relational
Outreach**

Trust Layer



**Participatory
Co-Production**

Action Layer



**Cyclical
Dissemination**

Feedback Layer

Points of Access

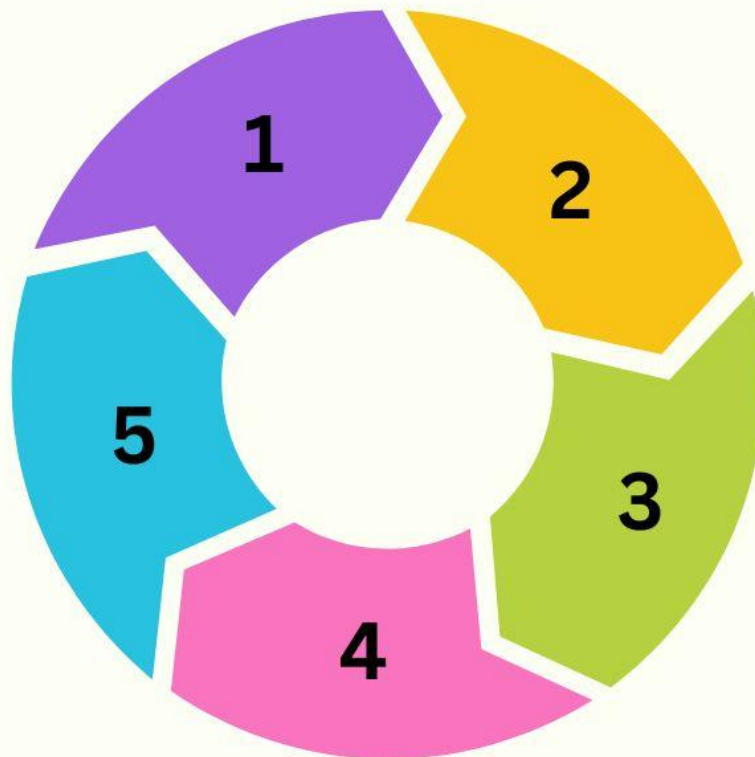
Publication donated by
community members.
Donation acknowledged
on social media

First point of access :
Analogue publication
catalogued

Second point of access :
Digitisation of articles and
depositing on OAR@UM

Third point of access :
Use of hyper local
metadata for each article
uploaded on OAR@UM

Fourth point of access :
Material from KPF
collection shared on social
media



PHASE 1 · Relational Outreach (The Trust Layer)

Entering Community Spaces

Librarians visited band club houses (kažini) and residents' groups, meeting communities on their own terms — dismantling the Town vs. Gown barrier.

Cultural Influencers

Local history experts and prominent banda members endorsed the KPF on their own social channels, transferring their credibility to the academic initiative.

Notice Board Strategy

Low-barrier Facebook posts appeared in community feeds alongside everyday local news — minimizing transaction costs of engagement (SET principle).

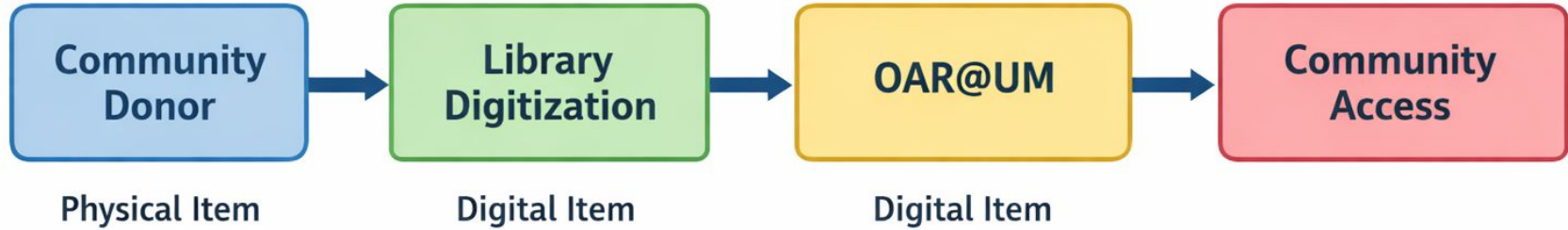
Mass Media Outreach

Local radio appearances brought the collection to a broad audience; a dedicated team member acted as PR liaison for the project.

Organic Growth

Word-of-mouth proved more effective than formal calls for papers. The Rivalry Effect — rival band clubs competing for representation — became a self-correcting acquisition mechanism.

PHASE 2 · Participatory Co-Production (The Action Layer)



Digitization

Physical programmes converted to high-quality PDF/A format. Scan-and-return policy preserves community ownership.

Community Metadata

Band club members and local experts contribute hyper-local context: dialectal terms, saint nicknames, specific event details — captured as Local Subject Headings (LSH).

Editorial Oversight

All metadata reviewed by librarians before publication. LSH terms linked to LCSH identifiers in backend — maintaining catalog integrity without sacrificing local relevance.

Critical Cataloging

Applying distributed authority (Roeschley, 2024) to decolonize description — community vocabulary given equal standing to standardized headings.

PHASE 3 · Cyclical Dissemination (The Feedback Layer)

Open Access on OAR@UM

All articles published open access. Indexed by Google & Google Scholar. Early 20th-century programmes preserved digitally — many exist only in this collection.

The Rendikont

Annual end-of-year statistical report shared publicly on social media. Demonstrates institutional transparency and publicly acknowledges the community's contribution — a critical social reward in the exchange.

Behind-the-Scenes Posts

'Thank you' posts for each donation; visual glimpses into shelving, preservation, and curation processes — demystifying the library and building sustained trust.

Photo Threads

During events like Good Friday and Christmas, members post photos in open comment threads — inadvertently creating a collective living digital archive, independent of library intervention.

The Silent Majority

The '90-9-1 rule': modest social media engagement (likes/comments) masks significant OAR@UM download activity. True engagement lives in repository logs, not vanity metrics.

Photo Thread : Good Friday

 **Katja Zahra Camilleri**
1 April · 🌐

Is-Sepulkri għal din is-sena bdew jintramaw. Itfgħu r-ritratti fil-kummenti hawn taħt 🙌 u tinsewx tghidulna fejn jinsabu!

[View insights](#) 2.4K post reach >

👍 37 💬 51 🔄

 **George Sacco Xerri** · [Follow](#)
Santwarju Qalb Mqaddsa ta' Ġesù - Fontana ...



9w Like Reply Share 15 🍷 🍷 🍷

 **Parroċċa San Nikola Siġġiewi**
Is-Sepulkru fil-Knisja Arcipretali ta' San Nikola is-Siġġiewi qiegħed jiġi armat bħalissa. Kollox għal għada filgħaxija



9w Like Reply Share Edited 12 🍷 🍷 🍷

Rendikont : End of Year Post



Rendikont 2025

- Kotba tas-sena 2025 : **225**
- Artikli maqsuma fil-grupp : **128**
- Membri godda : **688**

Grazzi!



Katja Zahra Camilleri

7 January · 🌐

...

**KOLLEZZJONI PROGRAMMI TAL-FESTA : LENTI
FUQ IL-WIRT MALTI. RIŻORSI MIĠBURA
B'AĊĊESS GĦAL KULHADD : RENDIKONT 2025**

Gheżiż Membri,

Bhas-sena li għaddiet, xtaqna naqsmu magħkom rendikont tal-[Kollezjoni Programmi tal-Festa](#) kemm tal-kollezjoni fizika kif ukoll dik diġitali.

Dan kollu ma kienx ikun possibbli mingħajr is-sostenn tagħkom, u għalhekk nirringrazzjawkom mill-qalb tal-wirt kulturali li qeghdin nippreservaw flimkien. Grazzi!

Il-ġbir tal-programmi dejjem għaddej u bi pjaċir ngħidu li s'ssa qbizna it-tmint elef programm tal-festa! Qeghdin nagħmlu sforzi kontinwi biex dan il-patrimonju Malti jkun aċċessibbli għal kulhadd. Il-Kollezjoni mhix biss għodda edukattiva, iżda sservi wkoll ta' bażi għall-istorja kollettiva tagħna l-Maltin u Għawdxin.

Nharsu lejn l-2026 b'entużjażmu, fejn ninsabu impenjati li nkomplu nkattru l-komunità tagħna, u nippromwovu l-istorja u l-patrimonju Malti għall-ġenerazzjonijiet li gejjin.

Bhal dejjem grazzi għas-sostenn tagħkom!

#KollezjoniProgrammitalFesta #KPF #Melitensia
#Malta #maltesefeasts #openaccess
#CulturalHeritage #JCLibrary #UMLibrary

Edit



43



10



Carmel Bonnici

Grazzi li staff tal-Librerija tal-Junior College għall-ghajjnuna li sibt u nixtieqilkom is-sena t-tajba.

21w

Like

Reply

Share

2



Joe Kopite

Prosit tal-hidma tagħkom!

21w

Like

Reply

Share

1



Jonathan Farrugia

Proset u grazzi tal-hidma

21w

Like

Reply

Share

1



Manoel Pirotta

Grazzi lilkom tal-KPF tal-hidma fejjieda li qed twettqu.

21w

Like

Reply

Share

1



Colin Mercieca

Prosit lilkom

21w

Like

Reply

Share

1



Eric Frendo

Prosit!

21w

Like

Reply

Share

1



Kevin Schieda

Grazzi lilkom

21w

Like

Reply

Share

2



Anthony Ferriggi

Grazzi tal-impenn!

Thank you Post for Donations



Katja Zahra Camilleri

8h · 🌐



Nixtiequ niringrazzjaw lis-Sur [Owen Caruana](#), tad-donazzjoni mill-isbaħ tiegħu. 🙏

Dan il-kontribut mhux biss isaħħaħ il-kollezzjonijiet tagħna, iżda wkoll l-impenn tagħna biex inkunu ta' iktar għajnuna għar-riċerkaturi u kull min għandu għal qalbu l-istorja kollettiva tal-gżejjer Maltin. 📖

🗣️ Nhegġukom biex tkomplu xxerrdu l-kelma u thegġu lill-ħbieb tagħkom biex jingħaqdu fil-grupp tagħna tal- [Kollezzjoni Programmi tal-Festa](#)

See more

Edit



2





Katja Zahra Camilleri

Admin All-star contributor · Yesterday at 11:00 ·

Il-Festa t-Tajba lill-Parroċċa ta' Hal Ghaxaq fejn qed tigi ċelebrata l-festa ta' San Ġużepp

Bhala libreria, ahna nemmu li l-programmi tal-festa mhumix biss fuljetti, iżda dokumenti storici li jirriflettu l-identità Maltja.

Fil-kollezzjoni tal- Junior College Library - University of Malta , ghandna bosta hargiet relatati ma' din il-festa, fosthom pubblikazzjonijiet minn:

- Parroċċa Ghaxaq
- Ghaqda Mużikali San Ġużepp Hal Ghaxaq

Ghandek xi materjal li tixtieq tikkontribwixxi? Il-proġett taghna jiddependi hafna fuq il-generozità tal-pubbliku. Jekk tixtieq taghti kontribut, tara l-kollezzjoni, jew titlob aktar taghrif:

• Iktbilna hawnhekk

• Ibghat email fuq juniorcollege.lib@um.edu.mt

• Cemplu fuq: 2590 7237

Inhegguk ukoll biex tidhol fil-grupp taghna [Kollezzjoni Programmi tal-Festa](#) biex tibqa' aggornat mal-kollezzjoni speċjali taghna li dejjem jikber.



Weekly Festa Posts



Katja Zahra Camilleri

Admin All-star contributor · Yesterday at 11:45 ·

Is-Surmast Tonna, kif kien l-aktar maghruf, twieled ir-Rabat fid-9 ta' Ottubru tal-1901. Minn tflutit, hu wera inklinazzjoni naturali ghall-Arti hekk li nistghu nghidu li donnu kien wild l-arti. F'dan l-artiklu, l-awtur jaghti informazzjoni dwar il-hajja ta' dan l-iskultur li ddisinja l-bradella ta' San Ġużepp ta' Hal Ghaxaq.

• Ellul, M. (2009). Is-Surmast Carmelo Tonna 1901-1973 : Id-disinjatur tal-bradella ta' San Ġużepp. Festa [San Ġużepp, Ghaxaq] 2009, 95.

Jekk trid taqra l-artiklu shih tista ssegwi din il-holqa

<https://www.um.edu.mt/.../1/Is-Surmast%20Carmelo%20Tonna.pdf>

• Ghal aktar artikli tistghu tfittxu fuq www.um.edu.mt/library/oar

• Segwu il-grupp taghna [Kollezzjoni Programmi tal-Festa](#)

• Inheggukom taqsmu dan l-artiklu ma kulhadd! See less

Ghaqda Mużikali San Ġużepp - Hal Ghaxaq

Is-Surmast Carmelo Tonna 1901–1973 Id-disinjatur tal-bradella ta' San Ġużepp

kifba ta' Martin Ellul

Is-Surmast Tonna, kif kien l-aktar maghruf, twieled ir-Rabat fid-9 ta' Ottubru tal-1901. Minn tflutit, hu wera inklinazzjoni naturali ghall-Arti hekk li nistghu nghidu li donnu kien wild l-arti. U dan bir-razun kollu ghal l-arti kienet kwazi tghammar fid-dar tiegħu. Missieru, Benjamin kien skultur mill-ahjar u ghal xogħlu kien imfittex sewwa. Għalhekk, mhux ta' min jistgħahegħ li jhu, is-Surmast Tonna hass minn kmieni dik it-tendenza artistika li wiret minghand missieru.

Wara li temm il-kors skolastiku mis-Seminarju Arċiveskovili fl-Imdina, is-Surmast Tonna kompli jitharregħ fl-Iskola tal-Arti fejn, taht artisti maghrufa huwa żviluppa, iżjed it-talent li kellu fid-disinn, modellar u skultura. Kien għadu kwazi tifel meta, għall-kapaċitajiet li kellu fl-arti, huwa gie magħżul u mpjegat fid-Dipartiment tal-Edukazzjoni bħala *Drawing Master*. Għal hafna snin huwa għallien l-arti l-hafna skejlej Primarji u fil-Liceo sakemm irtira bil-pensjoni. Matul dan iż-żmien twil,

hafna xogħlijiet mal-irjeh kollha tal-gżejjer Maltin. Kien jispikka l-iżjed fl-arti sagra u nistghu nghidu li f'dan ix-xogħol fitt ferm huma dawk il-knejjes f'Malta u Għawdex li mhumtix imzejna b'xi biċċa xogħol sabiha li hargiet minn idejha.

Fil-Mosta, is-Surmast Tonna żgur li jibqa' mfakkar għal żewġ opri kbar li halla jgħaxxqu fil-knisja sabiha tar-Rotunda, jiġifieri l-polptu u l-bankun ta' Santa Marija. Għandna xogħlijiet sbieh oħra fid-diversi knejjes, f'każini u f'postijiet oħra madwar Malta.

Minkejja l-hila artistika mhux komuni li kellu s-Surmast Tonna, huwa dejjem gharaf iżomm ruhu f'postu mingħajr ma qatt tkabbar jew fittex tifhir għal xogħlu. Kien umli u modest fl-imġieba tiegħu u mingħajr pretensjonijiet żejda hekk li kien dejjem iħobb jisna' lil kulhadd kemm minn min jifhem u wkoll min dak li ma jafx, għax il-parir kien iħobb jiedhu daqs kemm kien jifrah jagħbi.

Inrobbi f'ambjent reliġjuż, is-Surmast



Is-Surmast Carmelo Tonna, id-disinjatur tal-bradella ta' San Ġużepp ta' Hal Ghaxaq

Finding 1: The Power of Cultural Warrant & LSH

+2.46 avg views over 24 weeks vs. LCSH alone

Local Subject Headings (LSH)

Unlike folksonomies, LSH combine cultural, literary, and user warrant with LCSH structure — creating a hybrid that retains catalog integrity while unlocking community discoverability.

Event-Driven Engagement

When a prominent local artist passed away, community members searching by his nickname and band club affiliation retrieved material instantly — only possible because of LSH.

Cultural Representation

OAR@UM content is indexed by Google — LSH terms actively contribute to Maltese language representation on the web, preserving cultural identity beyond the library.

Conclusion

Moving away from strict custodial cataloging has not harmed usability. Local relevance is the primary driver of access for ephemeral heritage collections.

Finding 2: Branding KPF as a Community Product



The KPF was deliberately repositioned — not as an institutional archive, but as a community-owned product with its own brand identity, social presence, and narrative voice.

Dedicated Logo & Visual Brand

Lowered cognitive cost of engagement by making KPF instantly recognisable in community feeds alongside local news.

Cultural Influencers

Trusted banda members and local historians endorsed the project publicly, transferring credibility to the institution in spaces it could not reach organically.

Hyper-Local Targeting

Rather than UM social channels, the team embedded in local residents' groups and festa Facebook communities where potential donors already lived.

The Rivalry Effect

A post from one band club elicited responses from rival factions — driving voluntary contributions to ensure equal representation. Competition became an acquisition mechanism.

One-Stop-Shop Effect

Centralizing scattered programmes from private homes, band clubs, and local libraries into a single accessible hub provided genuine utility the community could not achieve alone.

Danger: Scope Creep

Growing trust led to donations of cassettes, vinyl records, flags and t-shirts. KPF maintained boundaries gracefully, redirecting out-of-scope items to other institutions.

Finding 3: Validation of Social Exchange Theory

Key Informants as Trust Bridges

Local experts vouched for the library's intent — a single public post from a trusted band club member proved more effective than any official policy document.

The Rivalry Effect in Practice

Opposing factions competed for equal representation, creating a self-correcting completeness mechanism driven entirely by community agency.

Passive-to-Active Shift

Members evolved from passive content consumers to active narrators — posting independently about local events, creating a living archive beyond library control.

The Rendikont as Recurring Reward

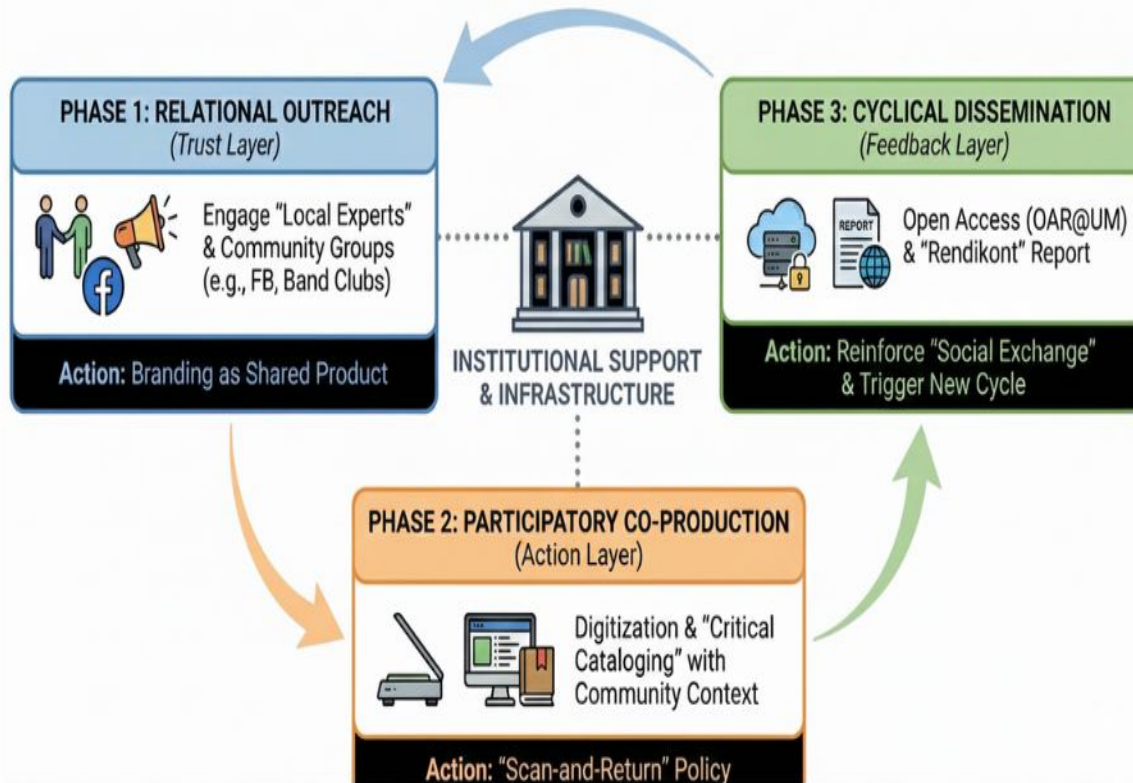
The annual public accountability report closed the feedback loop, demonstrating institutional respect for community contributions and sustaining the exchange cycle.

Digital vs. Physical Tension

For many working-class community members, rigid opening hours made physical access prohibitive. Digital access removed this barrier entirely — the digital surrogate became the primary archive.

The Community-Academic Co-Curation Model

Community-Academic Co-Curation Model



Phase 1: Trust Layer

Engage local experts & community spaces. Brand initiative as shared product. Key mechanic: earning trust before asking.

Phase 2: Action Layer

Co-digitize with community metadata. Scan-and-return policy. LSH + LCSH hybrid catalog. Editorial review maintained.

Phase 3: Feedback Layer

Open access via OAR@UM + Rendikont report. Close the loop. Trigger next exchange cycle. Community as co-authors of their own heritage.

The Cost of Omission: Three Failure Modes

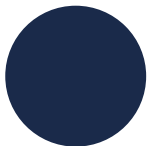
The phases are interdependent — removing any single layer collapses the model.



The Hollow Archive

Absent:
Phase 1 — Trust Layer

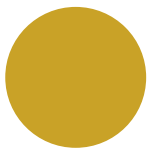
Without **relational outreach**, even well-funded digitization projects fail to acquire material. The community perceives the library's request as extractive — an institutional demand rather than a partnership. Result: high resistance, low participation.



The Black Box

Absent:
Phase 2 — Co-Production

If trust is established but **community metadata** is skipped, the collection loses its Cultural Warrant. A technically perfect archive becomes undiscoverable to the community it was meant to serve — no vernacular entry points, no LSH, no engagement.



The Dead End

Absent:
Phase 3 — Feedback Layer

The most common failure in academic initiatives. If the library takes heritage but **never 'returns'** the Rendikont or usage metrics, the social exchange loop is broken. The community perceives participation as having no recurring reward — rapid drop-off, stagnation.

Beyond the Festa: Global Applicability

The structural challenges addressed — Town vs. Gown distrust and institutional rigidity — are universal. The model is contingent on the mechanism of relationship, not the content of the collection.

Protest Ephemera (USA)

Local protest flyers, underground zines, tenant rights pamphlets face the same extractive distrust. Champions + social media notice boards = transferable workflow.

Oral Heritage Collections

Recordings, dialect materials, and intangible cultural heritage from underrepresented communities benefit directly from community-derived metadata and trust-first outreach.

Community Newspapers (UK)

Hyperlocal newsletters and community rags hold social history but fall outside academic collection priorities. Scan-and-return + LSH unlocks their value.

Any Academic Library

Identify your local 'currency of exchange' — digitization services, meeting spaces, public exhibition — and embed community rewards directly into the archival workflow.

Conclusion

1. Academic libraries can **bridge the gap** between **institutional rigor and community agency** — but only through deliberate, trust-first design.
2. Cultural Warrant outperforms standardized cataloging for community discoverability: **LSH are not a compromise, they are an enhancement.**
3. Sustainability is built into the model: **embed community rewards into the workflow**, and the archive sustains itself through **reciprocal exchange**.
4. The facilitator role requires **ceding descriptive authority and investing in relationships** — not just systems.
5. The KPF model is transferable: **find your local currency of exchange, identify your Champions**, and **close the feedback loop**.

"The value of academic collections increasingly depends on the library's ability to extend its impact through community partnerships — facilitating knowledge creation both within and beyond academia."

KPF



Kollezzjoni Programmi tal-Festa

Thank you.

Questions?



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