

An Analysis of the Strategies Employed to Curate, Conserve and Digitize the Timbuktu Manuscripts

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Abstract : This paper briefly reviews the range of curatorial interventions made to preserve and display the Timbuktu Manuscripts. The government of South Africa and Mali collaborated to preserve the manuscripts, and brief notes will be presented about the value of archives in those specific spaces. The research initiatives of the Tombouctou Manuscripts Project, based at the University of Cape Town, feature prominently in the text. A brief overview of the history of the archive will be presented and its preservation as a key turning point in curating the intellectual history of the continent. ­­­The strategies of preservation, curation, publication and digitization are presented as complimentary interventions. Each materialization of the manuscripts contributes something significant; the complexity of the contribution is dependent primarily on the format of presentation. This integrated reading of the manuscripts is presented as a means to gain a more nuanced understanding of the past, which greatly surpasses how much information would be gleaned from relying on a single media format.

Keywords : archive, curatorship, cultural heritage, museum practice, Timbuktu manuscripts

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