

Practical Exploration and Chinese Experience of the Documentation Project for National-level Representative Bearers of Intangible Cultural Heritage

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Abstract

The Documentation Project for National-level Representative Bearers of Intangible Cultural Heritage is a foundational and strategic project within China's systematic safeguarding framework for intangible cultural heritage (ICH). After more than a decade of large-scale implementation and standardization, the Project has undergone a strategic transformation from emergency rescue documentation of endangered skills to normalized living archival documentation. It has thereby established a localized system of living safeguarding that differs from the international paradigm of static museum collection. Grounded in the essential characteristics of living ICH transmission in China and in the country's cultural governance context, this article systematically examines the multiple motivations, staged evolution, and implementation outcomes of the Project. It distills China's experience in the digital safeguarding of ICH from four dimensions: governance mechanisms, documentation paradigms, cultural adaptation, and public services. In light of the new context of ICH transmission in the digital-intelligent era, the article further analyzes current practical challenges, including the imbalance between standardization and personalization, insufficient activation of documentation outputs, gaps in hierarchical coverage, and weak adaptability of technological empowerment. The study argues that, in the new era, the Project should be iteratively upgraded through five pathways: improving the standards system through hierarchical and categorized measures, promoting output transformation through multiple channels, strengthening grassroots foundations through four-level coordination, upgrading safeguarding capacity through digital-intelligent technologies, and disseminating the Chinese paradigm through international communication. These pathways may provide a replicable Chinese approach for the global safeguarding of living cultural heritage.

Keywords

Intangible cultural heritage; documentation project; digital safeguarding; living transmission; Chinese experience.

1. Introduction

The core vitality of intangible cultural heritage lies in human practices of transmission. As living carriers of ICH skills and cultural memory, bearers constitute both the central object and the crucial basis of ICH safeguarding. In contrast to the static preservation of tangible cultural heritage, ICH is sustained through master-apprentice oral and embodied transmission. It is therefore highly living, fragile, and dynamically evolving. Once a bearer passes away, the primary cultural resources embodied by that individual face the risk of irreversible loss.

As China's national-level ICH bearer community has generally entered an advanced age[1], problems such as the interruption of skill transmission and the increasing number of endangered items have become urgent challenges for ICH safeguarding. The former Ministry of

Culture launched pilot work in 2013 and formally implemented the rescue documentation project for national-level representative bearers of ICH nationwide in 2015. In 2019, the project was officially renamed the “Documentation Project for National-level Representative Bearers of Intangible Cultural Heritage” hereinafter referred to as “the Project.” To date, the Project has completed a staged strategic transformation, shifting from a singular focus on rescue documentation to normalized small-scale pilot work. Through systematic and standardized digital documentation, it has comprehensively preserved bearers’ technical systems and cultural memories.

Existing scholarship on ICH bearer documentation projects has mainly focused on audiovisual documentation techniques, archival arrangement methods, and local practical cases. Such studies tend to emphasize technical operations and summaries of work experience. There remains a general lack of systematic analysis of the Project’s overall institutional logic, practical model, and localized characteristics, as well as insufficient theoretical reflection on and extension of China’s experience in ICH documentation. Meanwhile, the rapid iteration of digital-intelligent technologies has provided new technical pathways for ICH documentation and activation, while also introducing new challenges in the context of generative artificial intelligence. Accordingly, based on more than a decade of practical achievements of the Project, this article systematically reviews its developmental trajectory, core practices, and actual outcomes; distills localized safeguarding experience; analyzes existing shortcomings; and proposes optimization pathways. It aims to provide theoretical support and practical reference for the high-quality digital development of ICH in the new era.

2. Evolutionary Trajectory and Practical Foundations of the Project

2.1. Multiple Motivations for the Launch of the Project

The implementation of the Project resulted from the combined effects of national policy empowerment and shortcomings in sectoral practice. It demonstrates a clear problem-oriented and strategic orientation.

From the perspective of real-world crisis, the weakening of human-centered transmission constituted the core motivation for the launch of the Project. As of June 2025, China had recognized 3,997 national-level representative bearers of intangible cultural heritage. Among them, 3,111 were still living, and documentation work had been carried out for 2,290 bearers, of whom 1,279 had completed documentation. During the documentation process, 71 bearers passed away, while 397 passed away after their documentation had been completed[2]. Many endangered skills and traditional ritual procedures faced the risk of disappearance before systematic documentation could be completed. This was particularly evident in ICH items of ethnic groups with smaller populations and in niche traditional skills, where the rupture of transmission was especially pronounced.

From the perspective of institutional support, bearer documentation work is underpinned by a solid and multi-dimensional legal and policy framework. The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage, implemented in 2011, continues to serve as the core legal foundation. The current process of legal revision is steadily advancing, and the relevant provisions further specify statutory requirements for the digital collection of ICH resources, the comprehensive establishment of bearer archives, and the long-term preservation of digital archives. These provisions provide a robust legal basis for normalized bearer documentation. The Opinions on Further Strengthening the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage issued by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council, together with the 14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Development, list the ICH digital archives system and the documentation of national-level representative bearers as core mandatory tasks. These documents are further supported by the special provisions of the 14th Five-Year

Plan for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. At present, various localities are also aligning with the preliminary arrangements for the 15th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Development, continuously promoting the transformation of ICH safeguarding from a staged special project into systematic long-term governance.

From the perspective of sectoral practice, early ICH documentation suffered from a lack of standardization. Before 2015, ICH documentation in China was mostly characterized by fragmented local filming and piecemeal textual compilation. There were no unified standards for filming, interview protocols, or archival systems. Documentation content tended to highlight the presentation of skills while neglecting the interpretation of cultural contexts. It focused on surface-level recording and lacked systematic organization of transmission genealogies. As a result, large quantities of valuable bearer materials could not be transformed into standardized archives that were suitable for long-term preservation and public use, making it difficult for them to support long-term ICH safeguarding and academic research.

2.2. Three Stages in the Development of the Project

Over more than a decade of development, the Documentation Project for National-level Representative Bearers of Intangible Cultural Heritage has generally evolved from exploratory trial and error to standardized formation, from emergency rescue to long-term governance, and from resource collection to value transformation. Its development may be divided into the following three stages.

First, the pilot exploration stage from 2013 to 2014. In the initial phase of the Project, the state selected a number of elderly and endangered bearers as well as niche ICH items for small-scale pilot documentation. It moved beyond the previous model of single-format video recording and initially explored an integrated documentation model combining “oral-history interviews + practical filming of skills + collection of documentary materials.” The pilot stage focused on refining basic work procedures, identifying difficulties in documentation, and preliminarily forming a framework of documentation standards. It verified the feasibility of a full-media digital documentation model and accumulated operational experience for nationwide implementation.

Second, the rescue and consolidation stage from 2015 to 2019. In 2015, the former Ministry of Culture issued a special work notice, marking the nationwide launch of the Project. Its core objective focused on elderly, seriously ill, and endangered bearers, and its primary orientation was rescue safeguarding in a “race against time.” During this stage, the state successively issued standardized documents such as the Work Specifications for Rescue Documentation Trial Version and the Operational Guidelines for Rescue Documentation. These documents unified national standards for filming, manuscript writing, archival filing, and output acceptance, thereby establishing a standardized work system. The central government continued to provide dedicated financial input and expanded the scope of documentation year by year, giving priority to the documentation of bearers aged over 70[3]. This effectively rescued and preserved a large number of ICH resources on the verge of disappearance. In 2019, the term “rescue” was officially removed from the Project title[4], marking the beginning of a shift in work orientation from emergency rescue to normalized safeguarding.

Third, the normalized maturity stage from 2020 to the present. The Project has fully moved beyond the singular attribute of emergency rescue and has formed a complete work system of “normalized documentation, standardized archiving, digital collection, and public service.” The China Memory Project Center of the National Library of China undertakes unified academic guidance, output acceptance, and permanent collection functions. Documentation subjects are no longer limited to elderly and endangered bearers but have expanded to include core middle-aged and young bearers. Long-term follow-up and collection-oriented documentation have also been added. Greater attention is now paid to the systematic documentation of ICH transmission

lineages, cultural ecologies, and sectoral development. At the same time, the dissemination and activation of outputs have been strengthened, resulting in a comprehensive upgrading of the safeguarding model.

2.3. Core Implementation System and Staged Outcomes of the Project

Through continuous improvement across the three stages of development, the Project has established a mature system of organizational implementation, funding support, and standardized documentation, becoming a core pillar of systematic ICH safeguarding.

In terms of funding support, the Project relies on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Fund established by the central government for stable support. It operates through earmarked funding and special management, while also establishing a mechanism that combines central coordination with local matching funds[5]. This has provided a financial foundation for the nationwide implementation of documentation work.

In terms of documentation standards, the Project has crystallized into a standardized documentation model of “four types of finished films + multimodal archives.” The four standard films comprise oral-history films, project-practice films, transmission-and-teaching films, and comprehensive overview films. They respectively correspond to bearers’ life trajectories, complete processes of skills, master-apprentice transmission processes, and overall cultural overviews of ICH items. Together, they construct a comprehensive and multidimensional documentation framework. At the same time, physical materials such as bearers’ manuscripts, genealogical texts, tool drawings, and old photographs are collected simultaneously. Fieldwork reports, interview transcripts, high-definition documentary footage, and other multidimensional resources are integrated to form a complete digital archival repository for bearers.

According to public statistics released by the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Center in 2025, as of June 2025, the documentation work had collected 75,548.9 hours of raw materials, with a total data volume of 2,969.7 TB. It had produced 20,880.2 hours of audiovisual documentary outputs, with a total data volume of 370 TB. Among these outputs, oral-history films totaled 12,865.6 hours; oral-history transcripts amounted to 148.318 million Chinese characters; and the number of interviewees, including bearers and related persons, reached 9,156[2]. A large number of endangered ICH skills and cultural memories have thus been permanently preserved, effectively reducing the risk of irreversible loss of ICH resources.

3. Core Chinese Experience of the ICH Bearer Documentation Project

Grounded in China’s distinctive cultural characteristics, institutional system, and patterns of ICH transmission, the Project has gradually established a Chinese paradigm for the living digital safeguarding of ICH across four dimensions: governance, documentation, culture, and public services.

3.1. Governance Experience

A state-led institutional governance system constitutes the most central advantage of China’s experience in the ICH Documentation Project. It is also the key advantage that distinguishes China’s approach from foreign models characterized by civil-society-led and fragmented documentation. Relying on its distinctive public cultural governance system, China has taken national legislation as guarantee, dedicated fiscal funding as support, and unified standards as the basis for the standardized nationwide advancement of ICH documentation. This has addressed longstanding sectoral problems such as weak local safeguarding capacity, inconsistent standards, and dispersed resources. The legal support provided by the Law on Intangible Cultural Heritage gives bearer documentation work a stable and authoritative institutional foundation.

At the same time, the Project has established a targeted implementation mechanism that combines standardization with differentiation. On the one hand, nationally unified documentation specifications, film standards, and filing requirements have overcome documentation disorder caused by regional and category-based differences. They have enabled standardized and homogeneous construction of ICH archival resources nationwide and laid a foundation for national integration of ICH resources as well as cross-regional research and exchange. On the other hand, the Project adheres to a differentiated priority safeguarding strategy. It prioritizes elderly, seriously ill, and endangered bearers, and places particular emphasis on ethnic groups with smaller populations, border areas, and niche endangered ICH items. This allows it to respond precisely to the most urgent needs of ICH safeguarding and maximize the effectiveness of rescue documentation. This governance model of “unified standards + targeted implementation” organically integrates efficiency and equity, as well as standardization and specificity. It represents a concentrated manifestation of China’s cultural governance advantages in the field of ICH safeguarding.

3.2. Documentation Experience

Western ICH archival documentation often emphasizes the static preservation of finished skills and physical materials, with a focus on the storage and display of collection resources. China’s bearer documentation project has moved beyond static archival thinking and established an all-dimensional living documentation paradigm integrating “people, skills, lineages, and emotions.” In doing so, it has formed a localized system of standards for the digital documentation of ICH.

This paradigm takes bearers as the core subjects and comprehensively documents their life experiences, learning trajectories, technical systems, master–apprentice genealogies, sectoral ecologies, and cultural understandings. It thereby preserves technical practices and cultural contexts simultaneously. The four types of standardized films work in coordination to make bearer documentation more comprehensive and complete. Oral-history films systematically organize bearers’ life histories and learning experiences, preserving irreplaceable individual cultural memories. Project-practice films fully reproduce the complete processes of skills and all stages of folk ritual procedures, accurately restoring the primary forms of ICH practice. Transmission-and-teaching films document the process of oral and embodied transmission, preserving the core logic of Chinese master–apprentice transmission. Comprehensive overview films integrate resources and distill cultural cores, making them suitable for public communication and popular education.

This multimodal, whole-process, and contextualized documentation method fully preserves the living attributes of ICH and resolves the limitations of traditional archives, which often retain “form without spirit” and “technique without resonance.” With the development of digital technologies, some practices have begun to explore the introduction of knowledge graphs, three-dimensional modeling, and other technologies into the management of documentation outputs. Through entity extraction and relationship annotation, semantic networks of ICH transmission lineages can be constructed, further enhancing the knowledge value of living documentation.

3.3. Cultural Experience

China’s ICH categories are diverse and rich in form, covering ten major categories, including folk literature, traditional drama, and traditional craftsmanship. Different types of ICH vary significantly in their modes of transmission, forms of practice, and cultural connotations. They are also deeply rooted in the soil of Chinese rural culture and ethnic cultures, thereby demonstrating distinctive local characteristics. In practice, the Project has consistently upheld cultural subjectivity and fully adapted to the local characteristics and transmission patterns of Chinese ICH.

On the one hand, the Project fully respects the transmission patterns of Chinese ICH. It focuses on documenting local modes of transmission, such as master-apprentice transmission, accurately preserving the core features of oral and embodied transmission. It also fully retains differences among schools of technique and regional cultural characteristics, thereby preventing standardized documentation from dissolving the cultural individuality of ICH. On the other hand, the Project accommodates differences among diverse ICH forms. For oral ICH, it emphasizes oral narration and contextual documentation. For craftsmanship-related ICH, it emphasizes processes and technical details. For folk-custom ICH, it emphasizes ritual procedures and cultural scenes. For opera-related ICH, it emphasizes vocal styles, bodily movements, and repertoires. Through category-specific and precisely adapted documentation, the Project maximally preserves the primary cultural forms of ICH and the pluralistic yet integrated characteristics of Chinese civilization.

3.4. Public Service Experience

The Project has established an integrated public service system comprising permanent collection, public access, nationwide dissemination, and educational empowerment. It promotes the transformation of ICH resources toward public-benefit-oriented value.

At the collection level, all raw materials and standardized outputs are centrally deposited at the China Memory Project Center of the National Library of China. They are managed through a secure mechanism of centralized collection, off-site backup, and long-term preservation. This has created a national-level digital repository of ICH resources and thoroughly addressed problems such as dispersed resources, insecure preservation, and vulnerability to damage or loss.

At the level of public service, the Project adheres to a public-benefit and inclusive orientation. It has built an online digital open platform that provides free public access for retrieval and learning. Since 2018, it has held the nationwide exhibition and screening activity “As Years Go By, Skills and Memories Endure” for eight consecutive years. It has also worked with public libraries across the country to conduct regular screenings, bringing digital ICH resources into everyday public life.

At the level of value transformation, documentation outputs effectively empower ICH transmission and education. They have become standardized teaching materials for young bearers’ further learning, ICH education in schools and universities, and public popularization. They also provide core resources for ICH academic research, the construction of cultural ecology conservation areas, the development of cultural and creative products, and the integrated development of culture and tourism. In this way, the Project realizes an organic unity of ICH safeguarding, transmission, research, and utilization.

4. Practical Limitations and Deep Challenges of the Project in the New Era

Although the Project has achieved remarkable results, its operational system still faces multiple limitations and new deep challenges in the context of ICH transmission in the digital-intelligent era.

4.1. Insufficient Balance Between Standardization and Personalization

The nationally unified documentation standards are suitable for most conventional ICH items. However, some niche ICH items, ethnic minority ICH, and individualized schools of technique possess distinctive transmission logics and practical forms. Unified documentation procedures are not always able to accommodate these personalized characteristics. As a result, the documentation of some niche ICH items lacks sufficient depth and detail, and their cultural individuality is not fully manifested[6]. While standardized filming frameworks and finished-film requirements enhance documentation regularity, they also, to some extent, compress the

discursive space for bearers' autonomous expression. Some culturally specific interpretations with regional characteristics and individual styles are not fully incorporated into the documentation system. This creates tension between normative uniformity and cultural diversity.

4.2. Rich Resource Accumulation but Insufficient Activation and Use

Over more than a decade of construction, the Project has accumulated tens of thousands of hours of standardized audiovisual documentation, hundreds of millions of characters of oral-history materials, and hundreds of thousands of physical archival items, forming a systematic and comprehensive digital repository of ICH. However, the current application of these outputs generally remains at a shallow level of archival storage and passive retrieval. The vast majority of high-quality documentary film resources remain dormant for long periods, and a normalized mechanism for their activation and use has yet to be established.

On the one hand, standardized oral-history films, project-practice films, and transmission-and-teaching films have not yet been fully connected with ICH education in schools and universities or with social transmission training. The utilization rate of high-quality teaching resources for transmission remains low[7]. On the other hand, the transformation of documentary outputs into popular-science resources, IP incubation, and culture-tourism integration remains insufficient. Public communication forms are relatively limited, relying mainly on annual concentrated screenings that generate only short-term dissemination effects. It remains difficult to achieve long-term communication and educational impact. Consequently, the public cultural value and social empowerment value of the large volume of national-level ICH documentation outputs have not been fully released.

4.3. Uneven Hierarchical Coverage and Gaps in Grassroots Transmission

At present, the resources and funding of China's ICH Documentation Project are highly concentrated at the level of national-level bearers. By contrast, systematic documentation of the large number of municipal- and district-level representative ICH bearers is generally absent. As the backbone of ICH transmission, municipal- and district-level bearers carry a large quantity of regional, rural, and niche ICH resources and constitute the core force sustaining living local ICH.

Compared with the standardized and normalized development of national-level documentation, documentation at municipal and district levels generally suffers from the "four absences": no dedicated funding, no unified standards, no professional teams, and no systematic archival filing. Most such documentation consists of scattered and fragmented records or temporary filming. Complete person-skill archives and documentary systems have not been formed. A large number of grassroots rural ICH skills, regional folk customs, and folk crafts face the risk of loss due to the absence of documentation, preservation, and transmission[8]. This has created a structural deficiency in China's overall ICH documentation system: strong at the upper level but weak at the grassroots, and therefore top-heavy. This deficiency constrains the construction of a comprehensive safeguarding pattern for ICH across all regions and levels.

4.4. Lagging Application of Digital-Intelligent Technologies and Insufficient Adaptability of Governance Capacity

At present, the Project still relies primarily on offline on-site filming, manual transcript preparation, and standardized basic archiving. The large-scale implementation of frontier digital technologies—such as AI-based multimodal intelligent retrieval, automated big-data classification and indexing, and digital twins of ICH scenes—remains insufficient. There is still considerable room for improvement in the full-process intelligent management and digital innovation-based transformation of the vast multimodal archival resources[9].

At the same time, the iterative popularization of generative artificial intelligence has introduced new risks and challenges for normalized bearer documentation. Because AI-generated content is highly realistic, it can easily blur the boundary between primary source documentation and machine-synthesized content, thereby weakening the authority of official primary bearer documentation outputs. When large quantities of AI-derived ICH content without provenance or fieldwork basis enter public communication spaces, they continuously reduce the recognizability and credibility of official standardized documentation outputs that have been collected, accepted, and permanently preserved through unified national procedures. The authoritative position of bearers as the core carriers of primary living ICH knowledge is gradually eroded. The value and authority-building logic of traditional documentation based on on-site field collection urgently need to adapt to the new developmental context of the digital-intelligent era marked by the widespread use of generative AI[10].

5. Optimization Pathways for the High-Quality Development of the ICH Documentation Project

In response to the above limitations, and in light of development trends in ICH safeguarding in the digital-intelligent era, the iterative upgrading of the Project may be advanced from five dimensions so as to realize high-quality development in ICH documentation and safeguarding.

5.1. Hierarchical and Categorized Measures

To address the imbalance between standardization and personalization, it is necessary to establish a refined standards system for hierarchical and categorized documentation. While upholding national basic standards and ensuring archival uniformity, differentiated special documentation guidelines should be formulated for different ICH categories, including folk literature, traditional craftsmanship, folk rituals, and traditional medicine. Particular attention should be paid to improving personalized documentation standards for niche ICH, ethnic minority ICH, and endangered schools of technique. Special documentation content should be added for cultural contexts, differences among schools, folk-custom scenes, and regional characteristics. This would enable standardization to provide a baseline while refinement provides targeted empowerment. It would both ensure the regularity of national archival resources and fully preserve the primary cultural individuality of different types of ICH, thereby promoting the upgrading of documentation work from “standardized full coverage” to “precise high-quality documentation.”

5.2. Diversified Value Transformation

At the level of communication and transformation, the Project may draw on the practical experience of the National Library of China’s nationwide exhibition and screening activity “As Years Go By, Skills and Memories Endure” for the documentation outputs of national-level representative ICH bearers. A narrative strategy combining “concretization of skills + contextualization of culture + personalization of emotion” may be adopted to adapt standardized raw documentation outputs preserved in archives to diverse communication forms, including short videos, feature-length documentaries, online digital exhibitions, and offline touring exhibitions in libraries. This layered narrative transformation pathway can preserve the ICH cultural core and complete historical context carried by primary fieldwork materials, thereby ensuring the effective transmission of professional cultural depth. At the same time, it can produce lightweight, story-driven, and authoritative official content that precisely responds to the viewing and browsing needs of different audience groups under algorithmic distribution environments.

At the level of educational application, standardized ICH audiovisual documentation and oral-history outputs should be systematically introduced into schools, classrooms, and transmission

bases. Categorized project-practice films and transmission-and-teaching films should be transformed into ICH aesthetic education materials for primary, secondary, and higher education, as well as regular teaching courseware for bearers' transmission activities. A normalized teaching application mechanism for documentary outputs should be established.

At the level of industrial empowerment, the cultural symbols and technical elements embedded in documentation outputs should be further explored and connected with the needs of cultural and creative product development and culture-tourism scenario building. This would promote the transformation of archival resources into cultural productivity. At the same time, documentation resources should be encouraged to reach communities through community memory stations, folk-custom exhibitions, and other forms, embedding them in everyday public life and activating the endogenous momentum of community-based transmission.

5.3. Four-Level Coordinated Collaboration

To address the structural problem of missing municipal- and district-level ICH documentation and weak grassroots safeguarding, a full-coverage closed-loop mechanism for documentation and transmission should be established through four-level coordination among the "national, provincial, municipal, and district" levels, thereby remedying shortcomings in grassroots ICH safeguarding.

Relying on the mature standards, technical paradigms, and management experience of the national-level Documentation Project, downward empowerment should be promoted. Localities should be encouraged to establish dedicated mechanisms for normalized documentation of municipal- and district-level bearers, supported by grassroots-level special work funds, unified documentation standards simplified and adapted for grassroots use, and localized documentation teams. Rescue documentation should be comprehensively carried out for endangered municipal- and district-level bearers as well as rural and niche ICH items. This would build a hierarchical, comprehensive, and vertically coordinated ICH documentation and safeguarding system.

5.4. Empowerment Through Digital-Intelligent Technologies

Relying on emerging technologies such as digital humanities and artificial intelligence, the Project should promote the intelligent upgrading of ICH archival management and application. At the level of resource organization, the Project may draw on the mature digital-intelligent data construction pathway of Digital Dunhuang. By referring to its technical solutions for layered semantic annotation of multimodal resources and automated knowledge extraction, the vast audio-visual, textual, and physical digital resources accumulated by the Documentation Project for National-level Representative Bearers of Intangible Cultural Heritage can be standardized and processed. A knowledge graph covering all categories of ICH can then be built to enable cross-modal precise retrieval by ICH category, region, technique, and bearer genealogy. Fragmented individual archives can thereby be integrated into a computable, interlinked, and intelligently inferable ICH knowledge system.

At the level of technological application, the deep integration of large language models with ICH documentation outputs should be explored. Dedicated intelligent agents for the ICH field may be developed to realize functions such as intelligent question answering, knowledge reasoning, and assisted teaching. In combination with VR/AR and three-dimensional modeling technologies, immersive experiential scenes can be developed to reproduce traditional craft tools, ritual procedures, and technical details in three-dimensional form, thereby enriching the presentation formats of digital ICH resources.

At the level of governance, a governance mechanism for generative content should be established. The authoritative identification of official documentation outputs should be clarified, and a mandatory labeling system for AI-generated ICH content should be promoted,

so as to protect the authority and cultural authenticity of bearer documentation. At the same time, an intelligent preservation system based on cloud backup and off-site disaster recovery should be improved to ensure the long-term secure storage of massive digital ICH resources.

5.5. Deepening the Dissemination of Experience

It is necessary to systematically summarize and refine the Chinese paradigm, institutional advantages, practical standards, and safeguarding logic of the ICH Documentation Project, forming a system of Chinese experience in ICH safeguarding that can be communicated internationally and promoted globally. Through Chinese-foreign cultural exchanges, international ICH forums, and international heritage safeguarding cooperation projects, China should actively share its concepts of living ICH documentation, standardized work paradigms, and systematic safeguarding models. This would promote the transition of China's ICH safeguarding experience from independent domestic practice to international sharing, and continuously enhance China's discourse power and influence in global ICH governance.

6. Conclusion

The more than decade-long practical exploration of the Documentation Project for National-level Representative Bearers of Intangible Cultural Heritage represents a vivid practice through which China has proceeded from its own cultural conditions, upheld the essence of living ICH safeguarding, and enacted cultural confidence. The Project has moved beyond the static paradigm of traditional international heritage safeguarding. Supported by state-led institutional governance, centered on all-dimensional living documentation, grounded in local cultural adaptation, and oriented toward inclusive public service, it has accumulated a distinctive Chinese experience in the digital safeguarding of ICH. It has also established a localized safeguarding model that is adapted to the transmission patterns of Chinese ICH, aligned with the national cultural governance system, and attentive to both rescue safeguarding and long-term transmission.

At present, the ICH Documentation Project has completed large-scale rescue documentation and standardized construction, and has entered a new stage characterized by high-quality development, intelligent upgrading, and value-oriented transformation. In the future, it is necessary to continue optimizing institutional standards, deepening the activation of outputs, strengthening technological empowerment, improving the transmission loop, and promoting the dissemination of experience. Through such efforts, China's experience in ICH safeguarding can be continuously iterated and improved, enabling massive digital ICH resources truly to become alive, transmissible, and usable. This will further consolidate the foundation for the inheritance and development of fine traditional Chinese culture and continue to contribute Chinese wisdom and a Chinese approach to the global safeguarding of living cultural heritage.

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