

Digitalization and Content Creation Training as an Effort to Preserve and Promote Karonese Traditional Arts at Sanggar Mbuah Page, Dokan Cultural Village

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ABSTRACT

This community partnership program supported Sanggar Mbuah Page, a Karonese traditional-arts studio in Dokan Cultural Village, Karo Regency, which had no website and had not yet used digital media to disseminate its writings and performances. The program combined digitalization of the founder's writings with training in audio-visual content production and in website and social-media management based on search engine optimization (SEO) principles. Field sessions culminated in a website handover on 22 August 2026. Qualitative observation and documentation show that the website, www.mbuahpage.com, was developed and handed over and that members' content skills are in application. Independent management, SEO results, and audience impact remain to be evaluated.

INTRODUCTION

Sanggar Mbuah Page is a Karonese traditional-arts group located at Dusun 2 No. 33, Dokan Village, Merek Sub-district, Karo Regency, North Sumatra. It was founded in 2009 by Modesta beru Tarigan, a female activist of Karonese traditional arts, to preserve Karonese arts and literacy through training, performances, and the production of traditional instruments such as the kulcapi and gendang. The studio was established out of concern that Karonese traditional arts were being gradually displaced by the rapid development of information technology. This displacement is evident in the declining number of customary ceremonies that still feature traditional performances and in changes to the form, meaning, and aesthetics of the performances that remain. Between 2009 and 2026, ninety people have been or still are members, mostly young people who wish to learn Karonese arts, and the studio is often invited to customary ceremonies and official government events.

Through the studio, Modesta beru Tarigan collects and researches literature and field information on Karonese culture, and she has written dozens of texts on Karonese traditional arts that remain unpublished and in printed form, so their reach is limited despite their documentary value. Before this program, the studio had no website and no strategy for using digital media to disseminate and promote these writings, its performances, or its instruments. In the team's situation analysis, information and literacy on Karonese culture were also scarce on digital media, which risks distancing younger Karonese from their cultural roots.

Digitalization can be understood within the wider frame of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, which the UNESCO (2003) convention defines to include documentation, promotion, and transmission. Internationally, research on digital cultural heritage has grown rapidly over the past decade, reflecting a consensus that digitization and virtual access can stimulate content creation and public engagement (Lian & Xie, 2024). A Taiwanese case study shows that moving heritage services online helps attract new audiences while retaining existing ones (Ng et al., 2024), social-media adaptation has kept traditional Javanese performing-arts studios relevant for younger audiences (Yuliati et al., 2023), and interactive applications have been used to revitalize Balinese lontar manuscripts (Sudipa et al., 2022) and to present under-documented artistic traditions in virtual heritage platforms (Chernbumroong et al., 2024). Indonesian studies have likewise examined the digitalization of local arts through social media (Dwihantoro et al., 2023), the development of local-wisdom-based culture through new media (Mayasari, 2018), and the role of art studios in sustaining traditional arts (Dewi & Arifninetrirosa, 2022).

In the literature reviewed here, less often reported is a low-cost, partnership-based model that combines the digitization of a community practitioner's unpublished writings, an institution-owned website, and hands-on skills training for a small studio, particularly for Karonese arts, whose online documentation is thin. This article reports such a program and asks two questions: to what extent did it activate members' capacity to produce digital content, and what platform did it deliver? The program is aligned with SDG 11 (safeguarding cultural heritage) and SDG 4 (skills of studio members) (Kementerian PPN/Bappenas, 2023). Because the studio also provides informal livelihood in the creative sector, economic effects are relevant, but they are not measured in this article.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

Location, Participants, and Time

The program was implemented at Sanggar Mbuah Page, Dusun 2 No. 33, Dokan Village, Merek Sub-district, Karo Regency, North Sumatra, under the Regular Mono-Year Community Partnership scheme of the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM), Universitas Sumatera Utara (Non-PNBP, fiscal year 2026). The team comprised three lecturers of the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, assisted by undergraduate students. The partner was the studio, represented by its founder and chair, Modesta беру Tarigan, together with its members, who took part in the training. Data collection and curation were followed by field sessions at Jambur Lesung, Dokan Village, which culminated in the field finalization and website handover on 22 August 2026.

Approach and Stages

The core problem was the members' limited knowledge and skills in using information technology to promote and preserve Karonese traditional arts. The program used a partnership approach in which the partner's contribution was in kind: members prepared manuscripts for conversion and provided personnel for training. Two interventions answered the two identified problems (Table 1): digitalization of the founder's writings, and training in digital content creation. The website-development and training approach follows the digital-marketing and community-service literature, in which an SEO-friendly website is the core platform for extending a small organization's visibility (Fattah et al., 2025; Martiyanti et al., 2024). The activity proceeded through the following stages:

- a. Preparation: a field survey, followed by data collection and curation and the drafting of descriptive manuscripts on the traditional arts to be digitized.
- b. Implementation: digitalization of the founder's books and articles; stepwise website development (domain registration, hosting, and web design) and content upload; and training, comprising an orientation on online media, digital content creation, cultural preservation, and studio management, together with audio-visual recording and social-media and website management based on SEO principles.

- c. Follow-up (ongoing): continued content curation and upload, SEO-based optimization of the website, mentoring, and monitoring and evaluation of the studio's management of its digital platforms.



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Digitalization and Content-Creation Training Program

Table 1. Problems Identified and the Corresponding Solutions

No.	Problem	Solution Undertaken
1.	The partner had not recognized digital technology as an effective medium for disseminating and promoting traditional art products.	Digitalization of traditional-arts manuscripts and documentation of the studio's performance activities.
2.	The partner lacked the ability to produce digital content as a means of promotion and preservation of Karonese traditional arts.	Training in digital content production so the partner could create engaging digital content.

Data Collection, Evaluation, and Ethics

Because the program was designed for capacity building rather than as an experiment, evaluation was descriptive. Data came from the team's direct observation during training and mentoring and from documentation: photographs, the website, a documentation video, and media coverage. No pre-test/post-test or standardized skills instrument was used at this stage, and the outcomes below should be read accordingly. Participation was voluntary, and the studio's willingness to cooperate was formalized in a written partner statement. The digitized manuscripts are the writings of the studio's founder, who is the program's partner. The team documented the activities with the knowledge and agreement of the studio, and the photographs are published with the studio's permission.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Activation of Digital Content-Creation Capacity

The closing field session at Jambur Lesung on 22 August 2026 opened with the team's presentations on online media, digital content creation, cultural preservation, and the motivation for studio management (Picture 2). The team leader stressed why digitalization matters today and how digital content can carry information on Karonese arts to a broader public. Members also received hands-on training in audio-visual recording techniques and in managing social-media accounts and the website, and discussed these topics with the team (Picture 3).



Figure 2. Presentation Session and Website Handover at Jambur Lesung, Dokan Village, 22 August 2026
Documentation: Team, 2026



Figure 3. Discussion Between the Service Team and Studio Members
Documentation: Team

At the reporting stage, the team's outcome record lists the capacity indicator as "in application": the skills have been transferred and are being applied under mentoring. Independent production across the full cycle of planning, recording, editing, and uploading has not yet been verified and is the main target of follow-up mentoring. The partner's reaction was positive: in media coverage of the handover, the founder welcomed the website as a way to broaden members' insight and hoped that the collaboration would continue (Analisadaily.com, 2026).

Website Development

The program produced the website www.mbuahpage.com, developed in stages domain registration, hosting, web design, and content upload –and handed over to the studio on 22 August 2026. Its main navigation has Home, About Us, Programs, Gallery, and Contact pages (Picture 4). The home page carries a tagline that translates as "Preserve culture, revive tradition," and the About page introduces the studio as a place for safeguarding, preserving, and developing the living arts of Karo in Dokan. The site carries narrative and promotional content, while digitalization and upload of the founder's books and articles, and the addition of photographs and audio-visual materials, continue in the follow-up stage.

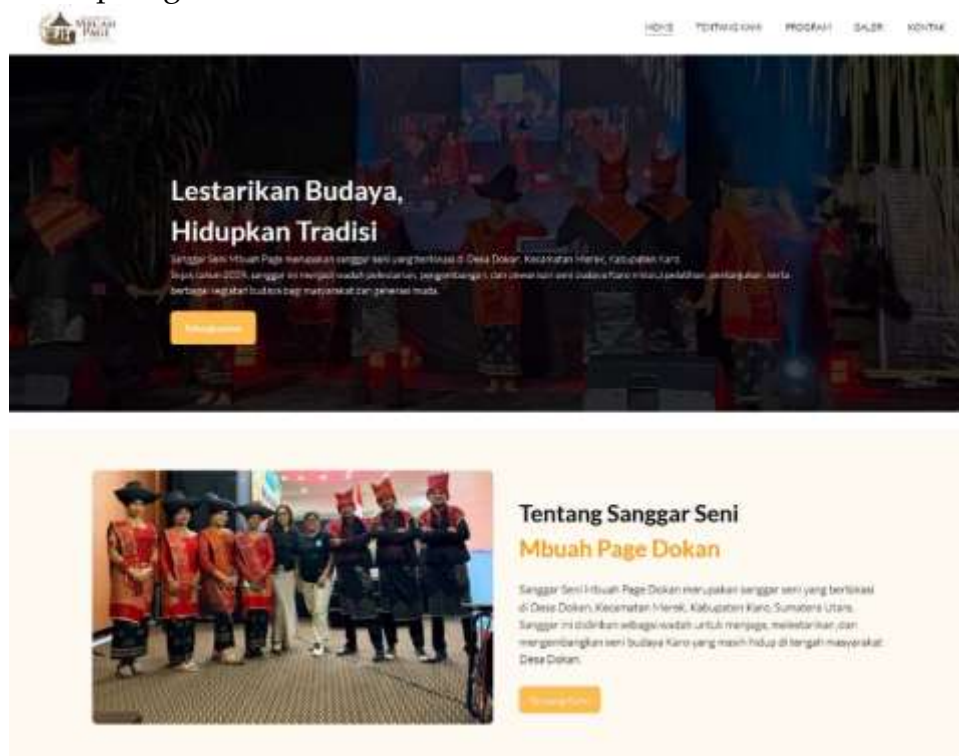


Figure 4. The Home Page (Top) and About Page (Bottom) of www.mbuahpage.com

The website-management training introduced SEO principles as the basis for improving the site's discoverability. Systematic on-page optimization and monitoring of search visibility are scheduled for the follow-up stage, so no claim is made here about search ranking or traffic. Table 2 summarizes the outputs and the evidence for each at the reporting stage.

Table 2. Outputs of the Program and Their Status at the Reporting Stage

No.	Output	Status and evidence at the reporting stage
1.	Website	Developed and handed over to the studio on 22 August 2026; www.mbuahpage.com (Picture 4)
2.	Digitalization of the founder's writings	Ongoing; the upload of the founder's books and articles continues in the follow-up stage
3.	Digital content-creation training	Delivered to studio members at Jambur Lesung, Dokan Village; closing session on 22 August 2026 (Pictures 2-3)
4.	Online media coverage	Published on 24 August 2026 by Analisadaily.com and Agiodeli.id
5.	Documentation video	Published on YouTube (Dewi, 2026)
6.	Members' digital-content capacity	Recorded as "in application"; independent production is the target of follow-up mentoring

The design of the program is consistent with the growing evidence that digital technology can help preserve and promote traditional arts. As in the Taiwanese case, where moving from physical to online service delivery helped engage new and existing audiences (Ng et al., 2024), the Mbuah Page website is meant to extend the studio's audience beyond Dokan. That effect, however, has not yet been measured, so the consistency is one of design rather than demonstrated outcome. Following the view that digitalization should support rather than replace traditional practice (Yuliati et al., 2023), the studio continues its regular training and performances, with the website as an additional channel for documentation and promotion.

Whereas digitalization of local arts in Indonesia is often discussed in terms of social media (Dwihantoro et al., 2023), this program centers on an institution-owned website and the digitization of the founder's writings, which gives the studio a durable archive that it controls. In terms of the safeguarding measures named by UNESCO (2003), the program addresses documentation and promotion through the website, and transmission of skills through training. Placing previously unpublished writings online also raises questions of access, attribution, and licensing, which should be settled with the founder and the community, for example by deciding which texts are openly accessible and which are restricted.

The choice of SEO as the organizing principle is supported by community-service research showing that SEO-friendly websites increase the visits and visibility of small organizations that had little online presence (Fattah et al., 2025; Martiyanti et al., 2024). Because optimization and monitoring are still scheduled, the contribution of SEO in this program remains prospective. Compared with technologically intensive approaches such as virtual-reality heritage platforms (Chernbumroong et al., 2024) and augmented-reality applications for manuscripts (Sudipa et al., 2022), manuscript digitization combined with a website and content-creation training is low-cost and needs no specialized hardware, which makes it easier for a small studio to adopt and sustain. Once this foundation is in place, more advanced options such as short-form video, virtual tours, or interactive multimedia can be added step by step (Katifori et al., 2023; Lian & Xie, 2024).

This study has several limitations. Evaluation was descriptive, based on observation and documentation, without pre-test/post-test measurement or a standardized skills instrument. The results describe an ongoing program: the upload of manuscripts, SEO optimization, and independent management were still in progress. Effects on audience reach, performance bookings, resource-person invitations, and instrument sales were not measured; website statistics, search-visibility data, and booking records are planned for this purpose. Finally, a single case limits generalization. The findings should therefore be read as evidence of capacity transferred and infrastructure established, not of confirmed economic impact.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The program produced two main results: (1) studio members' capacity to produce digital content was transferred through training and is recorded as in application, with independent production still being consolidated through mentoring; and (2) the studio now has an operational website, handed over on 22 August 2026, that serves as a platform for promotion and for documenting Karonese traditional arts, with content upload and SEO optimization continuing.

It is recommended that mentoring continue and that monitoring use measurable indicators, such as pre-test/post-test skill assessment, the number of content items produced, and website and search statistics, together with booking records. The studio and the founder should agree on an access and licensing policy for the digitized writings. The model can be extended to other traditional-arts studios facing similar challenges, and members can be encouraged to develop skills in short-form video and interactive content so that the platform continues to grow.

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