

Purdue University
Purdue e-Pubs

Proceedings of the IATUL Conferences

1996 IATUL Proceedings

Memory of the World - Preserving Our Documentary Heritage

Abid Abdelaziz
UNESCO

Abid Abdelaziz, "Memory of the World - Preserving Our Documentary Heritage." *Proceedings of the IATUL Conferences*. Paper 1.
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/iatul/1996/papers/1>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

MEMORY OF THE WORLD - Preserving our Documentary Heritage

*Abid, Abdelaziz
UNESCO*

Memory is the cornerstone to a well balanced personality: that holds true for individuals and for peoples.

The collective memory of the peoples of the world is of vital importance in preserving cultural identities, in bridging the past and the present and in shaping the future. The documentary heritage residing in libraries and archives constitutes a major part of that memory and reflects the diversity of peoples, languages and cultures. But that memory is fragile.

A considerable proportion of the world documentary heritage disappears through "natural" causes: acidified paper that crumbles to dust, leather, parchment, film and magnetic tape attacked by light, heat, humidity or dust. The cinema, for instance, is in danger of losing most of the works that have made it the art of the century, just when it is celebrating its centenary. Thousands of kilometers of film could just fade away unless they are restored and preserved as soon as possible. Nitrate fires in France and Mexico, for example, have caused important losses.

As well as natural causes, accidents regularly afflict libraries and archives. Floods, fires, hurricanes, storms, earthquakes... the list goes on of disasters which are difficult to guard against except by taking preventive measures. The recent catastrophe in Japan immediately comes to mind.

It would take a very long time to compile a list of all the libraries and archives destroyed or seriously damaged by acts of war, bombardment and fire, whether deliberate or accidental. The Library of Alexandria is probably the most famous historical example, but how many other known and unknown treasures have vanished in Constantinople, Warsaw, Florence, or more recently in Bucharest, Saint Petersburg and Sarajevo? There are so many more, and sadly the list cannot be closed - not to mention holdings dispersed following the accidental or deliberate displacement of archives and libraries.

The sheer scale of the effort needed to preserve what is part of this irreplaceable "Memory of the World" requires the implementation of a consistent protection programme which will pool endeavours and make use of state-of-the-art technology.

Preservation and Access

Impelled by its responsibility to develop culture and protect the world cultural heritage, UNESCO recognized that urgent action was required to ensure that the world's documentary memory was not further deteriorated and launched in 1992 the "Memory of the World" Programme to protect and promote the world documentary heritage.

UNESCO's reinforced long-standing commitment to the safeguarding of the world's documentary heritage came originally from a growing awareness of the perilous state of preservation of, and bad conditions of access to, documentary heritage in various parts of the world. War and social upheaval, as well as severe lack of resources to carry out preservation and dissemination activities have aggravated the problems that have existed for centuries.

The "Memory of the World" Programme is designed as a new approach to safeguard the world documentary heritage, democratize access to it and raise awareness of its significance and the need to preserve it.

The Programme has the following four objectives which are complementary and of equal importance:

- a) to facilitate preservation by the most appropriate techniques of the world's documentary heritage;
- b) to assist in enabling access to it, without discrimination against any users;
- c) to increase the awareness worldwide of its existence and significance;
- d) to promote the Programme and its products to the widest possible public.

The main objective of the Programme is to ensure the preservation, by the most appropriate means, of documentary heritage which has world significance and to encourage the preservation of documentary heritage which has national and regional significance.

A twin objective is making this heritage accessible to as many people as possible, using the most appropriate technology, both inside and outside the countries in which it is physically located.

Preservation of documentary heritage and increased access to it complement one another. Access facilitates protection and preservation ensures access. For example, digitized materials can be accessed by many people and demand for access can stimulate preservation work.

Another element of the Programme is to raise awareness of UNESCO Member States of their documentary heritage, in particular aspects of that heritage which is significant in terms of a common world memory.

Finally, the Programme seeks to develop products based on this documentary heritage and make them available for wide distribution, while ensuring that the originals are maintained in the best possible conditions of conservation and security. High quality text, sound and image banks could be compiled and made available on local and global networks and reproductions could be derived in all sorts of forms such as compact discs, albums, books, postcards, microfilms, etc. Any proceeds from the sale of related products will then be ploughed back into the Programme.

Programme scope and structure

The scope of the Programme is, therefore, quite vast and involves a variety of partners, ranging from students, scholars and the general public to owners, providers and producers of information and manufacturers of end products. An International

Advisory Committee for the "Memory of the World" Programme was appointed by the Director-General of UNESCO to guide the planning and implementation of the Programme as a whole and make recommendations concerning fund-raising, the allocation of funds and the granting of the "Memory of the World" label to the projects selected, including those not receiving financial support from the Programme. This Committee held two meetings (Pultusk, Poland, September 1993 and Paris, France, May 1995). It recommended, at its first meeting that the concept of documentary heritage be extended to include, besides manuscripts and other rare and valuable documents in libraries and archives, documents in any medium: in particular, audiovisual documents, computerized recordings and oral traditions, the importance of which varies from region to region. In all these fields there is a need for protection, sometimes as a matter of urgency if we are to prevent collective amnesia and set up world cultural exchange.

The Programme should make governments aware that they must protect their documentary heritage, release potential for action, support the activities of professional, national, regional and international organizations and stimulate initiatives.

At the national level, it is recommended that a committee be appointed, firstly to select projects according to the criteria agreed upon and submit them to the International Advisory Committee and, thereafter, to follow them up. The committee membership should include experts able to make an active contribution to the projects and of representatives of the users. Persons submitting projects must ensure that the rights of the owners of the holdings or collections are protected. In addition, each project will set up its own scientific committee of specialists to determine the general thrust of the project and to supervise its organization. A "Memory of the World" National Committee is now set up in 15 countries (Belarus, Cap Verde, China, Colombia, Croatia, Cuba, Federation of Russia, Finland, Hungary, Malawi, Mauritania, Pakistan, Slovakia, Tanzania and Zaire) and other are considering the creation of such a Committee. Jordan and Syria indicated that national institutions are already performing the role of National Committee.

Lastly, whenever the need arises, a regional committee will be required to select projects of a regional nature, taking local characteristics into consideration, with a view to submitting them to the International Committee.

An example of efficient regional follow-up to the establishment of the Programme is the Experts meeting held in December 1994, in Kuala Lumpur for the definition of an Asian component of the "Memory of the World" Programme. Participants from 20 countries discussed problems facing custodians of national documentary heritage materials which are generally endangered because of neglect, adverse physical and climatic conditions, political instability... The situation is very bleak for least developed countries, because precious and rare documents are endangered now, and if no action is taken in a few years, they will be lost for ever, while others that are still in a more or less stable condition now will be endangered in a few years if no programme for their preservation and conservation is carried out. The meeting agreed to take steps in ensuring that Member States will establish a mechanism at the national and regional levels to identify projects receivable under the "Memory of the World" Programme, as well as establish individual country inventory of documentary

heritage materials, prepare a programme for preservation and conservation of such materials, and promotion and marketing strategies to generate resources to finance the programme.

Similar conclusions were reached by a Sub-regional meeting on the "Memory of the World", held in Budapest from 9 to 10 March 1995. The meeting was attended by participants from Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. While digitization is a powerful tool to facilitate access and thereby helping to preserve the originals, participants stressed that it has limits and could not substitute conventional preservation work. During the meeting, a co-operative sub-regional project was designed. A mobile digitization equipment will be shared by the participating countries, a digital version of a selection of historical documents of interest to several countries will then be made available. It is expected that the project will enable the participating institutions to test digitization techniques and equipment and assess the related financial, legal and dissemination aspects.

"Memory of the World" Register

The participants in the Second Meeting of the International Advisory Committee, held in Paris in May 1995, agreed that a "Memory of the World" Register be developed. This Register will list all documentary heritage which has been identified by the Committee as meeting the selection criteria for world significance, similar to UNESCO's World Heritage List.

The "Memory of the World" Register, a compendium of documents, manuscripts, oral traditions, audiovisual materials, library and archive holdings of universal value, will be a significant document in itself, as well as an inspiration to nations and regions to identify, list and preserve their documentary heritage. Listing will serve as a significant tool in raising awareness of governments, non-governmental organizations, foundations and the public at large, to the importance of their heritage and will serve as an incentive to obtain funds for its preservation.

Individual countries are encouraged to set up their own documentary heritage registers in parallel to the "Memory of the World" Register. National registers identify the documentary inheritance of the nation. The national registers will increase awareness of the importance of the national documentary heritage and the need for a co-ordinated and integrated policy to ensure that endangered documentary heritage is preserved.

Groups of nations may compile regional registers to list documentary heritage which is integral to their collective memory.

A **nomination form** was sent out on 2nd February 1996 to all UNESCO's Member States and international professional associations, inviting them to identify documentary heritage nominated for the "Memory of the World" Register.

Selection criteria

Each register - World, Regional and National - must be based on clearly-defined criteria for assessing the cultural value of documentary heritage. These criteria relate to influence, time, place, people, subject, form and style, and social value.

Documentary heritage may need to meet only one criterion for inclusion in the World Register, but it is more likely to be assessed by reference to several criteria.

The criteria are:

Criterion 1 - Influence: Documentary heritage is of world significance if it had a major influence on the history of the world, transcending the boundaries of a national culture.

Criterion 2 - Time: Documentary heritage is of world significance if it reflects in an outstanding way a period of momentous change in world affairs or makes an outstanding contribution to our understanding of the world at a particularly important time in its history.

Criterion 3 - Place: Documentary heritage is of world significance if it contains important information about a locality or region which made a crucial contribution to major developments in world history or culture.

Criterion 4 - People: Documentary heritage is of world significance if it has a special association with the life or works of a person or people who have made an outstanding contribution to world history or culture.

Criterion 5 - Subject/Theme: Documentary heritage is of world significance if it documents in an outstanding way an important subject or major theme of world history or culture.

Criterion 6 - Form and Style: Documentary heritage is of world significance if it is an important example of an outstanding form or style.

Criterion 7 - Social and Cultural Value: Documentary heritage is of world significance if it has outstanding cultural and social or spiritual value which transcends a national culture.

Secondary Criteria: In addition to these seven major criteria, two further criteria should be taken into account. These may enhance the world significance of documentary heritage, though they are not sufficient in themselves to establish its significance.

a) Secondary Criterion 1 - Integrity: The significance of documentary heritage may be enhanced if it has a high degree of integrity or completeness.

b) Secondary Criterion 2 - Rarity: The significance of documentary heritage may be enhanced if it is unique or rare. The criteria will be tested by the International Advisory Committee and weighting factors will be developed to reflect the relative importance of the criteria.

The criteria for documentary heritage to be entered on National or Regional Registers are to be decided by the relevant National or Regional Committees. It is recommended, however, that the World Register criteria be used as a model.

Proposals for documentary heritage to receive resources through the "Memory of the World" Programme may be made by National and Regional Committees, by Governments, by NGOs, by the International Advisory Committee or by other professional bodies in the country or region. Documentary heritage proposed for support will be of World Register status. Support will require the documentary heritage to meet criteria to be set by the International Advisory Committee.

Restrictions on access to documentary heritage will not systematically prevent entry on a Register but may reduce the possibility of receiving support through the "Memory of the World" Programme.

Furthermore, the Pultusk meeting recommended that some degree of priority be given to operations affecting several countries, national projects with a regional or international dimension and projects carried out in co-operation or in partnership, while not overlooking minorities and their cultures. Particular attention will be paid to reconstructing the memory of peoples in the case of collections or holdings that have been displaced or scattered.

Pilot projects

1) Prague

A digitization programme was launched by the National Library in Prague, in co-operation with a private firm, Albertina Ltd. A demonstration CD-ROM was first published in 1993, featuring some of the most precious manuscripts and other documents in the historic collections of the National Library, with annotations in Czech, English and French. In addition, a CD-ROM series has been starting with the release of the first two discs in early May 1995. Digitizing the most beautiful manuscripts and old prints of the National Library will facilitate access to these treasures without exposing the originals to heavy use, thus contributing to their preservation. In addition, while colours and ink react with paper, parchment, silk and other traditional media, digital information does not fade with the passing of time and could be easily transferred from CD-ROM to more durable media to come in the future.

2) The Radzivil Chronicle

Written in old Russian, this monumental work reveals the history of Russia and its neighbors from the fifth to the early thirteenth century in pictorial form, representing events described in the manuscript with more than six hundred colour illustrations. Known to the scholarly community according to its ownership in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Radzivil, or Kenigsberg Chronicle, is the most ancient surviving example of the art of Russian illuminated chronicle. It is a fifteenth century copy of a thirteenth century archetype held by the Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg (BAN). The Radzivil Chronicle's combination of text and illustration places this manuscript in the company of such acknowledged masterpieces as the Madrid copy of the Greek Illuminated Chronicle of Ioann Scilipa, the Vatican copy of the Bulgarian Translated Chronicle of Konstantin Manassia, the Budapest copy of the Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle, and the

copies of the Big French Chronicles. Among these, the Radzivil is distinguished for the richness and quantity of its illustrations.

The text of the manuscript has been published many times. However, the illustrations have been published only once, at the turn of the century, as part of a black and white reproduction of the entire Chronicle. In the centuries since its creation, the manuscript has sustained significant damage. Its binding has been replaced several times, the edges of leaves have been cut, and the painted miniatures have been worn by age and use. The Radzivil Chronicle was restored on two occasions in this century.

The increasing fragility of the original manuscript, together with its preeminence in the Russian literature, has left BAN to share a dilemma faced by libraries around the world charged with the care and wise use of cultural treasures. Handling of the Radzivil Chronicle, itself, must be restricted to preserve its material well-being. At the same time, the scholarly and scientific enterprise to which the Library is dedicated argues for access to this important document for serious research. This is why the Library has turned to a digital medium - to display the manuscript in full color while preserving the original. A prototype Photo CD is produced with the support of UNESCO and the Library of Congress, as a pilot project and a demonstration of the use of digital media in the service of preservation.

3) Saint Sophia

Devised by a group of Bulgarian and French writers, the "Saint Sophia" project is an attempt at a multimedia edition of Bulgarian manuscripts on an interactive compact disc. The disc evokes the symbolic figure of Saint Sophia, patron saint of Sofia, capital city of Bulgaria, in Bulgarian history, literature and civilization from the eleventh to the seventeenth centuries.

The documents selected include primarily the facsimile reproduction, in the form of digital images, of Bulgarian manuscripts, including the oldest one known: the eleventh-century Book of Apostolic Epistles of Enina. They are supplemented by reproductions of illuminations, frontispieces and decorative motifs, and by photographs of various historic and archaeological sites. There are also printed transcriptions in Old Bulgarian of some manuscripts and their translations into modern Bulgarian, English where such translations exist, and French.

4) The Sana'a manuscripts

In 1972, after heavy rain, a section of the wall of the Great Mosque of Sana'a collapsed. Work on the roof brought to light manuscripts which had been concealed in the ceiling in ancient times. They are parchment and paper fragments representing approximately one thousand different volumes, the oldest of which date back to the first century of the Hegira. Most are extracts from the Koran and are of considerable interest for the linguistic, religious and paleographic study of the literature of the early centuries of the Hegira and of the Arabic language. The fortuitous and extraordinary discovery of these

documents and their unique character make this find a remarkable event which will mobilize efforts and expertise on an international scale. Thanks to the active participation of Germany, a plan of work on the fragments was begun, which led to the construction of a House of Manuscripts, the restoration of some 12,000 fragments of parchment (out of 15,000), their storage, identification and classification and the training of Yemeni restorers and photographers.

Research work on illuminated fragments and on bindings was carried out with a grant from the Getty Institute. This work, together with papers read at congresses and articles in academic journals, shows just how remarkable the collection is. The Yemeni authorities concur in the view that the collection is the equivalent of a historic building of exceptional heritage quality. A UNESCO mission visited Sana'a at their request to consider including a pilot project on the Yemeni collections in the "Memory of the World" Programme.

The collections of manuscripts that it has been possible to examine have been outstandingly rich, justifying their status as a "Memory of the World" project. Their historical, archaeological, scientific and documentary quality is such that they have all the features of collections worthy of heritage status.

A National Committee for the project has been set up to identify the most suitable documents. A demonstration disc based on a selection of manuscripts including some of the Koranic fragments has been published, in co-operation with the Regional Information Technology and Software Engineering Centre (RITSEC), Cairo, Egypt. This CD-ROM offers an introduction to the Arabic calligraphy illustrated by Yemenite manuscripts, especially the Koranic fragments. Descriptions and comments are provided in Arabic, English and French.

5) Memoria de Iberoamerica

In November 1992, the "Asociación de Bibliotecas Nacionales de Iberoamerica" (ABINIA) submitted a project called "Memoria de Iberoamerica" to UNESCO for the "Memory of the World" Programme.

A pilot stage of the project is concerned with protecting the nineteenth-century press published in Latin America and improving access to it for historians and interested members of the public.

ABINIA had previously organized a series of activities on the occasion of the Five Hundredth Anniversary of the Encounter between Two Worlds, in response to the desire to encourage appreciation of the documentary heritage of the Iberian world.

Among these activities was the compilation of a database indexing 90,000 books from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, a traveling exhibition and the reissue of the most important historical works in the context of the Five Hundredth Anniversary. The national libraries of seven countries (Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico and Venezuela) are

taking part in the project on the nineteenth-century press. It has led to the drawing up of a computerized inventory of some 2,000 newspaper titles and other press organs.

The second phase of the project will be to arrange for the conservation of the listed collections and their transfer to microfilm with a view to exchanges between national libraries, the organization of exhibitions and special publications.

6) Manuscripts of Kandilli Observatory The aim of this project is the preservation of a collection of about 1300 works on astronomy in three languages (Turkish, Persian and Arabic) held in the Library of Kandilli Observatory and Earthquake Research Institute at Bogaziçi University in Istanbul.

UNESCO's contribution covered the preparation and publication of the catalogue of these manuscripts, maintenance of the catalogue in a computer-readable form and the production of a CD-ROM consisting of the catalogue and sample pages from most of the manuscripts.

7) Memory of Russia

This project deals with preserving and improving access to the collection of XVth and XVIth Century Slavic manuscripts held by the Russian State Library in Moscow. It also includes the archives of many of the major Russian authors such as Dostoevsky and Pushkin.

All these projects were funded under the UNESCO Regular Programme. A number of other projects received funding under the Participation Programme. These include the safeguarding of manuscripts of Antonín Dvořák and Bedřich Smetana, held by the Museum of Czech Music in Prague; provision of equipment and training in Algeria, Cuba, Poland, Venezuela; reproduction and repatriation in Antigua of historical records held in foreign repositories; publication of "Libro de los Pareces de la Real Audiencia de Guatemala 1573-1655"; reproduction of the hand-written card file of the 11th-17th century Russian language to CD-ROM to promote access to this collection...

Some thirty other projects are under consideration. These include, for example, a project in Albania, the restoration and preservation of 7000 hours of audio materials of Chinese folk music, preservation of Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts in India, preservation of Vietnam film heritage, preservation of Lao manuscripts, preservation of a Jewish musical collection in Kiev, safeguarding of manuscripts of ancient cities in Mauritania...

Technical framework

From the examples mentioned above, it emerges clearly that the two basic principles which guide the "Memory of the World" Programme are the preservation of documents, holdings and collections and the democratization of access to them. The two principles are intrinsically linked, since access is conducive to protection and preservation ensures access.

The essential steps for carrying out any project in the "Memory of the World" programme are: selecting and preparing the documents, ensuring that they are placed in a suitable physical environment, photographing them where necessary, digitizing them, describing and annotating them, providing the staff to perform these tasks with appropriate ad hoc training where necessary, translating bibliographical descriptions where necessary, or even the texts themselves, and ensuring that the resultant product is distributed as widely as possible.

Provision has been made for the establishment of two sub-committees, the first to make regular assessments of the technology that might be used by the Programme and the second to study methods for marketing and selling the Programme's products throughout the world. The first Committee held three meetings devoted to digitization of documents. It reviewed recent developments in digitization and prepared preservation standards and technical guidelines with a table showing, for each type of carrier (texts and still images on the one hand and sound and moving images on the other hand) the recommended digitization standards for access and preservation. It was suggested that a programme of digitization of documents is the best compromise between the conflicting demands for wider access to collections and for greater protection of the documents.

The Sub-Committee also recommended that digital copies of manuscripts and old printed material under "Memory of the World" use the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML 2.0) as the basic presentation tool in order to provide the widest possible access.

As to the preservation of the originals, a series of brochures will compile annotated lists of the most relevant standards. In total, six brochures will be prepared, covering:

- Paper, leather, parchment, palm-leaves...
- Photographic material
- Micrographic material
- Audiovisual material
- Electronic records
- Electronic publications

Each brochure will discuss the general problem, draw the list of relevant standards, relating them to each other and pinpointing gaps, provide implementation guidelines and checklists and discuss Third World issues such as climatic and financial conditions, grassroot and traditional preservation techniques and minimum standards.

As to the Sub-Committee on Marketing, it will hold its first meeting in Oslo, during 1996.

Lastly, so that UNESCO can play its role to the full as co-ordinator and catalyst, three inventories in the form of regularly updated databases are being created in co-operation with IFLA, ICA and other competent professional bodies such as FID, FIAF, FIAT and IASA.

- 1) Inventory of library collections and archive holdings which have suffered irreparable destruction since 1900: This inventory, to be published soon as

"Lost Memory - Libraries and archives destroyed in the twentieth century", is an attempt to list major disasters that destroyed or caused irreparable damage to libraries and archives during the present century. Thousands of libraries and archives have been destroyed or badly damaged in the course of fighting during the two world wars, notably in France, Germany, Italy and Poland. War has also been the cause of untold destruction to libraries and archives more recently in former Yugoslavia and in many other countries.

The document, prepared by J. van Albada (ICA) and H. van der Hoeven (IFLA) lists lost documentary heritage in more than 100 countries. This inventory is not meant to be a sort of funerary monument but is intended to alert public opinion and sensitize the professional community and local and national authorities to the disappearance of archival and library treasures and to draw attention to the urgent need to safeguard endangered documentary heritage.

2) World list of endangered library collections and archive holdings: To date more than 60 countries have proposed collections and holdings to be included in the list of endangered documentary heritage. The International Association of Sound Archives has conducted a survey carried out by George Boston, in the context of this exercise, that shows that the most endangered carriers are not necessarily the oldest. In the audio domain, substantial numbers of acetate discs and tapes are lost each year. All unique acetate recordings at risk need to be copied swiftly to a new format.

3) Inventory of ongoing operations to protect documentary heritage: Documentary heritage has been lost in the past and will continue to disappear in the future. The aim of "Memory of the World" is to ensure that significant material is identified and saved. Today's technology enables us to identify the location of important documentary heritage and gain access to it. This inventory, being prepared under contract with IFLA by Jan Lyall, will list major preservation activities currently in progress. The information in this document was obtained through a questionnaire which was widely distributed in English, French, German, Japanese and Spanish, using the IFLA Preservation and Conservation (PAC) network. The survey was intended to collect information from libraries with collections of national significance in order to identify problems in various parts of the world and to obtain a snapshot of current preservation activities. More than 200 responses were received and input into the computer.

This database, as well as the previous one, running on CDS/ISIS, will be updated regularly and the data analysis facilitated by use of IDAMS, a statistical package developed by UNESCO and featuring an interface with CDS/ISIS. The two lists will constitute the indispensable basis for the Programme along with the "Memory of the World" Register. These lists should prove invaluable in assisting international cooperative projects and will eventually be made available on the Internet.

Furthermore, in recognition of the impact of cinema on the world, it was decided, as part of the centenary celebration, to compile and publish, in the context of the

"Memory of the World" Programme, a list of approximately 15 films each country considers to be representative of its most significant film heritage. This list is available at not cost from PGI under the title "National Cinematographic Heritage" (CII-95/WS/7).

Finally, UNESCO has published recently guidelines on the Programme's technical, legal and financial framework and its working structures. This text is to be available in all UNESCO official languages, free-of-charge, under the title "Memory of the World - General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage " (CII-95/WS-11).

Legal and financial context

Working in partnership in an international context means that a legal framework is an absolute necessity if "Memory of the World" is to be managed in a properly accountable manner. The framework must nevertheless remain sufficiently flexible to guarantee the originality of each project and take account of the diversity of national legislation.

It is essential that the rights of the owners of the collections and holdings in a project are respected and that the relationship between the owners and the technical and commercial users is clearly defined, particularly with regard to the division of rights among the various parties, the allocation of rights of ownership to the images produced and the sharing of the profits from the sales of products made from images. It also seems clear, however, that excessive protection which might limit access to the documents would run counter to one of the Programme's fundamental principles. The International Advisory Committee recommended, at its second meeting, that UNESCO pay careful attention to legal questions affecting the intellectual heritage in the new context of increasing use of electronic storage media in libraries and archives, in particular to provide for freedom of access within the limits set by national and international legislation. A working group of legal experts and of representatives of NGOs, will be set up, in co-operation with other interested parties, including the European Commission and the G7 Working Party on "The Electronic Library" pilot project.

Finally, with regard to financial support, an international fund is being set up within UNESCO to finance some of the Programme's projects. These will include, as a priority, projects with a regional or international dimension. Other projects which meet the agreed criteria could use the "Memory of the World" label without necessarily receiving aid from UNESCO or the fund. A UNESCO special account has been opened for the "Memory of the World" (Ref. 406 INT 61).

A set of promotional material highlighting the aims of the Programme is being widely distributed. This material will also be used to attract funds for the Programme. A two-tier approach is envisaged: a programme-oriented campaign and a project-oriented campaign.

Each "Memory of the World" project will be an entity in itself, especially as far as finance is concerned. While profit can never be a prerequisite for carrying out a project, each project must strike a financial balance between, on the one hand, the investment needed for digitizing, reproducing, and distributing products and for

preparing the reproduced collections and holdings for conservation and, on the other, initial contributions from local or outside funds and royalties from possible sale of products. This balance will not be achieved without the participation of sponsors and technical and financial partners. The search for partners is an important, not to say decisive, phase of all "Memory of the World" projects.

Conclusion

As soon as it was launched, the "Memory of the World" Programme began to arouse great interest. Requests for assistance, sometimes even appeals for help, regularly reach UNESCO. It is a daunting task and only the mobilization of all the parties concerned can translate declarations of intent into a vast world workshop to rescue, reproduce and disseminate endangered documentary treasures.

From that point of view, the economics of the operation and the considerable investment it will require cannot be stressed enough. The twofold aim - securing the survival of the heritage and facilitating access to this collective memory so that it is within the grasp of as many people as possible - necessitates new approaches to funding, particularly through co-operation with the private sector.

Sources:

"Memory of the World" Programme - First Meeting of the International Advisory Committee, Pultusk, Poland, 12-14 September 1993. Final Report. Paris, UNESCO, 1993 (PGI-93/WS/17)

"Memory of the World" Programme - Second Meeting of the International Advisory Committee, Paris, France, 3-5 May 1995. Final Report. Paris, UNESCO, 1995 (CII-95/CONF.602/3)

"Memory of the World" Programme - General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage, Paris, UNESCO, 1995 (CII-95/WS-11)

"Memory of the World" - Experts' Meeting - Asia Pacific Region, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 12-14 December 1994. Final Report. Kuala Lumpur: National Archives of Malaysia and Malaysian National Commission for UNESCO, 1994