

OVERVIEW OF THE UNESCO MEMORY OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME

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unesco

National Committee



What is the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme?

The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme for safeguarding documentary heritage was established as a Programme in 1992 by UNESCO with the mission to **preserve** and **make accessible** the documents that constitute the 'memory' of humanity.

The Memory of the World Programme is located within the Communication and Information (CI) sector of UNESCO.

The initiative to create the Memory of the World Programme came from library and archives professional associations – the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and the International Council on Archives (ICA).

Much documentary heritage considered for the Memory of the World registers was and is of considerable antiquity, and emphasis is placed on establishing its **authenticity**.

In 2015 the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme achieved the status of a Recommendation: the 'Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form'.

Vision for the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme

The world's documentary heritage belongs to all, should be fully preserved and protected for all and, with due recognition of cultural mores and practicalities, should be permanently accessible to all without hindrance.

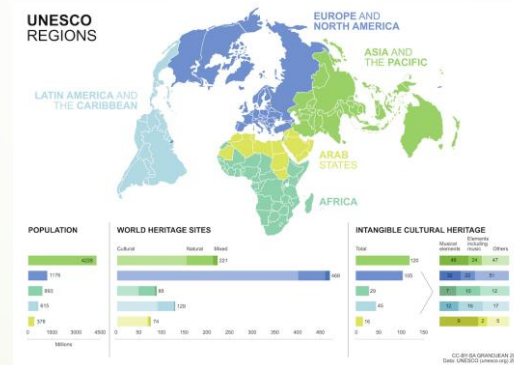


How is the Memory of the World Programme structured?

The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme operates at three levels: international, regional and national. A Secretariat within the Documentary Heritage Unit in UNESCO administers the Programme.

The **International Advisory Committee** (IAC) oversees the operations of the Programme and recommends inscriptions to the International Memory of the World Register. It has three sub-committees: the **Preservation Sub-Committee** (PSC); the **Register Sub-Committee** (RSC); and the **Sub-Committee on Education and Research** (SCEaR)

Regional Committees exist for Asia-Pacific (MOWCAP); Latin America and the Caribbean (MOWLAC); and ARCMOW (African region).



National Committees conduct activities in their countries under the auspices of their National Commissions for UNESCO.

Memory of the World International Register

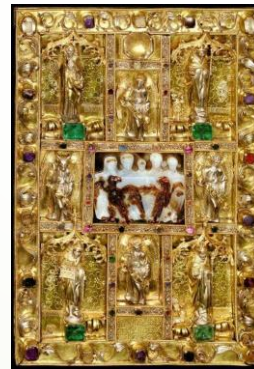
The UNESCO Memory of the World registers operate at **international**, **regional** and **national** levels. They are intended to raise awareness of the need to preserve documentary heritage and make it accessible.

To qualify for inscription on the International Register, a nominator must make the case that the documentary heritage being nominated is of **world significance**, that is, it must have had **impact and influence** beyond a nation state or region.

Sixty-four new inscriptions to the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register were announced in May 2023, after a five-year hiatus in the nomination and inscription process, bringing the total of inscriptions on the International Register to 494.



Archives of Antonín Dvořák, Czechia



Illuminated manuscripts of Charlemagne's Court School, joint nomination by Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Romania, United Kingdom



Feminism, science and politics – Bertha Lutz's legacy, Brazil

Regional committees and registers

The regional registers of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme inscribe documentary heritage relating to a UNESCO region with a regional committee and a regional register. There are three regional committees in the Programme so far:

- ▶ Memory of the World Regional Committee for Asia and the Pacific (MOWCAP)
- ▶ Memory of the World Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (MOWLAC)
- ▶ Memory of the World Regional Committee for Africa (ARCMOW).

All three regional committees maintain registers. General meetings are held every two years to consider new inscriptions on their registers; and inter-regional conferences are also held.



Training workshops

Training workshops to assist nominators from countries that are under-represented in the registers were pioneered in 2007 in Saint Lucia. This model was adopted in 2009 by the Korean National Commission for UNESCO and the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea, in association with local partners, in the Asia-Pacific, Africa, Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean. These workshops have been very successful in achieving inscriptions from many of the countries that have attended. The UNESCO offices in Bangkok, Jakarta and Tehran and the Caribbean sub-region of MOWLAC have also organised several workshops of this type and these have led to inscriptions of significant documentary heritage. Training workshops continued throughout both the four-year hiatus in register nominations from 2017 to 2022; and the Covid-19 pandemic, when they moved online entirely, and later into hybrid formats. The latest workshop was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in September 2023, and conducted in person-to-person mode only.





National committees and registers

There are an estimated 90 national committees operating in the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme.

Some, but not all, national committees maintain national registers, for example, Australia, Barbados, Brazil, China, Latvia, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Under the new General Guidelines of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme, national committees must liaise with their National Commission for UNESCO in approving and transmitting nominations from their countries to the International register or the relevant regional register.

Some national committees also maintain Memory of the World Knowledge Centres, which accumulate and make available for research publications relating to inscriptions on all the registers. They also hold events to raise awareness of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme.

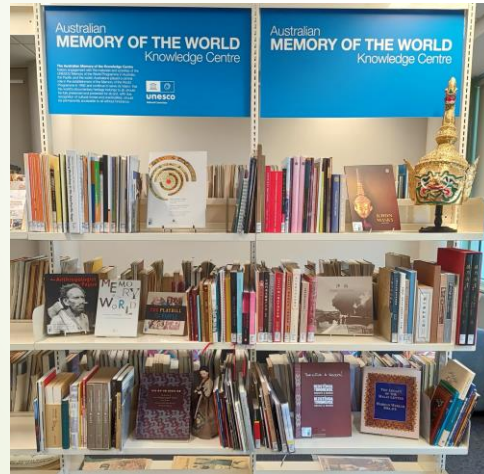
Memory of the World Knowledge Centres

There are currently nine Memory of the World Knowledge Centres, located in the Asia-Pacific, Latin America and African regions:

Asia-Pacific: Macau SAR, Beijing, Fujian and Suzhou, China; Andong, Republic of Korea; Canberra, Australia; Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Africa: Côte d'Ivoire.

Latin America and the Caribbean: Vizcainas, Mexico.



International Centre for Documentary Heritage

The International Centre for Documentary Heritage (ICDH) is a Category 2 UNESCO Centre established in Cheongju, Republic of Korea, in 2020. Its building was opened in October-November 2023 with an Inter-regional Roundtable and an International Conference.

The UNESCO International Centre for Documentary Heritage is the first international organisation in the field of UNESCO's documentary heritage, and has been established to promote safe preservation, management, and universal access to the world's heritage.

ICDH is a platform that connects documentary heritage, experts, and the world by providing programs such as a monitoring system for UNESCO Memory of the World inscriptions, heritage capacity-building and awareness-raising, network building, and heritage utilisation and content development.



Relationship to other UNESCO heritage programmes

The tendency earlier in the history of the Memory of the World Programme was to view documentary heritage in isolation – many documents have long been separated from their originating communities and historical connections to places and communities; and place and intangible heritage practices were not considered relevant in assessing their significance.

This perspective has changed in recent years, as experts with experience in museums and intangible cultural heritage have been included in the Programme's governing bodies since the mid-2000s. There is now recognition that some locations are relevant to all three of UNESCO's heritage programmes.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

