

Safeguarding the documentary heritage of humanity



MEMOIRE DU MONDE

ذاكرة العالم

MEMORY OF THE WORLD

世界的記憶

MEMORIA DEL MUNDO

ПАМЯТЬ МИРА



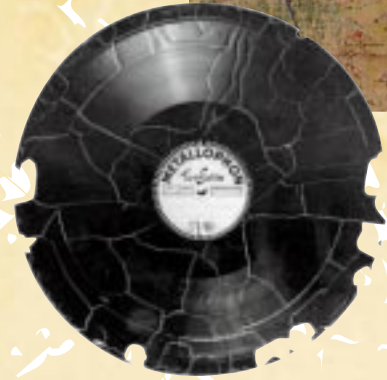
U N E S C O



If stone, paper, parchment and papyrus are the guardians of an almost legendary past, the language of films and multimedia become the testimony of our time and of our future.

In a world where emphasis is placed on speed, and where everything is becoming increasingly confused and hurried, we have to take the time to conserve the images of those things defining our roots, our past and our existence.

To this end, in 1992, UNESCO launched the “Memory of the World” Programme.



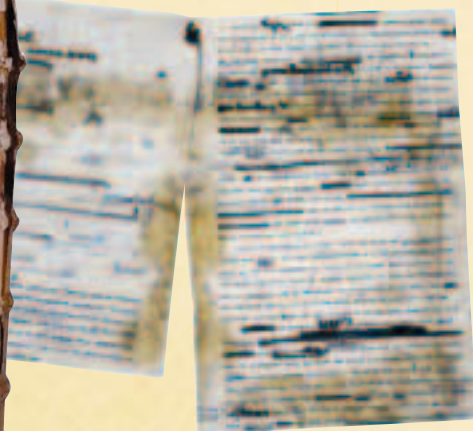
Loss of instantaneous records
 “Lacquer disk” or “acetate disk” used from the 1930s to the 1950s
 Photo: Phonogrammarchiv, Austrian Academy of Science



Damage from ink and copper corrosion
 18th century manuscript
 Photo: University Library, Graz



Mechanical damage
 17th century atlas folio
 Photo: Austrian National Library



Water damage and biological decomposition
 20th century typescript with hand correction
 Photo: Austrian National Library



Loss of cinematographic heritage
 Decomposition of nitrate films
 Photo: Austrian Film Archives



Damaged Tibetan records
 Photo: The Kashag Historical Archives of Tibet, China



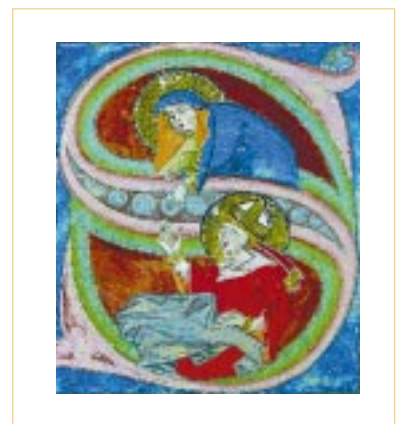
The Common Memory



Documentary heritage in libraries and archives constitutes a major part of the memory of the peoples of the world and reflects the diversity of peoples, languages and cultures. However, that memory is fragile.

Much of the world's documentary heritage is disappearing due to "natural" causes: acidified paper crumbles into dust; leather, parchment, film and magnetic tapes are weathered by light, heat, humidity or dust. Thus the cinema, for instance, is in danger of losing many of its earliest works. Thousands of kilometres of film may just fade away unless they can be quickly restored and copied. Also, many nitrate films have been lost in fires.

In addition to insidious causes of decay, several libraries and archives have been affected by floods, fires, hurricanes, storms or earthquakes. Such disasters are difficult to guard against unless preventive measures are taken.





Antiphonarium Sedlecense. The Resurrection,
13th-14th centuries, *Memoriae Mundi Series Bohemica*
Photo: National Library of the Czech Republic



Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts. Holy Ka'aba in Mecca
by 'Ibn al-Wardi,
Memoriae Mundi Series Bohemica
Photo: National Library of the Czech Republic



Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat, Priest Tang Ruowang's
principle on the calculation and completion of the lunar calendar,
17th century
Photo: Historical Archives of China, Xi Hua Men Nei,
Palace Museum, Beijing



Decorated page of the *Mustafa Berhan* (Book of the Light),
1442 A.D., Monastery of Daba Maryam, Eritrea



The "Memory of the World" Programme

In 1992 UNESCO launched the "Memory of the World" Programme to protect and promote the world's documentary heritage through preservation and access. These two tasks complement one another, for access incites protection and preservation ensures access.

The programme was given the following objectives:

- to raise Member States' awareness of their own documentary heritage, especially the part of it which holds significance in terms of common world memory;
- to arouse the interest of nations, institutions and peoples in safeguarding their documentary heritage;
- to encourage the preservation of documentary heritage which has world, national and regional significance;
- to make this heritage available to the largest possible audience by using the most appropriate technology;
- to develop products such as CD-ROMs, web sites, albums, books, or postcards promoting the concept of documentary heritage, and make them available for wide distribution.



Labyrint sveta a raj srdce by J. A. Comenius, 1623,
Memoriae Mundi Series Bohemica
Photo: National Library of the Czech Republic

The memory of the past.
Petroglyphs in Kyrgyzstan,
3rd millennium, B.C.
Photo: UNDP Office, Kyrgyzstan



The “Memory of the World” Register



The “Memory of the World” Register lists documentary heritage which has been identified by the International Advisory Committee as corresponding to the selection criteria for world significance. So far, 43 countries have nominated documentary heritage for inclusion in the “Memory of the World” Register, and the number of entries totals 47 collections from 26 countries.

“Memory of the World” National Committees have been set up in 32 countries:

Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, Cape Verde, China, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Croatia, Cuba, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Nepal, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Sweden, Tanzania, Thailand and Venezuela.

DENMARK
 - Archives of the Danish overseas trading companies,
 - The Linné Collection,
 - Manuscripts and correspondence of Hans Christian Andersen
 - The Søren Kierkegaard Archives

SLOVAKIA
 - Illuminated Codices from the Library of the Bratislava Chapter House
 - Basagic Collection of Islamic Manuscripts

GERMANY
 - Early cylinder recordings of the world's musical traditions (1893-1952) in the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv

MEXICO
 - Collection of Mexican Codices
 - Codices from the Oaxaca Valley
 - Codex Techaloyan from Cuajimalpaz



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
 - The Derek Walcott Collection
 - The Eric Williams Collection

SENEGAL
 - Afrique occidentale AOF



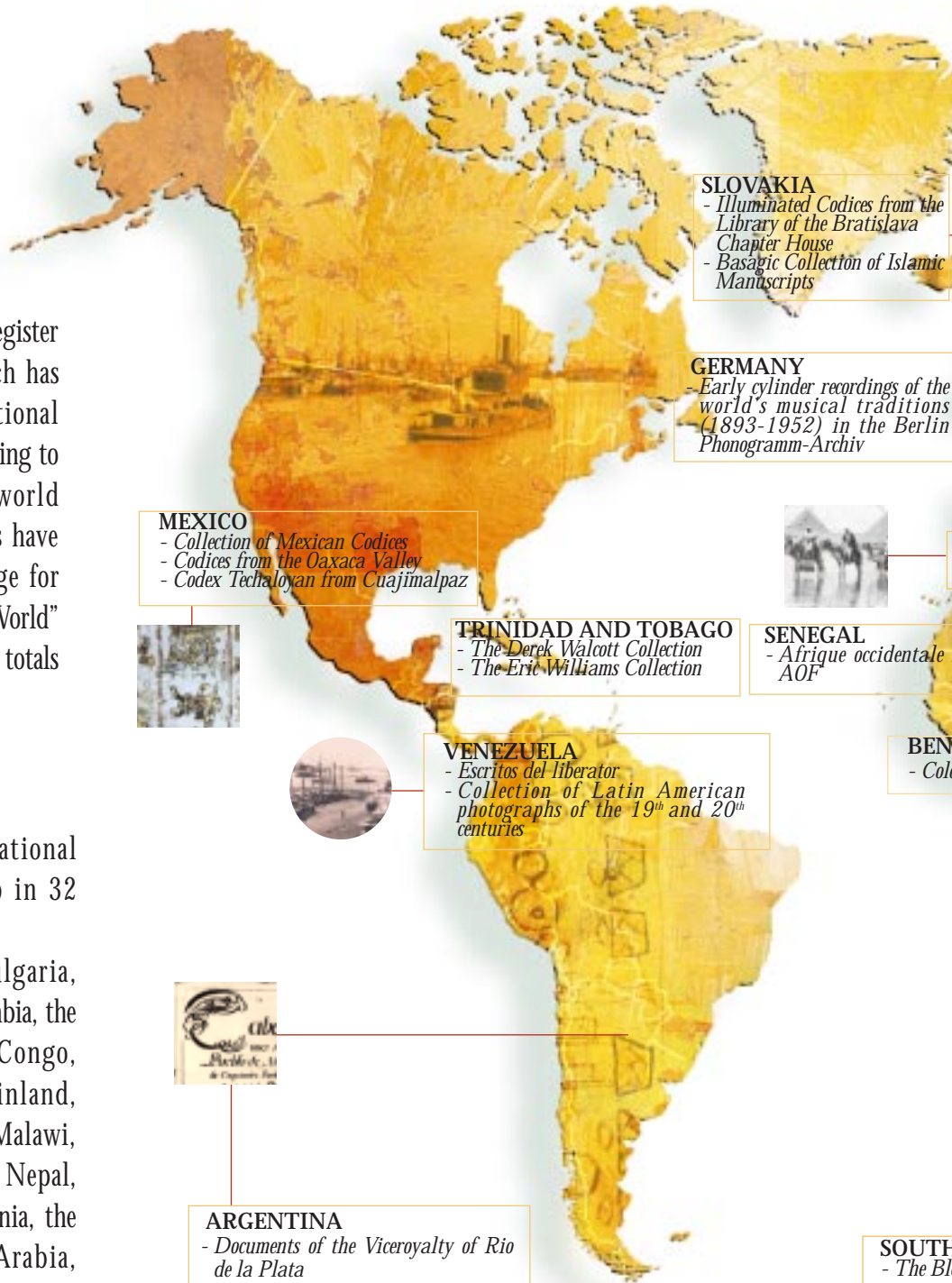
VENEZUELA
 - Escritos del liberator
 - Collection of Latin American photographs of the 19th and 20th centuries



ARGENTINA
 - Documents of the Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata

BENIN
 - Collections

SOUTH AFRICA
 - The Bloemfontein Collection



AUSTRIA

- Vienna Dioscurides
- Final Document of the Congress of Vienna
- The Historical Collections (1899-1950)



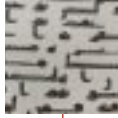
FINLAND

A.E. Nordenskiöld Collection



UZBEKISTAN

- Holy Koran Mushaf of Othman
- The Collection of the Al-Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies



RUSSIAN FEDERATION

- Archangel Gospel of 1092
- Khitrovò Gospel
- Slavonic publications in Cyrillic script of the 15th century
- Newspaper collections
- Maps of the Russian empire and its collection of the 18th century
- Russian posters of the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- The Hunmin Chongum manuscript
- The Annals of the Choson Dynasty

POLAND

- Nicolaus Copernicus' masterpiece "De revolutionibus libri sex"
- Warsaw Ghetto Archives (Emanuel Ringelblum Archives)
- The Masterpieces of Frédéric Chopin

CHINA

- Traditional Music Sound Archives
- Records of the Qing's Grand Secretariat

PAKISTAN

Jinnah Papers

PHILIPPINES

- Philippine Paleographs (Hanunoo, Buid, Tagbanua and Pala wan)



EGYPT

The Memory of the Suez Canal

ETHIOPIA

- Treasures from National Archives and Library Organizations

INDIA

- The I.A.S. Tamil Medical Manuscript Collection

ARMENIA

- Mashtots Matenadaran Ancient Manuscripts



TANZANIA

- German Records of the National Archives

MAURITIUS

- Records of the French Occupation of Mauritius



AFRICA

Week Collection



NEW ZEALAND

- The Treaty of Waitangi
- The 1893 Women's Suffrage Petition



Pilot projects

The “Memory of the World” Programme has established several pilot projects. These include preservation work and digitisation of :



Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts. Al-Qur'an,
1211 A.H. (1796 C.H.)
Memoriae Mundi Series Bohemica
Photo: National Library of the Czech Republic

Prague Manuscripts

A digitisation programme has been launched by the National Library in Prague in co-operation with a private firm, Albertina Ltd. and resulted in the publication of a number of CD-ROMs as *Memoriae Mundi Series Bohemica*. Digitising the most beautiful manuscripts and old prints of the National Library has facilitated access to these treasures without exposing the originals to heavy use, thus contributing to their preservation.



The Radzivil Chronicle, 15th century
Photo: Russian Academy of Sciences
Library, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation

The Radzivil Chronicle

Written in old Russian, known to the scholarly community according to its ownership in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Radzivil, or Koenigsberg Chronicle, is the most ancient example of the art of the Russian illuminated chronicle.



Sana'a manuscripts. Qur'anic fragments.
6th century
Photo: Great Mosque of Sana'a, Yemen

The Sana'a Manuscripts

In 1972, after heavy rain, a section of the wall of the Great Mosque of Sana'a collapsed. The work on the roof brought to light manuscripts which had been concealed in the ceiling for centuries. The parchment and paper fragments contain mostly extracts from the Qur'an, and they are of considerable interest for the linguistic, religious and palaeographic study of the literature of the early centuries of the Hegira.



Table showing the methods of arranging ruznames with respect to the Muslim and Christian years
Photo: Bogazici University, Kandilli Observatory and Earthquake Research Institute, Istanbul

The Kandilli Observatory Manuscripts

The aim of this project is the preservation of a collection of about 1 300 works on astronomy in three languages, Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, held in the Library of Kandilli Observatory and Earthquake Research Institute at Bogazici University in Istanbul.



Historical Collections. Fragment of Elementare by A. Milewski, 1629-1637
Photo: Vilnius University Library

Manuscripts of the University of Vilnius

The historical collections of the Vilnius University Library, including manuscripts, incunabula, and old atlases, were made available on the Internet and through a series of CD-ROMs. They are one of the best illustrations of European contributions to scientific advancement between the 15th and the 18th century.



Treasures from the Russian State Library. Newspaper collection. 18th century
Photo: Russian State Library, Moscow

Memory of Russia

The Slavic manuscripts held by the Russian State Library in Moscow include the archives of many of the major Russian authors such as Dostoevsky and Pushkin.



Dar Al-Kutub Manuscripts. Astronomy.
Photo: National Library and Archives of Egypt

Treasures of Dar Al-Kutub

A selection of precious manuscripts of the National Library in Cairo, Dar Al-Kutub, reproduced on CD-ROM offers a guided tour among the splendours of Arab culture and its contribution to the enhancement of knowledge in numerous scientific fields.



Persian Manuscripts Collection. Châmse by the poet Nizâmî.
1674, *Memoriae Mundi Series Bohemica*
Photo: National Library of the Czech Republic

Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts

The National Library of the Czech Republic possesses a collection of 150 Persian manuscripts dating from the end of the 14th century to the beginning of the 20th century. They include texts of important Persian poets and authors such as Sa'di, Hâfiz, Nizâmî, Rûmî. They also contain beautiful miniatures featuring various themes. The CD-ROM catalogue of this collection, accompanied by a brochure which may serve as a guide to Persian literature, is to be published.



St. Sophia Manuscripts. The New Testament, 1300-1400, Bulgaria
Photo: UNESCO

Saint Sophia

Devised by a group of Bulgarian and French writers the "Saint Sofia" project is a multimedia edition of Bulgarian manuscripts on an interactive compact disc. The documents selected include the facsimile reproduction, in the form of digital images, of Bulgarian manuscripts.



Water carrier in Quito,
1905, Ecuador
Photo: National Library
of Venezuela

Memoria de Iberoamerica

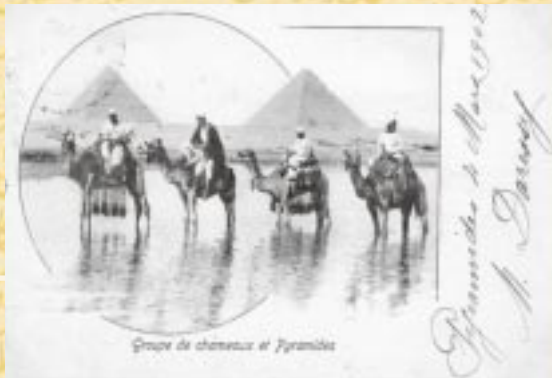
The national libraries of twelve countries, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, Peru, Portugal and Venezuela, have united to draw up a computerised inventory of some 6 000 titles of newspapers from the last century. The inventory was the first stage in a long-term scheme to safeguard and promote these collections through microfilming and digitisation.



Great Mosque of Bamako
Mali, 1895-1930

West African Postcards

The postcards chosen for this project are a pictorial treasure. Their rarity is due to their being dispersed in many countries, mostly in Europe. Only their presentation on a CD-ROM or a web site could bring them together, at least partially, under one theme or in a historical and geographical framework. The CD-ROM, prepared in collaboration with the Association Images Mémoires and ICG-Mémoire Directe, features 3000 postcards, which represents only a fraction of the 50, 000 postcards known for the period 1890 - 1930 in the sixteen countries concerned.



Camels and Pyramids.

Egyptian Postcards

These offer a unique description of early 20th century Egypt through its architecture and cultural life. This CD-ROM was prepared in co-operation with the Department for Egyptian Antiquities of the Louvre Museum in Paris and the Egyptian Delegation to UNESCO.

► CD-ROM on preservation

This CD-ROM prepared for UNESCO by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) offers a guide to the standards, recommended practices and reference literature related to the preservation of documents of all kinds.



Loss of cinematographic heritage
Decomposition of nitrate films
Photo: Austrian Film Archives

► Directory of Digital Collections

A directory of digitised documents held by libraries worldwide has been compiled in close co-operation with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). This database has been made available online, and will be regularly updated.

<http://www.unesco.org/webworld/mow/digicol/>



Damage by insects
Photo: Austrian National Library

On-going projects

A number of projects are awaiting the necessary funding



Photo: Alexander Art & Culture, Amsterdam

The archives of the Dutch East Indies Company

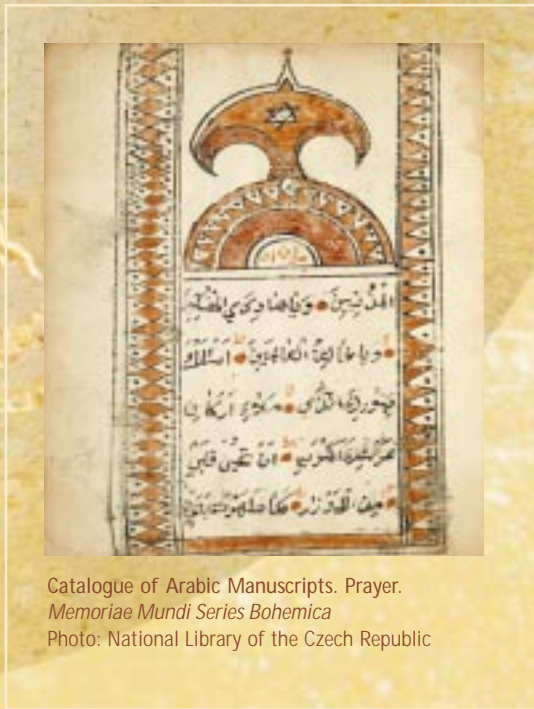
The aim of this project is to safeguard the extensive material heritage that this trading company left behind in the Netherlands, Asia and South Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and to make this heritage accessible for further use.

Slave Trade Archives Project

UNESCO has launched the Slave Route Project to examine the question of the slave trade and its impact on the economic and political situation of the countries involved. Archival materials should be the basis for the study of the slave trade. A feasibility study is being carried out in close co-operation with the International Council of Archives (ICA) to design a strategy for better preservation of slave trade records and their access through the UNESCO web site and other dedicated sites.

Palm-leaf manuscripts

This regional project aims to safeguard and digitise more than 100,000 palm-leaf manuscripts, which were for centuries the preferred medium for archiving traditional knowledge across most of South and Southeast Asia, including Myanmar, Malaysia, Cambodia, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand.



Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts. Prayer.
Memoriae Mundi Series Bohemica
Photo: National Library of the Czech Republic



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