

MOWCAP

ASIA PACIFIC MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

BACKGROUND

The *General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage* provide scope for moulding the guidelines for the Asia Pacific Register (Section 4.1). The following principles therefore apply to the MOWCAP Asia Pacific Regional Register:

- 1 As far as possible it will work to the *General Guidelines*. These will apply unless MOWCAP adopts specific variations.
- 2 All inscriptions from the Asia Pacific Region that appear on the International Register will automatically be included on the Asia Pacific Register.
- 3 MOWCAP is the authority that approves inscription on the Asia Pacific Register. (4.1.4)
- 4 The criteria for the Asia Pacific Register are identical to those for the International Register, except that references to the IAC are replaced by references to MOWCAP, and other corresponding variations are made.
- 5 Process and structures for managing the Asia Pacific Register, as far as possible, parallel those for the International Register.

THE PROCESS

- 1 MOWCAP has established an Asia Pacific Register Subcommittee. Its Terms of Reference and rationale for membership as far as possible parallel those of the Register Subcommittee of the IAC. It will assess nominations and provide recommendations for inscription or rejection to MOWCAP.
- 2 Nominations will be invited by and received by the MOWCAP Secretariat which will service the work of the MOWCAP RSC.
- 3 Inscriptions to the Register will be made every two years, in the even-number years (to alternate with the international register).

The Asia Pacific Register of the Memory of the World

(These guidelines have been adapted from the *General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage of Memory of the World.*)

1.1 International, regional and national registers

1.1.1 The *Memory of the World* Programme will maintain public registers of documentary heritage of world significance. In due course, all the registers should be available on-line. The more information is amassed, the more effective the Programme will be in identifying missing documentary heritage, in linking dispersed collections, in supporting repatriation and restitution of displaced and illegally exported material, and in supporting relevant national legislation.

1.1.2 There are three types of register: international, regional and national. All registers contain material of world significance (refer the criteria in 4.2) and an item may appear in more than one register.

1.1.3 The *international register* lists all documentary heritage which meets the selection criteria, has been approved for inclusion by the IAC, and has been endorsed by the Director-General of UNESCO. The register will be a significant document in itself, as well as an inspiration to nations and regions to identify, list and preserve their documentary heritage. Considerable status will accrue from listing, and it will be an instrument for advancing the Programme's objectives.

1.1.4 The *regional registers* list documentary heritage approved for inclusion by each regional committee of *Memory of the World*. The regional committee for Asia Pacific (MOWCAP) will maintain and publish the listing for the UNESCO Asia Pacific Region under the title *The Asia Pacific Memory of the World Register*. Its character will evolve over time in accordance with rules established by MOWCAP and approved by the IAC or Bureau. It may, for example, include a form of cooperation between national registers, and/ or list documentary heritage of regional influence which does not appear on national registers. It may afford opportunity for minorities and sub-cultures to be appropriately represented.

1.1.5 The *national registers* list documentary heritage of the nation approved for inclusion by the national committee of *Memory of the World* or, where there is no national committee, the corresponding National Commission of UNESCO. They will help to make governments and institutions aware of the total documentary heritage held by various kinds of organisations and private individuals, and the need for coordinated strategies to ensure the nation's endangered heritage is protected. The listing will be kept

up to date and published by one of these two bodies under the title *The [country] Memory of the World Register*.¹

1.1.6 Selection criteria for the Asia Pacific and national registers will use the criteria for the international register as a template, making the logical variations, and may incorporate additional criteria appropriate to the regional or national context. Likewise, the process of creating, receiving and assessing nominations, administered by the regional or national committee responsible, shall mirror the process for the international register. The reason for including documentary heritage in a register must be publicly stated as part of its description in the register.

1.1.7 Before a national register can be established, its documented selection criteria and nomination process must be approved by the IAC or Bureau. MOWCAP and national committees maintaining registers shall include in their annual reports a list of items added to/ removed from their register during the year.

1.1.8 Decisions about the inclusion of any documentary heritage in any register are based primarily on an assessment of its significance, not on an assessment of its location or management at the time of nomination.

1.2 Selection criteria for *The Asia Pacific Memory of the World Register*

1.2.1 Each register – international, regional or national - is based on criteria for assessing the cultural significance of documentary heritage. The following criteria reflect those of the international register, but also apply (with logical variation) to national registers.

1.2.2 Assessment is **comparative** and **relative**.: There can be no absolute measure of cultural significance. Accordingly, there is no fixed point at which documentary heritage qualifies for inclusion in a register. Selection for inclusion in a register will therefore result from assessing the heritage item on its own merits against the selection criteria, against the tenor of the *General Guidelines*, and in the context of other items already either included or rejected.²

1.2.3 When considering the documentary heritage for inclusion in the Asia Pacific Register the item will be **first** assessed against the threshold test of:

authenticity: Is it what it appears to be? Has its identity and provenance been reliably established? Copies, replicas, forgeries, bogus documents or hoaxes can, with the best intentions, be mistaken for the genuine article.

¹ For example, *The Malaysian Memory of the World Register*

² The context is provided in sections 2 and 3, most notably 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.8.2, 3.3.5, 3.3.6

1.2.4 **Second**, MOWCAP must be satisfied that the nominated item is of *world significance*. That is, it must be:

unique and irreplaceable, something whose disappearance or deterioration would constitute a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of humanity. It must have created great impact over a span of time and/ or within a particular supra-national cultural area of the region, It may be representative of a type, but must have no direct equal. It must have had great influence - whether positive or negative – on the course of history.

1.2.5 **Thirdly**, *world significance* must be demonstrated in meeting **one or more** of the criteria set out below. Because significance is *comparative*, these criteria are best illustrated by checking them against items of documentary heritage already inscribed on the international or national registers.

1. **Criterion 1 – Time:**

Absolute age, of itself, does not make a document significant: but every document is a creature of its time. Some documents are especially evocative of their time, which may have been one of crisis, or significant social or cultural change. A document may represent a new discovery or be the “first of its kind”.

2. **Criterion 2 – Place:**

The place of its creation is a key attribute of its importance. It may contain crucial information about a locality important in the history of the region and its cultures; or the location may itself have been an important influence on the events or phenomena represented by the document. It may be descriptive of physical environments, cities or institutions since vanished.

3. **Criterion 3 – People:**

The social and cultural context of its creation may reflect significant aspects of human behaviour, or of social, industrial, artistic or political development. It may capture the essence of great movements, transitions, advances or regression. It may reflect the impact of key individuals or groups.

4. **Criterion 4 – Subject and theme:**

The subject matter may represent particular historical or intellectual developments in natural, social and human sciences, politics, ideology, sports and the arts.

5. **Criterion 5 – Form and style:**

The item may have outstanding aesthetic, stylistic or linguistic value, be a typical or key exemplar of a type of presentation, custom or medium, or of a disappeared or disappearing carrier or format³.

1.2.6 **Finally**, the following matters will also be taken into account:

Rarity: does its content or physical nature make it a rare surviving example of its type or time?

Integrity: within the natural physical limitations of carrier survival, is it complete or partial? Has it been altered or damaged?

Threat: Is its survival in danger? If it is secure, must vigilance be applied to maintain that security?

Management plan: Is there a plan which reflects the significance of the documentary heritage, with appropriate strategies to preserve and provide access to it?

1.2.7 MOWCAP will, as necessary, adopt operational guidelines for applying the criteria.⁴

1.3 **Nominating to the *Asia Pacific Memory of the World Register***

1.3.1 The documentary heritage is the common moral property of all mankind. Nevertheless it is recognised that legal ownership may vest in an individual, private or public organisation, or nation. It follows that the heritage derives from all parts of the region and all eras of history, and over time the balance of registered items should reflect this fact.⁵

1.3.2 Historically, some nations and cultures are more oriented towards documentation than others. Minority cultures will tend to be overshadowed by majority cultures. Some documentary heritage – such as computer files and audiovisual media – may exist in variant versions or otherwise be harder to define or deal with than more discrete documents, such as unique manuscripts. Such factors as these must be kept in mind in trying to achieve a balanced register.

³ Such as illuminated mediaeval manuscripts, palm leaf manuscripts, obsolete video or audio formats

⁴ Operational guidelines for archival fonds are to be developed.

⁵ In the early years of the program a bias towards older materials, especially manuscripts, and against “modern media”, has been apparent. The program will need to achieve both geographic and temporal balance over time, and grow its capacity to identify potential nominations across the region.

1.3.3 Nominations for the register may be submitted by any person or organisation, including governments and NGOs. However, priority will be given to nominations made by or through the relevant national *Memory of the World* committee, where one exists, or failing that, through the relevant UNESCO National Commission. Priority will also be given to documentary heritage under threat. As a general rule, these single nominations will be limited to two per country every two years.⁶

1.3.4 In addition, two or more countries may put forward joint nominations where collections are divided among several owners or custodians. Such prior collaboration is strongly encouraged. There is no limit on the number of such nominations, nor on the number of partners involved. National *Memory of the World* committees, UNESCO National Commissions and NGOs are encouraged to identify potential nominations and support nominators in developing their proposals.

1.3.5 Indeed, the author – individual or collective – may still be living at the time of nomination⁷. Documentary heritage is not valuable purely for its age or aesthetic qualities.

1.4 Legal and management preconditions

1.4.1 The listing of documentary heritage in a *Memory of the World* register has no prima face legal or financial consequence. It does not formally affect ownership, custody or use of the material. It does not, of itself, impose any constraint or obligation on owners, custodians or governments. By the same token, listing also does not imply or impose any obligation on UNESCO to resource the conservation, management or accessibility of the material.

1.4.2 It does, however, imply a certain stance and commitment by the owners of the documentary heritage as well as indicate a continuing and informed interest by UNESCO in its preservation. As a prior condition for listing, MOWCAP would normally need assurances that there were no legal, contractual or cultural circumstances that would put the integrity or security of the documentary heritage at risk. It will require evidence that appropriate custodial, conservation or protective mechanisms are in place, that there is a management plan,⁸ that any physical, copyright, cultural or other factors limiting public

⁶ This rule is adopted as a means of managing the flow of nominations, and encouraging careful pre-selection of nominations within each country. MOWCAP will reserve the right to vary this parameter where the need warrants, for example to encourage countries with, as yet, little or no representation in the Register, or where the documentary heritage concerned is under particular threat. MOWCAP will also reserve the right to initiate nominations itself.

⁷ In theory, there is nothing to prevent authors – individually or collectively – nominating their own works! The assessment process, however, would take into account opinions other than those of the authors.

⁸ A management plan is normally a precondition for selection for the Register. Ideally a component of a total management plan for the custodial institution concerned, it may nonetheless be specific to the material if such a comprehensive plan does not exist.

access have been negotiated and resolved, so that appropriate access arrangements are guaranteed. Nevertheless, there can be circumstances in which the cause of preservation may be assisted by registration, even though owners or custodians object. Preservation of endangered heritage has first claim in available UNESCO funding.⁹

1.4.3 MOWCAP will also require that the documentary heritage be accessible. There are three levels of access:

- (a) access to verify the world significance, integrity and security of the material. This is the minimum condition for listing.
- (b) access for reproduction, which is strongly encouraged
- (c) public access in physical, digital or other form. This is also strongly encouraged, and in some instances may be required.

There may be a requirement that a single copy of part or all of the material is placed under the custodianship of UNESCO, not for public access but as a risk management measure with due legal and copyright permission and protection¹⁰.

1.5 Preparing nominations

1.5.1 In the light of the criteria and parameters set out above, all nominators are encouraged to prepare complete and comprehensive cases in order to aid efficient evaluation of their nomination. In the case of split collections, nominations need to be submitted jointly in the name, and with the documented support, of all involved parties. Assistance and advice from any convenient point in the *Memory of the World* structure is available if needed. This especially applies to countries, regions or categories of heritage that are under-represented.

1.5.2 The documentary heritage nominated must be finite and precisely defined, and finite. Broad, general or open-ended nominations will not be accepted. Nominations which duplicate those already listed in the Register are inadmissible. Typical acceptable examples are a discrete document or collection, a data base of fixed size and content, a closed and defined archival fond. MOWCAP will apply this principle with discretion in untypical cases: for example, where a discrete collection can be defined even if some of its elements are currently missing, the nomination may apply to the whole collection including the missing elements.

⁹ UNESCO National Commissions have an important role to play in fundraising and publicity for the Programme within their respective countries.

¹⁰ This would be at the discretion of the Director-General of UNESCO. It may apply in instances where material of significance is judged to be under threat, and this action is part of a strategy to secure the preservation and protect the integrity of item(s). This action would not usurp any of the legal, contractual or other rights pertaining to the heritage as no exploitation of the material is involved.

1.5.3 Where the documentary heritage exists in multiple copies and variant versions – for example, printed books or feature films released in differing versions or multiple languages – the nomination will apply to the **work** itself, rather than just the specific copies cited. If approved for inscription, MOWCAP will define criteria for those copies of the work which may be listed in the *Register* entry. Further copies of the work meeting these criteria may be added to the entry when a listing is requested by their custodians. .

1.5.4 Nominations should take into account the diversity and particularities of the documentary heritage in their country, basing nominations on the following factors:

- (a) the fullest match with the criteria
- (b) items under threat
- (c) items in under-represented categories

1.5.5 Nominations must follow the format prescribed in the [nomination form](#) and accompanying guide which can be downloaded from the MOWCAP website.

1.6 Submitting nominations

1.6.1 Nominations should be submitted to the MOWCAP Secretariat as indicated on the nomination form. When received, the Secretariat:

- (a) records each nomination, confirms the receipt to the nominator, verifies its contents and accompanying documentation; in the case of incomplete nominations, the Secretariat immediately requests the missing information from the nominator. If the nomination has not been provided through or by the relevant regional or national committee, their comment will be invited. Processing will not be commenced until all information is complete.
- (b) transmits the complete nomination to the Register Sub-committee for assessment and recommendation (see below).
- (c) submits the recommendations of the Register Sub-committee to MOWCAP at least one month in advance of its ordinary biennial meeting.
- (d) notifies nominators of MOWCAP's decision, and advises them on the presentation of successful nominations to the media. It also advises relevant national committees.

1.7 Assessment of nominations

1.7.1 The Secretariat manages the processing of nominations for the international register. Where necessary it may seek further information from nominators, respond to enquiries, set deadlines for acceptance of nominations or make other appropriate arrangements for the timely handling of nominations-in-process. These administrative arrangements will be posted on the MOWCAP website.

1.7.2 The Asia Pacific Register Sub-committee oversees the assessment of nominations. It is charged with the thorough investigation of each nomination and, in due course, the presentation to MOWCAP of a documented recommendation that the nomination be either added to the register, or rejected. Its documented methodology, including the priorities it assigns in processing, is to be posted on the website. It will seek expert evaluation and advice on each nomination from whatever appropriate sources it considers necessary, and will compare it to similar documentary heritage, including material already listed in the registers.

1.7.3 The sub-committee will normally call on the advice of expert bodies or professional NGOs. In the first instance, these are the Asia Pacific representatives of International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), the International Council on Archives (ICA), the Co-ordinating Council of Audiovisual Archive Associations (CCAAA), and the International Council of Museums (ICOM). These bodies may delegate tasks to one or more of their members.

1.7.4 In submitting their advice, the professional NGOs will be asked to express a view on whether the nomination does, or does not, meet the Selection Criteria. They will also be asked to identify any legal or management issues needing further attention before finalising a recommendation to MOWCAP..

1.7.5 The Asia Pacific Register Sub-committee will take into account the advice of the NGO, and any other advice it has sought, in reaching its recommendation. The nominator will be given opportunity to comment on the assessment before submission to MOWCAP.

1.7.6 The report of MOWCAP's ordinary session will include its decisions, the rationale for acceptance or rejection of each nomination, and any other comment it may wish to add.

1.8 Removal from the Register

1.8.1 Documentary heritage may be removed from the register in cases where it has deteriorated, or its integrity has been compromised, to the extent that it no longer meets the selection criteria on which its inclusion in the register was based. Removal may also be justified if new information causes a reassessment of the registration and demonstrates its non-eligibility.

1.8.2 The review process may be initiated by any person or organisation (including MOWCAP itself) through an expression of concern, in writing, to the Secretariat. The

matter will be referred to the Asia Pacific Register Sub-committee for investigation and report¹¹. If the concern is substantiated, the Secretariat will contact the original nominator (or, if uncontactable, other appropriate body) for comment. The Sub-committee will, in turn, evaluate the comment, and any additional data by then assembled, and make a recommendation to MOWCAP on removal or retention, or any appropriate corrective action. If MOWCAP decides on removal, the commenting bodies will be informed.

1.9 Lost and missing heritage

1.9.1 Major parts of the documentary heritage are lost or missing¹². Developing a public record of this now inaccessible heritage is a crucial means of placing the *Memory of the World* Programme in context, and is a precursor to the possibility of virtual reconstruction of lost and dispersed memory. It adds both urgency and perspective to the challenges of identifying and protecting the surviving heritage.

1.9.2 The *Asia Pacific Memory of the World Register* will include a section devoted to the listing of lost and missing heritage which, had it survived, would have been eligible for inclusion in the main body of the register. **Lost** heritage is material that is known to no longer survive – its decay or destruction is reliably documented or can be reliably assumed. **Missing** heritage is material whose current whereabouts is unknown, but whose loss cannot be confirmed or reliably assumed.

1.9.3 The selection criteria and nomination methodology set out above still apply, but with some logical differences:

- Since there may be no owner or custodian involved, the nomination may need to be made by some other party. The nominator does not have to have a legal, cultural, historical or other connection with the material in question. There is no limitation on the range of individuals or organisations who may initiate a nomination, and there is no limitation on the number of nominations from any source. UNESCO may itself initiate nominations.
- Since the document, collection or field of material concerned is not available for inspection, it cannot be precisely listed, but only described in general terms. The nominator will need to attempt the best description that can now be achieved.
- Issues of preservation, management and access, of course, do not apply.

¹¹ The investigation may include commissioning an independent assessment from a qualified person or organization; seeking the views of the relevant NGOs; seeking the views of the relevant regional and national *Memory of the World* committees.

¹² For a sobering window into this subject, refer to the *Memory of the World* publication, *Lost memory – libraries and archives destroyed in the 20th century* (UNESCO, 1996).

- As far as is now possible, the nominator should describe how the documentary heritage was lost: the fuller the description, the better.