

## ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR MEMORY OF THE WORLD (MOWCAP)

### REPORT TO MOW INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING 2009

This report covers the main activities of MOWCAP since the previous IAC meeting in June 2007.

MOWCAP comprises the delegates of the (currently) 15 national MOW committees in the Asia Pacific region. A further 6 countries have identified with MOWCAP as observers. Additional national committees are in the process of formation. For operational purposes MOWCAP relates to, and is accredited by, the UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok, Thailand.

MOWCAP's statutes, minutes of meetings, and other documentation are available on its website at [www.unesco.mowcap.org](http://www.unesco.mowcap.org)

### Background

MOWCAP embraces UNESCO's Asia-Pacific area – that is, the 45 countries bounded by Mongolia in the north, New Zealand in the South, the Pacific island countries in the east, and Iran and the “stan” countries in the west. Notable characteristics of the region are:

- Political, linguistic and cultural diversity
- Economic disparity: first world to third world.
- Population size ranging from the world's largest (China at 1.3 billion) to smallest (Niue at 2000)
- Its size and the tyranny of distance. Much of the Asia Pacific is ocean, many countries are islands, travel and communication is costly.
- Cultures of great richness and antiquity, yet many nation states are relatively young in their present form. A general history of colonization creates particular issues in the repatriation of documentary heritage.
- Many countries are tropical, with temperature/ humidity destructive of documentary heritage.
- Archives, libraries and museums often lack adequate funds, infrastructure and skills.
- Contains almost 50% of the world's population and 25% of UNESCO member countries.

### MOWCAP membership and contacts

Current members are Australia, Cambodia, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Krygyzstan, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Vietnam.

In addition, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> General Meeting, in February 2008, delegates from India, Laos, South Korea, New Zealand, Uzbekistan, Macau SAR and the Pacific Islands attended as observers.

Enquiries on setting up a national MOW Committee were received from Brunei Darussalam, South Korea and Vanuatu.

Countries participating in the February 2009 workshop were Bhutan, Cook Islands, Fiji, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam.

In summary, in the course of the last two years, MOWCAP has directly interacted with 31 of the 45 countries in the region.

## **Meetings**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> General Meeting of MOWCAP was held in Canberra, Australia on 17-18 February 2008, hosted by the National Library of Australia. The Bureau met in Bangkok on 2-4 February 2009, hosted by the National MOW Committee of Thailand, and supported by the Ministries of Culture and Education. The 4<sup>th</sup> General Meeting is scheduled for March 2010 in Macau, and will be hosted by the Macau Foundation.

## **Bureau**

The current Bureau comprises:

Chair: Ray Edmondson  
Deputy Chair: Carmen Padilla  
Secretary General: Helen Swinnerton  
Regional UNESCO Advisor: Dr Susanne Ornager  
Register subcommittee chair and Goodwill Patron: Dr Rujaya Abhakorn  
Publications subcommittee chair: Richard Engelhardt (from October 2009)  
Special advisors: Sarah Choy, Simon Chu, Jinsung Jeon, Akira Genba

Simon Chu served as Secretary General until late 2008 and Professor Eun-su Cho as Chair of Publications Subcommittee until April 2009. The Bureau is elected by the members for a 4 year term, and the next election will be at the 2010 General Meeting.

## **Asia Pacific MOW Register**

The Regional Register was launched at the MOWCAP General Meeting in February 2008, where certificates for the first four inscriptions were presented to representatives of the recipient institutions at a celebratory dinner, hosted by the National Library of Australia, in Old Parliament House. The inscribed items are:

Australia: Constitutional documents  
Cambodia: Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives  
Indonesia: Nagara Kertagama  
Thailand: Epigraphic Archives of Wat Pho

As an example of the public attention and recognition a single inscription can attract, the subsequent transmission of the inscription certificate to the Lord Abbot of the Wat Pho Monastery in Bangkok brought intense press, radio and television coverage. The occasion, in March 2008, was a merit making ceremony to celebrate the historic inscriptions. It was attended by the Thai Ministers of Culture and Education and other dignitaries. Wat Pho is a major tourist destination in Bangkok, and the archives, which are on stone tablets, can be readily inspected by visitors.

## **“Memory”**

This is the working title of a coffee table book celebrating the documentary heritage of Asia Pacific. It is the first major project of the Publications Subcommittee, and is being prepared in conjunction with a commercial publisher and UNESCO headquarters. It is envisaged as a “pilot” for a series that might eventually encompass MOW in other parts of the world.

The core of the book will be illustrated articles on all items from the region currently inscribed on the International and Asia Pacific registers. The editor is Philippines scholar Nick Deocampo, and the Publications Subcommittee and well as the UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok is sharing the task of gathering the textual and pictorial content.

## **Workshops**

*July 2007* - MOW workshop in **Colombo, Sri Lanka**, 22-28 July. This week-long program was organized by the Korean National Commission for UNESCO and participants came from a range of collecting institutions. MOWCAP chair Ray Edmondson participated, and the topics included practical preservation and collection management issues.

*August 2007* – MOW seminar in **Nong Khai, Thailand**, organized by the Thai MOW Committee. MOWCAP chair Ray Edmondson and Goodwill Patron Dr Rujaya Abhakorn presented. Participants came from Thailand and Laos, and the event focused on the audiovisual heritage, including collections of traditional music.

*September 2008* - At the invitation of the State Records and Archives Department of **Vietnam**, the MOWCAP Goodwill Patron, Dr Rujaya Abhakorn, conducted a MOW Workshop in **Hanoi** over 30 September – 1 October 2008. The workshop embraced a general introduction to the MOW program and the concept of documentary heritage, and guidance on developing nominations.

*February 2009* – Korean National Commission for UNESCO, in cooperation with the Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, the Cultural Heritage Administration of **Korea** and other supporters, hosted an Asia Pacific Training Workshop, held at **Icheon** (near Seoul) over 18-20 February 2009. The purpose of the workshop was to encourage ten countries which are not yet represented on an MOW register to develop nominations. All participants came to the workshop with draft nominations which were discussed with mentors and in working groups, and were developed and refined over the three days. The weather obliged with an unseasonable snowfall, giving some participants their first experience in seeing and handling snow!

At the time of writing, other workshops are in prospect in **Cambodia** and **Iran**. A one day workshop is scheduled at the PARBICA conference in **Brisbane, Australia** in October 2009.

## **Follow up from Third International MOW Conference**

At the conference held in Canberra in February 2008, the UNESCO Bangkok office was mandated to pursue the issue of developing a methodology for harmonizing the three UNESCO programs for tangible, intangible and documentary heritage. This project was reviewed at the MOWCAP Bureau meeting in February 2009 and is currently a work in progress. Funding assistance has been sought from UNESCO HQ and from government sources in Thailand.

The conference also discussed the question of a MOW convention – an issue that resonates in the Asia Pacific region and will remain on the MOWCAP agenda.

## **Goodwill Patron**

Dr Rujaya Abhakorn has a roving brief to represent MOWCAP and assist the growth of MOW committees in the region. In February 2008 he was invited to attend the certificate presentation ceremony at the National Library of Indonesia, Jakarta, which followed the inscription of *Negara Kertagama*<sup>1</sup> on the Asia Pacific MOW Register. The event was a formal celebration of the first recognition of an Indonesian document on an MOW register, and was attended by dignitaries, educators and historians. Dr

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<sup>1</sup> Literally “description of the country”, the document was written in AD 1365.

Rujaya participated with other academics in a panel discussion on the document, which was put on display.

During his mission to Hanoi (see above) Dr Rujaya visited archive facilities in Ho Chi Minh City, Dalat and Hanoi and met with the senior officials responsible for the MOW program in Vietnam.

## **ICA congress**

MOWCAP Chair, Ray Edmondson, participated in a presentation on MOW at the 4-yearly congress of the International Council on Archives (ICA), held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in June 2008. Other presenters were Ms Miriam Nisbet, head of the Information Society Division of UNESCO, and Dr Wladyslaw Stepniak, representing ICA. The occasion was important public declaration of ICA's support for MOW.

## **Other regional issues and perspectives**

Important issues canvassed at the Bureau and General meetings included:

- **Legal status** of MOWCAP: it was ultimately established that MOWCAP is a subsidiary body of the IAC and cannot have a legal personality. This impacts on its ability to raise and manage sponsorship funds. A **funding** task force was established within the extended Bureau to look at ways of overcoming this limitation.
- In the presence of representatives from MOWLAC and ARCMOW at the 3<sup>rd</sup> General Meeting, the **general role of regional committees** in the MOW structure was discussed. Acting as intermediary bodies, regional committees were best placed to plant, monitor and mentor national committees, and collect reports and information on behalf of Paris HQ.
- The need to clarify the **respective roles of national, regional and international MOW registers**. It was noted that the distinction between them was solely based on the geographic impact and influence of the documentary heritage in question.
- The Bureau has so far been preoccupied with the planting of national committees, the Register, publicity and awareness raising. What else should it do? Serve as an **information resource** on planning and advocacy issues? Offer a list of **preservation experts**? Can we coach members in each country in **fundraising** and **advocacy** to their governments? Can we list issues backed up by suggested actions?
- How do we build a sense of **community** among members? A newsletter? Creative use of the MOWCAP website? A blog? Visits, workshops, training?
- **Do we envisage a MOW in every country?** If so, what's our step by step **strategy** to achieve this? **What tasks should we encourage national committees to commit to?** Should they become sources of preservation and management information? Should they be advocates to their governments on behalf of the library/ archives/ museums sector? Should they offer it intellectual leadership within their own countries? What training, advice or help should we be able to offer?

In some cases there were more questions than answers! The questions are insistent, however, and will be tabled at the next General Meeting. They are implicit in the character of MOW.

## **National committees**

This report does not cover the individual activities of national MOW committees in the region...that would make it far too long. National reports are added to the MOWCAP website as agenda papers for General and Bureau meetings.

### **Regional office support and financing**

MOWCAP's operating resources come from many quarters – from the immense amount of volunteer time devoted to its work, and the substantial costs in cash and kind absorbed by individuals and supportive institutions, as well as UNESCO itself. Certain direct costs have been met by UNESCO's Regional Office in Bangkok, including travel by MOWCAP officers and some other meeting participants, and other expenses, and maintains MOWCAP's "budget line" in its system.

Ray Edmondson  
Chair, MOWCAP

20 June 2009