

# An overview of the MoW Programme

An analysis of how it has evolved in relation to its International Register and prospects for its future in view of the comprehensive review

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Chair of the Register Subcommittee

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# Memory of the World



1991 DG Federico Mayor:

- Need for a global strategy to ensure the long-term protection of documentary heritage, for its historic and evidentiary value, as well as for research and educational purposes ->

1992 Launch of MoW Programme

# MoW Programme



Vision:

Documentary heritage

- ... belongs to all
- ... should be fully preserved and protected for all
- ... should be permanently accessible to all

# MoW Programme



## Mission:

- To increase awareness and protection of the world's documentary heritage
- To achieve its universal and permanent accessibility

# Observation 1



- The basis of the Memory of the World Programme, its vision and mission, is not under question.

# MoW Programme



## Achievements:

- National and Regional MoW Committees
- Registers: national, regional, international
- Conferences on thematic and technical issues
- Capacity building workshops
- Technical advice in preservation projects
- Subcommittees Technology, Marketing, Education & Research
- Cooperation with IFLA, ICA, CCAAA and ICOM
- Jikji Prize



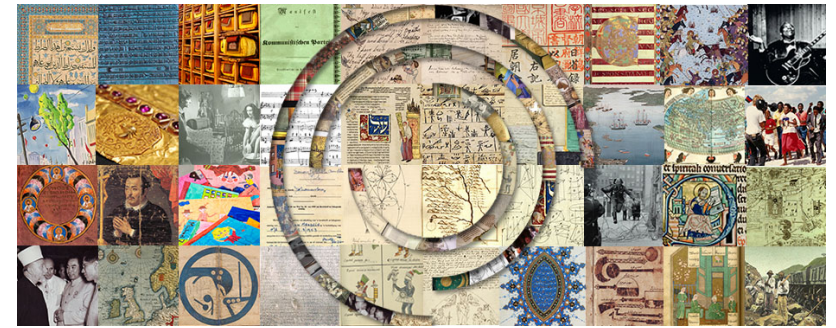
# MoW International Register



- Shop-window of the MoW Programme
- List of documents with world significance:
  - Their impact transcends national and regional boundaries
  - Their loss would mean a sincere impoverishment for humanity
- 430 items listed



# MoW International Register

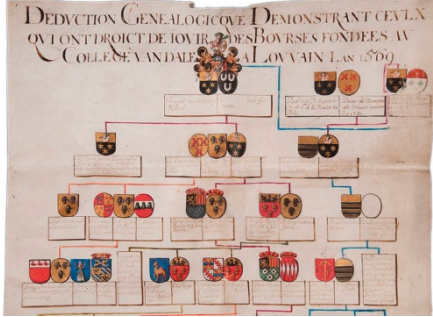


- MoW programme launched in 1992
- First inscriptions in 1997 - some examples:

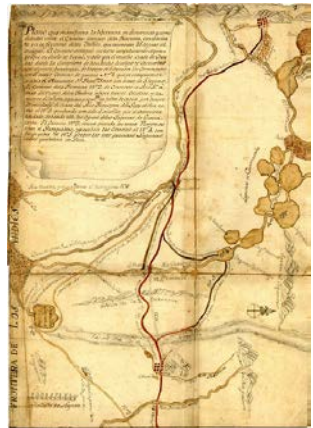
- Manuscripts and correspondence of Hans Christian Andersen
- Final document of the Congress of Vienna
- Tamil medical manuscripts collection
- Khitrovo gospel (Russia)
- Traditional music sound archives from China
- Records of the French occupation of Mauritius



# Diversity of documents: carriers and content



An open manuscript with Arabic text. The left page features a circular diagram with concentric lines and text inside. The right page contains several columns of handwritten Arabic script.



A page of handwritten text in a cursive script, possibly a letter or a document. The text is dense and fills most of the page.

A page of text in a formal, blocky script, possibly a religious or official document. The text is arranged in columns.



# Observation 3



- The vast majority of nominations does not deal with politically sensitive issues.



# Success of the International Register (1)



- Increasing number of submitted nominations:
  - 2011: 78
  - 2013: 84
  - 2015: 89
  - 2017: 130
- Quality of the submitted nominations has improved
- Number of countries with inscriptions is still growing

# Success of the International Register (2)



- Subcommittee on Education and Research
- Five Memory of the World Research Centers
- Conferences, Seminars, Workshops, Exhibitions, Newsletters
- Scholarly publications, coffee table books for a wider audience
- Websites, Wikipedians in residence
- Money for digitization and preservation (including crowdfunding)
- Media attention

# Observation 5



- The International Register fulfils its purpose: to promote awareness of the importance of documentary heritage.

# Sensitive nominations



## Politically sensitive nominations from the very start:

- Records of the French occupation of Mauritius
- Colonial archives of Benin
- Writings of Símon Bolívar

## Some examples of later inscriptions:

- 21 Demands from Gdansk
- Criminal Court Case of the State of South Africa versus Nelson Mandela
- Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives
- Registry of Slaves of the British Caribbean
- CLAMOR fond (Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in South America)

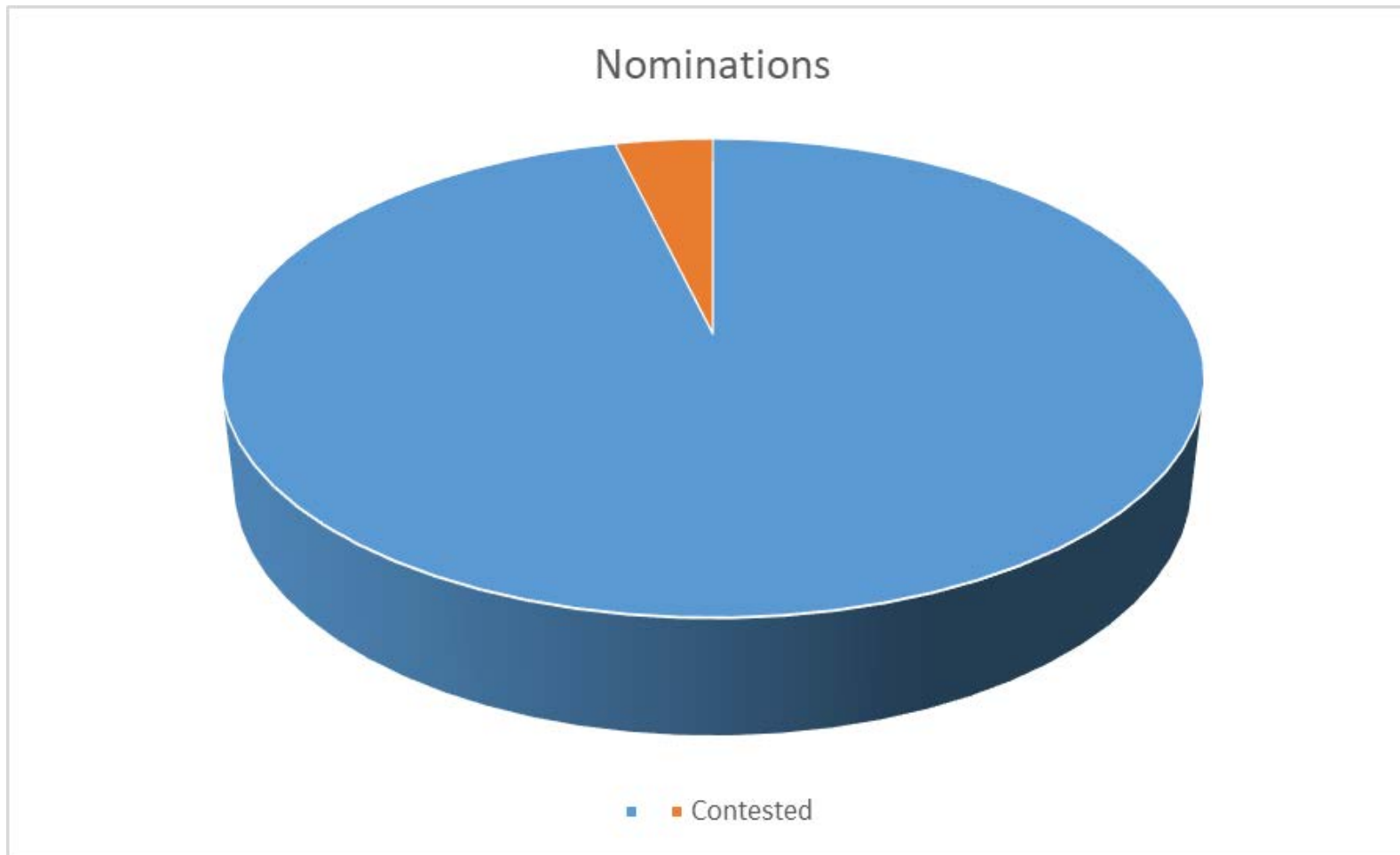


# Contested nominations



- Contested nominations are a recent phenomenon
- Difficult to predict which nominations will provoke reactions
  - Karl Marx *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital*
  - Che Guevara *Diary and other personal manuscripts*
- Over 95 % of all nominations (both accepted and rejected) have never been contested

# Observation 6



# Contested nominations



MoW's concern is with the preservation and accessibility of documents.

Inscription of a nomination does not in any way imply automatic agreement by UNESCO with its content.

UNESCO does not enter into disputes on the interpretation of historic events.

The International Register is not about 'good' and 'bad' documents. It is about unique and irreplaceable documentary heritage, that has had great influence – whether positive or negative – on the course of history.

# Contested nominations (2)



“History is an unending dialogue between the present and the past” (E.H. Carr)

Documentary heritage belongs to the sphere of intellectual discourse. The International Register is no playground for geopolitical games.

Any dialogue should be based on the knowledge of unbiased experts, and should be conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and acknowledgment that different viewpoints may exist.

# Input for Guidelines review



The retention of MoW's expert-led character was considered a defining strength of the Programme and its credibility.

The importance of the 2015 *Recommendation* as the appropriate legislative reference point was confirmed; the idea of a MoW Convention was seen as inappropriate.

All nominations for the International Register should be processed in the same way, including any nominations that had been subject of discussion or questioning. Any comments or objections needed to be dealt with by due process.

# Observation 7



Great consensus:

- MoW's expert-led character
- No steps towards a MoW Convention
- All nominations to be processed in the same way

# Input for Guidelines review (2)



Should nominations be filtered or pre-approved by another party (such as a national MoW committee or UNESCO national commission) before being accepted for assessment?

- Opinion was equally divided.

Third parties have opportunity to comment and have their views taken into account.

# Results of the Survey



Do you agree with the revisions to be introduced into the General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage?

Yes, entirely	11	(41 %)
Yes, with updates	12	(44 %)
No	4	(15 %)
Did not respond	166	



# Interim summary



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- 95 % of all nominations are not contested
- Which nominations will be contested is difficult to predict
- All nominations should be processed in the same way









# Interim conclusions



- A “small” problem should not block the working of the International Register nor other parts and activities of Memory of the World.
- A “small” problem in a successful programme does not justify big structural changes; a “small” problem should be solved with a light and flexible mechanism.

# Nomination process



- Every inscription goes through the same nomination process
- 2-years cycle (on hold)
- Open call for nominations by the Secretariat
- Everybody can nominate: public/private owner, custodian, government, ngo, national UNESCO commission or MoW committee, individual
- Maximum of 2 nominations per country (except joint nominations)

# Assessment process (1)

## - revised Guidelines



- Formal examination by Secretariat on legal and technical issues ->
- Nomination form uploaded on MoW website, open for comments by anybody
- Nominator, relevant permanent delegations, national UNESCO commissions and MoW committees notified
- Assessment by Register Subcommittee, which will take into account all received comments ->
- Preliminary recommendation

# Light, flexible mechanism - revised Guidelines



Received comments give reason to the RSC for preceding actions, for example:

- Suggestions for reformulation of the nomination or for adding or removing documents
- Initiating a dialogue with third parties
- Asking assistance from external experts or mediators

The course of action could take many forms

-> Assessment, preliminary recommendation by RSC

# Assessment process (2)

## - revised Guidelines



- Preliminary recommendation sent to nominator, copying relevant permanent delegations, national UNESCO commissions and MoW committees
- Opportunity for response by nominator ->
- Final RSC recommendations with explanations ->
- International Advisory Committee (IAC)

# Assessment process (3)

## - revised Guidelines



- International Advisory Committee reviews all recommendations ->
- Proposal to UNESCO Director General ->
- Decision by UNESCO Director General
- Nominators are informed about the outcome
- Successful nominations announced to the media

# International Advisory Committee (IAC)



- Advisory body to the Director General
- 14 experts (currently 7 women, 7 men)
- Coming from all UNESCO regional groups
- Representing different schools of thought and disciplines
- Serving in a personal capacity
- With a long experience in libraries, archives (including audio-visual archives), museums, heritage studies, (cultural) history etc.

# Register Subcommittee (RSC)



- Subsidiary body to the IAC
- 9 experts (currently 5 women, 4 men)
- From all parts of the globe
- With a long experience and a wide network in libraries, archives (including audio-visual archives), museums, heritage studies, (cultural) history etc.
- Serving in a personal capacity
- IFLA (libraries), ICA (archives), CCAAA (audio-visual archives) and [in the future] ICOM (museums) are represented in the RSC



# Way of operating

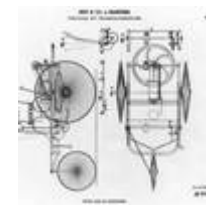


- RSC assesses all nominations : Do they meet the criteria?
  - Studying the nomination form and received comments
  - Scholarly research, using all available appropriate sources
  - Consultation of experts, both proposed by nominators and from its own network
  - Comparing the nominated items with similar documents, including documents already on the Register
  - Composing a substantiated recommendation
- IAC oversees the work of the RSC, makes its own judgements

# Criteria for inscription (1)



- Authenticity and integrity
- Historical significance
  - Political or economic developments, social or spiritual movements, world-changing events, changes in patterns of life and culture
  - Eminent personalities, unique phenomena, noteworthy traditions, critical innovations
  - Examples of excellence in the arts, literature, science, technology, sports, etc.



# Criteria for inscription (2)



- Form and style
  - Fine exemplar, outstanding beauty and craftsmanship
  - New or unusual type of carrier; type of document now obsolete or superseded



- Social, community or spiritual significance

# And finally



We all should strongly and explicitly communicate:

- The International Register is a unique collection of very diverse, beautiful, inspiring, surprising, colourful, and important documents - for everybody to study and enjoy.

