



Memory of the World and the Academic World: A Proposal to Introduce *Memory of the World Studies*

1. Preliminaries

The MSC MoW Action Plan 2009-2012 reveals “university researchers” under “Target Audience A. Professionals” as being among the core target groups for MoW promotional activities. The probably most effective way to reach the academic world would be by founding *Memory of the World Studies* and implementing them into universities and other institutions of higher education. This would transcend awareness-rising by far: a global MoW network of research and teaching would help to improve the systematic development of the Programme and the professionalization of working for documents and kindred forms of human heritage in an international context, thus building new capacities for universal access to information and knowledge.

This is not only a question of promoting MoW: From the perspective of the humanities and some technological disciplines, *MoW Studies* would cover a specific sector of the new field of human activities that arose with the development of the UNESCO heritage programmes (WCH, MoW, ICH). The ensemble of these programmes is the most extensive intentionally generated complex of memory and of safeguarding and mediating the contents of this memory in human history. “*Memory of the World* is an ‘umbrella’ for diverse knowledge and disciplines.” (*MoW General Guidelines*, 2002, p. 5). Based on the assumption that these programmes apply the highest standards, produce worldwide accepted outcomes of high quality that will be of long endurance, and aim at an audience of the most extensive scope, viz whole mankind, one has to draw the conclusion that such a new and very specific phenomenon requires a deepened knowledge and understanding and, seen from the practical side, the development of scholarly and scientific means to strengthen these programmes. The best way to reach such an understanding is to generate specific *Studies*, research and teaching, as the complexity and the peculiarity of these programmes hinder them from being covered by any existing academic discipline or even traditional interdisciplinary approaches.

While there are already some chairs/professorships for WCH in different parts of the world (see: whc.unesco.org/en/activities/121: “University World Heritage Studies Programmes”), there are none for MoW yet. The foundation of *MoW Studies* is something yet to come. It would help to improve human knowledge, could extend and promote MoW in a sustainable manner and institutionalize new means of international cooperation for human memory in its diversity. On the basis of international exchange, professors and students will be very effective multipliers for MoW.

It may be wise to introduce *MoW Studies* in the context of other heritage studies, especially those on UNESCO heritage programmes at universities in different regions of the world, or in faculties with close connections to the goals of *MoW Studies*. Thus *MoW Studies*, while following their specific tasks, could benefit from the experiences of other heritages studies, and at the same time help to instigate new forms of working and learning for and by UNESCO (and other) heritage studies, thus

being an innovative partner for some academic disciplines, different heritage programmes and for heritage institutions like archives, libraries, and museums.

2. MoW Chairs/professorships/lectureships

The long-term perspective is the creation of a set of MoW professorships/lectureships, at least one of them in each region. All institutions of higher education and research could be holding such positions, universities, universities of technology or applied sciences, academies, special schools of higher education, et cetera.

Although they all have MoW at the centre of their studies, each may put a main emphasis on special aspects like technology (ICT), media, archival or museological studies, semantics of documents, comparative cultural history, philologies, languages, and so on. In many cases this will depend on the context of the institutions, institutes, schools, they would work in. While the fundamental principles and more theoretical questions of MoW ought to be among their objectives, the professorships are to aim at the applicability at least of relevant parts of their work (applied research), for MoW itself and for the use in different sectors and on different levels of education.

There may be two groups of MoW professorships/lectureships:

1. Professorships fully or mainly dedicated to *MoW Studies*;
2. Professorships from disciplines close to the tasks of MoW, putting an explicit additional emphasis on MoW Studies (f.e. professor of archival studies or film history with special regard for *MoW Studies*); but to be a formal partner of the *MoW Studies* network, here, too, continuity in research, publications, teaching on MoW is necessary. Professorships of this second group may be installed more easily and could help to start MoW academic networking rather soon.

The MoW professorships (both groups) should be allowed to use the MoW logo in their letterhead etc with approval of the Secretariat/IAC for a certain time (four or six years), which could be extended if an evaluation of the outcomes would show the work had been successful.

This academic MoW net is expected to have a snowball effect and incite young researchers, students, and colleagues from different academic disciplines to work on MoW or questions related closely to MoW.

3. Tasks of Research

The following short list is just to give an idea of the multiple tasks of MoW research, f.e. on:

- the criteria and standards for the importance of documents (authenticity, aesthetic qualities, spiritual importance, and many other) and their applicability in different cultures and regions; definition of values in a comparative manner;
- 'translating' and mediating the importance of documents into different cultural contexts;
- the role of languages and translations for the understanding of documents and the promotion of MoW (with regard for cultural diversity and linguistic diversity);
- studies on common grounds and differences between similar documents in different regions, cultures, states (f.e. documents on music; on public crimes, and so on);
- technological questions of safeguarding and preserving documents, of mediating them by new information and communication technologies (ICT), of building bridges between MoW documents;
- standards for and technologies of electronic documents;

- marketing and promotional aspects of cultural heritage;
- strategies and tools of teaching of MoW; curricula for *MoW Studies* or MoW segments in wider heritage studies; sustainable implementation of MoW in different sectors of education (universities, schools, other institutions of learning and of knowledge like museums, libraries);
- common grounds of and differences between MoW and other UNESCO heritage programmes (WCH, ICH).

MoW Studies should instigate specific publications, f.e. e-publications, on MoW and related issues. Perhaps *Memory of the World Studies* could be the title of a scholarly journal, be it in print or in an electronic version.

4. Tasks of Teaching; special attention to e-learning; practical use; UNESCO MoW Curriculum

The MoW professors/lecturers should teach about the different forms of human heritage in its diversity and in different political and societal contexts; documents as important parts of human heritage; different forms of documents; their definitions; needs, methods, and standards of safeguarding and preserving them; all means of mediating them to the public, especially to young people; international and interregional aspects of working for documents.

As many universities are looking for teaching contents with a practical use, the participation of students in nomination processes, on whatever level of MoW Register, may provide them with valuable experiences, f.e. identifying potential MoW items; preparing of dossiers; developing of promotional, educational or conservation/management plans; cooperating with heritage institutions.

While there will be traditional forms of teaching in lecture rooms and class rooms, special attention should be paid to develop new forms of e-learning.

As some of these questions are tackled by specialised disciplines (f.e. archival studies; museology), *MoW Studies* seem especially suitable for students who want to work in leading positions in a broad field of heritage or just cultural professions, for which an interdisciplinary basis of knowledge is important, and for students for which specialisation in heritage professions is not useful (f.e. by financial reasons in some countries) or not in accordance with local traditions.

Teaching material should be identified or developed. Books already covering important aspects, should be proposed for worldwide use, like f.e. Roslyn Russell/ Kylie Winkworth: *Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections* (2009/2010, print and electronic), or adapted, if necessary. A certain worldwide standard could be developed by the choice or the making of teaching material. In the long run, **UNESCO MoW Curricula* (like f.e. *Model Curricula for Journalism Education*, UNESCO, CI, 2007) were to appear.

5. Cooperation

Close cooperation of the MoW professorships is strongly recommended with:

- the MoW Secretariat; the IAC and its sub-committees (Secretariat/IAC should be represented in advisory bodies f.e. of endowed MoW professorships); National UNESCO Commissions and MoW Committees;
- other MoW professorships, especially in an international cooperation; researchers and institutes of different regions and disciplines close to the tasks of MoW; joint MoW PhD ventures of universities in different countries could be one tool for this;

- experts for other UNESCO heritage programmes and conventions (“Diversity of Cultural Expressions”); other academic disciplines, close to the tasks of MoW Studies;
- heritage institutions (like archives, libraries, museums), and heritage associations like ICA, CCAA, IFLA, ICOM; etc.

Special attention should be paid to interaction with the UNESCO “UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme”, an interaction seeming desirable as UNESCO stresses “the dual function of UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks as ‘think tanks’ and ‘bridge builders’ between the academic world, civil society, local communities, research and policy-making” (*Guidelines and procedures for the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme* = ED/HED/UNITWIN/2006/PI/1 rev. 4 UNESCO, 2009, p. 2). It furthermore aims at “strengthening North-South, South-South and North-South-South cooperation”.

6. Further relevance for MoW

Many concrete positive effects of *MoW Studies* can be expected for MoW, for the quality of the programme and for its worldwide promotion. One aspect seems to be particularly interesting. If the impression is correct that the main emphasis and attention of the programme which covers a broad range of activities has been drawn slightly to concentrate on the World Register, *MoW Studies* could help gain the capacity to cover the broad range of tasks that make MoW so rich. With the network of *MoW Studies* the programme could follow its way to leadership in the work for documents more easily, working for outcomes and standards that are of importance beyond the programme itself.

7. Further relevance for UNESCO

The combination of MoW and *MoW Studies* offers rich opportunities to fulfill tasks UNESCO has set itself in an real intersectoral manner, as education, science, culture (as far as cooperation with the other heritage programmes is concerned), and information and communication are united in this combination.

Cooperation with further UNESCO programmes should be considered. One aspect of this cooperation would be that an integrated heritage management process (f.e. in relation to UNESCO conventions) may facilitate the conservation process needed particularly within small states.

The application of *MoW Studies* could provide an important element to implementing the research and documentation aspects required by conventions like WCH and ICH.

MoW Studies enlarge the possibilities to go new ways towards the information and knowledge society UNESCO works for, especially for the chapters it has taken over from the World Summit on the Information Society (2003/2005), “Access to information and knowledge”, “E-science and “E-learning”, “Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content”.

By joining the UNESCO “UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme”, on the one hand *MoW Studies* could add valuable new content to that university networking UNESCO programme, while on the other hand that programme would help to strengthen the global impact of MoW.

UNESCO may foster some of its global priorities by supporting special aspects of *MoW Studies* or activities in special regions.

8. Relevance for heritage studies in general

While sometimes people not familiar with MoW think it to be something for specialists, it has rather a

very broad interdisciplinary range. That is true from the side of the carriers (paper to electronic records); from the side of the contents, including nearly all aspects of human life (politics, religion, science, literature, societal aspects, and so on); from the side of regions, cultures, and languages; from the side of heritage institutions involved. As MoW “embraces documentary heritage over the whole of recorded history, from papyrus scrolls [...to] digital files” (*MoW General Guidelines*, 2002, p. 6), it reflects a great part of human cultural and technological development. For *MoW Studies* MoW is a complex phenomenon, seen as an object of research and applied research that as well can be taken as a complex model for a wide range of heritage questions. Students could learn a lot about many matters of heritage in *MoW Studies*.

As the academic world is looking for new forms of interdisciplinarity and international cooperation, *MoW Studies* could offer both as essential elements to a very high degree.

9. MoW Studies are not competing with existing studies or disciplines

As MoW Studies would have a strongly interdisciplinary character, they are not competing with existing disciplines. They would not have their eyes on replacing other studies, disciplines, or sub-disciplines which since long time do successful work on documents, like archival studies, scholarly editing of philosophical, literary or historical texts, f.e. But even to them MoW Studies could be a complementary net of knowledge, enhancing international aspects and the cooperation between different faculties.

In some cases it would be useful to implement a MoW professorship/lectureship (here and there even only as a part-time position) into an existing course of study and its staff, in other case the creation of a new course or even institute may be the right way (see above, paragraph 2., second half).

10. Recommendations for action

1. This Draft should be seen through, discussed, eventually modified, by the MoW Secretariat and the IAC and its appropriate bodies, meetings, and conferences. Other experts may be consulted. The acceptance of a Draft as a provisional basis for work could accelerate the momentum of this Proposal.
2. A short list of professors/lecturers and universities and other institutes of higher education ready to work for or expected to work for the aims of this Proposal should be made. The persons/institutions on the list should be contacted. Readiness to cooperate internationally (see 5.) is supposed. Experiences in MoW are most welcome.
3. A small number of concrete initiatives to institutionalize the idea of this proposal might suffice to start *MoW Studies*.