



Memory of the World Programme

## ITEM 5

### Report of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Register Sub-committee (Canberra, 28 February 2008 and Paris, 1-3 December 2008)

#### to the 9<sup>th</sup> IAC meeting, Barbados, 29-31 July 2009

Over the past two years the members of the Register Sub-committee (RSC) have been able to meet and work with one another more regularly than is usually the case between scheduled meetings of the IAC and the RSC. This extra contact and involvement has meant that the RSC has been able to maintain a high level of targeted activity, particularly in the area of assisting those who are preparing nominations for the Memory of the World registers.

The RSC was well represented at the Memory of the World International Conference held in Canberra, Australia, in February 2008. RSC members who attended the conference included Rujaya Abhakorn, Jan Bos, Ray Edmondson, Ken Hall, Nada Itani, and Roslyn Russell with Joie Springer, UNESCO Secretariat. Roslyn Russell presented a workshop on the process of nominating documentary heritage to the Memory of the World Register at the conclusion of the conference.

The RSC members met for discussion of a range of issues (see below) on 23 February 2008 at the historic Lanyon property outside Canberra. They were joined by observers Alissandra Cummins (Chair, UNESCO Memory of the World Programme), Jonas Palm (Chair, SCoT) and Elizabeth Watson (Vice-President, MOWLAC).



*RSC members and observers meet at Lanyon Homestead, Canberra, Australia. Left to right: Joie Springer, Ray Edmondson, Alissandra Cummins, Elizabeth Watson, Jonas Palm, Jan Bos, Nada Itani. Roslyn Russell took the photo.*

Sadly, this was the last time RSC members were able to meet with our esteemed colleague, Ken Hall. Several months after returning to the United Kingdom from Australia, Ken passed away. I want to express, on behalf of the RSC, our gratitude for Ken's contributions to our discussions, and to recall his gentle wit that charmed us all. We all have happy memories of time spent with Ken in Paris and Pretoria, and with his wife Stephanie as well in Canberra. His passing is a significant loss for the programme.



*The late Ken Hall, centre, at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Canberra, Australia, in February 2008, with his wife Stephanie and Roslyn Russell.*

The RSC met in Paris from 1-3 December 2008, primarily to consider the nominations to the Memory of the World Register, and to deal with other issues. Unfortunately Dr Rujaya Abhakorn was prevented from attending the meeting due to civil unrest in Thailand that led to the occupation of Bangkok airport by protesters, and its consequent closure. Dr Abhakorn however sent his recommendations by email, and they were considered as part of the discussion around the table in Paris. We welcomed Perrine Canavaggio as Ken Hall's replacement on the RSC; and also welcomed Dr Lothar Jordan, of the International Committee for Literary and Composer Museums (ICLM) as an observer.



*RSC meeting, Paris, December 2008. Left to right (back) Lothar Jordan, Jan Bos, Perrine Canavaggio; (front) Lourdes Blanco, Joie Springer, Nada Itani, Roslyn Russell, Ray Edmondson.*

The RSC discussed the 55 nominations submitted for the Memory of the World Register, and made recommendations that have been circulated to IAC members for consideration in Barbados. Other aspects of the discussion are outlined in *Issues*, below.

Just over two months after the RSC meeting in Paris, some of the RSC members met again in South Korea for a Regional Training Workshop for participants from Asia and the Pacific, held in Icheon, South Korea, 18-20 February 2009. The workshop was based on a successful model pioneered by the Caribbean sub-region of the Memory of the World Programme in November 2007, when MoW Chair Alissandra Cummins, RSC Chair Roslyn Russell and MOWLAC Vice-President Elizabeth Watson facilitated a workshop held in St Lucia and attended by delegates from the Caribbean and Central America. Participants had prepared draft nominations before the workshop, and these were critiqued by the facilitators, and comments returned to the nominators. The participants then worked on the nominations to improve them, with guidance from the facilitators.

The same methodology was applied at the MOWCAP Regional Workshop in South Korea in February 2009. The workshop was facilitated by RSC members Dr Rujaya Abhakorn, Ray Edmondson and Roslyn Russell in addition to Joie Springer, UNESCO secretariat and IAC member Professor Kyungho Suh. The participants worked hard over three days to improve their nominations, and we look forward to seeing the results in the next nomination round.



*Participants in the MOWCAP Regional Training Workshop, Icheon, South Korea, February 2009.*



*Rujaya Abhakorn, Joie Springer and Eun-hye Lee (Carrie) in Seoul, February 2009, before the Regional Workshop.*



*Joie Springer and Rujaya Abhakorn assist workshop participants in developing their nominations.*

A workshop along the same lines is to be held in Barbados immediately before the IAC meeting in July 2009. The facilitators are currently considering draft nominations for discussion at that workshop.

The last formal meeting of the RSC before the 9th IAC meeting in Barbados took the form of a teleconference held on 15 April 2009 to consider feedback from nominators after they had received the RSC's first recommendations. Due to technical problems with telephone connections, only three RSC members –Jan Bos, Ray Edmondson and Roslyn Russell, along with Joie Springer, UNESCO Secretariat – were able to be on line for the discussion. The meeting notes were circulated to the other RSC members for comment after the meeting.

#### *Issues discussed at RSC meetings*

1. Problems associated with problematic nominations.

The integrity of inscriptions on the Memory of the World Register is of paramount importance to the credibility of the programme, and all care is taken by the RSC to ensure that inscriptions do not

contain incorrect information. Problems with factual data, in particular concerning the ownership of specific collections of documentary heritage, have nevertheless arisen over the last two years, and have been referred to the relevant National Commissions for UNESCO for clarification and correction.

In the interest of accuracy, and to protect the Programme, the RSC will recommend revisions to nominations where information is known to be incorrect or insufficient. These recommendations are forwarded to nominators who are given time to respond and to take appropriate remedial measures. Any additional comments and/or supporting documentation are taken into consideration by the follow-up RSC meeting when making its final recommendation to the IAC.

## 2. Monitoring documentary heritage inscribed on the Memory of the World Register

At the Canberra meeting in February 2008, Jonas Palm, Chair of SCoT, drew the RSC's attention the fact that the *General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage* (Section 4.8) make provision for inscriptions to be removed from the Memory of the World Register if it is found that the inscribed material has deteriorated or been otherwise compromised. The RSC recommended that institutions whose documentary heritage has been inscribed should be circulated with a survey asking them to answer questions about the condition of the documentary heritage, and offering assistance. The RSC approved the text of such a survey at its meeting in Paris in December 2008.

## 3. Development of Operational Guidelines for Memory of the World nominations and assessment

This matter has been discussed at each RSC meeting, with RSC members commenting on successive drafts of a document prepared by Ray Edmondson and Roslyn Russell. The RSC wishes to recommend that the preparation of a manual to guide those preparing nominations for the Memory of the World register be defined as a publication project for the programme. RSC and Bureau members at the 9<sup>th</sup> IAC meeting in Barbados will be given copies (the publication is also available in digital form on the internet [proper URL to be advised]) of a recent Australian publication, *Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections*, which combines a detailed description of the process of assessing the significance of cultural heritage objects and collections, including documentary heritage collections, with case studies, some of them drawn from Memory of the World national and international registers.

The RSC believes that such a manual would be of enormous assistance to nominators in guiding them through the nomination process, and pointing out the strengths of particular nominations selected as case studies, and the reasons why they were successful.

In conclusion, the RSC has noted the increasing interest around the world in learning more about the process of nominating documentary heritage to the Memory of the World registers. Regrettably, unfamiliarity with the nomination process, and the amount of information required and in what form, often means that promising nominations fall short in addressing the criteria they must meet to qualify for inscription. We believe that a combination of training workshops such as those held in St Lucia, South Korea and Barbados, and in Australia, will assist greatly in the presentation of more effective nominations, and ultimately in registers that more truly reflect the nature of the world's memory captured and preserved in its documentary heritage.

Roslyn Russell  
Chair, Register Sub-committee  
1 June 2009