

# DIGITAL DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE: ACCESS FOR ALL

## *UNESCO Preservation Sub-Committee Panel*

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**Abstract – UNESCO Memory of the World Programme (MoW) and its Preservation Sub-Committee are concerned with the long term and sustained access to the World’s digital heritage. They are keen to engage with the digital preservation professionals around the world, to gather the requirements for effective international policies to support digital preservation actions and, more importantly, work towards reliable access to the world’s documentary heritage, now and in the far future. The past two decades have seen unprecedented increase in publishing, documenting, and communicating in the digital form, giving rise to a wealth of knowledge, insights and experiences. Digital information is becoming critical for education, skill building and participation in the global digital economy. This panel is organized by the UNESCO Preservation Sub-Committee to discuss the critical technological, policy and sustainability factors in providing effective access to the World’s digital documentary heritage.**

**Keywords – digital preservation, digital documentary heritage, access, technology, digital preservation policy**

**Conference Topics – Enhancing the Collaboration. Building the Capacity & Capabilities.**

### I. INTRODUCTION

Solid, coherent policies and plans are key to building a sustainable ecosystem of organizations, platforms and services that can preserve the World’s digital heritage and provide reliable access to documentation, information and knowledge to citizens around the World.

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and

Culture. UNESCO’s programmes contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in Agenda 2030, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015.

UNESCO Memory of the World Programme (MoW) through its Preservation Sub-Committee has recently organized a Virtual Policy Dialogue to begin work towards an international policy agenda for digital preservation. UNESCO’s objective is to fill policy gaps that must be addressed in order to mobilize national governments, industry, and international organizations to join forces in preserving and providing efficient access to the World’s digital heritage. The Virtual Dialogue highlighted policy gaps along four pillars that underpin every preservation action: technology, policy, sustainability and practices in preserving the digital heritage.

In order to continue the dialogue with the professional community, UNESCO MoW and the Preservation Sub-Committee propose to hold an iPRES 2021 panel on barriers and enablers for achieving **reliable access to the preserved digital heritage.**

### II. PANEL

UNESCO’s vision is one of the **inclusive knowledge societies**, where free flow of information is fully enabled through policies founded on four key principles: freedom of expression, equal access to quality education, universal access to information, and respect for cultural diversity.

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Engaging on the access requirements and access enablement methods is expected to help with honing onto important technological, legal and economical factors that require policy interventions to achieve a long-term access to and transfer of knowledge to new generations.

#### A. *Panel Format*

The panel will include:

**(I) Three practitioners** involved in three types of activities: creating digital documentary heritage, managing installations of complex digital objects (e.g., digital art with imbedded software), and managing scientific research repositories. Although dealing with different types of activities, they will reflect on

- Long-term preservation objectives
- Immediate needs and long-term enablement of access by considering technological, policy and sustainability issues.

#### **(II) Two specialists in two specific areas:**

- Technologies for enabling installations and long-term access with specific objectives (tasks, experiences, contextual use, etc.)
- Policies and current practices of access and access control, from NFT technologies that have emerged as essential for digital arts commercialization to research data ‘observatories’ and open-source software technologies that need to ensure validation and reproducibility of scientific results.

The panel will be moderated by members of the UNESCO Preservation Sub-Committee who will follow up with a written report on the panel discussion and document the outcomes for further considerations by the Preservation Sub-Committee.

#### B. *Panel Aims and Outcomes*

The objectives of this panel are to discuss

- **Guiding principles** that could be used to scope, describe and implement international and national policies on access to digital heritage.
- **Community engagement models** that would enable UNESCO to establish communication and participatory policy design.

The UNESCO Sub-Committee envisions a process that involves (1) community input in defining issues, (2) expert groups for designing, promoting and implementing policies, and (3) public review and feedback to support refinement of policies at the national and international level.

The panel discussion will

- Provide an opportunity to inform and inspire the iPRES community to take active part in the UNESCO work.
- Receive initial input and feedback on ways of achieving community participation at scale.
- Serve as an invitation to the practitioners to get involved in the initiatives by the UNESCO Preservation Sub-committee towards white papers and policy work.

### III. APPENDIX

In May 2008 UNESCO has adopted MAPUTO Declaration that clearly states the objectives of UNESCO to enable wide access to information by taking measures

To sensitize governments, legislators and public institutions on the importance of freedom of expression, including freedom to access, to produce and to share information;

To promote freedom of expression as a universal human right and to facilitate development of general principles and best practices on access to information;

To foster measures for media and information literacy;

To facilitate access to information and communication technologies and infrastructure in developing countries, as well as the development of all media, including for and by local communities;

To raise awareness among civil society organizations, governments and regulatory bodies, and the general public on the importance of sustainable and pluralistic broadcasting environments.

Building on these commitments, UNESCO Preservation Sub-Committee aims to ensure that World’s digital heritage is accessible to all and that the preservation professionals are active contributors to such an important mission.

[1] UNESCO Virtual Policy Dialogue, October 2020. <https://unescopersist.org/virtual-policy-dialogue-on-documentary-heritage-at-risk-policy-gaps-in-digital-preservation-27-october-2020/>

[2] UNESCO: Freedom of Information (FOI) <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/freedom-of-expression/freedom-of-information/about/>

[3] MAPUTO DECLARATION: FOSTERING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF PEOPLE, May 2008. [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/WP/FD2009/pdf/wpfd2008\\_Maputo+Declaration+-+Engl.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/WP/FD2009/pdf/wpfd2008_Maputo+Declaration+-+Engl.pdf)