

**E**CULTURE HORIZONS:

From Digitisation to Creating Cultural Experience(s)

**E**CULTURE DIMENSIONEN:

Von der Digitalisierung zum digitalen Kulturerlebnis

28109104 Parallel Session 1

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Abstract Abdelaziz Abid

**PRESERVING OUR DIGITAL HERITAGE: A UNESCO PERSPECTIVE**

A large part of the vast amounts of information produced in the world is born digital, and comes in a wide variety of formats: text, database, audio, film, image. For cultural institutions traditionally entrusted with collecting and preserving cultural heritage, the question has become extremely pressing as to which of these materials should be kept for future generations, and how to go about selecting and preserving them. This enormous trove of digital information may well be lost unless specific techniques and policies are developed to conserve it.

UNESCO has been examining these issues with a view to guide governments' preservation endeavours in the digital age. The General Conference adopted Resolution 34 at its 31st session, drawing attention to the ever growing digital heritage in the world and the need for an international campaign to safeguard endangered digital memory. The General Conference also invited the Director-General to prepare a discussion paper for the 2001 Spring session of the Executive Board containing elements of a draft charter on the preservation of born-digital documents, as well as to encourage the governmental and non-governmental organizations and international, national and private institutions to ensure that preservation of the digital heritage be given high priority at the national policy level.

The interest of UNESCO in this situation comes as no surprise. UNESCO exists in part to encourage and enable the preservation and enjoyment of the cultural, scientific and information heritage of the world's peoples. The growth of digital heritage and its vulnerability could hardly go unnoticed.

**UNESCO's campaign**

Based on the above findings, UNESCO has developed a strategy for the promotion of digital preservation. This strategy is centred on:

- a) a wide consultation process with governments, policy makers, producers of information, heritage institutions and experts, the software industry as well as standard-setting organisations;
- b) dissemination of technical guidelines;
- c) implementation of pilot projects and;
- d) and adoption of an international charter on the preservation of digital heritage by the General Conference at its 32nd session, held in October 2003.

The Guidelines form part of a far-seeing campaign by UNESCO to improve access to digital heritage for all the world's peoples, and to ensure that the means of preserving

their digital heritage are in the hands of every community. These Guidelines were prepared by the National Library of Australia under contract with UNESCO, and are based on extensive review of literature, the Library's own experience, and UNESCO-organised consultations in various regional centres.

The scope and ambition of the Guidelines are constrained. In such a rapidly evolving, but already extensive and complex field, they can only present a small amount of information. In the interests of offering guidance to individuals and organisations who are contemplating a responsibility for preserving digital heritage, it was decided to adopt a principles approach that might serve as a checklist of issues and possibilities that programmes need to take into account.

It is expected that the audience will include cultural and research organisations such as libraries, archives, museums, research institutes, data archives, publishers, community groups, and others with an interest in and a potential responsibility for preserving digital heritage. Such an audience will include many with a long history of collecting and preserving the world's „memory heritage“ of documents, records, publications, maps, manuscripts, artworks, images, sound recordings, moving imagery, cultural objects, and scientific, research and statistical information. It will also include many coming to digital preservation for a different background, less familiar with the preservation perspectives developed in 'memory' organisations.



**Abdelaziz Abid** graduated from the University of Tunis in 1970 with a Bachelor Degree from the Faculty of Humanities and the Teachers College (Ecole Normale Supérieure). In 1973 he graduated from the University of Montreal, Canada, with a Masters Degree in Library and Information Science.

He served as Secretary-General of the National Library of Tunisia. Joined UNESCO in 1976 as a UNESCO expert and later as Chief Technical Adviser of the School of Library and Information Science project in Rabat, Morocco. This project was funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

He joined UNESCO Headquarters in 1985. In 1988 he organized the International Architectural Competition for the Library of Alexandria, Egypt which was inaugurated officially only in 2002. He is now in charge of the "Memory of the World" Programme, which is a successful preservation and access initiative, and projects relating to libraries and access to information. He co-ordinates joint IFLA/UNESCO library and information work. He has contributed many conference papers and journal articles on library development, library education, access to scientific information, and preservation of and access to documentary and digital heritage in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

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Abstract Shinji Matsumoto

## **CAPTURING AND PRESERVING CULTURAL DIVERSITY: THE EXAMPLE OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Culture and cultural diversity are, indeed, central challenges of our time and issues in the international debate for the building of knowledge societies. A particularly important aspect to highlight is the relationship of the new concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage to cultural diversity and its impact on the understanding of cultural heritage as a whole. Most cultural expressions and cultural events that are now called “intangible cultural heritage” are the result of long series of historical experiences and influences from other cultures. They have a cultural distinctiveness of their own but at the same time, they may hold meaning for peoples from neighboring cultural communities. In a similar way, cultural digital contents are the result of interaction between the producer and the user and they give birth to spaces of collaboration and exchanges. Our heritage approach is being reshaped by the sense of flow inherent to digital cultural and to intangible cultural heritage. Both reflect the cultural relatedness of all groups around the world and propose a functional role of cultural diversity in eCulture Horizons.



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UNESCO Communication Sector, Division of Archives, Libraries and Documentation, Paris, France (1976-1977)

General Information Programme, Communication Sector (1978-1991)

Integral Study of the Silk Roads (1991-1994)

New Technology for Culture, Executive Office, Culture Sector (1995-2003)

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Works:

On UNESCO Activities in the field of library and information (1984)

Albert Thibaudet and modern Japanese literature (1988)

Albert Kahn - a portrait of forgotten millionaire (1989)

Guidelines for the National Library (1989)

Ancient Library of Alexandria (1991)  
Eurasia - past, present and future (1993)  
Archaeology and remote sensing (1993)  
World Heritage and Virtual Reality Technology(1994)  
Libraries - from the past to the future (1994)  
Access to the information on Japan (1998)  
La vie quotidienne à Paris (1999)

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