

## Welcome to the first volume of the International Journal of Documentary Heritage!

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The International Journal of Documentary Heritage (IJODH) fosters interdisciplinary research on the world's documentary heritage. Addressing the need for international academic and professional exchange, the IJODH is a thematic, annual publication of the International Centre for Documentary Heritage (ICDH) under the auspices of UNESCO. It aims to enhance global understanding of documentary heritage by stimulating academic discourse and promoting best practice across related fields.

IJODH strives to serve as a distinguished platform for disseminating a broad spectrum of scholarship on the world's documentary heritage and UNESCO's Memory of the World (MoW) Programme. The journal fosters in-depth discussions on theory and practice across diverse disciplines. Its content may encompass a wide range of formats, including theoretical essays, empirical research articles, policy briefs, Memory of the World (MoW) nomination-related content, data articles, practical reports, and narratives. With a commitment to professionalism, diversity, and inclusivity, the journal aims to play a vital role in advancing the global understanding of documentary heritage.

IJODH also acts as a bridge, connecting diverse groups, cultures, and countries. We actively encourage contributions that incorporate interdisciplinary perspectives and employ innovative research methods. This ensures that the journal remains at the forefront of addressing contemporary and unique communication topics in the field.

'Contemporary significance of documentary heritage' is the theme of this first volume of IJODH. Authors were invited to share their knowledge and experiences about the role of documentary heritage in present day society and academic discourse. This has resulted in some very remarkable contributions. We were happy to receive articles from countries as far apart as Australia and Latvia, and on subjects ranging from canonicity to computer games. Methodological analyses alternate with descriptions of preservation issues. The broad range and variety of documents is well represented.

‘Australia needs an agreed, transparent and defensible process for making hard decisions about what documentation to make and keep’, writes Adrian Cunningham in **‘Documenting Australia’s society’**. Who makes the decisions and how to prevent gaps and silences? These are issues that apply to almost every country in the world and to almost every heritage institution.

But selecting and preserving materials is not sufficient, when they are ‘dismembered’ from their historical context and background, argue Mike Jones, Sarah R. Demb and Catherine A. Nichols in their article **‘Against dismemberment’**. The way in which museums and other institutions treat their archives can result in documents becoming dissociated from broader relational ecosystems of knowledge. Therefore, they call for ‘re-membering’ documentary heritage in the most literary sense of the word.<sup>1</sup>

‘World significance’ is a central, but not irrefutable, criterion for the inscription of documents on the Memory of the World International Register. For their article **‘Analysing the “world significance” of documentary heritage’**, Yujue Wang and Ya Zhu conducted an innovative quantitative investigation into this concept, based on 390 inscribed nominations and using Latent Dirichlet Allocation as a thematic clustering method.

**‘The ongoing need for the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau’** is both a title and a statement. Documentary heritage from Small Island Developing States in the Pacific is continuously at risk of damage or destruction from both environmental and human threats - as is similarly the case in other regions, such as the Caribbean. Since 1968 the small Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (Pambu) has been taking measures to safeguard and disclose as much of the documents from the Pacific islands as possible. Kari James describes both the documentary heritage itself, mainly originating from colonial and missionary sources, and the history and present challenges of the Bureau.

Birch bark is an extraordinary type of text carrier, mainly used when common materials like paper are not available. Letters on birch bark, written by inhabitants of the Baltic States who had been deported to Siberia, were inscribed on the Latvian Memory of the World Register, and later also submitted for the International Register. In **‘Nomination as an agent of change’** Dagnija Baltina describes how this nomination process also resulted in a process of reckoning with history.

Very contemporary applications of documentary heritage are presented in the next two articles. Junsu Seo and Sojung Lee report about inscriptions on the Memory of the World International Register that helped in shaping the narrative and design of new video games at Korean game jams in 2022 and 2023, in **‘Documentary heritage to inspire content development: game jam cases of “Wat Pho” and “Amundsen”’**.

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<sup>1</sup> One of the significant examples in this article is the Donald Thomson Ethnohistory Collection. Just before the publication of this IJODH volume the news was spread that this collection, in its entirety, has been gifted to the University of Melbourne. See <https://www.unimelb.edu.au/newsroom/d.d.9December2024>. – Documentary heritage is a dynamic topic [JB].

And Rimvydas Laužikas analyses how the documented elements of past gastronomic culture can be reconstructed and applied to the contemporary tourism and restaurant industry. The extensive archival and library collections of the aristocratic Lithuanian Radziwill family include menus, recipes, diaries and many other documents about eating and cooking in previous centuries. How professional chefs used and adapted these documents for modern cuisine is told in '**From documentary heritage to a contemporary restaurant menu**'.

Joep Leerssen's approach to canonicity is equally innovative. Using modern data analyzing techniques, he explores the extent to which a historically accumulated corpus of documents provides an indicator to measure the rise and fall in canonicity of Dutch literary, cultural and historical figures over the decades and centuries. The title of his article, '**Culture in a moving rearview mirror**', is a suitable metaphor for his findings.

The *Lietuvių Enciklopedija* (Lithuanian Encyclopedia) was not published Vilnius or elsewhere in Lithuania. In '**The Lithuanian Encyclopedia published in Boston as a unique cultural phenomenon**', Ramūnas Kondratas explains why and with what great efforts Lithuanians in the diaspora published this 37-volume encyclopedia in their native language.

An equally unique phenomenon is the archives of the Jewish community in Harbin. Qiuping Guo and Weijie Guo tell the story about how the Jews came to live in this Chinese city, their way of life, the archives they created, and how these archives have been published in no less than fifteen volumes, in '**The Jewish archives in Harbin**'.

Every document in the world is produced to secure actual events, notions and knowledge for the future. The descriptions above show that much documentary heritage is being studied and applied outside the framework of the UNESCO Memory of the World programme. Nevertheless, this programme, in all its facets, remains the most important global initiative in the field. Its 30th anniversary in 2022 provides the impetus for organizing a Think tank on the future of Memory of the World. Nothing could be more appropriate for closing the first volume of IJODH than the outcome of the discussions of this Think Tank on '**The future of the Memory of the World Programme**'.

December 2024