

## Editorial

We open this second volume of the *International Journal of Documentary Heritage* (IJODH) with warm congratulations extended to Kari James, Executive Officer of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau at the Australian National University. Her article ‘The Ongoing Need for the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau’, published in IJODH Volume 1, was selected as the recipient of the 2025 Mander Jones Award (Category 5) by the Australian Society of Archivists. This is a distinguished achievement for the author, and we are honored by this recognition.

In September 2025, a group of experts in the field of documentary heritage convened in Seoul, Republic of Korea, for a conference on the future of the UNESCO Memory of the World (MoW) Programme. The Outcome Document of the conference closes this second volume of IJODH, and is intentionally called a ‘Discussion Paper’. Both the organizers and participants of the conference, together with the Editorial Committee of IJODH, welcome further exchanges of views and ideas on the future of MoW and related issues.

One of the conclusions of the meeting in Seoul was that while the MoW Programme is flourishing, the state of documentary heritage worldwide remains perilous, and challenges are multiplying. The same ambiguity can be found in this second volume of the IJODH, which offers several articles that contribute to ongoing discussions on community-driven archiving, open access, digitization practices, and inclusive and sustainable policies. At the same time, the richness and diversity of documentary heritage are not forgotten and are demonstrated by examples from countries as far apart as Mexico, Zimbabwe, Germany, Bangladesh, and Egypt.

“They keep files that are not ours. Our stories live in the people, not in those shelves in Harare.” This quote from a Zimbabwean citizen succinctly captures an issue faced by many national archives, where mainly governmental records are being preserved. In an article also relevant to the discussion of oral documents, **Munyika Sibanda** describes how community-driven archiving supports the safeguarding of intangible and popular heritage in a former colonial country like Zimbabwe.

The methodology and outcomes of another interesting archival process, based on maturity models and aimed at strengthening archival and gender equality policies, are presented by **Guadalupe Basualdo**. Within the framework of the Iberarchivos Program, no less than 17 national archival institutions have been analyzed to produce a comparative characterization of their organizational structures and personnel policies, with special attention given to the gender perspective.

Equally applicable to other memory institutions are the findings of a study on the digitization program and practices of the National Library of Namibia, carried out by **Wilhelm Uutoni**. The lack of a well-developed policy

for harvesting, handling, and preserving electronic records in a sustainable way, combined with shortages of financial, technical, and human resources, is characteristic of many digitization programs. The article concludes with a proposal for a digital preservation framework for the National Library and the country's library and information sector.

Kari James' article from last year, mentioned above, addressed the risks of damage and loss of documentary heritage of Small Island States in the Pacific. Similar natural and man-made disasters are threatening archives and libraries on Caribbean islands. **Stacia Martindale** adds a striking example from Barbados, where a fire in the National Archives in 2024 destroyed historical records of great significance and value for the history and identity of the people. She strongly advocates preventive measures such as risk assessment, digitization, and staff training.

The significance of a long-lasting and well-preserved school archive is demonstrated by **Elena Sánchez Cortina**, in her article about the School of Saint Ignatius of Loyola Vizcaínas in Mexico City. For over 250 years, the school has been a prestigious educational institution for girls, mostly from the upper classes of Mexican society. The archival records, together with pictures, musical scores, and other artifacts, provide an extensive yet underexplored source not only for the history of the school but also for educational reforms, societal changes, music history, and gender studies.

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt keeps the almost complete fonds of the Bulaq Press, established in present-day Cairo in 1820. It was the first official and largest publishing house in Egypt, which at that time was part of the Ottoman Empire. Through its educational and profession-oriented publications, the Bulaq Press played an essential role in the development of Egypt. **Ahmed Mansour** also analyzes what the publications' languages and subjects tell about the intended users.

The UNESCO definition of 'documents' not only includes obvious formats such as books, manuscripts, maps, and letters, but also photographs, films, sound recordings, and websites. Therefore, **Marcel Michels'** article on the extensive cataloging project of Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen's photographs and glass plate negatives at the Röntgen-Museum in Germany fits very well into the *IJODH*. Röntgen was awarded the first Nobel Prize in Physics for his invention of X-ray photography, but he was also a keen photographer of his relatives and friends, as well as public events. For the identification of people and places in the pictures, the cataloging project uses both traditional sources and the latest digital techniques.

In the following article, **Smita Barua** sketches the history of filmmaking in Bangladesh, with a special focus on *Mukh O Mukhosh* (*Face and Mask*) by Abdul Jabbar Khan. He was not only the director but also the protagonist of this film. *Mukh O Mukhosh*, released in 1956 and the first full-length film in the country, is described as a cultural and historical phenomenon for its content, language, artistic qualities, and influence on later cinematography in

South Asia. Created during a period of political turmoil after the Partition of Bengal, the film can also be regarded as a statement about Bengali identity.

All the aforementioned articles are based on research that could not have been conducted without the digitization and digital access to the documentary heritage at hand. Open access to public domain heritage and the use of digital tools are fundamental for modern research. However, equitable digital access is still far from guaranteed. Drawing on multiple examples from across the globe, **Brigitte Vézina** and **Dee Harris**, Directors of Creative Commons and conveners of the Open Heritage Coalition, propose a strong and active role for UNESCO in this field.

In conclusion, we trust that this second volume of the *IJODH* will provide our readers with new knowledge and much food for thought. We are grateful to the authors for sharing their research and insights, and to the peer reviewers and editors for their valuable work. Finally, we invite new authors to submit proposals for original academic articles, contributions to ongoing discussions, reports on new developments, or anything else in the wide and inspiring field of documentary heritage.

On behalf of the Editorial Committee,

Jan Bos  
Editor-in-Chief  
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