The Recommendation Concerning the Preservation of, and Access to, Documentary Heritage Including in Digital Form was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in November 2015.

"Documentary heritage records the unfolding of human thought and events, the evolution of languages, cultures, peoples and their understanding of the world."

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Why is the Recommendation needed?

Many collections of documentary heritage face threats from conflicts, natural disasters, and under resourcing. The Recommendation provides an international framework to address these challenges.

Documentary heritage is vulnerable to rapid advances in technologies. New updated responses to this challenge are needed.

The Recommendation establishes the importance of documentary heritage as a primary mean for maintaining, spreading and sharing knowledge.

The Recommendation reflects the aspirations of a number of international declarations, conventions, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
WHO IS THE RECOMMENDATION FOR?

The Recommendation recognises the need for proactive preservation and access measures. It provides a set of internationally agreed norms and principles that can be used by:

- **Governments**
- **Memory institutions**
  - Museums, libraries, archives, etc.
- **Others**
  - Private sector, individuals, professional associations and NGOs, UNESCO, National or Regional MoW Committees, etc.
THE CONTENT OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Recommendation is arranged by five thematic areas:
IDENTIFICATION OF DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

A key concern of the Recommendation is the need to identify documentary heritage, both in an analogue and digital form, as a crucial step for its preservation and access. The Recommendation urges Governments and Memory Institutions to:

- Identify documentary heritage at potential or imminent risk and draw it to the attention of competent bodies (Paragraphs: 1.3, 2.7, 5.5)
- Take all appropriate measures to safeguard their documentary heritage from danger (5.4)
- Nomination of significant documentary heritage to national, regional or international Memory of the World registers as a mean of raising awareness (1.4)
PRESERVATION OF DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

A key concern of the Recommendation is the need to preserve documentary heritage, both in an analogue and digital form. The Recommendation urges Governments and Memory Institutions to:

- Consider preservation as an ongoing process, both preventative and remedial, requiring the management of both analogue and digital objects (2.1 to 2.9, 4.1, 4.7)
- Develop and implement international standards for preservation, and encourage them to link with appropriate professional association (2.3, 2.4, 2.7, 2.8)
- Manage collections to ensure preservation and accessibility over time (1.1, 1.3, 2.7, 5.4, 5.5)
ACCESS TO DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

A further concern of the Recommendation is access to documentary heritage. The Recommendation urges Governments and Memory Institutions to:

- Consider the provision of access as a visible evidence and justification of public expenditure on preservation (3.1 to 3.7, 4.4, 4.7)
- Promote public domain access (3.7)
- Review copyright and legal deposit regimes periodically to make them fully effective (4.6)
- Encourage the development and use of open source software and access to proprietary codes on a non-profit basis (4.7, 4.8)
Policy Measures

The Recommendation also addresses the crucial area of policy measures for the identification, preservation and access to documentary heritage.

- Establish policies and standards by research and consultation, guided by internationally established norms and principles
- When updating or enacting legislation which impacts on access to documentary heritage, the potential for access should be maximised, while respecting the legitimate interests of rights-holders
- Embrace current and emerging technologies in a constantly changing environment (1.2, 2.2, 2.4, 3.2, 4.7, 4.8, 5.5)
The final area of concern of the Recommendation is the importance of national and international cooperation.

- Develop partnerships, including public-private ones, that allow sharing of costs, facilities and services (2.2, 3.4, 4.2)
- Participate in the Memory of the World Committees and establish national Registers (4.10, 5.6)
- Develop and participate in national, regional and international training and capacity building programme as appropriate to ensure identification, preservation and access to documentary heritage (1.5)
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Given that the Recommendation is relatively new, and has yet to be applied in the region, UNESCO has been supporting Members States and stakeholders in adapting this new instrument to the region’s contexts through a series of consultations. These resulted in the following Action Plans:

ASEAN+3 Action Plan

Involving: Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Brunei Darussalam+China, Japan and Korea

Western and Central Asian Cooperation Plan

Involving: Iran, Azerbaijan, India, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan

Pacific Action Plan

Involving: Australia, Micronesia (Federated States of), Papua New Guinea, Tonga, New Zealand, Fiji, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu
In 2015 the Australian MoW Register reached a milestone of 50 documentary heritage items. The UNESCO Australian Memory of the World register contains a select list of Australia’s unique, irreplaceable and influential documents.
Countries in a position to assist others can offer practical assistance. The Cook Islands Proclamation, on the MOWCAP Register, has undergone conservation treatment funded by the Australian Memory of the World Committee and UNESCO Bangkok with the support from the New Zealand Memory of the World Committee.
CASE STUDY 3: ACCESS TO DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

ASEAN DIGITAL LIBRARY

The ASEAN Digital Library is a regional project to aggregate and connect the digitised resources of National Libraries in the ASEAN region so that these repositories, containing books, papers and manuscripts, maps, photographs, paintings and drawings, audio and video recordings, ephemera, and newspapers can be accessed through a single search facility.

http://www.aseanlibrary.org/
**CASE STUDY 4: POLICY MEASURES**

Digital documentary heritage has critical importance for humanity, as it has become a key resource for knowledge creation and sharing. The Platform to Enhance the Sustainability of the Information Society Transglobally (PERSIST) project operates under the Memory of the World, and aims to enhance the sustainability of the information society by establishing continuity for preservation and access to information in digital form. PERSIST is working to develop a range of policy tools to help Governments, memory institutions in the broadest sense of the term, and ICT industry.
CASE STUDY 5: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

In 2009 representatives from the Caribbean, the Pacific, and Europe, met in Barbados to discuss international cooperation in developing joint Memory of the World nominations. This cooperation resulted in successful joint nominations to the International Register: the Records of the Indian Indentured Labourers, and Silver Men: West Indian Labourers at the Panama Canal.
WANT TO LEARN MORE?

The Recommendations can be accessed at:

en.unesco.org/programme/mow/recommendation-documentary-heritage