

## **Report on the Revision of the MOWCAP Register Processes**

**by Dr Helen Jarvis, Chair of the MOWCAP Register Sub-Committee (RSC)**

**For the 9<sup>th</sup> MOWCAP General Meeting, 25 November 2022**

The following is a brief recap for the GM of the background to the development of the International and Regional Registers and the current processes we were following in MOWCAP up to and including the 2018 revisions.

### **1. BACKGROUND ON THE REGISTERS OF THE MEMORY OF THE WORLD**

The International MoW Register was established in 1995, with the first inscriptions being added in 1997. Nominations to this Register are invited and processed in biennial cycles. Over time, many national and several regional MoW committees have established their own registers and the number is constantly growing.

The selection criteria for all registers are essentially the same, although wording may vary. The registers are differentiated principally by the extent of their geographic coverage, and whether the influence of the heritage inscribed is judged to be of international, regional or national *significance*, a term which refers to the values and meanings that items and collections have for peoples and communities.

All registers operate autonomously and to their own time frames. They are not a hierarchy. All inscriptions have equal importance in the eyes of UNESCO. The world's documentary heritage is so vast and complex that a single register would be unwieldy and unworkable. The tripartite approach allows regional and national expertise to be applied to assessing nominations in a way that would be impossible if there was just a single global register.

### **2. THE ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL REGISTER**

The Asia Pacific Regional Register (MOWCAP Register) was established by the Memory of World Committee for Asia and the Pacific at its 2<sup>nd</sup> General Meeting in 2005 held in Manila, Philippines. The first inscriptions to the Regional Register were added in 2008, and by 2018 it consisted of 56 inscriptions from 25 countries, including joint nominations.

The *UNESCO Memory of The World Programme General Guidelines* (Section 5) provided the basis for the previously operative *Guidelines for the Asia Pacific Regional Register*, which were drafted by Ray Edmondson and adopted by MOWCAP's 2005 General Meeting.

In 2005 MOWCAP also established its own Register Subcommittee (RSC), chaired

by Dr Rujaya Abhakorn from 2005 to 2018. Its Terms of Reference and rationale for membership were drafted to parallel the Register Subcommittee of the IAC. It assesses nominations and provide recommendations to the MOWCAP General Meeting for inscription or rejection of nominations.

### **3. REVISION OF THE MOWCAP REGISTER GUIDELINES**

The MOWCAP Register Guidelines needed to be updated to cater for the significant growth in the scope of MOWCAP and the Regional Register since 2008; the contextual evolution that has occurred in the world of documentary heritage, most especially the dramatic growth in digitised and born-digital material; as well as changes in the MoW programme at the international level, including the adoption by UNESCO's 2015 General Conference of the *Recommendation Concerning the Preservation of, and Access to, Documentary Heritage Including in Digital Form* and the substantial revision of *MoW General Guidelines* developed initially by a working group headed by Dr Ray Edmondson and adopted by the IAC in Paris in October 2017, but then extensively revised again during the Comprehensive Review of the MoW Programme initiated by the Director General and carried out by two working groups reporting to UNESCO's Executive Board, and approved in April 2021.

Some revisions had already been made in the MOWCAP Register process to reflect changes being undertaken at the international level, and then the General Meeting of MOWCAP in November 2019 authorised the Bureau to follow the Comprehensive Review being undertaken at the international level, and to ensure that MOWCAP's procedures were in harmony.

### **4. THE NEWLY REVISED MOWCAP REGISTER PROCESS AND GUIDELINES**

The MOWCAP General MEETING 18: 29 May -1 June, 2018 Gwangju, Republic of Korea, decided that the MOWCAP Bureau should make the nomination process consistent with revised international programme process.

The 19th meeting of the MOWCAP Bureau in November 2020 considered a note on 'Anticipated areas for future refinement of current MOWCAP register processes' presented by Helen Jarvis, then Acting Chair RSC, MOWCAP along with the Report on the MOWCAP Register Processes. The Bureau authorised a small working group consisting of Vice-Chair Dianne Mackaskill, Secretary-General Andrew Henderson to prepare draft revisions. This Working Group worked throughout 2021 and its draft was approved by the Bureau at its 20th Meeting in February 2022, posted on the MOWCAP web site and implemented during the 2022 round of nominations.

The *General Guidelines of the Memory of the World (MoW) Programme* provide scope for moulding the process for Regional Registers the MOWCAP Register. The following principles therefore apply to the MOWCAP Register:

- 1 MOWCAP is the authority that approves inscription on the MOWCAP Register.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *General Guidelines* 7.10 The International, Regional and National Registers

- 2 As far as possible MOWCAP will work to the General Guidelines unless specific regional variations are required.
- 3 The MOWCAP Bureau has the authority to make any required modifications in wording and to determine time-limits for any parts of the Register process outlined below.
- 4 The criteria for the MOWCAP Register are identical to those for the International Register, except that significance is to be established on a regional (Asia Pacific) scope rather than worldwide.
- 5 Process and structures for managing the MOWCAP Register, as far as possible, parallel those for the International Register.

## **SIGNIFICANT MODIFICATIONS INTRODUCED IN THE REVISED REGISTER PROCESS**

In addition to the above-mentioned modifications in wording to reflect the scope and structure of MOWCAP, significant modifications to harmonise with the revised international General Guidelines have been made to our Register Process as follows:

### **A. 2 Nominations**

Nominations must now be **submitted to the MOWCAP Secretary-General through the relevant National Commission or with a signed support letter from the relevant National Commission for UNESCO**, or in the absence of a National Commission, the relevant government body in charge of relations with UNESCO, involving, if one exists, the relevant national MoW committee. (See also K: Nominations for the MOWCAP Register may still be made by any person or organisation, including governments and NGOs.)

The call for nominations includes a deadline for the submission of the nominations, which shall be at least **4 months** after the issuance of the call, as well as the selection criteria the nomination must meet.

### **D. Admissibility**

An extra category was added to the list of documents are among those that may be regarded as inadmissible for nomination:

“6. Any documents that promote issues and ideas in opposition to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of the UNESCO Constitution and/or promote any form of denial of human rights, foster hate speech or promote racist or discriminatory rhetoric.”

### **G. Regional significance: Comparative criteria**

MOWCAP needs further information on the character of the documentary heritage

itself.

**Uniqueness or rarity.** Can the document or the collection be described as unique (the only one of its kind ever created) or rare (one of a few survivors from a larger number)?

This quality may need elaboration: a collection, manuscript or other item may be rare but not necessarily unique. There may be other collections or items which are similar but not identical.

The nominator has a responsibility to make an effort to discover any similar examples at national, regional or international level, and to compare the nominated item to these others, whether they are listed on any of the Memory of the World registers or not.

This comparison should outline the similarities between the nominated item or collection and these others as well as the differences, and should provide reasons that make the nominated item or collection stand out, explaining the importance of the nominated item in its national, regional and even international context (if applicable).

## **H. Gender Analysis**

A new element in the Register Process relates to Gender equality, one of two global priorities of UNESCO. The nominator should explain what the nominated documentary heritage tells us about the lives and impact of women and girls on the Asia Pacific region. For more information on the Gender Equality Baseline Study of the Memory of the World in Asia-Pacific see

<https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/gender-equality-baseline-study-memory-world-asia-pacific>

## **N THE INCIDENTAL PROCESS**

The newly revised *General Guidelines* (8.6), have introduced a new “Incidental Process” by which a concerned Member State of MoW (i.e. with a direct interest in a particular nomination) may contest that nomination on either “technical” (admissibility or criteria in assessing the nomination) or on “other” grounds.

This “incidental process” is also now being introduced for nominations to the MOWCAP Register, as a possibility for concerned MOWCAP Member States in addition to, and quite separate from the Comments on nominations invited without limitation from individuals, organisations or Member States, as outlined above (under section L).

## **K Formalities for submitting nominations**

Some slight changes have been made, eg

- 6 Objectivity. Every nomination stands on its own merits. Nominations should be based on fact, and written in impartial and objective language. The use of grandiose or unprovable claims, or derogatory, propagandistic or polemical language, is counter-productive and makes assessment more difficult. Any nomination form that uses inappropriate language, denigrating or insulting individuals, groups or nations will be returned to the nominator/s by the

MOWCAP Secretary-General on the advice of the RSC for amendment. Nominators should be careful to word their nominations in a neutral and objective manner.

### **L Submitting nominations and processing**

Some slight changes have been made, eg

2. The RSC's decision as to whether a particular nomination is inadmissible is final (unless contested by a Member State, according to the "Incidental Process" described below (under N) and will be communicated to the nominator by the MOWCAP Secretary-General. A reasoned decision will be reported to the MOWCAP Bureau and included in the RSC Chair's report to the MOWCAP General Meeting.

6 RSC posts on the MOWCAP website the titles of all nominations (both those accepted by the RSC for assessment and those ruled as inadmissible), and provides the full text of accepted nominations on request. Full text of nominations ruled as inadmissible are to be provided only to concerned MOWCAP Member States (as outlined below (under N. The Incidental Process)).

7 RSC invites comments (both positive and negative) on the posted list of accepted nominations from National Committees and National Commissions or from any interested individual or organizations, to be submitted to the MOWCAP Secretary-General within a stipulated time limit. All comments received shall be transmitted forthwith to the Chair of the RSC for consideration by the RSC in the process of its assessment.

8 Public comments, which support or provide other information relevant to aspects of any current nomination, may be sent by any individual or entity to the MOWCAP Secretary-General. For instance, the sender may wish to provide information to supplement the nominator's case, or may contest (on the specified form), the nomination on the grounds of its content or whether the admissibility and selection criteria have been met. Comments which go beyond these areas, however, will not be considered by the RSC

10. RSC acts as the principal channel of communication to and from the nominator on behalf of the RSC, including requests for further information or amendment of language; rulings on admissibility; and the preliminary assessment recommendation from the RSC, which are also copied to the National Commission for UNESCO or, in the absence of a National Commission, the relevant government body in charge of relations with UNESCO, involving, if one exists, the relevant national MoW committee.

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Phnom Penh, 22 November 2022