MEMORY OF THE WORLD COMMITTEE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
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unesco Regional Committee

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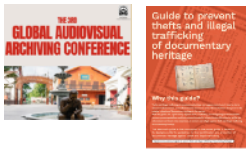

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MOWCAP NEWS

Message from the Chair

MR KWIBAE KIM

MOWCAP Chair Dr Kwibae Kim

Dear MOWCAP Friends and Colleagues,

This quarter saw important practical and policy developments for documentary heritage in our region.

- Capacity building: The 2nd UNESCO/J-FIT regional training in Yogyakarta brought 27 custodians, conservators and lecturers from five countries together for hands-on work on glass-plate negatives. Participants produced sample preservation assessments and draft project plans; trainers will integrate lessons into university courses. The programme prioritized locally sourced, sustainable approaches.

•International Day proposal: UNESCO has proposed 19 November as the International Day of Documentary Heritage. This offers MOWCAP a platform for regional awareness campaigns, joint digital exhibitions, and targeted capacity-building and disaster-preparedness for at-risk collections. I encourage members to begin planning partnerships and activities.

- Research spotlight: A research visit to Andong by Dr. Daniele Di Pasquale (Sapienza University) underlined the value of material study of 16th–17th-century Korean epistles and the vital role of custodianship in keeping these sources accessible and meaningful.

- Upcoming events and resources: Note the UNESCO dialogues in Paris (29 Apr), SEAPAVAA (7–11 Jun, Ipoh) and GAVA (15–18 Jun, Bangkok). New publications include Managing World Heritage Archives (UNESCO Bangkok/J-FIT) and ICA's Guide to Prevent Theft and Illegal Trafficking of Documentary Heritage.

Thank you to all custodians, trainers, researchers and partners for your continued dedication to safeguarding our region's documentary memory.

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2nd UNESCO/J-FIT regional training on preparing glass plate negatives at risk in Asia for digitization held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

UNESCO's Regional Office in Bangkok, in partnership with the Sonobudoyo Museum and supported by the Japanese Funds-in-Trust, convened a regional training on "Preparing Glass Plate Negatives at Risk in Asia for Digitization: Significance, Assessment and Documentation" in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Twenty-seven custodians, conservators and lecturers from Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar and Vietnam participated — including returning trainees and 18 new participants — fostering a growing community of practice across the region.

Led by three international experts — Ms Yoko Shiraiwa (Shiraiwa Studio, Japan), Ms Kirsty Johnson (National Archives of Australia) and Mr Andrew Henderson (Southeast Asia Museum Services) — the week combined hands-on "learning-by-doing" sessions with theoretical modules. Key activities included condition assessments of sampled collections, mould testing and cleaning demonstrations using 3M Petrifilm™, instruction on safe handling and housing, making enclosures with cost-effective local materials, environmental monitoring using dataloggers and eClimateNotebook, metadata and digitization planning, and a disaster-response "market sweep" to identify locally available emergency salvage supplies. Case studies from Myanmar and resources shared by the National Archives of Australia enriched planning and metadata practice.

The 2nd regional training on preserving and digitizing glass plate negatives at risk in Asia, hosted by the Sonobudoyo Museum and supported by the People of Japan, gathered 27 documentary heritage practitioners from Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar and Vietnam, with a disaster-response activity organized on 30 January 2026 at Beringharjo Market.

Notable outcomes include the participating instutions' submission sample-level preservation assessments, and forthcoming Preservation and Digitization Project Plans; three trainers will incorporate learnings into university curricula in Cambodia and Indonesia; and the National Archives of Australia shared templates to streamline project planning.

The training emphasized sustainability by prioritizing locally sourced materials and traditional pest-mitigation practices pending further testing. Next steps include completion of institutional project plans, continued eClimateNotebook monitoring, guidance on metadata, and further DRM and access-focused activities. The project showcases collaborative, practical approaches to safeguarding photographic heritage and advancing Memory of the World objectives in the Asia-Pacific.

UNESCO proposes 19 November as International Day of Documentary Heritage

UNESCO's Executive Board document 224 EX/29 (Paris, 23 March 2026) proposes proclaiming 19 November — the anniversary of the Memory of the World Programme's establishment in 1992 — as the International Day of Documentary Heritage. The proposal aims to raise global awareness of the value and vulnerability of manuscripts, archives, library collections, audiovisual materials and digital records that form humanity's documentary memory.

Why the day matters

The day would highlight documentary heritage's role in preserving identity, supporting education and research, promoting intercultural dialogue and enabling evidence-based policy.

Many collections — especially in developing countries and small island states — face threats from insufficient resources, limited digitization, technological obsolescence, climate change and disasters.

Goals and expected impact

The International Day of Documentary Heritage is aimed at encouraging governments, memory institutions and communities to undertake preservation initiatives, capacity-building and public outreach aligned with UNESCO's 2015 Recommendation on documentary heritage.

In addition, it aims to increase the visibility of documentary heritage; strengthen policy and resource mobilization; enhance cooperation among Member States, UNESCO and MoW committees; increase youth engagement and the integration of documentary heritage into education and cultural programmes.

Practicalities and implementation

19 November is proposed as the annual observance date. Activities, such exhibitions, open days in archives and libraries, conferences, capacity-building workshops, film screenings, storytelling events, youth initiatives, digitization projects and online seminars, would be funded through voluntary contributions and partnerships.

This proposal offers a clear opportunity for the regional MoW network in Asia and the Pacific to:

- Coordinate regional awareness campaigns and joint digital exhibitions for 19 November;
- Prioritize capacity building and disaster-preparedness training for at-risk collections in the region;
- Seek voluntary partnerships and funding for digitization and sustainable preservation projects.

The full document can be accessed on the UNESCO website.

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From Italy to the Republic of Korea: Memorable Collaboration on Documentary Heritage through 16-17th Century Handwritten Letters

Daniele Di Pasquale, a PhD student at the Italian Institute of Oriental Studies (ISO), Sapienza University of Rome, conducted a research visit to Andong on 10 March 2026 as part of his doctoral project, "Conservatism and Innovation in Scriptural Practices of Middle and Early Modern Korean Vernacular Epistles (諺簡, ŏn'gan)." His research examines 16th- and 17th-century spelling practices and writing conventions in han'gŭl correspondence, with attention to the interplay between linguistic form and material expression.

During his research, Di Pasquale encountered the strong emotional and scholarly impact the Yi Ŭngt'ae myo ch'ult'o ŏn'gan (1586) letter has on diverse audiences. This letter expresses the sorrow of a widow over the loss of her husband, Yi Ŭngt'ae, and the impact it had on her children. Di Pasquale identified the limitations of relying solely on digital and photographic reproductions, which cannot fully convey the physical and material qualities of manuscript sources. Recognition of these limitations motivated fieldwork at the Andong City Museum, undertaken in collaboration with the Korean Studies Institute and supported by a recent MoU between the Institute and Sapienza University.

Daniele Di Pasquale, PhD student at the Italian Institute of Oriental Studies (ISO), Sapienza University of Rome, conducted a research visit to Andong on 10 March 2026 as part of his doctoral project, guided by staff of the Korean Studies Institute, the host secretariat of MOWCAP. Image courtesy of KSI.

Supported by Sapienza's "Start-up Research" initiative for early-career scholars, Di Pasquale reframed the specific letter as an "affective archive." He highlighted how grief and trauma are expressed both textually and materially through features such as fading ink, irregular spatial arrangement, and strained brushstrokes.

The document's remarkable state of preservation, nearly five centuries after its creation, reflects the sustained efforts of its custodians. Close observation enabled the confirmation of several working hypotheses, particularly concerning ink variation and brushwork.

High-resolution macro photography supported detailed documentation, while consultations with museum specialists deepened understanding of the artefact's conservation and cultural significance.

The visit also provided an opportunity to situate the manuscript within a broader cultural landscape. Guided by the KSI staff, Di Pasquale engaged with MOWCAP-inscribed documentary heritage at the Memory of the World Experience Center. A visit to Dosan Seowon, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2019, further contextualised the intellectual environment in which such materials were produced and transmitted.

Di Pasquale noted: "Andong is a city where history feels remarkably present. Visiting the sites intimately associated with the story of the letter, and seeing how this private epistle has been institutionalised into the local landscape, was deeply moving." Sites such as Wŏryonggyo (Moonlight Bridge) connect the historical narrative of the letter to contemporary public memory. In this way, a deeply personal expression of grief is transformed into a shared cultural reference, illustrating that documentary heritage is not static, but a living part of a collective identity.

Article written by Ms Micah Vandendriessche, Korean Studies Institute.

UPCOMING EVENTS

How Can Equitable Access to Heritage Help Solve Global Challenges?

An Exploratory Dialogue

29 April 2026, UNESCO, Paris, France

Join global experts for a dialogue about the need to ensure equitable access to public domain heritage.

For more information and to register, visit the **Creative Commons event page**.

30th SEAPAVAA Conference: Redefining AudioVisual in Archives – Relevancy, Technology and Unity

7-11 June 2026, Ipoh, Malaysia

Hosted by the National Archives of Malaysia, the SEAPAVAA Conference will celebrate its 30th anniversary in Ipoh, Malaysia, and include its flagship activity 'Archival Gems Screening'.

For more information and to register, visit the **SEAPAVAA Conference website**.

3rd Global Audiovisual Archiving (GAVA) Conference

15–18 June 2026, Bangkok, Thailand

Hosted by the Thai Film Archive, this will be the biennial travelling platform's first event in Asia to foster for dialogue and collaboration in the field of audiovisual archiving

For more information and to register, visit the **3rd GAVA Conference website**.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Managing World Heritage Archives

UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok/Japanese Funds-in-Trust

Aimed at archivists, conservation specialists and heritage managers, the publication offers a roadmap for integrating archival policies into heritage management systems and strengthening the overall institutional capacity at World Heritage sites.

View and download the publication on the **UNESCO website**.

Guide to prevent thefts and illegal trafficking of documentary heritage

ICA Expert Group Against Theft, Trafficking and Tampering (EGATTT)

The guide addresses growing risks, from conflict situations to climate impacts and online markets, and highlights how preventive policies, accurate registration, and cross-sector collaboration are essential to safeguarding the world's documentary heritage.

It is available in two formats: an abridged version, a poster giving an overview of the recommendations and handling instructions and an extended version.

View and download the publication on the **ICA website**.

ANY NEWS TO SHARE?

If you have an upcoming or recent activity, publication or news on documentary heritage in Asia-Pacific to contribute to the MOWCAP Newsletter, submit to mowcapinfo@gmail.com.