

2017 Annual Report of the Chinese National Committee of MOW

I. Overview of the Committee

(I) Name: Chinese National Committee of “UNESCO Memory of the World Programme”

(II) Namelist of Committee:

Li Minghua (Chairman)

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(IV) Organizational Structure: Under the framework of China National Committee, National Advisory Committee of “China Archives and Documentary Heritage Programme” is set up, which consists of prestigious domestic experts in archival science, library science, museology, ancient philology, history and other disciplines, with Yang Dongquan (former Director General of the State Archives Administration) as Chair and Li Minghua (Director General of the State Archives Administration) and Li Zhizhong (Director of National Expert Committee for Preservation of Ancient Books; Member of National Commission for Cultural Relics Identification) as Vice Chair.

(V) Statutes and the term of reference: The main responsibilities of China National Committee of “UNESCO Memory of the World Programme” include as follows: cooperating with UNESCO to carry out rescue and preservation of Chinese documentary heritages, developing work plan for “China Archives and Documentary Heritage Programme”, supervising the implementation of work plan, and helping Chinese documentary heritages apply for *Asia/Pacific Memory of the World Register* and *Memory of the World Register*.

II. Activities and Achievements for years 2016-17

From 2016 to 2017, central and local finance authorities of the Chinese Government significantly increased the inputs into preservation and utilization of documentary heritages. The whole society paid dramatically increasing attention to the preservation and utilization of documentary heritages, while preservation and utilization of documentary heritages made growing contributions to economic and social development. In addition, China also actively provided supports for the development of “Asia/Pacific Memory of the World Programme” and “UNESCO Memory of the World Programme”.

(I) Continuous implementation of rescue and preservation of documentary heritages: In terms of content, greater rescue and preservation efforts were made for document heritages of ethnic minorities and documentary heritage with regional significance. For

example, the Committee instructed Tibetan Autonomous Region Archives to rescue, digitize and translate more than 1,400 Mongolian and Manchu archives, which will come off the press. The Committee also supported many archives in Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan and other places to rescue and translate the documentary heritages of Tibetan, Qiang, Shui, Bai and other ethnic minorities. In terms of approaches, Chinese archives at all levels not only continuously launched rescuing preservation for important documentary heritages by means of restoration and deacidification, but also made full use of modern information technology, and launched digitalization campaign for documentary heritages on a large scale. For example, in 2016-2017, Suzhou Archives fulfilled a large-scale digitization campaign for *The Archives of Suzhou Silk Samples of Modern and Contemporary Times* that had been successfully included into *Memory of the World Register*, and fulfilled digitization task for nearly 90,000 archives.

(II) Emphasis on the development and utilization of documentary heritages: In order to let documentary heritage preservation keep abreast of economic and social development and satisfy the needs of economic and social development, the Committee has organized nationwide local archives at all levels to implement *Overall Planning for Preservation and Development of Key National Archives during the 13th "Five-Year Plan" Period* from 2016 onwards. By playing the role of financial funds as "baton", archives at all levels were encouraged and guided to exert more efforts for the exploitation and utilization of documentary heritages. During 2016-2017, the Committee subsidized more than 300 preservation and development projects for important documentary heritages, and gave rise to a number of development achievements with social influence. For example, as for development and utilization of "Qiaopi Archives -Correspondence and Remittance Documents from overseas Chinese" (enlisted into *Memory of the World Register* in 2013), the Archives of Fujian Province and Guangdong Province held four exhibitions. In addition, four public lectures themed with "Qiaopi archives" were held. A number of promotional videos on the Internet were produced. Through these activities, the social visibility of "Qiaopi archives" has been further upgrade, which has attracted more and more people to take part in preservation, development and research of "Qiaopi".

(III) Proactive publicity and introduction of documentary heritages to the society: So far, four batches of assessment for *China National Register* have been carried out. Book publications and tour exhibitions are launched so as to extensively publicize the documentary heritages inscribe in the *Chinese National Register* in more vivid, intuitive and accessible manners.

(IV) Application for *Asia/Pacific Memory of the World Register* and *Memory of the World Register*: In 2017, *Inscriptions on Bones and Tortoise Shells of the Shang Dynasty* and *The Archives of Suzhou Silk Samples of Modern and Contemporary Times*, as well as *Macau Official Archives of the Qing Dynasty (1693-1886)*, were included into *Memory of the World Register*.

(V) Support for MOW: In June 2016, we held "Workshop on Archives Preservation in the Asia Pacific Region" in Xi'an, and more than 40 experts from around the world conducted in-depth discussions on document preservation technology. In November 2016, Seminar on "MOW & The Development of Archives Work" was held in Suzhou, and experts of IAC and attendees shared the experience of MOW in boosting the advancements of archives undertaking. In July 2017, in conjunction with official establishment of the Memory of the World Knowledge Center-Beijing, "Forum on

China and the Memory of the World Programme” was organized, which was attended by Lothar Jordan (Vice Chair of the UNESCO Memory of the World International Advisory Committee), Papa Momar Diop (Vice Chair of UNESCO Memory of the World International Advisory Committee) and many other experts. This forum propelled the cooperation between China and UNESCO Memory of the World International Advisory Committee, and played a positive role in further pushing forward MOW to gain ground in China.

III. Work Plans for 2018-2019

The Committee will continue to help nominating China’s documentary heritages to the regional and international registers, exert more efforts for publicity, utilization and preservation of the enlisted documents, exert more efforts for rescue and preservation of endangered documentary heritages, and strengthen the preservation technology, equipment and research.

(I) To make steady progress in implementing MOW program: In order to further promote “MOW” throughout China and consolidate the development foundation, the Committee intends to initiate the fifth cycle of nomination for national register in 2019. In addition, the Committee will prepare for the establishment of the Memory of the World Knowledge Center-Fuzhou and the Memory of the World Knowledge Center-Suzhou in China,

(II) The Committee will strive for more financial supports, especially give full play to the leverage role of the central finance, encourage and guide local governments to further increase their inputs into preservation and utilization of documentary heritages. The Committee will continue to mobilize local archives at all levels to carry out preservation and development of important documentary heritages in a pertinent manner. While rescuing and preserving documentary heritages, the Committee will also conduct more extensive and more in-depth development and utilization of documentary heritages, especially exert more efforts for access and sharing of development and utilization fruits so that more and more people can understand the documentary heritages and make the documentary heritages play a greater role in society.

(III) To give impetus to research and promotion of document heritage preservation technology: During 2018-2019, four regional national key archives preservation centers will be set up as planned. Upon the completion of these preservation centers, they will undertake the tasks for rescuing and preserving some of the archives and documentary heritages on the regional scale, actively carry out researches on archive preservation. In the future, these preservation centers will become important bases for archive rescue and preservation in China, important bases for launching top-notch research on archive preservation technology and important bases for pooling and cultivating outstanding archive preservation technologists. In addition, the Committee will also vigorously promote outstanding scientific and technological achievements in the field of document heritage preservation, and strengthen international exchange and cooperation.

IV. Challenges and issues

In the process of developing the MOW program, we are mainly faced with the following challenges and issues:

(1) The absolute amount of documentary heritage to be protected is enormous.

Although the implementation of the Memory of the World Programme has effectively promoted the protection of documentary heritage in China, and yet, due to the long history of China and the huge amount, there are still a large quantity of documentary heritage that needs to be protected at all levels of archives, especially in the remote and impoverished areas, some valuable documentary resources call for urgent preservation efforts.

(2) There is a shortage of archive protection technicians. Although it claims nearly 1 million employees in this field in China, the actual number that are truly engaged in this profession is estimated to be at less than 1%. And what makes the situation worse is that the existing archive protection professionals generally suffer from a low level of professionalism and a serious problem of knowledge aging. There is an incompatibility between the size and structure of the archive protection talent team and the needs of the current documentary heritage protection work.

(3) Choice of documentary heritage protection technology is a test of wisdom. With more and more social forces participating in documentary heritage conservation, various areas of society, including universities, research institutes and enterprises, have been investing in more, resulting in a greater diversity as far as technology is concerned. Despite some technological advancement brought by, some problems have also arisen, as some new technologies have not gone through a systematic scientific argumentation and test of time. Hasty adoption may cause irreparable losses to archival documentary heritage. How to avoid this situation is the major difficulty and challenge faced by archives when they use the technology to protect their documentary heritage.

V. Measures Taken in Implementing the UNESCO Recommendation on Documentary Heritage

After the UNESCO's *Recommendation concerning the Preservation of, and Access to, Documentary Heritage Including in Digital Form* ("Recommendation") was adopted in 2015, China has taken active measures to implement the *Recommendation*.

(1) The Chinese government attaches great importance to the preservation and use of documentary heritage. In the government work report of the past two years, the Chinese government clearly proposed to develop the archives and strengthen the preservation and inheritance of cultural heritage. In terms of specific actions, starting from 2016, the Chinese government has set up a special fund through the central government for the preservation and use of important documentary heritage at local archives of all levels, including rescue, protection, digitization, and exploitation. And the scale of funds used for this purpose was RMB 200 million (about 34 million USD) per year. In addition, the Chinese government continues to provide central financial support for the building of national-level archives buildings in the central and western regions. In 2016 and 2017, it supported a total of 337 projects with a total capital of RMB 1.4 billion (233 million USD)

(2) Strengthen the preservation and use of archival documentary heritage in the digital age through legislation and planning. Currently, China is in the process of revising the *Archives Law of the People's Republic of China*. During the revision process, the protection and use of archival documentary heritage in the digital age are the focus of attention. The revised archives law will highlight the management of the archival formation process in order to comply with the principle of action and intervention before the document is generated and collected so as to effectively protect archival

documents in the digital era and prevent the irreversible loss of the digital archival heritage. In the “*Thirteenth Five-Year Plan*” of the *National Archives Development Program* developed by the State Archives Administration, we have set clear development goals for the receipt of electronic files, the digitalization of archives, and the construction of digital archives. In addition, through the guidance of the National Archives Development Program, local governments have also formulated plans for the development of the archives business in the region, and have incorporated the preservation and use of archival documentary heritage in the digital age into the local archives development plan and implemented it in an active manner.

(3) Promote the preservation and utilization of archival documentary heritage in the digital era through implementation of the strategy to “Digitalize the Old and Electronize the New Document.” Since 2013, China has begun implementing this strategy. “Digitalize the Old Document” is characterized by digitization of traditional carrier of files such as paper and audio and video files. “Electronize the New Document” features timely archiving of electronic files that should be archived by various units under the conditions of office automation, and transfer of those files to the relevant archive entities as stipulated so that the archives newly received are all electronic files. In recent years, the pace of implementation of this strategy has been accelerating. A large number of livelihood archives related to the interests of the public have been digitized and provided to the public for use in various local archives collections. Meanwhile, digital archives of different sizes have been built in China. The opening up of archives departments at all levels is making it a reality for the formation, collection, accumulation, identification, and filing of electronic documents, as well as the transfer, storage, use, and backup of electronic archives.

(4) Actively promote the best documentary heritage protection technology by formulating consistent management specifications and technical standards. Regarding the protection of archival documentary heritage, China has promulgated a series of standard regulations in recent years, including *The Code for the Rescue and Rehabilitation of Paper Files Part I: Classification of Damage Levels*, *Regulations for the Rescue and Restoration of Paper Files, Part II: Investigation Methods of Archives Preservation Status*, *Rescue and Repair Specification for Paper Files Part III: Requirements for Repair Quality*, *Digitalization Specification for Paper Files*, *Digitalization Specification for Audio and Video Archives*, *General Rules for the Prevention and Treatment of Archives Entomophthora*, *Sealed Nitrogen Packaging for Paper Files*, *Classification and Diagram of Diseases of Paper Archives in the Ming and Qing Dynasties*, and the *Metadata Program of Audio and Video Files in Electronic Formats*, provide the best technical path and practical standards for the preservation of documentary heritage for all circles of the society.