

UNESCO and its partners launch online library to celebrate world cultures



UNESCO, Library of Congress and partners launch World Digital Library

21 April 2009 – In a bid to celebrate the world’s myriad cultures, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and dozens of partner institutions today launched the World Digital Library, a Web site featuring cultural materials from libraries and archives worldwide, free of charge.

The new Library, known as WDL, will function in seven languages – Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish – and includes content in over 40 languages.

James H. Billington, the United States Librarian of Congress, first proposed the creation of the online library to [UNESCO](#) in 2005, stressing that such a project could have the “salutary effect of bringing people together by celebrating the depth and uniqueness of different cultures in a single global undertaking.”

At today’s launch at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, the agency’s Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura hailed the WDL, noting that it “offers and invaluable platform for the free flow of information, for international solidarity, for the celebration of cultural diversity and for the building of inclusive knowledge societies.”

Developed by a team from the Library of Congress, the project seeks to expand the volume and variety of cultural content on the Internet; provide resources for educators, scholars and general audiences; and close the digital divide both within and between countries.

Among the information available on the WDL are manuscripts, books, maps and rubbings of oracle bones spanning the range of Chinese history, from ancient to modern times, contributed by the National Library of China.

Also on the site are Arabic scientific manuscripts from the National Library and Archives of Egypt and early photographs of Latin America courtesy of the National Library of Brazil.

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