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iPRES 2021 Panel 3

"Digital Documentary Heritage: Securing Reliable and Sustainable Access"

UNESCO policy dialogue and international policy agenda

21 October 2021

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unesco
Memory of the World

Outline

- UNESCO policy instruments and importance for the preservation community
- Policy dialogue and policy gaps in the preservation of digital documentary heritage

UNESCO
United Nations
Educational,
Scientific and
Cultural
Organization

Why increasing the effort on international policy work?

Why related to digital documentary heritage?

Why access? Why now?

Importance of Documentary Heritage

UNESCO is committed to protecting, preserving and promoting access to the world's documentary heritage, from preserving documents in libraries, archives and museums to the software that is driving the digital transformation.

UNESCO
193 member states
11 associate members

Documentary heritage is a key resource that helps us learn from the past.

Documentary heritage must be preserved and remain accessible.

UNESCO policy instruments

Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form (unesco.org)

- 2015 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the preservation and access to documentary heritage including in digital form

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, meeting in Paris from 3 to 18 November 2015, at its 38th session,

Considering that documents produced and preserved over time, in all their analogue and digital forms through time and space, constitute the primary means of knowledge creation and expression, having an impact on all areas of humanity's civilization and its further progress,

Also considering that documentary heritage records the unfolding of human thought and events, the evolution of languages, cultures, peoples and their understanding of the world,

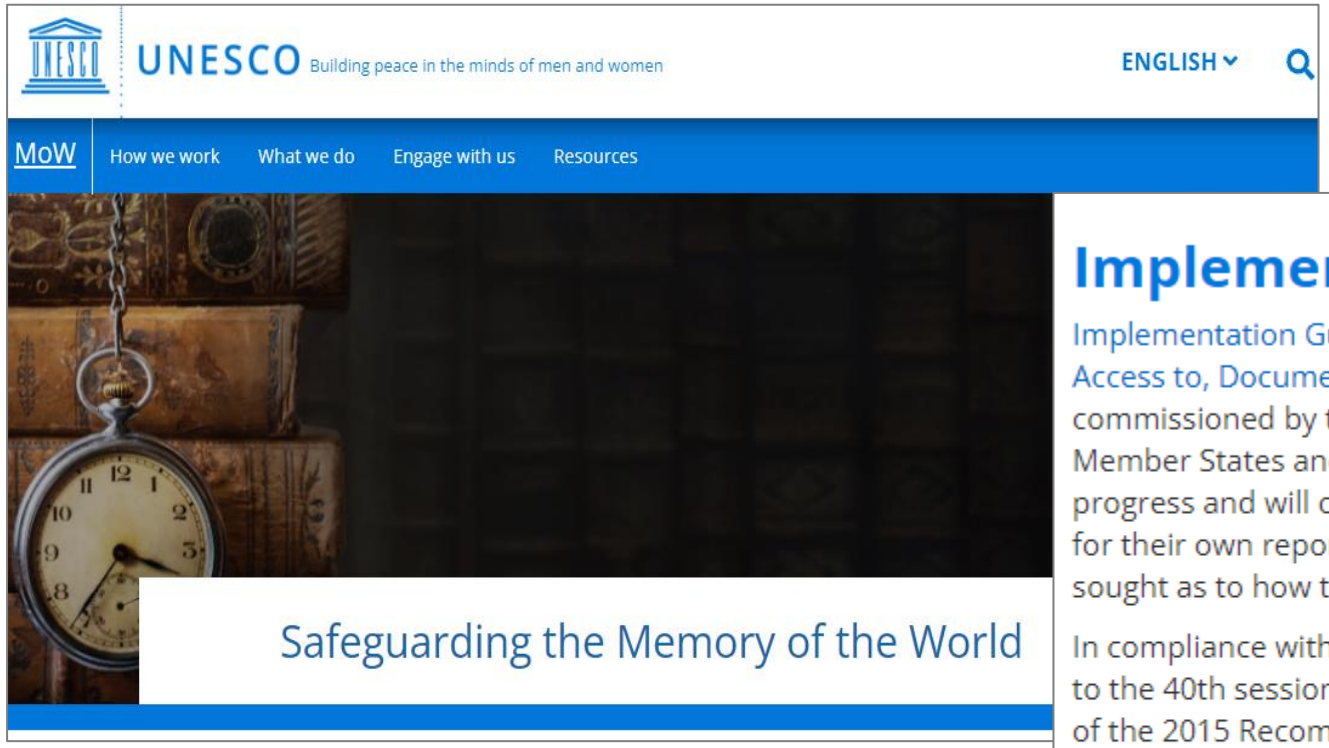
Underlining the importance of documentary heritage to promote the sharing of knowledge for greater understanding and dialogue, in order to promote peace and respect for freedom, democracy, human rights, and dignity,

UNESCO 2015 Recommendation

2015 UNESCO Recommendation on Policies - Section 4

- Long term investment
- Cost sharing
- Support private collections
- Access, education, research
- Incentives for supporters and investors
- Legal deposit, copyright exceptions
- Provision of needed technologies
- Open source and standardized tools
- Monitoring and status
- Synergies among UNESCO programmes

Implementation Guidelines



Implementation Guidelines

Implementation Guidelines for the 2015 Recommendation Concerning the Preservation of, and Access to, Documentary Heritage Including in Digital Form: These Implementation Guidelines were commissioned by the MoW Secretariat in order to provide an initial reporting framework for Member States and other national memory institutions/stakeholders. They represent a work in progress and will continue being reviewed in light of new experiences as Member States pilot them for their own reporting obligations under the Recommendation. Indeed, comments are still being sought as to how this draft can be improved for more effective reporting overall.

In compliance with 38 C/Resolution 55 and 206 EX/Decision 25.VI, the Director-General submitted to the 40th session of the General conference the first consolidated report on the implementation of the 2015 Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage, including in digital form, together with comments by the Executive Board thereon at its 206th session. The analysis was prepared on the basis of 38 national reports from Member States received by the Secretariat: Albania - Armenia - Austria - Bulgaria - Canada - China - Côte d'Ivoire - Cuba - Ecuador - Estonia - Germany - Greece - Hungary - Iceland - Iran - Jordan - Korea - Lebanon - Lithuania - Mexico - Myanmar - Netherlands - New Zealand - Oman - Peru - Poland - Russia - Serbia - Slovenia - South Africa - Sweden - Switzerland - Turkey - UK - Ukraine - Uzbekistan.

[2015_mow_recommendation_implementation_guidelines_en.pdf (unesco.org)]

What has changed? Why global policies?

FACTORS

DIGITAL REVOLUTION

GLOBAL ECONOMY

CONNECTED WORLD

- Global adoption of technologies and platforms
- Increased production of documentary heritage in digital form
- Global information and communication infrastructure—Internet
- Content and information beyond national boundaries.

RISKS & CONCERNS

Rapid technology obsolescence

Content diversity

Large scale

Increased cost and effort

Lack of content control and security

The first step: Identify policy gaps

Priority issues:

Preservation action

Protecting cultural identity at risk

Sustainability

Creating sustainable partnerships for preservation

Technology

Preventing loss of documentary heritage due to the rapid obsolescence of technology

Legal frameworks

Upholding enabling legal frameworks for effective functioning of memory institutions.

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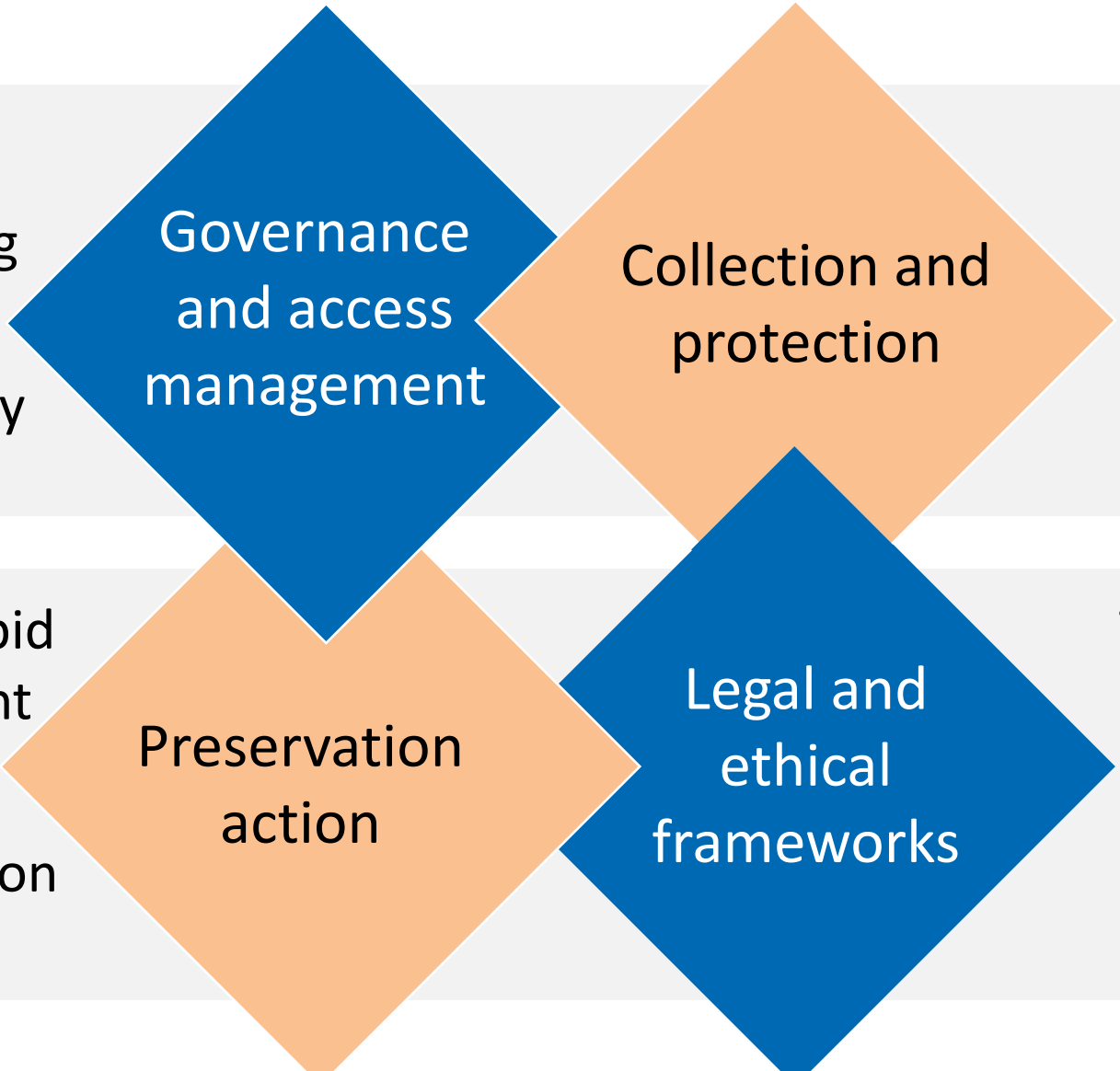
documentary_heritage_at_risk_policy_gaps_in_digital_preservation_en.pdf (unesco.org)

UNESCO Policy Dialogue: Key policy gaps



Digital trespassing

Data Sovereignty

Institutional mandate

Magnetic tape collection: awareness and collaboration

Scale & rapid deployment

Standards and common resources

Treaties for collaboration

Sustainable solutions and industry partnerships.

Long-term access to documentary heritage

- Ongoing protection of documentary heritage is key.
- Enabling and managing access are essential to achieve the purpose and impact of the preserved documentary heritage.

Risks to digital documentary heritage

- Digital content requires readers, i.e., legacy software that can open old files
- Digital requires sophisticated devices and computing environment
- Legacy software is non-secure and require extra security measures
- Licenses of operating systems and software may not be readily available
- New technologies replace old and user skills fade over time.

Thank you!

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