15th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
9 May - 20 May 2016, United Nations, New York

UNESCO side event
Universal Access to Information in Cyberspace for Empowerment of Indigenous Peoples

10th May 13.00h - 14.30h
UN House, Room FF 600
Universal access to information is an integral part of the right to freedom of expression and considered to be crucial for development, democracy, equity and delivery of public goods to all citizens. Despite the fundamental importance in the facilitation of all other rights, there are still many communities around the world, including indigenous, which are not able to access information in their languages, their exceptionally diverse documentary heritage is often documented, preserved and shared without taking into consideration their views and interests as rights-holders as well as ignoring key principles of information ethics and interoperability. This results in preventing those communities from growing any larger, accessing equal opportunities and realizing their full potential. Universal access to information including in cyberspace should be considered as a part of sustainable development plans and linked to the empowerment of indigenous communities.

The side event, organized jointly by UNESCO and other international, regional and national partners, will address a wide range of issues on digital empowerment of indigenous communities through ensured universal access to information and knowledge in cyberspace within three thematic areas:

(i) promotion of indigenous languages in cyberspace;
(ii) digital preservation of documentary heritage of indigenous communities;
(iii) ethical dimensions of making information and documentary heritage of indigenous communities accessible to all.

Speakers of this side event will share concrete examples on how universal access to information and knowledge in cyberspace contributes to the digital empowerment of indigenous communities. Reference will be made to the implementation of the UNESCO’s normative instrument “Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace” (2003) and a global initiative “World Atlas of Languages”. The outcomes of the Regional Conference for Central America “Multilingualism in cyberspace: Indigenous Languages for Empowerment” which took place from 27-28 November 2015 in San Jose, Costa Rica, will be also presented with an aim to form new partnerships among all interested parties, encourage interdisciplinary dialogue and exchange of good practices.

Furthermore, prominent speakers working in the digital preservation field will share information about new inscriptions related to the documentary heritage of indigenous communities on the International Registry of the Memory of the World Programme, and implementation of the UNESCO’s normative instrument “Recommendation concerning the Preservation of, Access to, Documentary Heritage in the Digital Era” (2015).

Additionally, the speakers of the session will address the ethical dimensions of making data, information and documentary heritage of indigenous communities accessible in public domain. Respect of fundamental universal ethical principles, in particular those concerned with production of new content, storage, distribution, access to and use by a global community will be debated and examples shared with participants of the session.

This 90-minute side event at the Forum will also include a question-and-answer segment providing opportunity for the audience to react and exchange views with speakers.
Mr. Christopher Moseley
Chief-Editor of the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (UK)
Mr Christopher Moseley is Chief-Editor of the UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger. Alongside linguistic geography, his research interests are in newly written languages and the creation of orthographies to suit them. Moseley also co-edited the second edition of the Routledge Atlas of the World’s Languages (2007). In addition, he completed this fifth Occasional Paper for the World Oral Literature Project in 2012, on the development of the UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger.

Mr Paul Trilsbeek,
Head The Language Archive, Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics (The Netherlands)
Mr Paul Trilsbeek is currently the head of The Language Archive at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. He has worked on archiving and preserving endangered languages materials for more than a decade through his work as the main archivist for the DOBES (Documentation of Endangered Languages) programme funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. He is a member of the Data Seal of Approval board, the DELAMAN (Digital Endangered Languages and Musics Archives Network) board and the Alliance for Linguistic Diversity Governance Council, which governs the Endangered Languages Project and the website. A significant part of the endangered languages collections of The Language Archive, including most of the DOBES collections, have been inscribed to the UNESCO Memory of the World register in 2015.

Mr Dick Kawooya
Assistant Professor, School of Library and Information Science, College of Information and Communications in USA (Uganda)
Dr. Dick Kawooya’s current research interests focus on the role of information (intellectual property) in fostering innovation. He is specifically looking at the role and impact of intellectual property rights (IPRs) in the exchange of innovation between formal institutions (universities, research centers, libraries, etc) and informal businesses or sectors in Africa. Dr. Kawooya’s research interests fit the broad theme of access and flow of information. He has particular interest in the ethical and legal barriers to information access and flows often with the library institution as the backdrop.
Linguistic diversity and multilingualism in cyberspace are key assets for promoting innovation, social integration and dialogue, sustainable development and peace. Technological progress provides enormous potential for languages to be present on the Internet and for content to be accessible by all.

In 1996, UNESCO published its Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger as a tool to monitor the status of languages and to raise awareness of this issue as to provide information on languages that are in danger, of which 199 have fewer than ten speakers or have actually been extinct since 1950.

In 2009, an interactive and collaborative online edition of atlas was created. This free and easily accessible resource includes information on the number of speakers and degree of endangerment, relevant policies, projects, sources, ISO codes and geographic coordinates.

Currently, UNESCO is in the process of using the online edition to create a new World Atlas of Languages which will include digital maps, data sets covering all of the world’s languages, new technical functionalities and content levels.

The World Atlas of Languages aims at embodying:

- A universally accessible and open online platform;
- A monitoring tool of linguistic diversity and multilingualism;
- A repository of interactive digital maps and e-resources;
- A reliable reference for educators, media, researchers, policy-makers, business and linguistic communities;
- An online space for networking and active crowdsourcing.

Join UNESCO in this unique undertaking [http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/](http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/)

Contact: Ms Irmgarda Kasinskaite-Buddeberg (i.kasinskaite@unesco.org)
**Archive of the Skolt Sámi village of Suonjel Suenjel**

Documentary heritage submitted by Finland and recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 2015.

The archive forms a unique body of documentation of an indigenous community. It is a unique expression of how documented decisions of the government were understood already centuries ago as safeguarding the fundamental rights of the community. The documents are official edicts issued by the Russian Emperor and the Imperial Government (gramota), which confirmed the rights of the Skolt Sámi community to their fishing and reindeer herding territories and the community developed a unique way to preserve these vital records.

**The Treaty of Waitangi**

Documentary heritage submitted by New Zealand and recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 1997.

The Treaty of Waitangi is the founding document of the nation of New Zealand. It was signed in the Bay of Islands on 6 February 1840 by Captain William Hobson, several English residents and approximately 45 Maori chiefs. The document signed at Waitangi was then taken to a number of other Northland locations to obtain additional Maori signatures.
The Mabo Case Manuscripts
Documentary heritage submitted by Australia and recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 2001.

The personal papers of Edward Koiki Mabo are held alongside legal and historical materials relating to the Mabo Case. Eddie Mabo was an indigenous activist whose efforts resulted – shortly after his death – in the Australian High Court, in June 1992, overturning the doctrine of ‘terra nullius’. The judgment unleashed profound change in Australia’s legal and legislative landscape, influencing the status and land rights of its indigenous peoples and race relations generally. The significance of the Mabo Case lies in it being an extremely rare instance in world history of pre-existing tribal law being formally recognised as superior to fundamental law of the ‘invading’ culture, regardless of the economic and political implications.

El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno
Documentary heritage submitted by Denmark and recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 2007.

The item is an autograph manuscript of 1,200 pages including 400 full-page drawings. Since its rediscovery in 1908, the item has become widely known as the only extant document conveying a purely indigenous (Andean Indian) viewpoint on pre-conquest Andean life and Inca rule, the Spanish conquest 1532, early Spanish colonial rule, and the systematic abuse of the rights of the indigenous population by the political, legal, and ecclesiastic authorities of the colony. The item is a “letter” to King Filip 3, suggesting that the government of Peru be returned to the indigenous population, if the once quite rich country is not to be utterly destroyed by rural depopulation and urban proletarization.

Sophus Tromholt Collection
Documentary heritage submitted by Norway and recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 2013.

The collection consists of photographic prints in a portfolio and glass negative archive by the scientist and amateur photographer Sophus Tromholt. Tromholt spent almost a year (1882-1883) in Kautokeino, Northern Norway, as part of the First Polar Year, monitoring an aurora borealis observatory. During this time, he photographed the indigenous population of the Sami, landscapes, villages and cultural observations. These portraits are unique in their individualistic and humanistic approach, a first in picturing the Sami as being something more than racial stereotypes and exotic objects for tourists. The images are most importantly an source to the international concern for indigenous populations and their portrayal as “the other”. Tromholt’s images are important historical and political records in this debate.
Sixteenth to eighteenth century pictographs from the “Maps, drawings and illustrations” of the National Archives of Mexico

Documentary heritage submitted by Mexico and recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 2011.

These 334 pictographic records of maps, documents, drawings and illustrations from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries contain data characterized by a “distinctly Indian style or Indian influence.” They include representations and pre-Hispanic glyphs that are evidence of enormous wealth, deep symbolism and meaning and continue being the subject matter of comprehensive study. The value of the documents lies in being key items to understand the worldview of the various indigenous cultures that populated the American territory in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and left a legacy of multi-ethnicity in Mexico. In that sense they constitute the historical memory that survived European settlement in America.

The work of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún (1499-1590)

Documentary heritage submitted by Mexico and Italy and recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 2015.

The work of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún (1499-1590) constitutes one of the most renowned historic sources of ancient Mexico. He was a pioneer of modern anthropology and showed singular commitment, reticence and intelligence. His work contains the Matritense Codex, a manuscript product of the great ethnographic research in the New Spain of the mid-16th century and the Florentine Codex, a manuscript in two columns with texts in Náhuatl and Spanish.
Collection of Mexican Codices
Documentary heritage submitted by Mexico and recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 1997.

The collection known as the “Colección de Códices Originales Mexicanos” (Collection of Original Mexican Codices) of the Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia” comprises one pre-Hispanic codex, 92 colonial originals and 68 period facsimiles. Most of the pictorial documents which comprise this collection were made in the sixteenth century, although a small number date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and a very small number, mostly the copies, date from the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. The pictorial documents called “codices” are the only references we have as original sources of pre-Hispanic cultures, the early relations between the native peoples and the Spanish conquistadors, and they are the only surviving examples of a reading and writing system peculiar to the cultures of Mesoamerica.

Colección de Lenguas Indígenas
Documentary heritage submitted by Mexico and recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 2007.

The patrimony proposed herein is a set of 166 books containing 128 titles, held at the Biblioteca Pública del Estado de Jalisco «Juan José Arreola» (Public Library of the State of Jalisco) in Guadalajara, Jalisco, México. These books are either written in indigenous languages or contain studies of those languages, and were elaborated for purposes of evangelization during the colonial period and the 19th century. The Colección de Lenguas Indígenas (as we shall call it), exists thanks to a series of historical circumstances that occurred mainly in the area known today as México. These tomes contain invaluable information covering four centuries of religious acculturation, and illustrate the modifications of languages that were spoken in an area of the Americas that stretched beyond the modern borders of the Mexican Republic. Furthermore, they are illustrative of the development of linguistic historiography and historical linguistics.

Codices from the Oaxaca Valley
Documentary heritage submitted by Mexico and recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 1997.

The Marquisate of the Oaxaca Valley was the land granted by the Crown on 6 July 1529 to Hernán Cortés in recognition of his services. This three codices were drafted by indigenous scribes (tlacuilos) using their own writing system and written on agave (maguey) paper. They are accompanied by documents drafted by the descendants of Hernán Cortés. These tomes contain invaluable information covering four centuries of religious acculturation, and illustrate the modifications of languages that were spoken in an area of the Americas that stretched beyond the modern borders of the Mexican Republic. Furthermore, they are illustrative of the development of linguistic historiography and historical linguistics.
**Codex Techaloyan de Cuajimalpaz**  
Documentary heritage submitted by Mexico and recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 1997.

This codex describes how indigenous communities were established in various places in the Valley of Mexico City. It contains indigenous pictorial elements and text written in nahuatl. The file includes a Spanish translation.  
This manuscript comprises a series of images relating directly to the lands belonging to a village. It also contains the land survey, a regional map, historical and economic data, a census, an ecological description...

**Selected data collections of the world’s language diversity at the Language Archive**  
Documentary heritage submitted by the Netherlands and recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 2015.

The nominated heritage offers and preserves a unique sample of the world’s linguistic and cultural diversity. It represents a landmark for language documentation in terms of quality of content and archiving infrastructure. The nominated holding at the Language Archive (TLA) consists of 64 digital collections with audio-visual and textual resources documenting 102 languages and cultures around the world, recorded and annotated for providing high-quality representative samples of the respective languages in their natural context, digitally prepared and archived between 2000 and 2014.

**UNESCO Memory of the World Programme**  
Contact: Ms Iskra Panevska (i.panevska@unesco.org)
Through its intergovernmental Information for All Programme (IFAP)\(^1\), the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005\(^2\), amongst others, UNESCO is undertaking initiatives aimed at supporting the protection and promotion of indigenous languages as well as their knowledge systems. Much of this work has sought to support research, the development of policy resources, capacity-building of individuals and communities, and implement projects. Together these efforts can foster the development and application of various tools and processes, including information and communication technologies (ICT), that can serve to preserve and enhance access to their information and knowledge systems and enable indigenous communities to be present in global knowledge societies.

Principles such as those contained in Articles 19 and 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights\(^3\), provide an ethical basis for proactive efforts that seek remedies to the limited availability of indigenous content online and the digital/knowledge divide these communities face. This requires a combination of technical responses such as content production/management tools, as well as capacity-side building efforts such as developing media and information literacy (MIL) skills of users and communities. Indigenous knowledge is closely linked to issues of identity and community. Indigenous languages and the indigenous knowledge they carry are not only a cultural heritage, but also a source of enormous opportunities for cultural, political and economic influence. Although created over thousands of years, this knowledge may be vulnerable to demographic, socio-economic, technological and other changes. Careful consideration is needed to ensure the survival and access to this knowledge, respect the right of the community’s custodial role and guarding against its misuse and misappropriation\(^4\). These factors underscore the importance of ensuring the active participation of indigenous communities in the representation, safeguarding and dissemination of their knowledge so as to respect and ensure their legitimate

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\(^1\) The Intergovernmental Information for All Programme (IFAP) (http://www.unesco.org/webworld/ifap)
\(^4\) Keystones to foster inclusive Knowledge Societies: Access to information and knowledge, Freedom of Expression, Privacy, and Ethics on a Global Internet (http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002325/232563E.pdf)
Publications

Information Ethics in Africa: Cross-cutting Themes
This reader developed by the African Center of Excellence for Information Ethics addresses ethical challenges around indigenous knowledge in Africa (ACEIE, 2013)

Keystones to foster inclusive Knowledge Societies: Access to information and knowledge, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethics on a Global Internet
This UNESCO study reflects on some of the challenges around the creation of a favorable ecosystem for realizing the creation of knowledge societies. The study also draws attention to the important role of indigenous knowledge (UNESCO, 2015).

NET.LANG: Towards the Multilingual Cyberspace
This publication developed by the Maaya Network with the support of UNESCO and its IFAP Programme captures practical challenges and projects as well as research and policy initiatives that are seeking to provide responses that support presence of multilingual cyberspace. Specific attention is given to the presence end protection of endangered and indigenous languages (MAAYA Network, 2012)
The Information for All Programme (IFAP) is an intergovernmental programme established at UNESCO in 2001 to promote the creation of equitable societies through better access to information. It works closely with other intergovernmental organisations and international NGOs, supporting a wide range of projects from individual capacity building, to research or thematic debates. In order to achieve its goals, the programme concentrates its efforts on six priority areas:

- multilingualism
- information ethics
- information accessibility
- information preservation
- information literacy
- information for development

Numerous activities have been carried out in the past by UNESCO and national IFAP committees to promote multilingualism around the world. The first and second international conferences on “Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace” took place in Yakutsk, Russian Federation, in July 2008, 2011 and 2014, and in July 2015 in Khanty-Mansiysk at which leading experts from around the world made concrete recommendations for actions to promote multilingualism in cyberspace. The discussion covered the political, cultural, social, ethical and technological aspects of the research and development of linguistic diversity in cyberspace, and examined issues related to the use of ICTs to safeguard all languages. The deliberations and recommendations of the conferences were published in the Lena Resolution (2008) and the 2011 Yakutsk Call for Action: a Roadmap towards the World Summit on Multilingualism (2017). The recommendations were taken into account in discussions about the creation of UNESCO’s World Atlas of Languages during a meeting of international experts held in 2014, in Paris.

UNESCO through its IFAP Programme continues to work in close partnership with the African Network of Information Ethics (ANIE) and the African Center of Excellence in Information Ethics (ACEIE) to conduct capacity-building, develop resources and support policy around the ethics of indigenous knowledge in Africa.

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The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is an UN summit held in 2003 and 2005. The Summit provided a forum in which multiple stakeholders including international organizations, governments, the private sector and civil society could discuss the opportunities of the new information and communication environment, and also address challenges such as the inequality in access to information and communication that is called the ‘digital divide’. UNESCO was one of the key players in the lead-up to the WSIS.

The WSIS outcomes set an ambitious agenda for building a “development oriented global inclusive information society” which would respect, support and enhance indigenous peoples’ cultural diversity, human rights, and self-determined development. As many Indigenous Peoples, whether in developed or in developing countries, are distinctly disadvantaged with regard to access to and distribution of digital information, the documents also provides guidance to all stakeholders interested in using ICTs to help improve Indigenous Peoples’ quality of life.

Because of its prominent role during WSIS, UNESCO was asked with ITU and UNDP to co-lead the implementation of the WSIS outcomes. For this implementation, the Organization is covering six thematic domains through Action Lines, including on “Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content” (Action Line C8) and on “Access to information and knowledge” (Action Line C3). Within the framework of these Action Lines, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity, preserving indigenous people’s culture is placed at the core of an inclusive, knowledge based Information Society.

In regard of the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, UNESCO organized several meetings and workshops. In May 2010, the workshop on “Indigenous Peoples in the Information Society” gave a short overview of the development of Indigenous Peoples’ issues in light of the WSIS outcomes and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, exchanged experiences of ICT projects for and with Indigenous Peoples and shared ideas on possibilities of advancing the WSIS commitments as it relates to Indigenous Peoples. In May 2011, the conference on “Indigenous Peoples, Education and ICTs” focused on the theme of promoting indigenous education and intergenerational transmission of indigenous knowledge.

UNESCO is today also a key contributor to the ongoing WSIS+10 Review process, wherein they are renewing their vision on knowledge societies in the wake of the rapid and often surprising developments in the Information and Communication technologies (ICT’s). This revision emphasizes on the universal access of information and language diversity, balancing the private and public interests in knowledge, and promoting the integration of knowledge within people’s lives in ways that maximizes benefits and minimizes harm, taking in to account economic prosperity, environmental protection, inclusive social equity and justice.

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