The Future of the Past: The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme

Special Event

International Committee of Historical Sciences | 26–30 August 2026 | Leipzig, Germany

DATE	LOCATION
28 Aug 2026, 14:00 - 15:00	House 5 HS015 (Campus Jahnallee)
THEME	CONFERENCE
Not assigned	International Committee of Historical Sciences

Overview

The Memory of the World Programme is one of UNESCO´s heritage programmes. Its main tasks are to help safeguard documents (manuscripts, books, films, photographs, digital documents etc.), provide access to them, raise awareness of their significance, and thereby foster dialogue and mutual understanding between people and cultures. It lies in the character of documents as reliable witnesses of the past that they can transmit information sustainably into the future and so become a specific part of heritage: Documentary heritage. They are indispensable tools not only for a thorough understanding of history in all its forms but also for and of humanity itself. And they can help to disclose the misuse of history.
One of the main tools of this programme is the International Memory of the World Register of single documents or collections with global significance. This Special event aims to inform about this and other core elements of Memory of the World, especially in education and research. And its wants, together with the audience and members of CISH, consider possibilities of building bridges between this UNESCO programme and CISH - and single researchers and lecturers.
Memory of the World and the Historical Sciences share the intention to make their work fruitful for humanity, following universal values, joining respect to diversity with a global perspective. They share interests like fostering digitization projects or reflecting concepts of Heritage. And strengthening document literacy is a common interest of Memory of the World, memory institutions, historians and members of other disciplines that need scholarly edited sources. The International Memory of the World Register could be a new tool for teaching in the Historical Sciences (and in History in schools) and an object of their research. And historians could help assessing nominations for this Register. Artificial Intelligence could play a role in fields that are interesting for Memory of the World as well as for historians, e.g.: Immediate transcription and translations of ancient and old documents, or facilitating the access to documentary heritage for non-specialists and foreigners.

Fackson Banda Head of the Documentary Heritage/Memory of the World Unit, UNESCO (Paris)

Jan Bos, Chair of the International Advisory Committee (IAC), UNESCO Memory of the World Programme

Lothar Jordan, Chair, Sub-Committee on Education and Research (SCEaR), IAC, UNESCO Memory of the World Programme, Ipshita Chanda (Hyderabad, India), President of the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA)

Sacha Zala, CISH & Dodis

Find more information here:
UNESCO Memory of the World Programme (MoW)
MoW Sub-Committee on Education and Research (SCEaR)

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