



## **The World Digital Library: Project Manager's Report**

### **WDL Executive Council Meeting Washington, DC December 6, 2012**

This report summarizes the main developments in the World Digital Library since the last meeting of the WDL Executive Council on November 14, 2011.

#### **Content**

The WDL currently includes 6,588 items, comprising 319,340 images. 2508 items were added since the last partner meeting, an increase of 50.3 percent.<sup>1</sup> An additional 134 items are scheduled to be added by the end of the year, which will bring the total number of items to 6,722. This marks the successful completion of the 6,000-item target set as a medium-term content goal in the Business Plan approved by the Executive Council in January 2011.

Content was contributed by 41 partner institutions in 23 countries, bringing the total number of libraries, archives, and museums represented on the WDL to 89 partner institutions in 45 countries.

While the size of the WDL increased, the strong emphasis on quality and providing users with added value was maintained. Supplemental cataloging, expert curatorial descriptions, enhanced viewing, and presentation in the seven WDL interface languages continued to be provided for all WDL items. The item-level descriptions for several categories of content -- notably Chinese rare books and manuscripts, Arabic scientific books and manuscripts, and photographic surveys of the Russian Empire -- include substantial amounts of original research by scholars and expert curators.

There was significant progress in building critical mass in a number of high-visibility areas as envisioned in the Business Plan, notably Arabic scientific manuscripts, Chinese rare books and manuscripts, treasures from Medieval and Renaissance Europe, and Mesoamerican codices.

A noteworthy development was the addition, in October 2012, of the Florentine Codex from the Medicea Laurenziana Library in Florence, an encyclopedic work about the people and culture of central Mexico compiled over a 30-year period and completed in 1577. Other noteworthy items or collections added included the Borso d'Este Bible (circa 1455) from the Estense Library, Modena, Italy; the original score of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (1791), from the Berlin State Library; the *Marquesado del Valle Codex*

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<sup>1</sup> Reflects additions to December 5.



(circa 1550), from the General Archive of the Nation, Mexico; the 16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Turkish *Deniz atlası* from the Walters Museum, Baltimore; the 14th century Qur'an that belonged to Père Lachaise, confessor of Louis XIV, from the Bavarian State Library; and the first part of *Turkestan Album*, a massive photographic survey of Central Asia completed in 1871-72, from the Library of Congress.

The WDL completed a cooperative project, requested by the U.S. Congress and separately funded by the Library of Congress, to digitize and place online at-risk Christian manuscripts from the Middle East. The project was carried out under a contract between the Library of Congress and the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, a WDL partner, and resulted in the addition of 51 Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, and Greek manuscripts from institutions in Lebanon and Syria.

The Business Plan calls for expanding the WDL to 100,000 items by the end of 2015. The experience of the last year, and particularly the progress in developing new tools and processes for content creation, suggests that this goal is eminently feasible. Meeting it will depend, however, on continued contributions from partners, support for a core staff, and sustained support for translation into the seven WDL languages.

### **Partner Recruitment**

The WDL currently has 163 partners representing 77 countries, an increase from 145 partners in 72 countries at the time of the last Executive Council session.<sup>1</sup>

National libraries and archives that have joined in the last year include the National Library and Archives of the Islamic Republic of Iran; the National and University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski," Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the National Library of Malta; and the National Library of the Philippines.

Major research libraries added include the Saxon State and University Library, Dresden (Germany), the Laurentian Library (Italy), and the Folger Shakespeare Library (United States).

The long-term goal of the WDL remains universal participation, i.e., securing at least one partner from each UN member country. Reaching this goal will depend on direct or third-party technical assistance and capacity building, as institutions, including national libraries and archives, in many developing countries lack the capacity to digitize content for the WDL and for their own digital library projects.

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<sup>1</sup> Includes partners recommended for membership by the Project Manager, pending formal Executive Council approval. 2011 total includes partners approved by the EC at the 2011 meeting.



## **Capacity Building**

In its capacity as WDL project manager, the Library of Congress has helped to establish and operate digital conversion centers at three developing country libraries: the National Library and Archives of Egypt (NLAE) in Cairo; the Iraqi National Library and Archives (INLA) in Baghdad; and the National Library of Uganda (NLU) in Kampala (under a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York).

NLAE continues to digitize Arabic scientific manuscripts from its collections for the WDL. Ten of these manuscripts were added to the WDL in 2012, and others were received for processing. INLA continues to digitize the earliest newspapers and serials published in Iraq. Complete runs of two titles, in Arabic and in Kurdish, were added to the WDL in 2012, and two other titles were received for processing. NLU has organized a network of 31 institutions and individuals from throughout Uganda with historical collections, and is digitizing these materials for inclusion in the WDL.

In cooperation with the Qatar National Library and the Qatar Foundation, the WDL organized a “Workshop on Technical Skills and Standards for the World Digital Library” in Doha, Qatar for members of the WDL Arab Peninsula Working Group on February 22-23, 2012. Participants included staff from partners or prospective partners in Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

The WDL organized and conducted a week-long training and orientation program for two staff members from the library of the East Africa Community, June 17-21.

## **Usage and User Engagement**

In the period November 15, 2011-November 14, 2012, the WDL had 4,625,317 visitors accounting for 23,026,723 page views. The top fifteen countries by number of visitors were Spain, Mexico, the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Portugal, Colombia, China, United Kingdom, Germany, Russian Federation, France, Peru, Chile, and Canada. The top countries from the Islamic world by number of visitors were Iran (17<sup>th</sup>), Algeria (20<sup>th</sup>), Saudi Arabia (21<sup>st</sup>), and Egypt (23<sup>rd</sup>). Since its launch in 2009, the WDL has had more than 22 million visitors accounting for more than 138 million page views. The WDL Twitter account has approximately 15,000 followers.

Usage of the Spanish interface is heaviest, accounting for approximately 50 percent of page views, followed by English (approximately 20 percent), with the other five languages accounting for the remainder. Use of the Arabic version of the WDL is growing, albeit from a low initial base, and in fact doubled over the first ten months of 2012 compared with the same period in 2011.



Efforts have begun to increase usage across all of the language interfaces. The WDL team at the Library of Congress and the Qatar National Library are working together on a program of measures to increase awareness and usage of the WDL in the Arabian Gulf region and the Arab-speaking world.

Other initiatives designed to increase usage include expanded use of social media and representation at conferences and exhibitions. A grant from a member of the James Madison Council at the Library of Congress will fund a one-year “Wikipedian-in-Residence” at the WDL who will cooperate with Wikipedia editors to increase the number of links from Wikipedia to the WDL and the number of Wikipedia articles about WDL content, in English and in the other WDL languages.

### **Technical Development**

A number of user interface (UI) improvements were completed, including home page features that promote new content, improvements to the interactive timeline, and improvements in the item-level display pages.

The WDL project site – <http://project.wdl.org> – was upgraded and new content added to serve the needs of the project and to facilitate communication with WDL partners and prospective partners.

A project to introduce full text searching of books and other textual materials, beginning with Arabic, English, and French, was carried out in cooperation with the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. A beta version of FTS is nearing completion and will be introduced in early 2013.

Full migration of the WDL to the cloud, resulting in lower costs and faster and more reliable service to users around the world, was completed.

### **Longer-Term Priorities**

#### *Adding Interface Languages*

The Business Plan stresses the desirability of adding at least three languages – Hindi, Japanese, and German – to expand the WDL’s theoretical reach to 53 percent of the world’s people in their native languages (68 percent in native and non-native languages combined). No progress was made in this area, given financial constraints.

#### *Developing Mobile Applications*

Work on an iPad app for teachers has begun, with support from a grant from three members of the Library of Congress’s James Madison Council.



### *Developing Areas of Thematic Focus*

The Business Plan mentions development of thematic areas of concentration as a possible future area of focus, e.g., “systems of writing and their origins, geographic exploration, slavery and the slave trade, science and innovation, founding documents, material culture, and regional themes.” Now that the volume of content is approaching critical mass in a few key areas, work on developing themes is beginning, starting with Arabic science and Arab history (in cooperation with the Qatar National Library), Chinese rare books, and Mesoamerican codices.

### **Resource Issues**

The funding environment remains challenging. Fundraising efforts in 2012 focused on securing the renewal of major grants from Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Qatar Foundation, both of which expired in 2012. Additional resources were provided by the Library of Congress and members of the James Madison Council of the Library of Congress.

The WDL team consists of eight full-time Library of Congress staff and two full-time contractors, a decrease for budgetary reasons from ten full-time staff members and two full-time contractors in the previous year. After a competitive bidding process, multi-year contracts were awarded to two firms for translation services and to two firms for content management and cloud storage and hosting. Professional and consultant services contracts were used for quality review of translations, editing, and research and description writing in the areas of Chinese rare books and manuscripts, Russian photographs, and Arabic and Persian scientific manuscripts.

Funding and staffing levels are both considerably below the levels contained in the 2011 Business Plan approved by the Executive Council, which has necessitated the scaling back of capacity building and partner recruitment efforts, meetings of the Technical Architecture, Content Selection, and Language and Translation committees, and the deferral of certain activities listed in the “longer-term priorities” section of the plan. Fundraising efforts are underway, and it is to be hoped that the additional resources needed to meet the ambitious objectives in the plan will be forthcoming from U.S. and international sources.