The World Digital Library: Project Manager's Report

WDL Executive Council Meeting
Washington, DC
November 18, 2013

This report summarizes the main developments in the World Digital Library since the last meeting of the WDL Executive Council on December 6, 2012.

Content

The WDL currently includes 9,560 items, comprising 402,048 images. 2,972 items were added since the last partner meeting, an increase of 45 percent.[1] Content was contributed by 37 partner institutions in 20 countries, bringing the total number of libraries, archives, and museums represented on the WDL to 103 institutions in 50 countries. Production plans call for reaching 10,000 items in early 2014.

Among the noteworthy items added in the past year were William Shakespeare, *First Folio Edition of the Collected Plays* (1623), Folger Shakespeare Library; Pedanius Dioscorides, *Dioscurides Neapolitanus* (circa 512), National Library of Naples; *The Khoikhoi at the Cape of Good Hope* (circa 1666-1700), National Library of South Africa; *Psalter of Frederick II* (circa 1235-1237), Riccardiana Library of Florence; *The Dresden Codex* (circa 1200-1250), Saxon State and University Library; Zakarīyā ibn Muhammad al-Qazwīnī, *The Wonders of Creation* (circa 1500-1599), National Library and Archives of the Islamic Republic of Iran; three of the five oldest books published in Armenian (1512-1513), National Library of Armenia; and several 18th century manuscripts documenting now-endangered indigenous languages in Colombia and neighboring countries (National Library of Colombia).

Content in 101 languages is currently represented on the WDL.

Under the terms of a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York awarded in late 2012, the WDL began adding manuscripts, books, photographs, maps, and other materials relating to the history and culture of Afghanistan and surrounding countries. The project to create an Afghan component in the WDL was announced at a ceremony on January 10 at the U.S. Department of State with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Librarian of Congress James H. Billington, and Carnegie Corporation of New York President Vartan Gregorian.

With support from the Qatar National Library, the WDL added content totaling 250 items relating to the history of Arabic and Islamic science and the history of the Arabian Peninsula. The QNL gift also funded cooperative efforts in outreach to the Arabic-speaking world, capacity building, and initial development of a thematic presentation on the history of Arabic and Islamic science.

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[1] Reflects additions to November 18

Members of the James Madison Council of the Library of Congress funded the addition of content in several areas, including Bibles, maps, and content relating to Italy, Russia, and the United States.

The WDL continues to emphasize quality – both of the content on the site and of the user experience in viewing the content. Comprehensive cataloging, expert curatorial descriptions, enhanced viewing, and presentation in the seven WDL interface languages continue to be provided for all items. Item-level descriptions for several categories of content -- Chinese rare books and manuscripts, Arabic scientific books and manuscripts, and photographic surveys of the Russian Empire – have involved substantial amounts of original research by scholars and expert curators.

Partner Recruitment

The WDL currently has 178 partners representing 80 countries, an increase from 167 partners in 77 countries at the time of the last Executive Council session.[1]

Three national libraries have joined in the last year: the National Library of Kenya, the National Library of Vietnam, and the Slovak National Library.

Two new partners in Italy will participate under the umbrella agreement with the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities: the University Library Alessandrina (Rome) and the Library of the National Monument of Grottaferrata (Rome).

The Library of Congress recommends that six other institutions be approved for membership on the basis of the content they are offering or other contributions they plan to make:

- Al-Noor Centre for Studies and Research, a manuscript library in Yemen that was recruited by the Qatar National Library-sponsored Arab Peninsula Regional Group, and the first partner in Yemen;
- the University of South Africa (UNISA), one of the libraries in South Africa recruited to join under the 2009-2012 Carnegie Corporation of New York grant; UNISA will contribute materials relating to 20th century South Africa;
- Réseau francophone numérique (RFN), the digital library of Francophonie, which has offered to assist with partner recruitment and capacity building in French-speaking developing countries;
- three institutions in Spain that have important collections relating to the history of Spain and Latin America: the library of the University of Complutense, Madrid; the National Library of Galicia; and the Cabildo Gran Canaria (parliament) of the Canary Islands.

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[1] Includes partners recommended for membership by the Project Manager, pending formal Executive Council approval.

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.

Capacity Building

In cooperation with the Qatar National Library, the WDL organized a "Train the Trainer Hands-On Workshop," which took place in Doha on June 11-12, 2013. Participants included 24 staff from partners and prospective partners at 15 institutions in eight countries (Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Yemen).

In its capacity as WDL project manager, the Library of Congress continues to support 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).

The past year saw positive developments at all three centers. In Uganda, a contractor was engaged to repair broken equipment and upgrade hardware and software. This resulted in the retrieval of approximately 46,000 images that had been trapped on a defective hard drive, which is now being processed for inclusion in the WDL.

NLAE continued to digitize Arabic scientific manuscripts from its collections. Twelve of these manuscripts were added to the WDL in 2013, bringing the total number of NLAE manuscripts on the site to 36. An additional 177 manuscripts have been received and are being processed.

INLA continued to digitize the earliest newspapers and serials published in Iraq. Complete runs of four titles, *Al-Zaura*, *Al-Iraq*, *Sada Babil*, and *Al-Arab*, were added to the site.

Usage and User Engagement

For Library of Congress Fiscal Year 2013 (October 1, 2012-September 30, 2013), the WDL website recorded 4,296,206 visits, accounting for 23,316,314 page views. The top fifteen countries by number of visits were Spain, Brazil, Mexico, the United States, China, Argentina, Germany, United Kingdom, Portugal, Colombia, France, Russian Federation, Sweden, Peru, and Chile.

The "big four" – Spain, Brazil, Mexico, and the United States – accounted for 48 percent of total visits, suggesting major opportunities for outreach and growth in the rest of the world.

Usage in the Spanish-speaking world remained high, but declined in both relative and absolute terms from 2012 levels. Usage in most other major countries, including Brazil, the United States, China, the UK, France, and Germany, either increased (in many cases substantially) or held steady. Usage in Arabic-speaking countries and of the Arabic interface increased. The top countries from the Arabic world by number of visitors were Algeria (18th), Egypt (19th), and Saudi Arabia (21st).

With funding from a member of the James Madison Council of the Library of Congress, the WDL began an experiment with a Wikipedian-in-Residence, starting in January 2013. The aim is to increase usage by creating links between Wikipedia articles and WDL. By the end of FY 2013, 136 volunteers were working to add WDL content on the English-language version of Wikipedia, and many others were working on other language versions of Wikipedia. 2,040 Wikipedia articles on English Wikipedia linked to WDL content, up from 198 at the end of calendar 2012. English Wikipedia has become the third largest referring site to the WDL, after Google and Facebook. Additional information about the project will be provided at the partner meeting by the Wikipedian-in-Residence, Ms. Sarah Stierch.

Other methods employed to build usage included presentations by WDL staff at conferences and meetings, interviews with print and electronic media, and use of social media, notably Twitter. The WDL Twitter account currently has nearly 23,000 followers, and tweets featuring content are regularly issued in English and in the other six WDL languages.

Planning for expanded use of other social media, notably a Facebook page and a WDL blog, is well advanced.

Technical Development

The WDL introduced three major user interface (UI) improvements during the year:

- A new results page for search and browse results that features larger reference images, lists the contributing partner with each item, and previews the item description
- A new book viewer and zoom feature
- A gallery view (with options to show or hide metadata facets).

Introduction of the new book viewer appears to have increased the average time on site and the number of pages viewed per visit. These features also improved the performance of the site on mobiles and tablets.

As previewed at the December 2012 partner meeting, the WDL introduced several new tools and procedures aimed at streamlining the transfer and processing of partner content. These included new online procedures for content transfer and new tools and

procedures for partner review prior to launch. The new procedures are documented on the WDL project page, http://project.wdl.org, which was extensively updated.

Thematic Presentations

As noted above, with the cooperation and financial support of the Qatar National Library, the WDL began work on its first thematic presentation: a history of Arabic and Islamic science with focus on mathematics, medicine, astronomy, and mechanical and measuring devices. The initial set of items to be featured was selected and a draft text by a leading expert was completed. Based on the discussions at the 2012 EC and General Partner meeting, thematic presentations will be one of the major topics on the agenda of the 2013 partner meeting.

Next Steps – Priorities for the Coming Year

Priorities for the coming year include:

- Continue adding content

- Continue to recruit partners, especially national libraries, in countries currently not represented among the WDL partners

- Develop thematic presentations and explore other ways to both exploit and increase the intellectual added value provided by the WDL

- In conjunction with partner recruitment, continue efforts to secure the resources needed to expand capacity building efforts in certain parts of the world

- Continue existing and launch new projects to increase usage, using both traditional outreach and social media.

A separate paper ("Draft Paper for the WDL Executive Council"), prepared in response to a request from the EC at its December 2012 meeting, discusses how many of these objectives might be better pursued, with greater contributions by WDL partners, and provides a basis for discussion at the 2013 EC meeting and ideas for possible presentation to the General Partner meeting by the EC.