

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

## **WDL Executive Council Meeting Rome, Italy October 29, 2014**

This report summarizes the main developments in the World Digital Library since the last meeting of the WDL Executive Council (EC) on November 18, 2013.

### **Content**

The WDL currently includes 10,778 items, comprising 500,087 images. Since the last EC and general partner meetings, 1,219 items and 98,039 images were added, increases of 13 percent and 24 percent respectively. This content was contributed by 34 partner institutions in 24 countries, bringing the total number of libraries, archives, and museums represented on the WDL to 122 institutions in 56 countries.

The rate at which new content was added (as measured by items) was down in both absolute and percentage terms compared to the 2012-2013 year, owing to the focus on developing the new User Interface (discussed below) and the demands of adding a substantial volume of challenging book and manuscript material in Chinese, Arabic, Latin, and other languages.

National libraries newly represented on the WDL include the National Library and Archives of Quebec and the national libraries of Cuba, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Peru, Portugal, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom. National libraries that were already present on the WDL but which contributed new content included the national libraries of China, Colombia, Egypt, France, Iraq, Japan, Qatar, Uganda, and Ukraine.

Content in 116 languages is currently represented on the WDL, up from 101 languages the previous year.

Noteworthy items or collections added in the past year include a selection of manuscripts from the British Library relating to Southeast Asia (for various reasons the most sparsely covered world region on the WDL); additional items in several formats from the National Library of France; manuscripts and wood block prints from the National Library of China; and illuminated manuscripts from the Bavarian State Library, the Walters Art Museum, the National Library of Portugal, and other institutions.

With support from the Qatar National Library, the WDL added 275 items relating to the history of the Arabian Peninsula and the wider Arab world, including books from the nineteenth-century Arab renaissance published in Cairo, Beirut, Istanbul, and other cities. Under the terms of a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Library of Congress continued to digitize manuscripts, books, photographs, maps, and other materials relating to the history and culture of Afghanistan and to add these to the WDL.

UNESCO Memory of the World collections added to or supplemented in the WDL included the *Business Archives of the Officina Plantiniana* (Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp); the *Bibliotheca Corviniana Collection* (Bibliotheca Laurenziana, Florence); the *League of Nations Archives* (United Nations Office in Geneva); *Illuminated Codices from the Library of the Bratislava Chapter House* (Slovak National Library); and *Peruvian and South American First Editions (1584-1619)* (National Library of Peru).

A substantial quantity of high-quality content was received and is undergoing processing. This includes 400 Arabic medical manuscripts from the Wellcome Library in London, made available through a joint Wellcome-Bibliotheca Alexandrina project; additional tranches of content from the national libraries of China, France, Japan, Qatar, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom; significant contributions from the Bavarian State Library and the National Library of Catalonia; and a number of smaller contributions from first-time contributors. Adding this material to the WDL as quickly as possible is a priority for the coming year.

### **Partner Recruitment**

The WDL currently has 184 partners representing 81 countries, an increase from 178 partners in 80 countries at the time of the last Executive Council session.<sup>1</sup>

The Library of Congress recommends that six new partner institutions be approved for membership:

- National Library of Andorra. To be approved under the blanket invitation issued to national libraries and national archives in 2009.
- National Library of Morocco. To be approved under the blanket invitation issued to national libraries and national archives in 2009.
- Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois. The Newberry has several manuscripts by Fray Bernardino Sahagún, the compiler of the *Florentine Codex*, chiefly representing Sahagún's translations from Latin and Spanish into Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs. With assistance from a donor to both the Newberry and the Library of Congress, it has agreed to digitize these manuscripts and contribute them to the WDL.
- Public Library of the Municipality of Porto. This library has the manuscript *Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama to India, 1497-1499*, an anonymous work inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World register in 2013, which it has agreed to contribute to the WDL.

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<sup>1</sup> Includes partners recommended for membership by the Project Manager, pending formal Executive Council approval.

- Louisiana State University. The Library of Congress aspires to recruit at least one prominent partner in every U.S. state, to secure content and promote awareness of the project in the United States. The LSU library has rich content about the state of Louisiana, the city of New Orleans, the Mississippi River, and the origins of jazz, which it proposes to contribute.
- Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records. This will add a major institution from another state. Arizona State proposes to contribute content about the Navajos, the Grand Canyon, the history of the American West, and other topics. Arizona State is also very active in projects in Afghanistan and the Middle East, and could be helpful with WDL international outreach.

The long-term goal of the WDL remains universal participation, i.e., securing at least one partner from each UN member country, which, as discussed at previous EC and general partner meetings, will depend on additional outreach and direct or third-party technical assistance and capacity building.

## **Technical Development**

The major technical development was the completion of a revamped and updated User Interface (UI), which was released in a beta version to partners for testing and comments on September 15 and released to the general public on October 10.

Two factors were behind the decision to devote the highest priority to a new UI: (1) the need for a new platform to accommodate the thematic sections and other features providing educational and intellectual added-value that were discussed at the previous partner meeting; and (2) the need to respond to changing user demographics, and specifically the shift toward access via mobile devices, and the risk that usage would decline as more users shifted toward devices for which the WDL interface was not optimized.

Features of the new UI include:

- full use of responsive design principles to better accommodate access on mobiles and tablets as well as on PCs and laptops with increasingly diverse screen sizes
- larger reference images
- larger search box set against the background of an archival map
- highlighting of partners through a rotating featured partner carousel on the home page and a much improved browse option
- new sections for featured and highlighted items
- a map display option for search and browse results to accompany the list and gallery views
- revamped browse options for place, time, topic, type of item (format), contributing institution, language (of the content/document)
- use of date created rather than subject date as the browse option for time period (an important shift that highlights the quality of the WDL collection)

- more transparent use of hierarchical metadata facets, e.g., states and provinces within countries; Dewey classes, divisions, and sections
- an updated item-detail page with new features, including an inset map showing location of the item and an option to show nearby items
- curated timelines and interactive maps
- upgraded audio and video display (migration to HTML5 and phasing out of Flash)
- one draft thematic section with options to add more
- updated and revised “About” and “Help” sections.

As agreed at the 2013 EC and general partner meetings, the draft text and mockup of the first WDL thematic presentation, “Arabic and Islamic Science and Its Influence on the Western Scientific Tradition,” was completed and is included in the beta site. The new site also includes timelines and interactive maps for world history; United States history; Chinese books, manuscripts, maps and prints; illuminated manuscripts from Europe; and an interactive map on the subject of the Russian Empire. These presentations are intended to provoke partner and user comment and to serve as models for other presentations that might be developed by other partners for the WDL platform.

No major innovations or improvements were made in the tools for transferring and processing content, but considerable operational experience was gained with using those tools that were introduced at the December 2012 partner meeting. An increasing share of partner content is now transferred by S3, Dropbox, or other online tools. The online partner review process is working well, reducing the time required to add material to the site and enabling partners to better review and edit metadata and descriptions for their content.

### **Usage and User Engagement**

For Library of Congress Fiscal Year 2014 (October 1, 2013-September 30, 2014), the WDL website recorded 3,761,303 visits, down from 4,296,206 visits the previous year. While visits were down, page views were up, to 24,106,592 in FY 2014 from 18,825,015 in FY 2013, reflecting higher levels of user engagement. Total time on site and other measures of user engagement also increased.<sup>1</sup>

The decline in the number of visits was largely accounted for by large drops in the number of visitors in major countries of the Luso-Hispanic world (-40.9 percent in Spain; -25.4 percent in Mexico; and -13.8 percent in Brazil), which were only partially offset by continued (and in some cases very impressive) gains in other countries (United States, 3.9 percent; United Kingdom, 3.1 percent; Russia, 3.9 percent; Saudi Arabia, 21.5 percent; Egypt, 23.6 percent; India, 42.9 percent; and Algeria, 10.9 percent).

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<sup>1</sup> Total time on site by all users in FY 2014 was 601,297,518 seconds, or some 167,000 hours. Comparable figures for 2013 were 618,440,624 seconds, or some 172,000 hours.

Declines and counterbalancing increases were reflected in the rankings of the interface languages, where English for the first time nearly pulled even with Spanish, and in the rankings of numbers of visits by country. Usage by interface language in FY 2014 was 33.7 percent Spanish (47.3 percent in 2013), 30.3 percent English (21.3 percent in 2013), 11.1 percent Portuguese (13.5 percent in 2013), 7.1 percent French (4.4 percent in 2013), 6.9 percent Arabic (4.8 percent in 2013), 5.5 percent Chinese (4.5 percent in 2013), and 5.4 percent Russian (4.0 in 2013).

The top fifteen countries by number of visits were the United States, Brazil, Spain, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Germany, China, Argentina, France, the Russian Federation, Colombia, Portugal, Peru, Canada, and Saudi Arabia. This represents a significant reordering of the rankings from a year ago (Spain, Brazil, Mexico, the United States, China, Argentina, Germany, United Kingdom, Portugal, Colombia, France, Russian Federation, Sweden, Peru, and Chile), and which had been fairly stable for the 2009-2013 period.

A number of other user statistics point to continued high levels of user engagement. The number of ReadSpeaker activations (text-to-voice conversion), for example, increased by about 20 percent, from 170,312 activations in FY 2013 to 206,619 activations in FY 2014. The number of downloads was up modestly (1.3 percent), from 305,906 in FY 2013 to 309,842 in FY 2014.

Mobile traffic was up 78 percent from FY 2013 to FY 2014, moving from around 5 percent of total traffic to more than 10 percent. Tablet traffic was up by 24 percent, from 4 percent to 6 percent of total site traffic. These trends lent urgency to the need to develop a new User Interface better tailored to mobile and tablet use.<sup>1</sup>

Various efforts to build usage and user engagement continued, but were downplayed somewhat in view of the pending launch of the new user interface.

Future efforts will focus on promoting the new UI, better understanding the causes of and reversing the decline in the number (and improving the level of engagement of) users in the Spanish-speaking world,<sup>2</sup> and building on the promising growth in the number of visitors from such countries as India, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.

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<sup>1</sup> In FY 2014, desktop users had a bounce rate of 37.0 percent, viewed an average of 6.84 pages per session, and spent an average of 3 minutes 17 seconds on site. Comparable figures for mobile users were a 61.8 percent bounce rate, 2.85 pages viewed per session, and 1 minute and 37 seconds on site. (Figures for tablets are between those for desktops and mobiles.) These numbers highlight the suboptimal quality of the user experience on mobiles that needed to be addressed.

<sup>2</sup> The largest drop-off in Spanish language users from 2013 to 2014 appears to be in single-page users, suggesting that some previous Spanish usage was “misdirected” traffic from search engines, i.e., people looking for a local library or current e-books that were sent to [www.wdl.org/es](http://www.wdl.org/es).

Under a pilot project funded by a member of the Library of Congress James Madison Council, the WDL employed a Wikipedian-in-Residence for a one-year period, ending in January 2014. The aim was to increase usage by creating links from Wikipedia articles to the WDL. Over the course of the project, total visits to the WDL from Wikipedia referrals increased by 292 percent. Articles in 93 different language versions of Wikipedia linked to items on the WDL, up from 42 a year earlier. Over the course of the project, 137 new articles were added to Wikipedia based on WDL content and 3,201 articles were improved or enhanced, which in most cases involved linking to WDL items as references.

The number of followers on Twitter (WDLorg) increased to more than 31,000 from just below 23,000 the previous year. Tweets featuring WDL content were issued on an (almost) daily basis. Tweets were both in English and in the other six WDL languages.

### **Capacity Building**

The WDL continued to receive and process content from digital conversion centers in three developing country libraries established with the financial support of the Library of Congress: 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.

Processing continued on the approximately 46,000 images scanned at the NLU and retrieved by a Library of Congress contractor in the summer of 2013. The first 65 items (books and journals) from this material were added to the site. Working under extraordinarily difficult conditions, INLA continued to digitize the earliest newspapers and serials published in Iraq. The complete run of one title, *Klilā d-warde* (Crown of Roses), published in Chaldean Neo-Aramaic in Mosul between 1904 and 1908, was added to the WDL. Processing continues on a body of more than 170 manuscripts digitized at the NLAE, and 21 completed manuscripts were added to the WDL in the past year.

In cooperation with the Qatar National Library, the WDL organized a symposium, “Training to Preserve Cultural Heritage Content – A Legacy for the Future,” which took place in Doha, Qatar on May 28-29, 2014. This was the fourth jointly organized workshop since 2010. Participants included 25 staff from fifteen partner and prospective partner institutions in nine countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Yemen). This symposium was a successful early effort at soliciting feedback and offers of participation for developing themes and other added-value features on the WDL.

### **Unfinished Tasks and Priorities for the Coming Year**

The EC and general partner meetings in November 2013 concluded with the adoption of a long list of concrete recommendations and requests regarding what should be done by the WDL team at the Library of Congress and the partners over the course of

the next year to advance the project. Some of the recommended tasks were completed; others, for a variety of reasons, were not. The Project Manager recommends that at the 2014 meeting the EC and the Project Manager review the list of recommended actions from 2013 and agree on a revised plan of action for completing those actions still seen as relevant, as well as decide on any additional tasks for the coming year.