

EXPLANATORY NOTE ON INCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This **Note** should be read together with **Section 8.2** of the *General Guidelines*.

The Programme embraces documentary heritage over the whole of recorded history, from papyrus scrolls and clay tablets to digital files. In principle, nothing is too old or too new to merit consideration. No distinction is made between ‘public’ and ‘private’ documentary heritage.

In preparing a nomination, it is useful to scroll through existing Register inscriptions for case studies relating to the comments set out below.

Audiovisual documents

Audiovisual media exist in a wide variety of analogue and digital formats. Identifying an “original” or earliest surviving generation is sometimes a matter of comparison and judgment. As a general principle, MoW seeks the “original” and therefore most authoritative version rather than whatever copy the nominator happens to have on hand.

Interviews, oral histories and performances

Performances of traditional ceremonies, dances, music, storytelling and similar cultural expressions are usually conceived of as intangible heritage, but if they are captured as sound or audiovisual recordings they become fixed in time and the recordings are therefore recognised as documents.

Likewise, interviews, testimonies and oral histories are recognized as documents with the same legitimacy as their text-based equivalents.

Artistic, literary and musical works

This is, by its nature, an area of unclear boundaries in which MoW has established its precedents with care.

MoW does not seek to inscribe artistic, literary or musical works as such, based purely on their artistic, literary or musical merit. However, it does inscribe documents that show the genesis of an important single work, group of works or of a whole oeuvre, or depict a prominent state of a work, and/or the biographical and societal context of an important artist or work (such as first draft, fair copy, letters that show the beginning, process, or end of an outstanding work, the personal library of an artist, composer or writer, for example, with personal annotations, films or tapes with interviews). The importance can be generated by aesthetic qualities and/or impact on culture and history.

To suggest a hypothetical example, one may nominate a group of letters that reveal the

relationship between two Renaissance painters. These are documents. But their actual paintings would be ineligible for nomination *unless* they had significant documentary value and satisfied the criteria for inscription on a MoW register.

Exclusions from the International Register

As a practical necessity, and to avoid offence, experience has shown that certain types of documents should not normally be considered for inscription on the International Register. *The two examples below are indicative only.*

Papers of contemporary political leaders and political parties

Normally, these would be relevant to national or regional MoW registers, according to the due decisions of their MoW committees. However, the need to be – and to be seen to be – even-handed and objective can conflict with the current political circumstances in which every MoW committee operates. MoW registers should avoid being subject to any accusations of political partisanship.

Where a national or regional committee decides to assess such material, the extent of influence needs to be weighed carefully. Is the individual or organization widely influential, for good or ill, in shaping recent history – for example, in starting or ending wars, in shaping social or political systems, or in establishing great insights or principles?

There will clearly be instances when the influence of a past political figure extends beyond national or regional boundaries. The relevant documentary heritage may then need to be assessed against the criteria for the International Register.

National constitutions and similar documents

These may be appropriate candidates for national MoW registers, but would not normally qualify for the International or regional registers because their influence is usually restricted to the country concerned. Exceptions would be documents that have clearly had wide geographic influence, for example in serving as models for other national constitutions, or in pioneering what have since become universally accepted principles.

“Whole of institution” nominations

While the nomination of a collection, a fonds or a group of collections and fonds is welcome, the nomination of the *entire contents* of a memory institution is unlikely to be successful, unless it demonstrates a significance, unity and coherence beyond the *coincidence* of



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material which happens to reside in the same institution. Further, such nominations do not usually meet the test of being closed and finite – the holdings of the institution are constantly changing as these institutions continue to add to their collections per their national or institutional mandates or missions.

For some institutions, such as official national, city and university archives or national libraries, acquisition of material is determined by legislation; jurisdiction and policy and archival fonds can be interrelated. By definition, MoW registers are highly selective and seek to recognise specific heritage which meets the stated criteria for world significance.