

University of Pretoria joins World Digital Library Project

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The University of Pretoria's Department of Library Services has joined the World Digital Library Project, making it one of the 27 institutions in the world and sub-Saharan Africa to belong to this project.

Proposed in 2005 by the Library of Congress in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the project will make available on the Internet significant primary materials from countries and cultures around the world.

The project's goal is to promote international understanding and to provide a resource for use by students, teachers, and general audiences.

The Principal of the University of Pretoria – Professor Calie Pistorius – welcomed news that the University has joined the World Digital Library.

"We appreciate this type of partnership as it enables us to explore various ways of improving our digital information management, database research, and access. Through this project, our collection will be accessible to other partners across the world," he said.

During negotiations for membership, the University of Pretoria was represented by Dr Heila Pienaar – Deputy Director, e-Information Strategy and Digital Library Services. In reaching an agreement, the University was represented by Mr Robert Moropa – Director of the Department of Library Services, while the Library of Congress was represented by Billington – the Librarian of Congress.

"This project is one of those international projects which is a win-win situation as we do not give up our copyright and intellectual property rights. It is a UPSPACE repository," said Dr Pienaar.

Mr Moropa pointed out the importance of this partnership: "By accepting the UP Library Services as a partner in this project, it is extremely meaningful for institutions of the stature of Yale University Library, Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the Library of Congress. This gives us the impetus to represent sub-Saharan Africa with distinction."

Initially, the University of Pretoria's Library Services will be contributing and sharing material from its digital collections on rock art and Pretorianiana.

"Further to our pursuit of being a world class institution, being accepted as a partner for this project is an acknowledgment of the standard and quality of the digitisation initiatives of the Library. As the only participating partner in sub-Saharan Africa, it further positions the University of Pretoria's Library Services. Ms Ujala Satgoor - Deputy Director at the University's Department of Library Services.

Pretorianiana refers to any media such as articles, photographs, newspapers, brochures, architectural plans, maps, etc on Pretoria. Please follow the Pretorianiana Van der Waal Collection already on UPSPACE (<https://www.up.ac.za/dspace/handle/2263/94>).

According to Ms Satgoor, the value of the partnership between the University and the World Digital Library cannot be measured in monetary terms. The exposure that it will bring to the University is immeasurable.

"However when developing the Pretorianiana collection, the University can become the initiator and custodian of a much larger Pretorianiana Collection city-wide project," she added.

The World Digital Library will make available on the Internet, free of charge and in multilingual format, significant primary materials from cultures around the world, maps, rare books, musical scores, recordings, films, prints, photographs, architectural drawings, and other significant cultural materials.

The objectives of the World Digital Library are to promote international and inter-cultural understanding and awareness, provide resources to educate about non-Western content on the Internet, and to contribute to scholarly research.

The World Digital Library project will be launched at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France on the 21st April 2009.

Institutions that are members of the World Digital Library project are: Library Services of the University of Pretoria, Yale University Library, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Central Library (Qatar Foundation), Columbus Memorial Library (Organization of American States), Iraqi National Library and Archives, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, The Library of Theology (Taiwan), National Diet Library (Japan), National Library and Archives of Egypt, National Library of Brazil, National Library of China, National Library of the Netherlands, National Library of Serbia, National Library of Sweden, Russian State Library, St. Mark Coptic Library, Tetouan Asmir Association, UNESCO, University of the Witwatersrand, Administration, University Library in Bratislava, and the Yeltsin Presidential Library.

For more information regarding the World Digital Library project, please visit <http://www.worlddigitallibrary.org/project/english/index.html>

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