



THE LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS

March 3, 2009

Dear Mr. Kellerhals:

On behalf of UNESCO and the Library of Congress, I invite you to the launch of the World Digital Library, which will take place at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on April 21, 2009.

I also wish to provide you with additional information about the World Digital Library and invite you to consider participating in this project.

In June 2005, I proposed to UNESCO the creation of a World Digital Library. Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura welcomed this initiative as a contribution to UNESCO's strategic objectives which are: promoting the free flow of ideas and universal access to information; promoting the expression of pluralism and cultural diversity in the media and world information networks; promoting access for all to information and knowledge; enhancing scientific, technical, and human capacities to participate in the emerging knowledge societies; and enhancing the linkages between culture and development through capacity-building and sharing of knowledge.

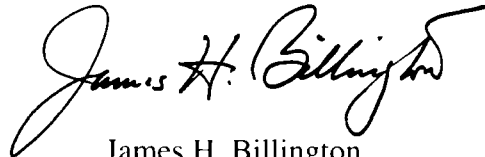
Over the course of the last three years, UNESCO, the Library of Congress, and individuals and institutions from many countries have worked together—in expert meetings, in technical and content working groups, and in the development of a prototype—to begin translating the vision of a World Digital Library into reality. The initial results of this effort will be apparent in April, when the Web site will be made available for free, non-commercial use by the world-wide public.

A key objective of the project is to highlight the cultural heritage and achievements of all UNESCO member countries. Achieving this objective will require enlisting the participation of cultural institutions from each of those countries, including those national archives that wish to participate. We will also seek to promote synergies between this initiative and UNESCO's Memory of the World program, including using the World Digital Library to make publicly accessible digital versions of Memory of the World collections where doing so is feasible.

I hope that you will be able to attend the event on April 21. World Digital Library project staff will be on hand to provide information and to discuss how your institution might contribute to and benefit from the project. Alternatively, please feel free to contact the project director, Dr. John Van Oudenaren, at [jvou@loc.gov](mailto:jvou@loc.gov), to obtain additional information and to offer your suggestions.

In the coming weeks, you will receive a formal invitation to the World Digital Library launch reception, which will take place in the UNESCO Restaurant (7th floor, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75007 Paris) on Tuesday, April 21 at 19:00hr. Please wait to respond after you receive the formal invitation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "James H. Billington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Billington".

James H. Billington  
The Librarian of Congress

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