

## International Journal of Documentary Heritage

### Tawfik Jelassi

Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information at UNESCO

Dear Reader,

It is with great excitement and a deep sense of purpose that I welcome the International Journal of Documentary Heritage and offer this foreword to its inaugural volume. This academic journal arrives at a critical moment, providing a much-needed platform to protect, study and celebrate humanity's collective documentary heritage - a legacy that connects us across cultures, generations and histories.

Since the launch of UNESCO's Memory of the World programme in 1992, we have worked to preserve this fragile heritage while recognizing its immense value for fostering peace, understanding and dialogue. This mission was strengthened in 2015 with the adoption of the Recommendation concerning the Preservation of, and Access to, Documentary Heritage Including in Digital Form. Today, as new technologies like artificial intelligence reshape our capacity to protect and share these materials, the need for global action has never been greater.

Despite progress, serious challenges remain. 60% of heritage institutions worldwide face chronic underfunding, while 80% of audiovisual materials risk permanent loss. Climate change, natural disasters and conflicts have already caused irreparable damage to collections that tell the stories of who we are and where we come from.

This Journal rises to meet these challenges, bringing together researchers, practitioners and policymakers to exchange knowledge, share best practices and inspire innovative solutions.

I extend my gratitude to the International Center for Documentary Heritage – a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO – in Cheongju, Republic of Korea, for their vision in leading this initiative, and to the authors and editors for their tireless work.

May this journal spark curiosity, action and collaboration to ensure our documentary heritage endures for us and for generations to come.

Paris, December 2024