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PRESS RELEASE

The World Digital Library and Italy's contribution to the project

On June 14, at 12:00 am, in the Assembly Hall of the National Council of the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities, at 27 Collegio Romano Street in Rome, the Library of Congress, Washington D.C., presents its **World Digital Library (WDL)** project, created by the Library of Congress and launched with the support of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). The event highlights the Italian contributions to this internationally acclaimed and prestigious cultural initiative.

The Italian Minister of Cultural Heritage and Activities, Giancarlo Galan, U.S. Ambassador David H. Thorne, and members of the Library of Congress Madison Council are present at the event, during which General Director of Libraries, Cultural Institutes, and Copyright (DGBID) Maurizio Fallace and Librarian of Congress James H. Billington sign an agreement on collaboration between the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and the Library of Congress.

WDL provides free internet-based access to cultural treasures, artistic accomplishments, and folk art from libraries around the world. Since April 21, 2009, the WDL has allowed patrons to view more than 1,500 high-quality digitized items: manuscripts, letters, maps, prints, newspapers, rare books, documents, motion pictures, sound recordings, illustrations, and images.

The Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities - General Direction for Libraries, Cultural Institutes, and Copyright has endorsed the project and, through the Central Institute for the Union Catalogue of Italian Libraries (ICCU), coordinated an initial project in which public state libraries select digitized materials that are particularly significant and representative of Italian culture. This is the first stage of a cooperative program that should last years.

The first Italian institutions participating in the program are: the National Central Library of Florence, the Library of the University of Naples, the Library of the University of Padova, the Library of the University of Sassari, the National Library of Naples, and the Estense Library of Modena. These institutions' digital materials include manuscripts, rare books, and early prints of great value, such as Galileo's manuscripts, Vanvitelli's designs for the Royal Palace at Caserta, and a 16th-century nautical map of the Mediterranean.

Through their participation in the WDL, these Italian institutions will assist a project that promotes cross-cultural connections and language diversity, a fertile ground for ideas that spring from knowledge of the past and form a foundation for the future. This new investment in the field of digital cultural content sees Italy and the Ministry for Cultural



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Heritage and Activities at the forefront of the coordination of national and European projects in this sector, as they have been for the last ten years.

Furthermore, during the Press Conference the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities will launch the new version of **Internet Culturale** that provides access to Italian library catalogues and digital resources.

Thanks to an advanced search engine, 20 million bibliographical records can be consulted, from the collective catalogue of the National Library Service (SBN), from databases specializing in manuscripts and in 16th century books, and from the Digital Library. The latter currently contains 650,000 documents that amount to 8 million digital image files and sound files pertaining to manuscripts, ancient and modern editions, letters, journals, maps, sheet music, graphics, photographs, and sound recordings.

Internet Culturale will provide a wealth of resources for literary and scientific research, as well as for musical studies. Also, it will have set “tours” composed of interconnected digitized texts and exhibit images in the categories *Cultural Routes*, *Virtual Exhibits*, and *3-D Itineraries*, thus facilitating a unique cultural experience.

Internet Culturale is also integrated into the Web site **CulturaItalia**, sponsored by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, with the cooperation of all the Italian regions. CulturaItalia allows access to all of the Italian digital cultural resources, libraries, archives, museums, archeological sites, historical villas, monuments, etc.

World Digital Library: <http://www.wdl.org/en>

OPAC SBN: <http://opac.sbn.it/>

Internet Culturale : <http://www.internetculturale.it>

Cultura Italia : <http://www.culturaitalia.it/>

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