WHOSE BRIGHT IDEA IS THAT?
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Whose bright idea is that?

Over the past ten years, the debate about intellectual property has become increasingly heated. Science, technology and globalisation have changed the game rules

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RESTORING THE BALANCE

Intellectual property rights (IPRs) such as copyrights, patents, registered industrial rights and trademarks are justified as a protection of, and incentive to creativity. Such rights are limited in time and space to prevent abuses, to prevent the growth of powerful monopolies for example, and protect the interests of the “public good”. However, science and technology are taking us into an area where this balance between society and its inventors is increasingly blurred.

Where was the notion of “public good” for example in Monsanto’s sterile seed technology known as “terminator”? More than 1.4 billion poor farmers in developing countries depend on farm-saved seed as their primary seed source. With “terminator” they would have had to buy new seeds every year. Similarly, where was the notion of “public good” when major pharmaceutical companies, in a bid to protect their patents, tried to block South African laws allowing local companies to manufacture cheaper, generic copies of AIDS drugs? AIDS is now the leading cause of death in Africa. Happily, in both of these cases, public indignation and the sheer weight of the ethical issues involved won the day. Monsanto will not commercialise “terminator”, and the pharmaceutical companies dropped their case against the South Africans. Nonetheless, constant public vigilance remains an absolute necessity.

The world economy is today driven by knowledge, and the domain covered by intellectual property has grown exponentially. This growth has far reaching implications for the developing world - potentially affecting food production, health services and even cultural development.

There is no doubt that those who invest sometimes hundreds of millions of dollars in a product have the right to protect that investment. But the public must not be held to ransom by this protection. The law must also protect those whose knowledge is exploited by the investors - such as indigenous cultures, whose environmental and medicinal knowledge and even cultural expressions are seen as something of a gold mine, but which have been completely bypassed by intellectual property laws.

Developing countries are increasingly aware of the high stakes involved and promise to make intellectual property one of the thorniest issues on the agenda of the Seattle Round of the World Trade Organisation, which starts this month.

Sue Williams

—

Some two dozen patents have now been issued to 12 institutions for genetically sterilized or chemically dependent seeds.

Five companies alone account for nearly 66% of the global pesticide market, almost 25% of the global seed market and virtually 100% of the transgenic seed market.

Several Asian countries are now sidestepping patents and producing their own AIDS drugs: in India, a locally made monthly dose of AZT costs $48 compared to $250 in the US.

Glaxo-Wellcome recently agreed to slash prices for its AIDS drugs to pregnant women in developing countries.

Source: Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI), UNAIDS, International Herald Tribune.
The increase in intellectual property titles either in the name of copyright or patent, has been made possible by a host of new technologies in information and communications and the life sciences. It has been propelled by international trade agreements and the globalisation of markets, and coincides with enormous concentrations of power in the hands of multinational companies. Decisions on intellectual property affect education and research, access to information and north-south relations, and are now too important to be confined to a handful of lawyers and experts.

"Intellectual property" is a recent, western expression. It implies individual ownership whereas for thousands of years, ideas and texts were considered community property. Looking at the foundations of European society, Aristotle's theories show surprising discipline: the idea that all concerning the spirit or intellect is universal; that it is human nature to copy and that this leads to continued invention and progress.

The continental European notion of...droit d'auteur... or "author's rights" was popularised around the French Revolution. The concept of literary property gradually replaced the existing system of privileges. In England, the concept of copyright grew from the royal privilege granted to printers to publish works. The emphasis was on the copy, whereas in Europe, the accent was on the author's "moral right" to claim his work as his own. While both these strands sought to recognise and compensate the author, the ultimate goal was to promote the arts and science. Society established an exchange: it provided legislation to protect creators on the basis that in the long term, the public domain would be intellectually enriched and stimulated.

Out of balance

The shelf life of industrial patents illustrates this point. After 20 years, inventions become public knowledge, which should encourage competition. Until recently, copyright of books and other creative works was limited to the author's lifetime plus 50 years. The idea has been to maintain a vibrant public domain and the possibility of, for example, a large distribution of classic works at a low price.

The public domain is however in danger. Over the last decade we have seen a steady reinforcement of intellectual property rights without a counterweight in favour of our communal knowledge base. The system is out of balance. Last year the American Congress adopted the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act, lengthening copyright from 50 to 70 years for authors after their death and from 75 to 95 years for corporate rights holders. The law is a direct response to lobbying by groups including the Walt Disney Co., which did not want to see Mickey Mouse entering the public domain in 2004. There was no debate; the public was not consulted, yet the consequences are far-reaching. Prices generally drop for the performance of music when a work enters the...
Mickey's keeping out of the public domain

public domain. Artists use what has come before as inspirational building blocks.

Another way in which the public domain is being threatened is through an increase in the number of so-called works falling under copyright or patent.

Thrown out

In early 1996, Europe introduced legislation covering the contents of data bases. This law contravenes the principal that raw information belongs to everybody - you cannot claim ownership of the temperature or stock exchange prices. It offers protection for the non-creative arrangement of information simply because a financial investment has been made and basically hands the rights' holder a monopoly over the information concerned. Again, there was no public debate. But the notoriety of the concept was highlighted when a similar treaty was proposed to the 1996 WIPO Diplomatic Conference (see p. 8). Researchers, librarians and developing countries were sensitive to the issue because it would have increased the cost of access to information for the poorest people. The proposal was thrown out. In Europe however, the law is beginning to be applied.

We must offer protection to the author and publisher, but the citizen also needs protection. The citizen must have access to information in order to participate in society. Since the 17th century, this access has been protected in the notion of “fair use” in Anglo-Saxon law and by the legal exception concerning authors’ rights in French law. Now however, the development of new technologies has called into question the legitimacy of copyright exception. It is possible to code a literary work on a compact disc for example, rendering copying completely impossible, even though the copy might be a legally admissible for use in education. Furthermore, in the 1996 WIPO Copyright Treaty, it is illegal to own decoding systems regardless of whether the copy might be “fair”. So there is tightening of a law to the detriment of the public interest and of the balance between users and copyright holders.

Patent v copyright

We are witnessing a debate over the patentability of computer software. In Europe, this is clearly excluded by law. Software can be protected by copyright in the same way as a literary work, but not patented. What is the difference? Under copyright, the ideas contained in the software are not protected. For example, the famous court battle between Microsoft and Apple over the electronic trash can could not have taken place in Europe because legal protection would only cover the graphic expression of the icon - not the software idea itself. The American philosophy makes life very difficult for competitors because software ideas contained in another product are effectively off-limits. Now there is pressure building on European legislators to bring European law into line with American law on software programmes. (It is interesting to note that in the run up to the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act, American politicians argued the law would bring the USA into line with European copyright law, harmonised in 1993 to “life plus 70 years” for private and corporate copyright holders.)

New technologies could facilitate universal access to, and sharing of information, but capitalism needs rarity in order to maintain prices. The only way of achieving this is through intellectual property law. This artificially created rarity would not be possible without the political will to enforce the protection and that is why these issues now need debate beyond legal circles.

Would our society, if it was well informed, accept to reinforce intellectual property law for the benefit of a few large corporations? Can these laws be accepted by the poorest countries when they are going to benefit the wealthy?

If we continue to carve out intellectual property on basic facts, on classic works that should move into the public domain, on ideas contained in software programmes, on living things, we diminish our common intellectual heritage. We are ultimately all the poorer. These matters deserve our close attention because they are shaping our future.

Philippe Queau
Director
Information and Informatics Division
UNESCO

Glossary

Intellectual property rights are divided into two parts:

Literary and artistic property rights: books and other writings, musical compositions, paintings, sculpture, computer programmes and films are protected by copyright for a minimum of 50 years after the death of the author. Also protected through copyright and “neighbouring” rights are works by performing artists (eg. actors, singers and musicians), producers of sound recordings and broadcasting organizations. The goal of protection of copyright is to encourage and reward creative work.

Industrial property: includes the protection of distinctive signs such as trademarks and geographical indications. The protection may last indefinitely if the sign continues to be distinctive. Other types of industrial property such as inventions and industrial designs are covered by patents for a finite term (usually 20 years). The aim is to protect the initial investment, thus giving the incentive and means to finance further research and development.
Who “owns” the “rights” to traditional designs used by contemporary Aboriginal artists? The artists themselves? Or the community from which they originated and which has ensured that they are handed down from one generation to the next? Or, could it be the company that puts those designs onto a tablecloth or a watch-face, for sale to tourists?

The increased activity in intellectual property has stimulated a lucrative trade in indigenous expressions of culture (often loosely referred to as “folklore”) and traditional knowledge and heritage. The art of Australia’s aborigines, which has received international acclaim, is but one example.

The resulting exploitation of indigenous peoples’ expressions of culture and traditional knowledge has led to a strong drive to protect their intellectual property, and increased awareness of their vulnerability. This has provided impetus for the introduction of some measures at the international level. For instance, the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity was an important step in the recognition of the contributions of cultural knowledge in the domain of traditional medicine and plants. On a national level, the United States has enacted the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Yet, no laws have yet been enacted specifically to protect indigenous peoples’ intellectual and cultural property rights.

An alien notion

The TRIPS Agreement (see page 8) is certainly a turning point, especially for the harmonisation of intellectual property laws. However, it does not refer to the rights of indigenous peoples at all. Worse, modern intellectual property laws arguably continue the process of economic exploitation and erosion of indigenous peoples’ expressions of culture and traditional knowledge, because they are based on western notions of property ownership, which are alien and detrimental to indigenous populations.

At the heart of the western legal system is the principle that individuals have a right to private property. Indigenous cultures are based on communal ownership and most of their cultural and intellectual property rights are likely to face the two fundamental obstacles: (i) under patents, designs, and copyright laws, traditional knowledge is not going to pass the novelty or originality test as it has no identifiable author, nor is it always recorded or written in tangible form; and (ii) in a legal context, traditional knowledge is open to the public domain. Therefore, those who wish to use it owe nothing to indigenous peoples. The western intellectual property system not only fails to protect indigenous rights; it protects the people who appropriate this knowledge.

This contrasts starkly with indigenous peoples’ conception that property rights are a means of maintaining and developing group identity rather than furthering individual economic pursuits. Since ownership of expressions of culture and traditional knowledge is collective, any use of indigenous heritage must be authorised by the community, or by traditional custodians acting on behalf of the community.

Conflict between the two concepts of property and ownership could best be reconciled in sui generis (one of its own kind) legislation, which recognises communal creation and ownership of intellectual and cultural property rights. Indigenous people only receive about a quarter of the profits generated from the sale and exploitation of their arts and crafts. The global pharmaceutical and agrochemical industries generate billions of dollars annually from products developed with indigenous knowledge, but hardly compensate indigenous peoples for their valuable contributions. Economic exploitation aside, the greatest concern for indigenous peoples is the vilification of their cultures through the use of heritage in culturally inappropriate and insensitive ways.

Protection is a double-edged sword. It enables groups and cultures to remove things that were once in the public domain, and restricts access to them. This can prevent the creation of a free and open public information space, and lead to a situation where once a person steps beyond their own community or culture to gain knowledge or information, they will be expected to pay for the privilege. Generally, the law must be cautious of the extent of protection that it offers.

Glossary

*Sui generis*: a legal term, meaning of its own particular kind, or, unique.

*Patent*: a patent protects a method or apparatus. An idea cannot be patented.

*Trademark*: a trademark links a product or service with a company. It distinguishes the goods or services of one company from those of another.
to creative efforts, lest it “over-protects” them and thereby allows all access to them to be denied, or made conditional. In other words, there is a need for a system of checks and balances.

Nevertheless, without adequate protection for indigenous works, expressions of culture and traditional knowledge will not be able to endure much more exploitation. Indigenous people do not necessarily seek monetary compensation for their artefacts and knowledge; rather many would just like some control over the management of their culture and knowledge base: the right not to disclose information of cultural significance and the use of cultural knowledge, and to receive compensation when its use is authorised.

The doctrine of “unfair enrichment” or the idea that it might be possible to prosecute people or companies who use indigenous cultural expressions and traditional knowledge for commercial gain, without attempting to compensate fairly the indigenous community from which it originates, would go some way to addressing the “unfairness” of appropriating another’s effort without prior authorisation. But protection based on economic grounds alone is too narrow. For many indigenous people, protection is necessary to safeguard the sanctity of a process or idea, to preserve cultural heritage, and especially to preserve the sacredness of an object and its meaning. Thus, a broader approach is required.

Many indigenous peoples are now trying to repossess burial material and sacred objects that have been in museums and other public repositories. Similarly, it is now time to reconsider the publication and distribution of indigenous symbols on dinner plates, tea towels or greeting cards. It is suggested that non-indigenous people should also take action in an attempt to right the past wrongs by, for example, refraining from buying any illicit products.

Kamal Puri
Professor of Law
President, Australia Folklore Association

Privatising life

Life itself is now a multi-billion dollar industry. “In the 20th Century, chemical companies made most of their money out of (...) non-living systems. In the next century, we will make many of them with living systems,” Jack Krol, the chairman of the agrochemical giant, DuPont, has been quoted as saying.

Many countries routinely grant patents for living things, including yeast and bacteria, but now biotechnology has enabled companies to stake a claim to areas of life which some might feel are best left in the hands of the Creator. The US company Biocyte owns a patent on cells from the human umbilical cord. Another US company, Human Genome Sciences, has filed a patent on a human growth hormone gene. Many people feel that there is a huge difference between owning a particular type of yeast for fermenting beer, and taking possession of a line of cells from the human body.

An invention cannot merely be plundered from nature. It has to include some input from mankind. In law, an application for a patent has to show novelty and inventive step. Often, however, the lines between invention and merely finding something in nature are blurred.

The pharmaceutical company, SmithKline Beecham, is grappling with the difference between finding and inventing when it claims on its web site: “While genes themselves are essential to life, the intellectual effort required to find them, decipher their DNA structures, understand the roles they play, and identify their uses in curing disease elevates them beyond the status of mere discoveries. In this sense, DNA molecules are inventions that can legitimately be patented.”

In the developing world, the patenting of living material by Western scientists is often seen as “theft” or the “privatisation of life”. Indeed, it appears there is an unseemly rush by scientists to stake their claims to useful life forms.

An American scientist, Loren Miller, owns a patent on a plant plucked from the garden
Intellectual Property and the WTO

Intellectual property has emerged as a central issue in multilateral trade relations conducted by The World Trade Organisation (WTO). The WTO came into being in 1995, as the successor to GATT - the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which governed international trade from 1947 - 1994. It is the most powerful trade body in the world. The WTO's main objective is to help trade flow smoothly and predictably. It does this by administering trade agreements; acting as a forum for trade negotiations; settling trade disputes; reviewing national trade policies; assisting developing countries in trade policy issues; and cooperating with other international organisations. It has 135 members. The Agreement on Trade-Related Property Rights (TRIPS) was applied in 1995. It is included in an appendix of the WTO's founding agreement, TRIPS, which has been signed by all members of the WTO, requires member states to protect all forms of creation - from literary works to the lay-out designs of integrated circuits.

TRIPS is seen as a milestone in the history of intellectual property: its scope of application is exceptionally wide - anything created in the fields of technology, software, news or under TRIPS. WIPO, one of the United Nations organizations, is responsible for the protection of the promotion of the protection of intellectual property throughout the world through co-operation among states, and for the administration of various multilateral treaties dealing with the legal and administrative aspects of intellectual property.

The two major conventions administered by WIPO are the Berne Convention, and the Paris Convention. The Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works was signed at Berne, Switzerland in 1886. One hundred and forty countries now subscribe including all major trading countries, as well as China. It is based on the principle of national treatment. The Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property was first held in 1883, and sets out basic standards of protection for industrial property in its widest sense, including inventions, marks, industrial designs, trade names, geographical indications and the repression of unfair competition. One hundred and fifty-six states have signed convention.

Blood patent

An even bigger storm blew up when a US Government agency, the National Institutes of Health, took out a patent in 1995 on cell line developed from the blood of a man in Papua New Guinea. The man came from the remote Hagahai tribe. Their blood was discovered to contain a virus very close to one associated with leukaemia. However the Hagahai variant of the virus was disease free.

Developing nations denounced the patent as “genetic imperialism.” Somewhat stunned, the NIH dropped its patent claim in 1996.

People in developing countries are sometimes surprised to hear that traditional medicines, which have been in use for thousands of years, have been newly 'invented' by Western companies taking out patents. The Indian spice turmeric was patented by the University of Mississippi. The patent claimed the invention of turmeric as “method of promoting healing of a wound by administering turmeric to a patient afflicted with the wound.” The Indian Council of Scientific and Industrial Research argued that Indians had used the spice for healing in ayurvedic medicine for rather long than the University of Mississippi. The patent was revoked.

Thus, some legal protection does exist. The US Patent and Trademark Office has shown that it will over-turn patents that do not involve human invention. Even the World Trade Organisation’s TRIPS agreement (see opposite) contains a clause which might allow countries to over-turn patents. It introduces the concept of an “ordre public” to protect human, animal, or plant life and to avoid serious prejudice to the environment.

Benefits not felt

It rubs salt into the wound however, that the benefits of biotechnology are rarely felt by developing countries and underscores the sensitivity of the intellectual property issue. The high cost of pharmaceuticals often puts them beyond the reach of the poor, at least until the 20 year patent runs out and of an indigenous family in Ecuador. The ayahuasca plant is considered sacred by shamans throughout the Amazon basin. It is the active ingredient in a hallucinogenic drink used by the shamans to come into contact with spirits. Mr Miller saw the potential for ayahuasca in psychiatric treatments.

The Amazonian shamans were outraged to discover that their sacred plant had been “appropriated.” The Coordinating Body for Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin declared Mr Miller an "enemy of indigenous peoples.” Mr Miller claims that his patent is on a variation of the plant. His critics say he merely copied it. The US Patent & Trademark Office has put the patent under review.

The WTO in Geneva
cheaper generics (copies) come onto the market. Bearing this in mind, it was a positive step when a group of Western Pharmaceutical companies recently dropped their long standing objection to South Africa producing generic treatments for HIV.

There are hopeful signs too, that some aspects of human life are to be held sacred. In September, the British and US governments announced plans to prevent private companies owning patents on human genes. The aim is to ensure that no one company can prevent another from working on a gene for the greater good of mankind.

It now seems certain that the “human book of life” will be in the public domain. Two major projects are raising each other to discover the sequence of the 100,000 human genes - the genome. The UK-owned Wellcome Trust and the US National Institute of Health are making each gene they discover public within 24 hours. Even their highly commercial rival, the US Company Celera, will publish its raw data for the genome on the Internet. Celera plans to make its money by selling powerful analytical tools to pharmaceutical companies. It is a good example of how a discovery can be made freely available, and yet how profits can be made out of its sophisticated application.

Hugh Fraser
London

UNESCO and intellectual property

UNESCO's efforts to strike a balance between protecting authors of creative works and the goal of universal access to information are reflected in its various activities.

- **UNESCO is the keeper of the Universal Copyright Convention**, adopted by the Intergovernmental Copyright Conference at Geneva in 1952 (revised at Paris in 1971). UNESCO also administers the following:

A UNESCO/Smithsonian Institution meeting to assess the latter Recommendation, held in Washington last June, urged states to adopt specific regimes to provide legal protection for indigenous people’s traditional knowledge and skills.

- **UNESCO offers assistance to States** on the protection and management of copyright and performers’ rights. It also administers a number of Conventions jointly with WIPO and the International Labour Organisation. These include the International Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations.

- **UNESCO’s INFO-ethics Programme** aims to reaffirm the importance of universal access to information in the public domain and to define ways in which it may be achieved and maintained. It encourages international co-operation in the identification of major ethical issues in the production, access, and use of information in the electronic environment. UNESCO has a virtual Observatory on the Information Society to keep member states up to date on these issues.

- **UNESCO’s Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights**, adopted unanimously by the UNESCO General Conference in November, 1997 has implications for intellectual property rights in stating that the “benefits from advances in biology, genetics and medicine, concerning the human genome, shall be made available to all, with due regard for the dignity and human rights of each individual.” (Article 12). The International Bioethics Committee of UNESCO is a pluridisciplinary, pluralist and fully independent body dealing directly with issues that advances in research and their application in the field of life sciences give rise to. With an even wider mandate is UNESCO’s World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology which monitors risk situations in several sectors including the information society.

More detailed information on UNESCO’s actions in the domain of intellectual property is available on the internet at the following addresses:
- www.unesco.org/culture/copyright
- www.unesco.org/webworld/public_domain
- www.unesco.org/ethics
Everybody knows that prevention is better than cure. But when it comes to protecting cultural heritage, this popular wisdom is seldom applied. Yet humanity's treasures are inherently vulnerable to natural disasters and those provoked by people.

Without argument, priority must be given to saving people's lives in a disaster situation. However, it would be an error to think that these people only need material help. They're hungry, they're cold and they're frightened. But their heart, their soul and their memory have also been wounded.

Natural disasters - earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, and landslides - take a terrible toll on our cultural heritage. In 1997, earthquakes all but levelled the important religious and artistic heritage of Assisi in central Italy. In 1995, the Kobe earthquake in Japan damaged 115 buildings designated as cultural properties by the national government. In the 1960s, earthquakes destroyed the historic Moroccan town of Agadir. In that same decade, floods damaged Venice and the medieval and renaissance heart of Florence in Italy. Neither should we forget the destructive fires that damaged Hampton Court Palace and Windsor Castle in England a few years ago, or the building and collection of the recently opened Rio de Janeiro contemporary art museum in Brazil.

Theft and pillage constitute another threat to cultural heritage, as any visitor to the extraordinary - and ravaged - site of Angkor in Cambodia could bear witness to. However, the most serious cultural heritage losses of human origin involve armed conflict. The bombing of Dubrovnik in Croatia, or the destruction of the famous Mostar Bridge in Bosnia Herzegovina are among the most recent reminders.

Half a million sites

Yet we live in a period of unprecedented interest in, and concern for, cultural heritage, and what we recognise to be part of this heritage is enormously varied. Definitions have broadened in recent decades and public authorities as well as the general public are increasingly demanding protection and enhancement of an ever-widening range of buildings, monuments, townscapes and landscapes. To take just one example: over the half century life of UNESCO, the number of buildings that have some form of special legal protection in Britain because of their archaeological, historical or architectural importance has risen from less than 1,000 to more than half a million.

Adequate plans for disaster reduction and protection should thus be the norm. This is not the case. In times of peace and clement conditions, few governments and institutions are prepared to spend large sums protecting heritage from eventual disaster, for educating and informing the public and the professionals. Even ensuring the application of existing legal instruments covering heritage can be an uphill battle. Many countries around the world have declared themselves to be bound by the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (see box p.12), but the actual implementation has been very disappointing. Earlier this year a Second Protocol was added to this convention to
These two conventions provide an excellent, practical framework for protecting cultural heritage. They're a starting point. But we have to go much further. We need to acknowledge that cultural heritage is always at risk: from the depredations of war, from nature, from urban development, political and economic pressures - as much as from the daily forces of slow decay, attrition and neglect. "If the cultural heritage community, itself, begins its dialogue with this presumption, then we will be able to make bridges not only to those responsible for planning for disasters but also to ordinary people whose own vigilance must be stimulated, whose own courage in the face of disaster must be recognised if we are to succeed," says Herb Stovel, the president of ICOMOS Canada. "We will be able to deal with catastrophe and its consequences without having to set human life against the worth of cultural heritage; we will recognise that the two are intrinsically linked, part of one indivisible whole."

Patrick J. Boylan
Professor of Heritage Policy & Management, City University, London

Building a Culture of Prevention

There will continue to be serious earthquakes, fires, tsunami, storms, volcanic eruptions, wars and crazy people out there," wrote Barbera Roberts, a consultant conservator from the American Institute for Conservation in "Risk Preparedness for Cultural Properties." "But we know how to minimise the impact, to keep the damage to acceptable levels and to conserve damaged works of art. It requires governmental and administrative support at the highest levels. It requires staff time. It requires planning. It requires money (but surprisingly not in huge amounts), and it requires a change in attitude."

Her words were echoed by the experts attending the 1999 Cultural Heritage Management for the Next Millenium Conference held at UNESCO's Paris headquarters in September. They believe it is urgent to implement an international programme of action for disaster reduction; a plan that will help communities minimise disaster risk, both natural and provoked by people, and give increased priority to protecting and restoring cultural heritage in the post-disaster period.

Sites of cultural symbolism and national identity - museums, archives, churches, mosques, synagogues to name but a few - have long been the target for armies and militias. Not only are the physical sites destroyed, but also a nation's history. Archives in Kosovo were systematically targeted to wipe out Albanian history and identity. In Sierra Leone, the national museum was emptied. The International Committee of the Blue Shield, (see box) has already received information that in the withdrawal from East Timor, the Indonesian army deliberately destroyed archives and records.

"In ex-Yugoslavia, from 1991 onwards, cultural heritage was among the first targets..."
Working to protect our heritage

The International Committee of the Blue Shield is the Red Cross of cultural heritage. It was founded in 1996 by four non-governmental organisations: the International Council on Archives (ICA), the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

Between them, they represent an unrivalled body of expertise to advise and assist in responding to disastrous events, such as wars, or natural calamities like earthquakes, hurricanes, floods or landslides.

The ICBS was also deeply involved in the preparation of the Second Protocol of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. This convention is the main legal instrument for protecting cultural heritage in times of war. The second protocol, which was adopted by States Parties to the Convention last March, takes into account the fact that most wars these days occur within states rather than between them and accordingly reinforces the convention, giving increased protection and sanctions.

We know how to minimise the impact, to keep damage to acceptable levels

Armies and cultural heritage do not a happy marriage make

...of the war,” says Visnja Zgaga, director of the Museum Documentation Centre in Zagreb (Croatia). “The aim was to destroy the cultural and historical identity of the Croatian people. We soon realised that as many of half of the museum items had not been registered in inventory books. There were not enough adequate storerooms – 70% of Croatian museums’ storerooms lack space and are damp, without ventilation or air conditioning,” she says.

The other point to consider says Amra Hadzimuhamedovic, from the Federal Ministry for Physical Planning and Environment, in Bosnia-Herzegovina is that, “there must be integration of cultural heritage protection in the post-disaster recovery progress. Cultural heritage has to be part of the process, at all levels from the international to local.”

Regional teams of experts, better record keeping, civilian and staff training for emergency situations and above all a greater sharing of information between NGOs, local authorities and national governments would all contribute to the better management of cultural heritage at risk. Many of these same points apply to management of natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and landslides.

There are ways of predicting earthquakes, but only with a couple of hours leeway. It is a better idea to prepare well for the eventuality of an earthquake, rather than hope limited forewarning will serve to protect people and their environments. The Basilica of St Francis in Assisi (Italy) was built in the 13th century, and hit by at least ten recorded severe earthquakes between 1279 and 1979. But during the earthquake of September 26, 1997 (and its aftershocks) the Basilica partially collapsed. It has now been successfully reconstructed, but Giorgio Croci, a structural engineer from the University of Rome who participated in the restoration says a policy of preventive measures should have been in place. “A detailed inspection would have discovered that the vaults were weakened by the effect of the previous earthquakes, and that fill over the extrados (arches) would become dangerous during seismic actions,” he says.

He recommends that sites of cultural value be “risk-mapped” by national or local authorities, to systematically assess the potential risks. “This would enable a map of priorities, so that taking into account financial resources, preventative measures could be adopted.”

Barbara Roberts says that there are a number of basic steps that lead to the prevention of damage to cultural property - especially moveable goods, such as museum and gallery collections. “Those of us who care for and conserve cultural property are acutely aware of the fact that had relatively simple actions been taken prior to the Kobe earthquakes (for example) - to attach show-
The city of Cuzco, in Peru is built in a highly seismic area. Landslides and earthquakes constantly threaten the archaeological Inca monuments in the city and surrounding area, which includes the sanctuary-fortress, Machu Picchu. But one expert argues that lessons learnt from the Incas could save this fragile site, included on UNESCO’s World Heritage List.

Peru was once part of the Inca empire and Cuzco was its capital. The city has been destroyed or severely damaged by earthquakes a number of times in its long history. The first one recorded was in the 1500s, and Cuzco was demolished. The Inca King Pachacutec rebuilt the city, constructing houses and walls that were purposely kept low, with inclined walls that subsequently resisted the worst of earthquakes and landslides. Urban buildings were spread apart, and an enormous drainage system was built, which stabilised the slopes.

When the Spanish arrived in the 1530s, they introduced new styles of architecture, heavier materials and different construction techniques that did not suit the volatile environment. Stone and straw roofs were replaced with heavy tiled ones, the slope protection and hydraulic systems were abandoned. “The Incas had a very deep understanding of landslides,” says Raul Carreno, the deputy leader of the International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP) run by UNESCO and the International Union of Geological Sciences (IGUS). “They knew the problems and they perfected a high degree of technical know-how to prevent them from occurring. The Inca city was safer than the colonial or modern city.”

Urbanization, and the fact that Cuzco and Machu Picchu have become Peru’s top tourist destinations...
nation have now added a new risk dimension to the region. Cuzco's population, which had stood at about 4,000 since the 1600s, now exceeds 300,000. The ‘old city’ is the focal point of the urban sprawl, and contains a lot of historical monuments in a relatively small area. It also houses most of the public services, hotels and shopping centres. “In the event of an earthquake during a crowded period, the losses would be enormous and a significant part of the cultural heritage would be unrecoverable,” says Carreno.

70% destroyed

Machu Piccu, placed on the World heritage List in 1983 and visited by 1,800 tourists a day, is perched on slopes that are constantly weakened by heavy rains, and which are not drained as they were during the Inca period. And now the Peruvian government would like to build a cable car to “the lost city of the Incas”, a decision, argue the experts, which does not take into account the impact on the site of increased numbers of tourists - or the unstable environment.

Local geoscientists look into the future with concern. So do the locals. A major earthquake in 1950 destroyed more than 70% of the cultural heritage sites in the old city, amongst them churches, palaces and houses. Avoiding similar devastation in the future is Raul Carreno’s aim. He’s working on a project supported by UNESCO’s Culture sector, the Swiss Disaster Relief programme, the University of Cuzco, and Kyoto University (Japan) to assimilate the Incan knowledge into practical plans that can work in today’s environment.

In tandem with the UNESCO project, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology has been carrying out an exhaustive study of slope instability in the Cuzco Valley. Carreno also heads this project. The main objectives have been to create a regional data bank of risks, and to modify urban planning. A detailed “risk map” of the Cuzco Valley is being compiled. The project needs a geodesic monitoring system to track big landslides as well as the changing physical state of the monuments. “We could then establish the relationship between landslide activity and rain-gauge variations. We need to understand the links between seismic activity and landslide reaction. We can then begin to identify alerts, and design a means of prevention and treatment. A data bank or a national network for the protection of cultural heritage would also help to maintain a working programme of prevention,” says Carreno.

Meanwhile, Carreno and his colleague Susana Kalafatovich have come up with a number of suggestions to immediately reduce the vulnerability of Cuzco’s heritage. The first is a drastic reduction in traffic. Carreno says the tourist service infrastructure should be transferred to the modern part of the city. He also recommends restoring buildings with lighter, traditional materials of the area.

Carreno says it is also important for geoscientists to cooperate in mitigating or preventing natural disasters affecting cultural heritage sites. “To conserve the heritage of both the city and the surrounding archaeological monuments, we have to restore and maintain it in a way that can face natural risks. The damage and destruction of this area would be a loss for both Peru and the world.”

Chloë Fox

In the event of an earthquake... losses would be enormous

Memory of the World

What am I? I am yellow and fade with time. I fear floods and fires. I am often badly damaged by bombing, rockets, earthquakes and hurricanes. The whole is what we pass on to future generations - dreams, thoughts, research and discoveries, the memory of entire groups of people expressed through a medium, recorded on paper (photos, posters, prints, drawings and manuscripts) and on tape or video (oral his-
How can we prevent whole chunks of this memory disappearing as it did in World War II when Poland’s national archives were destroyed? How can we prevent the destruction of libraries such as in St Petersburg and Sarajevo? How to keep at bay the floods and the ravages of time which make several million books printed on over-acidic paper unusable? And how, if you’re building a nuclear power station, can you keep the plans for it for 200-300 years so coming generations can consult them if there is a problem?

Digitization equals better access

To preserve is to protect the future, which is why the best solution to date is to copy things. Microfilm, but especially digitization, means you can stop the ravages of time, protect things by storing the original of them safely elsewhere and make copies of such material accessible to everyone. This is why UNESCO launched its “Memory of the World” project in 1997. The idea, says the programme head, Abdelaziz Abid, is “to enable documentary material of universal interest to be distributed as widely as possible and not stay locked up in some stately library.”

For example, by digitizing the manuscripts in Sanaa (Yemen) consisting of extracts from the Koran dating from the first century after the Hegira, a researcher no longer risks making a pointless journey by arriving and finding the curator is off sick. You can also “do a lot more with digitized material than with work on a document; a scholar can buy a CD-ROM for $15 or $20, which also provides a little income for the library.”

The Memory of the World project is the offshoot of UNESCO’s World Heritage Programme and is based on the same principles, though it does not have a signed convention. An international advisory com-

mittee meets every two years to choose documents of universal interest and put them on a register, which now contains 47 documents from 26 countries, including China’s historical archives, Copernicus’ manuscript in which he described his theory that the Earth revolved round the Sun, as well as the manuscripts of the composer Chopin.

Adding a document to the register is very important for its owners says Abid. “It enhances cultural identity, makes part of a country’s national heritage more widely known, draws more attention to a document and gives it more prestige in its own country.” There is also an increased likelihood of donors within the country giving money towards restoration projects.

Expensive

This is what happened with the national library in Prague, which digitized some magnificent medieval manuscripts, which can now be consulted on the web in Czech, and have also been translated into English and French.

The operation in Prague was so successful that the national library linked up with a local firm, Albertina, to set up a national programme to digitize the country’s documentary heritage. Libraries in neighbouring countries even sent their staff to be trained in Prague. “This means we can preserve the originals in the very best physical environment, since one of the main causes of document deterioration is change of temperature,” says Marie-Thérèse Varlamoff, of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and a member of the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS).

But digitization raises a few problems. It costs a lot, which means it cannot always be done in poor countries. Also, some documents, such as those consulted on the internet, are constantly changing. “How can we preserve things like that?” says Varlamoff. “What version shall we choose? The choice we make will influence future research. We can’t collect or assemble everything.”

Varlamoff says the role of libraries will have to change. Advances in technology also mean “material could be obsolete after two or three years,” she says. “All we can do is keep updating it, making copies using the new techniques and continually adapting.” Organisations should also remember to carefully keep the originals, unlike NASA, the US space agency, which lost a large part of the digitized data about the first US expedition to the Moon.

Cristina L’Homme
IN BRIEF

CULTURE OF PEACE

An Artist for Peace

Spanish dancer Joaquin Cortés has been named a UNESCO Artist for Peace. The title is in recognition of “his extraordinary contribution to the conservation and dissemination of the gipsy people’s folklore and artistic heritage and for his commitment on the side of the least favoured, for his promotion of the values of equality, tolerance and solidarity among peoples.” At a ceremony marking his nomination, held in Paris on October 7, Cortés expressed his determination to continue supporting his people and the most needy through the activities of the Fundación Gitana, of which he is the president.

MILITANT MOTHERS WIN PEACE AWARD

The Argentinian Association of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo has won the $25,000 1999 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education. The Association was founded in 1977 by a group of 14 women who demanded that the military dictatorship give them information about the fate of their missing children. Despite the return of democracy, the mothers have continued to meet, once a week, at the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, to demand an end to the impunity enjoyed by those responsible for the disappearance and assassination of some 30,000 people during the dictatorship. They are fighting, alongside the excluded, students and teachers, for human dignity and peace in Argentina. In 1999 they created a bookshop and a literary café with a view to providing the country’s youth with education about human rights.

The prize-giving ceremony will take place on December 13 at headquarters.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

LOOKING FORWARD

The challenges of globalisation and urbanisation were at the heart of debates at the 21st Century Forum, which took place in Hanover (Germany) from September 28-30. Organised by EXPO 2000 and UNESCO’s Analysis and Forecasting Office, the forum was a forerunner of the Universal Exposition scheduled to take place in Hanover from June to October 2000.

Participants agreed that the future of the planet is not predetermined and that we can shape it to a great extent, through future-oriented analysis and long-term preventive action. Five major themes were at the centre of debates: globalisation and its challenges; the future of the planet; urbanisation and globalisation; new social contracts; the future of culture. The forum’s proceedings will be made available on EXPO 2000’s and UNESCO’s websites and published in print.

PEOPLE

Appeal for Aids Orphans

UNESCO launched a worldwide appeal for children orphaned by AIDS on October 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. “The scale of this tragedy requires a massive international response,” said Director-General Federico Mayor, recalling that some 13 million children will have lost their mother or both parents to AIDS by the turn of the century. At least 95% of these orphans live in Africa, which is home to nine out of ten children under the age of 15 newly-infected with HIV. Contributions can be addressed to: UNESCO Appeal for Children Orphaned by Aids, A/C No. 949-1-191558, Chase Manhattan Bank, International Money Transfer Division, 4 Metrotech Center, Brooklyn, New York 11245, USA, or A/C No. 23107001, Chase Manhattan Bank, PADS Chasside, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH7-7DB, United Kingdom, or to the nearest UNESCO office.

THE FUTURE IS...

Sixty four intellectuals and scientists of great renown have become members of UNESCO’s newly-created Council of the Future. The Council, an open-ended consultative cyber-network, will take into account the progress of knowledge, and allow UNESCO to collect the advice and recommendations of leading experts who specialise in future-oriented studies. Eleven Nobel Prize laureates will sit on the Council, including Wole Soyinka and Elie Weisel. All regions of the world are represented on the Council, which will chiefly draw on new communication technologies for its work. It will contribute to the long-term reflection already undertaken within UNESCO, notably the 21st Century Talks and the 21st Century Dialogues.
Land-Use Changes and their Environmental Impact in Rural Areas in Europe
Man and the Biosphere series, volume 24
Series editor J NR Jeffers
UNESCO/The Parthenon Publishing Group, 1999 - pp26, 495 FF.

The Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Book Series was launched to communicate some of the results generated by the MAB Programme. This volume looks at Europe’s rural landscapes and how they have changed over the last four decades. These landscapes have been radically altered by urban expansion, and especially, developments in agriculture. The book presents a comparison of rural land-use change and landscape pattern dynamics in different parts of Europe – from the field level, to the household level and ultimately to the broader regional and country levels. Issues addressed include: the flow of nutrients, water and other materials in the agricultural landscape; the driving forces of transformation under different natural and socioeconomic conditions; the sustainability of rural land-use systems and their impact on biodiversity and soil erosion.

War With the Newts
By Karel Capek
“War With the Newts” will never fall into oblivion. Capek is perhaps the first European writer whose novels anticipated the grotesque vision of a totalitarian world,” says Milan Kundera. Karel Capek is certainly considered the greatest Czech author of the first half of this century, and one of the most important world authors between the wars. It was he who coined the word “robot” from the Czech word robota, meaning “to work”. His novel “War With the Newts”, newly translated by Ewald Osers, is an anti-utopian satire that served as inspiration for writers such as Orwell and Vonnegut. The story centres on humankind discovering a species of giant, intelligent newt, and exploiting them so successfully that the newts gain enough skills and arms to challenge the humans at the top of the animal kingdom. Along the way, Capek satirises science, capitalism, fascism, militarism, journalism and even Hollywood – yet he presents all the events on a comically human, rather than spectacular scale. Humanity gets challenged by a force of its own creation, the eponymous Newts. These are a species of very large amphibian discovered in Indonesia who prove to be docile, and are taught human language and technology, though not, for the most part, anything frivolous, cultured or pleasant. Naturally, no country can resist using the Newts for military purposes, and, just as naturally, the Newts eventually begin to fight human beings, and finally each other.

Gender, Innovation and Education in Latin America
Edited by Ingrid Jung and Linda King
UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE)/ German Foundation for International Development (DES), 1999 - pp242 - 65 FF.
This book on women’s non-formal education in Latin America arises from a series of activities organised by UIE and DES on innovative education processes. A three-year research programme analysed a range of non-formal adult education programmes in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Case studies enabled the analysis of specific themes, such as the role of pedagogy, gender, the relations between groups and institutions, and the way in which educational projects respond to the specific needs of groups of people in particular. The book is divided into five sections:

- theoretical considerations;
- gender based non-formal education projects;
- women’s leadership; health; and women and development. It documents, in the words of women educators in the region, the varied political and social contexts which have given rise to innovative experiences in the educational sector.

First Lady of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton, at the conference Culture Counts: Financing Resources and the Economics of Culture in Sustainable Development (Florence, Italy)

“In this time of globalisation..., the poor are the most vulnerable to having their traditions, relationships and knowledge and skills ignored and denigrated. Their culture... can be among their most potent assets, and among the most ignored and devastated by development programmes.”

World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn at the same conference

“On the day the planet is due to welcome its six billionth human being, we must ask what future are we preparing for him or her.”

Federico Mayor, UNESCO’s Director-General

“While heads of state go from summit to summit, peoples go from abyss to abyss [...] Education cannot be privatised, health care cannot be privatisised.”

Hugo Chavez Frias, the president of Venezuela, addressing UNESCO’s General Conference
World Teachers’ Day was celebrated on October 5th. To mark the occasion, Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO; Juan Somavia, Director-General of the International Labour Office; Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and Carol Bellamy, Executive-Director of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) issued a joint message paying homage to the profession and appealing for renewed commitment and support for teachers everywhere “who are and will remain, in the coming century, the core of the education system.”

The importance of the impact of teachers on their students is clearly shown in “Class Acts”, published by UNESCO for the event, and which presents nine remarkable teachers from around the world whose creative techniques are helping to open up their pupils’ minds. More on this in next month’s UNESCO Sources.

A UNESCO study of unskilled and semi-skilled workers in Thailand who lost their jobs during the 1997 Asian financial crash has concluded that many of them do not have enough education to be trainable for the needs of a revitalized labour market. Results of the study, financed by the UNDP and carried out by UNESCO Bangkok, are published in the latest issue of the education news bulletin, Countdown (No. 18, Sept.-Nov). It found that about half of those interviewed had only primary schooling or less. However, experts say that future job expansion will be in tourism and export orientated industries - which require some computer skills and often a foreign language.

To help these people, the study proposes that the government support training to give them useful skills such as basic accounting and business practice to enable them to find their feet in the informal economy.

The ocean is not a convenient garbage dump, and should not be treated as such. This was message behind the Marine Debris Public Outreach Campaign for the Gulf of Guinea, launched at the end of September in Accra (Ghana) and involving six countries: Cameroon, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire. For the event, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission organised a workshop for government authorities and environmental NGOs to raise their awareness of the importance of the oceans and marine environment for sustainable development. Adequate waste management facilities are rare in this part of the world, and much of what is produced, including industrial waste, is jettisoned into the sea and often washed back onto the shoreline. The programme included a beach clean-up day, in which students from UNESCO’s Associated schools and Clubs in Ghana took part.

Ethics and Confidentiality of Genetic Data was on the agenda of the sixth session of the International Bioethics Commission, when it met in Rabat (Morocco) from October 7-9. Also up for discussion was Ethics and Public Debate: information, education and participation. This meeting also included the first session of the new Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee. Comprising 36 representatives of Member States elected by UNESCO’s General Conference, the Committee will work closely with the Commission, and ensure the practical follow-up to its work and the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights.

Stark treeless landscapes, volcanic rock and an overpowering sense of isolation mark the works of the Icelandic photographer Maria Gudmundsdottir, who held an exhibition of her photos at headquarters in October. It was the first time an Icelandic artist held an exhibition at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. “A Land Told Me” presented black-and-white photographs of the landscape observed by the artist on her journey through Iceland. The photographer was brought up in Djúpavík, northwest Iceland, one of the most dramatic landscapes in the whole country. After winning the title Miss Iceland in 1961, she lived abroad, working first as a photographic model and later as a fashion photographer, based in Paris and New York.
**ON THE WEB**

**THE CLASSICS ONLINE**

Literary works from all nations and cultures could soon be available free online through the UNESCO Cyber-Readers Club, being set up by the Organisation's Bangkok office. The club was officially launched on October 25th, but is still largely under construction. It will eventually provide access to literature which is in the public domain, building its selection initially on the "UNESCO Index Translationum". Copyrighted materials will also be able to be accessed for a "fair and reasonable cost" for individual use through links to libraries and publishers. Students, educators, authors, publishers, librarians and all readers interested in accessing world literature are invited to visit and comment on the site. http://www.unesco-proap.org/cyread

**Children on the Net**

Only 4% of children around the world use the internet, but this figure is rising according to Choy Arnaldo, from UNESCO's Communication, Information and Informatics sector. "According to studies carried out in 1999, 8% of French, 12% of German children and 17% of Australian children surf the net," he says. He argued that this should serve as a warning signal. "We should not wait for problems to happen, but take preventative measures to make sure they don't happen." Arnaldo was speaking at the second meeting of the technical group of NGOs to report on the follow-up to the Agenda for Action plan, adopted in 1996 at the International Conference on the Sexual and Commercial Exploitation of Children.

**Nature and Resources**

Fish production is expanding, and so is aquaculture. In fact, over the last half century, the production of the world's fishes has increased more than six-fold. During the same period, the proportional contribution of aquaculture to total food fish and shell fish supplies has quadrupled. These are among the indications of status and trends reported in the Food and Agricultural Organisation's world fisheries review, reported in this quarter's issue (volume 35, number 3, July-September 1999) of Nature and Resources. In addition to reviewing trends in production, utilization and trade, the report also examines selected issues facing fishers and aquaculturists. Also included in this issue of the magazine are articles on the Yangtze floods of 1998, computer tools for accessing biodiversity information, a report on the World Conference on Science, and a feature article on how the Indonesian fires of 1997 started.

**MUSEUM INTERNATIONAL**

No. 202

In the 1980s, museums shook off their old structures and confronted a future that appeared bright and optimistic. In an effort to prove that museums were not obsolete, elitist institutions, a wide range of experiment and innovations were put into place. But in the 1990s, the very institution of the museum has come under serious criticism. "Over the last two decades, the art historical community have been forced to come to terms with the fact that the hermetic, object reverencing institutions which they once thought innocently represented a bastion for the public good, and a retreat for the soul... are institutions manifesting in their many narratives the hegemony of elite bourgeois culture in the West. "Today, the principle – and practice – of change has emerged not as an “added value” but as the very life-blood of the museum. This issue of Museum International looks at the notion of change, and sheds light on major shifts in thinking and practice, in the way that museums meet their obligation to society and make use of their resources."

**UNESCO Courier**

"Nobody has a more sacred obligation to obey the law, than those who make the law," said Sophocles. Across the world, wherever authoritarian regimes have been toppled and free market economic systems have been introduced, the establishment of the “rule of law” has jumped to the top of the socio-political agenda. The dismantling of military rule in Latin America, the collapse of communist regimes, and the popular shift away from dictatorial regimes means that momentum for legal reform is growing worldwide. The November issue of The Courier looks at this, and examines the different ways the rule of law has been developed and established in the former Soviet bloc, and in the South.
AT THE TOP

Career diplomat
Koichiro Matsuura of Japan has been elected to lead UNESCO into the 21st century

THE NEW MAN

UNESCO's 58-member Executive Board has selected Japanese diplomat Koichiro Matsuura, 63, as its candidate for the post of director-general.

Mr Matsuura will replace Federico Mayor of Spain who ends his second six-year mandate at the end of this year.

Married with two sons, Mr Matsuura is the first Asian ever to be nominated for the organisation's top job. He was elected with an absolute majority of 34, after three rounds of voting, ahead of ten other candidates in a fiercely fought campaign. The runners-up were Ghazi Algosaibi of Saudi Arabia and Lawrence Carrington of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr Matsuura said he was "very happy" with the result. The outgoing director-general was the first to congratulate his successor and wish him well in his labours as UNESCO chief.

A career diplomat with a sound reputation for management, Mr Matsuura trained in law at Tokyo University, and economics at Haverford College in the United States. He began his career at the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1959, where he has served as Director-General of the Economic Cooperation Bureau, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Ambassador to France, Andorra and Djibouti. In 1992 and 1993 he was named Japan's "Sherpa" to prepare for the G7 summits.

Mr Matsuura is the author of six books on Japanese diplomacy, economics and on relations between Japan and France and Japan and the United States. Since 1998 he has chaired UNESCO's World Heritage Committee and he is also a councillor for the National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan.

His aim as director-general, is to "make UNESCO a more dynamic, efficient and harmonious organisation, while at the same time fully reflecting the diverse needs of its Member States within the rapidly evolving international community" in a world faced by "increasingly complex and critical issues."

SIX OBJECTIVES

To this end, he has set six "fundamental objectives and challenges": rallying the wisdom of the world; contributing to peace through the consolidation of the concept of a culture of peace; achieving universality (bringing back the United States); utilising all human resources for sustainable development; reaching out to a wider spectrum of society; improving UNESCO's efficiency and transparency.

However, he said in an interview published in the International Herald Tribune after his nomination, his first task would be to "pinpoint priority areas and programmes. UNESCO has a vast mandate in education, science, culture and communication, and I have the impression that the organisation has been spread too thin. I have my own ideas, but I want to talk it over with senior staff and the Executive Board. "Alongside looking for focus is the need for reform in management (...) I do think that we have to get back to the clear organisation of responsibilities that UNESCO seems to have strayed from."

AN AFFINITY FOR AFRICA

Mr Matsuura's life and career, he says, are the result of a boyhood dream. "As a child, I experienced the absurdity, horror and emptiness of war which inspired me to commit myself to doing all that I could for world peace and security once I became an adult."

He declares himself deeply committed to development issues, and is attributed with "expanding the range of Japan's economic cooperation and technical assistance beyond the traditional foci of infrastructural development, basic human needs and human resource development, to include an emphasis on education."

He claims a strong affinity for Africa, and, more generally, expresses "a profound interest in and understanding of culture," which he believes UNESCO should more actively defend against the pressures of today's global market economics. "UNESCO must get involved" in the debate on fair trade competition and cultural exceptions, he told the International Herald Tribune. "Can we liberalise trade completely in cultural products? Not completely, I think. Everyone must understand nations' feelings about this. How can we reconcile these two values? Of course we cannot have total exceptions for cultural products. But UNESCO can perhaps help find ways for countries to safeguard their heritage and culture that will ease this conflict."

S. W
IS SCIENCE STILL SOCIAL?

SOCIAL SCIENCES The first World Social Science Report documents the discipline’s evolution through to the era of globalisation.

In the 18th century, statistics were called “political arithmetic,” to indicate clearly their role in political decision-making. The 1999 World Social Science Report, the first of a biennial yearly series, shows nothing has changed. Compiling data about a society is still done mainly for political purposes and the chance to inquire into current conditions, just as the way it is done varies according to ideological context.

The first lesson is that social science flowers along with political freedom. Englishman Peter Wagner describes how social sciences were born in Europe after the French Revolution at a time when “human beings increasingly saw themselves as being both enabled and obliged to create their own rules for social action and political order.”

THE BIG BOOM

From 1750 to 1850, political philosophy changed into social science. But by 1900, still only a few institutes in rich countries were interested in it and even today it remains overwhelmingly dominated by the North. It really took off though after World War II at the initiative of the United States, which gave refuge and freedom to many intellectuals and sponsored basic research. And the real boom in social sciences came with the “big social movements of the 1960s,” says Italian professor Guido Martinotti, “universities, factories and cities became the arena for an entirely new kind of social conflict (...) and the social sciences (...) became highly militant.” Research focused on the organisation of labour, the class structure, the capitalist state and sexuality.

“Access to information is extremely restricted in authoritarian regimes,” the report says. The 1980s, which were years of liberalization, saw new kinds of research develop. Until recently in the former Soviet bloc, says Russian Victor Nemshinov, “major figures such as Sigmund Freud or Max Weber were never officially taught, or known.” Russia is tackling other formerly taboo subjects these days, like Stalin’s “red terror.”

In China, research used to be “ideologically driven” but now it is open to the world. In several African countries, scholars can now “take critical stances without fear or threats.” In the Arab World, some countries have excellent researchers, but others “produce no meaningful research in anthropology and political science.”

And since the 1980s, universities have no longer been the main instigators of research, which is often determined by outside forces and, increasingly, the private sector. Research departments, public opinion firms, international organisations and marketing services all want to know about our lives and opinions too. Everywhere, researchers are often teachers, consultants and journalists all at the same time.

Research is also proliferating in topics like environment, women, family planning and AIDS, while other “important issues may be overlooked.” And poor countries continue to read material produced in rich countries. Rarely does the reverse happen.

NO COMPASSION

In sum, social sciences do not escape the ever-present law of the market, where brilliant students are drawn by the best offers and by research into “useful” subjects. Is this a coincidence? Favourite topics are economics, the law and political science, rather than cultural history or anthropology. The investigations of the 1960s and 1970s into inequality, poverty or the peasantry are not being done any more.

But this is not an era of understanding each other or of social compassion—things which anthropologists and historians know are one and the same thing.

Nadia Khouri-Dagher

Anthropology ain’t what it used to be...

© B.GENTILE/NEWSWEEK/SIPA PRESS
UNESCO brings African weavers and designers together to sound the alarm -- and industry -- in crisis.

**THE THREAD MAGICIANS COME TO PARIS**

Time was when a woman could hire a man for a year to work for her, when she got her daughter married, and she would order anything between 10 and 40 blankets,” says the old weaver as he toils away with two ropes held in the toes of each foot. “Sometimes you’d go to Mopti, weave there for months, up to three months and then come back to Timbuktu. You’d never go to Bamako. Now we live in Bamako and you can go five years without seeing Timbuktu.”

Afel Aly Sarré, a Peulh born in Timbuktu (Mali) 60 years ago into a family of weavers, plies the skills he has honed over the years. He dons a pair of glasses when he has to count the threads and do complicated patterns in brocading, which was once very fashionable in the French city of Lyons.

**RICHNESS OF CREATION**

Sarré was in Paris in early October, along with about 40 other weavers and artisans from several African countries, for a conference-exhibition called The Thread Magicians, the fourth in a series which has already displayed weaving from Bangladesh, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Latin America at UNESCO headquarters. The aim has been to convey the richness of creation involved, to sound an alarm about the dramatic plight of the weavers and come up with solutions.

In Africa, like in all poor countries, weaving is the second pillar of the economy after farming. After all, the three basic human needs are housing, food and clothing. As did pre-industrial Europeans, Africans have always made luxury fabrics for religious ceremonies and weddings and for chiefs and kings to wear. Each country has a special name for them – kente in Ghana, bogolan in Bénin, ndop in Cameroon – and they take weeks, sometimes months to produce.

**HARD TIMES**

“In Ghana, cloth is valued like wealth, and every family has a kente garment,” says Tetteh Aidzedu, a couturier. “In Niger, you don’t get married unless you have a teratera, a black and white woollen blanket the bridal couple wear,” says Rahila Sako, a student who is displaying her country’s woven products.

But modernization and poverty have brought hard times for the weavers. “These days, when a woman gets married, her clothes are bought in Dakar (Senegal), in France or America,” laments Sarré. “It takes two days to weave a metre of cloth. You can’t go any faster than that, so the things we make are quite expensive,” says the assistant of the late Kriss Seydou, a Malian designer. “Young people don’t want to learn the trade, so it’ll die out in a few years time,” adds Thompson Yao, a Ghanian weaver.

Before, we didn’t even talk about price,” says Sarré. “You’d come to see me, you’d say ‘I want a blanket made’ and you’d pay me with a half a million tonnes a year,” says Malian culture minister Aminata Traoré, “but only two per cent of it is processed here.”

“Marvellous colours and design make this garment a collector’s item.”

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goat or a sheep. Nowadays, if you only make one blanket, you don’t earn enough to eat.” To get by, he has four of his sons working with him. “Each of them makes two sections a day, enough to make one blanket when they’re put together,” he says.

But solutions are emerging. First of all, the weavers are organizing themselves. Associations, co-ops and federations are springing up everywhere, devising ways to make bulk purchases, get small loans and, most of all, market their products, which is a weak point. Bebisoa Rasoarilalao, of Madagascar’s Women’s Craft Association, says “there’s a tradition of weaving in every home, but the problem is how to sell what’s made.”

The other trend, a more recent one, is the revival of traditions. The artisans draw on the knowledge of their ancestors to satisfy modern-day tastes, lifestyles and purses. “We thought, we have beautiful designs,” said Ghanian designer Mary Klufio. “It is an artwork, a treasure. We asked ourselves why people were not wearing it? But with vibrant colours, people are uncomfortable.”

COMPROMISE

Using the kente technique of producing 10 cm. wide bands, Klufio organized the weaving of fabrics in more discreet beige, dark blue and white and used rayon or artificial silk to make the them affordable and more easy to handle. She sells seventy per cent of her production to Nigeria. In Madagascar, raffia is woven into beach mats, straw baskets and brightly-coloured table-mats.

“We have to compromise and adopt the practical style of European clothes,” says Angybelle, a designer from Côte d’Ivoire. The “modernized” hand-woven garment is popular with some upper class people, especially intellectuals and artists, and those at the UNESCO conference were striking examples of this.

But demand for these modern designs cannot by itself rescue the weavers because the elite and foreigners do not represent a big enough market. “Two-thirds of all African city-dwellers wear hand-me-downs,” says Traoré. The decline of the weavers is really an aspect of the ill-directed development found in the world these days, especially in poor countries. The figures speak for themselves. “A loincloth imported from India or China costs $5 but a locally-made one costs $10,” says Victorine Kossoum, who promotes fabrics from Bénin.

Various solutions were suggested in the conference discussions, such as tax breaks for local producers so as to discourage imports, a special status for fabrics, more government spending on culture and legal protection for craftspeople, whose “copyright” on their designs is sometimes “stolen” by the couturier or “appropriated” by foreign firms (see dossier pp. 4-9).

“If we don’t have anything of our own to offer foreigners, we’ll become the world’s dumping ground,” says Senegalese culture minister Abdoulaye-Elime Kane. “Culture isn’t some secondary activity, it’s the quickest way to development.”

“You’re wearing a disguise”

Saving the craft industry requires “a change in attitude by Africans,” says Traoré, who always wears African clothes. “The African upper class doesn’t feel pressure to dress African. Our menfolk continue to make the big tailors and the large shops rich. Africans sometimes tell me ‘You’re wearing a disguise!’ I reply: ‘Which of us is disguised?’”

To boost the craft industry, the late Burkina Faso president, Thomas Sankara, always appeared in public in a faso danfani, the traditional men’s skirt, and required his ministers to wear it at cabinet meetings. “We need an enormous change in people’s mentalities,” says Traoré.

Sixty years ago, one man, Mahatma Gandhi, became the forerunner of the revolution of wearing craft products. He wore a homespun cotton loincloth and made it the symbol of India’s fight for independence, self-reliance and assertion of cultural identity and helped to restore national dignity. He worked for human development before the concept had been invented and knew that economics, culture, ethics and caring for the poor are not contradictory but should feed and influence each other.

Nadia Khouri-Dagher

Weaving is a way of life for Afel Aly Sarré
next month’s issue:

TELEVISION: STILL A PUBLIC SERVICE

GIPSIES: CHILDREN OF THE WIND

on UNESCO’s calendar

6 to 12 December
QUALITY PUBLIC TELEVISION
In Moscow (Russia) UNESCO and INPUT (International Public Television) organise a seminar to watch and select films made specifically for public television.

13 to 16 December
REFORM ON THE AGENDA
What will education in the 21st century focus on? How should it be taught? These are some of the subjects that will be raised in Bangkok (Thailand) at the fifth UNESCO/Asia-Pacific Centre of Educational Innovation for Development (ACEID) conference.

9 to 11 December
COMPUTERS TEACH THE CLASS
In Fortaleza (Brazil) a workshop takes a look at the new challenges posed by virtual education - such as computers, internet, video conferencing - in the classroom.

13 to 20 December
MYANMAR: HERITAGE REVEALED
Headquarters hosts an exhibition about the artistic and architectural heritage of Myanmar, relatively unknown in the rest of the world.

13 December
CREATORS OF PEACE
At headquarters, the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education will be awarded to Argentina’s Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo for their efforts to “construct the defences of peace in the minds of men”.

17 December
COPTIC ART
A day organised by the Louvre Museum at headquarters will concentrate on Coptic Egyptian art, and launch a series of meetings about 2000 years of Christian art.

8 to 9 January
PEACEFUL ISLAM
At headquarters, the Routes of Faith programme organises a meeting about Islam and peace, with thinkers, philosophers and theologians from all the monotheistic religions.