



Establishing and Managing Online Databases and Archives for ICH Safeguarding

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I. Introduction

With recent recognition of the value of intangible cultural heritage ('ICH' hereafter) elements of a specific society, movements have emerged to signify them as common cultural heritage of humanity. These movements are related with UNESCO's activities, and they are spreading across the world as cultural movements to newly evaluate disappearing traditional culture and safeguard them. As part of these movements, UNESCO stresses that, by announcing the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, protection and management of ICH are the way of preserving traditional culture of each country as well as that of safeguarding cultural resources of humanity.

Of safeguarding methods, inventories are very important ways in which the intangible heritage community members can raise awareness about their ICH (Article 13. 8(4)).¹ According to UNESCO, the process of inventorying ICH

1) The concept of inventorying intangible cultural heritage includes complete and detailed contents of each element.

enhances the self-respect of heritage bearers and communities and enriches human creativity. The Convention encourages the involvement of States Parties in creating inventories of ICH existing in their territory and providing regular updates of such inventories already created (Article 12). Updating of inventories is an on-going process that can never be fully completed. The Convention allows some flexibility for the States Parties in utilizing their own methods in inventory-making.

II. Korea's Safeguarding Policy

Since the 1960's the Korean government has made efforts to protect and preserve cultural heritages at the national level.² Both legal and administrative measures have been undertaken affecting the national treasures containing both tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements. The government's imperative to safeguard the national treasures is acknowledged as being exemplary and draws international attention. Given this, the UNESCO's initiatives in the area of ICH are not new to Koreans. As the Korean government had an existing protection policy and legal enactment for protection, it was taken aback by UNESCO's initiatives. Korea had developed its own system of protection and preservation of cultural heritage, but it is now facing a shift of the existing system. Since the announcement of the Convention in 2003 and its Operational Directives, Korea might not be the only country that fell into confusion. There are some conflicts and differences between Korea's existing system and UNESCO's new one regarding the safeguarding measures. It is necessary to carefully take into account the differences and distinctions between the two systems.

In 1962 the Cultural Properties Protection Law was legislated in Korea to selectively protect cultural heritage that faced the greatest risks of disappearance and change due to modernisation and industrialisation. The law aims towards maintaining and preserving the original form of cultural properties. According to the law, such heritage of both tangible and intangible varieties that are recognised

2) The Cultural Properties Protection Law was legislated in 1962.

to have historical, cultural, and artistic values have been protected with priority. The major criteria in the selection process were thus, originality, excellence, and high quality. This approach to preserving cultural properties in Korea directly clashes with that of the UNESCO 2003 Convention in several aspects. While Korean criteria focus on the originality, excellence, and superiority of the element, the Convention would not consider the element valid if it were not practiced within a certain community, group, or a subset of individuals. In the case of tangible cultural heritage, the original form should be kept. But the most distinctive aspect of ICH, according to the Convention, is that it is a living culture, not counting its originality. Secondly, the Convention ensures ‘the long-term viability of intangible heritage within communities and groups’ (article 2.3) and for ‘ICH to be sustainably maintained by the communities, groups or individuals concerned.’ Living culture within communities and groups through transmission from generation to generation is considered as the most significant criteria in the inscription of ICH. Due to this character, the Convention focuses on practices and processes rather than on products. By doing so, the Convention attempts to raise awareness within communities and groups about their own ICH.

Due to its complex nature, intangible heritage generates more complicated issues than tangible cultural heritage does. As explained above, the law in Korea defines ICH elements as those that have high historical, artistic, or scientific value among intangible cultural assets, such as drama, music, dance, and crafts skills.³ While ICH refers to arts and skills, actual targets of protection and management are the people who have such arts and skills. In Korea, they are typically called intangible cultural property artisans. As they are inherited through people, intangible cultural properties can be seen and heard when these people perform them. So, preservation and inheritance of ICH mean those of arts and skills owned by artisans.⁴ Currently, ICH in Korea is designated in two categories of artistic talents and skills. Artistic talents include music, dance, drama, game/ritual, and martial arts, and skills include crafts and culinary skills.⁵

As the government played a leading role in protecting and managing ICH, there

3) Excerpts from Article No.2 ‘Definition’ of provisions on ICH of the Cultural Properties Protection Law (As of April 2007)

4) ‘A Beautiful Meeting’, 2004 published by Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation

5) As of 2010, the Cultural Heritage Administration has designated and is managing a total of 116 cultural heritage elements, including 17 music items (23 sub-divided items), 9 dance items, 14 drama items, 24 game and ritual items (27 sub-divided items), 49 crafts skills, 2 food items (4 sub-divided items), and one martial art.

is no question about the effect of such a downward approach.⁶ But various discussions are being made over the designation of ICH, the protection programs, and the perception of targets, as society changes fast.⁷ Thanks to these internal and external factors, new attempts have recently been made in Korea to make an ICH inventory. A pilot online survey on intangible cultural heritage being conducted by the Cultural Heritage Administration is part of this effort. I have been serving as the leading researcher for this project that has been on-going since September 2010. Based on this research, I would like to suggest a new way of investigating such heritage. The new way eventually aims at collecting information for ICH and makes documentation using advanced information networks.

III. Surveying Intangible Cultural Heritage from the Bottom

Surveying ICH through the bottom-up approach requires a new epistemology of such heritage and a methodology in collecting the related elements. Unlike the top-down approach of the past, the Convention advises that the communities, groups, and individuals play major roles in safeguarding and inventorying processes for their ICH. Thus, 'free, prior, and informed consent of the community' is the primary requisite condition for fulfilling the spirit of Convention.

The bottom-up may take longer and may be less efficient than the other approaches, such as the top-down approach. In the past, with experts and officials taking major roles in safeguarding measures of ICH, community members

6) It is believed that UNESCO approved in 2009 to establish the 'International Information Networking Center on Asia Pacific Intangible Heritages' in Korea, recognizing Korea government's active protection of ICH. In November of the same year, a treaty was signed between Korea and UNESCO for establishing the center. In line with this, the Cultural Heritage administration plans to build the Hall of Asia Pacific Intangible Cultural Heritage

7) When making ICH lists according to a new policy, we can refer to the following presentation papers.
Park, Weonmo. 'A Way to Draw Up Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage Online', Tasks and Strategies for Drawing Up Lists of ICH in Central Asian Countries—Asia Pacific Intangible Cultural Heritages (Daejeon: ICHCAP, 2010) 82-85.
Hahm, Hanhee, 'New Way to Inscription of Cultural Heritage through Collective Intelligence and Online Network', The 1st Asia-Pacific Roundtable on Visibility of Intangible Cultural Heritage(Daejeon: Cultural Heritage Administration) 18-25.

were relegated to being providers of information, not active participants in the inventorying process. The community members, with the assistance of experts, research institutes, local government officials, and NGOs, were expected to cooperate with one another in carrying out their missions for safeguarding ICH. In sum, the bottom-up approach has following the merits.

- (1) It can restore unknown ICH.
- (2) It helps members of communities restore their identity by inscribing their own ICH. Particularly, it can help alienated regional people and minorities realise value of neglected culture by encouraging them to actively participate while devising protection plans by themselves.
- (3) It enables us to get access to diversified culture beyond any format or frame, expanding range of ICH.
- (4) It can help draw up plans of safeguarding such heritage elements by discovering them before disappearance.

One of the most efficient approaches to excavate ICH from the bottom is the use of the Internet. Using communication facilities and innovative computer technologies allows the cataloguing of such heritage in fully open system. I will discuss further details in the following chapter.

IV. Surveying Intangible Cultural Heritage Using Collective Intelligence

To expand the list of ICH in quality and quantity, the survey method is important equally to the paradigm shift. New methods are required both in expanding surveyors and in creating data-collecting techniques. I will first discuss the way of expanding of surveyors. The bottom-up approach allows any interested individuals to participate in survey. In the past, national inventory making was led by specialised researchers and related government officials. However, in the new method, those who are interested in ICH are encouraged to be active surveyors. For this, the pilot survey team has created an online database system using a Web 2.0 platform. It

allows numerous surveyors and interested individuals across the country to freely input basic information of the concerned ICH element. The input data is shown in real time so that the data are to be simultaneously shared by others online. The main point of the online survey system is to use collective intelligence through the participation of various people. We have thought of Wikipedia as a model of using collective intelligence. Using a Web 2.0 site, anyone can present knowledge by inputting, reviewing, and/or verifying information through the online system. This innovative system can be made by merging Internet and information technology.

V. Spread of Cultural Movement through Online Network

The establishment of an innovative online network is needed to draw up basic ICH data. The online network is non-authoritative and built to support equal relations. Surveyors, administrators, ordinary people, and ICH bearers establish networks to collect ICH data, and thereby, they can share each other's knowledge, information, and practices. In this case, the inventory-making process may be less systematic compared to that of the current one. In the early stage, many problems may occur as well. Under the transitional situation, we may face some critical issues, such as the reliability of information, human rights infringement, and copyright disputes. But when we solve the problems, making the inventory through the online system using collective intelligence will eventually evolve into a cultural movement. Owing to this movement, ICH of remote communities, groups, and individuals that is in danger of disappearance would be protected and preserved by diverse stakeholders.

VI. ICHPEDIA

1. Collecting Basic Information to Draw Up a National ICH Inventory

In close collaboration with the Cultural Heritage Administration, our team has been carrying out the pilot survey and research. The research is composed of making a

new format for the inventory, the classification system, and the protection situation to comply with the fundamental philosophy of the 2003 Convention. Though our team's work in its early stage, there is a definite contribution to the ICH arena particularly in the fields of online surveys. I would like to briefly introduce the basic format of the online surveying system and its goals and methodologies of collecting data, and then I'll add information about the future direction and outlook.

UNESCO ICH List	ICHpedia
1. Identification of the element	기록유산(의) 항목
1.1. Name of the element, as used by community or group concerned	기록유산의 명칭
1.2. Short, maximally informative title (including indication of domain(s))	간단명
1.3. Community(ies) concerned	공동체
1.4. Physical location(s) of element	발원지
1.5. Short description	내용
2. Characteristics of the element	발원지 다른 이름
2.1. Associated tangible elements	연속지역
2.2. Associated intangible elements	본문체계
2.3. Language(s), register(s), speech level(s) involved	정의 및 내용
2.4. Perceived origin	- 정의 또는 간략기술 - 연속체계 - 내용
3. Formes and institutions involved with the element	- 보존정책과 보호 간송활동
3.1. Practitioner(s)/performer(s): name(s), age, gender, social status, and/or professional category, etc	자료관리
3.2. Other participants (e.g., holder(s)/custodian(s))	지급유형
3.3. Customary practices governing access to the element or to aspects of it	연구성과
3.3. Modes of transmission	관련단체
3.4. Concerned organizations NGOs and others	정부자료
4. State of the element's viability	
4.1. Threats to the element	
4.2. Threats to the transmission	
4.3. Availability of associated tangible elements and resources	
4.4. Viability of associated tangible and intangible elements	
4.5. Safeguarding measures in place	
5. Data gathering and inventorying	
5.1. Comment from and involvement of the community/group in data gathering and inventorying	
5.2. Methodology of survey, on basis of inventorial data	
5.3. Resource, personnel, time and status of affiliation	
5.4. Date and place of data gathering	
5.5. Date of entering data into an inventory	
5.6. The inventory entry compiled by...	
6. References to literature, discography, audiovisual materials, archives	

Table 1. Comparison of Forms between UNESCO ICH List and ICHPEDIA

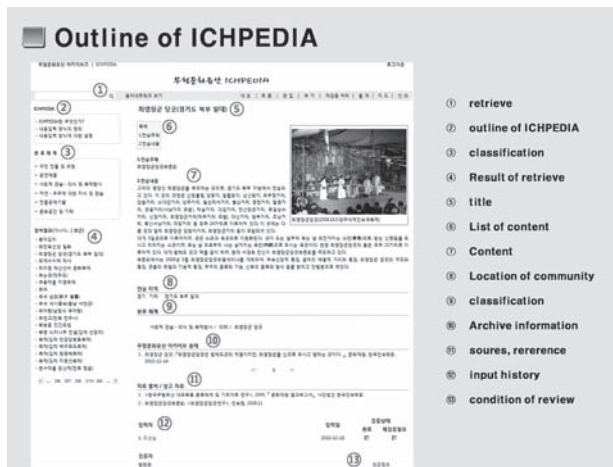


Figure 1. Outline of ICHPEDIA

First, the research team designed our own inventories called ICHPEDIA. ICHPEDIA was composed on the basis of items needed for drawing up the Representative List of UNESCO. ICHPEDIA items include the ICH title, community, classification, content (including bearers, groups, and community, safeguarding policies, and activities concerned), source of materials, type of

designation, research results, related organisations, and attached documents.

As shown above, Table 1 is a comparison of the items of UNESCO with those of ICHPEDIA.⁸ ICHPEDIA is designed to record the collected information in easy and fast ways without omitting important points. Second, it requires making a detailed record using the Archive of ICH when more detailed information is available or such record is needed. The archive with detailed records has the strength of providing materials needed for drawing up an inventory. These are explained by figures and tables as follows. Figure 1 explains the overall structure and distinctive design of ICHPEDIA (See Table I and Figure 1). Figures 2 and 3 show an ICH element in Korea and another country in ICHPEDIA, respectively (See Figures 2 and 3). Figure 4 shows how to make detailed records of ICH information. Our team has interviews with ICH practitioners when we visit their village. We use a movie camera and recording machines. The practitioners talk about their skills and knowledge and perform cultural heritage before us. We record the whole interview and practice session with careful arrangements. It is necessary for fieldworkers/researchers to be trained under the guidance of experts and instructors (See Figure 4). We have developed a high-tech survey mechanism as well. We can input data wherever we go, and we can our smartphones. This can be a noteworthy recording method since it allows us to easily record multimedia information about ICH using not only professional devices, such as cameras and voice-recorders, but also everyday digital appliances, such as computer and smartphones (See Figures 5, 5-1, and 5-2).



Figure 2. Blacksmith—ICH List in ICHPEDIA

8) Table 1. is from comparative analysis by Yonggu Kim (a project ICH officer for an online research project of the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea).



Figure 3. Mongol Biyelgee in the ICHPEDIA Format Figure



Figure 4. Interview with a Practitioner

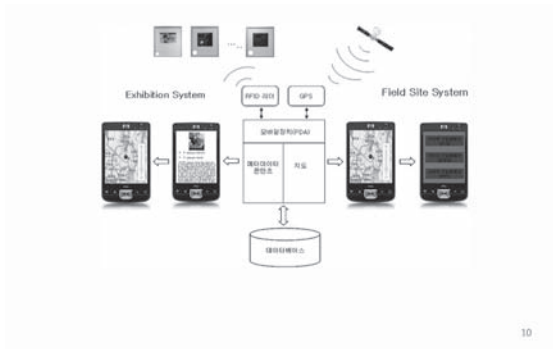


Figure 5. ICHPEDIA in a Smartphone Display

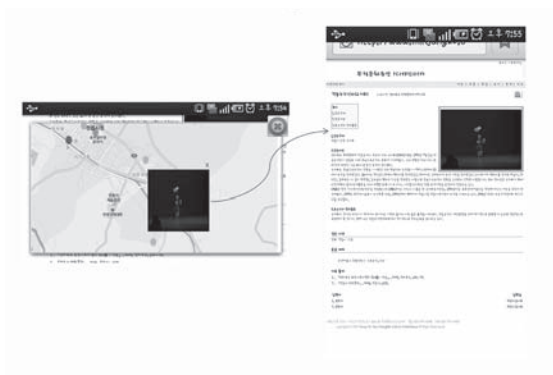


Figure 5-1. Map Search in a Smartphone.

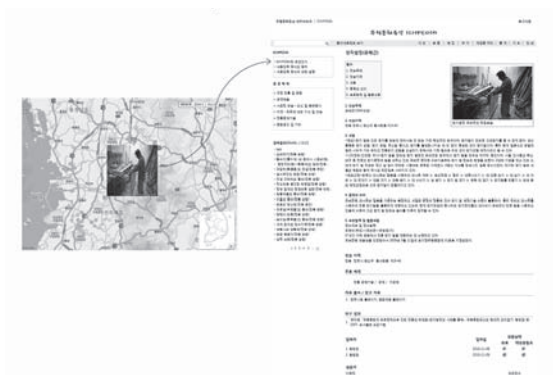


Figure 5-2. Map Search in ICHPEDIA

Figure 6 shows our database structure consisting of ICHPEDIA and archives. These two databases operate as an integrated entity, and they are inter-complementary. The former is designed to accumulate multimedia data, such as interview voices and activities, in the database and use them in various ways while the latter system is designed to be easily used by people. The two systems are interoperable and designed as an integrated structure. The archives can preserve all ICH data collected, as much as we can. The archives accumulate and store data while ICHPEDIA is useful for horizontally identifying the overall data features. ICHPEDIA allows conducting a complete enumeration and is designed to provide a variety of functions, including evaluation, search, and classification of newly found ICH elements. The ICH data collected vertically and horizontally will be used for cataloguing representative ICH of the state, the protection plans, and the development of policies concerned. For instance, when there is a need to record certain elements in detail, a surveyor will input the related data in the archive. It has the strength that many different surveyors, such as researchers, experts, and ICH communities, groups, and individuals, can input data directly. The archive can fully support multimedia materials-pictures, videos, and documents while using detailed materials stored in the database. And the archive is characterised by an integrated system and design. I believe it is essential to set up integrated archives to avail accumulated materials for diversified ways and to store accumulated data safely (Figure 7).

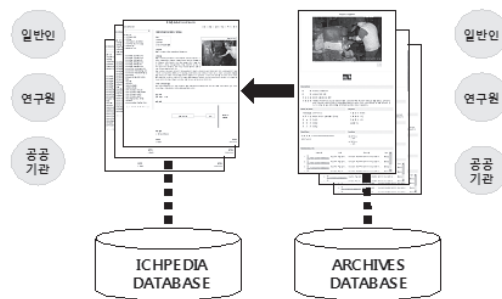


Figure 6. Structure of the Database: ICHPEDIA and Archives.

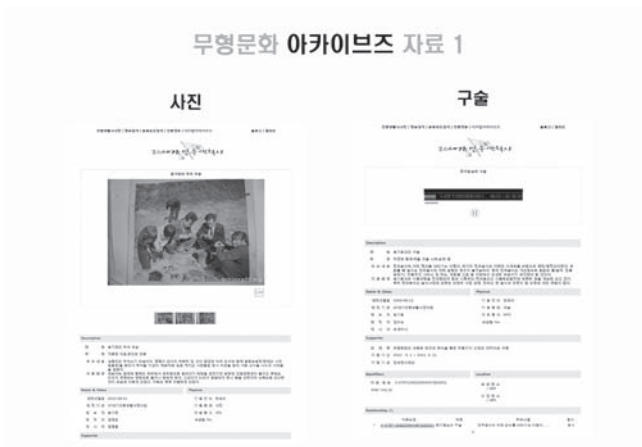


Figure 6-1. Picture and Oral Data Shown in the ICH Archives

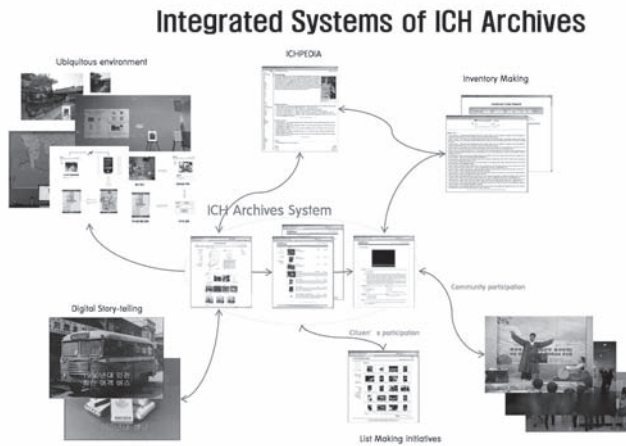


Figure 7. Uses for the Archives and ICH Data

2. Encouraging Communities Active Participation

As it is an open system, it allows ordinary people to connect with the ICH archive or ICHPEDIA and freely leave records in either part. This system can encourage more people who are interested in such heritage to actively input knowledge as well as to lead to a cultural movement where they can take part in protection plans and make policy suggestions.

3. Necessity of Networking with Other Organisations

To compile a representative list of ICH, there is a need to set up a new network system, destroying the walls between specialists and ordinary people, between central organisations and regional ones, and between government and citizens. Before anything, they need to actively build cooperative relations, and one plausible way is to establish networks online. Person-to-person contacts are limiting in terms of time and space, and they require much unnecessary energy to overcome existing barriers. Online-based networks have merits of surpassing barriers of time and space as well as various divisions and partitions in the society.

Meanwhile, online networks require technological standardisation. The research team installed the archives and ICHPEDIA in compliance with international standards. Of two widely used international data standards— Dublin Core and MARC—the team is accumulating data adopting Dublin Core. I suggest establishing a network through which we can carry out joint work and share data with other organisations in Korea and overseas institutions involved. Web-based networks are convenient and efficient, and they are evolving rapidly. Realising such a network largely depends on IT capabilities and the will to standardise data.