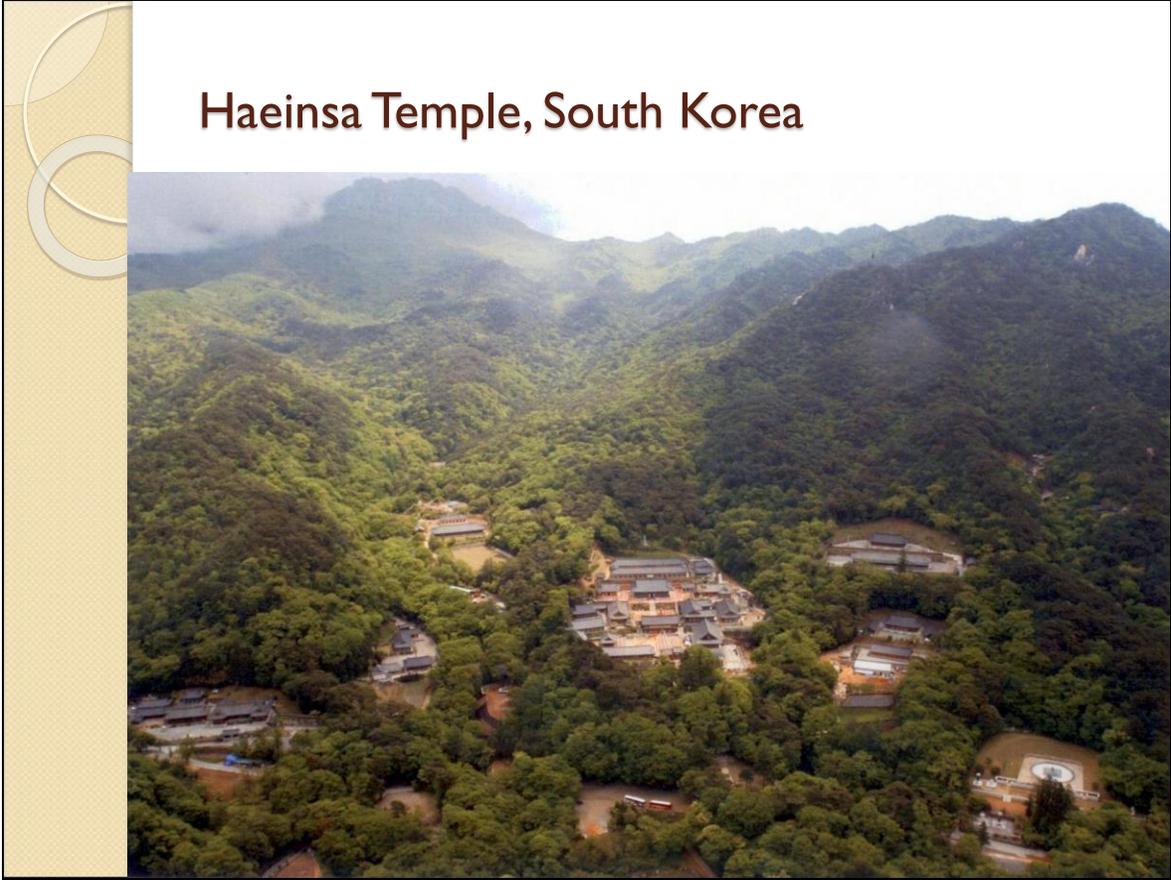


# Raising awareness on climate change

Ray Edmondson

Slide 2

## Haeinsa Temple, South Korea



I want to start by showing you some apparently unrelated images.

This is the Haeinsa Temple, a Buddhist temple founded in the year 802. It's in the Gaya Mountains of South Korea. The complex is on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

## Haeinsa Temple repository



One of the temple's treasures is the Tripitaka Koreana, a famed set of Buddhist scriptures on wood blocks. This is where they are housed. The building has no electricity and therefore no air-conditioning. It has carefully designed vents all around the building which regulate airflow.

## Tripitaka Koreana



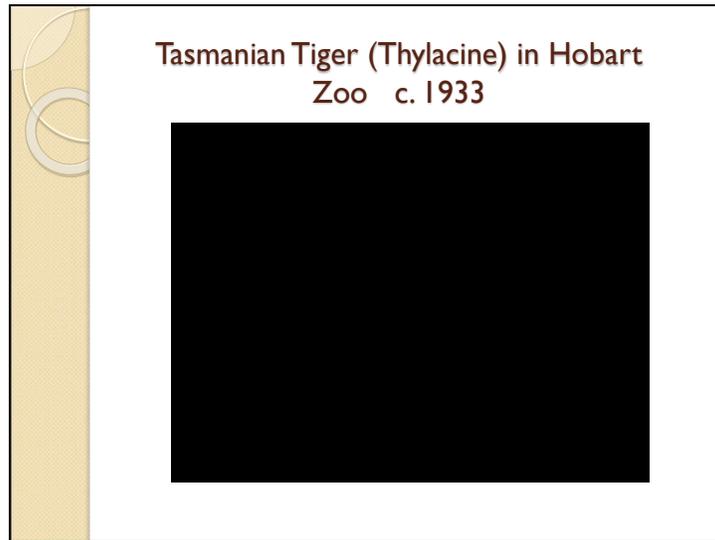
These are the wood blocks. The Tripitaka is itself listed on the International Memory of the World register. The age of the blocks varies but they are mostly about 800 years old. They are still in excellent shape. The temperature and humidity levels in the building are pretty constant and appropriate for the longevity of the wood.

Slide 5



This is a photo of an Australian animal, the Thylacine – usually known as the Tasmanian Tiger. It looks much like a dog or wolf. It's a marsupial with a pouch – like kangaroos. Unlike kangaroos, it's a carnivore. Or I should say it was. It is now extinct.

Slide 6



This is the last of its kind. The only live record we have of it is a few scraps of moving image. All that we know about its behaviour we have to draw from these few seconds of film.

## Great Barrier Reef, Queensland



The Great Barrier Reef along the eastern coast of Australia is the largest living organism on earth. It is an ecosystem that stretches for 2,300 km and covers 344,000 square kilometres. It is visible from space. It comprises thousands of reefs and hundreds of islands and over 600 types of coral. It abounds in brilliantly coloured fish, plant life and other sea creatures. It is highly sensitive to water temperature and pollutants, like fertiliser runoff along the coast, and discharges from seas vessels that thread their way through it.

## Great Barrier Reef, Queensland



It is also now seriously endangered. Temperature rises cause coral bleaching which has now risen to alarming levels, and the coral does not always recover. Recently the Queensland Government approved the establishment of a vast new coal mine whose output will be exported through the reef. Unless extensive and expensive conservation measure are put in place, the reef will not survive the threats that are now facing it.

## Floods, 2016



We have become used in recent years to increases in extreme weather and geographical events. There's the shrinking of glaciers and polar ice. There are forest fires, floods, droughts, hurricanes. The indications are that they are accelerating and are linked to climate change.



Just recently the entire state of South Australia lost its electricity supply during a massive electrical storm when it suffered 80,000 lightning strikes. The storm shut down the state's electricity grid, including the destruction by lightning of 23 electricity pylons like this one.

Of all Australian states, South Australia is furthest advanced in the conversion to renewable energy – solar and wind. It has shut down its last coal fired power stations. Yet critics – including some politicians – were quick to falsely blame the disaster on the state's reliance on renewable energy!

**In a warming world...**

- Island countries are disappearing as water levels rise
- Natural heritage is disappearing: Great Barrier Reef
- Resource consumption is 1.6 earths and increasing
- Species are lost: Bramble Cay melomys
- *Audiovisual memory might be all that is left*



We live in a warming world. Island countries are disappearing as sea levels rise. Natural heritage like the Great Barrier Reef is disappearing. We are living by consuming the planet's capital faster than it can be regenerated: every year we outstrip its capacity to do this.

This little fellow is the Bramble Cay melomys, native to an island off northern Australia. It hasn't been sighted since 2009 and it considered extinct – the first extinction attributable to global warming, because rising sea levels have destroyed its low lying habitat. We are now losing 100 species out of every million every year.

Increasingly the only live record we may have of the vanishing species and places may be our archived moving images. We are moving, in effect, in the direction of a virtual world after we have devastated the real one.

## An Inconvenient Truth

- In a low-growth world, expensive climate mitigation is not a welcome topic.
- Archives mostly not newsworthy, and don't win votes
- You can always delay action till tomorrow...

I don't know about the US, but in my own country it's still hard at times to get traction on the issue. There are still politicians and opinion formers who don't believe it's happening. One of our senators has recently stated he believes climate change is a nefarious United Nations/ CIA plot!

And archival work is always something you can put off till tomorrow. Urgency is a two-edged sword: if you resort to it too often it's like the boy who cried wolf. And there's nothing in the average person's experience to convince them that archives are needy institutions. Old footage is everywhere: just look at YouTube or the Internet Archive!

And, at least in Australia, archives don't win votes. Politicians know that reducing funding – as they are constantly doing now – won't result in a public outcry. We're pretty far down on the list of trigger issues.

So, if we want to be heard above the noise, what do we do?

## What do you want?

- Be clear about your objectives and time frames
- Practical outcomes
- Digital back up strategy: global networking
- Innovative low energy storage for analog carriers
- Disaster preparedness
- Avoiding deliberate destruction of memory (history is not encouraging)
- Raise general awareness about the importance of the heritage and looming dangers. **This has to matter to people at large.**
- Be clear about costs or action vs inaction

Be clear about Objectives: what do you want to achieve? Raise awareness? Increase your resource base? Enlarge your constituency? And is it for your archive, your area, your country? Internationally? Do you want better legislative support for your work? Do you want to back up for disappearing island countries?

What practical outcomes? Funding? Equipment? Renewable energy? Energy independence?

What is your digital strategy? How widely do you back up? Are you partnering with other archives with similar needs, especially in developing and threatened countries?

Do you have low energy solutions in mind for analog storage? Yes, there is a future for analog.

Do you want to be fully prepared for disasters? Have you identified what the disasters might be? Especially for your own institution?

Do you want to raise general awareness about your work and needs, and looming dangers? To be effective you will have to reach beyond your comfort zone, your immediate circle. What is going to make your activities matter to the community in general?

Have you worked out the cost equation – action vs. Inaction?

## Where's the resistance?

- This isn't the right time.
- It's only archives... It can wait till tomorrow
- What you want is too expensive
- The dangers of climate change are overstated
- Not a priority – there are political issues that are more compelling and urgent
- Your figures can be challenged

You can expect these answers. I have heard them all. You probably have too. And you'll be told that if you digitise everything your problems will be permanently solved and it will be much cheaper.



## Who do you have to convince, over what time frame?

- Yourself
- Archive management and staff
- Archive constituency, support base
- The profession
- Opinion formers: media, academia, lobby groups
- Climate change advocacy groups
- Politicians
- Bureaucrats
- The community at large

Unless you have a strong personal commitment to your objective you won't get far

Then there's your immediate circle: your institution and staff, and beyond that its constituency and support base. Can you bring them with you? They have to live it.

Where does the profession – organisations like AMIA - stand? Does it offer activities and statements that can back you up? What about international organisations like UNESCO? What is their stance? It's always useful to appeal to national and international bodies as justification for your views.

What about the media? Moving image archives ARE news – soft news – if they want to be. You need a message which you can back up with footage. Besides broadcast media and the press, there's social media. The right angle can go viral on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

There are many lobby groups effectively using social media to raise issues and prepare petitions. Are you on their radar? Can you persuade them to pick up your cause? So far – and perhaps like you I get lots of emails from them – none have picked up archives as an issue

There are politicians who believe in archives. Really! You just have to find them. Go looking. Yes, it's hard work. You have to find ways of meeting them. But you can do that. If they believe in your cause, and trust you enough to let you do the background work for them (they are busy people, after all), you might achieve great things. Meeting politicians also means meeting their staff and the supporting bureaucrats. Same deal. Busy people. But they might appreciate your help.



## What is your message?

- What audiovisual memory will we have – say, 20 years from now? How will that be affected by climate change in the meantime?
- Enlightened self interest: politicians, public figures and continuity of institutions
- Loss of memory, places, species is real
- The digital divide: need to protect the global memory

Here you have to be clear about your message and the case you are making. And it has to be your message – others can't create it for you.

Here are some possibilities that occur to me. They may or may not be your message.

Can you communicate a future scan? What audiovisual memories will have survived? What will have been lost? And how much of that will be due to climate change, directly or indirectly?

Enlightened self interest: politicians and public figures, among many others, have a vested interest in healthy and stable archives, though most don't think about it. Your collection is where their legacy to the future will be retained. It's how they will live on once they pass from the scene.

We are losing species and places and their memories. In some cases the only record that will survive will be moving images... Just like the Thylacine and maybe the Barrier Reef.

We are part of the connected world. We can't ignore our part in protecting the global memory. There's a digital divide and it's not really improving in terms of bandwidth. China has 29% of the world's bandwidth; the USA has 13%, Japan and Korea each have 8%, Russia has 4%. In the US, over 80% of people use the internet. At the other end of the spectrum, in Myanmar and Timor Leste the comparable figure is just over 1%.

What are the facts and statistics we need to back up our arguments?



## What are the means?

- UNESCO. Leverage its instruments. Nominate for Memory of the World
- Invite opinion formers to visit. Prepare well.
- Public activities and products –awareness raisers
- Be relevant and accessible
- Offer a solution – not a problem

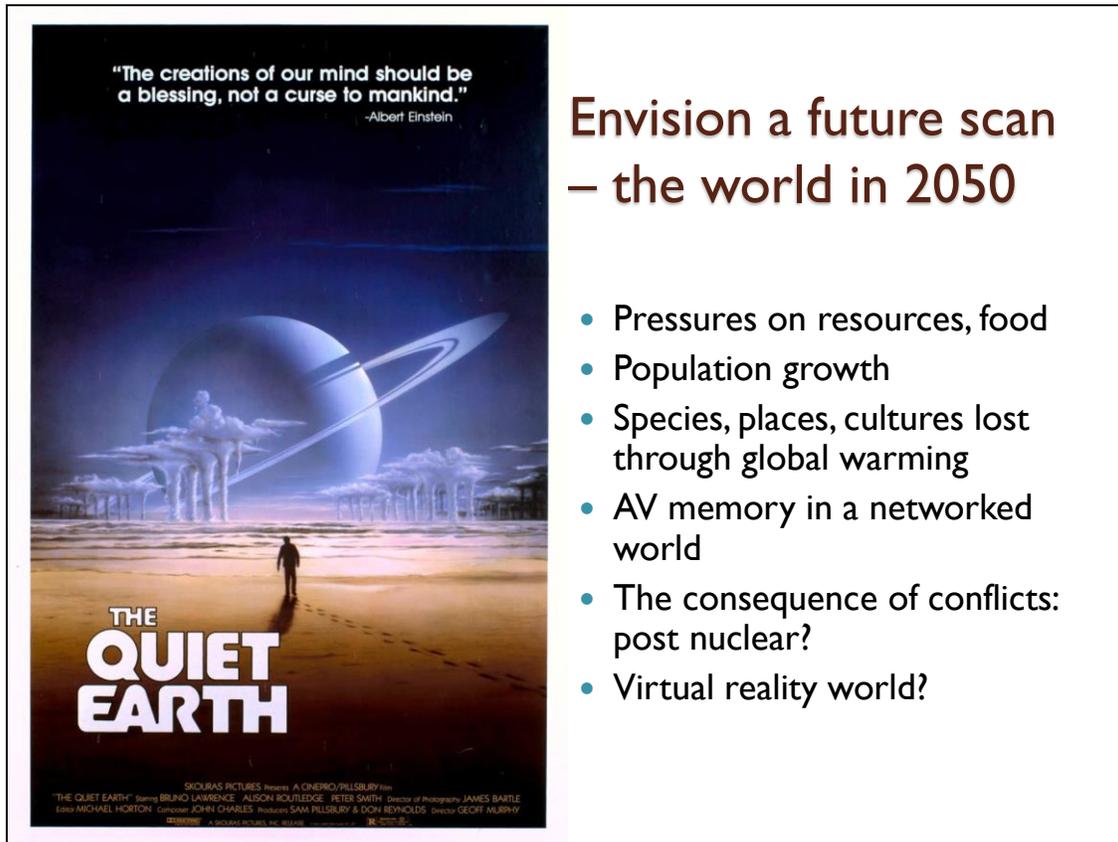
I have already mentioned some of the general means we can use. Here are some specific ideas:

UNESCO has authoritative statements on world's best practice and you can leverage them. The Vancouver Declaration, the Universal Declaration on Archives, the Recommendation on Documentary Heritage... There's quite a long list, and these are authoritative statements. Getting specific films or other moving images inscribed on a MOW register can be a powerful statement if you use it effectively.

How many opinion formers, such as media people, commentators and politicians, have toured your archive? If the invitations are individual, and you research and prepare well, you can gain well informed allies who will appreciate the trouble you took.

What public activities do you hold and what products do you create? How far does your website show off your collection? How accessible are you? If your institution was closed tomorrow, how many people would care? Your value to the community – indeed the justification for your existence – is a function of your accessibility. If you want to persuade and raise awareness, be accessible.

Offer a solution – not a problem. Have your facts and statistics marshalled. Propose a strategy. Don't bleat about a problem you expect someone else to solve.



"The creations of our mind should be a blessing, not a curse to mankind."  
-Albert Einstein

## Envision a future scan – the world in 2050

- Pressures on resources, food
- Population growth
- Species, places, cultures lost through global warming
- AV memory in a networked world
- The consequence of conflicts: post nuclear?
- Virtual reality world?

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To support your messages, can you envision a future say, 3 decades from now. What will the world be like if the worst happens? Where will your archive be? Where will the profession be?

Is it feasible that the people of 2050 will have to resort to virtual reality, using the moving images that we have preserved, to see the world which we know today? Tragically, that gives a new value to our archives, and actually one that we would like to avert.

It's a scary prospect. Is it one that we ought to be communicating? Can you work back from that vision to a course of action which you should be promoting now?

Thank you

