Nelson Mandela digital archive is live on the web

The Nelson Mandela Digital Archive Project went live on the web, yesterday, Tuesday, 27 March 2012, to allow the world to share in the life and legacy of this extraordinary African statesman.

click to enlarge

Google gave a US$1.25 million grant to the Johannesburg-based Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory (NMCM) in 2011 to help preserve and digitise thousands of archival documents, photographs and videos about Mandela.

Along with historians, educationalists, researchers and activists, users from around the world now have access to extensive information about Mandela. The new online multimedia archive includes Mandela's correspondence with family, comrades and friends, diaries written during his 27 years of imprisonment and notes he made while leading the negotiations that ended apartheid in South Africa. The archive will also include his earliest-known photograph, rare images of his cell on Robben Island in the 1970s and never-seen drafts of the manuscripts for the sequel to his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*.

"Reach the full spectrum"

click to enlarge

"It is invigorating to see our combined efforts become a reality," said Verne Harris from the NMCM. "This digital initiative will make it possible for us to reach the full spectrum of our stakeholders, from the global elite to systemically disadvantaged South Africans. Visitors can search and browse the archives to explore different parts of Mandela's life and work in depth: Early Life, Prison Years, Presidential Years, Retirement, Books for Mandela, Young People and My Moments with a Legend."

Steve Crossan, director of the Google Cultural Institute said, "The project shows how the internet can help preserve historical heritage and make it available to the world. We've worked closely with the NMCM to create an interactive online experience with powerful search and browsing tools, so that users can explore Mandela's inspiring life story."

"Engage with history"

"The archive currently includes over 1900 unique images, documents and videos and will grow over time. South Africans from all walks of life can now engage with important parts of our country's history," said Luke Mckend, country manager for Google South Africa.

With a team of dedicated Googlers around the world, the Google Cultural Institute builds tools to preserve cultural heritage and make it accessible worldwide.

To view the Nelson Mandela Digital Archive Project, go to archive.nelsonmandela.org.