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The National Museum of World Writing Systems Inaugurated, a Hub for Research and the Exhibition of World Writing Systems

- **Opened on June 29 in Songdo International City, Incheon, the museum spans a total area of 15,650 m²**
- **Precious artifacts, such as the Tablet of Round Ark inscribed with cuneiform and the Gutenberg Bible are permanently exhibited**
- **Replicas of ancient legal texts, including the Code of Hammurabi and the earliest known alphabet-inscribed document, are available for hands-on activities**
- **Cultural events ranging from a media art exhibition to experiential events and performances will take place between June 30 and July 6 to celebrate the museum's grand opening**

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST) inaugurated the National Museum of World Writing Systems (Director KIM Joo Won) in Songdo International City, Incheon, on June 29 (Thur); it is expected to serve as the global center for the study and display of world writing systems.

The National Museum of World Writing Systems, backed by a budget of KRW 61.1 billion, covers a total area of 15,650 m². The museum features a permanent exhibition hall in the basement 1, a special exhibition hall and children's interactive exhibition hall on the first floor, and a cafeteria on the second floor. The building, named "Pages," has an exterior that resembles an unfurled white scroll. It is expected to become a new attraction in Songdo, blending harmoniously with the surrounding park and landscape.

Minister PARK Bo Gyoon stated, "Writing is humanity's greatest invention. It has shaped history and fostered communication among humankind. Establishing the 'National Museum of World Writing Systems' in South Korea, the birthplace of the unique Hangeul writing system, which is known for its clear principles of creation, is a significant milestone. We will do our utmost to ensure that the museum serves as a bridge connecting Hangeul, the essence of K-culture charm, with the world's writing systems while also integrating history and civilization."

Cuneiform clay tablets, canopic jar, and the 42-line Gutenberg Bible displayed in Korea

The National Museum of World Writing Systems has amassed an impressive collection of global writing artifacts, a shared heritage of humanity. It houses significant materials such as the Tablet of Round Ark (Cuneiform clay tablet), canopic jar, and 42-Line Gutenberg Bible.

The Tablet of Round Ark (cuneiform clay tablet) records the ancient West Asian flood myth in cuneiform on both sides of a clay tablet, dated between 2000 BC and 1600 BC. This story, one of humanity's oldest, bears similarities to the "Noah's Ark" narrative in the Bible, making it a vital artifact in Biblical archaeology.

An intriguing artifact is the jar engraved with ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Ancient Egyptians used the canopic jar to store organs during mummification. The jar's body bears hieroglyphs pertaining to the deceased, while the lid features a baboon, an animal that symbolizes the protective deity.

The 42-Line Gutenberg Bible marks the earliest book printed with metal type in Europe, demonstrating how the dissemination of writing through print technology paved the way for the democratization of religion and knowledge. Besides Keio University in Japan, the National Museum of World Writing Systems is the only institution in Asia that houses the Gutenberg Bible.

Exhibition Showcasing the Grand Journey of World Writing and Human Civilization

The National Museum of World Writing Systems curates a permanent exhibition themed "The Great Journey of Writing and Civilization," which approaches writing culture from a comparative cultural standpoint. Visitors can engage with various artifacts and digital depictions of 55 writing forms, extending from the earliest human writing system, cuneiform, to Egyptian hieroglyphics that heavily influenced global writing systems, to Chinese characters, the oldest writing form that is still used today, and to Hangeul, known as the most well-constructed writing system. Notably, the museum encourages visitor engagement by allowing touch interaction with replicas and featuring art pieces that reinterpret writing, as well as multilingual services in nine languages¹.

The museum also displays precise replicas of Ebers Papyrus (owned by Leipzig University), which is the oldest extant medical document, the Code of Hammurabi (owned by the Louvre Museum), the most extensive ancient legal text, and the Serabit el-Khadim Sphinx (owned by the British Museum), the first recorded alphabetic document.

¹ Korean, English, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, Spanish, French, Arabic

To mark its inauguration, a special exhibition titled “Too Long; Didn’t Read – What is the Future of Writing?” will run until November 19 (Sun). The exhibition deliberates on the tendency to eschew lengthy texts and favor non-textual communication, such as images and videos. It urges a reevaluation of writing’s unique functions, shedding light on the roles played by writing and non-writing in communication.

The museum offers various spaces, such as a children’s interactive zone, which includes experience cards, interactive petroglyph videos, pictogram photo zones, and emoji quizzes. These allow visitors to actively engage with, experience, and express their thoughts on the exhibits. The museum’s first children’s exhibit, “Journey of Writing with Kkebi,” provides an exciting adventure of writing through digital technology–based experiences and content aligned with the Nuri curriculum.

Encouraging Interaction and Solidarity between Hangeul, the Root of K-Culture Charm, and World Writing

Various cultural activities include guestbooks in nine languages, time capsule mailboxes, underwater performances, etc.

On June 30 (Fri), an academic symposium celebrating the museum’s opening took place under the theme “Museum, Talking about Writing.” This promotes interaction and solidarity between Hangeul, the root of K-culture charm, and world writing systems. The symposium featured a keynote lecture on “Hangeul in World Writing” by KIM Joo Won, director of the National Museum of World Writing Systems. Other speakers included Ulf Sölter, director of the Gutenberg Museum in Germany, Tsukimoto Akio, director of the Ancient Orient Museum in Japan, Irving Finkel, a curator at the British Museum, Professor BAIK Seung Kuk of Inha University, and Professor LEE Yong of the University of Seoul. The event, equipped with simultaneous translation, was open to anyone interested in world writing.

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Various cultural activities commemorating the opening is available at the National Museum of World Writing Systems and Songdo Central Park from June 30 (Fri) to July 6 (Thur). Outside the museum, a media art exhibition utilizing the exterior wall “Pages” and a photo zone featuring visualized writing and books will be operated. In the lobby, various experiential events themed around global writing systems, such as a massive guestbook in nine languages, a time capsule mailbox, and fan creation using sign language stickers, will take place.

On July 1 (Sat) at 7:00 p.m., the first weekend after opening, a world music performance featuring seven artists, including pianist CHO Yoon Seong, took place at Songdo Central Park’s lawn under the theme of “A Musical Journey through World Writing.” On July 2 (Sun), from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., an underwater performance using a large aquarium was staged in the museum lobby.

The National Museum of World Writing Systems opens its doors to the public on June 30 (Fri), following the grand opening ceremony on June 29 (Thur). The exhibits are available for free viewing from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and are closed every Monday.

1. Facility Overview

Photo	Project Overview		
	(Location) Songdo-dong, Yeonsu-gu, Incheon (inside Songdo Central Park)		
	Land area: 19,418 m ² Floor area: 15,650 m ² (one basement floor, two floors aboveground)		
	Category	Area	Key Facilities
	Basement 1	6,651.87	Permanent Exhibition Hall
	M Floor	2,681.2	Parking Lot
1st Floor	5,776.9	Information, Special Exhibition Hall, Children's Interactive Exhibition Hall, Auditorium, Museum Shop	
2nd Floor	540.03	Cafeteria, Outdoor Exhibition	

2. Background of the Project

- The National Museum of World Writing Systems was established to enhance the country's prestige as the home of Hangeul, the most scientific writing system in the world, and promote the world writing-related industry and the role of a regional tourism hub.

3. Progress of the Project

- December 2014: Completed the basic concept study for the National Museum of World Writing Systems
- April–July 2015: Selected the project site (Songdo, Incheon was chosen among nine cities and provinces through a competition)
- November 2016: Completed the preliminary feasibility study
- May–September 2017: Announced the basic plan and selected the winning design through an international design competition
- November 2019: Started construction
- October 2022: Completed construction
- April 2023: Founded the National Museum of World Writing Systems
- June 2023: Opened the National Museum of World Writing Systems

1. List of Main Collections

- 244 collections of world script artifacts from around 2100 BC to the present, totaling 543 pieces

No.	Artifact Name	Year	Quantity (pcs)	Description	Photo
1	Tablet of Round Ark	2000–1600 BC	1	An early record related to the “Noah’s Ark” in the Old Testament, with the flood myth recorded in cuneiform	
2	“Book of Joshua” from the 42-Line Gutenberg Bible	Around 1454	1	A part of the first edition of the 42-Line Gutenberg Bible, representing Western printing technology	
3	Natural History	1476	1	Italian (Latin script) translation of the first encyclopedia in the West written by the ancient Roman politician Pliny the Elder	
4	Luther Bible	1523–1524	1	The first edition of the Wittenberg Old Testament, translated by Martin Luther from the Latin Bible into German	
5	Shabti	595–589 BC	1	A funerary figurine buried with the deceased, with Chapter 6 of the “Book of the Dead” inscribed in Egyptian hieroglyphs on the body	
6	Canopic jar	664–525 BC	1	A container for storing some of the internal organs of the deceased during mummy production with Egyptian hieroglyphs inscribed on the body	
7	Coptic ostraca	7th–8th centuries	4	Letters written on stone and pottery fragments in Coptic script, providing a glimpse into the daily life of the time	
8	Palm leaf manuscript of the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines	1150–1200	1	A manuscript of the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines written in an Indian Siddhamatrika script on palm leaves	
9	Palm-leaf manuscript of Pancha Raksha	1397	1	A Sanskrit Dharani sutra written in Nepalese script	

10	Explanatory book on Jachi Tonggam	1434	1	A book printed with movable metal type, Gabinja, which was compiled by adding annotations by Korean scholars to the historical Chinese book “Jachi Tonggam”	
11	Qur’ān	1300–1330	1	The Islamic scripture recorded in Arabic script, the revelation of Allah delivered to the Prophet Muhammad	

2. Permanent Exhibition

- (Theme) “The Great Journey of Writing and Civilization”
- (Content) The permanent exhibition allows visitors to see the grand flow of world writing and human civilization at a glance. From the first human writing system, cuneiform, to Egyptian writing that influenced most of the world’s writing system, to Chinese characters, the oldest writing system still in use, and Hangeul, known as the most well-structured writing system, 55 types of writing systems are displayed through various artifacts and digital images.
- (Production) The exhibition is made accessible by applying the latest digital technology, providing exhibition explanations in nine languages, offering replicas for a tactile experience, and presenting content* reinterpreted by an artist.
 - “*Tower of Babel” by Kim Seung-young: An installation made from a pile of speakers that symbolizes the origin of language and sound before the invention of writing (photo material provided separately)
- (Exhibition Composition)

Category	Theme	Main Content
Prologue: The Great Invention		
	1. From Sound to Writing	Voice: The sound that existed before the invention of writing
	2. Humanity: Memories of Life	Paintings: The first human records (cave paintings and petroglyphs)
Part 1: Writing, Opening the Path		
	1. From Prehistory to History	Cuneiform
	2. Gift of the Nile	Egyptian script
	3. Lost Writing and Civilization	Maya script
	4. Across the Sea to the World	Phoenician script, Greek script, Latin script, etc.
	5. Across the Desert to the Steppe	Arabic script, Sogdian script, Manchu script, etc.
	6. Coexistence of Various Writings	Brahmi script, Devanagari script, Thai script, etc.
	7. History Preserved in Writing	Chinese characters, Kana, Chũ Nôm, etc.
	8. Writing that Revealed the Principle	Hangeul

	of Creation	
	9. Reading with Hands	Braille (Hunmaengjeongeum)
Part 2: Writing, Creating Culture		
	1. Printing: Technology that Changed the World	Mass popularization of writing and spread of knowledge through printing
	2. Translation: Sharing Beliefs and Knowledge	Translation that led to communication and the spread of local civilizations
	3. Records: Traces of Humanity Conveyed by Writing	Writing records that represent the transmission and accumulation of knowledge
	4. Material: Vessel for Writing	Hidden helpers that led civilization, such as paper
	5. Typeface: Writing Turned into Art	History of typefaces that help improve readability
Epilogue: Writing of Tomorrow		
	1. From Writing Back to Pictures	Picture writing, such as emoticons, in the digital age
	2. Writing with Technology	Overcoming the barriers of language and writing with technology

3. Special Exhibition Opening

- (Theme) “TL;DR - What is the Future of Writing?”
- (Content) The special exhibition examines the phenomenon of a vast majority of individuals preferring non-textual communication, such as pictures and videos, and avoiding long texts; it also reconsiders the unique function of writing, thereby gaining insight into the roles of communication held by writing and non-writing.
- (Production) The exhibition provides content that visitors can identify with in their daily lives, experiential content that they can actively participate in, and interactive communication with questions and discussions.
- (Exhibition Composition)

Category	Theme	Main Content
Entering		
	Writing and Non-Writing	Intuitively distinguishing the difference between writing and non-writing through video
Part 1: From Drawings		
	Petroglyphs	Before the invention of writing, humans conveyed intuitive meanings through drawings
Part 2: Back to Drawings		

	Pictograms	Conveying meaning intuitively without language and writing
	Emoticons	Conveying feelings directly without the need for abstract expression
	☞ When Writing is Needed	Difficulty in conveying specific meanings with pictures alone
Part 3: Closer to Experience		
	Visual Stimulation	Conveying information more intuitively than text (Instagram, infographics, etc.)
	Through Various Senses	Conveying experiences closer through visual and auditory stimuli (videos, etc.)
	☞ When Writing is Needed	Creation of literary works, abstraction of thoughts, systematization function
Re-entering		
	The Future We Create	The future of communication is changing, and we are the ones creating it

4. Children’s Interactive Exhibition

- **(Theme)** “The Journey of Writing with Kkebi”
- **(Content)** The children’s interactive exhibition, themed around a journey of writing with the National Museum of World Writing Systems’ character “Kkebi Letters,” allows children to experience various scripts through play. It exhibits interactive digital experiences of scripts, including hieroglyphs and Hangeul.
- **(Production)** The exhibition is designed to be easily accessible and enjoyable for everyone, with digital technology applied to the exhibition presentation (radio-frequency identified [RFID]–recognized avatar creation, an open-world hieroglyph game, immersive video, etc.) and linked to the Nuri Curriculum.
- (Exhibition Composition)

Category	Theme	Main Content
Entering		
	ID for the World of Writing	Creation of an avatar ID for the journey in the world of writing (RFID card)
	Tot 3000 Journey to the World of Writing	An immersive, motivational video to start one’s journey into the world of writing
Part 1: Arrival in the World of Writing		

	World of Writing Information Center	A video of Kkebi Letters that acts as an introduction to the experiential content of the world of writing
	Secret Code of the World of Writing	An interactive touch screen quiz on Hangeul to guide the experience after arrival
Part 2: Journey in the World of Writing		
	Find “Ra,” the Egyptian God of the Sun!	An open-world game in which the player must escape the pyramid by finding Egyptian hieroglyphs
	Let’s Dance and Speak!	A motion recognition game in which the player must match the expression of Hangeul vowels and consonants to the body
	Colorful Writing Jungle	A touch screen experience where participants can view Egyptian, Sumerian, and Chinese hieroglyphs
	World of Writing Playground	A touch screen experience where participants can write Arabic characters and activities using blocks
Re-entering		
	Tot 3000 Journey to the World of Writing	Outro video for the voyage back home after exploring the world of writing

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