

Manuskrip Laut Mati Akan Segera Online

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In an ambitious application of 21st century technology to a first century wonder, the Israel Antiquities Authority and internet search giant Google announced a plan Tuesday to digitize the Dead Sea Scrolls and make the entire collection available to the public online.

The authority's general director, Shuka Dorfman, called the project a milestone that will enhance the field of biblical studies and people's understanding of Judaism and early Christianity.

"We have succeeded in recruiting the best minds and technological means to preserve this unrivaled cultural heritage treasure, which belongs to all of us, so that the public with a click of the mouse will be able to access history in its fullest glamour"

Made up of 30,000 fragments from 900 manuscripts, the Dead Sea Scrolls are considered by many historians to be one of the most important archaeological finds ever made.

The ancient manuscripts, made of leather, papyrus and copper, were first discovered in 1947 by a nomadic shepherd in a cave near the Dead Sea. In the years that followed, more scroll fragments were located.

Dating back over 2,000 years, the scrolls reveal details about the development of Judaism during the Hellenistic period and shed light on the relationship between early Christian and Jewish religious traditions.

The project will employ the latest in spectral and infrared imaging technology to scan the thousands of scroll fragments into one large database.

"This is the ultimate image of the scroll you can get," explained project manager Pnina Shor as she showed reporters an example of the imaging. "It presents an authentic copy of the scroll that, once online, there is no need to expose the scrolls anymore"

Conservation of the ancient manuscripts is a major concern for the Israel Antiquities Authority, which recently began limiting photography of them. Flawed preservation and display practices in decades past had, in some cases, "catastrophic" consequences, Shor said, and the authority decided it needed to create a new active image record that would spare the manuscripts from further degradation.

The entire collection of Dead Sea Scrolls was photographed in 1950s, but access to the photos and the documents themselves has been limited. Only four conservationists are allowed to handle the scroll fragments and scholars are limited in how much time they can spend studying them in person.

Google, with its high-powered search and translation services, will help catalog the mass of material, but the internet heavyweight says the project is not for profit and not exclusive.

"I can envision scholars or other companies contributing their own technologies so as to get some additional value over the data " said Yossi Matias, Google's head of research and development center in Israel.

The Israel Antiquities Authority has raised \$3.5 million to fund the project, and project managers say the first images could be online within months.

Matias said it is too early to detail how the scrolls will be displayed online, but he assured that "the idea is an open platform and an open approach"

Source: <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2010/10/19/digitized-dead-sea-scrolls-to-be-available-online/?hpt=C1>

Images: <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/TECH/innovation/10/19/dead.sea.scrolls.google/index.html>