

Research note on the Marxists Internet Archive

www.marxists.org

Most radical and working-class organisations and movements are now largely marginalised and fragmented. The literature they disseminated and introduced to young people in the past is disappearing, and their voices are being drowned out by the babble of the mass media. New forms of radicalism that respond to this new situation are appearing, and one of these is the Marxists Internet Archive (MIA). The MIA brings together people of widely diverging views behind the common goal of creating and maintaining the world's largest digital library of Marxist works.

Without the MIA, this material would only be available to a small number of academics in the rich capitalist countries, with access to specialist libraries. Thanks to the MIA, these works are being studied in internet cafés in Islamabad, high schools in Soweto, flats in Shanghai—and so on, all over the world.

The MIA is a non-profit-making organisation whose sole purpose is to provide an all-encompassing Marxist library that is free to people in all corners of the world. The MIA archives thousands of documents as searchable HTML or PDF documents on its website (www.marxists.org).

Over the course of recent years, the MIA has evolved to become one of the world's pre-eminent publishers of Marxist works. The MIA currently maintains archives in more than forty languages, featuring hundreds of authors and tens of thousands of documents. While the largest sections of the MIA are the English-language archives, it also maintains extensive archives in a host of other languages. The French, German, Chinese and Spanish sections are among the largest of the non-English sections, but the MIA also includes sections for texts in eastern European, Middle Eastern and Asian languages.

The MIA's focus is on Marxist writers of the past. Volunteers contribute very little by way of explanation or commentary: the material is almost exclusively original texts or translations. Authors range from activists in the International Workingmen's Association to Bolsheviks to the leaders of revolutionary movements of the twentieth century. The largest collections in the Writers Archive include the Lenin archive, with over 3,900 HTML documents; Marx and Engels, with more than 3,260 HTML documents; and the Trotsky archive, at over 1,260 HTML documents. Archives for newer Marxist thinkers such as Pierre Broué, Eugene Kamenka and Mansoor Hekmat are also featured in the MIA 'Writers' section.

The MIA Reference Archive contains an extensive collection of works that provide readers with a better understanding of Marxism as a movement, and contains some of the most widely viewed documents in the MIA collection. Included in this section are the works of Stalin and Mao Zedong, works by pre-Marxist philosophers and economists and by Soviet theoreticians, and a range of classics from the past. The MIA maintains a variety of 'History' and 'Subject' archives, which contain documents, images and audio files. The History Archive provides primary-source documents of interest to Marxists from the history of important events and social movements, ranging from the founding and development of the USSR to the US Black Panther Party. 'Subject' sections provide collections of the writings of Marxists organised into various subject areas, including the role of Marxists in social movements, political currents and international relations.

Each year, the MIA compiles a disc version of the archive for global distribution. In previous years, a CD-ROM set was offered; but with changes in demand and technology, the MIA has shifted its production efforts to a single-disc DVD version. The MIA encourages financial donations in exchange for copies of the DVD archive, but the majority of the discs are distributed for free to individuals and organisations in parts of the world in which internet access is restricted due to censorship or user fees. For countries in which the postal service is disrupted due to government interference or domestic upheaval, the MIA encourages individuals and groups to act as domestic distributors, with permission to copy and distribute the discs within their respective countries. This method of distribution has improved access to Marxist resources in several south-Asian countries.



The MIA is run entirely by volunteers whose work is completely decentralised. Volunteers are free to work on whatever they please. New volunteers are always welcome to participate in a variety of tasks, including transcription, translation, HTML mark-up and proofreading.

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