

The Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists: 2020-2030
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The year is 2030. As you can see, the future features what are called *airmobiles*, which hover and zip through overcrowded cities built vertically due to the world's population of 12 billion.

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Humans can now download the entire internet—by now more than a trillion yottabytes and growing—to their brains, and view the web via holograms with a herringbone-like device around the neck.

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By 2030 there have been just north of 10 million downloads of the Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists (ESDA) app, and so users can pull articles up in their brain on command. Because of the widespread knowledge imparted by the history accessible in the Encyclopedia, members, ministers, and missiologists alike have studied and considered the successes and mistakes of our past, learned from them, implemented missional strategies grounded in these lessons, and ushered in an evangelistic explosion unlike the church has ever witnessed.

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As a result, in 2030 there are 50 million Adventists worldwide.

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David and I are long in the tooth by now. I was going to age each of you but I didn't want to begin this second annual EDCOM engendering animus.

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But seriously, this brief presentation is my vision for the ESDA from 2020 to 2030. What follows borders on the fanciful, but you know what they say: Aim for the stars; if you miss, you'll still be above the clouds. And you may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only... A good Adventist crowd such as yourselves may not catch that reference.

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As promised, the ESDA website makes its debut at the 2020 GC session in Indianapolis, Indiana, to much fanfare. In fact, it is the toast of the session, and there are so many visits to ESDA Online that at 2 in the morning on the fifth day of the session the website crashes. However, it is back up at 2:23 and doesn't have a problem again.

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The website and app feature approximately 8,000 articles, with an easy-to-use navigation and interface that appeals to users from ages 8 to 80. (And please forgive this crude representation of the ESDA site. It will look MUCH better than this!) Each article has five tabs that feature photos, original documents, and materials on the subject, most of which have never been accessible to the public before. It is free at its debut, and will always remain so.

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Because the production and success of the website was made possible by the assistant editors, they will be afforded with a special digital space on the website. Here you see Dr. Oliver's assistant editor page, which will include a write-up of him, and a description of his capacity with the encyclopedia.

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Under the direction of the capable editors, more than 10,000 people have contributed in some way to the production of the ESDA, and the contributors, primary among them the authors, have a personal page on the ESDA website with a short description of who they are and their accomplishments, and a list of all the articles they authored with hyperlinks to the articles. In time, the authors' pages are themselves used as a type of reference work, gleaned for career information about the person and their portraits.

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Each month the top 10 most clicked-on articles appear in order on the home page.

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Quite simply, the ESDA revolutionizes Adventist historiography. With the open information in the ESDA, the median level of comprehension of our past is heightened. And so historical presentations in books, articles, presentations, videos, is greater, more advanced and sophisticated. Further, the vast network of author-contributors of the ESDA have made publishers and media outlets aware of a largely hitherto unknown corps of Adventists who do history.

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In the months after its debut, church leaders find ESDA Online so indispensable that they unanimously approve at Annual Council—in an unprecedented standing hand-waving vote—a permanent budget for its continuance, maintenance and expansion, with two fulltime staff at the Main Office, and a healthy annual appropriation for editors on an as-needed basis. Besides this, the Encyclopedia regularly receives donations from grateful users and benefactors.

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ESDA Online is a living, dynamic thing. The website has fifteen addresses that take you to its home page. The ESDA web developer has primed its SEO and search capacity, so that whenever any of its contents is Googled, the ESDA website is the top result. The Encyclopedia website logo has become easily recognizable. The website design is updated every 3 years. Thanks to an extensive promotion strategy taken up by the World Church, the ESDA nets over 1000,000 unique visitors each month.

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Who are these unique visitors? The ESDA website is used by people of all walks of life.

- Students use it for their assignments (by 2023 it is the most plagiarized Adventist website)
- Teachers use it to teach and in their research
- Academic administrators have incorporated it into their school curriculum

- Church leaders use it to strategize for mission, to learn about their Church, in talks, in committees, and when budgeting
- Pastors use it in sermons
- Television stations, web programs, podcasts, use it on their shows and programs
- Public media outlets use the Encyclopedia to learn about Adventists in order to inform their articles and production
- Adventist members use the ESDA in myriad ways: to learn about their church, to witness, to educate their children and families, for church and school programs, to learn about their ancestors

The ESDA is instrumental in transforming the public's perception of Adventists. Where before there was largely ignorance, or only that Adventists have a different diet or operate a lot of hospitals, or this or that famous person is Adventist, the Encyclopedia is so woven into the fabric of the internet, and thus people's lives, that the public's IQ pertaining to our church is heightened.

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The ESDA has been translated into four languages by 2025, and sizeable portions of the ESDA into ten tongues.

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The ESDA has key partnerships with other Adventist projects. It is an essential part of the Adventist Learning Center's curriculum, and is fully incorporated into the Adventist Digital Library, and one of the main contributors of its primary sources.

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And, by 2022 a crowd-sourced portal of the ESDA website jointly operated with Adventist Review Ministries is launched, a space in which the public can contribute research, memories, media, artifacts, etc. Although this will be distinct from the Encyclopedia proper, it quickly becomes a popular digital destination. GC Archives, the Center for Adventist Research at Andrews, Loma Linda Heritage Center—Adventist archives around the world receive artifacts that they never dreamed existed because of this portal.

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The number of articles in the Encyclopedia is ever-expanding. As expected, many users, from GC leaders to colporteurs in India, alert the Main Office of articles that are missing that should be included. Further, as knowledge increases and more sources become available, the existing articles are improved. Articles are written on the history of the Adventist work in every major city in the world. Besides this, articles have to be written for prominent Adventists who pass away, new administrative structures, media outlets, special issues and themes, etc. There is a process for this, of course, including names for new articles going through a board, the identification and activation of authors, a peer-review and editing process, and final approval. The process of adding, updating, editing, and amplifying is perfected. By 2025, there are 12,000 articles, and the number of articles added annually after that is about 200. Around this time there is a push from primary and secondary schools to have official ESDA articles, and not relegated to just crowd-sourced entries. They prevail. By 2035 the ESDA Board, in a heretofore

unimaginable action, approves the commissioning of articles on local churches that were established before 1935.

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The ESDA's impact on the world divisions is truly remarkable. Never before has so much thorough, scholarly, painstaking research been done on the history of the movement in any given part of the world. In a few instances, single articles have been published as standalone books. Several of the world divisions have published a special volume (and often it is a multi-volume set) of just the Encyclopedia articles pertaining to their divisions. This has led to a renaissance not only in Adventist historiography, but every day members are now extremely knowledgeable about the Adventist pioneers where they live, the history of the church in their region, the history of the schools, hospitals, publishing presses—in short, how God has led the movement.

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Previously unsung heroes of the past, whose names weren't even known, are now the subjects of church skits, have schools named after them, have scholarships in their honor.

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The male workers' wives, whose names often didn't even appear in their own obituaries, are now recognized for the sacrifices they made, often exceeding their husbands.'

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The Encyclopedia is largely responsible for the establishment of Adventist heritage centers across the globe. Because of the information brought to light and made available by the Encyclopedia, an unprecedented history in Adventist heritage and history consumed the membership, who in turn provided funding for centers of heritage. The Encyclopedia articles provided the material for the exhibits, signage and collections. Our history provides inspiration and exemplary models.

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This new knowledge leads to an increased sharing of our faith, and more focused and enlightened evangelistic efforts. Church leaders plan more wisely, knowing the successes and failures of the past. In their administrative duties they discern patterns, chart trends, and ingeniously innovate. Never has the church as a whole been more informed about our rich past.

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Because of the vast number of participants from every corner of the globe and the inclusive nature of the project, each church member considers the Encyclopedia theirs. As a result, experts offer their talents to the project. For instance, each article has been geolocated—which you will hear about tomorrow—so users can see on the map where things took place. Other reference works have linked to the ESDA in order to provide it with up to date information on countries and regions. The *Yearbook* has a feature that automatically updates information in the ESDA on church administrative units. The link network on the Encyclopedia is truly a wonder. Even when a user misspells a word in the search engine, it takes them to the article they are looking for. In the article, the user will have an offering of links to related articles, and in an article of, say, 2,000 words, there will be an average of 200 words hyperlinked to related articles.

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With the feedback and perfecting of the ESDA online articles, and the addition of missing ones, it is time for the print edition. The four volume, 3,400 page, one-time print edition of the Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists comes off the presses in 2026.

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Due to the success of the Encyclopedia, in 2023 the ESDA editor is given approval for his idea of a museum of Adventist history on the south lawn of the GC property.

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Ladies and gentlemen, here is the Museum of Adventist History, grand opening on January 1, 2025. The Mormons top brass come to visit this museum to learn how to run a top flight church museum.

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This week we have gathered here from all parts of the globe to produce the Seventh-day Adventist Church's first online Encyclopedia. I believe that with the team assembled, and with the Lord's help and guidance, that we will produce an exceptional reference work that will be a blessing to millions. Let's keep this lofty purpose in mind as we plan this week.