

The ICA: Catalyst of International Archival Cooperation and Promotion

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International archival cooperation before World War II was limited to rare ventures such as the project launched between the two wars to publish a regional guide to archives in Europe. Archivists and librarians were considered together in 1910 at the first World Congress held in Brussels but the intergovernmental arrangements of the post-war League of Nations had virtually no repercussion on archival matters. It was only the strong impetus towards building a new global order, based on a world-wide partnership institutionalised in the United Nations (UN), which induced some systematic action in the essentially institutional, regional and national world of archival organisation.

IN 1946, Solon J. Buck, then Archivist of the United States and President of the Society of American Archivists, initiated an international archival programme structure. Its two main components were the creation of the UN's own archives in New York and the founding of an international organisation for archivists to be associated as a "non-governmental organisation" with the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO). The idea behind the UN archives, that its many services should have one great archival agency, was not realised but Buck's second programme element did not become viable.¹ In May 1948, a committee of experts² was convened by UNESCO in Paris and declared itself the constituent assembly of an International Council on Archives, under a provisional constitution.³ The First International Congress on Archives, meeting in Paris in 1950, formed the Council and ruled that an international congress would meet every three years (changed in 1956 to a four year interval). Charles Braibant, France's Director-General of Archives in 1954, decided that an annual Round Table on Archives should be convened, except for the year in which the Congress met. Whereas Congress is intended to be an open gathering of the world-wide profession and aimed at discussing topics of general interest on the basis of reports and lectures, the Round Table meetings are mostly attended

1 It took until 1976 to create a mechanism, ultimately a section of the ICA, to consider the archives of international organisations.

2 The committee of experts consisted of Solon J. Buck and Herbert O. Breyer (USA), Charles Samaram and Eugene Martin-Chabot (France), Hilary Jenkinson (UK), Julio Jimenez Rueda (Mexico), Emilio Re (Italy), D.P.M. Graswinckel (Netherlands), Vaclav Husak (USSR), and O. Steinnes (Norway).

3 See ICA *Directory* (1978): 35-44, for the most recent version of the constitution approved on 29 September 1976.

by the heads of national archives to elaborate specific subjects on data gathered from international questionnaires.⁴

The International Council (ICA) has five membership categories: *Category A*—archive directorates of member states of federal countries; *Category B*—national or international regional archives associations; *Category C*—institutional members; *Category D*—individual members; *Category E*—honorary members. Its plenipotentiary body is the General Assembly which meets in connection with the quadrennial Congress. In the interval between meetings, the administration and direction of the ICA's business is vested in an Executive Committee which meets annually. The Committee is composed of one member from each of seventeen countries, elected by the Assembly for a four year term as president, two vice-presidents, fourteen members, ex-officio membership of the Secretary-General and his Deputy, the Treasurer, the Executive Secretary and the chairman of ICA's regional branches. One vice-president must be elected from a Third World country. The ICA Bureau then consists of the president, two vice-presidents and the executive officers.⁵

During the late fifties and early sixties, the exclusive concentration of professional archival interest in the grand old archival administrations of Western Europe began to diminish as first, North American practice and, second, Third World needs began to impinge upon accepted and often obsolete traditions. UNESCO's membership and programme expansion, vigorously assisted by decolonisation processes in Africa, had its effect upon ICA organisation too. ICA's activities at first were limited to Africa south of the Sahara and to Southeast Asia. With a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, ICA launched a comprehensive campaign covering thirty one countries (anglo- and franco-phone) to explore archival need and awaken archival considerations at government levels. Linked to this campaign, regional archival programmes were initiated and coordinated with UNESCO activities to foster, modernise and strengthen archival infrastructures at the national level—through pilot projects and consultancy appointments. Very special attention was given to means of pooling available resources in the regions and, above all, of creating training facilities for archives staff.

The regional branch structure of ICA began in 1968 and, after ten years, lacks formal recognition in only two regions, Western Equatorial Africa and the Pacific. Using the acronym RBICA, for Regional Branch of ICA, the international regions of the Third World can be identified as follows:

SARBICA 1968 (Southeast Asia)—Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Burma, Kampuchea, Laos, Vietnam.

ECARBICA 1969 (East and Central Africa)—Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia.

ARBICA 1972 (Arab)—Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman Sultanate, Qatar

4 Extensive reports on the ICA Congresses have appeared in *Archivum* in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. The minutes of Round Table meetings have been published separately in French from 1954-78 but an edition in English is being planned for the future.

5 See Charles Kecskemeti, "International Council on Archives (ICA)" in *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* (New York, 1974): 361-72.

Emirate, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, both Yemens.

CARBICA 1975 (Caribbean)—US Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Bahamas, Barbados, Trinidad, Guyana, Colombia, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Dominica, West Indies, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Puerto Rico, French Guyana, Curacao, Bermuda, Haiti, Dominican Republic, British Virgin Islands.

LARBICA 1976 (Latin America, based on membership of the Asociacion Latinoamericana di Archivos)—Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Columbia, Costa Rico, Cuba, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicargua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Venezuela.

SWARBICA 1976 (South and West Asia)—New Delhi, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Nepal, Sri Lanka.

WARBICA 1977 (West Africa)—Benin, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissao, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauretania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, Upper Volta.

Already, this regional grouping has proved to be the best way of pooling scarce resources and coordinating programmes as crucial to archival development as professional and subprofessional training (including technical staff for restoration and reprography), exchange of personnel on study visits, publication of regional newsletters, microfilming and oral history programmes.

Along with expansion of programme structure, ICA has also widened and consolidated its coverage of archival subject areas. There are now subject-oriented committees in most essential fields—publications, education, automation, conservation and restoration, repography, sigillography, business archives, literature and art archives and records management. There are two *ad hoc* working groups, one, studying statistics and standardisation supported by a UNESCO project on archival standards, the other, compiling a multilingual glossary of archival terminology. A Committee on Archival Development, created in 1970, provides guidance or assistance to projects under the authority of ICA's Executive Committee.

In January 1975, under the patronage of President Leopold Senghor of Senegal, the ICA's operational programme was greatly strengthened by the establishment of an International Archival Development Fund, generously supported with grants from Canada, France, the Federal Republic of Germany and Nigeria. Nigeria and Yugoslavia have annually subsidized the Fund over the last three years, while Algeria and Iran have made handsome contributions. The Fund is administered by ICA through its Committee on Archival Development and operates without the limitations and constraints of bilateral aid, without bureaucratic regulations and without a heavy overhead. The Fund can act and react on a flexible basis whenever and wherever aid is needed. Requests channelled through regional representatives and national archives administrations cover financial aid to surveys, meetings at regional, national or international levels mainly related to education, institutional programmes for technical and professional work, overseas study tours, regional publications and some equipment.

UNESCO tended at first to see the Fund as a venture likely to compete with its existing projects and endanger its Third World prestige.⁶ However, realisation of the wholly inadequate financial capacities of both UNESCO and ICA has brought programmes to a complementary understanding. Joint meetings, symposia, and publications are now a matter of course rather than an exception. One publication project in particular is worth notice—the “Guide to the Sources of the History of Nations” which comprises inventories of archival material relating to developing regions but located outside the regions. Latin America, Africa north and south of the Sahara have already been covered and volumes for Asia and Oceania are in preparation. Both ICA and UNESCO have their headquarters in Paris too and this helps, neutralising much of the bureaucratic effects of international operations. The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and the International Federation of Documentation (FID), two sister disciplines, have developed organisationally alongside ICA within one unit of UNESCO since 1967 and cooperate on matters of professional and technical training. Similarly, ICA maintains linkages with experts in areas of physical and legal security, preservation of historical monuments and cultural property, historiography and museology. More recently, contacts with the fields of information science and statistical research have been strengthened.

What is ICA's future? The next International Congress, scheduled for London from 15-19 September 1980, will be devoted to two themes—“The Use of Archives” and “The ICA, its achievement and its future”. The latter theme ought to generate some lively discussion, although the Council does have a medium-range plan for the period 1978-82, which articulates a large number of projects involving Category A members. Priority has been given to all kinds of training, to conservation and restoration and to areas, such as records management and appraisal, which will permit a measure of international standardisation. Although a small secretariat and a few well-chosen members of the profession are vastly superior to a heavy bureaucracy with elaborate rules and regulations, the workload of the Bureau is extremely heavy and getting heavier. Finances do not, and may never, permit the growth of a suitable administrative infrastructure. At present, the French National Archives covers a large portion of ICA's current operational expenditure and the national archives of the Federal Republic of Germany and of Spain have furnished a professional archivist on secondment for a limited period. There is some chance of the Executive Secretary in Paris receiving an assistant in the coming year—at present he has only an executive assistant and two secretary-stenographers.

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⁶ Certainly this was the author's experience during his service as a Programme Specialist with Unesco, 1968-1975.

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- XX Archival Legislation. Vol II. Africa-Asia.
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Résumé

Le Conseil international des archives, souvent de pair avec l'UNESCO, travaille avec un budget restreint à promouvoir les intérêts de l'archivistique et met à la disposition de la communauté internationale oeuvrant dans ce domaine, un service mondial d'information et de ressources matérielles. Une grande partie du travail, a été accompli, et continue de l'être, en fonction des besoins du tiers monde. Quant à l'action du Conseil dans les pays développés, il se manifeste surtout au niveau des publications.



The
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