

The International Council on Archives: Continuity and Change

David Leitch
ICA Secretary General

International Institute for Archival Sciences, Trieste, 12 October 2010

What is ICA?

The International Council on Archives is the international body that represents archives and archivists on the world stage. It defends and advances the cause of archive institutions and professionals at the international level. It aims to develop a range of products that will enable archivists worldwide to find solutions to common problems.

ICA - Introduction

- Founded as an international NGO at UNESCO in 1948
- **1,400** institutional and individual members
- Based in **195** countries or territories
- Funded largely by membership dues but secures grants for specific projects
- Works in partnership with IFLA, ICOM and ICOMOS and CCAAA
- *Example: the Blue Shield network for disaster preparedness*

ICA –Global Network

- **Annual General Meeting** of voting members is the sovereign body that takes final decisions
- **Executive Board:** led by elected President and Vice-Presidents
- **13 Regional Branches** spanning the entire globe, including EURBICA
- Over **80 Professional Associations**
- **13 Specialist Sections** including archival education and training (SAE), universities (SUV) religious archives (SKR, notarial archives (SAN), business and labour archives (SBL) and international organisations (SIO)
- **Project Teams and Working Groups** of volunteers
- **Secretariat:** 5 full-time staff in Paris

ICA – Main Activities

- Has provided a forum for discussion across political divides
- Has produced many important publications, often with UNESCO
- Plays a leading role in the development of professional standards, notably in archival description
- Has stimulated the role of professional training where structures are lacking
- Organises annual conferences (CITRA) and major Congresses every four years
- Will hold first ever Congress in Australasia in Brisbane in August 2012

The Challenges of Globalisation

- **One Global Market Place:** easier transport, improved communications, media coverage much faster
- **Technology:** huge growth of electronic data in highly impermanent systems
- **Political Change:** increased power of international bodies, regional organisations and civil society organisations at the expense of nation state
- **Social Trends:** increased public appetite for online information, but risk of a digital divide between societies and within societies

ICA cannot ignore these challenges but has to respond constructively to them.

ICA's Reponse

- Introduce more elected posts and a shorter governance cycle (two years)
- Produce a modernised vision and strategy and then implement it
- Develop a vigorous professional programme, with products that are relevant to today's professional
- Improve internal and external communications
- Advocate more forcefully the cause of archives, based on the following:-
- clear messages to key stakeholders, increased membership and effective partnerships

The Vision for ICA

ICA aspires to convince **key decision-makers** and the **general public** that effective archives management is an essential precondition for good governance, the rule of law, administrative transparency, the preservation of mankind's collective memory and access to information by citizens.

Strategic Directions and Professional Programme

- Six strategic objectives for the ten-year period agreed at AGM in 2008
- Strategy is implemented by a rolling business plan to which all ICA bodies contribute
- ICA has now a flourishing programme of 50 projects
- Need to monitor progress and to evaluate impact on the profession and society

Strategic Objective 1: To Raise Awareness

- Make key decision-makers aware that archives matter for good governance and accountability

Record Keeping for Good Governance Toolkit (PARBICA)

Database of archival legislation in Europe, Euronomos (EURBICA)

- Encourage the wider public to be aware of archives and to use them

International Archives Day, celebrated on 9 June

Strategic Objective 2: To Harness New Technology

- Support efforts to manage enormous quantities of electronic data

ICA-Req: Principles and Functional Requirements to manage electronic data in office systems

- Exploit opportunities to make archives available on the Internet to a much wider public

ICA-AtoM: freely available, multi-lingual, open sources software enabling online archival description that conforms with ICA standards

Strategic Objective 3 – To Develop Capacity in the Archives Profession

- Develop best practices on legal matters, records management, preservation and access
Common Principles of Access across different cultures are being formulated
ICA working group monitoring copyright and related intellectual property questions
- Stimulate education and training opportunities
Revival of Fund for International Archival Development
- Promote professional exchanges
Planned online terminology dictionary using the latest technologies

ICA – Organisational Priorities

- Objective 4: To strengthen the Network
Launch of new ICA website as a major communications tool is imminent
- Objective 5: To improve ICA's performance
Independent Audit Commission makes recommendations for improvement
- Objective 6: To build partnerships
Influence the direction of UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme

ICA –Increasing Membership

- Many types of archive have no obvious home in ICA and are less likely to join the organisation
- New Section on Local, Municipal and Territorial Archives (SLMT) is a first step
- Also important to increase individual members (still fewer than 300)
- Improved benefits: access to ‘members only’ part of website; participation in working groups and project team; Flying Reporters enabling younger professionals to start in ICA; and access to ICA publications online and in print

Universal Declaration on Archives -1

Archives record decisions, actions and memories. Archives are a unique and irreplaceable heritage passed from one generation to another. Archives are managed from creation to preserve their value and meaning. They are authoritative sources of information underpinning accountable and transparent administrative actions.

Universal Declaration on Archives -2

Archives play an essential role in the development of societies by safeguarding and contributing to individual and community memory. Open access to archives enriches our knowledge of human society, promotes democracy, protects citizens' rights and enhances the quality of life.

UDA has been formally adopted by ICA which will now seek endorsement by UNESCO

A Virtuous Circle?

- Increased membership and sharper communications give ICA more influence
- Major funders adopt policies in line with ICA's own priorities
- ICA builds reputation for timely delivery of products
- Based on this success, more archivists wish to join ICA
- More high flyers in the profession seek leadership positions in ICA

Contact Details

leitch@ica.org

Tel: + 33 (0)1 40 27 63 49

International Council on Archives
60 rue des Francs-Bourgeois
75003 PARIS
France

<http://www.ica.org>