

BACKGROUND MATERIAL FOR A HISTORY OF SPA

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(Translated to English by Cristina Bianchi and revised by Colleen McEwen)

1 - Context

Why was SPA (the Section of Professional Associations) created; what is its role in the ICA; what has it achieved; who has worked for the Section? These are some questions I had in mind when I joined the SPA Steering Committee in 2000. However, the information to enable me to understand the history of the Section since its creation in 1976 had mainly been transmitted by word of mouth and the handover between committees did not always ensure continuity of thought and action. The passing of time meant that it was important to record what had happened in the past and when reaching the end of my term, I decided to leave SPA members with some information about the Section. Contrary to what one might expect, sources abound. It is true that they generally do not give a lot of details, and to understand events, reading between the lines is sometimes necessary. Also the exercise proved rather difficult as I had not witnessed, or been an actor, in all the events.

2 – Material made available

This paper does not constitute a history of SPA. Rather it is information which can be questioned, supplemented and amended in the future when a true history of the Section is written. Further research is needed and I therefore encourage others who may wish to continue this work.

3 – Section creation

The first association of archivists was created by colleagues from the Netherlands in 1891 (*Vereniging van Archivarissen in Nederland*, VAN, today called KVAN) and before World War I, nine associations had been established in Europe. Associations were established in France in 1904, Belgium in 1907 and 1921, Hungary in 1912, Denmark in 1917, Switzerland in 1922, Norway in 1936, Estonia in 1939, and one in North America (the United States, *Society of American Archivists*) in 1936. The *British Records Association*, created in 1932, can also be added to this list, although its main interest was in preserving and using sources, rather than being an association of archivists, however, it became a member of ICA in 1950.

As soon as the International Council of Archives was created in 1948, associations could become members of the international movement. At the August 21st 1950 session of the Steering Committee held in Paris, national associations from nine countries were admitted as members: Belgium, Denmark, United States of America, Finland, France, United Kingdom (*British Records Association*), Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland. A list from 1953

mentions 10 associations, including the German association (covering the Western part of the country).

Although they participated in the General Assembly, the role of the associations appeared limited and their influence weak. In the fifties and sixties, the association movement was still struggling with small numbers. It did not gain strength until the late sixties, when many associations were created around the world.

In the early seventies, there was a movement for change in the ICA. Some associations questioned the fact that the ICA dealt almost exclusively with government archives whereas members were interested in giving more prominence to non-government archives. Questions were also asked about the role of associations in the ICA. The association of Polish archivists played an important role in the protest movement and in 1972 suggested the creation of a separate group for professional associations within the ICA.

The issue was raised at the ICA Steering Committee at its meeting in Hyde Park (New York) in 1974. Helmut Dahm, member of the ICA Steering Committee and President of the German Association of Archivist, was asked to prepare a document on professional associations and on the possibility of creating an alliance of associations within the ICA. To this end, he undertook a survey of professional associations and published a report sending it to the Steering Committee in 1976. Several options were suggested including a federation of associations along the lines of the IFLA model for librarians. However, the ICA did not want professional associations to secede and decided to create a new structure. At Big Meadows in September 1976, the Steering Committee proposed to the General Assembly an amendment to Article 34 of the ICA Regulations to authorize the creation of sections. This solution provided associations with a special place in the international movement giving them a dedicated section where they could address topics of interest.

The SPA Section was created on September 29th 1976, at a special meeting of the International Congress held in Washington. There were 17 members and a list of these associations is preserved in the ICA archives. Helmut Dahm assumed the Presidency of the Section and was confirmed in that office by the ICA Executive Committee in March 1977. He held the position until the London Congress in 1980.

The objectives of the Section developed over time. At the beginning they were to:

- promote cooperation between all associations;
- collect and disseminate information on activities of all archival associations;
- carry out projects of professional interest; and
- represent and strengthen personal and, in particular, non-governmental elements of the ICA.

The objectives have been amended several times and their evolution can be followed by browsing successive Section Regulations.

Currently, the goals mentioned in the SPA Articles are:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to promote closer collaboration of all records management and archival professional associations;• to gather and disseminate information about the activities of all records management and archival professional associations; |
|--|

- to encourage and assist the establishment of new professional records management and archival associations;
- to promote and maintain the ICA Code of Ethics;
- to encourage and assist the establishment of new professional records management and archival associations; and
- to carry out projects of professional interest.

Figure 1: SPA Articles (2007)

From the outset of SPA the following structure was put in place and a system of meetings was decided upon which provided a governance framework for the Section:

- a Steering Committee;
- an Assembly of Delegates - to be held once a year, during CITRA;
- a Plenary session to be held during the World Congress every four years.

This structure still prevails today.

In addition to establishing a Regulation, the early work of the Section was directed towards defining tasks to be undertaken. Members of the Section Steering Committee agreed to prioritize their efforts and decided to focus on developing a directory of associations and a newsletter and to support the first International Archives Week, which took place in 1979 (SPA also participated in organizing the second Archives Week, in 1984). Sessions dedicated to non-governmental archives were organized for the 1980 International Congress in London.

4 – Section development

4.1 A slow start

The beginnings of the Section were not easy. The Steering Committee complained that too few associations were members of the Section. The first projects did not progress as fast as they should have, with the work relying on only a handful of people. In 1982, the Steering Committee even suggested reducing the number of its members to 5, because of difficulties in reaching the quorum. The absentees offered various reasons why they could not participate actively, including travel costs and the fragility of their association's finances. However, the suggestion did not go ahead with the proposal being lost at the 1984 Plenary Assembly held in Bonn.

The ICA Executive Committee asked the President of SPA to inquire into the reasons for the low participation of associations. In order to gain an understanding of the situation, Milos Milosevic, the second SPA President, sent a questionnaire to the twenty-three members associations and received thirteen responses. Milosevic wrote a report on the results of the survey and made a number of suggestions: "*The Prospects of the Section of Professional Archival Associations seen through the eyes of those members in the Survey*" (published in *Janus* I, 1983, pp. 4-5). The situation of the Section improved after this with more associations participating in meetings and in other organized events.

4.2 SPA participation in ICA Governance

One question that occupied the SPA Steering Committee was the participation of the SPA President, or another member of the Section, in the ICA Executive Committee. In 1976, participation on the Executive by archivists outside the national archives was relatively small. The associations participated in CITRA and in the General Assembly, but not in the Executive Committee or on the ICA Board. It must be remembered that only two sections had been created in 1976 (SPA for professional associations and the SIO for international organizations). At the time Helmut Dahm, the President of SPA, was a member of the Executive Committee, but not as the Section President. After his departure, the question took on another dimension as there was no representation at all for the professional associations on the Executive Committee of the ICA. A debate on the subject was started in the Steering Committee in 1988 and culminated with Ken Hall joining the Executive Committee of the ICA in 1990 as the SPA representative.

4.3 Increase in the number of SPA members

When the Section was created in 1976 there were 17 members. This number has steadily increased over time, as shown in the table presented as Figure 2, rising from 17 to 81 in 2008. This rise has been largely due to Section members continually increasing their efforts to persuade organizations to join their ranks.

The first Directory of the Section was published in 1983. Updates were published in *Janus* from 1985 onwards.

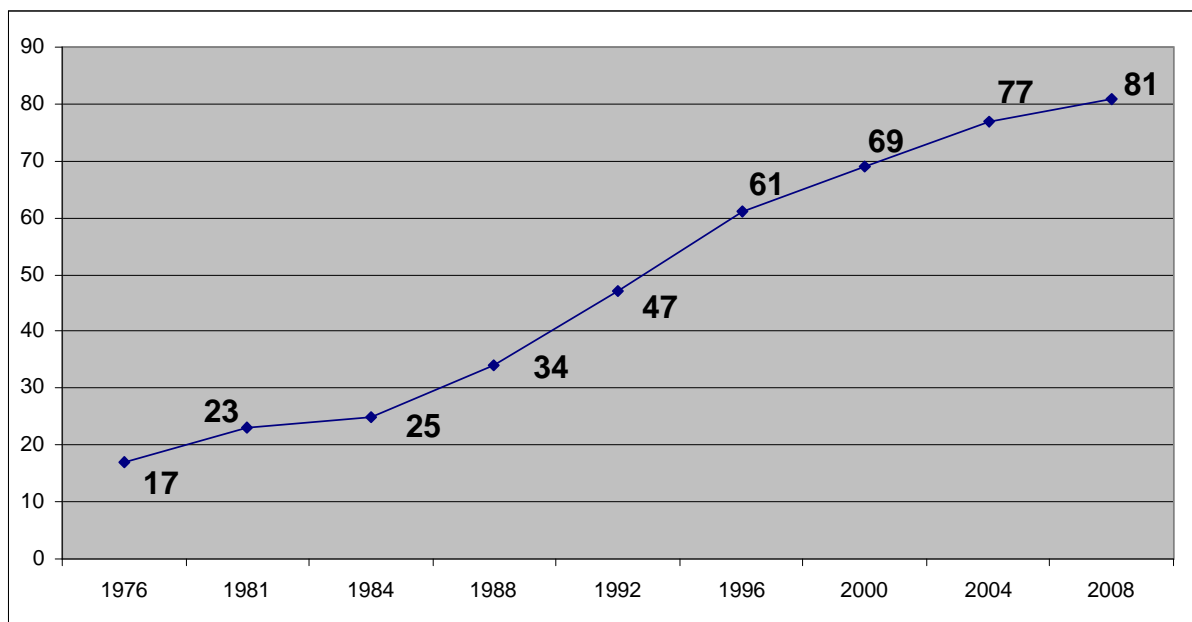


Figure 2: SPA membership numbers 1976-2008

The association movement was particularly strong in Europe and North America. Currently, SPA has members on five continents.

4.4. Activities and products

Although SPA members have worked on a great variety of projects, as shown in the variety of Section activities and products listed below, the Section has always focuses its efforts on projects that are not only useful to associations, but also to the entire profession.

The first efforts of the Section were in three areas: drafting a regulation, producing a newsletter and supporting the organization of the first "International Archives Week". The regulations were quickly drafted and underwent changes over time in response to identified needs. The newsletter became eventually a journal in 1983, with the evocative name of *Janus* and reading the early issues of the journal tells us much about the Section and its activities. *Janus* was a success, appearing regularly, and allowing not only SPA but also other branches and sections of the ICA to publish articles, reports and conference proceedings. By 1990 it had become the main means of communication for ICA Committees and Sections. The first "International Archives Week" was organized as a world event in 1979. Following the success of this first celebration, it was decided to repeat it every five years and today most countries around the world hold an archives day, week or month to promote archives.

From the late seventies SPA participated in the organization of World Congress sessions and in 1980 it held its first session at the London Congress dedicated to non-governmental archives. Analyze the programs of each congress would provide a list of the topics that were organized by SPA.

The Section also published « *Guidelines for Establishment of a Professional Association* » which related, in particular, to developing statutes for new associations.

Very early, exchanges between professionals were organized involving visits by members of associations who were housed by their colleagues in the host country. During their stay, they were able to compare practices and share experiences. Exchanges were arranged between the UK and the Netherlands, the U.S. and China, Bavaria and neighboring countries, as well as between the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

The creation of the Code of Ethics mobilized the forces of the Section between 1989 and 1996. The Code of Ethics, accepted by the General Assembly of the ICA in Beijing in 1996, was certainly a very significant contribution of the Section.

In 2000, SPA also wrote a guide on lobbying, a subject too often ignored by our profession, (*Lobbying and Public Campaigns for Professional Archival Associations*) and shortly after produce guidelines for the organizing conferences were added (*Conference Guidelines / Report on Organizing Regional Meetings and Conferences*).

In collaboration with national professional associations, SPA strongly contributed to the development of successive European Conferences, particularly those held in Barcelona (1997), Florence (2001), Warsaw (2006) and Geneva (2010). In 2006 the European branch EURBICA took over part of the organization of this event, in collaboration with SPA.

To conclude this brief overview, it should be noted that SPA also works to support associations and other colleagues who experience professional difficulties, whether temporary or recurrent. Sometimes regarded as the voice of the profession it takes a stand, when necessary or useful, in discussions of professional and public interest.

Sometimes, the Section has started work on specific subjects, but has not finished the task. For example, a project to interview experienced archivists and a project to develop an archival bibliography has not been completed.

Beyond these concrete outcomes and those failed attempts, SPA has become with each passing year an amazing network of associations and professionals, a perspective that does not always emerge from reading the official documents.

5. What about today?

In addition to the already mentioned SPA achievements, the following is a list of more recent works that have been completed or are ongoing:

- *Guidelines for developing a Retention Schedule for Records management and archival professional associations, including a model schedule*
- *Advocacy and Promotion Strategies for Professional Associations*
- *Sources relating to archival and recordkeeping competency, certification and accreditation programs*
- *A list of archives Awareness Days/Weeks/Months around the world*
- The development of the Universal Declaration on Archives, which was accepted in Oslo in September 2010
- A survey regarding the ICA Code of Ethics (Results can be seen on the ICA website: <http://www.ica.org/fr/node/39240>)
- *Guidelines on Organizing Training Workshops and Seminars*
- *Guidelines for establishing a mentoring program*
- *Guidelines for conducting an election*
- *Records management guidelines for associations*
- *A list of publications of Category B members*

In 2000 SPA began working on the concept of Archival Solidarity and a working group was created to guide this project with the aim of coordinating efforts in the international archives community to carry out foreign assistance projects to develop tools and expertise for developing communities and communities in transition. It has a website where information about the project can be found <http://archives3.concordia.ca/Solidarity/quoi.html>). In recent years an Archival Solidarity Funding Database has been developed providing information about sources of funding for archives related foreign assistance projects. There is also a database of current projects being carried out around the world. The Archival Solidarity project has also produced guidelines on *How to approach a potential donor* and a contact list for *Development Funding from European Governments and Institutions*.

After *Janus* ceased publication in 2006 the Section decided to prepare a Newsletter for its members. The first issue was released in September 2007. Each issue is available on the ICA website in three languages (French, English and Spanish).

Finally, through collaboration with the State Archives of Spain and the coordination of the Spanish Associations, SPA members held their first international conference in Madrid in October 2007. It brought together over 180 delegates and speakers from five continents. This first conference was highly successful. Discussions were cordial and there was a very high level of commitment from the attending association representatives. The conference led to projects which, hopefully, will materialize in coming years. Given this success, Section members were encouraged to organize a second conference, which will take place in Edinburgh in September 2011.

This list of activities and products is not exhaustive and it is recommended that it should be regularly updated.

Website addresses were verified on February 12th, 2009.

Appendix 1: Sources***Bibliography***

To my knowledge there has been no history of SPA written. Some articles on the Section have been published, but they have been ad hoc presentations on SPA activities including:

Jaap RINZENA, « Au sujet de la Section des associations professionnelles d'archivistes (SAPA) », *Janus*, 1983, 1, pp.3-4.

Marcel CAYA, « Le rôle des associations professionnelles au niveau international », *Archives*, vol.17, n.4, 1986, pp.3-10.

Rosine CLEYET-MICHAUD, « Les associations d'archivistes de l'Europe des douze. Synthèse d'une enquête de l'Association des Archivistes Français », *La Gazette des Archives* 149, 1990, pp.138-143.

Rosine CLAYET-MICHAUD, « Les associations d'archivistes dans le monde », *Janus*, 1993, 1, pp.130-134.

Ken HALL, « The role of Professional Associations in Archival Development », *Janus*, 1996, 1, pp.110-113.

Didier GRANGE, « Las asociaciones archivísticas : panorama de un mundo en movimiento », *El Archivo: un servicio público ? Congreso de Archivos de Canarias, La Oliva, Fuerteventura, 19-21 octubre 2006, Las Palmas, Anroart Ediciones, 2006, pp.627-661.*

Archives and official publications

In order to write a history of SPA, several sources should be investigated. First, there are a few files in the ICA archives in Paris. The information is divided between issues related directly to SPA and those concerned with the ICA Board and Executive Committee, as well as the general Assemblies of the international movement. However, these records are incomplete. In order to fill the gaps, it would be necessary to contact former Presidents and Secretaries who have managed SPA, in particular those since 1996, so they can send documents still in their possession to the ICA Secretariat.

Various publications could also be very useful. Of particular interest is *Janus*, the magazine created by SPA in 1983, which includes extensive information on the life of the Section; the ICA Newsletter which includes minutes of certain meetings of the Steering Committee of the Section and the Annual meeting or General Assembly of Delegates of the Section. Finally, the "Green Books" which group documents distributed at the ICA General Assembly, including a report on the activities and achievements of the section every four years.

To complement this body of sources, it would be interesting to use the published literature of various member countries of the Section, as many representatives of the Steering Committee have issued reports and presentations in their respective countries. Similarly, they may have filed papers relating to their activities in their own association's archives.

What about oral history?

Finally, an oral history project could be very useful in gathering information about SPA. There is still time to meet and interview a number of SPA members, since the Section was created little more than thirty years ago, including Marcel Caya, Joan Van Albada, Gerard Ermisse, Rosina Clayet-Michaud, Marco Carassi, Yvonne Bos-Rop, Margaret Turner and many others. I have not undertaken this additional work which would definitely help.

Some proposals

Among the proposals to be made, it would be good to create a complete "collection" of minutes of the Section Steering Committee meetings, minutes of the Assembly of Delegates, as well as annual and quadrennial reports and place them in the archives of the Section. I do not know to what extent it would be appropriate to put them on the Web in electronic format. Perhaps we might be satisfied with electronic versions from recent years.

It would be appropriate if successive members of the Steering Committees could make a special effort to gather documents created during the time they were members, necessary to keep the memory of the Section and send them to the ICA Secretariat in Paris for archiving. There are currently too many gaps, and they make the writing of a history of the Section difficult. This action should be compulsory at the end of each Presidency. Also, it should be stressed that developing a retention schedule for documents of the Section in 2006-2007 was an excellent achievement and hopefully this tool will be used in the future.

Appendix 2 : ListsMeetings of SPA Steering Committee

29.09.1976	Washington
18-20.07.1977	Düsseldorf
25-27.06.1978	The Hague
01-02.03.1979	London
14.09.1980	London
29.04-02.05.1981	Warsaw
05.09.1981	Oslo
07-09.05.1982	Herceg-Novi
04-07.10.1982	Münster
26-28.04.1983	Brussels
19-21.10.1983	Bratislava
02-04.05.1984	Madrid
17-21.09.1984	Bonn
12-13.10.1984	Milan
29.04.1985	Hilvarenbeek (Steering Committee)
23.06.1985	Melun (Steering Committee)
06.10.1985	Hilvarenbeek (Steering Committee)
07-09.10.1985	Hanover
27-29.05.1986	Geneva
09-11.02.1989	Nice
03.10.1989	Madrid
18-24.04.1990	Radenci
26.09.1990	Dresden
12-16.03.1991	Spoletto
05-10.1991	Maastricht
22-25.04.1992	Munich
14-17.04.1993	London
14.09.1993	Mexico D.F.
1994	Rennes
1994	Thessalonica
23-25.03.1995	Barcelona
03-09.09.1995	Washington
27.02-03.03.1996	Schleswig-Holstein
02-06.09.1996	Beijing
30-31.05.1997	Barcelona
25.09.1997	Edinburgh
01-03.04.1998	Lausanne
10-12.09.1998	Stockholm
04-09.05.1999	Florence
05-08.10.1999	Budapest
25-29.04.2000	Montreal
25.09.2000	Seville
28-29 et 31.05.2001	Florence

09.10.2001	Reykjavik
16-19.04.2002	Dublin
11.11.2002	Marseille
21-25.04.2003	Chicago
20.10.2003	Cape Town
18-23.03.2004	Paris
2004	Vienna
2004	Vienna
2005	Gerona
25.11.2005	Abu Dhabi
15-17.05.2006	Warsaw
19.11.2006	Curaçao
15-18.05.2007	Kyoto
12.11.2007	Quebec
31.03-03.04.2008	Mexico D.F.
21.07.2008	Kuala Lumpur
30.03-02.04.2009	Stockholm
16-20.10.2009	Malta
25-27.04.2010	Pully (CH)
13.09.2010	Oslo

Delegates Annual meetings

04.10.1977	Cagliari
12.10.1978	Nairobi
07.11.1979	Gosier/Guadeloupe
05.09.1981	Oslo
1982	Münster
1983	Bratislava
1985	Austin
1986	Helsinki
1987	Gardone Riviera
05.10.1989	Madrid
27.09.1990	Dresden
10.10.1991	Harlem
29.09.1993	Mexico
1994	Thessalonica
1995	Washington
1997	Edinburgh
11.09.1998	Stockholm
08.10.1999	Budapest
2001	Reykjavik
11.11.2002	Marseille
20.10.2003	Cape Town
27.11.2005	Abu Dhabi
24.11.2006	Curaçao
16.11.2007	Quebec
21.07.2008	Kuala Lumpur

20.11.2009	Malta
14.09.2010	Oslo

Plenary Assemblies

29.09.1976	Washington
19.09.1980	London
1984	Bonn
1988	Paris
08.09.1992	Montreal
1996	Beijing
2000	Seville
23.08.2004	Vienna
26.07.2008	Kuala Lumpur

Presidents and Secretaries

	President	Secretary
1976-1980	Helmut Dahm (GER)	Ann Morgan Campbell (USA)
1980-1984	Milòs Milòsevic (YUG)	Jaap Rinzema (NL)
1984-1988	Gérard Ermissé (FRA)	Joan van Albada (NL)
1988-1992	Marcel Caya (CAN)	Ken Hall (UK) followed by Joan Van Albada (NL)
1992-1996	Ken Hall (UK)	Marco Carassi (ITA)
1996-2000	Yvonne Bos-Rop (NL)	Margaret Turner (UK)
2000-2004	Margaret Turner (UK)	Kathryn Dan (AUS)
2004-2008	Didier Grange (CH)	Patricia Sleeman (UK)
2008-2012	Christine Martinez (F), followed by Henri Zuber (F), in 2009	Colleen McEwen (AUS) and Andrew Nicoll (U.K.)

It is recommended that a list of all members of the Steering Committee since the creation of the Section be drawn up.