

The 83rd German Archival Conference: Archives without Borders. Description and Access in the European and International Context

Greetings from ICA

Madam Minister, Madam Mayoress, Doctor Maissen, Your Royal Highness:

Many thanks to Dr. Diefenbacher and the Association of German Archivists for the invitation to the German Archival Conference. I find the theme “archives without frontiers” not only topical but also very interesting. And the choice of venue, Saarbrücken on the French and Luxemburg borders is of course excellently suited to the theme.

It is a great honour for me to be here as ICA’s representative. The theme of the conference is naturally very important for ICA in the sense of international cooperation.

The theme could also mean overcoming the barriers which prevent understanding between archives and government, as well as citizens, so that this archival work of ours does not appear so secret and inaccessible.

For me personally it is a great pleasure to be here in Germany again. My first paid archives work was a practical in the Mannheim City Archives in 1984 and 1985 – and I am sure that later this experience helped me to be accepted on the archives course at University College London. So a door, or border, that was opened for me because of my German experience.

After this small personal Nach diesen kleinen persönlichen recollection, I want to return to the meaning of international work and ICA’s role in it. ICA is evidence that international cooperation is very important. I can only mention a few examples here of ICA’s work in developing international standards and principles.

- In 2000 ICA’s General Assembly adopted ISAD(G) – this is the abbreviation for *International Standard Archival Description (General)*. This is intended to be an International Gemeint ist damit ein internationaler standard to be applied when describing archival material. This manual can be used in conjunction with existing national standards and makes possible the international exchange of descriptive information. It belongs to a family of standards for archival description work.
- ICA-Req (*Principles and functional requirements for records in electronic office environments*) defines international standards for systems managing reliable, and secure electronic records..

Among the international principles for archives work, I’d like to note in particular:

- The *ICA Code of Ethics*
- The *Principles on Access to Archives* formulated by ICA

And finally:

- *The Universal Declaration on Archives* which was adopted by UNESCO in 2011. The Declaration, initiated by ICA, states that the role of the archives is as custodian of cultural heritage. At the same time it declares that good archives and records management are a prerequisite for a state to be considered democratic.

Since then the Declaration has been translated into 21 languages, and not only the world languages but also Welsh and Icelandic for example.

Among ICA's committees and working groups I particularly want to highlight PCOM's work. PCOM is the Programme Commission and has responsibility for the professional programme of ICA, for example:

- ICA partnership work, for example the UNESCO project to develop a model curriculum in digital preservation
- Expert Groups made up of members for all over the world who concern themselves with specific areas of archival work, for example digital records, emergency planning, appraisal etc
- Liaison with and cooperation between the other parts of ICA such as professional sections, regional branches and FIDA (the Fund for the International Development of Archives)
- The Annual Conferences, in particular for the professional content

The ICA was set up in 1948 and every year the national archivists would meet (at the CITRA meeting or international round table on archives). However, since this year the Annual Conference is open to all members of ICA.

ICA wants to increase the number of members and hopes that more German archivists will join ICA: it costs only 30€ maximum if the digital publication option is taken.

The first Annual Conference takes place this year in Brussels on the 23rd and 24th of November. The theme is "Accountability, Transparency and Access to Information". The themes of the German Archival Conference and that of ICA therefore complement each other. In Brussels sessions are planned for:

- Open Government
- Records Management
- Access to information
- Truth and Reconciliation
- The role of the archivist and records manager

This year's venue is fast and cheap to get to from Germany – there are even reductions for groups of 10 people. It could only be more practical and cost effective if the conference were to take place in Germany itself. So take the chance! It would be great if a lot of German archivists would take part.

From outside the borders, we regard German archival management as being very well organised. In ICA we know that the German Archivists' Association is the European association with the most members and moreover well established. I would also like to thank the German Archivists' Association Secretariat for being so friendly and helping me to prepare for my trip here. I am take great interest in the achievements of the German profession and look forward to sharing experiences.

It only remains for me to say that I am really looking forward to the German Archival Conference. I would really appreciate it if I can talk to you about ICA's work and hear your

hopes and wishes for international cooperation. I expect that I will learn a lot – and hope that I will make new friends.

Thank you very much.