



International Council on Archives
**Section of Archives and
Archivists of Parliaments and
Political Parties**

Conseil international des Archives
**Section des Archives et
Archivistes des Parlements et
Partis politiques**



QUADRENNIAL REPORT

**Section for Archives and Archivists of Parliaments and Political Parties (SPP/ICA)
2004-2008
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0. NAME OF THE SECTION

Section for Archives and Archivists of Parliaments and Political Parties (SPP/ICA)

1. ADMINISTRATION

1.1 *Membership*

Membership of the section has been quite a constant factor over the past four years. As of now, the section has 93 members.

1.2 *Management*

The Section's Steering Committee currently has ten members:

Günther Schefbeck (President)
Marietta Minotos (Vice-President)
Reinder van der Heide (Secretary)
France Bélisle
Claus Brüggmann
Włodzimierz Kucner
Mateo Maciá
Béla Pálmany
Michael Schneider
Reinhard Schreiner

Since 2004, four members have withdrawn from the Steering Committee:

Vincenzo Arista (retirement)
Mariona Corominas (change of professional position)
Inaldo B. Marinho Júnior (change of professional position)
Mario Tonelotto (retirement)

2. PROGRAMME

2.1 *Seminars and conferences*

Within the framework of its work program, every year (with the exception of Congress years), the SPP is organizing a conference on a subject of particular interest to its members, as a forum for them to present and exchange their experiences and also take an input from experts from the greater archival community invited to participate.

The first conference within the quadrennial period in question took place in Vitoria-Gasteiz (Spain) in November 2005. The conference was named "From Archives to Information Management", thus indicating that the scope of tasks of our archives is becoming broader and is now comprising not only involvement in the whole life-cycle of parliamentary and political documents but also a core role in providing current access to these documents. Thus, parliamentary and party archives are no longer just the memories of their institutions but also involved in fulfilling their current functions, such as the transparency function. On the other hand, safeguarding the memory of Parliaments and political parties is facing new challenges: "long-term preservation" is the keyword representing a whole set of hardware and software issues to be settled. Within the framework of the conference, the input given by members of the section as well as by an invited external expert working with the InterPARES project reflected different aspects of the transitional situation on the way from archives towards information management, the range extending from general overviews and theoretic approaches to practical findings.

The conference held in Bonn in November 2006 on the subject of "The WWW as a challenge and as a chance to parliamentary and party archives" – proceeding from the results of the SPP conference in Vitoria-Gasteiz and going deeper into one particular subject mentioned there – was to deal with the chances and threats the world wide web has brought along for archives and archivists, especially in their role of 'keepers of records'. In particular, the conference focussed on two different questions: 1. How to deal with parliamentary and political party websites as matters to be archivally preserved, i.e. how to give users time-independent access to (every version of) these websites? 2. How to use the Internet for presenting the archives themselves and give users

space-independent access to their holdings? To answer the first question, guidelines for website-archiving prepared by a working group of the German parliamentary and party archives were presented, and recommendations adopted. With regard to the second question, experiences with presenting archives and their holdings on the internet were discussed. As a particular aspect of this issue, the legal problems arising when it comes to publishing documents (e.g., photos and A/V files) on the internet were taken into consideration.

Since in particular the latter issues are common to archives and other organizations dealing with information, such as libraries and documentation centres, the SPP proceeded from the discussions in Bonn when organizing its next conference held in Corfu in November 2007. The subject of this conference was "Parliamentary, Party and Politicians' Archives and their Neighbouring Institutions". Within its framework, the following three specific issues were addressed: 1. Political, cultural, and educational responsibilities of archives, libraries, and documentation centres; 2. training requirements for archivists, librarians, and documentalists; 3. organisational issues (how to give form to co-operation between archives on the one hand, and libraries and documentation centres on the other).

2.2 Publications and communication

Conference proceedings

The section intends to make the proceedings and results of the conferences held in Bonn and in Corfu available, probably in print and digital form. In both cases, publication will be within a publication series of the respective conference host, i.e. the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in case of the Bonn conference and the Ionian University in case of the Corfu conference.

Website

The section's website, managed by the section's webmaster (Claus Brüggemann), provides information on the section's members and activities and can be seen as a starting point for the exchange of views and experiences on matters of interest to the members.

Public relations

The section is continuing its efforts to establish contacts with parliaments, their archivists and information managers, and with political party organisations and their archivists and information managers which are not yet members of SPP. A new publicity document, in the form of 'fact sheets' about SPP, has been prepared

2.3 Studies, actions and projects

Workshop on website-archiving

For the XVI International Congress on Archives, the section is preparing a workshop on the subject of "Archiving websites – a new challenge to archives". Basing on the results of the conference held in Bonn in November 2006, the workshop is to make aware of the task of website-archiving as a new challenge to archives and archivists, present guidelines for archiving websites and give practical advice on how to develop one's own strategy in this field. Even more, it may encourage the participants to start archiving websites. After the workshop, which will also include a contribution by a representative of SIO/ICA, further steps, probably in cooperation with SIO, are to be taken towards developing a reference model or a standard for website-archiving.

Directory of parliamentary, political party, and politicians' archives

In order to obtain a world-scale overview of parliamentary, political party, and politicians' archives, a questionnaire has been developed which in a first step has been distributed among the European parliaments; in further steps, other target groups will be addressed. The directory will be published online on the section's website.

"Twinning"

Within SPP, the idea of initiating "Sister Archives", in analogy to cities all over the world, is under discussion (friendship, partnership, jumelage relations between two parliamentary archives, or two political party archives). The idea is of course that for instance two parliaments help and inspire each other with tackling the complexities of their information management. A possible twinning has been suggested between the parliaments of Senegal and Belgium, and between Burkina Faso and Canada. Perhaps a third twinning possibility will be the combination of Albania and The Netherlands, but in all three cases further relations still are to be established. The further development of twinning projects could also be an issue for the archival community at large and could be discussed on the ICA level in Kuala Lumpur.

2.4 Other activities

Establishing Regulations for the section has been an item on the agendas of the annual meetings of the Plenary Assembly in Vitoria-Gasteiz (2005), Bonn (2006), and Corfu (2007). A draft proposed by the Steering Committee has for the first time been adopted in Bonn and, on the ground of further proposals by the Steering Committee, amended in Corfu. The Regulations thus established are yet to be approved by the ICA Executive Board.

3. PLANNED INITIATIVES WHICH DID NOT TAKE PLACE

Several SPP member institutions having collections of audio records of parliamentary or political proceedings, a tool supporting automatic production of transcripts of such proceedings would be welcomed by them. That was why a project on testing and comparing tools of the mentioned kind was under discussion but then cancelled, for exploratory research showed that available tools were not yet sufficiently functional. With technology improving, the project idea might be resumed.

4. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF ACTIVITIES

The strength of a professional organisation like SPP/ICA is, of course, in the experience of its membership. It is, therefore, to be a forum for exchange of these experiences, along with providing selective state-of-the-art input from outside. At the same time, it is to focus this experience into formal or informal professional “standards” that the members in their everyday business may refer to.

Exchange of experience currently may take place within personal encounters, ideally within the thematically focussed environment of a conference, or within virtual encounters on a bi- and/or multilateral level, making use of the options of the new communication technologies. Within SPP, activities still centre on the concept of personal encounter: In accordance with this concept, in the past four years three successful conferences have been organized, which dealt with subjects of particular interest to our members; the selection of subjects was also an expression of the opening-up of modern archives not only towards the new technologies but also towards neighbouring and related institutions.

Though this concept of personal encounter will also to be observed in the years to come, it will have to be more and more complemented by offering opportunities for virtual encounters within interactive environments. Providing fora for smart virtual interaction as a continuous process will be a particular challenge to professional organisations like SPP in the next years.

5. LOOKING AHEAD

The new technologies are fairly capable of surmounting distance-related gaps, whereas at the same time they might open up new economic gaps between the technological “haves” and “have-nots”. One main objective of a global organisation like ICA therefore will be to reduce such possible technological gaps, e.g. by supporting the development and roll-out of easily usable technical tools, developing standard solutions available free-of-charge, dealing with licence issues, offering training and support, and overcoming language barriers, within the professional community of archives and archivists worldwide.

SPP will have to play a role of its own within these global efforts of ICA. Representing the archives and archivists of bodies involved in law-making processes, it might, e.g., be able to offer expertise in the normative area, which is of utmost importance when aiming at ensuring equal opportunities in a cross-border approach.

Albeit SPP itself yet has quite a eurocentric membership structure, it is working on expanding outside Europe; as a significant expression of this tendency, SPP in 2010 for the first time will hold a conference outside Europe, namely in Dakar, Senegal (on the subject of "Modernization and Sustainability. Law-making Support in the 21st Century"). The next quadrennial period in the development of SPP/ICA will be marked by a significant extension of its scope of activities.

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SPP Secretary

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