



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON ARCHIVES
SECTION FOR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

NEWSLETTER
February 2008

Welcome to the February 2008 edition of the SPA Newsletter. The purpose of the Newsletter is to keep SPA members up-to-date with news on Section activities and projects and to strengthen international cooperation and collaboration between professional records management and archival associations.

New members

We would like to welcome the following new members to SPA:

- Association des Archivistes Francophones de Belgique (AAFB)
- Association pour le Développement des Activités Documentaires au Bénin (ADADB)
- Associacao dos Arquivistas do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul
- Association of Canadian Archivists
- Association congolaise pour la promotion culturelle et artistique (ACPCA)
- Turkish Librarians' Association

We look forward to working with these new members in advancing the work of professional associations. There are currently 77 member associations of SPA.

International Congress of Professional Associations

The State Archives Office of the Spanish Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with SPA and the Coordinating Agency for Spanish Archival Associations, hosted an International Congress of Professional Associations in Madrid between 17th and 20th October 2007.

Information on the Congress, including the program and some of the papers presented, summaries of associations who had displays at the Congress Fair, and closing remarks are available at http://www.mcu.es/archivos/CE/Congreso_Int_Asocia_ProfEN.html

The following report on the Congress has been prepared by Patricia Sleeman, Secretary of the SPA Steering Committee (SPA/SC).

Are archivists the new macho heroes of society???

Over 18 associations and 130 delegates participated in this one off event organised by SPA and the Ministry of Culture, Spain.

This Congress covered the role of archival associations in society; outreach and archival associations; associations and competencies – training and certifications, and the future of professional associations. Much of the event took place as roundtable discussions and it was great to see a lot of active participation from the floor.

After welcoming remarks from Rogelio Blanco Martinez, Director General del Libro, Archivos y Bibliotecas del Ministerio de Cultura and a keynote address by José Ramón Cruz Mundet, the Subdirector General de los Archivos Estatales, the SPA President, Didier Grange, commenced proceedings with his presentation on challenges for associations in today's world. In his paper he highlighted the lack of research in the area of archival associations which he aims to rectify by writing a book on the subject. Didier spoke of the history and background of professional associations with most being established after World War 2. The biggest society is ARMA International with 11,000 members. He estimated that there are approximately 80,000 members of professional records management and archival associations in the world.

Didier described the background to the formation of SPA. At the time of its creation it was felt that non government archives and associations needed stronger representation within ICA and SPA was established to address this gap. However, this decision was questioned by the speaker. He noted that the ICA is heavily subsidised by government archives with non government and professional associations contributing only 1% to the ICA budget, and that this situation that has resulted in a heavy domination by the government sector. Didier suggested that in the future we may need to consider the most efficient way to organise the international archival community. For example in the seventies a Federation of Associations was suggested.

Mark Greene, the current President of Society of American Archivists (SAA) - a one year post - then took the floor and described various effective lobbying activities (public policy advocacy) and activities aimed at shaping public opinion about the role and purpose of archives in general (outreach or public relations) that had been undertaken by the Society in recent times.

Discussion on public policy activities included a reference to SAA's lobbying against a federal court order that appeared to mandate destruction of certain portions of court records related to the detainees at Guantanamo Bay, in contradiction to federal records schedules. Details were also provided about how Allen Weinstein, the Archivist of the United States, challenged the US Vice President's office over improper classification of records – an action which led to a Washington newspaper referring to our noble profession as the 'new macho heroes of society'.

There are three types of outreach or public relations activities undertaken by SAA – assistance for the public; assistance in promoting archives through the media and American Archives Month. It was noted that all lobbying and outreach activities were carried out on a voluntary basis but the Society provides guidance for members, for

example the American Archives Month public relations kit which includes a section outlining 5 easy steps for ensuring media coverage.

The representative of the Association of Mexican Archivists and Records Managers Maria Teresa Donantes spoke about the advocacy and outreach activities they have been involved in with the three bodies of the Federation and also at a local and municipal level. She emphasised their particular focus on the importance of archives as champions of human rights, the fundamental role of the archivist as custodian of collections and the recognition of the work of the professionals who work in the archives. She also mentioned that at present they are preparing a publicity campaign directed at children using a series of little stories whose main protagonist is called 'Archivaldo'.

A roundtable followed focusing on associations and governance, and topics covered included the level of qualifications required for association membership and the relationship between associations and the national archives in various countries. This session also gave each Society a chance to publicise upcoming events as it was widely agreed that self promotion is a problem. During discussions interesting details were exchanged about the world archival scene including information about the situation in Spain where there is no specific archival training available, and in Colombia where every archival institution is required to employ professionally trained archivists.

Peter Lor, the Secretary General of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) gave a fascinating talk about the role of this organisation. IFLA has a permanent headquarters in The Hague and its most important members are nation associations. It has 11 full time staff, 8 Divisions or Coordinating Boards and 45 sections or Standing Committees covering specific themes, and 7 Discussion Groups. These sections work on producing guidelines, standards and publications, as well as delivering training sessions and workshops.

A major message in this presentation was that for an international professional association to remain representative and credible it must be responsive to diverse interests and specializations, and be aware of the international technological, economic and political environment within which members of the profession has to function.

In the afternoon we had an Archives Fair where each association had a table and displayed their wares and websites for people to browse.

The second day began with a roundtable on outreach and associations. It was interesting to hear the various approaches taken by associations around the world. Kim Eberhard noted that the Australian Society of Archivists has an alliance with a humanities/ arts and social science based lobby group which holds regular seminars in the capital to facilitate access to politicians and to teach lobbying skills to members, noting that a number of benefits can be derived from using the skills and knowledge of other professions. To reach records creators the German archivists conduct campaigns specifically directed towards reaching this group. In Canada the Canadian Council on Archives organise 'Archives and You' conferences designed for those who use archives to learn more from archivists.

Training and certification followed next with interesting presentations by Christine Martinez, President of the Association des Archivistes Francais (AFF). Scott Goodine, President of the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA), gave an overview of a training course for archivists in Canada and outlined the Association's professional development program. In the last session Cindy Smolovik, President of the US based Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA), spoke about the Academy's certification process and the personal benefits gained from becoming a Certified Archivist (CA). There are also benefits for associations from the CA program as it is a requirement for maintaining membership in the Academy, and for the privilege of using the CA designation that members must undertake continuing education activities and participate in archival associations.

On the third day Carlos Garcia Alix started proceedings by talking about his experience as a user of archives to support his work as a film Director. He gave a fascinating account of his research for his latest film on the Spanish Civil War.

The next roundtable was on the future of archival associations. It was chaired by SPA Steering Committee member Berndt Fredriksson with participation by delegates from Chile, Japan, Ivory Coast, Romania and Germany. Each representative gave us an overview of their association, current projects and plans for the future. The Japanese Society of Archives Institutions (Zen Shiryo Kyo) aims to trim down its present governance structure so that there will be less administrative work and cost savings. Anne Marie Tche Tche from the Ivory Coast spoke about the struggle experienced by that country's professional association to maintain their existence, and about the importance of the alliance with SPA, which has enabled them to have a archival voice on the world scene. Robert Kretzschmar, from the Association of German Archivists, noted that it was their aim to become the voice of all archivists in their country, and to identify the role of the archivist in society.

The congress provided a marvelous forum for everyone to exchange views and experiences. As well as helping us understand how the situation of associations differs throughout the world, we also saw that we had a lot in common.

The following important topics were raised during the conference:

- It was acknowledged that our associations have both institutions and individual members and that it is important to remember that while they share many interests associations need to be conscious that employers and employees are not the same.
- Certification is a good idea but we must convince employers of the benefits of employing certified archivists.
- In Europe and North America access is not as complicated an issue as in many other countries around the world.
- Lobbying and outreach activities are extremely important for an association to undertake, however, it was recognised that it is not always easy to reach beyond our immediate profession.
- It is essential that we identify our competencies and to undertake this task soon.

As Fred Van Kan reminded us in his summing up – “We have a beautiful profession, a profession that has to do with human rights, with heritage, with modern developments and with keeping alive the old knowledge, of for example of paleography. When we meet people in the street, when we meet people at parties, when we meet people in our institutions, we can tell them – we are archivists, it is a very interesting profession, a profession that helps people like Carlos Garcia Alix to awaken documents that are sleeping in our depositories.” We must never forget the importance of archivists or the value of the professional association.

International Declaration on Archives Project

A resolution was passed at the November 2007 ICA Annual General Meeting held in Quebec directing SPA to prepare a ‘Universal Declaration on Archives’ modeled on the ‘Quebec Declaration on Archives’ developed by the Association des archivists du Quebec. A copy of the Quebec Declaration is located at http://www.archivistes.qc.ca/evenement/declaration/declaration_en.html

A working group has been established to undertake this work with the following members - Didier Grange (SPA/SC President), Diane Baillargeon, Denys Chouinard, Abdelkader Kapadonou, Kim Eberhard and Colleen McEwen.

Archival Solidarity Project

As reported in our last Newsletter the SPA Archival Solidarity project aims to coordinate international community efforts to carry out foreign assistance projects to help developing archival communities. The project is led by Nancy Marrelli and supported by a committee.

Details are being gathered about archival international outreach projects and sources of available funding and a database has been developed to manage this information. If you would like to send information on projects currently being undertake for inclusion in the database or to inquire about the project contact Nancy Marrelli at Nancy_Marrelli@concordia.ca The project website is located at <http://archives3.concordia.ca/Solidarity/default.html>

Competencies Project

A proposal to develop a set of archival competencies was first raised at the 7th European Conference on Archives in 2006, and was again supported at the 2007 ICA Annual General Meeting in Quebec.

In response to the 2006 proposal the SPA/SC developed a paper summarising competency, certification and accreditation programs undertaken by professional associations and institutions throughout the world. We are currently negotiating to have this document made available on the ICA website.

A working group is currently being formed to work on the development of the competencies.

Revision of Category B membership fees

The SPA Steering Committee is concerned that the current ICA fee structure for Category B members (i.e. for professional associations), being based on membership numbers, does not match the ability of many professional association to pay. It is felt that this situation is acting as a deterrent to a number of associations who are interested in joining.

An alternate way of calculating fees would be to base them on the annual budget of an association. The Steering Committee is currently gathering information on membership numbers and budgets to determine the feasibility of this approach and if considered reasonable a proposal to change the fee structure will be submitted to the 2008 SPA Delegates Meeting at Kuala Lumpur.

SPA affiliated associations have been asked to send details about budgets and membership numbers to inform the Steering Committee's investigation. This information should be sent to Christine Martinez at christine.martinez@culture.gouv.fr

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