



**PRESENTATION**  
**ICA Advocacy Expert Group**

**UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON ARCHIVES – A TOOL TO IMPROVE  
UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS**

**(Note this presentation should be read in conjunction with showing  
slides presented in the accompanying Power Point presentation)**

**SLIDE 1**

The 10 November 2011 marked an important day for archives when the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference of UNESCO endorsed the ICA's Universal Declaration on Archives and today we are going to be looking at how we can use the UDA as a tool to improve understanding and awareness about archives.

**SLIDE 2 – PRESENTATION SUMMARY**

This presentation will give an overview about the genesis and origin of the UDA, outline the history of its development, talk about the challenges involved in putting together the document; look at the aims of the UDA; and then go through the text of the document.

It will later outline some of the promotion strategies that have been suggested.

**SLIDE 3 – GENESIS/ORIGINS**

The UDA was inspired by the Quebec Declaration on Archives that was released in 2007. In the same year the Annual General Meeting of the ICA was held in Quebec and the Section of Profession Associations (SPA) was directed, through a resolution at the meeting, to develop a Universal Declaration on Archives along the same lines as the Quebec Declaration.

To undertake the work a multi-lingual, multi-cultural Working Group was established.

**SLIDE 4 – DEVELOPMENT OF THE UDA**

Between 2008 and 2009 the group consulted stakeholders and involved professional associations throughout the world in its development; working with a graphic designer, created a visual identity for the Declaration, and developed a set of promotion ideas for promoting the document.

In November 2009 the Declaration was presented for endorsement at the ICA AGM in Malta. At this meeting the UDA was adopted in principle but more information was requested on the level of compliance required by ICA members, and its legal status. It had also been suggested that the Declaration be developed into one of UNESCO suite of statements and members wanted to know how the Declaration would fit in with the other suite of UNESCO statements.

These matters were resolved over the next year and at the 2010 ICA AGM in Oslo, the Declaration was unanimously adopted.

The UDA was officially adopted by UNESCO on 10 November 2011. This vote was a culmination of intense efforts led by Papa Momar Diop, the UNESCO Ambassador of Senegal and former national archivist of Senegal, supported by Jens Boel, the head archivist at UNESCO; professional associations through the world lobbied their ambassadors.

## **SLIDE 5 – CHALLENGES**

There were a number of challenges worth noting involved in developing the Declaration.

The Working Group had to create a document that could be translated and understood in many languages, in many cultures and was able to be used by countries with varying record keeping traditions.

To span these different approaches, the Working Group strived for the middle ground to address varying political and cultural realities.

The approach was to be succinct, and focus on higher level aspirations guided by the awareness that the primary audience was outside the profession.

## **SLIDE 6 – IMPORTANCE OF UNESCO'S ENDORSEMENT**

In adopting the UDA UNESCO cited it among other powerful statements concerning knowledge and information, including UNESCO's own constitution, which stresses the desire of member states to help 'maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge' as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides that 'everyone has

the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers’.

Together with the principles expressed in the Charter on the Preservation of Digital Heritage and the Memory of the World Programme, the UDA strives to ensure the preservation and universal accessibility of the world’s documentary heritage.

UNESCO encourages member states to be guided by the principles set out in the UDA when planning and implementing future archival strategies and programmes nationally.

## **SLIDE 7 – AIMS OF THE UDA**

The UDA was developed to:

1. secure a global understanding and acceptance of the purpose, value and scope of archives and archivists;
2. promote the role of archives in securing a whole range of human rights, in establishing collective memory and in underpinning accountable and transparent government;
3. explain the uniqueness of archives and why they need to be managed by adequately trained professional archivists;
4. encourage the use of archives , and as a
5. call to action - to seek engagement in archival issues by governments, decision makers and the general public.

## **SLIDE 8 – UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON ARCHIVES – PREAMBLE**

Now we will look in detail at what the UDA actually states:

The Preamble reads:

Archives record decisions, actions and memories. *[This opening line ensures that formal records as well as personal memories are covered by the declaration.]*

Archives are unique and irreplaceable heritage passed from one generation to another. *[In this sentence the essential nature of archives (their uniqueness) is captured, as well as the generational responsibility for caring and preserving them.]*

Archives are managed from creation to preserve their value and meaning. *[This sentence is particularly relevant for electronic records which need to be identified at creation and managed across time.]*

They are authoritative sources of information underpinning accountable and transparent administrative actions. *[Here the text mentions the importance of records to support administrative practices, and outlines an endorsement of their role in supporting accountability and transparency.]*

They play an essential role in the development of societies by safeguarding and contributing to individual and community memory. *[This is an acknowledgement of archives role in confirming and ensuring that the identity of individuals and communities is sustained and secured.]*

Open access to archives enriches our knowledge of human society, promotes democracy, protects citizen's rights and enhances the quality of life. *[The message here is that access to archives underpins basic human rights and entitlements, and provides knowledge about our society that will enrich the quality of life.]*

## **SLIDE 9 – TO THIS EFFECT WE RECOGNIZE .....**

In understanding and accepting the description in the *Preamble*, the Declaration goes on to state recognised 'truths' about archives and archivists and joint responsibilities for their good management.

To this effect we recognize .....

- **the unique quality** of archives as authentic evidence of administrative, cultural and intellectual activities and as a reflection of the evolution of societies;
- **the vital necessity of archives** for supporting business efficiency, accountability and transparency, for protecting citizen's rights, for establishing individual and collective memory, for understanding the past and for documenting the present to guide future actions;
- **the diversity of archives** in recording every area of human activity.

## **SLIDE 10 – TO THIS EFFECT WE RECOGNIZE ....**

- **the multiplicity of formats** in which archives are created including paper, electronic, audio visual and other types;

- **the role of archivists** as trained professionals with initial and continuing education, serving their societies by supporting the creation of records and by selecting, maintaining and making these records available for use;
- **the collective responsibility** of all – citizens, public administrators, and decision-makers, owners or holders of public or private archives and archivists and other information specialists – in the management of archives.

### **SLIDE 11 – WE THEREFORE UNDERTAKE TO WORK TOGETHER IN ORDER THAT ....**

The next part of the Declaration is a call for support and an inspiration for action.

We therefore undertake to work together in order that ....

- appropriate national archival policies and laws are adopted and enforced;
- the management of archives is valued and carried out competently by all bodies, private or public which create and use archives in the course of conducting their business;
- adequate resources are allocated to support the proper management of archives, including the employment of trained professionals;

### **SLIDE 12 – WE THEREFORE UNDERTAKE TO WORK TOGETHER IN ORDER THAT ....**

- archives are managed and preserved in ways that ensure their authenticity, reliability, integrity and useability;
- archives are made accessible to everyone, while respecting the pertinent laws and the rights of individuals, creators, owners and users;
- archives are used to contribute to the promotion of responsible citizenship.

### **SLIDE 13 – PROMOTION & ADVOCACY**

The UDA is intended to be used to:

- explain archives and their relevance (i.e. for **promotion**)
- to encourage proactive decision making about archives (i.e. for **advocacy**)

The Declaration *raises awareness of the importance of records and archives, especially for good governance* by –

- providing a statement to assist in the persuasion of key decision makers that archives matter for good governance, administrative transparency and democratic accountability;
- underlying the strategic importance of archives for administrative efficiency;
- providing an overview of the key requirements for good archival management which could be used by records managers and archivists to build a case for increasing their resource allocation, improving facilities and increasing staff, and
- improving public knowledge and interest in archives in ensuring the capture and preservation of individual and corporate memory and in supporting democratic rights.

The UDA can be used equally well by:

- archival institutions
- collecting archives institutions
- professional archives and records management associations
- individuals
- and in the workplace.

Because the UDA is aspirational it cuts across ‘boundaries’

- between individual members of the profession and the institutions they work for
- between institutions and government
- between associations
- between languages
- between cultures

It also cuts across boundaries with other record workers and those interested in archives but not working in the profession.

## **SLIDE 14 – UDA IN PRINT**

A graphic image has been developed for the Declaration which can be downloaded in English, French and several additional languages from the ICA website. The image can be printed as a poster, incorporated into publications or placed on a website.

## **SLIDE 15 – TEXT VERSIONS OF VARIOUS LANGUAGES & SCRIPTS**

The Declaration has been translated into many languages; however if your language is not available from the ICA website and if you would like to translate it into your language, you can do so and have the text version placed on the ICA website. With regard to translations, the ICA usually likes them to be endorsed by the local archival institution and they should be sent to the ICA when completed to be placed on the website.

If you wish to show your support for the UDA, you can go to the online register on the ICA website. This register can be signed by individuals and/ or people representing institutions. You can also add supporting comments.

## **SLIDE 16 – IDEAS FOR PROMOTING THE UDA IN YOUR REGION**

Work has been done to identify a number of strategies that could be used to promote the UDA.

The promotion strategies are aimed at:

- establishing awareness of the UDA amongst ICA members
- promoting adoption of the UDA by the wider public
- raising awareness about archives
- ensuring acceptance of the importance of archives to individuals and society
- understanding about the nature of archives and their particular management
- encouraging the use of archives.

Promotion strategies include:

- Seek active engagement by governments, archival institutions and individuals by using the UDA to open discussions about the role and relevance of archives. This might take the form of an official signing ceremony publicizing the endorsement of the UDA. For example the UDA was recently endorsed by the Catalan Parliament (in Spain).
- Develop a web presence for the UDA on your organization's website
- Use your Facebook page, or the Facebook page of your organization to promote the Declaration. Send a Tweet!!
- Sign the online register and encourage others to do so

## **SLIDE 17 – IDEAS FOR PROMOTING THE UDA IN YOUR REGION**

- Develop brochures, banners etc. using the UDA design; produce a range of merchandise, e.g. T-shirts, mouse pads, laptop cases, mugs featuring the UDA
- Develop an e-postcard featuring the design and attach the design to email footers
- Photograph people holding the UDA in front of significant landmarks and use in a promotion campaign
- Speak about the UDA at conferences and meetings

### **SLIDE 18 – IDEAS FOR PROMOTING THE UDA IN YOUR REGION**

- Promote through other professional and cultural networks (e.g. local history groups); publicize the UDA in broadcast and print media (radio interviews could be linked to association/organization websites)
- Encourage educators to incorporate the UDA into curriculums and run UDA competitions for all levels of students/university, secondary, primary
- Use in International Archives Day promotion activities on 9 June each year

Promotion of the UDA should be a constant process of dissemination, explanation, understanding, and encouragement of values that we defend as professionals.

### **SLIDE 19 – WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE YOUR REGION?**

What do you think can be done in your region to promote the UDA?