

ICA Secretariat: Activity Report for 2014

Summary

With the absence of the communications projects manager on maternity leave since the end of March, Secretariat staff (based in the Paris office and externally) have risen well to the latest challenge of keeping ICA functioning with quite limited resources. This year the emphasis so far has been on keeping essential operations running as smoothly as possible. It is worth pointing out that the unpaid voluntary effort provided by colleagues in the extended Secretariat amounts to at least one full-time staff member. The Archives of France (SIAF) continues to offer crucial support to the Secretariat by making available entirely free office accommodation in the centre of Paris, as well as a subvention of 50,000 € to finance professional programme activities in the French-speaking world.

Partnerships

UNESCO: The major development this year has been the launching of a consultation on a proposed Recommendation on the Documentary Heritage. If approved by the General Conference in 2015, the Recommendation would have the status of a 'soft law' and would require Member States to report on measures being taken in their countries to implement the Recommendation. The Secretary General participated in an experts' meeting in Warsaw in June, as a result of which substantial modifications were made to the draft Recommendation prepared by UNESCO staff.

The UNESCO Memory of the World programme continues to flourish. In order to take account of the increased interest in the International Register (on which are inscribed documents of worldwide significance), the membership of the Register Sub-Committee has been increased, but ICA has retained its right to nominate an expert. Danièle Neirinck has now stepped down and made way for Frédérique Bazzoni (a senior archivist at the French Ministry of Defence), who has already done considerable work on the current batch of applications, in consultation with her distinguished predecessor and the Secretary General.

The two modules on digital preservation training, commissioned by UNESCO in 2013 and developed with IRMT as our delivery partner, were duly completed and outstanding payments made. The process of disseminating the modules, which have a focus on Africa and the Caribbean, will be launched at one of the workshops taking place here this week.

World Bank: It has been agreed that ICA and World Bank staff will redouble their efforts to exchange information of mutual interest on a regular basis. At the present time early work is being done on a proposal which could possibly lead to a benchmarking survey of national archives and other institutions, in order to assess their state of readiness to cope with the demands of information management.

Outreach/Representation

At the beginning of May the Secretary General visited the national archives of the Czech Republic and the major regional archives centre in Trebon, with a view to cementing the good relationship which has existed between the Czech Republic and the ICA for many years. In June, at the invitation of the Supreme Court of Mexico, he attended the annual conference of judicial archivists

in Mexico City, as a result of which it is intended in due course to establish a suitable structure for professional discourse on judicial archives in ICA. He and DSG Margaret Crockett gave a presentation at the Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting in Washington in August, which achieved a healthy attendance of about 70 delegates. They also took the opportunity to visit the World Bank (see above) and to have an interview with the Archivist of the United States. He plans to participate in the annual meeting of the International Institute of Archival Science in Trieste, Italy, which is a quite invaluable network of countries in central and east Europe; to attend the conference organized by the Section on Architectural Records in Granada, Spain, in November; and to take part in the CARBICA Conference in Martinique in early December. In 2015 he and other Secretariat staff are especially keen to visit parts of the ICA network outside Europe, budgetary constraints permitting.

International Committee of the Blue Shield: The Secretary General continues to serve on ICBS, which monitors situations where archives are threatened by armed conflict or natural disaster, with his counterparts on IFLA, ICOM and ICOMOS.

Coordinating Council of Audiovisual Archival Associations: Joan Boadas (City of Girona) continues to represent ICA, and to provide content for the International Day celebrating the Audiovisual Heritage (27 October).

Communications and Publications

Publications: The Secretariat continues to produce two issues per annum of the bulletin Flash, now concentrating on feature articles rather than immediate news items, which are instead posted on the website. A proposal that Flash should be published online only is currently under active consideration. The journal Comma (two issues a year) continues to be published to a high standard. In addition, we have inaugurated with Liverpool University Press a new special series of ICA publications. The first volume, based on the proceedings of a conference organized by the Section on Business Archives, has now been published as *Crisis, Credibility and Corporate Identity* and is available to ICA members at a substantial discount

Website: The long-awaited improvement of the ICA website will start next month, with the transfer of all data and functionalities to a new site based on open source software by the spring of 2015. The second phase of the redevelopment, including a more user-friendly interface and a design that is suited for mobile applications, will take place later next year.

Looking Ahead to 2015

It is intended to recruit a marketing and communications specialist in the Secretariat by the end of the calendar year, with a view to sharpening internal and external communications in 2015 and also to generating a modest revenue stream. The Secretariat will be restructured to enable it to offer greater support to the professional programme. Current administrative processes will be fundamentally reviewed and simplified wherever possible, with the intention of phasing out antiquated paper-based systems. The Secretariat will also embrace the new technologies that offer opportunities for productive ICA meetings online, thereby reducing travel expenses. Finally, the Secretariat intends to create opportunities for internships and secondments that are attractive career development opportunities for ICA members and will increase the Secretariat's capacity.