



international council on archives  
conseil international des archives

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# THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON ARCHIVES IN THE INFORMATION AGE

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## WHAT IS ICA?

The International Council on Archives is the international Non-Governmental Organisation that represents archive institutions and professionals on the world stage. It advocates the importance of effective archives management in modern society. It develops a range of products and services enabling archivists worldwide to find solutions to common problems.



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## ICA - Introduction

- First International Congress of archivists took place in Brussels in 1910
- Foundation of the United Nations system in 1945
- ICA founded as an international NGO at UNESCO on 9 June 1948
- 1,400 institutional and individual members
- Based in 195 countries or territories
- Funded largely by membership dues but also secures grants for specific projects
- Since 2004 an Association under French law
- Works in partnership with sister NGOs for libraries, museums, and monuments



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## ICA – Global Network

- Annual General Meeting of voting members is the sovereign body that takes final decisions
- Executive Board: led by elected President and Vice-Presidents
- National Archivists have played a strong role in ICA's development and remain very influential today
- 13 Regional Branches spanning the entire globe, including EURBICA
- Over 80 Professional Associations: cross-cutting initiatives such as Code of Ethics
- 13 Specialist Sections working on subjects of common professional interest: a source of expertise
- Project Teams and Working Groups of volunteers
- Secretariat: 5 full-time staff in Paris plus volunteers

## ICA – Main Successes

- Has provided a forum for discussion across political divides – especially important during the Cold War
- Has produced many important publications with UNESCO – example of RAMP studies – and continues its own publications programme
- Plays a leading role in the development of professional standards: ISAD-G for archival description and ICA-Req for electronic records
- Has stimulated the provision of professional training in areas where structures are lacking
- Has organized annual conferences (CITRA) and major Congresses every four years



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## ICA's Continuing Strengths

- ICA covers records and archives management in its entirety – from records created electronically to historical archives on traditional media
- ICA has an official status with UNESCO and links with many other NGOs
- ICA strongly believes in international co-operation, linguistic and cultural diversity
- ICA has a worldwide network of committed volunteers

## The challenge of Globalisation

- Better transport and communications: one global market place for information
- Rapid growth of population in many parts of the world may lead to increased instability
- Increasing scarcity of resources means that armed conflicts between nations and civil unrest with societies more likely – archives are at risk
- Climate change brings about more frequent natural disasters, in which archives are very vulnerable

## Advances in Technology

- Advent of the internet, digital records, e-mails, text messages
- Huge and rapid growth in the amount of records created in electronic form
- Need to manage, review and appraise records of continuing use and long-term historical value
- Challenge of preserving records on media that rapidly deteriorate

## Social Trends

- Public appetite for information, for example family history sources
- Demand for swifter, easier access to information online
- Archivists have to respond to these demands or risk being marginalized
- Need to bridge the ‘digital divide’ within and between societies

## Political Developments

- World Bank and IMF have a major impact on developing countries
- Increasing power of regional organizations (EU, ASEAN, Mercosur)
- In western countries many people are joining civil society organizations
- In developing countries there is an emphasis on nation building

## Review of ICA Performance 2006-2008

- Many successful initiatives but overall impact on profession and society not clear
- Need for better co-ordination and use of scarce resources
- Some national archives seek a better 'return on investment' for their dues
- Demand for more material in languages other than English or French
- Need to do more for developing countries and to be less 'Eurocentric'

## ICA's Commitment to modernise - 1

- Introduce more elected posts and a shorter governance cycle (two years)
- Increase membership and give more members a greater say in the running of the organisation
- Identify new sources of revenue and reduce dependence on dues of a few members
- Enable members to communicate with each other via new website
- Create more opportunities for younger colleagues to participate in ICA

## ICA's Commitment to modernise - 2

- Produce a modernised vision and strategy and then implement it
- Develop a vigorous professional programme, with products that are relevant to today's professionals
- Improve internal communications within ICA and external marketing and promotion
- Advocate the cause of archives more forcefully with large international organisations



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## The Vision for ICA

ICA aspires to convince key decision-makers and the general public that effective archives management is an essential precondition for good governance, the rule of law, administrative transparency, the preservation of mankind's collective memory and access to information by citizens.



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## Mission

- ICA promotes the central role of record-keeping and archives in protecting the rights of individuals and states, and in supporting democracy and good governance.
- ICA strives to build a better understanding across societies through fostering international cooperation, while respecting linguistic and cultural diversity.

## Strategic Directions and Professional Programme

- Six strategic objectives for the next ten years were agreed at AGM in 2008
- The strategy marks a decisive shift away from an exclusive concentration on historical archives
- Archives are relevant to society as a whole and archivists need to be able to articulate this better
- ICA needs to organise its affairs in a more business-like manner
- Strategy is implemented by a rolling business plan to which all ICA bodies contribute
- ICA has now a flourishing programme of over 50 projects

## Strategic Objective 1: To Raise Awareness of the Importance of Archives

- Make key decision-makers aware that archives matter for good governance and accountability
- Underline the importance of archives as an information asset for public administration and business enterprises
- Persuade the public that if archives are not preserved, there will be a loss of collective memory
- Encourage the wider public to be more aware of archives and to use them

## Strategic Objective 2: To Respond to the Challenge of New Technologies

- Support efforts to manage enormous quantity of electronic data
- Enable archivists to have an increased influence on simplifying administrative processes: e-government
- Help archivists to identify solutions to the problem of long-term digital preservation
- Exploit opportunities to make archives available on the Internet to larger audiences
- Address the issues relating to the intellectual property of material made available over the Internet

## Strategic Objective 3: To Develop Capacity in the Archives Profession

- Produce best practices/standards on legal matters, records management, principles of access appraisal, preservation, archive buildings public services
- Stimulate education and training opportunities, especially in countries where these are few, through workshops and online resources
- Develop a range of publications online and in hard copy
- Facilitate exchanges between archivists working in different languages through an online terminology dictionary
- Support colleagues in the developing world through the Fund for International Archival Development (FIDA)

## ICA – Organisational Objectives

### ▪ **Objective 4: To strengthen the ICA network**

-New ICA website was launched as a major communications tool in December 2010

-But still a need to strengthen ICA's presence in many parts of the world, including Latin America, Africa and parts of Asia.

### ▪ **Objective 5: To improve ICA's performance**

-Independent Audit Commission makes recommendations for improvement and greater efficiency

### ▪ **Objective 6: To build on existing partnerships and build new ones**

-Influence the direction of UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme

-Develop links with the World Bank, so that it emphasises the importance of effective records management in all its programmes

## Universal Declaration on Archives (UDA)

- A powerful succinct statement about the importance of archives in modern societies
- Initially developed by Section on Professional Associations (SPA)
- Adopted at ICA AGM in Oslo, September 2010
- Approved at the UNESCO General Conference, 10 November 2011
- Translated into twenty languages

## UDA - 1

- Archives record decisions, actions and memories. Archives are a unique and irreplaceable heritage passed from one generation to another. Archives are managed from creation to preserve their value and meaning. They are authoritative sources of information underpinning accountable and transparent administrative actions.



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## UDA - 2

■ Archives play an essential role in the development of societies by safeguarding and contributing to individual and community memory.

Open access to archives enriches our knowledge of human society, promotes democracy, protects citizens' rights and enhances the quality of life.

## ICA – Latest developments

- CITRA replaced with Annual Conferences open to all
- Reform of the constitution and possible extension of the right to vote
- Reform of the membership dues system
- New strategic priority to enhance the role of the archivist in the Information Society
- Partnership with World Bank to promote archives management in developing countries



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## *Challenges for Archives in the Information Society*

- Need to manage the huge quantity of electronic Records and create appropriate metadata
- Appraisal needs to be carried out at an early stage
- Find solutions for the permanent preservation of electronic records
- Need to make electronic records and digitized copies of records created on other media available online
- Preservation of archives threatened by natural disasters and armed conflicts

## A Virtuous Circle?

- Increased membership and sharper communications give ICA more influence
- Major funders adopt policies in line with ICA's own priorities
- ICA builds reputation for timely delivery of products and attracts more funding
- Based on this success, more archivists wish to join ICA
- More high flyers in the profession seek leadership positions in ICA
- ICA achieves a higher profile for the benefit of archive professionals and the archives themselves



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