

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
May 16-17, 2017  
Chicago, Illinois**

**Report: Representative to the International Council on Archives  
Section of Professional Associations (SPA)  
(Prepared by Becky Haglund Tousey, CA)**

The International Council on Archives' (ICA) Section of Professional Associations (SPA) Steering Committee met in Oslo, Norway on April 23-26, 2017. I attended as a representative of both the Academy of Certified Archivists and the Society of American Archivists.

**SPA MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

Other SPA steering committee members present in Oslo were from professional associations in Norway, China, Chile, Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Israel, France and Spain (Catalonia). The SPA members from Switzerland and Senegal were not present.

This was the first in-person meeting of the 2016-2020 term SPA steering committee. Twelve people serve on SPA this term and six of the twelve are new to SPA. So we spent our first day together getting to know one another and talking about how best to work productively as a virtual team. At the Seoul, Korea SPA meeting in October 2016, Vilde Ronge of Norway was elected as the new SPA chair. I was elected vice-chair. The National Archives of Norway and the Norwegian Association of Archivists and Records Managers very generously hosted this SPA meeting.

The chair typically opens the meeting with a report on recent activities of the ICA Executive Board (EB) and Program Commission (PComm). But those ICA governance bodies are meeting in May in Tanzania. So Vilde will send a report to the steering committee after she returns from the meetings.

David Leitch, ICA Secretary General, will announce his retirement later this year and ICA will conduct a search for his successor. Being based in Paris, the job requires some fluency in both French and English and strong diplomatic and political skills. Confidentially, David (who is from the UK) has shared his frustration to me about working within ICA's difficult French-based governance structure. But during his tenure David has helped ICA transition from a very conservative and un-transparent organization dominated by the large institutional members (first world country national archives) to one that is more democratic, open to individual members and financially more transparent. ICA meetings have changed from primarily governance-related to more programmatic and inclusive.

One full day of our 4-day meeting was spent dealing with administrative matters, planning for SPA activities at the ICA annual meeting in Mexico City, and giving the new SPA members background on recent past and current activities.

**SPA Budget:** Each ICA section's allotted budget for 2017 is €1666. These funds are typically spent on translation services to publish SPA governance documents and member communications (such as the newsletter) in English, French and Spanish.

**SPA Membership:** Currently 74 professional associations (ICA category B members) make up the full section membership. This number is pretty stable from year to year.

### **SPA Projects and Strategic Objectives:**

- **SPA 2018 Film Festival:** After the success of the inaugural SPA Film Festival at the 2016 Seoul Congress, SPA plans to hold a bigger and better festival at the 2018 ICA annual meeting. A large portion of our SPA meeting time in Mexico City will be spent planning for the 2018 film festival.
- **Elevator Speech Workshop @ ICA2017 in Mexico City:** The 2017 ICA annual meeting program committee approved a SPA workshop proposal for creating an Elevator Speech. It will be a practical hands-on half-day workshop conducted by SPA steering committee members and is based on a shorter program session we held on this topic at the Iceland ICA annual meeting in 2015.
- **ICA Africa Strategy:** Unfortunately the one African SPA member (from Senegal) was not able to attend the meeting in Oslo because of visa delays. The Senegal member plans to attend the Mexico City meeting so we anticipate getting his input on this topic during that meeting. The China member on SPA – who has been involved in ICA for a number of years – said that African countries need two things: 1) for ICA leadership go to their government officials to advocate for archives, and 2) help in the training of archivists. Can SPA find a way to take training materials or adapt curricula from other country associations and bring them to the African associations who need these materials? This was one of many questions we discussed during our action-plan day.
- **Engagement and Communications with Member Associations:** Significant time was spent discussing how to engage member associations in the programs and activities of ICA. We recognize that language is a key barrier to communication with 74 different associations. This is especially true of countries where neither English nor French are the native language. SPA pushes out communications several times a year to each association's designated contact. But very little information flows back to ICA or SPA from those member associations, except for those countries that have a representative on the SPA steering committee. We discussed questions such as: Is there an interest in international issues among country associations? How should SPA push information about international issues to member associations? How can SPA "pull" information more easily from member associations about their local activities? Are ICA and SPA goals and activities well known in most country associations? One strategy is to enlarge the size of the SPA steering committee. That is possible. But how many country associations have

the resources to send a representative to two meetings per year? And PComm special project funds do not cover travel costs for governance meetings.

- **International Archives Day:** In 2016 ICA began integrating its marketing and communication efforts around International Archives Day (June 9) and its fall annual meeting program. Previously the two events had separate unrelated themes. In the same way that SAA engages archival institutions across the country in celebrating American Archives Month, ICA is trying to engage as many country associations as possible in creating their own programs and social media campaigns around a global theme. One challenge is that several countries, in addition to the US, have Archives awareness/advocacy programs at different times of the year. But ICA is asking SPA to do what we can to promote IAD among our country associations.

<http://www.ica.org/en/message-from-david-fricker-for-the-international-archives-day-2017>

**Skype conference call with ICA secretariat staff:** We spent an hour on a video conference call with David Leitch and two of his staff, Marianne Deraze, website and electronic publications officer, and Christine Trembleau, marketing and communications manager. David updated us on plans for the Mexico City annual meeting. Governance meetings (November 25-26) and the program (November 27-29) will be held at two different venues, so providing transportation to attendees will be a challenge. The 2018 annual meeting will likely be in a French-speaking African country and that location should be announced before the meeting in Mexico City. With Marianne we asked questions about the new ICA website, specifically the section's sub-site and possible social media channels. We were told that SPA could set up a Facebook page and probably a blog. But a SPA Twitter feed is not possible at this time. With Christine we discussed the importance of getting her assistance in arranging for the Film Festival awards ceremony and screening of the winning entries at the 2018 annual meeting. She will try to give us 30-45 minutes during one of the plenary sessions.

**Creating a SPA Action Plan for 2017-2020:** One full day of our meeting was spent working on an action plan for the next 3 ½ years. Vilde communicated to the group the importance of identifying realistic and achievable goals and deliverables. We spent time brainstorming and discussing a wide range of possible projects and goals. We reviewed past and current projects (like the film festival) and some brand new ideas. Late in the day we still had quite a long list of possible action items. In my opinion many items on the list were nice ideas but not realistic given the budget and time limitations of a volunteer steering committee which only meets twice a year. The "wish list" of ideas will be narrowed down by the group via email over the next couple of months. So I should be able to share the plan as part of my report after the Mexico City annual meeting.

The final day of our meeting was spent with two groups: 1) archives students and professors at Oslo University's Department of Archivistics, Library and Information Science, and 2) representatives of the Norwegian Association of Archivists and Records Managers.

- The meeting with students was enjoyable and informative. Their library program dates back to 1940. A 1-year archives certificate program began in 2003 and a 3-year

bachelor's degree program began in 2013. Norway – like most European countries – does not see records management and archives as distinct professions. Their 1-year program and their 3-year curriculum focus on what we call records management with a small component on historical archives. They explained their focus on records management is because if institutions do not have a strong RM foundation, there will be nothing in the historical archive. And their program emphasizes digital records almost exclusively, with little attention paid to physical or analog records and their preservation/conservation. The professors told us, “Recommendations exist about conservation and preservation requirements. But few institutions have conservation/preservation positions.” They admitted this lack of expertise was becoming a problem since most institutions in Norway still have paper and analog records in need of preservation and conservation. A practicum is not a required part of the archives curriculum. The students were very vocal about wanting to get practical experience during their program, but the professors said they had difficulty finding institutions willing to host practicum projects or internships. Currently many librarians are hired for “record keeping” jobs. The bachelor's degree in Archives is so new that it will take a number of years before it is a recognized or required credential in hiring for records/archives jobs. We told the students about ICA's New Professionals program and they were very interested. The Norwegian archives association does not currently have a student member category or a student registration rate at its meetings. But when I mentioned SAA's practice in this area, the students were very supportive of this idea. I asked the Norwegian association board members about this when we met with them later in the day.

- After lunch we met with board members of the association of Norwegian records managers and archivists – Norsk Arkivråd. We heard presentations from the head of records management at the Norwegian Bank (a government department) and the head of the Oslo City Archives. Norway has strong legislation supporting archives and records management and Freedom of Information. There is an expectation among citizens that they should have access (electronic access) to all government records. The association has more institutional members than individual members. They provide training workshops to their members and fund research and publications on relevant topics. They have been discussing the idea of adding a student member category to their association.

#### **FUTURE ICA & SPA MEETINGS:**

- 2017 – ICA annual meeting in Mexico City, November 25-29
- 2018 – Spring SPA meeting probably in Berlin, Germany
- 2018 – ICA annual meeting probably in a French-speaking Africa country
- 2019 – Spring SPA meeting probably in Santiago, Chile

#### **FOR SAA COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

- International Archives Day (IAD): Is there some way(s) that SAA would like to become more involved in IAD? Is this something the International Archival Affairs Section would like to take on?
- What sector(s) within SAA might be interested in partnering with an archives association in one of the English-speaking African countries for the purpose of assisting in their training/professional development efforts?