

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
August 12 – 13, 2013
New Orleans, Louisiana**

**Statement of Support Regarding SAA Membership and
Involvement in the International Council on Archives
(Prepared by Nancy Beaumont)**

BACKGROUND

By virtue of providing funding each year for (at least) the past 10 years, the SAA Council has recognized the value of SAA being a member of the International Council on Archives and of having a representative serve on the ICA Section on Professional Associations steering committee.

In the context of 1) discussing a replacement for Trudy Huskamp Peterson (the long-time representative of both SAA and the Academy of Certified Archivists to ICA and ICA SPA, who resigned effective August 2012) and 2) determining the extent to which international issues should be included in SAA's Strategic Plan 2013-2018, the Council asked to be briefed by Peterson to gain a better understanding of ICA's role and SAA's history within the organization. Peterson briefed the Council via conference call on July 17, 2013.

Following that conference call, I was asked by SAA President Jackie Dooley and Vice President/President-Elect Danna Bell-Russel to prepare an action item for the Council's consideration to affirm the Council's interest in continued engagement with ICA.

The current draft Actions associated with the Strategic Plan do not include explicit mention of ICA or ICA SPA.

DISCUSSION

Peterson provided the Council with many interesting points of information during the July 17 conference call, some extracted from Didier Grange's "Background Material for a History of SPA."¹ For example:

- ICA was founded in 1948 as a direct result of a resolution at the first General Conference of UNESCO in 1946 to encourage archivists to create an international organization. ICA is the archival world's representative ("formal associate") to UNESCO.

¹ <http://www.ica.org/5128/resources/history-of-spa.html>

- Nine associations, including the Society of American Archivists, became members of ICA in 1950. Decolonization, which brought a proliferation of nations into ICA, and the rise of regional branches led to restructuring of ICA in the 1970s. At that time, writes Grange, “Some associations questioned the fact that the ICA dealt almost exclusively with government archives whereas members were interested in giving more prominence to non-government archives.” In 1976, at a special meeting of ICA held in Washington, the Section of Professional Associations (SPA) was created, with the president of the German association as the president and Ann Morgan Campbell of SAA as the secretary. (At that time a decision was made also to authorize creation of “sections” devoted to a particular type of institution, which has led to the creation of sections for university archives, archives of business and labor, international organizations, sports, and so forth.) Articles of the Section established a Steering Committee and an Assembly of Delegates to be held each year during the ICA annual meeting. Beginning in 1990, the SPA president had a seat on the Executive Committee of ICA.

Peterson expressed to the Council her belief that SAA’s involvement with the Section on Professional Associations within ICA is particularly important. She noted the following:

- SPA initiated “International Archives Week” in 1979, now a routine commemoration during the week of June 12, honoring the founding of ICA. It started a news journal, *Janus*, which by 1990 had become the main means of communication for ICA committees and sections. It ultimately was merged with the official ICA journal, becoming today’s *Comma*. SPA organized sessions at the ICA annual meetings and quadrennial congresses. It wrote guidelines to assist new archival associations on topics from lobbying to voting procedures, which have now been collected as the SPA handbook for associations posted in English, French, and Spanish on the SPA page of the ICA website (<http://www.ica.org/13300/news-events/the-spa-manual.html>). It held conferences, mostly in conjunction with conferences of the European region of ICA.
- Perhaps the two most important contributions of SPA, according to Peterson, are the International Code of Ethics and the Universal Declaration on Archives. The Section worked on the creation of the Code of Ethics from 1989 to 1996 in response to a demand from professional archivists to have a document that could be used when pressured by forces outside the archives to act in a way that is incompatible with professional standards. It was through the final negotiation between the presidents of SPA and ICA that a draft was agreed upon and finally adopted by ICA as a whole. This important document would not have been created were it not for the action of the members of SPA. The Universal Declaration on Archives had its genesis in a Quebec Declaration on Archives that was developed by the archival association in Quebec. The Declaration was featured at the ICA annual meeting in Quebec in 2007. Impressed by the Quebec document, the ICA leadership asked SPA and a small committee of association members to draft a universal version. This was finally approved by ICA in 2010 and adopted by UNESCO in 2011.
- The formal leadership of ICA traditionally has been the national archivists. Early in the life of ICA, the direction came principally from Western Europe and North America, and the national archivists were generally professional archivists. This has changed in the past dozen years, as the national archivists from Europe and North America often are no longer archivists. As a result, the voice for the profession in the ICA now comes from the SPA members and the other section leaders who are archivists and who have a vested interest in the professional activities of ICA. The SPA president currently sits on the Programme Commission which decides on the professional program of ICA, and the immediate past president of SPA is the vice president in charge of the Programme Commission.

- All the associations that are members of ICA are automatically members of SPA. Currently that totals approximately 80 members. Representatives of these associations meet once a year, usually only for a couple of hours, at the Annual General Meeting.
- The programmatic work of SPA is done by a Steering Committee of 7 or more members; associations volunteer to be members of the Committee, and there is no upper limit to the number who can belong. SAA has always been a member of the Steering Committee. The Committee meets twice a year: one meeting, usually of three days, in the spring at which the work program for the year is set, discussed and reviewed; and a brief meeting, usually half a day, during the ICA annual meeting. SPA's governing Articles say that the costs of the representatives to SPA are paid by the association, but in fact associations have sometimes paid all and sometimes paid none of the costs. Similarly some Committee members are able to attend both yearly meetings and some attend only the spring meeting.
- Each Steering Committee decides on the work program for the four year period between ICA Congresses. For the current work program, see <http://www.ica.org/763/activities-projects/activities-projects.html> One initiative, for example, is to draft a set of principles on the role of archivists for handling materials that can be used to protect or defend human rights. SPA takes a position on matters that will come before the Executive Board and before the AGM; it sends out a newsletter three times a year which gives information on the work it is doing and the position it is taking. SPA will also take positions and send out letters on behalf of professional associations in member countries, as requested; these can be taken without needing to go to the ICA as a whole (see, for example, the resolution voted by the Committee at its April meeting <http://www.ica.org/14318/news-events/spa-news-april-2013.html>).
- The spring meeting of the SPA steering committee is hosted by one of the associations of the steering committee members. Each steering committee member pays for his or her transportation and hotel; the host usually pays for most meals.
- Because the official languages of ICA are French and English, native speakers are important for the work of taking minutes, writing newsletter articles, drafting papers, and translating or smoothing translations. It is essential that the steering committee always has one or more of the native speakers available for such work, and U.S. representatives have always played an important part in this. The language in the steering committee meetings is usually English, but by tradition all formal documents are produced in English, French and Spanish.

Given this background about the International Council on Archives and its Section on Professional Associations, it appears that the organization has significant influence on the global archival profession and thus is an important partner for SAA in accomplishing its goals on behalf of archivists and archives.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the SAA Council affirm its support for the International Council on Archives in light of that organization's role in enabling SAA and American archivists to expand their professional knowledge to keep pace with an increasingly diverse archival record (Strategic Plan 2013 – 2018, Goal 3).

Support Statement: Based on information collected from the field, the SAA Council believes that membership in and active engagement with the International Council on Archives will serve

to further SAA's Goal 3 (Advancing the Field: Professional knowledge expands to keep pace with an increasingly diverse archival record), Strategy 3.3 (Participate actively in relevant partnerships and collaborations to enhance professional knowledge). In addition, ICA membership addresses an important Key Performance Indicator related to Goal 3: SAA participates in national and international collaborations in which representation of the American archival perspective is considered vital.

Impact on Strategic Goals: Supports Goal 3 – Advancing the Field: Professional knowledge expands to keep pace with an increasingly diverse archival record, Strategy 3.1. – Identify the need for new standards, guidelines, and best practices and lead or participate in their development, and Strategy 3.3. – Participate actively in relevant partnerships and collaborations to enhance professional knowledge.

Fiscal Impact: Membership in the International Council on Archives currently costs 600 Euros (approximately \$780) per year. In addition, support for a representative to ICA carries with it travel costs for attending up to two ICA meetings per year (shared at 50% with the ACA); in FY 2013 the cost was \$3,000. The FY 2014 budget includes travel to the ICA Congress in Brussels in November 2013 and to the ICA SPA meeting in Girona, Spain, in April 2014.