

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
December 3-5, 2019
Chicago, Illinois**

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

The International Council on Archives (ICA) 2019 annual meeting was held in Adelaide, Australia, October 19-24, 2019. I attended as a representative of both the Society of American Archivists and the Academy of Certified Archivists. Governance meetings were held October 19-20. The Section on Professional Associations (SPA) chair represents SPA at Executive Board (EB) meetings. I attended the EB meeting this year, on behalf of the Section on Business Archives (SBA) chair, as the chair was unable to attend.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Strategic Planning: Secretary General Anthea Seles reported on the strategic review process that included surveys, focus groups, and 1-on-1 interviews. Anthea said feedback was often contradictory. But some general themes were: Be more “needs based”; be more transparent about decision-making, finances; make it easier to participate; and be more influential on professional issues. The wider findings will be presented to the membership and final approval of the new Strategic Plan will take place at the 2020 Congress in Abu Dhabi.

Finances: The finance report shows that ICA is still drawing from its reserves to meet expenses and must remain vigilant to keep expenses down. Annual meetings over the past 4 years have not generated revenue and several have lost money. Essentially all of ICA’s budget comes from membership dues and this is not sustainable long term. However, the expected revenue stream from the 2020 Congress in Abu Dhabi should help replenish the reserve funds.

Membership Development: Category C is growing, in large part because institutions are joining ICA to be part of the new Section on Archives and Human Rights. Category D is also growing. Category A and B are stable. ICA has 1,343 members across 4 categories:

A: National Archives institutions = 155 B: Professional Associations = 63
C: Institutions = 568 D: Individuals = 557

Some additional statistics...

% of overall membership number	% budget contribution
Category A – 7%	Category A – 82%
Category B – 4%	Category B – 2%
Category C – 35%	Category C – 14%
Category D – 52%	Category D – 3 %

Number of members in Category B associations	
Less than 500 members	63%
500 to 1000 members	25%
1000 to 2000 members	4%
More than 2000 members	8%

New Section: The EB approved the formation of the Section for Archives and Human Rights. It was formerly a working group with restricted membership. Due to widespread interest it is now a Section and open to all category C or D members.

Future meetings: The National Archives of Italy submitted a successful bid for the 2021 annual conference. But Anthea Seles asked the EB to postpone this meeting until 2022, to give staff the time and resources to make operational and technical improvements that have been needed for many years. Governance meetings as well as branch and sections meetings would still occur during 2021, but there would be no annual conference. This request was approved by the EB and relates to one of the constitutional proposals mentioned later in this report.

Plans for the 2020 Congress in Abu Dhabi are well underway. A call for proposals went out recently and the Congress website is up. The Theme is “Enabling Knowledge Societies.” Dr. Abdulla, head of the Abu Dhabi National Archives, gave several “pitches” during the meeting to encourage attendance. The UAE government is paying for all conference facilities, airport transfers, receptions, cultural and repository tours, and excursions, including trips to the World Expo 2020 in Dubai. Governance meetings will be held November 16-17; the Congress will be held November 18-20.

DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

As the vice chair of SPA, I was invited to participate in an invitation-only “workshop” after the EB meeting to discuss the proposed constitutional changes. Attendees consisted of the EB (which includes section and branch chairs) plus a few other invited guests. An outside facilitator helped keep the discussions on track. A 3-page “Briefing Note” describing the proposed changes had been distributed before the meeting. Anthea admitted the document was not well written and was a compilation of input from many different people. It was described as a “lesson in provocation.” However, some recommendations received positive consensus:

- Give Category D members the right to vote;
- Create a Forum of Professional Associations (*see more details below*);

- Remove the requirement that internal regulations be approved by the General Assembly and transfer that responsibility to the EB, and remove procedural elements of the constitution and move them to Internal Regulations; and
- Change the frequency of meetings from annual to biennial.

Two proposals received negative consensus and likely will not go forward:

- Create an Affiliate Member status (for vendors); and
- Create “Groups of Expertise” to replace Sections (which are created by the membership and open) and Expert Groups (created by the EB and invitation only).

The proposal that generated the most discussion and strongest reaction:

- Reduce the number of members on the Executive Board.

There had been a heated discussion about this proposal during the section chairs meeting the previous day, which continued during the workshop. The EB currently has 34 people. The proposal suggests an EB of 14 people, in part to help the EB operate more effectively and reduce the Secretariat staff workload. The VP of Finance feels that ICA cannot continue to fund attendance of 34 people at every spring EB meeting. The proposal is that the 12 section chairs would no longer sit on the EB. But two new “Member At Large” positions would be created, one for Category C members and one for Category D members. The Secretariat and officers feel the new proposal will be more representational overall. However, a few section chairs reacted negatively to the proposal, stating that removing section chairs from the EB would go against all of ICA’s efforts to be more representational and diverse. One person said she thought the document was “a dastardly plot by the elected officers and Secretariat to centralize power in the top leadership.” However, this was not the consensus of the overall group. There was a willingness to reduce the size of the EB by most of those in attendance, but some disagreement as to what the actual number should be. Making a more open, diverse, and representative organization is sometimes in conflict with making a more efficient and cost-effective organization.

TRANSITION FROM SPA TO FAP

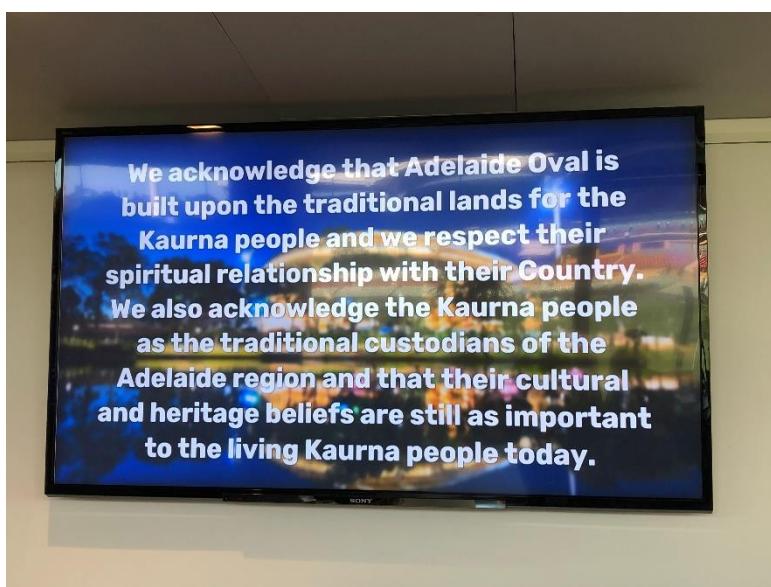
The proposed constitutional revision I mentioned in earlier reports will create a Forum of Professional Associations (FAP) to represent Category B members such as SAA. FAP will replace SPA. The intent and result of this change will be to elevate the position of Category B association members to be on par with Category A’s Forum of National Archives (FAN). As described by Anthea Seles, FAP will be “an important counterbalance for FAN within ICA, because national interests and professional interests are not always the same.” FAN members represent their government and their country’s national interests. They cannot take professional positions that are seen as political. But professional associations are not bound by political restrictions and can lobby and advocate on issues that affect our profession.

In between governance meetings, SPA chair Vilde Ronge and I met privately with Secretary General Anthea Seles, VP of Finance Henri Zuber, and VP of Programmes Normand Charbonneau to discuss the transition. They asked Vilde and me to draft the governance documents (the constitution and operational bylaws) for the new FAP and submit them to the

EB by February 2020 so that they can be shared and discussed prior to the EB meeting in April. They also asked us to propose a new formula to calculate Category B membership dues. They feel it makes sense to revise the dues structure at the same time the organizational change is made. Currently there is a sliding scale for B members, from €50 to €600 annually, based on the association's income. ICA leadership would like to see Category B members pay a bit more. As shown above, Category B members comprise 4% of the membership and contribute 2% toward the annual budget. The tasks of drafting the governance documents and establishing a new sliding scale of dues are more than a little daunting and will take quite a bit of time to accomplish. During this meeting we also discussed succession planning for FAP. SPA Chair Vilde Ronge will roll off SPA after the 2020 Congress. ICA leadership asked if I would consider stepping up as chair of the new FAP, starting with the 2020 Congress. I responded that this is a decision that my two associations must make. There are actually two decisions that need to be made by SAA (and ACA): 1) would SAA be willing to continue to fund a steering committee representative after 2020, and 2) if yes, would SAA want me to continue in that role or appoint someone new?

ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

About 620 people from 70 countries attended the 3-day meeting. There were 138 speakers across 40 sessions. The theme of the meeting was “Designing the Archives” but there were also strong themes throughout the meeting on indigenous peoples and the importance of archives being “user-centered.” The Adelaide Oval was the venue of the meeting, Adelaide’s beautiful sports stadium. Some variation of the statement in this photo below was spoken or read at the start of each session of the annual meeting:



A representative of the local indigenous people gave a welcome greeting at the opening ceremony and a “see you later” message (they never say “good-bye”) at the closing ceremony. Also during the closing ceremony the four category winners of the 2019 SPA Film Festival, and the People’s Choice winner, were announced. The new Expert Group on Indigenous Matters (formed last year) hosted a one-day Indigenous Matters Summit following the annual meeting.

SPA STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING HIGHLIGHTS



Of the twelve SPA steering committee members, six of us were in Adelaide. Countries represented were Norway, Germany, France, Israel Spain, and, of course, the United States. We held a brief steering committee meeting after the closing ceremony to discuss the status of ongoing projects and map out what needs to be done in the coming months related to the transition from SPA to FAP. Also, Anthea Seles interviewed us as part of her strategic review process to gather member feedback. My feedback centered around the need for more membership communication from, and follow-up by, the Secretariat staff. When members do not renew, no one reaches out to ask why. For associations, this is often because contact info has changed and the renewal invoice did not get to the correct person. And ICA should look at how to make conferences profitable so that membership fees are not ICA's only source of revenue.

FUTURE ICA AND SPA MEETINGS:

- 2020 May – SPA steering committee meeting in Beijing, China
- 2020 November – ICA Congress in Abu Dhabi, UAE
- 2021 May – FAP steering committee meeting in Barcelona, Spain
- 2022 fall – ICA conference in Rome, Italy

FOR THE SAA COUNCIL: DISCUSSION TOPICS OR ACTION ITEMS

- As I noted above, there will likely be a new sliding fee structure for Category B member dues starting in 2021. This may mean some increase in fee levels.
- Does the SAA Council wish to continue partnering with ACA to fund a steering committee representative after the 2020 Congress?
- If the answer is yes, would SAA want me to be the designated representative and take on the role of FAP chair after the 2020 Congress? Or do SAA and ACA want to appoint a new representative to serve?