

Report on the Meeting of Professional Archivists Called by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, June 9 to 11, 1948, Paris, France

By HERBERT O. BRAYER

*Secretary General
International Council on Archives*

FOR almost two years the secretariat of UNESCO has endeavored to formulate plans which would lead to the establishment of an International Council on Archives. With such international organizations already operating in the fields of museums, libraries, and general documentation, it was felt that the time was at hand for the establishment of a similar international organization dealing specifically with archives. Action was taken in the fall of 1946 by the secretariat to formulate a program for presentation to the Second Congress of UNESCO which was subsequently held in Mexico City in October, 1947. As Consultant for Archives for UNESCO, this reporter, aided by Dr. Solon J. Buck, then Archivist of the United States, and by Oliver W. Holmes, chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Society of American Archivists, discussed the projected program with members of the State Department and with members of the United States National Commission. Our cause was supported by the able and records-conscious Librarian of Congress, Luther H. A. Evans. The result of this preliminary activity was the adoption by the General Conference at Mexico City of a provision calling for assistance in the establishment of an international organization on archives during 1948. A limited budget for effecting this directive was approved in the budget of the libraries section.

During the past spring the secretariat developed plans for the

calling of experts to discuss and to form the international organization. In May Dr. Julian Huxley, UNESCO director general, transmitted formal notification of the plans to establish the international council and requested all member nations to submit names of key archives personnel in each country. A formal invitation was then sent to certain specific countries who were requested by the director general to name official delegates to attend the meeting of the Committee of Experts in June.

In the meanwhile, a tentative draft of a proposed constitution for the international organization was prepared in the United States. Outstanding credit for the production of the constitution is due the members of the International Affairs Committee of the Society of American Archivists, headed by Oliver Wendell Holmes of the National Archives. Mr. Holmes, Dr. Solon J. Buck and this reporter — then officially a member of the UNESCO secretariat serving as consultant on archives — gave the draft constitution careful consideration before it was submitted to the director general for duplication and transmittal to the various member countries of UNESCO.

On June 9th the first meeting of the Committee of Experts was held in Paris at UNESCO House. Present were: Dr. Charles Samaran, director of the Archives of France, who was selected as chairman; Mr. Hilary Jenkinson, deputy keeper of records of the Public Records Office in London, who was selected vice-chairman; Dr. Solon J. Buck, chief of the Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress; Dr. D. P. M. Graswinckel, director of the General Archives of the Netherlands; Dr. Vaclav Husa, councilor for the National Archives of Czechoslovakia; Dr. E. Martin-Chabot of the Archives of France; Dr. Emilio Re, director of the Archives of State, Italy; Dr. Julio Jiminez Rueda, director general, National Archives of Mexico; Dr. Asgaut Steinnes, director of the Royal Archives of Norway; two observers, Major Lester Born, Office of Military Government, United States, present from Germany at the request of Dr. Buck, and Miss P. Mander-Jones of the Mitchell Library, Sidney, Australia invited by the secretariat. In addition to the foregoing, the writer as consultant for UNESCO was present and selected as reporter. Mr. Arne J. Møller, head of the Bibliographical Center, Library Section, and Mr. E. J. Carter, head of the Library Section UNESCO, attended most of the sessions.

Following the address of welcome by the distinguished Deputy Director General, Dr. W. H. C. Laves (U. S. A.), the committee



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON ARCHIVES, PARIS, JUNE 9-11, 1948

Seated left to right: *Husa (Czechoslovakia); Graswinkle (Holland); Samaran (France); Buck (United States); Jenkinson (Great Britain); Steinnes (Norway).*
 Standing: *Martin-Chabot (France); Rueda (Mexico); Mander-Jones (Australia); Born (OMGUS); Re (Italy); Möller (UNESCO-Denmark).*

began consideration of the suggested agenda, and approved a two-fold plan submitted by the secretariat: a) to take action to establish an International Council on Archives; b) to draft the constitution of the Council and to decide on action necessary to bring it fully into being.

As the first order of business the committee unanimously agreed to the provisional establishment of an International Council on Archives and following some discussion, the organization began the actual consideration of the draft constitution submitted by the secretariat. The constitution as finally amended and adopted will be duplicated shortly by UNESCO and copies sent to all members of the Society of American Archivists. For that reason no detailed consideration of the various sections of the organic act underlying the International Council will be made here.

The name of the organization as formally adopted is "The International Council on Archives," and its purposes as set forth in the constitution are:

- a) To hold periodically an international congress of archivists;
- b) To establish, maintain, and strengthen relations among archivists of all lands, and among all professional and other agencies or institutions concerned with the custody, organization or administration of archives, public or private, wheresoever located;
- c) To promote all possible measures for the preservation, protection and defense against all hazards to the archival heritage of mankind, and to advance all aspects of the professional administration of archives by providing greater opportunities for the exchange of all ideas and information on problems concerning archives;
- d) To facilitate the use of archives and their more effective and impartial study by making their contents more widely known, making reproductions more readily available, and encouraging greater freedom of access;
- e) To promote, organize and coordinate all desirable international activities in the field of archival administration;
- f) To cooperate with all organizations concerned with the documentation of human experience and the use of that documentation for the benefit of mankind.

Considerable discussion developed over those sections of the proposed constitution dealing with membership and representation, with sharply drawn divisions of opinion being manifest on this subject throughout the three day session. As finally adopted, membership is more restricted than in the draft constitution prepared by Mr. Holmes and this writer and submitted by the secretariat.

There are now three classes of membership: "a) National or regional archival associations, i.e., associations of institutions or persons interested professionally or otherwise in any aspect of the conservation or availability of archives." Such associations may become full members and are entitled to send two delegates to each congress, but associational membership on the council for any one nation is limited to a single association. The executive board may admit to membership international regional associations notwithstanding the fact they include within their membership members of national associations already represented separately on the council, but in any case no country will have more than three votes in the constituent assembly. Special provision was made for those countries in which there were more than one association within the country or where no associations exist at all. b) Institutional and individual membership. This class is divided into two parts: first, archival institutions (public, semi-public, private or ecclesiastical), which are entitled to representatives to the International Congresses and to the constituent assembly, *but have no voting rights*; second, individuals who are professional archivists. *The latter have no vote*, but the constitution contains certain provisions whereby individual members may participate in the meetings of the constituent assembly despite this restriction. Provision for honorary membership was made, but it was specifically provided that such honor should be given only to individual members of the council.

The matter of financial obligations for all classes of membership was discussed and referred to a special committee to be appointed by the president. A report of this committee will be submitted previous to the first international congress which is now tentatively set for the summer of 1950.

Provision was made for the calling of an international congress at least once in every five years and the adopted constitution outlined the method for calling these sessions and the functions to be included at such meetings.

The authoritative body of the International Council on Archives is the constituent assembly composed of the officers of the council, members of its executive board, honorary members of the council, and the *delegates appointed by the association members of the council*. Institutional and individual members may attend all meetings of the constituent assembly, but in no instance will they have a vote.

An executive board composed of the three elected officers and

ten additional members selected by the constituent assembly, the secretary general and the treasurer, governs the activities of the council between sessions of the constituent assembly. No two of the ten elected members of the executive board may be from the same country and board members are not eligible for immediate reelection.

Officers of the International Council include the president, two vice-presidents (one from the Western Hemisphere and one from the Eastern Hemisphere), treasurer, and the secretary general. The first by-law adopted by the council, but not made a part of the constitution, provides for two deputy secretaries general, one from each hemisphere. Provision for standing and special committees, their operation and reports, was provided for in the constitution.

Many of the provisions of the constitution evoked prolonged and detailed discussion and, unfortunately, the present international unrest and division was manifest in the Paris meetings. The American delegate, Dr. Solon Buck, endeavored throughout the discussions to maintain the broadest possible concept of individual participation and intellectual cooperation on the widest possible sphere. The adoption on the final day of a resolution which bound the secretary general not to invite to membership individuals, institutions, or associations from Spain, Germany, and Japan was necessary in order to secure the cooperation of southeastern European member nations. Dr. Buck and several others present, including this reporter, opposed this resolution, but it was felt that the international situation may be so clarified by the time that the first congress is called that its modification could be secured. This provision was not added to the constitution as demanded, but was only made a part of the directive to the secretary general. Along with the matter of dues, this will be referred to the constituent assembly for action in 1950.

The Committee of Experts then resolved itself into the first constituent assembly, constituted the members present as the initial executive council to which additional members will be elected as provided in the constitution, and resolved itself into the first meeting of the constituent assembly. The constitution was then formally adopted and officers elected accordingly. Dr. Samaran was elected the first president of the International Council. Mr. Jenkinson and Dr. Buck were elected vice-presidents, Dr. Graswinckel was unanimously selected as treasurer, and Herbert O. Brayer was chosen as secretary general. Upon his nomination, the assembly unanimously approved as deputy secretaries general

Oliver W. Holmes of the United States and Jan Olstad of Norway.

The sessions in Paris were carried on in the spirit of cordiality and good fellowship despite the fact that some linguistic difficulties were apparent. The UNESCO secretariat provided French-English interpreters for all meetings, and all documents, revisions, resolutions and redrafts were duplicated in both French and English. A special drafting committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Jenkinson, worked far into the night after each daily session. The result was a minimum of confusion during the regular daily sessions.

Financing the International Council in the interim period presents some difficulties, as the committee to deal with this subject has a great many factors to take into consideration. Such matters as international monetary control with strict regulations on the sending of money in and out of various countries is but one of the difficulties. Determining an equitable basis of dues is another. This matter is now being given the earnest consideration of a special committee appointed by President Samaran. In the meanwhile certain national associations have pledged funds for current operations. Dr. Graswinckel on behalf of the Netherlands Association has pledged fifty pounds, and a similar amount was approved late in June by the British Records Association at Mr. Jenkinson's behest. It is expected that other national associations will make similar appropriations to sustain the council until its finances are placed on a more permanent basis. Although the secretary general is sending out formal invitations to various proposed associational, institutional, and individual members, such membership for the time being will be without financial obligation. It is anticipated, however, that a considerable number so admitted to membership will make voluntary contributions to assist in the work.

Following the final adjournment of the meeting of the first constituent assembly on June 11th, the delegates and members of the UNESCO advisory staff made a brief visit to the National Archives of France as the guests of Dr. Samaran. The work of this outstanding institution proved of especial interest to Dr. Buck and this reporter, as the archives of France contain vast quantities of American materials, most of which are as yet unused by historians in America or Europe.

To the Director General of UNESCO, and especially to Mr. Carter of the library division of that important organization, goes the credit as well as the deepest appreciation of archivists in all countries for the assistance given in the formation of the Interna-

tional Council on Archives. UNESCO supplied all the funds for the holding of the meetings and provided for the expenses of the delegates. For this support the various member nations who contribute to the UNESCO budget are entitled to our appreciation.

In the months to come the secretary general's office will direct various reports and information to the members of the Society of American Archivists and he will be pleased to receive from his colleagues in the United States all suggestions and information concerning the work of the Council. In order that the records of the new international organization can be complete, it is earnestly urged that the members of the Society of American Archivists send copies of all annual reports, articles, and other publications dealing with archives to the office of the Council, Room 306, State Museum Building, Denver 2, Colorado. From time to time abstracts from such reports, articles, and other publications will be made for distribution to our colleagues in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. On the other hand, material of interest to American archivists will be duplicated for distribution to members in the Western Hemisphere. The office of the secretary general will serve as a clearing house for such information and the assistance of all members of the Society of American Archivists is cordially invited.