

Archives in Developing Countries: The Regional Training Center Movement

By MORRIS RIEGER

THE CAPACITY of national archival establishments in the developing world to make substantial contributions to nation-building will remain unrealized until they themselves achieve minimal functional effectiveness; until, that is, they develop competence to discharge the basic responsibilities of modern, public archival institutions with respect to records management and archives administration.

For the most part, the prevailing situation in this regard is not encouraging. There are many reasons, but the underlying problem is staff shortage and, in particular, the critical lack of trained professional personnel who are indispensable to successful archives administration. Of course, there are notable exceptions (Ghana, Nigeria, and Malaysia for example) but as a rule, the vacuum or near vacuum of trained skills that exists in most countries in tropical Africa, the Arab region, the crescent of South, Southeast, and East Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean has inevitably depressed the quality and effectiveness of performance in every area of archival operations and therefore has prevented archival institutions from playing their proper part in national development.

Until recently the principal training facilities available to the developing world have been those of archivally mature countries in Western Europe and North America. With the help of fellowships and internships financed by these countries—which in many cases had been the controlling metropolitan countries in the days of colonial empires—or by such international organizations as the United Nations and Unesco, trainees have taken their formal archives courses in Western schools and their practical work in Western archival institutions.

The author, a Fellow of the Society since 1965, read this paper at the session on archives in developing countries, on Oct. 15, 1971, at the 35th annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, in San Francisco. Now Special Assistant for International Relations to the Archivist of the United States, Mr. Rieger serves as Deputy Secretary General of the International Council on Archives and as secretary of ICA's Committee on Archival Development.

This method has produced many fine archivists now serving in developing countries, but as a basic training device, it has a number of shortcomings. Training in the West is designed after all to prepare the trainee to function in the relatively advanced archival environment found there; it is not ordinarily well suited to instruct a fledgling archivist in ways and means of dealing with the peculiar problems of a small institution operating on a subsistence level in the tropics. Typically, no real effort is made to adapt the training to the needs of the special clientele. Moreover, training in a major metropolitan country like England or France too often confers on the trainee an aura of prestige that makes him attractive to non-archival employers in his home country, employers who proceed to entice him away from the archival institution which had sponsored him originally. Finally, training abroad is quite expensive in terms of transportation and living costs, and the availability of fellowships is quite limited.

Accordingly, present thinking in the International Council on Archives (ICA) and Unesco, the international organizations most concerned with technical assistance to archives, tends to the view that training in the West should be reserved primarily for potential archival leaders of developing countries who, after some years of experience on the job, should be afforded the opportunity for overseas advanced training to perfect their professional expertise. Basic professional training, on the other hand, should be provided closer to home. At this stage of archival evolution in most developing countries, it would be impracticable to establish separate *national* archival training facilities: typically, instructors would have to be imported from the West (and they are in short supply); there would be too few students ready for training at any one time; and, generally speaking, the expense would be prohibitive. The solution to this problem was borrowed from the library field: the concept of a *regional* training center used cooperatively by various countries comprising that region.

At the present time three regional archival training centers are in various stages of development: one, to provide for the needs of the French-speaking countries of tropical Africa, located in Dakar, Senegal; another, an analogous center for the English-speaking countries of tropical Africa, to be situated in Accra, Ghana; and a third for the countries of Southeast Asia, to be established in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The prime mover in the creation of all three centers has been the ICA, which, since its Extraordinary Congress in Washington in 1966, has considered organizing archival technical assistance on behalf of the developing world to be its most urgent responsibility. Because the need was demonstrably greatest in tropical Africa, ICA

in 1967 gave first priority there and to founding regional training centers in that region. ICA's initial planning, based upon an extensive examination of the African archival situation, took the form of a study, as yet unpublished, entitled "Program of Archival Professional Training for Developing Countries," prepared by Charles Kecskeméti, then ICA Executive Secretary, under contract with Unesco. Simultaneously, the training center concept was formulated in a more concrete manner as the key project within an omnibus program of archival technical assistance for Africa that was presented by ICA to the major American foundations—Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie—for their support. The relevant project appeared in the ICA program under the heading, "Archival Training Centers in Tropical Africa." It read in part:

It is the purpose of this project to effect a material expansion of the currently inadequate supply of trained archival professional personnel in tropical Africa by means of two regional basic training centers, one serving the English-speaking, and the other, the French-speaking nations of the area. A linguistic division of this kind is necessary to facilitate instruction, but principally because of the vastly different systems of administration, documentation, and record-keeping inherited from the colonial past and still adhered to by the two groups of successor states. It is most important that each center be placed in a university setting in order to lend academic prestige to the course of study and its terminal diploma, to take advantage of the economies afforded by an already existing administrative base, and, when necessary, to enable otherwise qualified trainees to make up deficiencies in their general educational background. It is also essential that a going archival service of good standing be readily accessible to each center to assure the availability to the trainees of practical internship experience. If at all feasible, it is desirable that a connection be established between each of the centers and a library school since, in a region of endemic professional shortages, future archivists ought to have at least a minimal grounding in the closely related fields of library science and documentation.

Against this background then, it is proposed to organize two basic professional training centers for anglophone and francophone tropical Africa respectively, each attached to a university, and associated with an archival establishment, and, if possible, with a school of librarianship as well. The centers would each offer an archival training course of an academic year's duration to a student body of 10. Trainees would be selected for admission, from a body of candidates nominated by the participating national archival authorities, on the basis of entrance qualifications [principally a bachelor's degree or its equivalent with a major in history] and priorities established by each center and the university to which it is attached. The curriculum employed would be one adapted to the specific needs of the region from the standard pro-

gram of professional archival training for developing countries being prepared by ICA under Unesco contract [i.e., the above-mentioned Kecskeméti study]. Graduates of the centers would be awarded a diploma or other formal completion certificate by the university concerned, which henceforth would normally serve as a requirement for professional employment at the participating archival institutions.

ICA's association with the centers would be limited to the first 4 years of their operation, until they were firmly established. Continuation thereafter would be the responsibility of the national archival authorities and their governments served by the centers.

While its program was being considered by the foundations, ICA selected the University of Dakar's School of Librarians, Archivists and Documentalists as the site of the francophone center and the University of Ghana's School of Librarianship as that of the anglophone center. Internship facilities for the two centers were to be made available at the National Archives of Senegal and the National Archives of Ghana, respectively.

ICA approached the foundations primarily for support of the salaries of the Directors of Archival Studies, i.e., the heads of the two centers, who were to be expatriates of high professional standing and qualifications. The salary envisaged was \$25,000 per annum each (including the costs of the incumbent's transportation to and from his post and housing for himself and his family). Thus the total requested of the foundations for both Directors over 4 years was \$200,000, the largest single cost component in the regional center project. The host countries were expected to compensate their National Archivists for their additional work as supervisors of the internship phase of the training programs; visiting lecturers (two each academic year at each center) on specialized subjects were to be financed by Unesco; classroom and office quarters and administrative facilities and services were to be contributed by the host countries (that is, shared between the Governments and the universities); and tuition charges and trainee transportation and living expenses were to be borne by the user countries—those sending the trainees and ultimately benefiting from their training.

None of the foundations acted favorably on the regional centers. There were many reasons for their negative reaction, not the least of which was that funds of even the wealthiest foundations are finite and that they make grants in accordance with programs and priorities of their own choosing. At that time, the priorities did not extend to archival technical assistance. In any case, it was clear that the Ford Foundation, which is deeply committed to the imperatives of national development in the emerging world, was not persuaded that

the upgrading of archives and records management could contribute substantially to such development. One hopes that Wilfred I. Smith's paper [see p. 155–161 of this issue—Ed.] and two detailed studies on the subject to be published by ICA in 1972,¹ will change the Ford Foundation's view and that of other potential donors.

ICA had explored possible sources of support other than the foundations, and in 1969 one of them, the Canadian International Development Administration (CIDA), displayed genuine interest in regional centers. Through the good offices of Dr. Smith and his predecessor as Dominion Archivist, Kaye Lamb, officials of the ICA had full opportunity to discuss their plans with the concerned CIDA authorities and to demonstrate the value for socioeconomic growth in developing countries of a properly functioning national archival structure, in particular a structure embodying integrated records management and archival services. CIDA recognized the validity of this argument and agreed to finance the salary of the Director of Archival Studies of the anglophone center for the first 4 years of its existence. (For reasons that will become apparent below, the francophone center was not involved.) It was a condition of the grant—inherent in the terms on which official funds are appropriated for CIDA use—that the Director be a qualified Canadian archivist. On behalf of ICA, Dr. Smith made a nationwide search for a suitable person, and two well-qualified archivists were considered. Unfortunately, as neither was able to accept, the Canadian grant could not be implemented. This was especially regrettable because an ideal candidate for the post was available, a leading archivist from another Commonwealth country with considerable archival training experience in his own part of the world and with full knowledge of the records and archival problems likely to be encountered in former British colonies.

On the francophone side, however, ICA's efforts were finally successful. Through Unesco it became known that the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) might well be receptive to an application in support of one of the centers. It was decided to put forward this center because the French-speaking countries of West and Central Africa were in even more desperate need of archival development than the English-speaking ones and, moreover, the host government (Senegal), inspired by the personal interest of its President, Leopold Senghor, a renowned scholar in his own right, was

¹ See F. R. J. Verhoeven, "The Role of Archives in the Public Administration and the National Planning Policy of Developing Nations," and Jean Valette, "Le rôle des archives dans l'administration et dans la politique de planification dans les pays en voie de développement." Both unpublished studies were prepared for Unesco by the International Council on Archives.

ready to act without delay. (It should be explained that UNDP procedure calls for grant applications for regional projects to be filed direct by the host country on behalf of itself and the other cooperating countries in the region.) The application submitted by Senegal in mid-1969 was made in essentially the same terms as the previous application to the foundations. The principal difference was that all personnel costs were to be covered by the grant—not only the salary of the Director of Archival Studies—and that additional funds were requested for document restoration and microfilming equipment and supplies to be used for training purposes. The total sum sought was \$151,450 over 5 years. After a year's consideration, UNDP awarded the entire amount requested.

Considerable difficulty was encountered in recruiting the Director. One exceptionally competent French archivist actually accepted and then withdrew for personal reasons. Finally, as a temporary expedient, the person most familiar with the archival realities of the area served by the Dakar center—Charles Kecskeméti, the ICA Executive Director—was drafted and given responsibility only for the organization of the center. Beginning in January 1971 he was based in Dakar and began preparing the curriculum, traveling to the user countries to recruit qualified students, and, in general, readying the Centre Régional de Formation d'Archivistes at the University of Dakar's School of Librarians, Archivists and Documentalists for its opening in October 1971.

His search for qualified trainees in francophone West and Central Africa has made clear what was only suspected before: that in those countries candidates with university degrees are virtually unobtainable, insofar as archival work is concerned; instead, the center must depend on secondary school graduates who, under the French system still in use, have, in American terms, gone no further than junior college. Therefore, it was decided to expand the curriculum of the training course from 1 to 2 academic years in order to accommodate certain nonprofessional subjects that the trainee would otherwise have mastered at the university. These subjects include (in the first year): Introduction to the History of Ideas, Sciences, and Technology; General Notions Concerning the History of Civilizations; History of African Institutions in the Colonial Period; Historical Geography and Cartography of Africa; History of African Arts; Introduction to Law; a foreign language; and (in the second year): Auxiliary Historical Sciences; and Advanced Law. The specifically archival subjects offered are Archival Theory and the History of Archives; Administration of Archival Institutions; Management of Current Records and Records Retirement; Documents and Their Processing at the Archives; Physical Protection of Archives; Introduction to

Classification and the Inventory; and, of particular relevance in an African setting, Oral Sources. There is also provision during the second year for full-time practical work, lasting at least a month, in the National Archives of Senegal. In keeping with the thinking that in the developing world the archivist should have at least an elementary understanding of the parallel work of the librarian and the documentalist, the curriculum also includes courses in General Bibliography, African Historical Bibliography, Cataloging, Library Economics, and Documentation.

His preparatory work completed, Mr. Kecskeméti presided over the opening of the center in October 1971 and served as interim Director until December, when it was possible to relinquish his duties to the first regular Director, Jacques d'Orléans, detailed to the position from the Paris City Archives. During the 1971-72 academic year the student body consisted of 20 trainees from 7 French-speaking nations of West Africa: 8 from Senegal, 3 each from Togo and Upper Volta, 2 each from Congo-Brazzaville and Ivory Coast, and 1 each from Mali and Niger. With the inauguration in Dakar of the first of the regional archival training centers, October 1971 marked a major milestone in the history of the archival profession.

Progress on the anglophone front has been much slower. After the Canadian disappointment, ICA and the host country, Ghana, decided to follow the francophone example and seek support from UNDP. Success appears likely because, judging from past practice, UNDP has typically given equal treatment to the anglophone and francophone nations of tropical Africa. With ICA assistance, the National Archivist of Ghana, in collaboration with the University of Ghana, has prepared a detailed proposal that closely resembles the Senegalese application favorably acted upon by UNDP. It calls for an outlay of \$170,000 over the initial 4-year period.

One problem that troubled the planners of the Accra center was lack of adequate physical facilities at the University's School of Library Studies. Fortunately, the expansion of the National Archives Building, in progress at the end of 1971, provides a solution: the new wing will contain three classrooms, which the National Archivist has agreed to make available to the center. Thus, though the center will be attached to the Library School, most of the teaching activity will take place at the National Archives.

A provisional curriculum has been developed, which includes three major and two subsidiary fields of study. The major fields are Records Management, Archives Administration, and Administrative History (emphasizing the evolution of the organs of government of the formerly British controlled African territories and seeking to impart an understanding of recordkeeping systems and a knowledge

of the kinds of records typically produced). The subsidiary fields are African History and Basic Library Methods and Techniques. In addition the trainees will devote a substantial proportion of their time during the course to practical training, both by observation and by participation, in all aspects of archival work. Each trainee will also be required, as one of the conditions for satisfactory completion of the course, to undertake an assigned project that will demonstrate his professional competence.

The Ghanaian application to UNDP is now before the Ministry of Finance, having been referred there by the Ghanaian Cabinet for a review of its financial provisions. National Archivist J. M. Akita is convinced that the application will be approved and sent to UNDP without undue delay. Although his October 1972 target date for the center's opening seems too optimistic, the center will most likely be in operation by the autumn of 1973. Unlike the Dakar case, there will be no problem in recruiting Accra's Director of Archival Studies: the excellent candidate mentioned above remains available.

On the other side of the world, steps are being taken to establish an analogous regional training center in Southeast Asia. The motive force there is primarily self-generated. In 1968 the national archival authorities of the region, led by the Director of the National Archives of Malaysia, Dato' Alwi Jantan, joined together to found the Southeast Asia Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (SARBICA). At its inaugural conference at Kuala Lumpur in July 1968, SARBICA recognized the imperative need for professional training facilities in the region and requested its then Secretary-General, Serafin Quiason, Director of the National Library of the Philippines, to study the situation and to propose appropriate regional action. His report was submitted to the SARBICA conference held in Manila in May 1971. It recommends the creation of an Institute of Archival Science for Southeast Asia in association with the University of Malaya at Kuala Lumpur and the National Archives of Malaysia. The Institute would offer a diploma program in archival science of 8 months in length (one academic year), and train 20 students annually. It would be conducted at the graduate level, the minimum requirement for admission being a bachelor's degree. The program of study would be similar to those offered in Dakar (and to be offered in Accra), with core courses in all aspects of archives administration, including records management, and ancillary work in Southeast Asian history, culture, and public administration. There would also be supervised practical work in the National Archives of Malaysia. In one major respect, the proposed curriculum differs from the African ones in that it makes no provision for instruction in library methods. (This omission may produce some

controversy, for lack of a regional library training school in South-east Asia causes sentiment to exist for the establishment of both library and archival regional training under one institutional roof.)

Quiason's proposal specifies a faculty consisting of the institute director, two part-time instructors selected from among the staff of the Malaysian National Archives, and two visiting lecturers each semester to deal with specialized archival topics. Members of the regular university faculty would handle nonprofessional subjects.

For the first three years, Dr. Quiason hopes to fund the institute through grants from such sources as Unesco, UNDP, the Colombo Plan, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and/or the major foundations. His estimates are comparatively high (\$106,000 annually or a total of almost \$320,000 over the 3-year period) and undoubtedly they will be scaled down. He recommends that after 3 years, when the institute has been firmly established, the user countries of Southeast Asia assume its full costs.

The Manila Conference of SARBICA adopted the Quiason report and entrusted its implementation to the Malaysian National Archivist. Soon afterward, he secured a promise of cooperation from the University of Malaya and a small grant of \$3,000 from Unesco to support his organizational efforts. Following precedent, he will seek to obtain major funding through UNDP or possibly through the projected Unesco Intergovernmental Program. SARBICA is aiming at a target date of June 1972 for opening the Institute, but that seems unrealistic. More probably it will begin operations a year later at about the same time as the Accra center.

Although still in its very early stages, the regional archival training center movement has been well launched. In the conviction that archival effectiveness in the developing world depends upon, before all else, skilled professional personnel and that the regional center is the most efficient instrument for training the required personnel, the ICA will continue its vigorous promotion of these centers in each of the developing regions. Apart from tropical Africa and Southeast Asia, where progress is discernible, the need is also very great in the Arab lands, South Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. With the support of the relevant worldwide and regional intergovernmental organizations, of private foundations sensitive to the need, and of the concerned nations themselves, ICA hopes to see each developing region of the world equipped with a functioning archival training center by 1980.