

The ICA and Technical Assistance to Developing Countries

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WHILE INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVAL AFFAIRS have played a relatively minor role in the activities of the SAA, it is interesting to recall that the Society was involved in the two most significant decisions in the history of the International Council on Archives—its founding in 1948 and its decision in 1966 to give the highest priority to technical assistance for archives in developing countries. Both decisions are related to meetings in Washington. The first, in 1946, has been described by Oliver Holmes who had a significant involvement in the founding of ICA, and the second in 1966 by Morris Rieger, one of the organizers of the Extraordinary Congress and an active participant in the subsequent history of ICA.

One of the most significant features of the Extraordinary Congress in 1966 was the worldwide representation made possible by travel grants from the Council on Library Resources. Thus, the impact of representatives from developing countries was felt for the first time, with a resulting emphasis on their needs. The author of a report to the SAA on the congress observed that "the Congress appears to have wandered quite far from its basic theme of scholarly access. The resolutions were much less concerned with this than with the urgent need for archival technical assistance to the underdeveloped regions of the world."¹ These resolutions included recommendations 1) that UNESCO make regular provision in its budgets for technical assistance to developing countries; 2) that a permanent joint ICA-UNESCO technical assistance planning and coordinating group be established; 3) that there be compiled an international roster of archivists competent to undertake technical assistance missions, as a sort of archival peace corps; 4) that regional archival pilot projects be established in East and West Africa; 5) that a study of film preservation in the tropics be undertaken by ICA; and 6) that regional branches of ICA be set up in Southeast Asia and Africa. Most of the resolutions were based on a report on the activities and problems of ICA by Charles Kecskeméti, executive secretary of ICA. He stressed the importance of technical assistance to developing countries and the need to create regional branches of ICA, which were provided for in the constitution but had not been established because of the lack of financial resources. He reviewed the progress of publications relating to developing countries, chiefly the series of *Guides to the Sources of the History of Nations*, commenced in 1959 with a subsidy from UNESCO, and manuals on archives in the tropics (Y. Pérotin, 1966), archives in Latin America (A. Tanodi, 1961), and on archival buildings and equipment (M. Duchéin, 1966). He reported a project in the UNESCO program for a pilot project to create a model archives service in an African country. He referred to studies on

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¹ Morris Rieger, "Archives for Scholarship: The Washington Extraordinary Congress of the International Council on Archives," *American Archivist* 30 (January 1967):87.

archives in developing countries, one on Southeast Asia, the other on Africa. And he suggested that a list be prepared of archival experts who could undertake missions to developing countries, and emphasized the need for a permanent working group to concentrate on comprehensive planning of technical aid to developing countries.

At the VIth International Congress in Madrid in 1968, only thirty-eight countries were represented, compared with fifty-five at the Extraordinary Congress in Washington; and the chief business was the consideration of the reports of working groups, established following the conference in Washington, on liberalization of access to archives and on microfilming. There were no sessions at the Madrid Congress on the subject of technical assistance to developing countries. Nevertheless, references to technical assistance were prominent in the opening address of the president, Etienne Sabbe; the address by Alfred Wagner, program specialist in archives at UNESCO; the report of the executive secretary, Charles Kecskeméti; and in the resolutions approved at the end of the congress.

Most significant was the confirmation that technical assistance in regard to archives in developing countries was to have the highest priority in the activities and goals of the International Council on Archives. The secretary recalled that at the Congress in Brussels in 1964, Alex Bein, at the time state archivist of Israel, had made a strong appeal for ICA to dedicate itself to technical assistance. The resolutions of the Washington Conference, the increased support and cooperation of UNESCO, and the prospects of financial support from private foundations had made it feasible for ICA, which had become a truly worldwide organization, to address itself to the fundamental task of preserving mankind's documentary heritage which was threatened with destruction in so many countries.

Considerable progress had been made in the preceding two years. A special archival program officer had been appointed in the UNESCO Secretariat, Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives, which included an archivist, Alfred Wagner, and another archivist was a member of the Advisory Committee; the pilot project for Africa had been approved; the first regional branch, SARBICA, had been established in Southeast Asia and other regional branches were planned for East and Central Africa and the Arab countries; a contract with UNESCO provided for studies on the role of archives in public administration and economic planning in developing countries; and the Rockefeller Foundation had given a grant to ICA to send four experts to study archives in Africa as the basis for a long-term plan for archival development in Africa.

Also, in our own Society, at the annual meeting of the SAA in Ottawa in 1968, a panel discussion featured Charles Kecskeméti who discussed the Washington Conference and the Congress in Madrid in relation to the expansion of ICA and its promotion of technical assistance to developing countries. At the next annual meeting in Madison, Wisconsin, two of the experts who had been sent to Africa by ICA (Morris Rieger, West Africa, and Jeffery Ede, East and Central Africa) reported on archival conditions and problems in those regions.

At the VIIth International Congress on Archives in Moscow, in 1972, one of the four plenary sessions was on technical assistance for the development of archives. Jeffery R. Ede, keeper of public records of the United Kingdom, and S. N. Prasad, director of the National Archives of India, delivered comprehensive papers from the viewpoint of donor and developing countries respectively. Both speakers emphasized the need for technical assistance which Prasad documented by a review of archival conditions in thirty-two developing countries in regard to buildings,

microfilming and conservation equipment, and the proportion of holdings cataloged. Both speakers also reviewed the extent and nature of technical aid in the last two decades and agreed that it had been uncoordinated and insufficient and that it had been given a relatively low priority by UNESCO. Prasad estimated that during the period 1946-66, only 5 percent of the UNESCO expenditure on documentation, libraries, and archives had gone to archives, the remaining 95 percent to libraries. He listed UNESCO projects in support of archives for the period 1957-70. Of sixty-one projects for thirty-eight countries, approximately 50 percent were activities of two mobile microfilm units, the remainder being equally divided between fellowships for archivists from developing countries to receive training abroad and missions by experts from developed countries to advise or do studies in developing countries. Both speakers indicated the unsatisfactory results of depending for professional training on visits or courses in metropolitan countries and agreed on the need for regional training schools. Prasad made a strong plea for the return to former colonies of records relating to their history—migrated archives—while Ede explained the difficulties in transferring either originals or microfilm copies. Ede reported the establishment in 1970 of an ICA Committee on Archival Development which would prepare guidelines for a long-term program of coordinated development; and he pointed out that, despite the handicaps which existed, developing countries had an opportunity to establish new archival concepts. Both speakers agreed that the chief efforts of ICA in cooperation with UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and other aid organizations should be directed to stimulating and sustaining regional cooperation and national initiatives.

During the discussion in the session, Charles Lee, president of the SAA, suggested that the United States was a developing country in regard to archives, thus making a point which is often overlooked, that some archives in the most economically developed countries are less developed than some archives in the so-called developing countries. Recently the archival situation in Zaire has been compared with that in the state of New York.

No fewer than eight of the recommendations of the VIIth Congress related to technical assistance to developing countries. By 1972 the chief elements of a comprehensive ICA program for assisting in the development of archives in developing countries had been identified. The last four years have been a period of implementation, a process which is far from complete but which in retrospect is a creditable record of ICA leadership, with some increases in financial support and regional cooperation and a growing awareness of the importance of archives in the economic and cultural life of every nation.

Regional branches. The need for regional branches of ICA had been apparent as early as 1964. Relatively few representatives of countries in the developing regions were able to attend meetings in Europe, the basic need for professional training could not be met adequately by sending staff to courses in metropolitan countries, and the ultimate improvement of archives depended on national and regional initiatives and cooperation. The first regional branch was established in Southeast Asia as a result of the initiative of Alwi Jantan, director of the National Archives of Malaysia. Malaysia had been the recipient of a UNDP Technical Assistance grant, 1962-66, which provided an archives expert from the Netherlands to advise on and assist in setting up national archives services, as well as a UNESCO fellowship to permit the national archivist to receive training in metropolitan countries. Assis-

tance in preparing the constitution of the branch was provided by ICA, and the Southeast Asia Regional Branch of ICA (SARBICA) was inaugurated in July 1968. It has been a model for subsequent branches and has been very active, publishing a journal and engaging in such current projects as a list of documents on microfilm in the region and the preparation of a records management manual. In June 1969 a second regional branch was established in East and Central Africa (ECARBICA) and a third in the Arab countries (ARBICA) at a meeting in Rome in June 1972. The Executive Committee of ICA, when approving the constitution of ARBICA in August 1972, also approved plans for the establishment of regional branches for Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Southern Asia, and one or more branches in West and Central Africa. These plans are only now reaching fruition.

In October 1975 at the Second Caribbean Archives Conference in Guadaloupe, the Caribbean Historical Association, which had been established at the First Caribbean Archives Conference in Jamaica in 1965, was converted to the Association of Caribbean Archives which became a regional branch of ICA.

Efforts to form a regional branch for Latin America continued for more than fifteen years, including a series of meetings in Washington and Ottawa at which resolutions were prepared. At a meeting in Bogota in March 1976 a Latin American Archival Association was formed, and this allied itself as a regional branch of ICA. It is likely that the initiative of S. N. Prasad, national archivist of India, will succeed in the forming of a South and West Asian Branch in May 1976, and also that a bilingual branch for West Africa will be established during the year. These branches will be focal points for the identification of archival assistance required, for the sharing of training and other facilities, and for the implementation of joint projects to improve archival services within the regions. They are essential to effective and co-ordinated planning and utilization of technical assistance.

Regional training centers. While legislation, adequate buildings, and equipment for conservation and reprography are fundamental requirements for developing countries, most of which are in tropical regions, the availability of trained professional personnel is indispensable to successful archives services. Until recently, archivists from developing countries, many of them future national archivists, received training in Western Europe and North America with the help of fellowships and internships financed by individual countries, particularly former colonial powers such as the United Kingdom and France, or by UNESCO. This training has served a very useful purpose, but there are obvious difficulties in adapting the procedures in a large national archives, such as the National Archives in Washington, the Public Record Office in London, or the Archives Nationales in Paris, to a small archives operating on a subsistence level in a country in the tropics. Also, such visits are expensive, fellowships are limited, and many of the trainees on their return were diverted to more attractive administrative positions outside the archives. It was apparent that basic professional training should be provided closer to home, but since separate national training facilities were impractical, it was decided to establish regional training centers which would accommodate a small number of trainees from each country, make maximum use of the limited number of foreign experts who were required as instructors, and adapt curricula to the needs of the particular region.

The first regional training center was established in Dakar, Senegal, as the first stage in a comprehensive ICA program which was based on a study, "Program of Archival Professional Training for Developing Countries," prepared by Charles

Kecskeméti, executive secretary of ICA. Since the need seemed most acute in Africa, it was proposed to establish two centers, one serving the French-speaking countries, the other the English-speaking countries. After long negotiations with various foundations, a UNDP grant was approved to finance the establishment of a francophone center at the University of Dakar's School of Librarians, Archivists and Documentalists, with internship facilities at the National Archives of Senegal. The school was eventually opened in October 1971, marking a major milestone in the history of the archival profession. The first class consisted of twenty students from seven French-speaking countries in West Africa.

Progress in establishing the English-speaking school in Ghana has been much slower. There were difficulties in regard to buildings, finance, and staff. The UNESCO/UNDP-supported Regional Training School at the University of Ghana, Department of Library and Archival Studies, Accra, finally commenced operation in October 1975 with a class of thirteen trainees from eight English-speaking countries in Africa.

The need for a regional training center in Southeast Asia was recognized at the inaugural conference of SARBICA at Kuala Lumpur in July 1968. A report which was submitted in 1971 proposed the creation of an Institute of Archival Science for Southeast Asia in association with the University of Malaysia and the National Archives of Malaysia. Like the programs of the schools at Dakar and Accra, courses would be at the graduate level accompanied by practical work at the National Archives, but it is hoped that staff could be provided by local professional staff instead of having to rely on foreign experts. The target date for opening the institute was June 1972, but because of delays, chiefly of a financial nature, the center has not been put into operation.²

Although not a regional training center sponsored by ICA, a school for archival training has existed for several years at Cordoba, Argentina, under the able direction of Aurelio Tanodi and with the support of the Organization of American States. This is the nucleus of a professional school for Latin America. Similarly in South and West Asia, the Indian Archives seems to be the most suitable center for professional and technical training. A Lebanese national training center, which would be available to students from all Arab countries, was expected to open this year, but this now seems unlikely in light of the civil strife in that country. ICA has been providing assistance in the planning of this center. While one must be somewhat skeptical in view of unexpected delays in the past, one may be hopeful that the next year or two may witness the completion of the program to include all developing countries in regional branches with a professional training center in each region.

Archival pilot projects. A third element in the ICA program, an element that had been identified by 1972, was the establishment of archival pilot projects in developing regions. The first and, in fact, the only successful experience to date was in the Ivory Coast in Africa. This was a five-year program, 1970-75, for setting up, developing, and promoting in an African member-state a national archives and records management system that would serve as a model to the countries of the region through the provision of expert and consultant services, fellowships, equipment, and study grants. The advantages of such a model archives are obvious as an example of an operating system and as a valuable supplement to the regional training

² In June 1973 a regional seminar, sponsored by SARBICA with the support of UNESCO, was convened to consider the organization and curriculum of the proposed regional training center.

center. There is also the possibility of giving training to nonprofessional staff and staff engaged in conservation and micrographics. This highly successful UNESCO project ended in 1975, by which time it was able to support itself. Pilot projects in other developing regions have been proposed and even included in UNESCO budgets from time to time, including one in Uganda, one in Latin America, and one in an Arab country. The 1975/76 UNESCO budget makes provision for the start of two new archival pilot projects, in Lebanon for the benefit of Arab countries and in Costa Rica for the benefit of Caribbean and Latin American countries. The following elements are proposed for the Costa Rica project: the preparation of archival legislation to govern a modern archives administration and records management system, specially designed accommodation including a records center and equipment for restoration and reprography, and provision for training. The government of Costa Rica will provide the accommodation and part of the equipment and personnel; and UNESCO's contribution will be the services of an expert consultant, fellowships for two Costa Rican archivists to train abroad, and some modern equipment.

Committee on Archival Development (CAD). The need for an ICA committee to plan and coordinate technical assistance in developing countries was identified in a resolution of the Extraordinary Congress in Washington. In 1970, at a meeting in London, a Technical Assistance Working Group was established. By 1972 it had become a Committee on Archival Development and had proposed the establishment of an international archival development foundation for which contributions would be solicited from foundations, governments, and companies. It was hoped that such a foundation would broaden the base of support to supplement UNESCO and other grants. After some discussion concerning the separate status of such an international foundation, it was decided to abandon the original concept of an independent group and to substitute for it a development fund which would be itself an account within the ICA treasury. Proposals that the Committee on Archival Development be abolished when the foundation was established were rejected. The committee has played an important role in establishing the fund and as an advisory and planning body with representation from each region in the Third World. At meetings in Paris and Darmstadt in 1973 and 1974, the CAD decided to work out a four-year plan of aid to archives in developing countries. The outline for this plan was discussed at a General Conference on the Planning of the Development of Archives in the Third World, organized by ICA and supported by grants from the Canadian International Research Development Corporation (IRDC) and smaller contributions from the West German Krupp Foundation and the French Government, and held at Dakar in January 1975. The conference marked the official launching of the International Archival Development Fund under the patronage of President Leopold Senghor of Senegal. The prospectus of the fund, designed to encourage contributions, was published first in a bilingual English and French edition by the Public Archives of Canada and later in four languages including Arabic and Spanish by the National Archives of Algeria.

There has been some difficulty in obtaining from developing countries specific information in regard to archives and records projects, information required before the comprehensive four-year plan for technical assistance could be presented to prospective donors. It is too early to assess the success of the fund, but it is a significant initiative, and the machinery for its administration has been integrated into the ICA structure with control by the Committee on Archival Development, under the

general supervision of the Executive Committee. It should extend the scope of aid, provide more flexibility, and permit assistance in emergency situations to which the cumbersome budgetary process of UNESCO cannot respond quickly. Ultimate success, however, will depend upon the amount of contributions to the fund.

NATIS. One of the most significant developments in the last two years has been the increasing cooperation of the ICA with the related International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and the International Federation for Documentation (FID), especially in regard to relations with UNESCO. These nongovernmental organizations assisted the UNESCO Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives (DBA) in preparing the Intergovernmental Conference on the Planning of National Documentation, Library and Archives Infrastructures, which was held in Paris in September 1974. At this conference a program of national information systems (NATIS) was endorsed and later approved by the General Conference of UNESCO.

This program, which is described elsewhere in this issue, was particularly important for developing countries. Because of the importance of a national information policy, the planning of documentation, library, and archives services should be integrated into the national development plan, thus ensuring a higher priority than is customary. NATIS gives particular emphasis to infrastructures, the establishment of archives and libraries, and their adaptation to the needs of the various classes of users. Two important elements are training, to produce the specialized staff required to provide information services, and the use of the appropriate technology to ensure the preservation and effective use of the information contained in published and unpublished materials.

Conditions in most developing countries do not encourage the allocation of adequate resources for establishing and maintaining archives. With the urgent need for economic development and in the struggle against poverty, illiteracy, and disease, archives tend to be given a low priority. Climatic conditions in tropical countries make the preservation of paper difficult and expensive. The lack of trained professionals is a deterrent not only to the provision of archival services, but also to the promotion of the value of archives. Historians, usually the primary users and chief supporters of archives, tend to be more interested in the records in the archives of the former imperial power than in the records produced locally. In these circumstances, technical assistance in some form is almost a prerequisite for the effective development of archives in a large portion of the world. The chief aim, however, is to stimulate interest and awareness by government and public of the importance of archives as information, to assist in planning, and in the establishment of regional projects such as training centers and pilot schemes.

It is evident that technical assistance for archives in developing countries will be required for a long time. It is equally evident that while archivists themselves consider archives primarily as a cultural resource, the permanent record of human experience, the chief sources of technical assistance to the present have been such international and national agencies as UNDP, the Agency for International Development (AID), and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), which are primarily concerned with assisting economic development. To obtain the support of such agencies it has been necessary to emphasize the importance of records management in promoting the efficiency and economy of government administration and the value of the information in archives in promoting national

development. There is no doubt that these arguments are valid, but to be effective in the long run, it is not only necessary to convince technical assistance agencies, but the governments of the recipient countries that archives should have a higher priority in national development plans, that they have an essential role in the community, and they are responsive to the needs of a wide range of users. Also, archival services must be adapted to the particular needs of each nation and region, to appear not as a foreign transplant but as a beneficial graft on organisms rooted in native soil. The obstacles to be overcome present a challenge to archivists who must adopt a more positive role than is customary in many developed countries. They are becoming aware of this challenge and recent trend. Proposals of regional branches and discussions with individual archivists from developing countries (such as Hugh Payne of Guyana, to mention one example) indicate an attitude which may result in archival advantages such as those to which Jeffery Ede referred in 1972, since new institutions are less inhibited than those which have developed in a less coordinated way in developed countries. Among these advantages are:

1. In the area of planning, according to the NATIS concept, archives can be assigned a higher priority in a total plan for national development, and archival services can be planned in a comprehensive manner along the lines suggested in such studies as Brune Delmas, *Création et Développement de Services Nationaux d'Archives*.
2. The values in an integrated records management and archives system are recognized, and a recent study has indicated that in this respect developing countries compare favorably already with state archives in the United States in the extent to which current and dormant records of government departments, microfilm, etc., are controlled by the archives.
3. The concentration of all archival materials in one archives along the lines of the "total archives" concept in Canada is particularly attractive in conditions which make the maximum use of each archives desirable. The trend in developing countries is to give responsibility to a single archival institution for public records, private papers, maps and plans, photographs, film, and all other archival media.
4. Emphasis on oral history as an archival function is natural in circumstances in which textual records of indigenous experience are sparse or nonexistent; and pictorial records are particularly useful where literacy is not universal.
5. Cooperation with related institutions such as libraries and museums is facilitated in a development period before firm boundaries of responsibility are established.
6. Regional cooperation is encouraged by regional branches, regional training centers, and such projects as the publication of archival sources and exchange of microforms within a region.
7. Training of staff including not only professional but subprofessional and technical personnel will probably evolve within regions thus achieving uniform standards which are rare in many developed countries.
8. Public relations must be given a higher priority than in conventional archives in the past because of the need to convince decision makers of the profitability of archives and the need to demonstrate a responsiveness and service to the entire community. This can result in a greater emphasis on publicity, exhibitions, and educational services enabling the archives to have a greater impact on the public.

Such opportunities for developing new archival concepts should not be viewed too optimistically. The reality is that many national archives in developing countries are neglected, lack adequate accommodation, trained staff, and basic equipment, and have barely subsistence budgets. The level of archival functions must depend ultimately on the total resources and per capita revenue of each country. Technical assistance from abroad will be required on a scale much larger than in the past and it will never be adequate, particularly in regard to such areas as capital expenditure on buildings. Nevertheless, when one considers what has been accom-

plished in the last decade, when one considers the extent of the efforts of ICA to ensure that the assistance available is used most effectively and when one considers the remarkable progress in regional cooperation and the pooling of expertise within each region in the developing world, it is evident that a great step forward has been taken in ensuring the preservation and effective use of the records of human experience which are of such great concern and importance to all mankind.