

## International Scene

# International Archival Adventures: A Reminiscence

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**Abstract:** Based on his personal diary, this article recalls Robert Warner's experiences in international archival affairs from 1968 through 1989. The period from 1980 to 1985, when Warner was archivist of the United States, explores the special problems caused by the General Services Administration and the Cold War tensions reflected in international archival activities. Also discussed are similarities and differences between the International Council on Archives and the International Federation of Library Associations.

*About the author:* Dean of the School of Information and Library Studies at the University of Michigan since 1985, Robert M. Warner retired at the end of the 1991-92 academic year. He was director of the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan from 1966 to 1980 and archivist of the United States from 1980 to 1985.

THE CHATEAU LAURIER, a distinguished old hotel in Ottawa, was the elegant setting for the 1968 Society of American Archivists' annual conference and for my first experience with international archival adventures. As program chair for this meeting, I had spent much effort in designing a program to match the excellence of the site and the international spirit of the occasion. The centerpiece was to be a session presented by some of the luminaries of the profession—two former archivists of the United States, the archivist of Canada, and the executive secretary of the International Council on Archives (ICA). Our committee reserved one of the largest rooms in the conference hotel at a prime time to accommodate the anticipated large crowd. All was ready for what I thought would be the pièce de résistance of the meeting. When the appointed hour came, I surveyed the spacious room filled only with a vast number of empty seats. In that nearly empty chamber, it became clear to me that in 1968 internationalism in archives was of interest to only a few American and Canadian members.

In spite of the Ottawa setback, I did not lose my enthusiasm for international archival activities and seized the next chance that was offered. In 1972, I was given a modest appointment to attend the ICA Congress in Moscow. James B. Rhoads, archivist of the United States (1968–79), asked me to serve on the International Council on Archives Nominating Committee, perhaps because of my apparent interest in internationalism at the Ottawa meeting.

### A Visit to the Soviet Union

The trip to the Soviet Union seemed a great opportunity, not only to broaden my own international experience, but also to give an international dimension to the Bentley Historical Library, where I was director. I had long hoped to seek in Europe historical materials that reflected the American immigrant experience, and I now saw

a door opening to this goal. These research efforts eventually led to a large National Endowment for the Humanities grant for an overseas archival project, beginning the internationalization of the Bentley Library that continues vigorously to this day.<sup>1</sup>

Rhoads headed the U.S. delegation to the 1972 ICA Congress and had many responsibilities, so I saw little of him. About thirty-five other Americans were in attendance—mostly higher-echelon National Archives and Records Service (NARS) and Library of Congress staff and their spouses, plus a few “archival tourists,” persons with modest archival ties who saw the congress and its tours (quite correctly) as a good way to see the Soviet Union.

ICA was then and is still largely supported by funds supplied by national archives administrations and, for the most part, is run by their officials.<sup>2</sup> ICA's history—the fact that the National Archives helped found ICA—explains this dominating National Archives influence. Rhoads and his predecessors were very active and interested in ICA and involved NARS staff in ICA committees and projects. That tradition continues to this day but more non-NARA personnel are becoming involved as other archival institutions provide the necessary funding to make participation possible. Along these lines, it would be a constructive step if the profession could fund a delegate to the annual Round Table meeting.

The opening session of the Moscow ICA Congress was about two hours long, consisted mostly of formalities, and was mostly dull. It was naturally dominated by speeches from Soviet officials with their mixture of

<sup>1</sup>The resulting publication is Francis X. Blouin, Jr. and Robert M. Warner, eds., *Sources for the Study of Migration and Ethnicity* (Ann Arbor: Bentley Historical Library, 1979).

<sup>2</sup>See Maygene Daniels, “The Genesis and Structure of the International Council on Archives: An American View,” *American Archivist* 50 (Summer 1987): 414–19.

archival commentary, friendly greetings, and Soviet propaganda. The setting, however, was great. It was the Hall of Columns, a handsome building where Lenin had lain in state and where important events in Soviet history had occurred. It also had about the only air-conditioned room in town, an important fact in a Moscow that was unusually hot that summer.

The papers, which had all been distributed prior to the conference, produced few new insights and little useful discussion. But there were many interventions, which are standard components of international meetings. They are supposed to add to the discussion of the professional points covered in the papers. I recall a particularly strong statement from an African delegate on the need for technical assistance in the archives of his country and for other African nations, coupled with a demand that the assistance should be paid for by former colonial powers as reparation. Some interventions were good, but most were used for political purposes, either to work in a little propaganda (the Soviets always had to include a message on world peace and anti-imperialism) or, more often, to get the delegates' names in the record of the proceedings to prove to their home governments that they had participated. This is a formula for trivial and irrelevant meetings. Language, too, poses difficulties. Simultaneous translation largely minimizes this problem, but in the Moscow meeting the equipment was not good.

I do not want to leave the impression that these sessions are useless. Sometimes the discussion produces a lively exchange. In recent years, there have been attempts, with considerable success, to reduce formal reading of papers and to emphasize discussion. But, as with any multilingual activity, these meetings will always have their limitations.

I attended a number of sessions and participated in tours. Tours and receptions are

standard operating procedures for all international meetings. Let's be honest—these international meetings are heavy on socializing and excursions because people who attend expect to have a good time. On the international scene, socializing is more important than in our own American conventions. Many contacts are made and valuable information is exchanged during these usually interesting, historically oriented excursions.

Toward the end of the congress I performed my official duty as a member of the ICA Nominating Committee. My fellow committee members came from Trinidad, Indonesia, and Bulgaria, and the chair was from Ghana. Our first task was to nominate someone for the next ICA presidency, an office traditionally designated for the host archivist—in this case, the archivist of the Soviet Union. We then nominated two vice presidents, one of whom would host the next congress in Washington in 1976. By custom, this meant, of course, Rhoads. In theory, we were there to select nominees for the executive committee, although in reality these nominees had largely been chosen beforehand by the existing officers and ICA executive secretary, who communicated these decisions to the chairman of the nominating committee. We did have a bit of discussion about which country should gain an appointment on the executive committee. It was decided to give the post to an Asian nation rather than a European one. This, too, reflects a balance repeated today.

However, the collapse of the Soviet empire will undoubtedly change the politics of ICA. Before the collapse, the Soviet Union and its satellites had to have a large share of all appointments. There were other "blocs" also, based on other commonalities requiring recognition, such as language (the United States, Great Britain, and Canada), geography and culture (Scandinavia), colonial heritage (France and its former

colonies), and others. The major national archives unquestionably play a dominant role in appointment making.

All the international congresses provide postcongress tours, and our Soviet colleagues provided excellent ones. The tour that my wife Jane and I took included Soviet Armenia and Georgia, a spectacular trip that gave us a fine experience in the archives of two Soviet republics and enabled us to make wonderful professional contacts not only with our Soviet colleagues, but also with archivists from other nations who were our tour companions. The most important benefits for me and other delegates were the beginning of friendships and contacts that would prove most valuable. Friendships made on a funicular railway stuck halfway up a mountain in Soviet Georgia transcended all political barriers.

### The ICA in 1976

In 1976, the eighth ICA Congress met in Washington, D.C., overlapping the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists. This meeting was highly significant for both the international guests and for American archivists. The overseas visitors found the informal, frank, and lively SAA meetings exciting and more interesting than most ICA sessions. At the same time, the SAA members had their consciousness raised about the international scene. My own role was limited, however, since I was very much occupied with my duties as vice president and president-elect of SAA.

I did host a small party for some of my contacts from the 1972 Moscow meeting, and began discussions with Helmut Dahm of the Federal Republic of Germany about his dream to create a vigorous section of ICA composed of representatives, not of national archives, but of archival associations. There was much pressure for SAA to become the focal point for this new in-

ternational thrust, and for good reason, since SAA was by far the largest organization of archivists in the world, had a permanent full-time executive secretary, and, last but not least, was prosperous. But Ann Campbell, SAA executive director, and I demurred in taking the lead—to the disappointment of our European colleagues. We both agreed that at that time there simply was not enough interest in international affairs in SAA for us to take on this leadership role, although we did agree to support the concept. Such an organization, the Section of Professional Associations (SPA), did emerge, and still exists, although as a relatively weak body.

Another opportunity also came out of the 1976 ICA meeting. ICA appointed me to its Committee on Professional Training. Most, though not all (as my own appointment demonstrated), of the American representatives to these committees were selected from the National Archives for three main reasons. First, the greatest interest was there. Second, as an ICA officer, the archivist of the United States could ensure American representation on the committees. And, finally, funding for travel to meetings usually held in Europe was available from the National Archives and Records Service, a most important factor since neither ICA nor SAA had funding to support this type of activity.

The site for our committee meeting was the archives school at Marburg, one of two (the other being in Munich) where all West German archivists were educated. I found myself at a big disadvantage because the committee decided to conduct its business in French in order to accommodate our French-speaking chairman and committee secretary. In archives, as in most other areas of international activity, the lack of any foreign language competency is a real obstacle, even though English has become the most common language for international communications.

From the somewhat insignificant deliberations of the committee there did emerge an item or two of some importance. The committee agreed to survey archival education programs throughout the world and to produce a directory of them. I received the task of circulating the questionnaire in the United States and Canada. Our other major decision was to hold an invited conference of directors of archival education programs at the time of the 1980 ICA Congress in London.

### International Activities After 1980

In 1980 I was appointed archivist of the United States. My new job was to have a dramatic impact on my role in international archival activities, but I didn't really understand that at the time. In the whirlwind of learning a new job fraught with great problems and turmoil, I gave no thought to my new international role until Pan Am deposited Jane, our fourteen-year-old daughter Jennifer, and me in London's Heathrow Airport on 12 September 1980 for the ninth ICA Congress. Although the congress did not officially open for a few days, I found myself drawn in right away. The contrast between my new role and the one I had held eight years before could not have been more extreme. Then I had only participated on the fringes; now I was right in the middle of everything. For example, when we returned to our hotel from Sunday services at Westminster Abbey I had a telephone call inviting me to lunch with the executive director of ICA, Charles Kecskeméti, who helpfully briefed me on the power structure and politics of the organization. This led to another meeting later the same afternoon with some of that power structure, including Jean Favier, director general of the Archives Nationales of France; Freddy Mabbs, keeper of the Public Records Office in Great Britain; and Oscar Gauye, the archivist of Switzerland. I know I was sizing them up

and I am sure they were doing the same. I later heard that the two main "curiosities" at this congress were the delegates of the Peoples Republic of China, who were making their first appearance at any ICA affair, and the new archivist of the United States.

Before I arrived in London I had been asked to chair the Resolutions Committee for the congress. I accepted on the assumption that this was mostly an honorary job requiring little knowledge or skill, befitting my neophyte position. I was wrong. As is customary, the plenary session produced resolutions reflecting the will and program of the congress. They were referred to the powerful Resolutions Committee, which revised them and approved the proper French and English versions. None of this was an easy matter. In such circumstances, most of the resolutions are bland, representing compromise positions that have been hammered out in lengthy, often boring sessions.

At this point, I should mention one positive encounter with the Russians during the 1980 ICA Congress. In 1976, NARS and its Soviet counterpart undertook a joint project to publish documents from both institutions relating to American-Russian relations from the establishment of our country to 1815. Unfortunately, the project was completed when American-Soviet relations were at a very low point because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the cancellation of our participation in the Moscow Olympics. The National Archives staff had wanted to have a ceremony in Washington, D.C., to exchange copies (our volume in English and theirs in Russian), but the U.S. State Department had frowned on that. Instead we arranged an impromptu ceremony in Kecskeméti's suite in London during the 1980 ICA Congress. Jim O'Neill, Bert Rhoads (who had initiated the project), Charles Dollar of the National Archives, and one or two others from NARS were there, along with our Russian coun-

terparts. I inscribed a copy to them and the Russians did the same for me. In my brief presentation speech I noted that times were not good between our countries, but that I hoped cooperation could continue between our institutions. They expressed similar sentiments and, for a few moments, we had a jolly break in the Cold War. I recall one of the members of the Soviet delegation referring to our ceremony as "the last crumb of détente," a humorous but apt summation of the event.

So ended my first foray as a major player on the international archival scene. On the whole I found it fun, interesting, and of more substantive value than I had anticipated. I was pleased to discover that the National Archives of the United States and the American archival profession were star players on the international stage.

After the conclusion of the London congress, virtually all thoughts about international archival activities were overshadowed by major events in the nation and tumultuous times in the National Archives. Reagan's victory was to have a profound impact on the National Archives and my role in it, but I will focus only on those matters relating to international archival affairs. The Carter appointment at the head of the General Services Administration (GSA, under which the National Archives functioned) was replaced by Gerald P. Carmen, a Reagan appointee who had helped the new president win the key New Hampshire primary. As a tire store owner from Manchester, New Hampshire, Carmen had absolutely nothing in his background that would enable him to understand the National Archives and its unique position in government. On the other hand, he rebuffed attempts to educate him on these matters. The international responsibilities of NARS turned out to be one of the first examples of the serious difficulties Carmen would cause the agency in general and me personally.

In between its congresses, the ICA holds

annual meetings of the executive committee made up of the heads of National Archives or their appointed representatives and a roundtable limited to two or three members of national delegations to ICA. For 1981 the roundtable was scheduled for Oslo, Norway, with the executive committee meeting immediately after in the Hague, The Netherlands. I assumed that having O'Neill and me attend these two important meetings as representatives of the United States would not be a point of issue with the relatively new GSA administrator, but this was a wrong assumption. I provided all kinds of data and even offered to stay home myself if only one of us could go. Finally Carmen gave in and approved our travel orders. This was to be the last such "victory" from our standpoint, and O'Neill would not attend another international meeting until Carmen left office.

The roundtable was attended by one hundred delegates representing fifty nations, including all the major "archival powers"—France, Great Britain, the USSR, Canada, Italy, plus many delegates from smaller nations and Third World nations. It was much like the big congresses, except on a smaller scale and with greater personal interaction. The main speakers summarized their papers, followed by interventions from the delegates. The Russians put in their usual intervention, which had nothing to do with the topic.

On a less formal note, O'Neill and I spent an evening as guests of the archivist of the Soviet Union, Filip Dolgikh, and his associates. With the traditional vodka supplied by our hosts we drank toasts to continued friendships between our institutions, stopping only when the bottle was empty. The Soviets wanted to explore the possibility of a further joint publication project. But considering the status of relations between our countries, that was not feasible. Talk of new joint endeavors would have to await the coming of *glasnost*. The



pleasant evening we spent illustrates that warm professional contact can transcend the political problems of the time.

### The National Archives in Crisis

The most serious issue for 1982 was the continued estrangement of GSA and the National Archives, an issue that spilled over into the international arena. The first hint came in April when the administrator refused to sign travel orders for a group of NARS staff members who were participating in SAA's first study tour of China. This refusal prevented them from being granted a leave of six days or the protection of government insurance if they had an accident. In addition to being simply petty and lacking any understanding of these kinds of activities, Carmen allowed some of his ultraconservatism to show. That was again the case in October 1982 when we entertained a high-level delegation of Chinese archivists in Washington, D.C. He questioned our dealings with these "communists."

The next crisis with GSA concerned getting my orders to travel to the 1983 roundtable meeting in Kuala Lumpur and getting O'Neill's to the roundtable and the executive meeting in Indonesia. The administrator would not budge on O'Neill and he kept me guessing until almost the last minute. But I did get my orders signed and was on my way to the roundtable with a stopover in Japan.

I knew there would be a problem awaiting me in Kuala Lumpur because while I was still in Tokyo, I received a call from O'Neill and George Scaboo, my deputy. The problem concerned the nonadmission of the Israeli delegate to the roundtable in Malaysia, a Moslem nation that at the time banned all Israelis from entering. I was told that I would be briefed further by the American Embassy upon arrival. Early the next morning I made contact with our official, Francis J. Tatu, who told me that the

embassy had received a number of cables from the U.S. State Department on the matter and that they had forcefully protested the nonadmission to the Malaysian foreign ministry. The American position had been to uphold Israel's right to attend these kinds of nonpolitical, professional meetings. But the Malaysian government was absolutely adamant in maintaining its position. Thus I faced the dilemma of walking out and raising a big commotion about the matter or of developing some other response. There was a great concern among the ICA delegates that the whole conference would collapse with much hard feeling. They also expressed concern that some of the delegates from Moslem countries might even try to have Israel barred from ICA entirely. The U.S. embassy, while clearly wanting to uphold American policy on Israel was nevertheless loath to stir up a brouhaha at this time. Our overall relations were good with Malaysia, and I pointed out that Zakiah Hanum Nor, our host and the archivist of Malaysia, was not sympathetic to her government's position on this issue, and that it would be a shame to ruin her meeting. Thus, in our discussion we moved to a middle position. I volunteered to draft a statement deploring the politicizing of an international professional meeting and to try to get it adopted before the meeting adjourned. With this agreed upon, Tatu took me to meet Ambassador Ronald D. Palmer to review this approach. Palmer approved our plan completely.

The embassy's approval was only part of the battle. To be truly successful I had to win approval by the roundtable, an approval as close to unanimous as possible. When I got back to the conference site, a number of delegates were anxious to know what I had learned and what I would do. Again, this reflected the fact that whatever the United States decided to do would have a great effect on everyone else and on the fate of the roundtable. The archivist of The Netherlands had already written a strong

letter both deploring the banning of the Israeli delegate and refusing to attend. Sven Lundquist, the archivist of Sweden, also wanted a strong statement. This was in contrast to the stand taken by the delegate from Great Britain, who wanted to do little about it.

In the next two days I worked on my statement and checked it with the embassy, which in turn passed it along for approval to the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C. I also worked to get consensus in the roundtable and had much success. All of the other archival "powers" (Germany, France, Canada, Great Britain, Belgium, and Sweden) agreed to support my statement.

At the concluding session, the secretary of the roundtable introduced the subject by noting the arrival of a letter from the archivist of The Netherlands protesting the Malaysian government's refusal to grant a visa to the Israeli delegate. The letter stressed that this was contrary to the spirit and purposes of ICA. The president of the roundtable then recognized me and, after brief prefatory remarks, I read the following statement:

On behalf of the United States Government and speaking personally, I want to associate myself with the position of our colleague from The Netherlands. This meeting has dealt with professional and technical problems of archives from around the world in a friendly and constructive manner, greatly facilitated by the National Archives of Malaysia, our host. But there has been a cloud over this meeting which has now been brought before us by our Dutch colleague. A member in good standing of the ICA, entitled to attend this Round Table, was not permitted to share in these constructive deliberations because of political considerations beyond the control of the National Archives of

Malaysia. The introduction of political consideration into this professional meeting is saddening and regrettable to all concerned with the international development of the archival profession. But we can learn from this experience to ensure that never again will the Round Table Conference be placed in this position. We must ensure that any host nation will guarantee admission of all members of the Round Table. In this period when the world faces many problems, we have a special need to ensure that organizations such as the Round Table, which are concerned with technical, professional, and cultural topics, are allowed to flourish and function in a climate of high-level professionalism, free from the burden of political constraints.

Lundquist of Sweden immediately made a short but strong statement endorsing my remarks on behalf of all the Scandinavian archivists. The matter then returned to roundtable president Jean Favier who summarized the issue, noting the protests that had been made and declaring that the roundtable should not permit such an occasion to arise again. He then declared the discussion closed. As there were no objections, that ended the matter.

So the crisis came to a friendly end. I talked privately with Nor to say that I hoped she understood what I had done. She reassured me that she did, that it had to be said, and that there were only warm good feelings. The Russian representative also came by to say an especially friendly goodbye. I reported all this to our embassy and received its congratulations. We had accomplished all our purposes: We had upheld a high moral principle; brought forth a strong affirmation against the politicizing of these meetings; and avoided offending our Malaysian archival hosts or causing a mess for the embassy to clean up.



The Malaysians had indeed been fine hosts. We met there to participate in the dedication of their handsome new archives building, a splendid facility with a six-story stack and carpeted reading room accented with beautifully hand-carved woodwork. King Ahmad Shah and Queen Afzan attended, and the reception was elegant. Some Third World nations have exceptionally active archival programs and fine buildings like the Malaysian one. These are important expressions of their relatively new nationhood.

The year 1983 was tumultuous for the National Archives and for me. My fight to keep the archives from being politicized—and for that matter to keep my job—reached crisis proportions. Paralleling these events was the rapidly growing movement for NARS independence, with the resulting series of sometimes bitter contests between me and the GSA administrator. My international activities were all wrapped up in this contest. On 13 October 1983 I wrote in my diary, “So all in all the archives war has begun.” Actually the war had begun many months before without my realizing it!

Two days before I was to leave for the roundtable in Czechoslovakia, a major crisis resulted from an article in the *Washington Post*. The article stated that the GSA administrator had “retreated” in a battle we were having over the head of the Office of Presidential Libraries. *Retreated* was the reporter’s word, not mine; but I got blamed for it. I must admit the flight across the Atlantic was a welcome break from the crisis in Washington, but I knew it would follow me and it did. The meeting place for the roundtable was Bratislava, occasioned by the dedication of the new archives building for Slovakia. Meeting in an Eastern European state meant we had more nonarchival speeches and recitations of the Communist commitments to world peace.

The ending of the roundtable did not end my participation this time; as arranged the

previous year, I was invited to join the ICA Executive Committee on its long bus ride to Prague and its subsequent meetings. I was welcomed as a full participant and took an active role throughout the meetings. This committee proved to be a much more active group than the roundtable because it was smaller, almost everyone knew each other, and the translation facilities were excellent. The meetings, ably presided over by Hans Booms, the archivist of West Germany, were informal and lively. There were committee reports on ICA activities but nothing controversial until a German archivist called on European archives to reject the American ideas of records management and the life cycle of records. In not very diplomatic language he said these were not in the European tradition and therefore Europe must develop a new theoretical base for handling archives. This argument produced an uproar. Wilf Smith, archivist of Canada, Frank Evans representing UNESCO, and I all spoke in refutation. Fortunately the idea won no real support and the issue went away. During the meetings there were other reports from the regional branches of ICA, most revealing a very uneven pattern of activities in the primarily Third World nations. But debates were remarkably free of propaganda from Eastern bloc archivists. The only other major controversial item was a proposal to raise the dues. The United States through the National Archives paid the highest of any nation—about \$20,000. I protested the proposal to increase this amount to \$28,000. We finally agreed on a compromise figure of about \$23,000 to be achieved by 1988.

The year 1984 was a great year for the National Archives and was for me the most exciting year of my life. After a decades-long battle and an amazing and extraordinarily tense political campaign, NARS won its freedom from GSA. Both international and domestic activities had to take a back seat to the independence campaign. Fortunately, the fight was largely over by the

time I left for Germany and the tenth ICA Congress in Bonn. There were the usual opening ceremonies—about three hours of pious speeches. But the main excitement was seeing old friends and making new ones. The new archivist of the Soviet Union, Feodor M. Vaganov, greeted me enthusiastically. He had been well briefed on previous U.S.-USSR archival relations. At this congress I was elected to the ICA Executive Committee and also to the Commission on Archival Development (CAD). This body was especially concerned with assisting the development of Third World archives.

A few months later, I participated in another minor historic event, the last UNESCO meeting in which the United States was represented. One of the sections of UNESCO deals with information: information specialists, librarians, and archivists. It has had a positive impact on archives through the Records Archives Management Program (RAMP) ably led for many years by Frank Evans. After several years in Paris, Evans had recently returned to his home base, the National Archives. One of the issues facing UNESCO was his replacement.

Because it seemed clear that the United States would be withdrawing, the U.S. State Department wanted to send a strong delegation to the biannual meeting of this section, which was to meet at UNESCO headquarters in Paris in November 1984. Our delegation was headed by Toni Carbo Bearman, then chairman of the National Commission on Library and Information Services. The other members were Robert Wedgeworth (then executive director of the American Library Association) and me. In addition, Michael McReynolds of the National Archives accompanied us as a most helpful alternate.

The meeting opened with an address by Director-General Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow. In combination with policy disputes on freedom of the press, treatment of Israel, and charges of inefficiency and corruption, M'Bow was a major reason for American

unhappiness with UNESCO. But personally he proved affable if not inspiring. Elections were the first order of business, but because of our impending withdrawal there were no American candidates and therefore we played no role. A number of delegates expressed their sadness at the departure of the United States from the organization. We assured them that the United States had no complaint with this section and that we would try to keep an American presence in their work and hopefully secure some modest government support for international activities for libraries and archives. The three of us delivered long, major interventions. Wedgeworth talked on education and training, I stressed archives, and Bearman addressed the general information scene.

Some of the debates were interesting, particularly those focusing on the shortcomings of UNESCO. During our meeting it was announced that Great Britain was following our lead and also leaving UNESCO. That put an end to all hope, however feeble, that Michael Roper of the Public Records Office might succeed to Evans's old duties. We took no role in the resolutions since they would not apply to us in any case.

This was not to be my last meeting with this UNESCO section. Though the United States was no longer a member, the U.S. State Department and the library profession wanted to keep an American presence there. Therefore in November 1986, I accepted the invitation of the American Library Association (ALA) to attend the section meetings in Paris along with Mohammed Amad, dean of the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. The session opened in the same way as before with about the same speech from Director-General M'Bow. Seated not with the delegates but with the official observers, we did not think we should participate in the discussion. Later, Jacques Tocatlian, an American (UNESCO

had not fired American "civil service"-type people despite our departure from the organization), told us to participate except for voting. We then drafted an intervention stressing American support of UNESCO activities and describing international projects in libraries and archives being carried out by the United States.

The meeting's main focus was the budget problems caused by the almost 25 percent loss resulting from the departure of Great Britain and the United States. I took pleasure in the fact that RAMP programs were commented on favorably by several delegates. In fact, there were several archival delegates to this meeting and, with Kecs-keméti serving as host, we got together for a very nice dinner.

Despite the urging of ALA to rejoin UNESCO and the departure of M'Bow, the United States still remains outside the organization. Although the United States had good reasons for leaving, these problems have largely been corrected: M'Bow is out; anti-Israel and anti-free press biases have been mitigated; and corruption has been curbed. We therefore should rejoin this organization, which has done so much for archives and libraries on the world scene. As a practical step, SAA could emulate the action of the ALA Council in calling for American reentry. I was pleased to support this ALA action while serving on its council.

### **International Activities After 1985**

The National Archives became officially independent on 1 April 1985. In actuality it became *de facto* independent in November 1984 when Ray Kline, the GSA acting administrator, transferred virtually all of the GSA administrator's powers to me, in an enlightened and sensible decision that was typical of him. I returned to Ann Arbor to become dean of the School of Library Science (now School of Information and Library Studies) of the University of Michigan.

I expected that my service on the ICA Executive Committee would soon come to an end. I planned to stay on only until my successor had been appointed and confirmed.

When the next year came around and there still had been no appointment, I flew to Leningrad for the executive committee, feeling a bit awkward and believing that this would certainly be my last meeting. And it was a good one. The Russians had arranged a wonderful series of tours and programs for us, there were no major controversies, and I was treated very well by our hosts. We were honored with not one but two elegant and formal banquets with lots of caviar, wonderful food, but no vodka. The new Gorbachev policy of no alcohol at government affairs was obviously being taken seriously. In fact, when I tried to talk about it with a Russian, he indicated clearly that this was not a topic for public discussion. So we toasted international friendship and harmony with Pepsi Cola, the official beverage for all occasions and still quite a novelty in the Soviet Union. Our meetings and social events were all held in handsome places, some evidently renovated for our arrival. Our final banquet was held in a very new hotel. Beautiful linens, elaborate dishes, sparkling crystal, gleaming tableware, and waiters in impeccable tuxedos greeted us as we entered the banquet room. But shortly after we were seated, we discovered a major problem. All the chairs had been freshly painted with white paint—which was not quite dry. I discovered it quickly and draped my napkin around the back of my chair. By keeping my elbows in, I escaped with little damage. Some of my colleagues were not so fortunate and soon had large white stripes on their jackets and sleeves. But all attendees were practiced diplomats and carried on as though they always dressed as zebras.

Despite the heavy social and touring schedule there was no skimping on business. Several issues occasioned considera-

ble debate. One that came up regularly was the restitution of colonial records to the archives of the former colonies. Another debate, sparked by a delegate from the Caribbean, was whether to use the term "discovery" in relation to Christopher Columbus's journey. Another issue was whether to have an International Archives Day. Budget matters were also a concern because of the decline of the dollar, the currency on which ICA based its budget.

I introduced one of the more important issues of the meeting: to get formal approval by ICA of the Second European Conference on Archives to be held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1989. I was somewhat concerned about winning approval because I thought the Third World nations would object because this would be a meeting primarily of European and North American archivists. I tried to anticipate this objection by pointing out that these Third World nations had their regular regional conferences but this group had seldom had an opportunity to meet. The opposition came from an unexpected quarter: France. Favier, the archivist of France, focused his objections on the title. He wanted it changed so as not to imply a continuation of the First European Conference. (Incidentally, ICA uses the UNESCO definition of *European*, which in addition to Europe includes the United States, Canada, and Israel.) To settle the matter, President Booms put the issue to a straw vote and there were only four negative votes. When the Second European Conference on Archives was actually held in Ann Arbor, Favier, who was by then president of ICA, flew from France to address the conference, participated in it fully, said some very gracious things about me, and promised to promote a Third European Conference.

I thought we would surely have a new archivist of the United States by 1987 and we did, but not in time to attend the ICA Executive Committee in Bern, Switzerland, and the roundtable in Gardone Ri-

viera in Italy in September. Don Wilson had been nominated, but he would not take office until December. We therefore agreed that as I would finish my term at the Paris congress in 1988 and a new election would take place then, I should just go ahead for one more round.

Having someone who was not the archivist of the United States serve on the executive committee and represent this country at the roundtable was not an ideal arrangement. There should be strong representation from the National Archives in these activities. But I do wish that there could also be regular and consistent representation of SAA at the roundtable sessions. Perhaps the chair of the International Archival Affairs Committee could do this, or the executive director, or the president. I am sure it would do much to advance the cause of internationalism in our profession. One of the gratifying changes I have observed in the U.S. archival profession in my quarter-century of involvement has been its steadily enhanced awareness and participation in international events. These events themselves have also improved, both in content and form. With the end of the Cold War and the greater ease of international communication and information exchange, internationalism in American archives has a bright and important future.

It will come as no surprise to anyone to know that I have translated some of my international interest to the library field. The librarians' international organization, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), is quite a different organization from that of the archivists. IFLA has a major meeting every year, which is open to any librarian in the world who wants to attend. It is not dominated by chief national librarians and their libraries. Quite the contrary, you seldom see them there. There are many active American members and there are large delegations from the United States. Frankly, I am not qualified to discuss its political structure for I have

not participated in it, but their sessions resemble ICA sessions. IFLA's president, Hans Peter Geh of Germany, is a friend of long standing, and from my conversations with him I learned that he has a much larger international role than that of ICA presidents. For example, he attends several ALA meetings during his term and participates in similar activities in other parts of the world. It seems to me that one desirable change archivists might try to initiate would be to emulate librarians in their practice of fostering greater participation of working librarians in their meetings. For example, archivists could transform the roundtables (or at least every other one) into a much more open meeting. As it stands now, librarians have much greater opportunity for international activities than do archivists.

A final word on the Second European Conference on Archives. For many years, at least since 1976 when I tried unsuccessfully to have Ann Arbor on the itinerary of one of the postcongress tours after the ICA Washington, D.C., meeting, I had wanted to have an international archival event in my home town. My service on the executive committee gave me the opportunity. We got the money to put on a first-class conference, thanks to grants from the Council on Library Resources, National Commission on Library and Information Services, some local grants, and substantial assistance from University of Michigan sources—particularly the Bentley Library, the University Library, and my own School

of Information and Library Studies. There were planning sessions in Paris and Ann Arbor and a magnificent putting together of all the complex pieces by Francis Blouin, Marjorie Barritt, and their associates at the Bentley Library. What emerged was as good an international meeting as I have attended anywhere. We had delegates and observers from twenty-seven nations. The papers were excellent, the discussions (wonderfully assisted by a superb translation service furnished by the National Archives of Canada) lively, interesting, and significant. The delegates enjoyed the college-town atmosphere and varied social fare. And out of it came in record time a well edited proceedings, complements of the National Archives and Records Administration.<sup>3</sup>

I suppose what I was trying to do was to express in a tangible way my thanks for the wonderful enriching experience all of my varied international archival adventures had brought me. I like to think that this conference brought to other fine archivists from around the world an experience that they, too, will some day recall as a great enrichment of their personal lives and their professional experience. I wish for them the rewards that my international archival adventures have brought me.

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<sup>3</sup>International Council on Archives, *Second European Conference on Archives and Proceedings, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1989*, edited by Judith A. Koucky (Washington, D.C.: ICA, 1989).