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IASA FUTURE AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

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During the Canberra General Assembly the proposals for Constitutional amendments-circulated to all members in July 1992 were discussed at length. Most of the 'cosmetic' amendments were accepted and passed and the Constitution (1992) reflects this. However, some of the major amendments were passed back for further consideration- these were the ones concerned with an expansion of IASA's interests to include audiovisual archives in addition to IASA's primary concern with sound archives.

The reasons for passing them back were surprising to anyone who has worked in IASA over the years- namely that there had not been enough discussion and there was a general lack of information about the reasons for the move.

Even a brief look at the history of the discussions belies this view. Let us attempt to clarify the issue by looking at the history and repeating some of the arguments which have been used for and against.

There were several issues in the draft amendments, but discussion in Canberra centered around an expansion of IASA's interests in audiovisual archives which contain sound documents. Audiovisual archives may be said to have entered the group consciousness of IASA when we first joined the Round Table on Audiovisual Records, an organisation which operates under the auspices of UNESCO. The Round Table was formed in 1979 and has had a membership consisting of IASA, FIAT, FIAF, and the Audiovisual Committees of IFLA and ICA. It is through our membership of the Round Table that interest in audiovisual matters is nourished. We discuss mutual problems with our colleagues in the other Associations as well as less formally during the year. In the mid- 1980's, the Round Table began to realise that certain archives were not able to find representation in any of the constituent Associations. These are the general audiovisual archives which contain film, video, sound, and sometimes photographic material. For several reasons a growing number of archives containing audiovisual materials find themselves without an international Association to represent their interests.

As a result of these indications and because many IASA archives are also audiovisual archives, the Board of IASA began to consider what could be done to help them and others. One option was an expansion of interests to include audiovisual materials in addition to our specialist, interest in sound materials. Initial non-binding proposals, more floating of ideas, were introduced to the membership and discussed in detail with our Round Table colleagues in the late 1980's. The Board considered the issue as early as 1986 when our colleagues in Austria, France and the Netherlands began to widen their scope and extend their interests into audiovisual archives.

In November 1986 at the Stuttgart Executive Board meeting, the Secretary General was asked to produce a report for the membership and IASA opened the debate in the Amsterdam conference in 1987 both in the content of the conference where several papers concerned AV archives, and in the General Assembly. (Phonographic Bulletin No. 49, 1987).

Vienna Conference 1988

In 1988 the debate continued at the Vienna conference in September at a session entitled the Future of IASA. This had presentations from four speakers and because of the interest it generated a second session

was included in the Vienna conference. It was decided not to print the discussion in the Phonographic Bulletin; instead they were printed separately as the Future of IASA and sent to all members in May 1989 asking for reactions and comments as well as to generate further discussion at the Oxford conference in August 1989. Two papers from Vienna on the discussion by Hans Bosma and Rainer Hubert were printed in Phonographic Bulletin No. 53, March 1989.

The primary purpose in forming the Association in 1969 was to establish a body of like minded people with similar aims to function as an intermediary for international cooperation between archives which preserve recorded sound documents. The Association is actively involved in the preservation, organisation and use of sound recordings, techniques of recording and methods of reproducing sound in all fields in which the audio medium is used and in all subjects relating to the professional work of sound archives and archivists, but the changing emphasis of our interests towards audiovisual archives has already been noted several times during previous conferences.

Hans Bosma thought there were clear signals that many members collect not only sound recordings but also other audiovisual materials and cannot find an international platform for discussion or for information exchange. At the Stockholm conference in 1986, France, Austria, and the Netherlands announced that they had widened their scope to audiovisual materials and felt IASA could not meet their needs in this field. Also other organisations such as FIAF or FIAT are, for several reasons, not appropriate organisations for many audiovisual archives to join. Rainer Hubert looked at our relations with other organisations and proposed some interesting ideas for future cooperation and even the formation of a parent organisation. This point was taken up in the Round Table and in the Oxford conference.

The ensuing discussion was extensive and only a summary can be given here. The membership at the time recognised that we are sound archivists with increasing ancillary interests, and that changes are necessary to keep IASA as a dynamic organisation: changes in our scope and changes in our structure and organisation to accommodate this extension of our interest. But which should come first? Logically we have to decide what are the aims and objectives of the association and then devise a Constitution which will help to fulfil those objectives.

Hans Bosma posed the main question:

Is IASA willing and able to change its purposes to include all audiovisual materials and is IASA willing and able to act as an association for audiovisual archivists? The answer will be found in clear purposes.

Three suggestions for change emerged:

- a) IASA could become an international association of sound and other audiovisual archives
- b) An umbrella organisation for the existing audiovisual archive organisations could be established, although it exists informally in the Round Table. This may or may not be practical but it is worth pursuing as part of a cooperative scheme.
- c) The other suggestion was for the merging of all audiovisual organisations into one massive organisation. As soon as we looked at this we saw the impracticality and dangers and disregarded it.

Oxford conference 1989

During the Oxford conference 1989 a further session was devoted to the Future of IASA. One member had taken the trouble to send a detailed written comment after the first paper was circulated and his

comments formed a substantial part of the discussions at the Oxford session. We also had representatives from FIAF and FIAT who added to the discussion on external relations. The resulting discussion was printed in a second separate leaflet Future of IASA Part 2 and was sent to all members in October 1989.

These discussion papers covered a wide range of topics concerning IASA structure, scope and external relations- topics which have exercised the Association ever since, as it appears. At each stage IASA members were asked and encouraged to take part in the debate, but the response was unfortunately very sparse- perhaps a result of busy working lives, or worse, apathy.

At the Oxford conference General Assembly, a Board resolution was presented to the membership. Three of the points are particularly relevant to the present discussion:

1. That the Association continues to represent the interests of sound archives and sound archivists but extends this interest to include other audiovisual media
2. That in future, the Association holds annual conferences on its own, or where appropriate, in conjunction with organisations with similar interests
3. That the Association encourages future cooperation with other audiovisual associations with similar interests

These resolutions were dated 1 September 1989.

One member argued that it was more sensible for institutions and individuals who are involved in different media to be members of several international organisations, and counter arguments came from the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra, Australia, and the National Archives Committee, the majority of who maintain a function-based rather than a media-based institution. The National Archives Committee argue that the majority of their member institutions are already de facto audiovisual archive collections. There is a trend towards the development of multi-media archives whether for practical, economic or philosophical reasons.

The various branches of audiovisual archiving have so much in common that it is in everyone's interest to recognise realities and the capitalise on inherent strengths. At stake in the long run is the recognition and perhaps survival of our profession and the development of a coherent and well-articulated body of theory on which recognition must ultimately rest.

Following the Oxford conference discussions, work began on drafting a new Constitution. These and other developments were summarised in the President's report to the General Assembly at Ottawa in 1990.

Sopron conference 1991

At the Sopron conference in 1991 it was noted in the Secretary General's report that '...since the needs and interest of the membership of the Association have clearly expanded into audiovisual documents and since the programmes of the Association have reflected these evolving interests, the Constitution and By-Laws of IASA should be modified to reflect that interest.' During the week of the conference, draft amendments were drawn up and presented to the membership at the General Assembly on 28 May 1991 for discussion and consideration during the following months. One member sent in a detailed commentary.

Revised draft amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws were sent to the membership in July 1992 and, surprise surprise, in September in Canberra we were informed that not enough discussion and information had been given for members to make up their minds! How do you define enough]

The Round Table and related organisations

Information was asked for during the Canberra conference on the discussions which have taken place with related organisations, whether we had discussed the issue of IASA extending its interests and what the other Associations' reactions were to this move.

As previously mentioned, most of our discussions on this topic arise at the annual Round Table meetings. The Round Table on Audiovisual Records is a group of UNESCO Non- Governmental organisations (NGOs) with similar interests in various aspects of audiovisual archive matters. The Round Table consists of member representatives from FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives), FIAT International Federation of Television Archives), IASA, IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and the AV Committee), ICA (International Council on Archives and the AV Committee) and UNESCO.

All of these NGOs have an interest in audiovisual archives and collections, but only a few are open to include general audiovisual archivists in their current membership structure.

The Round Table members realised early in the 1980's that there was not an Association devoted to audiovisual archives and the growing number of audiovisual archives found themselves without an international Association to represent their interests. Those archives which can will continue to affiliate or remain in membership of the archive Association which best serves their interests. Some, especially the larger national archives which may have separate archives take out membership in several organisations, while others, especially the smaller, integrated archives, are excluded from joining a relevant Association for one reason or another. The Association may have stringent membership conditions, it may be costly, it may not cover all interests adequately. FIAF has a relatively small membership, although it is representative of the majority of main film archives. The membership structure is strict- the primary function is preservation. Dues are high, but financial support of member archives is also extensive, especially to conferences. Audiovisual archives simply do not qualify for membership. FIAT also has a relatively small membership and is largely restricted to television organisations. There are few video archives outside these organisations and many audiovisual archives which are not always served by FIAT's interests. Dues again are quite high and beyond the reach of the smaller audiovisual archive. IASA has less stringent membership entrance and our dues are ludicrously modest for institutions, but that is another argument, and until we start offering more value for money we have little argument for increasing dues to more realistic levels.

The other Round Table partners, IFLA and ICA, represent committees of the Associations involved although the parent Associations have always taken an active interest in Round Table affairs and have put their considerable weight and expertise behind its activities. IFLA has a very large membership of libraries and archives, principally national libraries with national archives attached. They have appointed an Audiovisual Round Table to take an active interest in audiovisual matters in all sorts of libraries including public, special, national and subject archives. They too recently appointed a Committee for Audiovisual Archives.

Both of these last two organisations lack something— a technical committee for audiovisual materials. They depend upon the technical activities and advice of the other three organisations. This is where the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) comes into the equation. The Round Table set up the TCC to advise member associations on technical matters pertinent to audiovisual archives. As you know the TCC

presents Joint Technical Symposia at regular intervals for the information of all Association members, technical and non-technical alike. It also has an active publications programme.

IASA was one of the founding members of the Round Table and has attended all of its meetings. Discussion centres around activities of each of the Associations, conference programmes— each organisation is invited to the others' conferences, joint projects, publications, and activities. There has been a lot of discussion about the role of the Round Table Associations vis-a-vis the provision of membership services for audiovisual archives. Some of the organisations may include audiovisual archives among their membership, others exclude them at present but are considering altering their membership structure to include the smaller archives as 'corresponding' or 'associate' members.

The Round Table itself consists of representatives from existing relevant audiovisual archive Associations— it has no wider membership. Matters of policy are discussed at the Round Table and are taken back to the members' Associations by the representatives. Widening the membership structures of the various organisations to include provision for audiovisual archives also appears consistently on the agenda of the meetings.

IASA has taken part in these discussions about provision for audiovisual archives during the life of the Round Table. Plans for extension of interests have always been discussed openly, and far from objections being raised, the several Associations have encouraged the welcoming attitude of those Associations which were able to include the audiovisual archives in their remit. Although the topic is one of constant interest there have been one or two notable discussions at the Round Table.

In 1987 (see *Phonographic Bulletin* No. 48 May 1987), ICA announced the formation of an audiovisual committee whose main purpose was liaison between the Round Table and the members of ICA with a particular interest in audiovisual matters. The ICA committee on AV saw itself as a liaison between the specific audiovisual archive groups and in no way a rival to any existing groups. This coordinating role was acknowledged as a valuable addition to the audiovisual archive lobby of the Round Table.

At the 9th Round Table meeting in Brussels, March 1989, IASA introduced the topic of extension, arguing that 'the small developing audiovisual archive dealing in a range of audiovisual materials may not qualify for membership of one or other of the specialist organisations, and yet need an international voice to take advantage of developing principles and techniques. The Round Table agreed that they should consider this problem and how the NGOs might serve the interests of these mixed material developing archives.' FIAF also indicated that they were discussing membership structure to try and accommodate the number of regional and specialised archives which do not necessarily qualify for FIAF membership, yet who else is to serve their needs? Some institutions include film museums: can FIAF respond to the changes, and how? Does FIAF open or close the shop?

The next main discussion between the organisations on the topic of extension of interests occurred during the Oxford conference in 1989. During the Future of IASA session, members of FIAF and FIAT were invited to speak to the topic. Their contributions appear in the *Future of IASA Part 2* paper.

David Francis of FIAF said that "FIAF were having the same concerns after fifty years of existence, and that FIAF was looking at the problems from the point of view of the membership. FIAF has only institutional membership and many archives are not eligible for membership of FIAF because of the criteria for membership. FIAF has taken as its main criterion for membership the ability of an archive to preserve the national cultural heritage. The term, preservation is used quite literally. It is very expensive and highly technical and has proved one of the most difficult items to get international funding for, but without preservation none of the other activities can exist in film archives."

David went on to consider the areas of cooperation between the archive Associations. IASA, FIAF and FIAT obviously have a common purpose on the technical front and there are other areas of mutual interest. While not advocating any sort of merger of the Associations, it would be worth exploring a biennial meeting on a topic of mutual interest, albeit retaining separate identities and business sessions as well. The Associations could hold separate conferences in the alternate years and still retain their own identity.

Anne Hanford, the president of FIAT, spoke of the fact that television archives are also concerned with other media, i.e. sound. Because of the organisational structures, members have a common responsibility for radio, music, stills and all kinds of media. FIAT have therefore identified much in common with other audiovisual Associations. There is an interest in closer cooperation in several other areas as we have already done in the technical area. The criteria for membership in FIAT are that full members represent an organisation which is responsible for the custody of a television archive. That, by definition, means most are television organisations.

The suggestion had been that the three main audiovisual archive Associations should consider forming one large organisation to serve all interests, including audiovisual. This one does not meet with approval in the Round Table.

At the *Future 2* meeting, FIAF and FIAT both agreed that a total merger of the Associations is impractical and undesirable. The parent organisations have such different constitutions, rules of membership and structures that such a merger is impossible in the short term. Each Association should maintain its own identity but it is agreed that cooperation must be increased and one of the Associations has to take on some responsibility for the growing number of audiovisual archives and collections which need an international voice. Cooperation between INAS, FIAF and FIAT should be intensified, and perhaps a coordinating council formed. Views and information are constantly exchanged, joint international working parties formed for the benefit of all members. The Round Table could be used to set up additional coordinating committees in subject areas of mutual interest.

The final question in this particular discussion remains: should IASA change and broaden its terms of membership and increase its hospitality to the benefit of the audiovisual archive community at large?

NOTE: Documents cited in this article are available from IASA. Anyone who needs extra copies of the Future of IASA Parts 1 and 2 could write to me (Helen Harrison) at the address on the inside of the front cover of this issue.