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A personal review of thirty years of IASA (1969 - 1999)

IASA was born during the week beginning August 18th 1969 during the annual conference of the International Association of Music Libraries (IAML). It began when several sound archivists (all members of IAML) gathered in a room at the Institute of Theatre Sound and Picture in Amsterdam. For more than a year they had been planning to found an association which should be devoted specifically to questions related to sound archives. Two associations concerned with the documentation of sound carriers did exist already, namely IAML (through its Record Libraries Commission) and the Fédération Internationale des Phonothèques (FIP). However, those at the meeting were convinced that the activities of the two organisations did not help them to attain their archival ambitions: FIP showed hardly any commitment at all, and IAML was primarily concerned with the documentation of musical manuscripts and scores. Sound carriers played a subordinate role and the only recordings that interested IAML were those which contained music. In brief, those concerned with sound carriers of all types felt they were the 'stepchildren' of IAML and FIP and found the situation increasingly objectionable. But they realised that international collaboration in their field was an absolute must, especially in the face of rapid technological progress.

It was these convictions which informed the meeting of IASA's founders at that initial meeting in August 1969. Their names have gone down in IASA's history: they were, among others, Patrick Saul (British

Institute of Recorded Sound, London), Donald L. Leavitt (Library of Congress, Washington), Philip Miller (Rodgers & Hammerstein Archives, New York), Dietrich Lotichius (Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Hamburg), Herbert Rosenberg (Nationaldiskoteket, Kopenhagen), Claes Cnattingius (Sveriges Radio, Stockholm). Rolf Schuursma (Stichting Film en Wetenschap, Utrecht), Timothy Eckersley (BBC, London).

At the end of that same week, Friday 22nd August, 1969, the official foundation ceremony took place with twenty-four participants. The organisation was named International Association of Sound Archives (IASA). Taking into consideration the rather primitive means of worldwide communication in those distant days, the founders of the organisation expressed all but Utopian aims. Don Leavitt (Washington) was elected first president of IASA. Rolf Schuursma became secretary.

Some of the earliest challenges and tests of strength were in the diplomatic rather than in the professional field. In 1972, the association comprised 40 institutions and 37 personal members. IASA was not able to organize annual meetings by itself, therefore a larger organisation's infrastructure had to be used. IAML was the obvious choice and for many years IAML and IASA held their annual conferences together and inspired one another with their different fields of work. After a series of meetings in 1978-1980 a so-called "Joint IAML/IASA Working Committee on Music and Sound Archives" was founded. Claes Cnattingius (Sveriges Radio Stockholm), Derek Lewis (BBC London), Marie-France Calas (Bibliothèque Nationale Paris) and Ulf Scharlau (Süddeutscher Rundfunk Stuttgart) were appointed members of

the Joint Committee. Its task was to meet before the annual conferences in order to organise events in which both associations shared interests and to minimise conflicts.

In the mid 1970s a younger generation of archivists became influential in IASA. Two colleagues in particular should be mentioned: David Lance (then at the Imperial War Museum, London) and Dietrich Schüller (Phonogramm-Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna). They were soon to take on important functions in IASA's board.

IASA has been fortunate in continuing to find highly qualified personalities who are willing to run for positions on the executive board of the organisation. The roll-call of presidents includes: Donald L. Leavitt (USA, 1969-1972), Timothy Eckersley (England, 1972-1975), Dietrich Schüller (Austria, 1975-1978), Rolf Schuursma (Netherlands, 1978-1981), David Lance (England, 1981 -1984), Ulf Scharlau (Germany, 1984-1987), Helen Harrison (England, 1987-1990), Gerald Gibson (USA, 1990-1993), James McCarthy (Australia, 1993-1996) and Sven Allerstrand (Sweden, 1996-1999). General Secretaries (the backbone of our association) have included: Rolf Schuursma (Netherlands, 1969-1975), David Lance (England 1975-1981), Helen Harrison (England, 1981 -1987), Jean-Claude Hayoz (Switzerland, 1987-1990), Sven Allerstrand (Sweden, 1990-1996) and the current secretary Albrecht Häfner (Germany, since 1996).

IASA's work has been determined by various themes and topics. Browsing the past issues of *Phonographic Bulletin* (subsequently *IASA journal*), one gets a fascinating insight into the development that sound archives have undergone within the last thirty years.

It is striking how often IASA has managed to engage with developments in the field of sound archiving and new technologies of audio-documentation at the earliest possible stage. In the early years IASA was mainly concerned with information on archives and archive structures in the member countries. As early as 1972 the Bulletin reported on archives in the Soviet Union, and this was followed during the next ten years by reports on other Asian countries (notably China), and Africa. Methodical issues and principal questions addressed by archives dominated the agenda, such as:

- evaluation and acquisition of oral history recordings
- automated documentation
- copyright
- training
- specific problems of radio sound archives
- the merging of audio and video collections
- questions concerning the evaluation of audio recordings as historical source material.

IASA's Technical Committee was founded in 1975 and has had an enormous impact on IASA's work as a whole. IASA owes much of its high international reputation to the excellent work of the Technical Committee which has been dominated by the following topics:

- the treatment and restoration of historical audio recordings
- standards for an international tape exchange (1978)
- the role of the compact disc (1982)

- automation of archive systems(1989)
- analogue and digital technologies for restoration and long-term protection of endangered recorded sound collections.

Other questions frequently discussed have concerned cooperation with partner organisations such as IAML, Association française des Archives Sonores (AFAS), Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC), International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), International Federation of Television Archives (FIAT) and International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) and especially UNESCO. Another regular topic is the discussion of IASA's future roles (1989) and a *Philosophy of AV-Archiving* (since 1992). Digitisation has dominated the agenda since 1993.

Like similar associations, IASA has been subject to organisational change and has always had to adapt to constantly emerging problems. In the beginning IASA acted primarily as a union of professional institutions. The forming of specialised committees encouraged the discussion of several sub-disciplines in the field of archives. Presently the following committees are in operation: Discography, Cataloguing and Documentation, National Archives, Radio Sound Archives, Technical Committee. Discussion within the committees increased IASA's professionalism.

IASA succeeded in recruiting many new members in the 1970s and 1980s most of whom came from the US and Australia, including a large number of private collectors. Not surprisingly, this development had constitutional effects on IASA.

National interests of many countries have been given added weight by IASA itself through the foundation of

National Branches. These platforms help promote national interest within the executive board and IASA as a whole. With their excellent connections to Non-Governmental Organisations, both Helen Harrison, IASA General Secretary for many years, and Dietrich Schüller have boosted the Association's prestige by furthering its application to become a member of UNESCO. This success has enabled IASA to recruit new members from non-Western countries, i.e. countries in Asia, in Africa and most recently in South America. Since the end of the Cold War, IASA has gained many new members from the former socialist countries of Middle and Eastern Europe.

At the Helsinki Conference in 1993, the possible extension of IASA activities into the visual field (principally video) was the centre of discussion. This was a case of history repeating itself. A clash of interests with existing organisations, such as FIAT, could have developed. As was the case thirty years ago, diplomatic skill is needed in dealing with this kind of problem.

My review of thirty years of IASA can be summarised as follows. A professional organisation operating on a world-wide basis, even if it is relatively small, can succeed in pursuing and reaching its targets through patient persistence. The present and future of audio archiving and documentation is and will continue to be dominated by digitisation. Digitisation of collected items, changes in methods of working within archives and the development from archivist to data manager are the main challenges our profession is facing today. The networks of communication are getting tighter and tighter. Internet and E-Mail systems provide us with means of communication that the founding members of IASA could not have imagined in their boldest visions. If IASA succeeds in further increasing

the professionalism of its members and member institutions, if IASA succeeds in encouraging its members to cooperate with and within the association and if IASA succeeds in maintaining open and fair cooperation with other professional organisations, then there will be no cause for concern about its future. However, it is also necessary to professionalise IASA's management. Moreover, independent initiatives or jealousies of single nations and institutions have to take second place to the common target of a world-wide network in the field of audio archives.

We can only reach this target together.
With this in mind: Ad multos annos,
IASA!

Ulf Scharlau, Südwestrundfunk