

Forty Years of IASA – a brief introduction

By Grace Koch and Albrecht Häfner

You may wheedle only a weary smile out of some people if you tell them that this year is the 40th anniversary for IASA. Only 40 years – that's ridiculous! For them, a millennium or, at least, a centenary is the minimum period to commemorate an event such as 500 years of the Gutenberg Bible (1455 – 1955), or 500 years of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus (1492 – 1992), or the 300th birthday of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1985). On the other hand there are people who think that being married for 40 years to the same person may be a very long time. IASA members have many special memories of friends, of working together and of being part of an organization that is truly more than a professional society. Those 40 years have been very special.

Let us keep up this kind of comparison, which is a perfect fit to describe IASA's history. Let us start in 1969 in Amsterdam, a defining moment that challenged some young and angry sound archivists to band together in order to become more independent. Contrary to their more venerable relatives, such as the paper-based archives, libraries and museums who had created long-standing associations dealing with their own requirements, these sound archivists tumbled into their first adolescent crisis when they saw the need to separate from IAML, their parent organization, and to create their own Association, IASA. So much has happened since then! IASA gained independence and autonomy from IAML with its own constitution, widened its scope to all audiovisual media, and adopted its own philosophy. IASA has travelled around the world with annual conferences, its members have spoken peer-to-peer with institutions of equal status through the CCAAA, it has dealt with the crossing over of analogue to digital – in other words, IASA has gone far. It is respected, it has a say, it is in demand. In September 1981, David Lance, one of IASA's founding fathers, said "... The Association became 'adolescent' and subsequently reached 'adulthood' and even 'maturity'. We believe that is where we are now.

The celebration committee debated how to present IASA's development in the best way. Initially we considered taking all presidential reports printed in the *Phonographic Bulletins* and *IASA Journals* and publishing them as a description of IASA's history. The large number of pages involved and the question of who would actually read them persuaded us to reduce the volume down to the first and last reports of those Presidents who wrote for the *Bulletins* and *Journals*. We have chosen to include, however, all of the Presidential articles by David Lance because they document much of the early organizational development. We are sure that not only the landmarks of IASA but also the continuous development of the Association can be seen from their writings. Additionally, there are some articles on IASA's 'prenatal' phase, its first shaky steps and its launch as well as a special history of IASA. We have left in most of the original spelling errors so that you can see how far we have come and have tried to keep at least a semblance of the original typefaces. We have put the titles in hypertext so that you can go immediately to the articles that you choose from the Table of Contents. Last but not least this commemorative work contains a "picture book" of all programme covers and some accompanying material from the annual conferences. We chose to publish a CD rather than a print version so that we could include a larger number of important documents. In the year 2019, IASA members may find that this CD contains enough material to serve as a strong basis for a major work on the subject "Fifty Years of IASA".

Although IASA is certainly not a marriage agency, it has spawned a number of romances. Rolf Schuurmsma, IASA's first Secretary-General, and Anne Briegleb, Vice President in 1976, set a good example when they met through IASA, fell in

love and married later. Who knows how many other such relationships have been encouraged through mutual involvements in IASA. We shall see what the future will bring.

Therefore, happy birthday, dear IASA, ad multos annos! The life expectancy of modern people is about 80 years, and we wish IASA an existence at least as long or even much longer. And let us join those who believe that 40 years are sufficient to celebrate. We are simply building up a good tradition as we can see by our great celebration of IASA's 30th birthday in 1999 in Vienna.