IASA – 40 years: an overview[1]

Ilse Assmann (ed.), Grace Koch, Dietrich Schüller, George Boston, Crispin Jewitt, Kurt Deggeller, Eva Fønss-Jørgensen

BIRTH OF IASA

In the summer of 1969 in Amsterdam, the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) was established to function as a forum for international cooperation between archives preserving recorded sound and audiovisual documents.

IASA's beginning is directly linked to IAML (*International Association of Music Libraries).* IAML supported the floundering first few years when IASA lacked infrastructure and resources to host its own conferences. IAML had been officially founded in Paris in July 1951. Its Radio Library Commission which also had a Radio Sound Archive Subcommittee was primarily interested in music recordings.

Before IASA came into existence, earlier attempts to unite sound archivists were made. The first initiative came from linguists who, in 1962, formed IALSA, *(International Association of Linguistic Sound Archives)* at a meeting in Amsterdam. In 1963 already, IALSA was absorbed by a newly founded organization, the *Fédération Internationale des Phonothèques* (FIP). The inactivity of FIP, however, led to the decline of the organization which practically faded away during the early 1970s.

IASA was founded after sound archivists within IAML expressed, in view of the inactivity of FIP, their intention to form an international body for *all* kinds of sound archives. The first meeting took place in the *Département de la Musique* of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris on September 4, 1968 and was attended by IAML members Patrick Saul (Director of the British Institute of Recorded Sound), Vladimir Fedorov (Director of the Department and President of IAML), Dr. Kurt Dorfmuller (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München), Dr. Herbert Rosenberg (Director of the Nationaldiskotek in Kopenhagen), Dr. Israel Adler (Director of the Jewish Music Research Centre at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem), FIP president, Roger Décollogne (Director of the *Phonotèque Nationale*), and oral historian, Rolf Schuursma, Rolf Schuursma from the Institute of History at the University of Utrecht, represented spoken word archives. Dr. Adler was the Chairperson.

At first a joint committee was intended between the Record Libraries' Commission and the newly founded IASA. In principle the roles were clear: IAML was interested in music recordings and IASA in all recordings. IAML also represented a branch of librarianship, whereas IASA was a response to the fact that sound recordings were more often held in an archival environment - a separate professional context. IAML was not sufficiently open to the technical challenges in the sound archives, which are most acute in the areas of unpublished recordings, generally held in archives, rather than the

---

[1] It should be noted that this article does not pretend to be complete at all. It is merely an overview of 40 years of activities and growth for IASA. Research has just started and it is hoped that over the next few years a complete history of IASA will be available – Ed.

published phonograms held by IAML member libraries. It would take a while before full agreement was achieved to avoid overlapping and even competing activities between IAML's Record Libraries' Commission and IASA.

The actual foundation of IASA took place in 1969 during the course of the IAML Annual Conference in Amsterdam. On August 18, 1969 Lou Hoefnagels (Director of the Theater Klank en Beeld), Rolf Schuursma, Patrick Saul, Donald L. Leavitt (Library of Congress), Philip Miller (Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound in New York), Dietrich Lotichius (Norddeutscher Rundfunk in Hamburg), Herbert Rosenberg, Claes Cnattingius (Swedish Radio), and Timothy Eckersley (BBC), met at the *Institute of Theater Klank en Beeld (Institute for Theatre Sound and Image*) in Amsterdam to prepare the draft constitution. They would become known as the founding members of IASA.

The formal launch of IASA took place on August 22, 1969 with 24 participants. The official name of the new organization was the *International Association for Sound Archives*. The first Executive Board was made up by Don Leavitt (President), Patrick Saul (Vice-President), Claudie Marcel-Dubois (Vice-President), Rolf Schuursma (Secretary), and Claes Cnattingius (Treasurer).

During the joint IASA/IAML Conference in Leipzig in June 1970, a decision that IASA should have its own periodical, led to the birth of the *Phonographic Bulletin*. The first issue was in A4 format with different shades of green for the cover and lettering and highlighting the IASA logo designed by Rob van der Elzen, a graphic designer with the Film Research Foundation. From Issue no. 16 onward the lettering on the cover was changed to black, and in 1977 the A4 format was replaced by the B5 format. IASA's publications would regularly change and be updated to improve communication and to facilitate the exchange of information between members. The first issue of the *Phonographic Bulletin* was launched by Rolf Schuursma and Phita Stern (Utrecht) during the 1971 joint IASA/IAML conference in St Gallen, which was also the first conference where IASA had a separate program.

By the time the 1972 IASA/IAML conference took place in Bologna, Italy, IASA had 40 institutional and 37 personal members. Under the leadership of Timothy Eckersley, IASA further expanded its membership and became a strong partner with IAML of the joint annual conference in London in 1973.

The election of the next IASA Executive Board in 1975 during the Montreal Conference was of particular significance. Two new members were elected that would help to take IASA decisively on a route to strengthen the internal structures of the association and its efficiency to outside: Dietrich Schüller (Director of the Phonogrammarchiv in Vienna) and David Lance (Keeper of the Department of Sound Records of the Imperial War Museum in London). Dietrich Schüller was elected as President, and David Lance as Secretary. The new Executive Board made dramatic changes to IASA. One of the first was to have midterm meetings to ensure better planning of annual conferences, and to discuss issues and activities in which IASA had an interest. The Executive Board also agreed to include an *Editor* on the Board with Rolf Schuursma as the first Editor. Various *committees* were

formed to look after the specialized interests of the membership. The first committee was the Technical Committee with Dietrich Schüller as Chair, followed by a Copyright Committee under Robért Ternisien.

Another important step was a major revision of the constitution. While the first constitution was a copy of that of IAML, the new one was adapted to the specific needs of IASA. It was adopted at the Annual Conference in Lisbon 1978. There have been several revisions since, but its basic structure is still the same.

The year 1978 was nearly a watershed year for IASA. David Lance and Dietrich Schüller were about to abandon joint annual conferences with IAML. But the incoming president, Rolf Schuursma and a few IASA members, who had strong music relations, were reluctant to do so. As a thematic bond between the two associations a new Joint IAML/IASA Committee on Music and Sound Archives was established to coordinate the activities of both organizations until 1983 when Ulf Scharlau (IASA) and Dietrich Lotichius (IAML) formed the Radio Sound Archives Committee under the aegis of IASA and suspended the IAML Radio Sound Archives Subcommittee.

YEARS OF GROWTH
The 1978 constitution permitted the establishment of national branches within a country or region. It also provided a legal framework for cooperation with *Affiliated Organisations* or independent associations with similar interest. The first national branches were established in Great Britain, the Netherlands, France and Australia. But several countries were already interested to unite audiovisual archives under one umbrella, something IASA as an association of sound archives did not cater for. Austria, therefore, never officially liaised with IASA, while the original Netherlands IASA branch broke away to form an independent *Association of AudioVisual Archives*. National branches also wanted to include non-IASA members, which had the potential to weaken IASA. In the early 1980s, following administrative difficulties with IASA International, the French and the Australian national branches broke away to form AFAS (*Associacion française des archives sonores*) and ASRA (*Australasian Sound Recordings Association*) as independent, but still IASA affiliated associations. This situation led to a drop in the number of IASA members, which was, however, compensated soon by the further growth.

IASA's first solo conference was held in 1988 in Vienna. It was attended by more than 100 delegates, and experienced as an advantage as IASA could concentrate on its own affairs. Consequently, joint conferences with IAML were replaced during the following years by solo events or joint conferences with other audiovisual associations such as ARSC (Association for Recorded Sound Collections), FIAT (International Federation of Television Archives), SEAPAVAA (Southeast Asia-Pacific Audiovisual Archive Association) and ASRA.

The late 1980s and 1990s were a time of tremendous expansion of IASA, especially in the establishment of cooperation with UNESCO. Helen Harrison, a Board member for over fifteen years,

was instrumental in the establishment of the UNESCO Round Table, which later became the CCAAA (Co-ordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations) under the leadership of Crispin Jewitt. The Technical Committee of IASA joined cooperation with Technical Committees of organisations such as FIAT, FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives), IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) and ICA (International Council on Archives) and eventually formed the UNESCO TCC (Technical Coordination Committee) with George Boston of IASA as Chair. This body organised the third and fourth Joint Technical Symposiums (JTS), which were and still are one of the most important professional meetings in audiovisual archiving. IASA also became closely involved in the UNESCO Memory of the World programme.

This period was also a fertile one for publications about audiovisual archive matters. Several 'Special Publications' were written, including *An Archive Approach on Oral History* in 1978 and in 1983 *Sound Archives: A Guide to their Establishment and Development* by David Lance. For UNESCO Helen Harrison wrote the publication *AV Archives: A Practical Reader* which is still regularly accessed on the UNESCO website. In 1995, a *Glossary of Terms Related to the Archiving of Audiovisual Material* was published on the UNESCO website. This was the result of nearly five years work by a team from the Round Table and led by Gerry Gibson and Sven Allerstrand of IASA. *The Glossary* includes French, German and Spanish terms, as well as English terminology from both sides of the Atlantic. In 1978 Briegleb, Ann & Don Niles compiled the first *Directory of Member Archives*. The 2nd edition of the *Directory of Member Archives* was compiled in 1982 by Grace Koch.

IASA's publications grew from the first Phonographic Bulletin in 1970 to four Information Bulletins and two IASA Journals per annum. The Phonographic Bulletin was renamed *IASA Journal* in 1993 under the editorship of Grace Koch. Chris Clark as editor at the time launched IASA's own website during the late 1990's. Currently, IASA publishes two Information Bulletins, two eBulletins and two Journals per year, and maintains and updates the website regularly. IASA also maintains a listserv to facilitate the exchange of information between members

With their excellent connections to non-governmental organizations, both Helen Harrison 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, Africa, and 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.

During the current decade IASA actively expanded its membership to Africa and South America with conferences held in 2003 in Pretoria, South Africa, and in México in 2006. A partnership between Dietrich Schüller and Albrecht Häfner in particular saw a series of very successful workshops across the world. The Board became truly representative of its international membership with members elected from India, Mexico, South Africa and Canada. IASA is currently respected for taking the lead by setting standards to digitally preserving sound and audiovisual collections.

IASA: THE ORGANIZATION

IASA has members from more than 60 countries, representing audiovisual archives and personal interests that are distinguished by their focus on particular subjects and areas. This includes archives for all sorts of musical recordings, historic, literary, folkloric and ethnological sound documents, theatre productions and oral history interviews, bioacoustics, environmental and medical sounds, linguistic and dialect recordings, as well as recordings for forensic purposes.

Every three years the IASA membership elects the Executive Board to oversee the business of the organization. Various committees, sections, and task forces are responsible for developing the work of IASA, and these serve as important information and discussion conduits in addition to dealing with specific areas of interest.

- The *Cataloguing and Documentation Committee*. The IASA Editorial Group, originally convened by Mary Miliano, compiled and edited the *IASA Cataloguing Rules*, which is a manual for the description of sound recordings and related audiovisual media. An electronic version is available on the IASA Website. It is also available in Spanish as *Reglas de Catalogación de IASA (2005 ed.);*
- The *Discography Committee*. The *National Discography* document provides guidelines on best practices for members who may have a responsibility for establishing national discographies in their countries, who intend to establish such a service, or who may be seeking funding;
- The *Technical Committee* devotes itself to all technical aspects of recording, storage, and reproduction, including new recordings, transfers, and storage technologies. Producing special publications that enable the audiovisual archive community to make educated decisions, is a main concern of the committee. The series "*Standards, Recommended Practices and Strategies*" includes:
    - IASA-TC 03, *The Safeguarding of the Audio Heritage: Ethics, Principles and Preservation Strategy*, Version 3, December 2005, (Dietrich Schüller (Ed.)), which has been translated into German, French, Swedish, Italian, Spanish and Russian.
    - The IASA-TC 04, *Guidelines on the Production and Preservation of Digital Objects* (Kevin Bradley (Ed.)). The first edition (2004) is also available in Spanish and Italian. The revised, second edition, substantially enlarged and updated, was released in 2009.
- The *Training and Education Committee* recently was revitalized under the leadership of Vice-President, Pio Pelizzari, and concerns itself with audiovisual training and education in the educational context, bibliographies of training and education-related publications, as well as concentrated actions in gaining multifunctional training and education material;
- The *National Archives Section*.. Policy guidelines for the *legal deposit of sound recordings* have been published and are available on the Web site;
- The *Radio Sound Archives Section*. A name change to *Broadcast Archives Section* to include television archives was approved by the General Assembly during the 2008 Conference in Sydney, Australia;

- The *Research Archives Section* concerns itself with special issues relating to audiovisual archives whose holdings include collections of recordings originally made for research purposes.

IASA's Technical Committee follows closely the progress of technology, and the association's members can call upon a pool of expertise for help and advice on digitization and problems arising from the use of computer storage systems for heritage collections. As such IASA has published the following publications in addition to those already mentioned:

- Treatment and restoration of historical audio recordings.
- Standards for International Tape Exchange (1978).
- 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.

IASA "Task Forces" report on specific topics of interest to the membership such as selection criteria and endangered carriers. These and other reports will be made available on the IASA Web site as they are completed. In this regard the IASA published the Task Force findings to establish *Selection Criteria of Analogue and Digital Audio Contents for Transfer to Data Formats for Preservation Purpose* (Majella Breen, Gila Flam et al. (Ed.)).

IASA's first honorary member was Tim Eckersley in 1980. Current honorary members are Claes M. Cnattingius (Sweden), Gerald Gibson (U.S.A.), Carlo Marinelli (Italy), and R.L. Schuursma (the Netherlands).

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF IASA PRESIDENTS AND TERMS SERVED:

	Term	Name	Institution
1	1969–1972	Donald Leavitt	Library of Congress, United States
2	1972–1975	Timothy Eckersley	BBC, United Kingdom
3	1975–1978	Dietrich Schüller	Phonogrammarchiv, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria
4	1978–1981	Rolf L. Schuursma	Foundation Film and Science, The Netherlands
5	1981–1984	David G. Lance	Imperial War Museum, United Kingdom
6	1984–1987	Ulf Scharlau	Süddeutscher Rundfunk, Germany
7	1987–1990	Helen P. Harrison	Open University, United Kingdom
8	1990–1993	Gerald D. Gibson	Library of Congress, United States
9	1993–1996	James McCarthy	National Film and Sound Archives, Australia
10	1996–1999	Sven Allerstrand	Arkivet för Ljud och Bild, Sweden
11	1999–2002	Crispin Jewitt	British Library National Sound Archive, UK
12	2002–2005	Kurt Deggeller	MEMORIAV, Switzerland
13	2005–2008	Richard Green	National Library of Canada, Canada
14	2008–	Kevin Bradley	National Library of Australia, Australia

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS:

1. Lance, David. 1978. An Archive Approach to Oral History. (Special Publication No.1). Imperial War Museum & International Association of Sound Archives. [reprinted 1985]

2. Briegleb, Ann & Don Niles (comps.). 1978. Directory of Member Archives. (Special Publication No. 2). International Association of Sound Archives.

3. Koch, Grace (comp.). 1982. Directory of Member Archives. 2nd edition. (Special Publication No. 3). International Association of Sound Archives.

4. Lance, David (ed.). 1983. Sound Archives: A guide to their establishment and development. (Special Publication No. 4). International Association of Sound Archives.

5. Harrison, Helen P. (ed.). 1984. Selection in Sound Archives: Collected papers from IASA conference sessions. (Special Publication No. 5). International Association of Sound Archives.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Schuursma, R. IASA: The first ten years: Some personal memories. IASA J. 1994, 3 (May), 5–15.
2. Schuursma, R. Keynote Address to the IASA Annual Conference, Vienna, Austria, September 18–25, 1999. IASA J. 1999, 14 (December), 6–10.
3. Scharlau, U. A personal review of thirty years of IASA (1969–1999). IASA Inform. Bull. 1999, Special Issue (August), 9–11.
4. Assmann, I (Ed.) IASA Membership Directory, 2007.