

The past century has been the century of sound and moving image. Amongst ourselves this piece of information is self evident, and we hear it repeated often at conferences and speeches. The way of documenting our history and knowing our past now includes the new sound and audiovisual documents, and has done for over a century. With these dynamic time based documents came a new set of imperatives; where libraries and archives were once content to wait until the documents of their time were no longer active, and then take them from their shelves, boxes and folders and incorporate them into the archives of the world's memory, we have learnt, often to our detriment, that we only have a finite time to acquire our collection material before the ravages of decay and technical obsolescence take them from us, and we commenced a race to acquire and save as much of our AV heritage as we can. As these documents took centre stage as records of our more recent past, still more challenges awaited the libraries and archives that acquired them; we now know that we need to interact in the digital environment, even more quickly than before, and take an active part in determining the format, structure and architecture of the information we acquire.

Using archival collections was once an elite practice, and the trusted and verified scholar could blow the dust from the boxes and reverently use that content. In the last century, we AV archivists invited our users into our collections, wheeled out our dust free machines, and provided access to our precious collections. In the present we are now providing access to people we have never spoken to and will probably never know. We aspire to preservation practices that are part of our everyday workflow. Recognising the large technical challenge and responding to it has led to the realisation that acquisition, preservation and access are part of a single practice in which each part depends and relies on the other.

Sound and audiovisual archives everywhere have adapted and changed, and are still adapting and changing with an ever increasing sophistication in our understanding of the environment in which we operate. Embracing that change while preserving the principles that underpin the core reason for being, has been, and remains, a difficult balance. This balance has been achieved with varying degrees of success in many parts of the world, and has a way to go in many others. It is inevitable, however, that the sound archiving community will need to think about how we do things differently in the light of how things have changed.

In the same way that our collecting institutions have grasped that nettle, IASA must think about how we remain a valuable and significant organisation that is different from that of 40 years ago. As the opportunities offered to IASA to become involved in the changing socio-technical environment grow, we need to be able to respond and participate. So to be more internationally responsive do we need to be more legally constituted? It is a concern that IASA is not a legal entity, and the Executive Board will be moving to address that immediately under our existing constitution.

However, there is a need to take a deeper look at our constitution to see how it helps and hinders us in our endeavours, and to consider the concerns of our members. At the Athens 2009 conference, the Board and the membership discussed some of the issues that have arisen as a result of our old constitution, and a small committee has been charged with the task of developing those ideas, and investigating the strengths and shortfalls of our organisation. They will provide the Board with a report indicating the issues that need to be addressed. Constitutional reform is a slow process within IASA, ironically because of its constitution, but this is a safety net which will ensure the best possible result, and we will make sure there is a forum to consider the issues that have been raised at the 2010 IASA/AMIA joint conference in Philadelphia in November next year.

Likewise, the sections and committees have nominated a member to review and revise the draft "Professional Ethical Principles for IASA". It is expected that we will have a final version for our Philadelphia meeting next year.

So the challenges that face IASA are in finding a way that we can best move forward in our organisation and in its programs and initiatives, to encourage our members to remain productive and enthusiastic, but to find a useful and reflexive structure that supports it.

The next two years will be pivotal in reshaping our organisation as we review our key documents and clarify our purpose. I encourage you all to express your views and participate in the discussion to make this a fruitful and representative process.

Next year's conference, in Philadelphia, USA, (mid way between Washington and New York), will be an exciting event, not only because so much that is critical to IASA will be discussed, but also because we will be meeting with AMIA, the Association of Moving Image Archivists, an organisation whose interests overlap with some of ours. The call for papers will be out soon, and I look forward to seeing your paper proposals. More news on the IASA list soon.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Bradley

Canberra, Australia
October 2009