

International Notes

Edited by Ewan Maidment

The XIVth International Congress on Archives, Seville, September 2000

Correspondent: George Nichols

The Vandals visited the city of Seville in AD426 and, having destroyed what was there, decided to stay on. The Visigoths were there within a century of that and also found it a suitable spot to settle. In September 2000 it was the Archivists who visited – to see and to learn and to listen but not to stay.

The four-yearly congresses of the ICA – the centrepiece of the ICA's activities for many – are the culmination of four to six years of extraordinary planning and preparation by the hosts. With upwards of two thousand five hundred delegates these are events which require extensive cooperation and liaison with the host city's accommodation resources and facilities. The city of Seville in southern Spain beckoned and welcomed an enthusiastic bunch of Australian archivists to this Congress. If you include the Australians living abroad there were certainly more than thirty Australians attending.

For Australians, a journey to a Congress is usually no small matter – they have always been held in the northern hemisphere (eg in recent times Bonn 1984, Paris 1988, Montreal 1992, Beijing 1996) – but it is a journey I would recommend – you can start planning now for Vienna in 2004. And of course travelling to a Congress affords the opportunity to visit other places en route.

Undoubtedly the formal highlight of the whole Congress was the appearance of His Majesty, The King of Spain, who opened the Congress with a gracious and thoughtful speech and then spent some time touring the special exhibitions area and meeting participants.

Congresses are big sprawling events that take place in large spaces. They run the risk therefore of being impersonal and inaccessible. But speak to any Australian

archivists who have attended a Congress and you will be reassured to find that they are anything but impersonal. Certainly the formal meetings, the opening ceremony, the plenary sessions and the business sessions of the ICA can be a bit arid. But they are only a part of a much bigger scene which at times appears more like a marketplace where friends meet, new friendships are formed and ideas and opinions are exchanged, all in a spirit of great fellowship and goodwill.

The program for the Seville Congress focused on the relevance and relationship of archives with modern society and within that broad heading the individual segments managed to cover most of the themes and issues familiar to archivists wherever they practise. Presenters are invited by the host country program committee to participate. At this Congress Anne-Marie Schwirtlich was invited to give a presentation on the topic, 'The archival contribution to quality management in the public and private sector'. The formal contents of the Congress should soon be available through the reconstructed ICA website (www.ica.org) so I won't attempt to summarise them here except to comment that the presentations showed the usual exemplary research and preparation and provided the participants with the opportunity to hear many prominent archivists present their ideas. Participation is always difficult in such large gatherings, but the Spanish hosts excelled in being able to facilitate a significant number of comments and questions of the speakers at the end of each session. There was a pleasing spontaneity to the interventions which I heard.

The best parts of the Congress however are the informal parts. I urge you to seek out colleagues who have attended and hear their version. To me it was always a splendid sight to see the entrance lobbies of the congress site, the dining hall and the many external spaces thronged with archivists from so many countries meeting again or meeting for the first time and engaging in fervent conversation. It is the opportunity to meet those whom you have read and whose writings you have admired from afar – or indeed in some cases those who have read you! Just a word on the site. The Congress Centre is a modern purpose-built exhibition and conference facility on the outskirts of Seville and its origins are probably connected with the 1992 Expo held in that city. In all respects the facilities were equal to the task of hosting a large international congress conducted in six languages simultaneously. While it involved a journey out of the city the facilities, including the catering, made it a pleasant place to spend the day.

The indefatigable ASA President Gavan McCarthy I observed was quick to perceive the possibilities and relentlessly worked the crowd seeking out colleagues to speak with, to deal with and to arrange with. He was but one of many making the most of the opportunities that an international professional meeting of this size presents.

The Congress is also the culmination of the ICA's four-year planning cycle so there is much ICA business transacted. ICA Sections and Committees now complete their work program on this four-year cycle and can usually take the opportunity to hold a meeting at the Congress. For Committees it is also the end and the beginning

as membership is reconstituted at this time and members who have served two terms depart opening the way for new members to come forward. Australian archivists are now represented on several ICA Committees and Sections ensuring that the international archival community is informed of and benefits from the advances in archival theory and practice which emanate from this country.

For the record Australian archivists on ICA Committees for the next four years are:

Adrian Cunningham	Descriptive Standards
Simon Davis	Electronic and other Current Records
Ted Ling	Buildings and Equipment in Temperate Climates
Gavan McCarthy	Science and Technology
Sigrid McCausland	Professional Training
Helen Morgan	Information Technology

Australian archivists are also prominently represented on two ICA Sections. Karen Anderson was elected Chair of the Section on Archival Education. Kathryn Dan is the Australian representative on the Section on Professional Associations.

A final word on Australian participation should refer to the very successful exhibition stand mounted and supported by the National Archives and the State Records Authority of New South Wales. The stand was always well attended by delegates and provided yet another opportunity to communicate with a very receptive international audience. The volunteers who staffed the stand throughout the Congress must have been very pleased with their efforts.

South East Asia Pacific AudioVisual Archive Association

Correspondent: Ray Edmondson, President

The South East Asia Pacific AudioVisual Archive Association (SEAPAVAA) was formed in 1996, so is much younger than the other main audiovisual archiving federations. These include FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives), IASA (International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives), FIAT (International Association of Television Archives), AMIA (Association of Moving Image Archivists) and ARSC (Association of Recorded Sound Collections). It is firmly focused on the geographic region that embraces the ten ASEAN countries, Australasia, and the island countries of the Pacific. It is headquartered in the Philippines, and it embraces both institutional and individual members from all over the world, though full members must be audiovisual archives from within the geographic region. Currently there are around 30 of the latter, and about 80 members all told.

SEAPAVAA came into being because the growing community of audiovisual archives and archivists in this part of the world, far from Europe and North America, needed a means of networking and addressing shared problems, and needed a way of making themselves seen and heard on the international Richter scale. In a fairly short time, it has managed to do both.

In this part of the world, most archives have to keep their films and tapes in a tropical climate, with all its attendant problems of adequate storage and costs (vinegar syndrome, for example, is a scourge). Few archives have anything approaching adequate funding. Skills, too, are at a premium: there is a huge need, and hunger, for training. Networking – the need for community – is fundamental to overcome isolation and give moral support, and it needs to be face to face as well as electronic. Cooperative projects help to transfer skills and achieve goals collectively.

At the same time, SEAPAVAA has rapidly become a well-known name within the global audiovisual archiving community. It has attracted support from UNESCO and ASEAN. It figures regularly in the professional literature, and it has developed active working relationships with the older federations, who make a point of being represented at its conferences.

Last July, in Singapore, SEAPAVAA's annual conference was held jointly with IASA: on the theme *A Future for the Past*, it was our first cooperative venture with another association, and IASA's first meeting in Asia. With an attendance of 180 it was a resounding success organisationally, but what made it *really* successful was the way it melded global issues with regional ones. In a closing resolution, both associations adopted the 'Singapore Declaration', which read in part:

IASA and SEAPAVAA support the principle of the adequate and equitable development of audiovisual archiving skills and infrastructure in all countries of the world. The audiovisual memory of the 21st century should be truly and equitably reflective of all nations and cultures; the failure of the 20th century to secure this memory in many parts of the world must not be repeated.

Each year the conference is in a different regional capital, and always with a strategic aim of boosting the local work. So far the other venues have been Manila, Jakarta, Hanoi and Kuala Lumpur. This year (16 to 20 July) it's Bangkok. They are distinctive gatherings in many ways, not least in appearance: the opening and closing ceremonies are spectacular formal events as everyone turns out in national dress. The theme of the upcoming Bangkok conference will be *Ethics, Values and Standards in Audiovisual Archives*.

The SEAPAVAA Technical Committee has developed manuals and a large documentation resource relating to the problems of audiovisual archiving in tropical countries and with limited resources. It's a unique grouping of people and information, and there are innovative ideas: for example, the Vietnam Film Archive has developed its own low-cost way of dealing with vinegar syndrome.

Shared projects are genuinely cooperative. An example is the joint (Australian) National Film and Sound Archive (ScreenSound)/Philippine Information Agency restoration of the endearing 1939 Philippine musical film *Giliw Ko (My Love)* from the sole surviving copy. A huge technical challenge, it involved a workload split between the two archives, and staff exchanges. It was a highlight of the Philippines' own Centenary Celebrations when, in December 1998, the Australian ambassador presented the restored negative to the Philippine Government as a gift from Australia, and as the original stars were mobbed by autograph hunters at the premiere screening.

The first-ever book in English on the whole sweep of South East Asian film history will be published by SEAPAVAA this year, a joint Vietnam/Australia exercise. One reason that the cinemas of these countries are largely invisible beyond national boundaries is that you cannot read about their histories in English. This is one step in the direction of changing all that.

SEAPAVAA probably has the most active training program of any of the audiovisual archiving federations, and it is heavily supported by UNESCO, ASEAN and others. It includes summer-school type events, short 'clinics' on special needs, assisted access to the internet-delivered postgraduate program in audiovisual archiving offered by Charles Sturt University and the National Film and Sound Archive (ScreenSound).

Australia's institutions are, of course, a crucial source of expertise to SEAPAVAA. Current Australian institutional members are the National Screen and Sound Archive (ScreenSound), National Archives of Australia, Cinemedia and the Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive. There are also several Australian individual members. But experts from Europe and America, too, have freely given of their time and resources as teachers and advisors: and across the region, as the work grows, knowledge increasingly begins at home. For a major objective must be to grow a vibrant regional community with practical expertise and curatorial depth widely spread. Australia stands as much in need of this as any other country, and the key issues are not only technical, hands-on matters: we have much to learn from the thinking and worldview of our Asian and Pacific colleagues.

SEAPAVAA's website is at seapavaa.virtualave.net and membership enquiries are welcome. The annual conference is open to all who wish to register.

Vanuatu National Archives and Records Services

Correspondent: Bruce Burne

A short history of the development of the Vanuatu National Archives and Records Service:

1952 Establishment of the Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission by Australian History Researcher Dorothy Crozier, the Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC) being the administration of the British Colonial Territories outside of Fiji.

1959–1970 Development of the Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC) by Archivist Ian Diamond. Transfer of the old New Hebrides British Service records to Suva.

1970 Fiji Independence on 10th October 1970. The Central Archives was split into the National Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific Archives.

1971–1978 Development of the Western Pacific Archives as the National Archives of emerging nations of Kiribati (formerly Gilbert & Ellice Islands Colony), Solomon Islands (formerly British Solomon Islands Protectorate), Tuvalu (formerly Ellice Islands) and Vanuatu (formerly New Hebrides Condominium) by Archivist Bruce Burne.

1978 Unexpected transfer of the Western Pacific High Commission records, many of the Central Secretariat relating to Vanuatu, and the New Hebrides British Service records, many of then recent date, to a records repository in a satellite town outside of London, under the control of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Transfer of a small quantity of New Hebrides British Service and Vanuatu records, printed matter, historical manuscripts and Western Pacific Archives (WPA) lists and records to Vila. They were stored in the deteriorating British Public Works building in Vila. These records were later removed to storage planned for the exhibits and artefacts belonging to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre in the former Mental Hospital at Tepo, later named as the National Archives of Vanuatu.

1980 Vanuatu Independence on 30 July 1980. Transfer of the French New Hebrides Service records to Noumea, where they are retained in the custody of the Territorial Archives of New Caledonia.

1992 Passing of the Vanuatu National *Archives Act*, No. 13 of 1992, giving considerable authority in archives and records management to the Archivist.

1994 Appointment of the Vanuatu Archivist, Mr. Wille Toa, who had undertaken training at the time of Vanuatu's independence in the Western Pacific Archives in Suva and in the National Archives of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur.

1998 Appointment of the Acting Archivist, Tom Sakias. The staff of the National Archives, however, was greatly reduced.

1999 Circular sent to all Departments of the Vanuatu Government advising that no further records could be received in the National Archives as the repository was full. Reference services have virtually ceased due to limited staff. With a growing crisis in records management in the public sector, the National Archives was not able to carry out its functions as set out in the Archives Act of 1992.

To start to change this situation, the present National Archives building must be better adapted by:

- planned use of existing space;
- utilisation of the accommodation within the adjacent National Trade Training Testing and Certification Centre; and
- extension of the National Archives building into the adjoining courtyard.

This must not delay planning and progress in the building of the projected National Archives and Records Centre adjacent to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre.

More staff, with soundly based training, will be essential. A staff establishment of at least four is a matter of urgency, as follows: National Archivist, Records Manager, Keyboard and Enquiries Officer, and Repository Assistant.

If the National Archives is to fulfil its proper role as the keeper of the memory and records of the nation, whether on paper, on film, on magnetic tape, photographic images, or electronic database, and as an essential part of records management for the public sector, it must be better appreciated, utilised, and better staffed and housed.

Report on the Records and Archives Management Project of the Public Sector Reform Program and the Operations of the National Archives of Vanuatu

Correspondents: Bruce Burne and Peter Orlovich

Project Summary

The aim of the project which formed the basis of the AESOP contract, which was undertaken by Bruce Burne and Peter Orlovich in June and July 2000, included:

- visiting a number of government departments in order to make an appraisal of archival problems;
- recommending and implementing appropriate procedures; and
- training various officers in such procedures.

The initial task involved the identification and documentation of recordkeeping systems of the Public Service Commission, including the provision of a supportive role to the Public Sector Reform Program on two fronts:

- advise on the review and revitalisation of the filing system of the Vanuatu Public Service Commission and the location and identification of unfiled *current* papers and correspondence and their attachment to files; and
- identification, analysis and documentation of previous registration and filing systems used for the control of non-current record and archive series of the Public Service Commission. The principal registration and filing practices used by the Commission from 1980 (independence) until recent years were identified, and archival descriptions and documentation compiled in anticipation of their eventual transfer to the National Archives when accommodation becomes available.

Another important task involved the identification and documentation of recordkeeping practices of other departments and agencies of government, including notably, but not exclusively, the recordkeeping practices of the State Law Office, the Registry of Land Titles, the Lands and Survey Office, the Prime Minister's Department and the High Court. The consultants sought to establish contact with a wide range of government departments and agencies with a view to identifying and assessing the effectiveness of their registry operations and filing practices. They were also requested by departmental officers to provide advice on the problems encountered in maintaining and improving the effectiveness of correspondence registration practices and filing indexes in some departments experiencing difficulties through lack of appropriate training or experience in registry practice. Every opportunity was taken to meet with departmental and agency registry and records officers with a view to identifying the problems experienced in operating and maintaining correspondence registry and filing systems appropriate to the needs of the departments and agencies.

Archival outreach activities

The consultants visited Malapoa College, the senior high school in Port Vila, at the invitation of the school to address the senior students in History on the role and significance of archives generally and of the National Archives of Vanuatu in particular. The opportunity was taken to gauge the interest of staff and students in facilitating arrangements for short periods of voluntary archives work attachment by students as a component of their assessment, and subsequently, two students accepted an invitation to undertake weekly work experience activities with the consultants on the archives of the State Law Office. The consultants' visit to Malapoa College also provided an opportunity to inform students of the pressing need in the future for suitably motivated persons interested to pursue a career in records and archives management, in view of the paucity of such expertise in Vanuatu.

Inspection of departmental records storage accommodation

Visits were undertaken to several departments with a view to inspecting their inactive records and archival storage accommodation, with particular interest in the adequacy and quality of the accommodation for the keeping of records and archives. In several cases, the accommodation was found to be detrimental to the long-term preservation and use of the records, and consideration was given to the development of strategies for the provision of advice to departments on standards for the keeping of records in departmental custody. In many cases, it was evident that the departments are unable to accommodate their inactive records in suitable storage facilities.

In view of the moratorium which has been imposed on the transfer of records to the National Archives pending the provision of a new building, it is emphasised that additional importance and urgency attaches to the statutory responsibility of the Archivist to ensure that the *public records* and *public archives* are being maintained by departments in adequate and appropriate storage accommodation. The Archivist is empowered to inspect records in the custody of government offices in accordance with sections 7(2)(d) and 9(1) of the Archives Act No. 13, 1992.

Records Disposal Authorities

In view of the continuing accumulation of *public records* in government offices, coupled with the suspension of the arrangements for the reception and storage of inactive records and archives of government offices by the National Archives, the initiative was taken by the consultants to compile some records disposal authorities for the Public Service Commission and the State Law Office in order to facilitate the identification and disposition of records of those offices which are either required to be preserved as *public archives* or destroyed because they have no enduring value. The records disposal authorities created for the Public Service Commission and the State Law Office were compiled with a view to providing a model for the implementation of similar authorities for managing the disposition of records in other government offices.

Consideration was also given by the consultants to the provision of advice to departments requesting it on the management of electronic records.

The National Archives of Vanuatu

After a protracted delay following the arrival of the consultants, a visit was eventually arranged to the National Archives building, in company with the Archivist, for the purpose of assessing the nature and extent of the problems confronting that agency in the provision of an archival service to the government and the citizens of Vanuatu.

It was evident that the National Archives is incapable of providing any service to either government or the public on account of (a) the uncontrolled accumulation

of records within the building over many years; and (b) the lack of finding aids (lists, indexes, inventories and guides) to the holdings, apart from the archives of the Western Pacific High Commission transferred in 1978 and the Joint Court archives. Finding aids to the WPHC and Joint Court archives compiled by Bruce Burne were transferred with the archives to Port Vila in 1978.

A further impediment to the provision of an effective national archive service is the inadequacy of the staff establishment of the National Archives. For the past two years, the staff of the National Archives has consisted of one person who is designated as a Clerical Officer. The position of Archivist is unfilled. This is totally inadequate for the provision of an acceptable archive service to the government and citizens of Vanuatu. Effectively, there exists at the present time a cessation of active operations within the National Archives.

The National Archives building is completely saturated with *public records* and *public archives*. It is not possible at the present time to estimate the quantities of records which may not be required to be preserved permanently as *public archives*. The consultants attempted to develop a strategy for eliminating such *public records* as are no longer required to be retained in the building because of the expiration of their retention periods. In this way it is anticipated that accommodation may be provided for additional staff to be engaged to undertake the work of establishing control of the records in the building. No immediate prospect appeared to be evident that additional staff might be appointed to the National Archives.

It is observed with some satisfaction that the storage environment within the National Archives building appears to be satisfactory, and that no serious problems appear to exist which might be detrimental to the permanent preservation and condition of the archives.