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SAA and the World of Archives

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SAA and the World of Archives

At a time when America's role in world affairs has increasingly been questioned by many people in the international community, it is heartening to see the positive impact that American archivists are having within our broader profession. This realization came to me most clearly while I attended the 15th quadrennial congress of the International Council on Archives in Vienna, August 23–28, 2004.

Among approximately 2,000 archivists from 116 countries at this ICA congress, there were more than 150 of us from the United States and dozens more from Canada. Unlike many past ICA congresses, typically heavy on plenary sessions and limited numbers of speakers, this meeting featured more than 200 sessions on a vast array of topics.

The broad theme of this ICA congress was "Archives, Memory, and Knowledge," with numerous sessions clustered around the relationship of archives to memory, knowledge, and society. Specific sessions ranged from basic archival techniques to the latest technological, political, legal, and ethical issues that our profession faces in countries around the globe. Another innovation this year was a series of informal "Archives Salon" discussions, intended to replicate the intellectual atmosphere of Viennese café society.

The American presence at ICA was striking, with dozens of American archivists presenting papers or commentaries at sessions. "It was wonderful

to see so many SAA members there participating in the Congress and on the program," said Karen Benedict, SAA's representative to the ICA Section of Professional Archival Associations. "Whenever I passed through the exhibition area the SAA booth was the busiest one there—it seemed always to be filled with people."

Francis X. Blouin, Director of the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, served on the ICA Congress Programme Committee. He emphasized the importance of SAA's role in the international archives community: "One of the principal functions of the Congress is to provide current information for archivists as they struggle with problems of technology, access, description, and preservation. Without doubt, SAA is the principal source of such information through its extensive publication program and because its publications are in English."

The SAA booth became a gathering point for American archivists. Several of us volunteered to assist

Publishing Director Teresa Brinati in the sales operations. I spent one full morning at the booth, and a few additional hours during the week. During that time I met archivists from two dozen countries, including:

- Dr. Vu Thi Minh Huong of the State Records and Archives Department in Hanoi, who took away large stacks of SAA books.
- The director of India's Kerala State Archives Department, S. Raimon, and the Director of Tanzania's Records and National Archives, who discussed SAA's publications and educational activities with me.
- Several Mexican archivists who purchased the SAA books that have been translated into Spanish, including Fredric Miller's volume on arrangement and description.
- Ricardo L. Punzalan, instructor of Archival Studies at the University of the Philippines, who told me that he uses SAA publications such as *American Archival Studies: Readings in Theory and Practice* in his archives courses.

These and other contacts at the SAA booth confirmed my belief that SAA plays a critically important role in the international archives community. Our publications are one important component of this. According to Teresa, SAA sold more than 250 books onsite in Vienna to archivists from 40 different countries. She also brought back to Chicago a handful of publication orders and several membership applications. (For additional coverage of the ICA congress, see page 12–13.)

"It's clear that SAA and its members benefit when our 'world view' is broadened by interaction with archives professionals from other countries," said SAA Executive Director Nancy Beaumont. "We learn from the diversity of backgrounds and experiences, and we gain a better understanding of how we might contribute to meeting the needs of archivists worldwide."

Another opportunity for me to see the impact of SAA came when I had the privilege of representing SAA on a session panel discussing "Issues in Leadership of Professional Associations." Bryan Corbett, former president of the Association of Canadian Archivists, chaired the panel, which also included Kathryn Dan, former president of the Australian Society of Archivists, and Chiyoko Ogawa, deputy president of the Japan Society of Archives Institutions. In many respects, SAA serves as a model for professional associations in other countries.

As one of the largest and oldest professional associations of archivists, SAA contributes significantly to

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Student News

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Thank you to all of the Student Chapters that have submitted Annual Reports. Behind-the-scenes repository tours, special presentations, and social gatherings were among the mix of activities reported.



Wright State University SAA Student Chapter's contribution to a campus-wide public art project involving the school's mascot, Rowdy Raider.

SAA's newest student chapter, Wright State University (WSU) in Dayton, Ohio, participated in one of the more unique chapter activities recounted. A campus public art project had student organizations transform life-sized statues of the school's mascot—a wolf named Rowdy Raider—into one-of-a-kind artwork to be auctioned at the university's fund-raising gala. The WSU Student Chapter's Rowdy was snapped up for \$300. With an additional donation by the university, the chapter netted a total of \$400.

Twenty-six statues were placed around Dayton. The student chapter's statue adorned the lobby of the National City Bank in the heart of downtown. The chapter partnered with the University's Special Collections & Archives to create a statue covered in photos and newspaper articles from the university records. Students researched, selected, and digitized the artifacts themselves.

"The project was of interest to the officers because 100 percent of the auction sale price went to the student group," said Mackensie Wittmer, SAA WSU Chapter Coordinator. "Immediately there was the idea to use the archives for photos of the university as an easy and professionally applicable design concept."

To check out what other chapters did in the last year, visit www.archivists.org/students/chap_dir.asp, in the "List of Student Chapters, click on "Annual Report."

Student chapters that have not submitted a report should send them to sdesutter@archivists.org.

Student Discounts for SAA Education

It has become increasingly apparent that SAA education programs are out of reach to student members due to cost. We have been brainstorming on a solution that would enhance student attendance and have come up with the following plan: Select educational offerings will be made available to SAA student members at a substantial discount, on a space available basis 5 business days prior to the date of the program. Contact Solveig De Sutter or Jodie Strickland at education@archivists.org or at 312-922-0140 to find out if the program you are interested in qualifies and has space available.

Listserv Activity Increases

It's been gratifying to see the recent activity on the SAA Student List. It appears that many students have rediscovered this valuable communication tool. Recent discussion threads have revolved around job searches (with people providing tips and useful website URLs) and individuals' education programs and institutions. If you would like to join your peers for discussions like these, just subscribe to the SAA Student List by sending the command, "subscribe saa-students <your name >," in the body of your email message, to imailsrv@lists.archivists.org. ❖

Solveig DeSutter is Education Director for the Society of American Archivists. She may be reached at sdesutter@archivists.org.

President's Message

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the international community. With the recent formation of the North American Archival Network of the International Council on Archives (NAANICA), SAA has joined the Association of Canadian Archivists and other North American archival societies in a more formal association with ICA. NAANICA member organizations elected Thomas Connors, of the National Public Broadcasting Archives at the University of Maryland,

as the first coordinator of this new organization, and we will be hearing more from NAANICA in the coming year.

My hope is that our strong representation at the ICA congress and our new involvement with NAANICA signals an expanded role for SAA in international archival affairs. I'm delighted that so many American archivists are participating in these important efforts. ❖

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