

**PHOTOGRAPHIC AND AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVES GROUP OF THE
INTERNACIONAL COUNCIL ON ARCHIVES (ICA)**

Joan Boadas, David Leitch

The International Council on Archives (ICA) is a non-governmental organization that groups together a global network of over 1,400 institutional members from 190 countries. Its aim is to promote the management and use of records and archives and the preservation of mankind's documentary heritage worldwide through the exchange of ideas and experiences, and research related to records and archives management.

Obviously, within this broad mission and the very idea of what we understand as a record, audiovisual and photographic documentation is the subject of this international organization's interest, attention and promotion.

The convergence of interests among various international organizations—Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC), Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA), International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA), International Council on Archives (ICA), International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF), International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), International Federation of Television Archives (IFTA), Southeast Asia-Pacific Audiovisual Archive Association (SEAPAVAA)—prompted them to create, in 2000, a shared platform for these eight organizations known as the **Co-ordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations (CCAAA)**.

The CCAAA's mission is to influence the development of public policy on issues of importance to audiovisual archivists. Its main action is to guarantee the preservation of sound and audiovisual documentation in order to guarantee it can be used by and remains accessible to current and future generations.

Despite the ICA's integration and active participation in the CCAAA, the reality is that the ICA's involvement in issues related to photographic and audiovisual heritage management could have been greater.

On 16th November 2009, a meeting took place in Paris between David Leitch, ICA Secretary General, Didier Grange, ICA Deputy Secretary General, and Joan Boadas. This meeting helped to begin outlining the current situation of photographic and

audiovisual heritage in non-specialized archives and the deficiencies most in need of attention.

From the outset it was clear that we needed—and still need—to determine in a consensual manner that which different countries consider to be audiovisual heritage. This sometimes includes photographic documentation, and at other times (and this is the most widespread opinion held by international organizations affiliated with the CCAAA) only those still images related to the creation of the audiovisual record.

In the document drawn up following the aforementioned Paris meeting, a proposal was put forward that was merely the starting point for the route to consensus that was now required:

Generally speaking, the following was considered **photographic heritage**:

- Photographic documents: from the daguerreotype to still digital images.
- Textual documents related to photography: photographic registers and account books, technical documents, correspondence, invoices, price lists, lists of materials purchased, personal documents (training received, awards, etc.).

Generally speaking, the following was considered **audiovisual heritage**:

- Film, video and digital moving image records.
- Audio records.
- Photographs related to audiovisual records.
- Scripts and other textual information.
- Stage material, etc.

An initial observation was that the organizations that make up the **CCAAA** are responsible for managing their audiovisual heritage, meaning sound and film records. Regarding photographic heritage, there is no global agency that engages in establishing strategic lines that contribute to improving its management.

There have been various international organizations and projects, but they did not have this aforementioned global approach. This is the case of the European Commission on Preservation and Access (ECPA) in Europe, which developed the TAPE (Training for

Audiovisual Preservation in Europe) and SEPIA (Safeguarding European Photographic Images for Access) projects. At present, the ECPA has finished its projects. It is important to note the existence, also at a European level, of projects such as PRESTOSPACE (Preservation towards Storage and Access. Standardized Practices for Audiovisual Contents in Europe). At an international level there are projects like UPDIG (Universal Photographic Digital Imaging Guidelines), with the participation of various bodies from the United States, Australia, Britain, Canada, Italy, Hong Kong, and so on.

A second finding was that a large majority of archives stored their photographic and audiovisual materials alongside other types of records, especially textual ones in paper and electronic formats. Many archivists are working alone in their institutions and at local level there is a significant body of audiovisual records from local television stations, radio stations, producers and amateur filmmakers.

Given this set of circumstances, it seems clear that the general training of archivists is often insufficient to meet the needs of this heritage, and further training options are often scarce or inadequate. However, the existence of archivists specializing in photographic and audiovisual material in some institutions leads us to consider the possibility of creating educational resources within and for the archival community.

ICA WORKING GROUP

In an attempt to advance the role and projection of the ICA in relation to photographic and audiovisual heritage, the ICA Executive Committee at its meeting in May 2009 at Tamanrasset (Algeria) agreed to appoint Joan Boadas i Raset as the Council's commissioner for audiovisual and photographic documentation. As a starting point for the implementation of various actions, it was agreed to create a working group, the **Photographic and Audiovisual Archives Group** (PAAG), composed of specialist archivists that would develop a general framework for action with the following objectives:

- To establish the basic guidelines of action for intervention in photographic and audiovisual collections.
- To provide archivists with working tools to perform tasks of description, conservation, digitization, etc.

- To promote training activities and their funding.
- To create a virtual space for inter-professional communication and the dissemination of resources.

Ultimately, its goal should be to bring to archives issues of interest related to photographic and audiovisual heritage.

Plan of Action

Once the creation of the working group was approved and its goals established, a selection process of members that would form part of it began. The aim was obtaining a worldwide representation of archivists who were specialists in the treatment of photographic and audiovisual records, while also being able to create a network in their own countries and hence be considered representative of a more or less extensive group of professionals. The number of people initially envisaged for the working group would be around ten, one of which would also carry out coordination tasks.

Regarding the work plan, an initial scheme was designed with the idea that it would have to be developed later on, once the group had been established. The main lines of work would be developed around the following axes:

- To collect and analyze existing surveys by different bodies, and not propose any new ones; the existing ones should provide us with sufficient knowledge about the state of affairs. To use this information to identify the needs of archives and determine topics of interest.
- To select the resources that have been drawn up by various bodies and may be of interest for archives.
- To work with existing resources and prepare versions of them that could be useful for archives. Possible topics include: Description, Metadata, Conservation, Copyright, Digitalization, etc.
- To create a bibliographic database. As an example it could aim to contain the material already produced by the SEPIA and TAPE projects. Some of these texts have been

translated into different languages. The ICA's website ought to create a section to bring together the different texts that have previously been validated by the working group.

- To facilitate the creation of an Internet forum designed for archivists who manage photographic and audiovisual collections.

Professional Profile of PAAG Members

Another important aspect to consider when setting up the group was the profile of the people who would form part of it, essential for being able to carry out the work plan set out and approved by the ICA Executive Committee. Hence a document was drawn up to define the professional profile of those who should be involved. Below is a summary of the main points contained in it:

- General profile. A professional who works in the field of photographic and/or audiovisual heritage, with technical (though not necessarily management) responsibilities in the running of his or her centre.
- Professional experience. It is preferable that members have some experience in cooperation projects for the normalization and development of the profession (participation in description standards, drawing up best practice guides, research, publications, etc.).
- Language skills. The ability to communicate in English, both oral and written.
- Dedication. Participation in the working group activity requires involvement that goes beyond communicating with the rest of the group. Members must commit themselves to a certain amount of dedication in order to carry out this work.
- Availability. Communication between group members will be electronic, though members must be aware that meetings may be convened, which will involve travel.
- Technology. There will need to be a minimum level of technological support that enables communication among group members and their participation through a common platform built into the website (this could be a blog).

- Professional support. It is important for members to have some kind of professional support that allows them to make contributions on any aspect dealt with in the working group. This support can come from their immediate work environment (the institution itself) or the network that could be created.

- Representation. It is important to have the ability to create a specific territorial network in order for the activities carried out by the group to be as representative of the needs of the archives as possible.

Despite the difficulties of joint collaborations at international level, the working group at present consists of, besides the director/coordinator, from Catalonia, representatives from Brazil, USA, Netherlands, New Zealand and Uruguay. Meanwhile, it is waiting for confirmation from other professionals from Africa and Europe.

ACTIONS CARRIED OUT AND ACTIONS IN PROGRESS

The Creation of the Website

The establishment of a working group with the characteristics and constraints of the PAAG forced the immediate creation of an online platform that allows it to state its existence. Hence, and in parallel with the process of selecting members, a website was created with the aim of establishing a point of reference for the group itself and within the ICA.

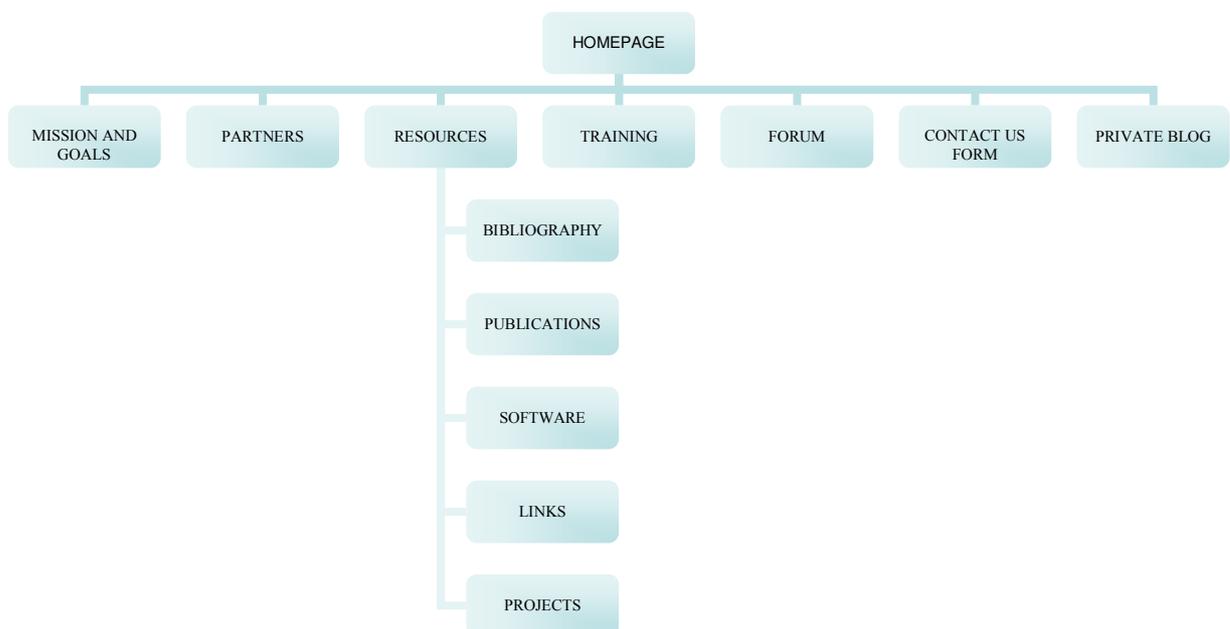
The creation of the website, undertaken by Dimitri Sarris, webmaster at the ICA, initially consisted of designing a structure that was immediately operational and at the same time flexible and easily configured according to the interests of the group and the direction of its future work.

The website is divided into the following sections:

- Homepage. Presentation of the group.
- Mission and goals.
- Partners. Short introduction to group members.

- Resources. Links to various resources that have been drafted: bibliographies, publications, software, links, projects, etc.
- Training. Focused above all on online training.
- Forum. For dealing with various topics of interest.
- Contact form.
- Private blog. Access is limited to members of the group.

Hence the website is a space that is essentially for providing information, and will be expanded with further content depending on the projects that the PAAG undertakes in the coming years.





Photographic and Audiovisual Archives Working Group

The ICA Working Group in Photographic and Audiovisual Records was created to attend the needs arising from the safekeeping of photographic and audiovisual archives. The "Working Group" is composed of archival specialists that should develop a general framework, creating educational resources within and for the archivist community, it's to say, suitable to its needs.

We know that many archives keep photographic and audiovisual records, but not as exclusive material if not as complementary material among another kind of documentation, especially textual documents, in paper or electronic format.

A lot of archivists work alone in their institution and at a local level there are important quantities of photographic and audiovisual records that come from the photographers, local production companies, amateur filmmakers or local televisions.

Also, the general training of archivists is often insufficient to attend the needs of this heritage and complementary training options are usually limited or inadequate because they are not, and they probably won't be, specialist in this area.

In this website, the ICA Working Group provides some educational and professional resources to the archival community, and a **forum for a debate in an international level.**

Mission

To attend the needs arising from the safekeeping of photographic and audiovisual archives.

Goals

- To establish the basic guidelines for intervention in photographic and audiovisual fonds and collections.
- To provide to archivists working tools to do works of description, conservation, digitization, etc.
- To promote activities and resources for training.
- To create a virtual place for communication and dissemination of resources.
- To bring to archives, on a non-elitist way, the issues of interest related to photographic and audiovisual heritage.

Photographic & Audiovisual Archives Group

[About Photographic and Audiovisual Archives Group](#)

[About Photographic and Audiovisual Archives Working Group](#)

[Members](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[News & events](#)

[Activities & Projects](#)

[PAAG Resources](#)

[Useful links](#)

[Photos Galleries](#)

Pilot Project: The Survival Kit

The will to exist was therefore an indispensable factor for a group that rarely found a workspace beyond a virtual platform. Equipped with this space, it was deemed appropriate to start a pilot project that, in accordance with the mission and goals set out, would direct the work of the PAAG. We named this project Survival Kit, and it aims to provide the basic resources to all those archivists who face the challenge of dealing with and organizing photographic and audiovisual material. The main aim is to provide support to archivists when they face the responsibility of dealing with records and collections whose specific traits closely resemble the characteristics of certain types of documents. So when faced with the question, "what do I need to know to perform an appropriate archival operation on photographic or audiovisual records?", archivists will be able to find a series of resources that will greatly facilitate their work.

The presentation of these resources for non-specialist archivists will be done in accordance with the following criteria:

- The resources will be presented in various, previously established categories.
- There will be no resources that are too specific, as they are intended for non-specialist professionals.
- It is essential that they are accessible online.
- The inclusion of different major languages should be considered.
- The resources must be properly justified and therefore should be accompanied by an explanatory summary.

The screenshot displays the ICA.ORG website interface. At the top left is the ICA.ORG logo with the tagline 'international council on archives'. To the right is a navigation menu with 'Site', 'Resources', and 'Members' links, and a search bar with a 'GO' button and a 'Search Help' link. Below the navigation is a horizontal menu with 'Home', 'Discover ICA', 'Joining In', 'Engaging the Issues', and 'Sharing Knowledge'. The main content area is titled 'Photographic & Audiovisual Archives Group' and 'Activities & Projects' with a breadcrumb trail 'Photographic & Audiovisual Archives Group > Activities & Projects > Survival kit >'. The 'Survival kit' section includes a sub-header 'Survival kit' and a description: 'What you should know to work with a photographic and audiovisual collection.' It lists several categories: 'METHODOLOGY' (How to manage a collection: Description, Metadata, Conservation, Intellectual Property, Digitization, etc.), 'STANDARDS' (To the most important functions: description, metadata, digital image, etc.), 'SOFTWARE' (Database, edition, visualization, etc.), 'FORUM ONLINE' (A place to ask for help, etc.), and 'TRAINING ONLINE' (Degrees, masters, courses, etc.). A small image of a computer monitor is visible next to the 'STANDARDS' section. On the right side, there is a vertical sidebar menu for the 'Photographic & Audiovisual Archives Group' with links to 'About Photographic and Audiovisual Archives Group', 'Contact Us', 'News & events', 'Activities & Projects', 'Survival kit', 'On-line Training', 'PAAG Resources', 'Useful links', 'Photos Galleries', and 'Workspace'.

The specification and carrying out of this project is important from many points of view since it represents the consolidation of the PAAG and the creation of a working dynamic of the group itself, while also allowing for an assessment of the direction that the PAAG must take to fulfil its expectations in the field of archives.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this text is to provide information about the creation in 2009 of the Photographic and Audiovisual Archives Group of the International Council on Archives (ICA). The Mission of the PAAG (the acronym for the group) is to establish the general guidelines for undertaking actions on photographic and audiovisual collections, offer work tools to archivists for carrying out their duties, promote activities and educational resources, and create a virtual space for inter-professional communication and the diffusion of resources. To do this it is equipped with its own website within the ICA's, while it is currently developing a pilot project called Survival Kit, which aims to provide basic resources to all those archivists facing the challenge of dealing with and organizing their records and collections.

November, 2010