

The Photographic and Audiovisual Archives Working Group of the International Council on Archives

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The Historical Roots of PAAG

In 1980 UNESCO issued a report titled, *Recommendation for the Safeguarding and Preservation of Moving Images*. Two years later, five organizations—International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP), International Federation of Television Archives (FIAT/IFTA), International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), International Association of Sound Archives (IASA), and International Council on Archives (ICA)—formed the Roundtable of Audiovisual Archives. The roundtable's initial efforts led to the creation of the first [Joint Technical Symposium](#) held in Stockholm in 1983, and made contributions to UNESCO's Records and Archives Management Programme ([RAMP](#)) [Studies](#), "creating the first set of [technical literature](#) for the profession."

In order to expand its mission and reach, the roundtable reorganized in 2000 to form the Co-ordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations ([CCAAA](#)), which added three new organizations to its ranks: Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC), Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA), and Southeast Asia-Pacific Audiovisual Archive Association (SEAPAVAA).

Although ICA was an active member of CCAAA, some ICA members believed ICA's involvement "could have been greater." After the 2009 CCAAA annual meeting in The Hague, ICA appointed Joan Boadas as Commissioner for Photographic and Audiovisual Archives to create a working group that would focus on these types of records. As Boadas considered ICA's role within CCAAA, he made the following observations:

- CCAAA member organizations focused exclusively on moving images and sound recordings, but not still photography.
- CCAAA did not sufficiently know the real necessities of non-member archives, so it could not adequately

select topics on which to offer training. ICA, thanks to its organizational structure, was well-positioned to try to understand the broader realities of audiovisual heritage.

- CCAAA specialized in audiovisual records, so ICA could consult CCAAA for information regarding technical archival needs. Of the CCAAA member organizations, only ICA and IFLA did not focus solely on audiovisual records.
- There was no global agency that contributed to improving the management of photographic heritage.

Boadas concluded that ICA could be a leader in the area of photographic heritage by creating a working group to focus on both photography and audiovisuals. This group became known as the [Photographic and Audiovisual Archive Group \(PAAG\)](#) with the mission of attending to the needs that arise from the safekeeping of both photographic and audiovisual archives.

It was important at that point in time to clarify what comprises audiovisual heritage because most CCAAA members had created their own definitions. For example, in the UNESCO white paper *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles* written by Ray Edmonson in 2004, photography is not included in the general definition of audiovisual heritage. ICA therefore made its own definitions, as follows.

Photographic heritage comprises

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

Audiovisual heritage comprises

- film, video, and digital moving image records;
- audio records;
- photographs related to audiovisual records;
- scripts and other textual information; and
- stage material, etc.

PAAG Today

The main goals of PAAG are:

- to establish the basic guidelines for intervention in photographic and audiovisual collections;
- to provide to archivists working tools to do works of description, conservation, digitization, etc.;
- to promote activities and resources for training; and
- to create a virtual place for communication and dissemination of resources.

Establishing these goals took into consideration that while some archives collect audiovisual and/or photographic records exclusively, many more maintain visual material as part of a wider array of archival materials. For archivists working in the latter environment, their general training is often insufficient to attend the specialized needs of photographic and audiovisual heritage, and complementary training options are usually limited or inadequate because generalists are not, and probably never will be, specialists in this area. PAAG's goals also recognize that many archivists work alone inside their institution, and at a local level there may be significant audiovisual records that come from local television stations, local production companies, or amateur filmmakers. The existence of archival specialists in audiovisual and photographic materials in some institutions, however, enables PAAG to enlist specialists to create educational resources for the broader archival community.

From these considerations PAAG formed a steering committee consisting of at most ten visual materials archivists who reflect worldwide representation. Steering committee members work with an existing network within their own countries, thus representing an extensive group of professionals.

Activity and Projects

Since its inception, the PAAG Steering Committee has completed various projects, while others are ongoing. The **Survival Kit** is a pilot project that directed the initial work of PAAG. The kit provides basic resources

to those archivists who face the challenge of organizing and managing photographic and audiovisual material. Archivists can consult the Survival Kit when faced with the question, "what do I need to know to perform an appropriate archival operation on photographic or audiovisual records?" Targeted for non-visual-materials archivists, the resources are:

- presented in four categories: methodology, standards, software, and preservation;
- not too specific, as they are intended for non-specialists;
- properly justified and accompanied by an explanatory summary; and
- accessible [online](#).

The Survival Kit includes thirteen resources (seven concerning photography and six related to audiovisual). It is imperative that the working group continually update the Survival Kit with new resources to remain relevant.

The second PAAG project was to write **Case Studies** to address the fundamentals of processing photographic and audiovisual archives, with an eye toward future research. For each case the specificities of a collection are highlighted and solutions are explained. There are, however, only six case studies and PAAG would like to significantly increase its offerings.

ICA's Programme Commission (PCOM) has funded translations of three PAAG projects: Concise Guides, a chronology, and Best Practice Guides.

Concise Guides offer a general approach to subjects concerning photographic and audiovisual materials. To date, PAAG has produced three concise guides, available in English, French, Catalan, and Spanish: Guide 1. *Digital Image Archive*; Guide 2. *Digital Video Archive*; and Guide 3. *Management of Photographic Repositories*.

A Chronology of Photographic and Audiovisual Media depicts the evolution of different technologies and media: cinema, photo, sound and video. The chronology compares what is happening for each technology in different periods using nearly 100 illustrations. The chronology can be experienced as a poster highlighting the most remarkable events in the evolution of photography, film, television and video, and sound, or as a more thoroughgoing website with more text and images than contained in the poster. There are versions in four languages from both,

poster and website: English, French, Catalan and Spanish.

The *Best Practice Guide for Establishing a Permanent Observatory for Archives and Local Television* systematizes all of the work carried out thus far by the Permanent Observatory for Archives and Local Television (OPATL) in Girona, Spain. OPATL is an ongoing joint project of several organizations and institutions whose mission is to safeguard local television and other producers of local audiovisual documentation. The best practice guide, however, goes beyond the particular needs of Catalonia and Andorra, with a more generic approach to realities that may exist elsewhere. ICA published the [guide](#) in four languages: English, French, Catalan, and Spanish. There is also a reduced version in Arabic, Russian, Hindu and Japanese.

Collaborations and Connections

PAAG needs to collaborate and network with other associations and projects. ICA is a member of CCAAA, so PAAG has a connection there. This is a big challenge for PAAG, however, because PAAG is a subgroup within ICA, which itself is a subset within CCAAA. As the smaller entity, PAAG may not be able to provide extensive services for audiovisual professionals, but PAAG has a direct lineage to associations that are creating resources of high interest for the archival community.

PAAG's most important collaboration to date has been with the European Commission for Preservation and Access (ECPA) through its projects Safeguarding European Photographic Images for Access (SEPIA) and Training for Audiovisual Preservation in Europe (TAPE). ECPA was established in 1994 to promote the preservation of the documentary heritage in Europe, but its work came to a close in July 2008. The surveys to understand the reality of the photographic and audiovisual heritage in Europe and the SEPIADES standard for the description of photographic records are now accessible in the online publications section of PAAG's website, thanks to an agreement between ECPA and PAAG. It is an opportunity to re-use the valuable ECPA materials that can rarely be found elsewhere.

Last year PAAG reached an agreement with the International Consortium for Photographic Heritage. Commonly known as Photoconsortium, it is a nonprofit organization formed in October 2014 from the collaboration experience of Europeana Photography—sixteen European archives that digitized hundreds of thousands

of pictures from the first one hundred years of photography and contributed their content to Europeana, the European portal of cultural heritage. Photoconsortium promotes and enhances the culture of photography and photographic heritage by organizing and managing conferences, exhibitions, awards, training courses, and publishing activities. In order to be linked to all cultural institutions with photographic collections, they designed one member of its Executive Council to serve as a link to the archives field via PAAG. The aim of this connection is to disseminate the activities and accomplishments of Photoconsortium to archives and to foster collaboration.

PAAG has other connections with European projects, such as Training the Trainer Resource Packs from the program Leonardo da Vinci. This project aims to create pedagogical resources for people who are beginning digitizing projects in an archive. The final outcome will be a toolkit that will be published on the ICA website. Some chapters of this toolkit are dedicated to digitization of photographs and audiovisuals.

Future plans

During PAAG's fifth year, the ICA board suggested a partial renovation of the Steering Committee, which is currently under way. The main goal of this renovation would be to create real networks all around the world so that many people could participate and benefit from PAAG initiatives. With new members and broader networks, the first aim will be to focus on existing projects: updating the survival kit, case studies and concise guides. We need much collaboration to achieve good results. A resource with only six case studies, for example, has limited usefulness. We hope to undertake additional projects so we may continue providing service to archivists worldwide, always keeping in mind our current mission to attend the needs arising from the safekeeping of photographic and audiovisual archives. A bibliography is one new project that PAAG would like undertake. The Visual Materials Section already has a bibliography, but it needs to be updated, and PAAG's bibliography includes only nine resources. A joint effort between PAAG and VMS to expand and update their bibliographies into a single document would result in an invaluable resource for a global audience, and could serve as a solid first step toward a lasting international partnership.

Franch and Fletcher are members of the Photographic and Audiovisual Archive Group (PAAG) Steering Committee. Iglésias is the PAAG Coordinator.