

# Presidential statement: how ICA is meeting the challenges of digital preservation

[icarchives.webbler.co.uk/14770/position-statements/presidential-statement-how-ica-is-meeting-the-challenges-of-digital-preservation.html](http://icarchives.webbler.co.uk/14770/position-statements/presidential-statement-how-ica-is-meeting-the-challenges-of-digital-preservation.html)

## Position Statements

Martin Berendse

When I was re-elected as ICA President in 2012, I placed the changing role of archivists in the digital age at the heart of my agenda. As a matter of increasing urgency archivists need to re-position themselves as the information managers of modern society, where information is valued as a great asset. Archivists should be vital players in achieving key objectives of public policy, including democratic accountability, administrative transparency and protection of citizens' rights.

Without efficient record-keeping systems, major public policies such as Open Government and Open Data simply do not get off the ground. In the information age the archivist should be equipped to manage, preserve and to make publicly available records of all kinds created in digital form. I knew from the outset that ICA could not hope to implement this agenda without forming partnerships and alliances with other organizations. Programmes generated entirely within the ICA network were likely to get us only so far and we would not reach our final destination.



Since our Congress in Brisbane in August 2012, ICA has focused strongly on the challenges of digital preservation. Within ICA, the Programme Commission, under the leadership of Henri Zuber, has made the formation of a Digital Records Expert Group one of its top priorities. Externally, I represented ICA at the highly successful UNESCO Conference on Digital Preservation, held in Vancouver in September 2012. During the conference ICA and the International Records Management Trust (IRMT) agreed that practicing archivists needed to be given greater support in tackling digital preservation and that the archivist's role should be explicitly linked to the implementation of wider public policy programmes. Clearly, we have a strong interest in working together with IRMT, although we do not rule out working with other partners in future. ICA's policy for digital preservation has now developed two major strands. With the support of the Dutch National Commission for UNESCO, I have been concentrating on creating a Digital Road Map, which will harness the influence of international organizations and the IT industry at the highest level in order to identify the obstacles that currently stand in the way of digital preservation, and then to work progressively to remove them. A major high-level meeting on charting the Road Map is planned to take place in The Hague in December 2013. In parallel with this activity, the ICA Programme Commission and Secretariat have been working on an outline for a model curriculum in digital preservation, with an emphasis on colleagues working in countries where resources are scarcest, in partnership with IRMT. It was Janis Karklins, Assistant Director General for Communication and Information at UNESCO, who provided the two organizations with a window of opportunity in November 2012. Joint working by IRMT and ICA in the succeeding months led to an Experts Meeting at UNESCO Paris last April, which validated the basic approach developed by the two organizations, and, shortly afterwards, to the allocation of funds for a pilot project linked to Africa and the Caribbean. Of course ICA will remain open to the possibilities of widening the expertise base as the curriculum develops. The two strands of ICA policy – increasing our influence at the highest level on legal and technological developments and compiling practical and accessible training materials for the working professional – stand together as a coherent whole. I am quite satisfied that the proposed training materials will take full account of all existing research and professional activities. My own concern is for the hard pressed professional, who does not have easy access to advanced archival education but who is crying out for a practical good practice guide. That is the purpose of the model curriculum. The ICA membership should now demonstrate professional solidarity by supporting these initiatives. While lively discussion on professional issues is a healthy sign, we must demonstrate a unity of purpose as never before in the common pursuit of major objectives. Our colleagues throughout the world will not forgive us if we fail. However, I am convinced that our two-strand policy, reinforced by the enthusiasm of ICA members worldwide, offers us a good chance of success.

**Martin Berendse, ICA President**

5 August 2013