

The role of the Global Archive as the heart of EI-OE-ICA in the 21st century

The elements needed to create a new level of generative synergy among all elements of our network

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The purpose of this talking paper. This paper summarizes several reflections and proposals that arose from my experience of the May Archive Sojourn Month. The overarching concept I'm championing is the need to expand our image of the role and function of the Global Archive. I develop a train of thought about the need to view the Global Archive project as a repository dynamic that includes major publishing, communicating and community building activities. I confess that I found it necessary to write as if ICA USA were the only ICA with an interest in the future of the Global Archive for the sake of my own focus. An inclusive discussion is still a critically important unfinished project.

A sojourn that was more than advertised. Terry and Pam Bergdall, Marge Philbrook, Doug Druckenmiller and the ICA Board, particularly the board members with a special interest in the archive had very concrete hopes for the Archive Sojourn month. Terry had preparation for the conference with Oklahoma City University on his mind and a vision of the eighth floor of 4750 N. Sheridan as a retreat center for movement colleagues. Doug saw the month the archive sojourn as a foray into the data preparation needed for a digital the Global Archives.

I don't believe that any of us anticipated the teamwork, the intense around sorting and organizing, the energy level, the story telling, the singing, the feeling of pride in ourselves and the sense of a shared, future-oriented mission that everyone experienced. The May Archive Sojourn Month was unexpected and full of portent. Could it have been a signal of something new emerging in our global network?

Spreading some puzzle pieces on the table. The happening of the May Archive Sojourn offers clues to several puzzling developments that have gone mostly unnoticed for many years. We witnessed a *professionalization of expertise* that put salaried ICA USA staff at the center of our collective attention and hundreds of movement colleagues at the periphery. We became a network of largely *disconnected learning teams* with no easy ways to share what we were doing and learning. We've had close collegial relationships and mutual endeavors, but a *limited facility for institutional partnerships* that could contribute to the competence and stature of the ICA USA as an organization. In spite of many distractions and distancing factors, we've maintained a *profound loyalty to a we with very few tangible manifestations*. This *we* is like an unfinished puzzle that we've kept out on the card table because of a few clusters of linked pieces with the same background elements—persistent memory and an unfulfilled yearning for a consequential destiny. Have *we* been living in a kind of historical-vocational eddy where past and future have become abstractions. Had *we* lost our *collective expectation* of a future?

But the pieces of this puzzle are being rearranged before our eyes. The Mathews Archive has moved to Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. The Transforming the Legacy Symposium last December was a moving appreciation of our movement by the historic church. The ICA USA is revisiting the question of how to be global. Oklahoma City University faculty members are interested in our movement's experience as exemplars of a committed and engaged ethical lifestyle. The May Archive Sojourn event was a remarkable focus of intense activity and energy. The trajectory of these events and projects—all having to do with our history—continues into the future with no apparent ending point.

This startling concurrence of events linking our past and our future suggests that we may have broken out of a time of circling with little sense of forward movement. There is little reason to recover our past if we do not believe we have a future. The experience of being noticed by people who are focused on the future seems to have redeemed our past from being prematurely disconnected from unrealized possibility. If there is a possibility that our life work might be uniquely relevant to future generations, it becomes quite urgent to remember everything, to put our common memory in good order and to add the explanatory context and real-life narrative to keep it well grounded without being boxed in by the late 20th Century.

The rediscovery of treasures. Perhaps it was the suggestion of an interesting partnership that was the catalytic factor. Perhaps it was simply noticing the face of mortality in the mirror. Whatever got the ball rolling, the May

sojourn began to bring some of the future into focus. We are part of very tangible community of colleagues who continue to live remarkable lives. Both within and related to that community are untold numbers of individuals and groups with certifiable expertise and formal or informal communities of practice. We find ourselves now formally related to two institutions of the historic church: a United Methodist seminary and a university with Methodist origins. And we have the very tangible contents of a basement storeroom in an eight-story building with an interesting history and a noteworthy identity in Uptown, Chicago.

The so-called Global Archives, recently dubbed the EI-OE-ICA archives, turns out to be a surprisingly effective excuse to convene colleagues for what is arguably a very unattractive project: transporting, scanning, arranging, culling, refileing, labeling and cataloging our past. This journey from the basement to the sixth floor at 4750 N. Sheridan Road is a metaphor for the life-giving exercise of organizing our common memory and offering it up to the future. It seems that the common mission of being useful to our children's and grandchildren's generations has shifted the identity of the Global Archives from storeroom to treasure trove. We should hang a new sign above the door: Story Room.

Embracing two pasts. The experience of value and delight in working with our past was the first big surprise of the May sojourn. The second was an inevitable expansion of the concept of "archives." The word archive (from the Greek *arkheia* 'public records') carries the connotation of "civic asset." That simple enlargement of the sense of the word suggests that an archive's reason for being is to become a civic asset. This noble possibility raises a loaded question: how much of our past needs to be included in any civic asset we might wish to create? That question raises the other: how much past do we have?

We have two pasts: the first 35 years from Austin to Oaxtepec and the last 25 years that bring us to the present. Our deep past gets us only to chapter seven, with at least five chapters to go. Though the work of the first 35 years is what made the work of the last 25 years possible, only a fraction of the experience of the last 25 years has entered our common memory. Without bringing our common memory into the present, the trail ends abruptly, without explanation, in the middle of the forest. It would be a scandalous omission if the work of the last 25 years was not captured as thoroughly as the work of the first 35 years. If you buy the premise, the archive project must necessarily grow. We need to clear the files out of the basement *and* we need to document the life and work of hundreds of colleagues during the last 25 years.

The Global Archive as the heart of an emergent community project. A new and expanded role for the Global Archives probably requires a whole new set of working relationships among several interrelated constituencies: individual colleagues, communities of interest and practice, the partner organizations of which ICA USA is the prime mover and the evolving cadre of archive champions and leaders. What might these new or enlarged relationships look like? The May sojourn offers some clues. The four-week event and the work with a new set of files each week were emergent processes. Each evolved over time as we discovered what we were doing. Completing the record of our past could become an emergent project in which we explore and document the 25-year transition that led from our deep past to the present and the near future that are upon us.

There are some caveats and some essential elements. A storeroom with 170 file cabinets could be like a black hole that is so dense that light can not escape its gravity. That dismal image is transformed by enlarging the context of the Global Archive project. The Global Archive becomes a source of energy, pride and collegiality if we approach it with young people and what they need for their future on our minds.

I want to "think out loud" about four EI-OE-ICA constituencies and speculate on what might happen if we fostered an emergent community archive project that involved all of them.

The starting point is an interested and attentive *colleague network*. The May event attracted nearly 48 people—from an hour to a month. It attracted sufficiently wide attention and appreciation that colleagues are asking if they can come to work on special projects of personal interest, like caring for the A/V materials. The second constituency is a number of *generative partnerships*: WTS in Washington, DC and OCU in Oklahoma City. "Generative partnership" suggests a future-oriented use of our common memory and a collaborative effort to reinterpret and merge that heritage with other wisdom for use in a 21st Century context. This relationship appears to be a significant catalyzing factor.

The third set of relationships is with the *communities of practice* whose expertise is related to our common memory. The ToP® Trainers Network, the Imaginal Education practitioners, Resurgence Publishing, the Repository team, the listservs and ad hoc study groups are the tip of the iceberg of formal and informal networks of colleagues with shared interests and experience in a wide variety of fields.

The fourth set of relationships is among an emerging archive leadership cadre. Marge Philbrook has taken the reins held by Betty Pesek and others for many years. Pam Bergdall has a passion for Town Meeting records and a gift for recruiting volunteers. Jan Sanders and Richard Sims are key players with the content depth needed to lead the file processing work and the inventiveness to catalyze the unique spirit eventfulness suited for each new group. Terry Bergdall and Doug Druckenmiller represent a set of champions among ICA staff and board members. Rosemary Albright and Sally Fenton in Chicago volunteer weekly to do data entry and are key informants in developing the archive database. Beret Griffith has a passion for order and rationality and is part of the brain trust that will be critical in developing our cataloging scheme. I'm a source of creative services and technical support for using and developing the Filemaker Pro database. Add the technical backup of Christina Wolf, the Archivist at Oklahoma City University, and Ken Gebhard, ICA USA's IT support person in Chicago, and we've got a highly functional team.

It's helpful to spell out some of the assets and vulnerabilities that further describe these interrelated constituencies.

Assets

- Colleagues represent the broadest and deepest pool of undocumented experience.
- Partner organizations represent a variety of interest groups acquainted to one degree or another with the body of knowledge based in our shared experience.
- Communities of interest and practice represent broad connections, evolving practices and depth knowledge.
- The archive leadership cadre represents longevity of experience, familiarity with our network, relationships with archive professionals, intense interest in the archive project and a unique set of specialized skills related to organizing resources, community building and communication.

Vulnerabilities

- Colleagues do not have any easy way to access current information about the work of others in our network over the last 25 years that might support or complement their own work.
- ICA USA, as the core partner, lacks current, depth knowledge about many members of our colleague network, the nature and impact of their work, and the role our common memory has played in their lives and endeavors.
- Communities of interest and practice
 - may not have easy access to or regular interaction and joint work with members of our network with shared interests, complementary knowledge or relevant experience
 - may not have access to depth knowledge of the origins of their practice
 - may not have access to current information about work related to their own that could be referenced in support of their own bona fides
- The leadership cadre's level of experience and interest in the archive is not matched by the wherewithal to sustain a significant level of effort on behalf of the archive or the constituencies interested in the archive.

Creating mutually beneficial synergy among network players. The fascinating reality is that each of these interrelated stakeholders has something one or more of the other constituencies lacks and needs.

- The colleague network and the communities of practice have the stories that could ground the ICA's and each other's need for current information that corroborates their value propositions and complements their credentials.
- The generative partnerships create a future-oriented program that requires the participation of both colleagues and communities of practice and a context in which our historical and contemporary experience is an essential input.
- The ICA is the one organization related to the entire network, the official keeper of the Global Archive and the institutional sponsor of archive- and network-related activities. It has the physical facilities and internal mechanisms to house, oversee and manage a people- and communication-intensive project.

- The leadership cadre has the time, interest and capacity to foster eventfulness and participation, and provide continuity of leadership for archive-related volunteers. This informal leadership core is positioned to mobilize members of these several constituencies for relevant practical projects, to share personal information and to contribute needed materials from their own, personal archives.

It's not difficult to brainstorm important early steps. We need, for example:

- an inclusive, in-depth listing of all the people with an interest in the EI-OE-ICA common memory and something to say about their own involvement with this heritage; documentation of these colleagues' arenas of interest, their personal and professional engagements and contacts, and the stories and case studies they could share with colleagues and the public
- a comprehensive listing of all of the publications by or referencing our colleagues, with thumbnail images of the publications and where they can be obtained
- a way to cross-reference our interests and fields of engagement in a way that reveals the breadth of information and experience that surrounds us
- to thoughtfully identify colleagues with high value memory and health vulnerabilities whom we need to spend time with immediately for oral history taking and topical debriefing
- to identify subject area memory holders and interest groups that can help us prioritize the most important materials we need to uncover and prepare for cataloging and archiving
- to describe the most urgent archiving tasks needing the investment of volunteer effort and to encourage and support self-organizing teams willing to spend time with the archive in Chicago
- to develop a calendar that helps people plan for engagement in Chicago
- to thoroughly document lessons learned and best practices from our work in May and continue developing resources for use by future volunteer groups
- to continue using the web sites available to us to foster distance eventfulness that keeps the archive and related projects in mind and that furthers development and community building with the ICA USA web site

The roles required to support increased network synergy. There are several catalytic roles whose absence in the past 25 years has created an unintended learning disability vis-a-vis the power and impact of the relationships among EI-OE-ICA constituencies. They come to mind with renewed clarity in light of the experience of the May Archive Sojourn. In some cases we already have these roles in one form or another, in other cases we need to create them. (Names in parentheses indicate people playing these or similar roles today.)

- organize and facilitate "sojourn initiatives," not limited to Global Archive projects (Marge, Pam, Jan, Richard, David, Terry)
- manage and supervise the Global Archive project (Marge, Pam, David and Jan)
- provide technical support and creative services for the Global Archive project (David; Ken Gebhard [ICA's IT tech support person])
- identify, convene and facilitate the work of subject area experts ("curators," conveners, ?) to spearhead high priority archive projects, including sojourn initiatives (?)
- cultivate, develop and manage generative partnerships, including partnerships that include financial support (Terry Bergdall, Doug Druckenmiller)
- service and debrief members of the resource communities (Anne Neal w/ TTN; imaginal education network?), generative partnerships (Terry Bergdall, Doug Druckenmiller) and our colleague network (Michael Tippett—Directory; Wegner, Harper, Hockley, Dunn—listservs)
- publish for and communicate with our various audiences (ICA USA; ICAI; ICA UK; Gordon, et al—Repository; David [archive sojourn])
- document our networks' experience and impact (Wiegels' video interviews)
- compile and publish a directory of colleagues who are available and actively delivering services active "in the marketplace" with their credentials, publications, areas of interest, availability and contact information (Anne Neal for TTN)
- development, maintain and facilitate online collaborative project, teaching-learning and community meeting spaces (?)
- describe, market and seek funding and/or fee-for-service projects involving members of this creative network (?)
- Facilitate preparation for the July "Peace, Poverty, Planet" conference in Oklahoma City.

These are the concrete projects that require immediate funding to get the ball rolling in support of a long-range, self-sustaining effort to bring the archives-as-repository to life.

Images and ideas for an emergent budget. The ICA USA and other national members of ICAI all face the challenge of succession planning and capacity building for a new generation of leadership. The archive of tangible materials and documents is a key asset needed to address these challenges. These four networks—colleagues, resource communities, generative partnerships and the EI-OE-ICA Global Archive leadership team—are potential additional assets that need to be tapped. Finding ways to underwrite activities that make good use of these untapped assets could add materially to the ability of the ICA USA and ICAI to meet the challenge of succession planning and capacity building.

ICA USA has at least three arenas of initiative active today—servicing resource communities (exemplified by the TTN and Imaginal Education networks), developing generative partnerships (exemplified by the work with WTS and OCU) and the Global Archives itself (exemplified by the May Archive Sojourn month). Expanding the context of thinking about the Global Archives could introduce the elements of interchange, sharing approaches that work, online access and collaboration among complementary arenas of ICA USA's present work.

How could such activities be developed? There are perhaps three key images that need to inform development of the Global Archive.

- reimagine the Global Archives as a repository (interactive interchange) dynamic for an entrepreneurial network of networks
- image all of our networks as sources for innovation, project development, service delivery and income generation
- image the challenges of succession and capacity building as an emergent two-decade community project that engages all of these networks

Taking this train of thought one step deeper, the May Archive Sojourn was a demonstration of three key strategies that are essential to a modern-day implementation of the repository dynamic we envisioned in the late 1970s. These are the three core strategies needed to unlock the potential of an emergent project for an entrepreneurial network of networks.

- *Community building*: corporate events with a shared common life and multiple roles for a diversity of people
- *Asset development*: the involvement of subject area experts, documenting field experience, supervising volunteer activities, developing needed procedures and lessons learned
- *Creative and technical services*: communicating with an online community, publishing relevant materials, technical support for database and procedure development

These three key strategies involve tasks that need regular support to insure effectiveness and continuity of effort.

- *Community building*: stipends and expense reimbursement—for colleagues who organize, recruit, facilitate and document the events, in Chicago and elsewhere, that are the corporate settings for further the development of the EI-OE-ICA archives and network relationships.
- *Asset development*: stipends and expense reimbursement—for colleagues involved in oral, video or written documentation of historical and current experience of our colleagues; collecting or receiving, processing, organizing and data entry related to extending the global archive collections;
- *Creative and technical services*: stipend, expense reimbursement and fees for contracted services—for designing, editing, desktop publishing of print and electronic media and online resources; developing and maintaining web sites, collaborative platforms, web logs and content management systems; developing systems and procedures for processing new holdings, maintaining a catalog database, creating finding aids and adding to the digital collections; developing training and support materials and curricula for volunteers and staff members who are working on the archive and for the general public who are interested in accessing and using the archive.

These three categories of work provide a starting point for envisioning cash flow scenarios and a budget that could evolve over time as this work expands and begins to attract funding and fees for service. We should include creation of a travel pool for sojourn (like May) and conference events (like OCU in July) that could support participants and include contributions on behalf of participants. It will help us project numbers if we visualize budgeting stipends for the different levels of experience people bring to our archive-related work:

- \$10/hour: interns without common memory or system familiarity = \$400 per week
- \$15/hour: colleagues or part-time staff with common memory and/or system familiarity = \$600 per week
- \$20/hour: colleagues or part-time staff with subject expertise and/or process leadership = \$800 per week
- \$25/hour: colleagues or part-time staff with process and/or technical expertise = \$1,000 per week

We should create a budget for work that needs to begin immediately and prioritize that work so that we can grow the level of contributed or earned income that it attracts. These are servant leadership roles for empowering and engaging colleagues, partners and clients in activities related to our methods, the contents of our archive and the long-term project of reinventing ourselves and our services in partnership with others. In principle, the more time we invest in activities that engage others, generate income and/or support the income-generating activities of others, the more we will be able to attract funding, contributions and fees for service.

Concluding reflection. We have every reason to trust our recent experience: when we create a futuristic context for our archive work, link it with the interest of new partners with whom we share a sense of mission, and engage colleagues in implementation of practical projects with a common life, we release passion and energy among participants and thoughtful interest among distant observers.

There are intriguing questions and possible implications. Who else needs our unique skill set for this kind of work on their own archives. We bring a unique set of approaches to growing an archive: volunteer teams representing stakeholder constituencies, team work set within an eventful common life, focus on developing a capacity for skillful archive work and a realtime connection with a widely dispersed colleague network.

I wonder if this experience with archive sojourn eventfulness might become a collaborative program involving members of our colleague network, including the ToP Trainers' Network. And most pointedly, I wonder if there are congregations, denominational bodies or religious orders with archives to process and missions and operations to reinvent, who might pay us to continue developing our archive, our unique practices and our ability to facilitate their own archive-related succession and capacity building processes.

Note. Please note the graphic “A dynamic process to bridge the generations.”