

Brief history on structure/framework archives

A summary of the process - some of the wording below is taken from newsletters or documents of the period.

1959 – What might be called the first unofficial *international committee* for Subud was located in New York. One of their first declared intentions was to establish an archive as a resource for the future. They began to do this however, in typical Subud fashion the minute they did, some moved to other countries and we never discovered what happened to the documents they started to collect.

1967 – ‘It was decided at Tokyo congress, with the permission of Bapak, to prepare Subud Archives for present and future generations’ – *article by Richard Engels, SWN, 1967*. Richard Engels was put in charge of this and asked to take the necessary steps. Countries of ISC were asked to collect historical documents as follows:

- 1. Tapes: These were already being collected by Subud UK in preparation for a *World Tape Archive in England*.** They noted that many tapes hadn’t reached London. The person responsible for the ISCC Tape Sub-Committee was Isobel Isaacs. (ISCC was the original name of ISC). Maxum Stafford was also involved at some stage.
- 2. Films:** Subud Hamburg was to look after these as the ISCC Films Sub-Committee.
- 3. Photographs and slides:** These were to be looked after in Wolfsburg as the ISCC Slides and Photos Sub-Committee
- 4. History of Subud:** All written and printed words of Bapak, publications, letters and documents, showing the history of Subud were to be sent to Richard Engels in Germany.

1975 – ‘Congress recognised the importance of duplication for security and the value of archives to aid the work of ISC and other Subud bodies’. A chair of ‘the International archives’ was created, Mary Thompson in England. At that time *the* international archive for Subud was in Kenfield Hall, England.

NOTE: Before we had ‘international archives’, we had a body called *Communications, Publications and Archives*. Rashid Arthur was one of the chairs of this body according to reports of the period.

While the archives were in England, film and photographs were sent from Germany and by 1977 the tapes that had originally been intended for the World Tape Archive in England had been transferred to Faisal Sillem in Belgium. Before the Tape Preservation Unit was established under the international archives framework while Mary Thompson was the Chair of the International Archives, Faisal worked as one of the ISC Tape Units that existed in various countries, collecting, duplicating and distributing the talks

1976 – Bapak wrote a letter to ISC giving instructions on their function which letter included a paragraph about archives – “**to arrange for the preservation of archives and historical material relating to the development of the Spiritual Brotherhood of Subud**”

1977 - Letter from Bapak (Sharif) in answer to Mary’s question saying yes, copy the most important material from the archives in England and Belgium to an additional three locations. The archive in Indonesia didn’t exist at that time nor was mentioned in Bapak’s letter.

It had already been decided at the congress in 1975 in fact that it was important to duplicate some things for security so it was possible Mary was not at that congress

We are missing the ISC records from 1975 to 1979. They had been for a long time in Hamburg Subud House, all clearly organized and marked

1978 – Tin trunks containing duplicated archives and duplicated talks were being prepared to send to Lewis Arquette, USA; Aisha Parker, Sydney; Eijiro Mochida, Japan.

1979 – I could find no mention of archives at this congress.

1983 - Faisal Sillem had been appointed as the Chair of the International archives and

Bapak advised that the tapes preservation unit (TPU) should be moved to England and to amalgamate it with the archive there. However, this did not eventuate.

Harlinah Longcroft got involved in the archives collecting for the history project. When she started to write the history she couldn't find sufficient information in the existing documents, including in Indonesia where she was living, to be able to compile an accurate history. It's not known what happened to items Richard Engels had collected in Germany or what was collected at that time. As an aside normally archives wouldn't separate tapes, films, photographs, documents in the way we had done so as to ensure complete historical context for the future

1987 – Bapak passed away which stimulated establishment of the archive in Indonesia.

1988 - *The International archive fundraising team (IAFT)* was formed and in March 1988 Daniela was commissioned to go to Indonesia to work for IAFT/ISC. IAFT raised around US\$500,000.00 including salaries, equipment and supplies. What they raised also went to sustain the other archives. IAFT was in operation for approximately 3 years which enabled the archive in Indonesia to be established

1989-1993 Saodah Higashi became Chair of the International Archives when ISC was in Japan. Saodah was in fact the last *Chair* of the International Archives. One of the problems that had occurred previously was the cutting off of the top and bottom range of dynamic sound of Bapak's voice which ISC tried to address during that period and was why recently the Memnon project was so beneficial in restoring the full dynamic range of that sound via the capacity of developing technologies

During this period, Lorenzo Music, who was the head of IAFT, wanted to transfer the original recordings of talks to the USA to have them processed commercially and, properly stored in climate controlled facilities which Varindra Vittachi as WSA Chair supported.

IAFT then suddenly resigned and everything stopped. Part of the problem was a conflict with ISC who were concerned with how much money IAFT was raising feeling it was taking money away from ISC. From the documents available there was conflict surrounding the archives generally at that time even though it was possible to establish the archive in Indonesia.

From 1983 to 1989 the various activities under the umbrella of the international archives were:

- History of Subud – Harlinah Longcroft
- Faisal Sillem - TPU
- Robin Drewett - the ISC Tape Unit
- The transcription and translation unit – Indonesia

The backup locations (archive centres) were never mentioned, including the archive in England which, by then had disappeared perhaps into a basement in Lewis or had been partly lost in transit as one story tells.

In the USA, Australia and Japan only the tin trunks of duplicated material existed and countries were financially responsible for this material, as well as its care

1989 world congress resolutions included that ISC shall appoint an archives Sub-Committee called Subud Archives International (SAI), with a Chairman to coordinate the work of:

- YSBD – archive in Indonesia (YSBD became YMS)
- Transcription and translation unit which worked with the archive in Indonesia
- TPU – Belgium – tape preservation and multiplication
- ISC Tape Unit – UK – *distribution* of sound, video (may also have held some film)
- History of Subud – assembly of source material and writing the history of Subud

In the second part of the resolutions of the congress the 'Five International Archive Centres' were mentioned in relation to holding duplicates of various archives yet, they weren't under the management umbrella of ISC or, the sub-committee being established.

1993 congress changed the framework again and everything was merged into ISC Media Services including all the various 'units' below. SAI (Subud Archives International) was now included:

- SAI – Australia, Japan, USA, UK, Indonesia
- TPU - which was under the umbrella of the archives but retained the TPU name
- Video talks archive – Robin Drewitt
- Film and video archive (not video talks as above). These were transferred to Harris Smart in Melbourne during this period for the purpose of having them copied for safety
- ISC Tape Unit UK – sales and distribution
- History of Subud
- Copyright and Trademarks
- Web and Publication guidelines
- Ibu Rahayu talks

(SPI were off to the side as private publishers with no link to the WSA as such)

Archives no longer had a dedicated chair

1993 – 2001 - Lester Sutherland was the ISC Media Services Coordinator. During this period Daniela returned to the USA from Indonesia c1992 and was at that time called the technical advisor to the international archives. She was unable to find work in Los Angeles where the archive of backup material was. She moved to Phoenix and another coordinator was appointed in Los Angeles.

From approximately 1993 to 1995, security microfilm copies of the contents of the archive in Indonesia were lodged for safety in the USA, Australia and Japan and audio cassette backup copies of Bapak's talks were also distributed during that period. A set of microfiche had also been made of a selection of Bapak's letters with names and addresses removed, much like the selection of letters which had been part of the original helper's guides. These sets of microfiche were sent to the USA, Australia and Japan

Circa 2000 due to problems with the archive in the Subud House in Los Angeles any remaining material was transferred to Phoenix under Daniela's interim care. It isn't known when Daniela was appointed as the Subud USA archivist and began to take care of Subud USA's archive

1997 – Resolutions relating to Archives were:

1. It is resolved that the WSA undertake a project to:

a) Make security copies of archival film about Bapak (of his early visits to Coombe Springs, Holland, Wolfsburg and other places in Europe) and

b) Copy this archival film on to video.

2. It is resolved that WSA undertake a project to make a subject index to Bapak's index. (This project had already been started by Faisal Sillem)

3. It is agreed that WSA should be responsible for the international archives

Regarding the Transcription Unit Congress approves that the Indonesian Transcription Unit has to report to Subud Archives International

1998 – Amalijah Thompson took over as coordinator from Harlinah Longcroft of the archive in Australia and in 1999 moved the archive into new premises

1999-2001 – In 1999 Amalijah Thompson became responsible for all aspects of the international archives at Lester's request - it was too much to deal with everything under media services which included copyright, publishing, trademarks as well as archives. Amalijah was Lester's assistant media services person for this short period. The archive units under her umbrella were:

- The **video talks archive** held by Robin. This was separate to the sales and distribution aspects of video talks which he later transferred to SPI.
- **Tape Preservation Unit** - Belgium
- The **film and video archive** – Harris Smart. In 2001 the film and video archive was transferred to the archive in Canberra. When it was received, the national film and sound archive cleaned, spooled and transferred the film into proper archival containers at a very low fee then it was transferred to a film cold store.
- The **'five international archive centres'** – **USA, Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Britain**
- There was also a project which didn't succeed at the time to set up a computer database via a team of computer experts, historian and archives

As per the 1997 congress resolutions the Transcriptions unit was supposed to report to SAI.

In 1999 Amalijah proposed a slightly revised model for the organisational structure because of clear issues in the 'international archives framework'.

It involved an umbrella body called **SICS – Subud International Communication Services**, with divisions under that umbrella related to:

- **Archival preservation and functions** – all normal archive activities and functions including transcriptions and first English translations
- **Publishing** – of talks, books and their distribution including SPI, ISC Tape and video unit, History of Subud etc
- **Copyright and trademarks** – maintaining copyright, trademarks and protections including guidelines to web etc re anything published in name of Subud
- **Information services** – general public interface, institutional interface, member access to information

Each section or division would have its own manager or person responsible and each division would comprise various working groups carrying out the work needed. Sharif and Lester supported it however, Amalijah wasn't able to continue in the role and it didn't get to the 2001 world congress for consideration.

Circa 2000 Farlan Williams became the new coordinator for the archive in Indonesia replacing Latif des Tombe.

2001 - World Congress separated the archives and the rest of ISC Media Services into two areas each with a different coordinator, one for archives and one for 'media'.

2002 - Reinier Sillem was appointed as the archive coordinator during the BIG gathering in England and did a good job supervising the removal of the archive from the Manchester Subud house into a storage facility from necessity however, his studies made it difficult for him to actively perform the function of coordinator

During this period the transcriptions and translations units were transferred to SPI as well as the distribution aspects of the talks

2005 - Amalijah Thompson appointed in October following the congress. No direction or action had emerged for the archives at this congress.

Note: From the time I took the role on until world congress 2010 one of the biggest problems I faced was confusion about the role itself. This happened over and over and over and it was clear something wasn't working. The ISC Chair felt the role was more appropriately that of WSA Archivist and this was then that term first developed. The other issue was fragmentation and disconnection of things that had once been connected to the archives but which were now being

managed by a range of people without any cohesive connection at least that was how it seemed at the time. For example:

- Trademarks and copyright were dealt with by Maya assisted by Matthew Weiss
- Translations were dealt with by Armand who developed a translation manual with a lot of reference to the archives which I, as the archive coordinator knew nothing about and which was published with incorrect or out of date facts about the archives
- SPI was dealing with transcriptions and first English translations disconnected from the archives yet, these are part of the archival record and are traditionally part of the work of archives
- Matthew Weiss was dealing with websites
- Roger van der Matten was dealing with the electronic office

It was unclear who was responsible for the publication of Bapak's talks on the Subud Library where errors in translations were found creating confusion about what Bapak had said

There was no visible 'coordination' of all these activities and from my own point of view it was hard to grasp what was happening even when it directly related to my function

In a way this whole period became a battle to retain the light that existed in the archives and their right place within Subud on a straight and accurate path. *Very often* it felt that the light was very close to being extinguished. Initially I had tried to implement the same kind of role Lester had as a 'coordinator' and I tried to 'coordinate' the archives as had been done before, but found over and over it felt like flogging a dead horse.

There was nothing to coordinate in reality – what was needed was to bring the archives into a more cohesive, up to date, more simple way of management, more professionally focused and possibly away from the transience of the WSA.

At one point in time I felt there were two roles, a liaison person to the WSA who was part of 'the executive' and a WSA Archivist, paid, professional appointment that managed the overall archival needs of the WSA in critical areas, supported by 'trustees' who would ensure the resources were available and long term 'protection' and facilitation. **At the time in the situation that existed** and under a newly designed staged development of the archives we thought this may create the needed transition

2006 – The archive in Canberra moved from rented premises into a storage facility to focus on developing a permanent facility

2007 – The future was very unclear generally

2008 – Circa 2008 SPI contacted the executive with an offer to take over the archives. This presented a great temptation for me personally given the problems that existed during a period of transition within the multi-faceted focus of the WSA

SPI's rationale was more or less the same as mine at the time that, for the archives to function properly they needed to be a *proper archive body*, run professionally and protected from the transient functions of the WSA and its office bearers who, no matter how well meaning they may be, have considerably varying capacity, usually little knowledge about managing archives and very little time to apply to the in-depth preservation decisions needed from time to time. After a great deal of consideration it was decided by the executive that it wasn't a good idea to transfer the archives to SPI

Archives also clearly needed stable funding and, a dedicated permanent fund that members could donate to continually as they felt to, to build up the resources needed for necessary long term planning.

2006-2009 – Archive Report to WSC with recommendations for a slightly revised framework for archives, which was approved in principle by the WSC in 2009 but did not go to congress and may not have been the right solution. It was recommended to have a council comprising of representatives from MSF, SPI and the WSA supporting a WSA Archivist for 3 years initially to get the most critical work done. At that time there was no archivist in Britain, Daniela had been busy with her own work and had by her own words not a lot of time available for the archives, Faisal had passed away and Robin Drewitt wanted to be free of the video talks archive etc

The recommendations were basically

- To change the framework and name of the archives to WSA Archives

- To consolidate archive units to cover the needed transitions from the former TPU and the video archive
- To resolve issues relating to and therefore strengthen the security backup system
- To bring up to date policy, procedures, protocols, finding aids/lists/databases and guidelines as well as develop the needed archive website so that members could see directly the aim of the archives, what they contained and more easily access what they needed
- That the WSA Archivist would be supported by a group of trustees or a council perhaps who would ensure resources were available one of which would deal with liaison with the WSA
- The archive body itself would comprise the archivists working in each WSA Archive as they were available plus co-opted expertise as needed from time to time
- The WSA Archives and the archive body would operate under a simple charter from the WSA to ensure permanence in facilities and funding necessary to develop long term valid preservation planning to avoid 'crisis spending'
- The change from a 'coordinator' who had no knowledge of the archives in the depth needed nor of archival practice to a WSA Archivist supported by a group of trustees or similar providing the needed link to the WSA was designed to eliminate long standing issues with the role
- That a permanent fund was needed to ensure the long term stability and effective management of the archive rather than ad hoc annual very uncertain budgets which add to the 'cost' of running archives
- Original sound recordings in Belgium should not be discarded as per the request to do so but professionally assessed prior to world congress, as to the feasibility of re-mastering to current preservation standards and the cost.
- All recommendations in the report including all preservation priorities for several years ahead were cost and submitted as part of the budget process

The consolidation of the former TPU and the video talks archive into the archives in Indonesia and Australia (Ibu's talks to Indonesia, Bapak's talks to Australia) was on the basis that those two archives were already archives of the WSA and the clear responsibility of the WSA; the relevant expertise was available; they were close geographically so the concept of a twin WSA archive sharing responsibility for the early historical records of the WSA and the talks made sense because the records were already in those two locations or in case of the talks soon would be

The recommendations did not preclude development of other archives - WSA Archives or country archives

It simply dealt with the current urgent needs where it made sense to amalgamate and consolidate, while at the same time creating a framework that would make simpler and more easily doable the overall management of the archives along professional lines as archivists and resources were available

2010 – Congress resolutions

Excerpt from 'Minutes of 13th Subud World Congress'

10. WSA ARCHIVES

10.1 Congress resolves WSA takes responsibility to provide the funds needed for the maintenance and preservation – to the latest archival standards – of the WSA Archives; USA, Spain (32-0-0)

10.2 Congress approves the following recommendations. Mexico, Britain (32-0-0):

"WSA shall appoint a WSA Archivist and shall establish a "Panel" (Working Group) who shall work as a team to ensure the maintenance, preservation and accessibility of current and future WSA Archives;

The panel shall consist of approximately five persons who together shall have appropriate skills, expertise and experience needed;

The WSA Archivist shall be a person who has proven professional experience and competence in archives;

The panel including the WSA Archivist shall work together in a collaborative and harmonious manner for the furtherance of the aims of this resolution;"

10.3 Congress resolves that the material created by and related to Bapak, the WSA and its Affiliates be preserved for all coming generations as far into the future as Almighty God permits. Australia, Spain (32-0-0)

2010 – Amalijah Thompson continued as WSA Archive Coordinator

2010 – WSC Meeting in Great Malvern, UK

Excerpt from minutes of WSC Meeting, August 2010

6.1 ARCHIVE STRUCTURE: Amalijah Thompson, WSA Archives Coordinator, is continuing to review and assess options regarding the framework and infrastructure for the archives. Three working models were presented for consideration. See Archives Power Point, attachment 9.

6.2 ORIGINAL BAPAK RECORDINGS: Following world congress and the resolution supporting funding of the WSA Archives, the original sound recordings of Bapak's talks were transferred to a professional facility for assessment of their condition. An interim report with options was provided to the WSC meeting which indicated that the recordings are in relatively good condition. The second stage of this process, which involves digitally sampling a percentage of the recordings, will begin shortly. This will determine more clearly the overall costs needed to re-master the recordings to the higher technological standards available today.

6.5 FUNDING: A dedicated, permanent archive fund is needed to provide stable funding, possibly to be held by MSF. This fund would be managed by the archive team in liaison with the WSA and MSF (if the latter holds this fund on behalf of the WSA).

2011 - Amalijah Thompson resigned as WSA Archive Coordinator

WSC Meeting in Rungan Sari, Kalimantan agreed to proceed with the Memnon project to remaster the original sound recordings of Bapak's talks and MSF offered to fund the project with Amalijah Thompson acting as MSF's archive consultant working directly with Memnon to supervise the re-mastering process.

Armand Bisson appointed WSA Archive Coordinator

2012 – Amalijah Thompson appointed by executive as WSA Archivist under 2 year contract to end of 2014

2013 – WSC Meeting in Poio, Spain,

Excerpt from WSC meeting minutes, June 2013

Digitisation/re-mastering of the talks had reached the end of the first stage and MSF was thanked sincerely for its work and the WSA declared its intention 'to restore the US\$172,000 provided by MSF from its assets in relation to the digitalisation process.

2014 – MSF/Memnon project completed and original tapes transferred to Canberra for final stage of the work needed

Amalijah Thompson

June 2014