

FIAF COMMISSIONS

The FIAF statutes and regulations do not include any agreements concerning organization or the working method of the commissions. This has proved to be faulty from our experience up to now. Some problems have arisen which in my opinion should be considered within a basic regulation :

Who may or who should chair a commission ?

Are commission members elected or appointed ?

How should commissions be formed ? Should they be formed by members who by chance are present at a congress, or should the members be selected from specialists of different fields working in the various archives ?

What is the exact organizational form of a commission (chairman, one vice-chairman, managing committee) ?

Will the deciding group of a commission be elected or appointed ?

May all member archives participate in the commission meetings or exclusively the appointed or elected members ?

Should we agree on a voting procedure for commissions (principle of the simple majority or 2/3 majority) ?

In what way may someone be made a commission member by a later election or appointment ?

Those are the questions that have appeared to me from the work of our commission so far.

I think it necessary to fix a precise wording for rules of commission work, not for bureaucracy's sake but to make work more efficient and to avoid misunderstandings.

I should welcome it if the Comité Directeur would consider this problem.

K l a u e

To the Secretary General of F.I.A.F.

From Brenda Davies, National Film Archive, London.

MEMORANDUM FOR SUBMISSION TO THE EXECUTIVE

Subject : F.I.A.F. Commissions

As a result of my very limited experience as Chairman of the F.I.A.F. Commission on Cataloguing and Documentation set up at the Annual Congress in London last year, I would like to submit a few observations on the organization of such commissions.

I should perhaps begin by explaining my own idea of the function of such a Commission. As I understand it, a Commission is a small group of specialists, appointed by a parent body, to study certain specific problems in some detail. On completion of its studies, it reports its conclusions and recommendations to the parent body which is free to accept or reject them.

When the Commission on Cataloguing and Documentation was set up in London, it was given no specific tasks, no "terms of reference". Consequently, much of the time in London was spent in discussing its aims and deciding what its main work should be. The Commission then reported to the F.I.A.F. Executive setting out the programme of work it hoped to accomplish before the next Annual Congress.

The Commission has continued to work towards its stated aims, but at the Leipzig meetings (which I did not attend) I gather that the discussions developed into a sort of Open Forum in which members of the Executive and various observers took part and much the same pattern has developed in Brussels. Please, understand that I am not suggesting that such an "open forum" or "symposium" is a bad thing. On the contrary, it is a most valuable way of exchanging ideas, meeting colleagues and discussing common problems. But in my opinion, it is not possible to organize the work of a Commission satisfactorily within this framework.

My suggestion would therefore be that F.I.A.F. should consider setting up occasional meetings or "symposiums" on some aspects of Archive work (The Gottwaldov meeting on film identification seems to have been of this nature). Any interested parties could be invited to attend (from outside F.I.A.F. too perhaps, in some cases), but the meetings should be conducted by a member of the F.I.A.F. Executive. As a result of such general discussions, specific common problems would come to light and these could then be referred by the Executive to small commissions of specialists (i.e. people whose day-to-day work is concerned with the subject in hand). Such Commission should then meet privately and discuss in depth the technical details involved. They would be guided by the Executive. The sort of rules I have in mind are as

follows :

1. A Commission should consist of a limited number of specialist workers. There should be a stated maximum of SIX or eight members, chosen for their experience rather than as representatives of a particular archive.
2. A Commission should be given definite terms of reference, in writing by the F.I.A.F. Executive and instructed to produce a report within a stated time.
3. A Commission should elect a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman and the duties and responsibilities of these two should be clearly laid down by the F.I.A.F. Executive.
4. A Commission should meet in private but should be empowered to call for evidence or reports from non-members.
5. Secretariat assistance should be provided by F.I.A.F. at all Commission meetings so that competent minutes can be prepared.
6. Commission meeting should preferably be held outside the framework of F.I.A.F. Executive meetings, leaving any Commission members who are also at the Executive free to attend.
7. All Commission expenses, including travel, should be a central responsibility of F.I.A.F. rather than of individual Archives.

All the foregoing is entirely my own personal view of the matter which may not be shared by all my Colleagues on the Commission. It may well be that the F.I.A.F. Executive has already considered and rejected the kind of system I am Proposing. I feel however that if F.I.A.F. Commissions are to be expected to produce serious and concrete results some such organization will be needed.