

ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology

In 2010, the Section for Archival Education and Training (ICA-SAE) of the ICA embraced the challenge of creating an interactive, online, multilingual archival terminology resource. The project was led by Luciana Duranti at the University of British Columbia, and was funded by ICA and InterPARES. In the initial stage of the project, the research team (composed of the ICA-SAE members) chose 300 core archival concepts and identified the corresponding terms in English-speaking countries. This exercise produced 320 English terms. Afterwards, a team composed of archival students at the master's and doctoral level and professional/academic supervisors identified the definitions for the English terms as used in several English speaking countries, and the corresponding terms and definitions, where they exist, in fifteen other languages.

In March 2012, the Project was completed and delivered to the ICA for publication and interactive use on the Internet. From 1 August 2013 it is available as a reference tool for professional archivists and researchers as **ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology** at: <http://icarchives.webbler.co.uk/14282/ica-multilingual-archival-terminology/ica-multilingual-archival-terminology.html>

The languages now available are: Catalan, Chinese, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish and Swedish. Croatian will soon be added. After InterPARES has added interactive functionalities, the **ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology** will offer ICA members the opportunity to add languages, terms and definitions.

What ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology is and is not

ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology is:

- An international source for the terminology and definitions used by many traditions to express shared archival concepts
- A dynamic instrument that will reflect international archival practice/terminological usage and its evolution over time
- A product created by archival professionals from around the world using authoritative sources and common practice/usage
- A tool maintained by its users – professionals, academics, researchers, and archival students in the international archival community
- A constantly up-to-date reference for students and professionals alike
- The terminology reference for the ICA Education Modules, *Digital Records Pathways: Topics in Digital Preservation*
- An opportunity for its users to inform the archival world about the development of new concepts identified by specific terms and definitions

ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology is not:

- A static, authoritative resource that preferences one definition over another
- A resource that preferences any one tradition or language over another
- A straight translation of English terminology and definitions

The ICA-SAE /InterPARES Multilingual Archival Terminology Project

ICA-SAE Multilingual Archival Terminology was originally proposed to support a concurrent project: the ICA-SAE Education Modules, *Digital Records Pathways: Topics in Digital Preservation*, also funded by the ICA and InterPARES. Eight modules were completed in 2012 and made available for download at <http://www.ciscra.org/>

The Multilingual Archival Terminology project began with a core set of terms based on concepts expressed in previous ICA dictionaries and InterPARES glossaries, chosen by the Project Director Luciana Duranti, and approved by the ICA-SAE. The initial work of identification of corresponding terms in each language/region was done by a team that consisted of graduate students (native speakers of each language) at the University of British Columbia's School of Archives Library and Information Studies, expert professionals from several national archives, and archival scholars from leading universities in each country/region. Definitions were drawn from standard authorities in each language/country, where such authorities existed, and from common practice/usage. Particularly important initial sources were the *ICA Dictionary on Archival Terminology*, coordinated and edited by Angelika Menne-Haritz, which presented terms and definitions in the five official languages of ICA and *Nordiska Arkivterminologi* (Nordic Archival Terminology), which built on the ICA Dictionary for Danish, Icelandic, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish. Citations in **ICA Multilingual Terminology** identify the source of each definition. The definitions are presented in the order in which they have been entered—not in authoritative order. There is no hierarchy or implied endorsement in the position of each definition in the list.

The choice of languages reflects the human resources available to the team at the time of development, and is indicative of the high degree of international participation and cooperation. It is expected that more languages will be included as records professionals from around the world will start using the **ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology**, which is capable of accommodating any languages at any time. When the interactive functionality will be enabled, ICA members will be able also to add terms with related definitions to existing languages, as well as other definitions to already defined terms.

Purpose

The purpose of the **ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology** is to support archivists, records managers and information managers in the use of records-related terms, from the traditional ones to those related to the preservation of authentic records in digital systems. Founded on archival, diplomatic and records and information knowledge, the 320 initial terms express concepts that are central to both the ICA (many of the terms chosen appear in existing ICA dictionaries), and the InterPARES project.

ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology is intended to facilitate communication and understanding of concepts and usage of related terms across a variety of languages, cultures, and traditions of archival practice. Terminology is a living entity. To attempt to produce a definitive, authoritative dictionary that could support this goal would be a massive undertaking destined to failure, because, given the speed of change and growth we are observing in our field, the result would become obsolete the moment it was published, even if it were possible to agree on definitive, authoritative definitions at any given time. Furthermore, it would be anachronistic in our digital networked world to offer a fixed product, incapable of change without re-publication.

Therefore, a planned second purpose of **ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology** is to provide a dynamic resource that can benefit from the affordances of digital networks, and the wisdom of crowd sourcing within the archival community. Registered users will be able to add terms, definitions, links between definitions, and comments, as well as languages. InterPARES will manage the tool and [ICA-SAE members expert in each language will be recruited to monitor additional entries](#). The InterPARES and ICA-SAE Project Team are currently working on protocols that will allow these contributions. Given this facility, the number of terms in ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology will quickly increase and reflect researchers' and professionals' current usage, thereby satisfying users needs for up-to-date terminology. At the same time, being based on actual referenced usage, the **ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology** will, over time, reveal the development of terms and definitions and trace changes in usage. This characteristic will support the reading of archival literature from previous decades, including seminal writings that used archival terms in ways that have been superseded. For example, in the United States, the term "manuscripts" is no longer the most commonly used term to refer to private archival material, which today is referred to as "private or personal records." In another example, over the past 4 decades, the term "machine-readable records" has been replaced by the term "electronic records" and, later, "digital records."

Methodology

Archival work has different traditions and different cultural backgrounds – a simple translation of terms will not suffice to understand what colleagues from different countries are doing. We need to see their reality through their eyes and understand it through their expertise, which is manifested in the way they use archival terminology: we can begin to do that by linking across languages and regions terms and definitions conveying shared concepts as they are used in each language and region.

Thus, the goal of **ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology** is to reflect, as much as possible, national/regional archival traditions and usage through the choice and definition of terms. Although it was initiated with 320 English terms conveying internationally shared concepts, which were then interpreted in several other languages, the result is a resource that does not give preference to one language, regional variation or tradition over another, but presents terms and definitions as they are used by records professionals where they live and work. This is no easy task, as some of the languages represented simply do not have equivalents for all the concepts expressed by the English terms or for the terms themselves. In many of these cases, the terms and definitions have been translated from a standard English language source (ICA or InterPARES being the sources of choice where possible). In this way, ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology offers a tool to disseminate archival practice, archival research, and expand the archival discourse. Throughout, however, the desire to reflect national or regional practice remains paramount.

The ICA-SAE / InterPARES Project members gratefully acknowledge and thank all those in the large team who have so far contributed to **ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology**. In particular, we wish to thank Giorgio Mammarella, database and web designer, whose work enables the flexibility and usability of this resource. All who have worked on this project hope that many more will contribute, extending the terms and the languages included in **ICA Multilingual Archival Terminology** so that it becomes an indispensable resource for our present and future professional community.

Use it now:

<http://icarchives.webbler.co.uk/14282/ica-multilingual-archival-terminology/ica-multilingual-archival-terminology.html>

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