

ICA/SBL Section for Business Archives: Extended International Cooperation.

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SBL has during these last four years had as one of its main goals to extend communication and international professional partnerships worldwide to an extent that is possible considered that the section members works out of enthusiasm and without basic external support.

This point was strongly emphasized during the successful SBL steering committee meeting held in Genoa Sept. 13.th-14th 2007.

Summing up of activities show that the section never before has had a so widely spread presence internationally as has been the case during the last few years. A main project of SBL to increase number of the national overviews is also going ahead with more overviews being produced. This important source of information about business archives can be found on the new ICA web site.

The most recent international activity took place in Gouangzhou, China, on the days Dec. 3rd-7th 2007. The first ICA/SBL seminar on business archives held in China was hosted by the Chinese archives central authorities in Beijing and the regional archival authorities in the Guangdong province. The seminar attendance consisted of representatives of a high number of Chinese corporations, many of them huge manufacturing and industrial companies. In all 63 participants were present daily throughout the seminar. The SBL representatives were Didier Bondue from Saint-Gobain company in Paris (SBL vice-chair), Bruce Smith, archives consultant from Melbourne, Australia (SBL board member), Helen Swinnerton from HSBC Banking group in Hongkong and myself.

The seminar was the first of it kind in China and was recognized publicly by the Chinese authorities as an important event.

The seminar focused on important aspects of the handling of business archives ranging from issues as organization and preservation to retention regulations, international cooperation and other issues. The Chinese participants showed great interest and concern and there was too little time for to discuss all the questions that were raised during the three days seminar. The papers were handed in to the organizers in advance and had been translated into English – respectively Chinese – so that every participant received a readable hard copy before the start of the seminar.

The seminar was held at the Guangdong provincial archives building built in 2004. The building was a marvellous showcase of the most modern technologies and comfortable facilities. The six exhibit halls stretched out on a total of 5000 square meters, a demonstration of will and ability to share vast and varied information with local and foreign visitors. In

many ways this new building should be visited as a possible model for authorities planning to erect new archives buildings.

SBL is about planning its next board meeting, its annual meeting and a workshop going to take place in Stavanger, Norway June 15th-June 18th 2008. I hope that our next four-year plan will demonstrate continued ability for the section to pursue its international aim of still even more extended international cooperation both in the western and the eastern hemisphere.