

Rescuing the Memory of our Peoples
IAMS Mission Study Group Report
Project for Archives Documentation and Oral History (PADOH)
IAMS Conference, 31 July – 7 August 2004

Rescuing the Memory of our Peoples is a foundational interest of Mission Studies. Meetings during the IAMS conference reviewed activities since 2000 and made plans for future events. Concerns which had informed this group from the early days of IAMS were identified, together with notes of the opportunities and constraints provided by the character and membership of IAMS. We developed proposals to make use of the Archives Manual developed at the 2002 Rome Consultation as a means for increasing the capacity of local and regional church and mission groups to record and preserve their history. We also made a number of recommendations for consideration by the incoming IAMS executive.

Three foundational convictions were identified as critical to what people associated with this group have sought to achieve from the establishment of IAMS in 1972.

1. The conviction that reflection about Christian mission should not be allowed to lose its way to primary records of Christian experience.
2. The importance of researchers in Christian mission needing to know what those records are, where to locate them, and how to interpret them.
3. The desire that what have come to be called “reflective-practitioners” in Christian mission need to be able to identify and access quality texts relative to the past and future mission of the Christian Church.

Because of its global and multi-cultural membership, and ecumenical, academic and praxis-orientated values, IAMS is well placed to champion these concerns, identify theoretical and practical issues, and encourage those seeking to address them. Despite limited resources, we believe that by means of carefully selected projects, IAMS is able to make a difference to the quality of discourse about Christian mission in the world today. Previous projects have included a significant conference in Rome in 1980, and the major effort to develop an international database and thesaurus of bibliographical references for mission studies. Although IAMS withdrew from responsibility for this project following the 1992 conference, it is pleasing to note that the associated project of the American Society of Missiology has under the leadership of the former convenor of DAB, Norman Thomas, has not only continued to provide thematic annotated bibliographies in the journal *Missiology*, but has had published the substantial *International Mission Bibliography, 1960-2000*, Scarecrow Press, 2003.

Events since the 2000 IAMS Conference

- a) Rescuing the Memory of Our Peoples – Rome September 2002.

In 2000 it was proposed that an archives consultation be held in Rome at least a year before the next IAMS international conference. This was agreed to by the 2001 IAMS executive meeting and given the title “Rescuing the Memory of our Peoples.” The executive also suggested a name change for the group from Documentation Archives and Bibliography (DAB) to “PADOH” - Project for Archives Documentation and Oral History. The rationale for the change in name being that the greater need appeared now to be archives and oral history, particularly of the stories of the poor.

Planning for the Rome consultation involved an international core group which met by teleconference, fundraising, selection of speakers and sponsored attendees, and sharpening the focus of what the consultation would seek to achieve. It was important that we related to our sister organisation the International Association of Catholic Missiologists in hosting the event. After some adjustments to the time frame, with the support of the IAMS secretariat, 42 people from over 20 countries met in Rome from 29 September to 6 October 2002.

The consultation was planned as a working conference in which participants were expected to engage through critical reflection and the presentation of the needs and plans of their own countries and institutions. The location of the consultation on the campus of the Pontifical Urban University connected our gathering to the living faith and history of our environment. It is difficult to speak too highly of the significance of the location, our local hosts, and the archives we were able to visit. Within the conference itself, the papers, workshops, personal interactions and presentations all contributed to an extraordinarily informative, interactive and inspiring event.

Martha Smalley and Rosemary Seton engaged members of the conference in the adaptation of their archives manual to the needs of global church and mission groups and were gracious in submitting this statement from their professional experience to cross-cultural critique. The revision is now available for download from the Yale Divinity School website or by purchase from the Overseas Ministries Study Centre in New Haven. More than we realised at the time this process of engagement with a practical working document established a template for the next phase of the work of our group.

b) Regional Consultations

The name of the Rome consultation, “Rescuing the Memory of our Peoples” proved inspirational not only for Rome itself, but also subsequent events. An adjunct meeting to the Aotearoa New Zealand Association for Mission Studies enabled mission society leaders to meet with archivists and historians about the need for preservation strategies for their records. A further meeting in 2004 drew attention to the need for a practical records management policy for teaching faculty. A meeting of a religious archivists group in Dunedin also faced the challenge of being a bridge between professional archival bodies and the often volunteer nature of record keeping among church and mission groups. The question of interfaith meetings of religious archivists was also raised.

In April this year an Oral History workshop took place in Madagascar which trialled a French translation of the Archives Manual. This was an outstandingly successful consultation. An archives training month in Bangalore in June also made use of the Manual among its resources.

Proposed projects for 2004 – 2008

The following projects are planned between now and the next IAMS conference:

1. “Rescuing the Memory of our Peoples” consultations in Lima, Singapore, Seoul and the translation of the Archives Manual into Spanish, Chinese and Korean in association with these consultations.
2. Minor revision of the 1992 Statement to reflect current needs and perspectives.
3. We would like to change the name back from PADOH to DAB.
4. We would like to offer cooperation to the American Society of Missiology in relation to their planning of the next phase of bibliographical data base management and information sharing.
5. To develop and post on the website a practical statement on Records Management for Teachers and Practitioners of Missiology
6. Join the ICA Church Archives group (SKD) as part of intentionally seeking to help bridge the gap between mission agencies and professional archives bodies
7. Investigate the research needs of emerging models of mission orientated theological education.

A number of ideas were suggested for follow up by members of the network.

1. Clarifying and supporting the research needs and strategies of emerging models of theological education, and missiological theological formation.
2. Encouraging students to use the Amazon book review facility to add to the missiological discourse available globally in major languages
3. Encouraging information resource development projects such as dictionaries – Chinese, India, African Christian biography.
4. Exploring networks and possible host institutions capable of addressing the need for global directory of archives and documentation centres – a global Mundus
5. Discussing with the editors of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research the possibility of placing on their website some of the survey articles of archives and documentation centres, together with theses relating to mission studies..

Recommendations to the IAMS Executive.

The group would like to make the following recommendations to the incoming IAMS Executive.

6. That IAMS Executive be requested to include online access to databases and electronic texts, particularly ATLA / ATLAS, as part of membership in IAMS.

7. IAMS Executive be requested to “Rescue the Memory of our People” by commissioning a history of IAMS to be presented to the next IAMS Conference.

John

John Roxborough

Convenor, Documentation, Archives and Bibliography "Rescuing the Memory of our Peoples"

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