He waka eke noa - A canoe which we are all in with no exception

PARBICA has a track record of successes as a Branch of the ICA.

We believe that this results, in part, from the way in which the PARBICA Bureau is structured, organises its activities and works with members.

PARBICA has developed from a group of interested individuals into a productive body for Pacific archivists and record keepers.

Today, Amela (PARBICA President and National Archivist of Western Samoa) and I (Helen Walker, PARBICA Treasurer and Director of International and Strategic Liaison at the National Archives of Australia) will explain how the branch is structured, supported and directed.

We will then look to you for an interactive exchange to compare and discuss ideas for improved governance and operation of ICA branches.

Before we begin I would like to acknowledge Talei Masters (PARBICA Secretary-General and Senior Archivist Digital Continuity at Archives New Zealand) for her work in preparing this paper. Talei was unable to travel to Spain to present with us but her thoughts are with all of us together here.

Map and introduction to PARBICA

Founded in 1981 PARBICA covers the largest and most diverse geographic region of the ICA.

Practitioners are geographically dispersed even within countries, some being comprised of islands hundreds of kilometres apart. The climate of the region presents significant challenges with regard to the preservation of records. So the characteristics of the region combine to present a wide range of issues for PARBICA.

About the Membership

PARBICA has over 100 members, from 21 countries, including government archives, non-government institutions and associations, and individuals.

Many members have limited capacity in terms of staff numbers, professional skills, storage, communications and power infrastructure, access to basic supplies and training.

Many member countries also have a history of foreign administration and governance frameworks are still developing in some countries.

How PARBICA works

PARBICA has an active constitution. Most notably, it provides for the governing body (the Bureau) and biennial general conferences which strengthen governance arrangements and motivates training events.

The constitution provides for General Conferences that specifically includes member participation and the election of a new Bureau. Members are able to participate in the
general conferences, whether they can be present or not, through the submission of member reports. Like ICA, we try to get things done through and with members.

The Branch is governed by an active Bureau to which members are elected at each General Conference (President, Vice-President, Secretary-General, Treasurer and members). The Bureau meets via regular teleconferences and works together on advocacy, Branch planning and professional development for members.

The Bureau is well supported by its members’ institutions and responsibility is shared proportionally.

For the last 10 years PARBICA has built a tradition that its well-resourced member institutions support fundamental functions of the Bureau, such as the Treasury and Secretariat. Member institutions from Pacific Island countries have traditionally provided leaders and Bureau members. This model works well for PARBICA and has enabled the branch to achieve a significant amount, but it does depend on the commitment of the institutions involved.

SLIDE 5   Photo

Photo of outgoing and incoming Bureau members, with DSG Programme Margaret Crockett at PARBICA 15 in the Solomon Islands in 2013.

SLIDE 6   How PARBICA works cont’d

The output of PARBICA is directed by a business plan, built on members’ resolutions from the General Conference. Our current Business Plan is presented in 4 key areas of activity. Each area has an action plan with tasks assigned to members of the Bureau and target times to start/finish work.

This Plan captures the needs of members and helps the Bureau to prioritise its effort. We try to balance a modest number of big things with the other ongoing work that each Bureau members should be doing all the time.

We engage with regional partners such as the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA) and the Victoria University to identify opportunities for collaboration on business plan objectives.

The PARBICA Treasurer undertook a review of finances and membership in 2013 and presented recommendations to members at the General Conference in the Solomon Islands. It aimed to provide PARBICA with a more modern and sustainable financial outlook by:

- Streamlining financial processes
- Ensuring accountability to members and the ICA
- Minimising expenses
- Ensuring expenditure is in the interests of the membership

The review process and recommendations were discussed at the 15th PARBICA General Conference where members accepted recommendations that included:
• publishing one annual newsletter each year and using the PARBICA website as the main communication tool (this was instead of 4 hard copy newsletters therefore achieving savings in publishing and postage);
• implementing modest and phased increases to membership fees which had remained the same for over 10 years; and
• updating banking arrangements to maximise interest and minimise fees.

The branch has a history of successfully gaining aid funding for a number of regional projects, including AUD$1m over several years to develop the award-winning Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit.

SLIDE 7 Successful activities

The branch has been successful in engaging with its members through [to be developed eg Toolkit reference groups, FB page]

Despite geographical and economic challenges, members convene for networking and training at our biennial conferences. Conferences are flexible in their format but in recent years we had a successful formula that combines keynote addresses, member contributions, workshops in leadership and records management streams, and cultural experiences.

In developing a conference the Bureau works closely with the host country to ensure their needs are met and that benefits for the hosts and participants are maximised.

The Bureau has a successful track record of raising funds to support the attendance by members. Sometimes attendance has been funded with Official Development Aid money but in more recent times funds have been raised through stakeholder engagement and sponsorship.

With assistance from the Bureau, members are becoming increasingly successful in securing internal funds, grants and in kind contributions to develop archival capability in the region particularly in areas such as training workshops, placements, preservation and digitisation work. Some examples of this are RK4GG implementation workshops in Tuvalu, Tonga and Palau; short term placements at Archives New Zealand for staff from national institutions of Cook Islands, Fiji, Palau and Solomon Islands; and repackaging and digitisation projects in Solomon Islands, Fiji and Samoa.

SLIDE 8 www.parbica.org

This is the front page of the PARBICA website where you can see links to our Facebook and Flickr pages, recognition of partnerships (UNESCO Memory of the World in this case) and Latest News where we feature stories from Members around the Pacific. From this website you can access the entire Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit and a selection of training materials as well as governance documents etc.
SLIDE 9    PARBICA on Facebook

This is the PARBICA Facebook page. It was created just in time for the 15th PARBICA General Conference last year and recognises that members can stay connected with PARBICA through occasional updates on their mobile devices which are commonly more reliable in than the desktop infrastructure. The page currently has 82 ‘likes’ which may not sound like a lot but is acceptable considering that we have 100 members. Since its creation we have posted about updates to the website, ICA news (such as bursary opportunities for this conference and International Archives Day, especially the website initiated by SLMT) and sadly but importantly, the page hosted messages of support when the devastating floods affected our friends in the Solomon Islands earlier this year.

SLIDE 10    PARBICA on Flickr

This is our Flickr page. This was created in 2011 following the 14th PARBICA General Conference in Samoa and primarily includes photos from the 14th and 15th conferences.

SLIDE 11    Successful activities cont’d

The Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA) recognised at its conference in Nandi, Fiji in 2005, that good recordkeeping underpins public sector efficiency and accountability. By improving recordkeeping practices, governments will become more efficient in their everyday activities and be able to be more accountable for their actions.

In response PARBICA developed this toolkit as a series of resources that promote a common approach to best practice across the Pacific and in alignment with International best practices.

The toolkit will assist Pacific government meet their legal applications and help protect the rights and entitlement of the citizens of these countries and territories.

Funding was provided from the Australian Government’s AusAID program and the PARBICA Bureau, assisted by the National Archives of Australia (NAA) is responsible for maintaining, distributing and updating modules of the toolkit for as long as they are needed and remain useful.

The toolkit has been produced through collaboration process with input from a variety of archivists from across the Pacific. This photo is of the reference group that guided the development of the digital toolkit guidelines.

Archivists around the Pacific have implemented and use guidelines which are relevant to their needs, others have translated the toolkit into to their own language and use them across government ministries.

PARBICA has been successful at maintaining a high profile in ICA. This is partly due to its successful activities, which are reported to ICA and sometimes funded by ICA. The toolkit, for example, was picked up as a global product and translated into French by ICA. However, proactive engagement also plays a part. PARBICA always invites a senior officer from ICA to attend its conferences. Most recently, Deputy Secretary General Margaret Crockett joined us
in the Solomon Islands to attend our 15th conference. This helps senior ICA officials to understand the work of the branch, see how funding is used, and share information on ICA that we can use to inform our planning.

We seek out partnerships to help us in our work. We work closely with the UNESCO Memory of the World Committee for Asia-Pacific on encouraging member countries to nominate inscriptions from their collections, sometimes in partnership with each other. This helps us to connect with broader UNESCO aims. A current example is that we are exploring a joint workshop on audio-visual archives preservation with the South East Asia Pacific Audio Visual Archives Association (SEAPAVAA). These partnerships help strengthen funding applications and make the most of limited resources.

SLIDE 12   Challenges

Countries in our region are spread far apart. This presents challenges primarily around travel. Unlike travel around a region such as Europe, the only real option is to travel by air and air travel in the Pacific is expensive and the market is small. This makes it difficult for members to attend events. Having a conference biennially provides a training opportunity to aim for and means that participants are not seeking funding for training every year.

Many Pacific societies are built on a face-to-face culture. For PARBICA this adds a treasured element that contributes to strong relationships among members. It manifests in our observation of formal welcome and farewell customs at PARBICA events and in our long-standing membership base and strong network. However, it also introduces a challenge when combined with the geography of the region. We are separated by the ocean and yet need to communicate. As Helen has demonstrated, we are increasingly using web communications tools, but in the Pacific it is not a complete substitute for face-to-face interaction. This challenges us most when trying to get full and high quality feedback on issues and input into projects.

Priorities for funding bodies run in cycles and for this region have certainly changed since the toolkit funding was obtained. The Bureau has to stay informed on national and regional politics and policy changes to identify the most successful funding opportunities. The toolkit appealed to trends at the time for improving governance. The Bureau has become aware of a more recent switch in focus back to heritage and culture. For the last two years it has become clear that we cannot rely on Official Development Aid to support our activities and the Bureau has encouraged members to be more active in seeking the funding from their own employers and agencies. This is something of a change for members, but lots of Pacific Island Countries are used to looking for external funding for a range of public services. The Bureau is putting thought into how we can pitch our activities to appeal to new funding priorities. We have also made in-roads into modest commercial sponsorship for events.

Another challenge is what could be perceived as a dependence on the input of key member institutions. Some institutions directly allocate work time for certain roles or individuals on their staff to dedicate to PARBICA Bureau work. Some contribute ongoing or occasional funds to support Bureau activities. Others allow staff members who serve as PARBICA officers to attend PARBICA and/or ICA events on work time. If these inputs were taken away, PARBICA would be reliant solely on volunteers, fundraising and ICA. To secure this input, it
helps to build this commitment into the business plans and statements of intent of those institutions.

I will now hand back to Helen for the discussion.

SLIDE 13  Discussion

PARBICA’s Bureau would like to stimulate discussion about branch administration and activity with other branches. Invite members of other branches to share their experiences. The objectives are to trigger discussion about what works for branches. This could contribute to an improved network of branches and the improved performance of ICA, which operates through its members.

Do any other branches work this way?

If not, what other operating models do participants’ branches use?

Could the PARBICA model work in less active branches?

The key is drive, activity, communication and planning.

SLIDE 14  Closing