My experience at the 2016 ICA Congress in Seoul, South Korea

I was surprised and humbled to be one of the recipients of the PARBICA Bursary. This gave me the opportunity to be part of the International Council on Archives (ICA) Congress, which was my first time attending the ICA Congress or any such organised event like this.

In just two days I could see what a great congress for meeting and exchanging experiences and ideas it was, and I was impressed at what the hosts and organisers had done. It was an eye-opening, educational and absolutely great experience for me.

There are so many interesting topics and I couldn’t join them all since there wasn’t enough time. It was enjoyable and fun. The program was a success and seeing many professional people together sharing their experiences and challenges was so encouraging. I however chose to attend the sessions which are interesting and relevant to my job.

The sessions I attended:

- The bigger picture – Anne Gilliland-Swetland
- Rising to the challenges of the twenty-first century and a digital world – Anne Gilliland-Swetland
- Record keeping in the age of FANG (Facebook, Apple/Amazon, Netflix, Google) – Barbara Reed
- China’s Digital Archival Resources Development – Li Minghua
- International standardization: A major step for recordkeeping in the Digital Age–Gholamreza Azizi
- Record keeping in the digital age – Cassie Findlay
- Archiving Technologies – Eric Ketelaar

I enjoyed all of the sessions attended because it gave me the opportunity to learn new things, reflect and be encouraged. The Congress addressed many topics that are of interest. Presenters were experienced educators who have practical knowledge and were willing to share what they have done in their various organisations.

Above all, I had the opportunity to meet with the friends from the Pacific and enjoy sharing their experience in the various Pacific island countries which they have worked in. It was so interesting listening to their conversations.

The Professional Visits program was the other event that I enjoyed. We were able to visit two museums and learn about Korean culture, customs and language. We also had the chance to appreciate what Korea has to offer - it is really amazing.

There were many new things I learnt from the Congress, and I will mention a few. Archives touch each part of the society - it hears the past and the future.
I learnt about the International Standard which intends to:

- guarantee reliability, authenticity, validity, usability, integrity and accessibility of the scanned documents throughout the lifespan.
- scanning and protecting all the data relating to the original documents;
- storing data in a form that will be accessible, retrievable and readable throughout their lifespan.

This is useful for me since I am involved in digitising materials for our library.

I also discovered that other countries have built digital archives and provide online archival information query services to the public. In order to develop a digital archive, certain processes have to be followed, and planning, organising and dedication is needed to achieve such a development.

We are a long way from this, but it is beneficial to have the knowledge and be prepared for such a development.

The Congress introduced me to the wider community of very important professionals in the similar field of work. Having attended the Congress encourages my home organisation to think about becoming part of this wider community.

It also offers the opportunity for me to mix and socialise, form new relationships and strengthen existing ones. This Congress forced me to break out of my comfort zone - which is the right type of action that is necessary to change the old ways of thinking and learn new ideas and approaches to make me more effective and efficient at work.

The Congress has enabled me to be prepared and be familiar with what is expected at a Congress. Now that I know what it is like, I can challenge myself to attend sessions that are not only relevant to my work but others which are new and different to what I am used to.

Also, this Congress has help me realise that it is very helpful to introduce oneself to other professionals because we will definitely need their assistance in the future as our organisation is slowly developing to meet the demands of this changing world.

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