

**SPEECH TO THE INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR
ON SOUND & AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVES IN LATIN AMERICA, MEXICO CITY,
22ND NOVEMBER 2001.**

**Anselm Crispin Jewitt, President, International Association of Sound &
Audiovisual Archives**

**Madame Sari Bermúdez, Presidenta del Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las
Artes.**

Dear Colleagues and Friends.

It is a pleasure to be here today, and to have the opportunity to say some words at the inauguration of this Seminar on Sound & Audiovisual Archives in Latin America.

For the last one hundred years an increasing portion of our recorded heritage has been in the audiovisual domain. Over a much longer period, libraries of books containing our written words have been established for the study of all aspects of civilisation, but today we face a situation where our intellectual, scientific, and cultural heritage is reflected to an ever increasing degree in the volatile media of sound and moving image. Rapid technological change has been a dominant factor in our professional response to this challenge, but now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, new digital technologies begin to promise powerful and sustainable solutions to our familiar archival situation of technological obsolescence. Moving image has flourished as an artistic medium, and while recorded sound was originally a means of collecting scientific data, both media are today used for communication and social interaction in almost every sphere of human activity, in the entertainment and broadcasting industries, in the arts and publishing, in academic study and research in both sciences and humanities, and of course in the cyber-environment of the world-wide web.

This is the environment in which our professional associations work to support their members in the tasks of collecting, preserving, documenting, and making available for present and future generations our rich audiovisual heritage. My own association, the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) supports the exchange of professional and technical information through publications and conferences, providing a home for large and small institutions that serve a wide

variety of users. Our membership comprises institutions and individuals working in radio archives, national audiovisual archives, and specialist research archives, and includes institutions, such as my own, the British Library, which include a remit for audiovisual material within a wider overall range of activities.

One of IASA's current priorities is to increase its membership in all parts of the world and to widen the geographical spread of our services and professional contacts. We are already working with our members from Africa, and IASA is grateful for the opportunity to support this Latin American seminar and the preceding workshops. In 2003 our annual conference will be in South Africa: we look forward to holding our annual conference in Latin America on a future occasion.

Many colleagues working with audiovisual collections work in isolation, as specialists within university music departments, or research institutions, or in countries where there are a few, if any, colleagues with whom experience can be shared or skills passed on. Through seminars, conferences, workshops, publications, by sustaining professional networks through the internet, and in regional and international meetings, membership of professional associations can overcome this isolation.

I began by reflecting on the long history of the written word and of libraries, as a way of setting a wider context for the real challenges that face us as professionals today and every day. May I close by offering you the thought that our profession is moving steadily from the margins of the archive and library world into the centre. We are at the beginning of a media revolution, rather like the printed word in about 1500, but faster and on a larger scale. Whether this media revolution will be accompanied by such profound social change as that earlier one is not the subject matter of this seminar: our business is to preserve the evidence in all of its rich and fabulous variety.

At the last, I want to underline our gratitude to the Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes and Radio Educación, our host today, for giving all of us the opportunity to be here in this historical meeting for the next three days.

Thank you for listening.