

ICA Strategic Plan Survey Results November 2024

By Meg Phillips, VP - Programme

ICA conducted a strategic plan survey from early July to early September 2024 to inform ICA's next strategic plan and ensure that ICA's direction addresses the most important needs of our members. The survey included seven multiple choice questions and an optional open-ended question, providing an opportunity to tell us whatever you thought we should know.

This report summarizes the results of the survey so you can follow along with the planning process. These results will create a foundation on which we can build ICA's strategic direction in the coming months.

The next step will be a series of additional efforts, like small focus groups or written questions for specific groups, to gather more nuanced and detailed guidance about what our strategic plan should say. After this step is complete, we will create a first draft of the new strategic plan for review and comment by ICA members. Our goal is to revise the draft after receiving your feedback, then share a final draft in advance of the General Assembly in Barcelona in October 2025.

The results of the survey described in this report are in two parts. The first part contains the responses to the multiple-choice questions, including bar charts and a brief description of the results. The second part is a summary of the main themes that emerged from all of the comments received in the final open-ended question. We used Google Gemini, an AI tool, to assist in analyzing the unstructured, qualitative data we received in response to the final question.

The survey received 501 full responses.

Question 1: Why are you, or your organisation, a member of ICA?

By far the most common response was “Exchanges of Knowledge”, which was selected by 72% of respondents. The next two most common responses were “Developing professional skills” selected by 53%, and “Networking” selected by 50% of respondents. (The responses do not add up to 100% because respondents could select more than one response.)

Those who selected “other” could add a comment to provide additional information. Comments included, “Internationalism is the only thing that makes sense in today’s world!”, “Being a member of an international organisation is an important, official quality mark”, and “To contribute to tools, practices, and guidelines used by the international archives community.”



Question 2: Did you make use of ICA’s previous strategic plan “Empowering Archives and the Profession? If so, how?”

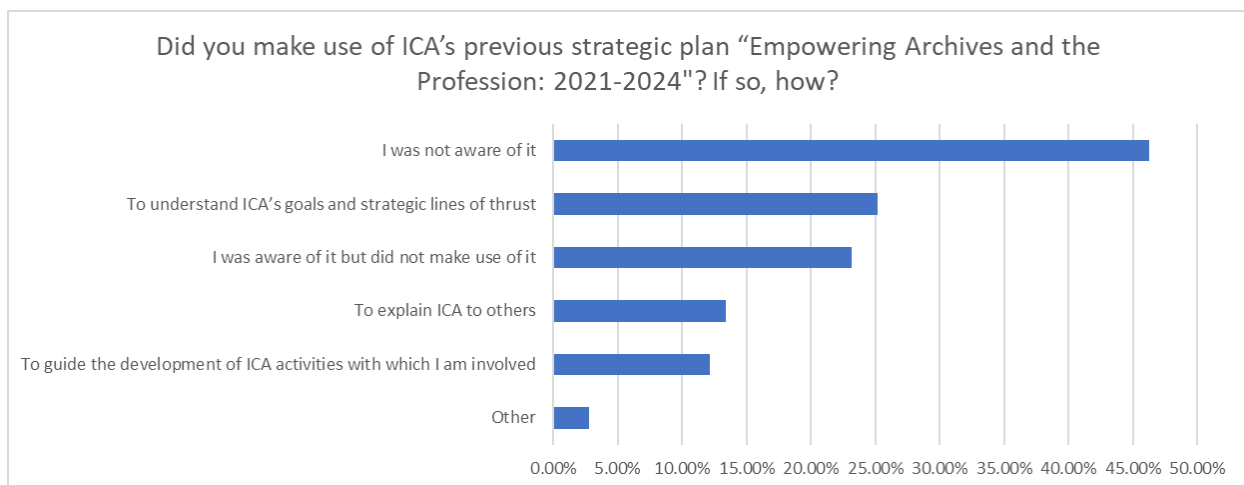
The most common response to this question was that the respondent was not aware of the previous plan. Some explained in the comments that they are new ICA members and therefore weren’t involved with the earlier plan. The next most common responses were “To understand ICA’s goals and strategic lines of thrust”. The third most common response was “I was aware of it but did not make use of it.”

Among the comments, one person notes,

“Puisque les instances n'ont pas été impliquées dans sa réalisation et qu'il ne s'est pas traduit en plan d'action, il était quasiment inapplicable, même lorsqu'on souhaitait l'appliquer”

[“Since the authorities were not involved in its realization and it was not translated into an action plan, it was virtually inapplicable, even when we wanted to apply it”.]

These responses give us valuable information to ensure we create a new plan that is well known, relevant, and used by the ICA community.

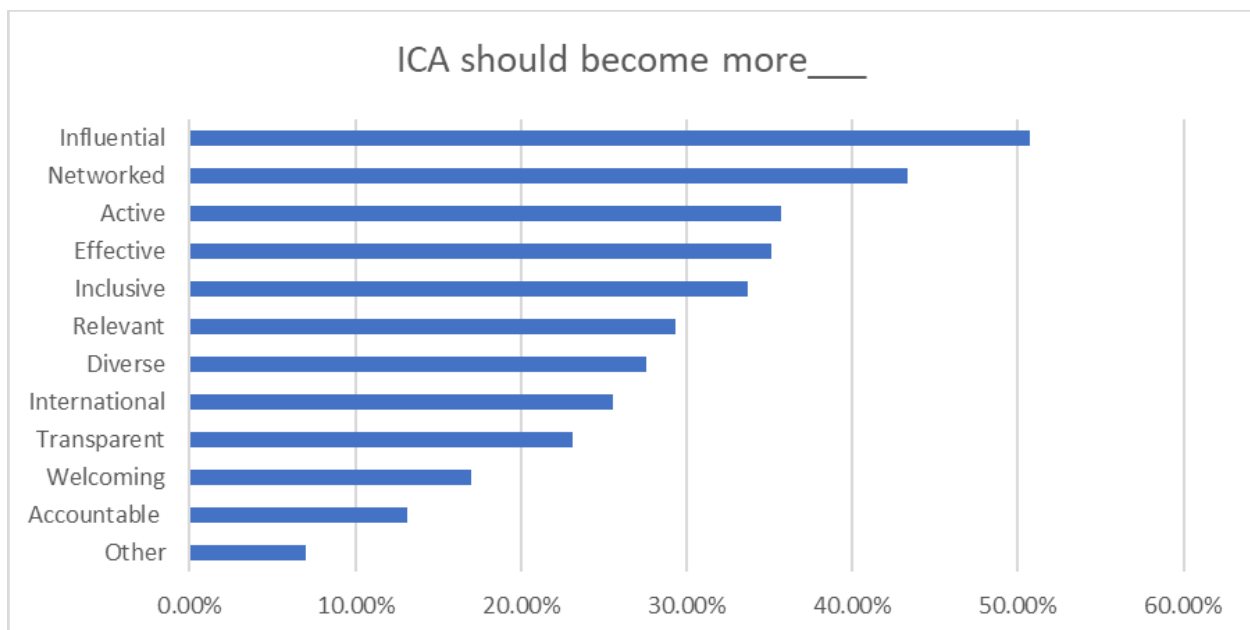


Question 3: ICA should become more _____.

The top three responses to the question about what ICA should strive to become were “Influential” (51%), “Networked” (43%), and “Active” 36%), with “Effective” and “Inclusive” also selected by more than 30% of respondents.

These related top responses indicate that ICA can work on **how** we do what we do, involving more people, becoming more visible and increasing our influence. We hope to gather more information about specific steps we can take to improve in these areas in the next planning steps.

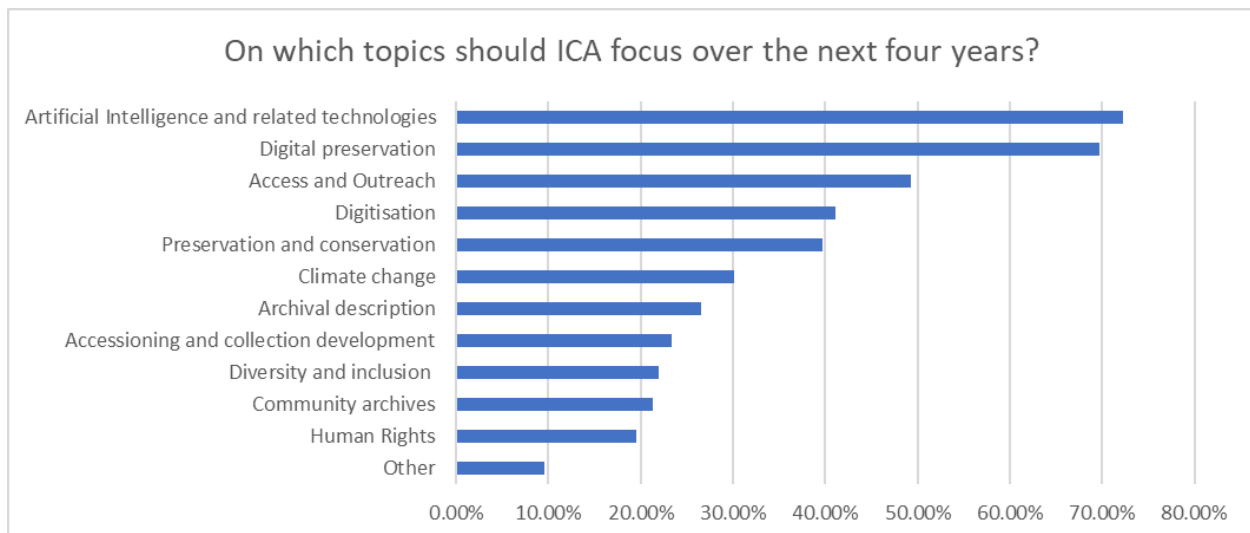
Many people selected “other” and provided additional advice to ICA in the comments. Among the responses were that ICA is fine as it is, but also that it should become more: online, collaborative, innovative, “organized and less centered on its internal bureaucracy”, and include more members from Asia and the Caribbean.



Question 4: On which topics should ICA focus over the next four years?

The response to question 4 was particularly interesting because the top two topics were chosen far more often than any others: “artificial intelligence and related technologies”, which 72% of respondents chose, and “digital preservation”, selected by 70%. The third most common response was “access and outreach”, with 49%. After that, “digitization” and “preservation and conservation” were chosen by 41% and 40% of the respondents, respectively. This question provides very clear direction for the content of the information ICA should focus on providing to its members over the next few years.

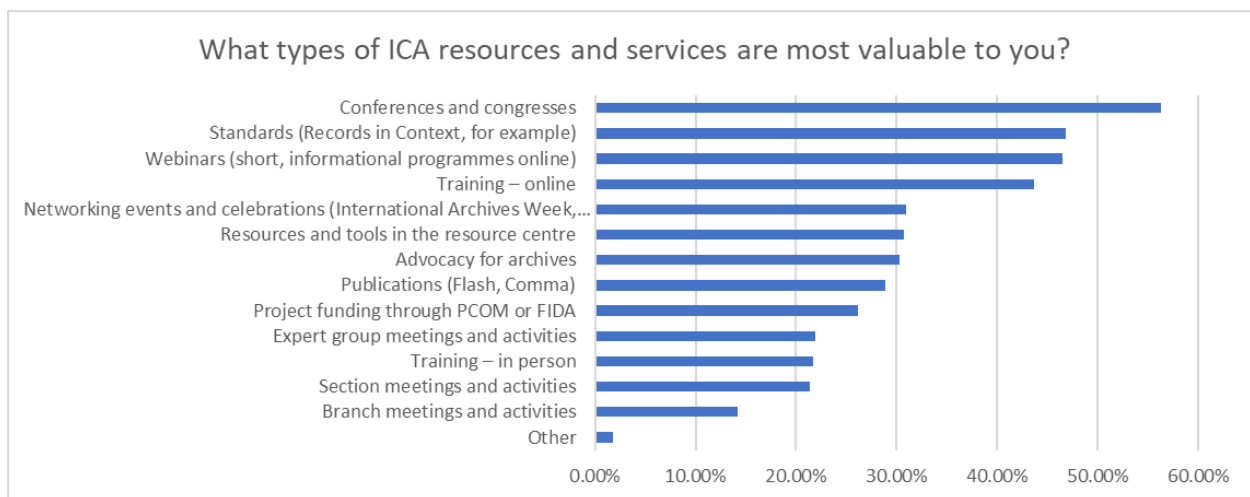
Among the additional topics mentioned more than once in the “other” comments were: archival leadership and management; advocacy; the role of archives in democracy, including good governance and open government; displaced archives or shared archival heritage; and records management.



Question 5: What types of ICA resources and services are most valuable to you?

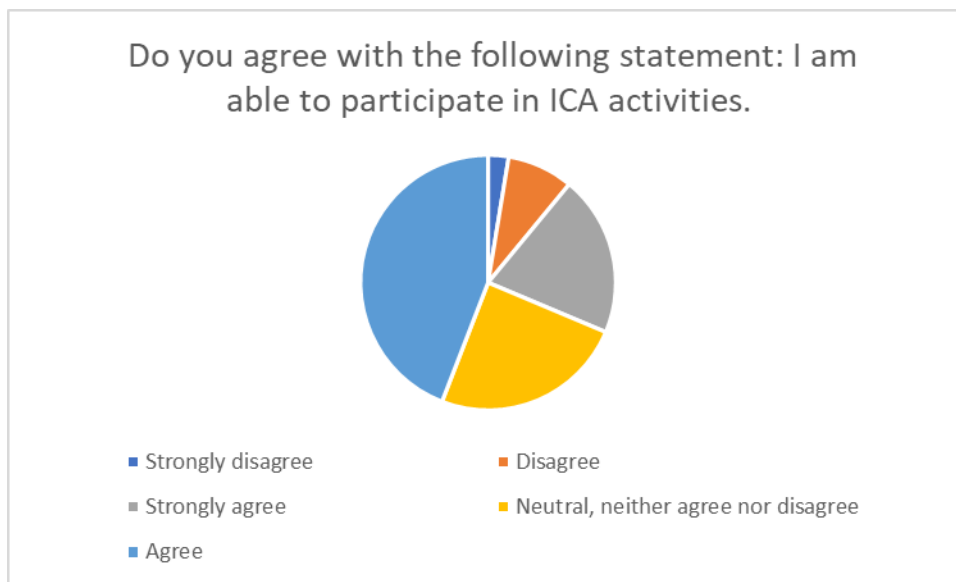
Like question 4, question 5 provides clear and practical direction for ICA’s priorities over the coming years. “Conferences and congresses” were by far the most common choice for the ICA resource or service our members find most valuable. 56% of respondents chose it. The next three most common responses all received between 40 and 50% of the survey responses: “standards (Records in Context, for example)” with 47%, “webinars (short, informational programs online)” with 47%, and “training - online” with 44%.

Those respondents who selected “other” specified additional resources such as regional and forum meetings, email communications, and newsletters.



Question 6: Do you agree with the following statement: I am able to participate in ICA activities.

Of the members who responded to the survey, 64% either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. However, 25% were neutral, which is greater than the 20% who strongly agreed. In addition, 8% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed, meaning that 11% of members responding to the survey cannot fully participate in ICA.

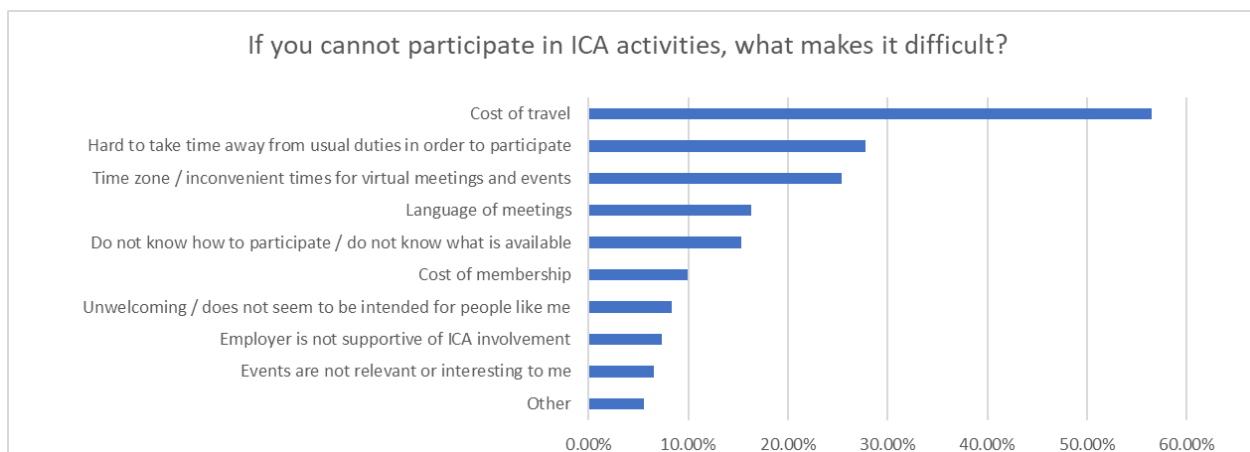


Question 7: If you cannot participate in ICA activities, what makes it difficult?

Responses to question 7 elaborated on the difficulties experienced by those who chose neutral or disagree options in question 6. With nearly double the number of responses as the next highest (56%), the cost of travel to in-person ICA activities is the biggest hurdle that ICA members face. The next two most common responses were “hard to take time away from usual duties in order to participate” with 28%, and “time zone / inconvenient times for virtual meetings and events” with 25%.

These responses should not be unexpected for any international organization, but several of the responses do indicate areas where ICA could develop new strategies to allow more ICA members to benefit from its activities. Even less-commonly chosen options provide important feedback for ICA programs.

The respondents who chose “other” and provided more information in the comments often reinforced options available in the list of choices, including cost, events that are inconvenient for their time zones, and ICA’s reliance on English for many programmes. In addition, comments also highlighted the need to get notice of upcoming programmes further in advance and in a clearer format.



Question 8: Please share any other comments or suggestions for ICA’s next strategic plan.

Of the 501 responses to the survey, 40% or 201 people provided additional comments in response to this question. Because the resulting data was so rich and varied, both in language and in topic, we used the artificial intelligence tool Google Gemini to analyse it. The following section of the report contains the prompt we used and the results we received from Gemini, with no further human editing.

Prompt: *This document contains responses to the survey question "Please share any other comments or suggestions for the International Council on Archives (ICA) next strategic plan." List and summarize the main themes found in these responses. Please include every response in your analysis.*

The responses to the survey question contain the following main themes:

- **Inclusivity:** Many respondents emphasize the need for ICA to be more inclusive and accessible to archivists from diverse backgrounds, especially those from the Global South, developing countries, and underrepresented regions. They suggest reducing fees, offering scholarships, providing training and resources in multiple languages, and hosting events in different regions.
- **Professional Development:** Respondents express a strong desire for ICA to provide more comprehensive and accessible professional development opportunities, including training on digital preservation, AI, and other emerging technologies. They also suggest mentorship programs, leadership training, and opportunities for international collaboration.
- **Advocacy and Awareness:** Many respondents highlight the need for ICA to strengthen its advocacy efforts and raise awareness about the importance of archives and archivists. They suggest partnering with other organizations, engaging with policymakers, and promoting the value of archives to the public.
- **Digital Transformation:** Respondents emphasize the need for ICA to prioritize digital transformation and provide guidance on digital preservation, access, and the use of emerging technologies like AI and machine learning. They also suggest developing standards and best practices for digital archives.
- **Governance and Transparency:** Some respondents call for improved governance and transparency within ICA, including clearer communication about decision-making processes, financial management, and the activities of sections and expert groups.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Respondents suggest that ICA should strengthen its collaborations and partnerships with other international

organizations, archival institutions, and professional associations to promote knowledge sharing, joint initiatives, and resource sharing.

- **Specific Regional Needs:** Respondents from different regions highlight specific needs and challenges, such as the destruction of archives in conflict zones, the need for capacity building in developing countries, and the importance of addressing linguistic and cultural diversity.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Some respondents suggest that ICA should develop a more robust financial model and explore alternative funding sources to support its activities and reduce reliance on membership fees.

Overall, the responses reflect a strong desire for ICA to be a more inclusive, accessible, and impactful organization that supports the diverse needs of archivists worldwide and effectively addresses the challenges and opportunities of the digital age.