

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY AND ARCHIVES AT THE UNIVERSITY TO THE ARCHIVAL WORLD

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The author discusses the possibilities of the universities and the archives at the university to contribute to the archival world. He also discusses the extent of the influence of the archives on the students and the faculty members to be aware of the importance of archives to the human culture and heritage.

Descriptors (ATLANTI)

Standards (9)

The university is a human crossroads. It is a meeting point of students, researchers, scholars, visitors, the whole world.

It is also a meeting point of difference disciplines. Show me another place where a philosophy scholar can meet an engineer or where a poet can meet a mathematician.

They all come to learn, teach, share knowledge and create knowledge. They seek information and create information.

The value of the information gathered in the university is described in the book of Hellen W. Samuels, *Varsity Letters* (referring also to other collections): "Academic institutions are now the stewards of a significant portions of this nation's cultural heritage, and therefore, not consciously or willingly, they have accepts the responsibility to preserve these material"¹.

For these purposes the university holds and maintains archives and documentation centers.

Archives in the university deals also with the mass of documentation which is created through the administrative work.

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¹ Helen Willa Samuels, "Varsity Letters, Documenting Modern College and Universities", The Society of American Archivists and Scarecrow Press Inc, Metuchen, N.J & London, 1992, p. 244.

Thus we are dealing with history, history of sciences, history of research and history of the university and records management of this huge organ.

Most of the archives in the university belong to the Academia or the Academic administration and their expertise in the discipline, and serve the students or academic staff related to this discipline.

Alongside with them are also the University Archives.

The University Archives are usually a part of the University Library or the university Administration.

It is an administrative archives and documentative archives. This differentiates it from other archives in the university.

In my paper I shall deal with the potential contribution of the University Archives to the archival scene in the university and to the archival world.

The university has many definitions but we can say that it is a place where the elite of the current and future society is gathered, among them are the decision makers of today and tomorrow.

In the 20th century the university became more popular and much more populated. Exposing of the archives and its importance to those elites, will help to promote the awareness to our profession.

General Marketing and Outreach

In the university there is one archive which can reach all its disciplines and populations, it is the University Archives.

Therefore the challenge of the University Archives is to reach and market our importance. And this is a real challenge.

In his book, "The Management of College and University Archives", William J Maher, the experienced archivist of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, insists that the archivist should "Initiate contacts with, or reach out to, the many publics in the world outside the archives"² and later he describes among other goals of outreach, "Educate persons outside the archives about phenomena documented in the archive"and "Demonstrate the usefulness of archival information for understanding the past and present"³.

We may state cynically that the world is divided into two:

First, and unfortunately foremost, are people who are not aware of the existence of archives.

² William J. Maher, "The management of College and University Archives", The Society of American Archivists and Scarecrow Press Inc, Metuchen, N.J & London, 1992, p. 315.

³ Ibid, p. 316.

Second, are those who know something about archives but do not think that they are important enough to the society.

Both are not aware of the value of the archives and of the documentation which is accumulated by them. Most people think that historical documentation is made of films, photos, news clips and what media creates. They do not know that the most important information is in endless documents created in different systems in somewhat "grey" and less sexy environment.

Students, who are coming through the gates of the university, are, for the first time, in an institution which has archives in it. Sometimes the archives are "behind the wall" or in the adjacent building. It is so close but so far.

Not all of the students study archive related disciplines like history. The challenge is to connect ourselves to students of mathematics or music or more important for our interest, students of business administration and law studies, who may have in the future much influence on our welfare and existence, not to mention people, managers and lawyers who are coming to the university for advanced studies or seminars, when they are at the peak of their career and influence. If we have the sense to reach them and attracting their attention to archives, we may break the barrier of unawareness.

We may do it by simple methods of marketing, such as displays of interesting documents and artifacts related to their discipline, some scientific tools dated many years ago, and so on.

Fig. 1



In fig 1 we can see a display of a very old IBM PC computer dated back to 1984 which is placed at the entrance of lecture halls of the Business Administration Faculty

at TAU. The University Archives are mentioned on the plaque, so people who are passing by may see this classic artifact and the name of the archives.

Many users come to the archives after coming across one of the displays which are always situated in strategic points across the campus.

We may achieve the student's awareness also through faculty members.

Integrating archives in the academic programs, using the "next door" archives in the university, may cause a rethinking among the students, concerning their professional future.

More than that, faculty members may find much help with the archives next door rather than sending their students to remote places.

As Maynard J. Brichford writes about the relevance of archives in the university: "The archivist is concerned about his relationship with faculty because academic staff members are both important sources and users of archival materials...They are users in that they engage in scholarly research based on archival source. Introduce research assistance and graduate students in their seminars to archival research, assign research papers requiring undergraduates and graduates to use archives and bring the resources of archival program to the attention of colleagues in other institutions"⁴.

We may find a nice example in Tel Aviv University at the Faculty of Architecture. You may think that the future architects do not need archives for their studies, but we found the potential of the University Archives as a source of information to those students. One of the faculty members, dealing with modern architecture, initiated a program about the buildings at the University Campus.

Fig. 2



⁴ Maynard J. Brichford, "University Archives: Relationships with Faculty", , p.31.

The campus had been built through the second half of the 20th century, and the buildings reflect the trends and shapes of the modern architecture of that period (fig.2). Each year some twenty students of architecture are coming to the University Archive, seeking material about the buildings, the process of making the decision about the architecture style, the program of the building and of course the drawings. Thus people who have never thought about archives are "living" in our reading room. The same goes for other disciplines which are more or less close to the archives like Geography (the implications of the university on its environment) or law studies (the juridical relations between the university and its former owner, Tel Aviv Municipality), etc..

To conclude this chapter I will bring the words of Nicholas C. Burckel: "The archivist must use his imagination, his budget, and his personality to maximize the importance of the archives in the minds of administrators, faculty and students"⁵.

Grooming a new generation of archivists.

There is no doubt of the need of a new generation of archivists who are university graduates.

Archival studies are generally of second and third degree. The source of students is first degree graduates. The problem is that a student may finish his or her studies without entering through the gates of even one archives. All they need is using the library or some source books. Their awareness to the archives, the endless sea of knowledge, is minimal. The influence of the internet as a source widens the gap between them and the traditional archives more than ever. The archives in the university which are "behind the thick wall" have the role to attract those students and potential future archivists to the profession and its prospects. Creating an intimate link between students and the archive may show them, for example, that there is another life for a history graduate other than being a history teacher.

We may attract them to the profession not from a "no other way" point of view but by planting in them the love to archives.

If we convince the faculty members to bring the students to our archives, and to use it as academic tool of learning, like the libraries, we may find some new future archivists in the campus.

The last contribution which the archives in the university and the University Archives may give to the archival world, is the backing and supporting archival studies.

A university which has the awareness of the importance of archives will also encourage archival studies in its campus. This awareness can be achieved through a strong position of archives in the campus.

⁵ Nicholas C. Burckel, "Establishing a college Archive: Possibilities and Priorities", College and University Archives: Selected Readings, Society of American Archivists, Chicago 1979, p. 39.

When archival studies are taking place, the archives at the university may be a learning tool and a place for training. This may raise the quality of the courses and save the students much traveling to remote archives.

There is no doubt that universities may contribute much to the archival world.

By creating a meeting point and link between the archives and the future elite of society

By increasing the awareness of the educators of this future elite to the existence of the archives as an educational tool.

By attracting new and young human resources to our profession.

By supporting and backing archival courses which are taking place in the university.

Archivists in the university, who are aware to the potential benefits of their position in this human and cultural crossroads, may contribute much to the archival world.

Fig. 3



Summary

The university is a human crossroad where all kind of people, the current and future elite are meeting for teaching, learning and research.

The university creates documentation and it is stored in academic and administrative archives.

The contribution of archives at universities to the archival world is significant at four levels:

1. By marketing the profession to the students which are the future elite that can influence our professional future.
2. By encouraging faculty members to use archives as teaching tools, thus increasing the awareness of students to archives and their value.
3. By encouraging students to choose the profession of archivist for their future
4. By supporting and backing archival studies at the university.

It is the duty of the archivists at the university to fulfill these challenges for a brighter professional future.