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Archivist Ethics: Understanding Components, Displayed in International Code (1996) and Projection of Practical Activity

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The main sense of conception "archivist's ethics" consists in its interpretation as a system of moral-ethical standards and rules of behaviour of archival personal. Its components may be as follows: a) ethics of means and purposes of activities, aimed at preservation of national archival heritage of nations of the world; b) ethics of providing public interest, related with providing access to archival information aiming its promulgation; c) ethics of personal career of archivist in sense of forming corporate consciousness and image of profession.

The International Code of Ethics of archivists (1996) concludes ethical norms regulating the behaviour of representatives of archival profession regardless of geopolitical location of their countries. Overtask of code consists in establishing sample standards of archivist's behaviour, placing the emphasis on professional responsibility for preservation of records, increasing public rating of the representatives of this profession and trust to them.

It is important for each country to introduce these norms into practice activities, where often the situations incompatible with main provisions of code appear (theft of records, unjustified prohibition of access, infringement of privacy, irresponsible attitude to professional duties). The International Code has been translated in Ukrainian just after its adoption at Beijing Congress. It is worth to speak about necessity of its perception by those who enter archival profession, and taking the "Archivist Oath" similar to Hippocrat Oath for doctors.

MATYASH, Iryna, Etica degli archivisti: comprensione dei concetti delineati nel Codice Internazionale (1996) e ripercussioni nell'attività pratica. Atlanti, Vol. 16, N. 1-2, Trieste 2006, pp. 103.-

Ten years ago, the XIII International archives congress (Peking, September 4-7, 1996) approved the Archivist Code of Ethics, which necessity had become absolutely evident. Geopolitical changes in the world, at the beginning of 90s, perceptibly affected the archive work organization, caused the expanded access to archive information (before all, in the west European countries, distinguishing feature of this sphere was closure and overideologization, during the soviet time in these countries) and stimulated the development of international contacts in the sphere of archive affairs. Speculations, by the archivists of different countries, about the development tendency of this sphere, in one way or another, related to the solution of ethical problems, peculiar to archivists activities, cooperated at levels: archivist – archive information user, archive – institution/source of archive collection, archive – higher educational institution for archivist preparation, as well as the cooperation at the level archivist – historian and archive institution of one country and archive institution of another country. At that time, the Code of Ethics was accepted for museums, and in the archives world, such document was accepted by the American Archivist Association and was about to be accepted by the Quebec Archivist Association (Canada), while British archivists held symposium concerning these problems (1988).

Text preparations for the Code of Ethics, accepted as international archive standard, were not realized within one time period, and were based on approved ideas. More, ethical problems in the archive, had universal features and, in many cases, required special actions by international archive community.

Concrete actions for the development of the Code of Ethics started in 1990 from the moment of Marko Karrazi's speech at the 5th European Archivists' Conference in Barcelona. In March 1991, the first version of the Code of Ethics was prepared by the Italian archivists. Questions about archive ethics (archivist behaviour code) were considered firstly, by the wide archive community, according to the initiative of professional archive associations, during the XII International Archivist Congress (Montréal 1992). Except Italian version, the English version of the code text was presented by Michael

Roper. From that time, the discussions about the content of the archivist code started, during which, appropriate ideas, that affect the formulation of the final text, were expressed. Discussion took place during the meeting of MPA section (1994 – in Beladjo and Renne; 1995 – in Amsterdam and Washington) on the pages of major professional archive publications. Alternative version of the code (“Seventeen Moral Basis”) which counted the problems of the West European countries, was proposed by the director of the Polish archive service; Professor Eji Skovronek¹. Indications mentioned in the Code of Ethics, by the archivist opinion, based on universal ethics norms and should determine the requirement for diligent and positive fulfilment of the requirements by the archivist. In the code version of J. Skowronek, questions related to the expanded access to the archive information, solution of “general archive inheritance” matters, and non-party position of the archive services. The most important, with the consideration to the present popularity of archive documents at the auctions, was the article XI, by which the archive documents should not be objects of buying and selling. After the acceptance of the Code of Ethics in September 1996, the questions regarding ethics in the archive and archivist activities, during each International Archive Congress (Barcelona 1997; Florence 2001; Vienna 2004), stayed actual for interesting discussions by experts. Peculiar openness of the archivist Code of Ethics, declared during the acceptance of the document in Peking, determined by continuous perception dynamics of archive document in society and by society and state to the entire archive. It is a pity that, in our changeable world, each year, archives became objects of interest to “intellectual” evils, equipments are physically demolished in archive institutions of the majority of countries, technology became morally old, and archivist society status do not attract the attention of the younger generations (personnel aging is taking place). The acceptance of the Code of Ethics, in these circumstances, not only at the general directive level, but also at the level of archive case development, obtains actuality.

The main sense of the conception of “archivist ethics” lies down in its interpretation as an aspect of professional ethics, moral-ethics norm system and the rules of archive institution employee’s behaviour. From its components, we can distinguish the following: a) means and foals activities ethics, directed at the saving of national archive inheritance of the peoples of the world; b) public interests saving ethics, related to the archive information access with the goal of its promulgation; c) individual archivist career in the sense of corporative consciousness formulation and professional prestige.

The first basic component which is determined by archive’s phenomenal meaning, humanistic function of which is to secure the wholeness and completeness of people’s documental inheritance and, by that, preservation of relations between nations and generations. It provides that the archive institution employee understands all levels of his main mission of memory guarding and of people’s intellect, materialized in archive documents of different mediums.

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Il senso principale del concetto di “etica degli archivisti” consistenza nella sua interpretazione come un sistema di standard etico-morali e regole di comportamento per il personale archivistico. I suoi componenti sono: a) etica dei significati e scopi delle attività, finalizzati alla conservazione del patrimonio archivistico nazionale dei paesi del mondo; b) etica del provvedere al pubblico interesse, connesso col provvedere all’accesso alle informazioni archivistiche allo scopo di favorirne la diffusione; c) etica della carriera professionale degli archivisti nel senso della formazione di uno spirito di corpo e di un’immagine della professione.

Il Codice Internazionale di etica per gli Archivisti (1966) porta a conclusione le norme etiche che regolano il comportamento dei rappresentanti della professione archivistica senza riguardo a quale sia la situazione geopolitica dei loro paesi. Un compito gravoso del codice consiste nello stabilire esempi standard di comportamento per gli archivisti, ponendo l’accento sulla responsabilità professionale nella conservazione dei documenti, facendo crescere il pubblico apprezzamento dei rappresentanti di questa professione e la fiducia in loro.

E’ importante per ogni paese introdurre queste norme nell’attività pratica, nella quale spesso situazioni contingenti appaiono incompatibili con le principali enunciazioni del codice (furto di documenti, divieti ingiustificati all’accesso, infrazione alle norme sulla privacy, atteggiamenti irresponsabili verso i doveri professionali). Il Codice Internazionale è stato tradotto in ucraino immediatamente dopo la sua adozione al congresso di Pechino. E’ il caso di discutere della necessità che venga recepito da coloro che abbracciano la professione di archivista, e di rendere il “Giuramento Archivistico” simile a quello di Ippocrate per i medici.

MATYASH, Iryna, Etika v arhivistiki: pojem, vsebina mednarodnega kodeksa (1996) in vidiki v vsakdanji praksi. Atlanti, Zv. 16, Št. 1-2, Trst 2006, str. 103.-107.

1. Skowronek Jerzy. Głos w dyskusii o “Kodeksie etycznym archiwisty”// Archeion. – 1995. – T. XCIV. – S. 362-365.

Glavni pomen »etike za arhiviste« je v njeni interpretaciji, saj predstavlja moralno etične standarde in pravila, ki se nanašajo tudi na osebe v nekem arhivu. Zato je glavni pomen etike naslednji: a) to so etična načela, ki so zabtevana v ciljih in vsebini, ko gre za aktivnosti varovanja nacionalne arhivske dediščine, b) etika zagotavljanja javnega interesa, ki se nanaša na pristop do arhivskih informacij, njenih ciljev in razširitve, c) etika, ki se nanaša na delo arhivistov, ko gre za formiranje skupne zavesti in predstavitve arhivskega poklica. Mednarodni arhivistični kodeks (1996) vsebuje etične norme, ki določajo obnašanje vseh tistih, ki delajo z arhivsko teorijo in prakso, ne glede na državo. Ta kodeks bi moral imeti pred očmi vsak arhivist in po njem bi moral tudi ravnati, pa naj gre za poklicno delovanje, za varovanje gradiva ali za predstavitev arhivske dejavnosti v javnosti, kjer gre za igro zaupanja.

Moramo reči, da bi naj vsaka država predstavila te etične norme v arhivsko teorijo in prakso, kjer morejo nastati različne situacije (npr. kraja dokumentov, nepravilčen dostop do dokumentov, prekršitev zasebnosti, neodgovornost pri poklicnih dolžnostih, itd.). Mednarodni arhivski kodeks je bil preveden v ukrajinsko v času kongresa v Bejingu, zato lahko govorimo o tem, da se kodeksa zavejo vsi, ki stopajo na pot arhivistov. Predlagam, da si ga vzamejo kot »arhivistovo prisego«, podobno kot imajo zdravniki Hipokratovo prisego.

Any archive work element related directly or not to the realization of this mission.

Immanent assignation of the mankind for self cognition, ascertain of own place in time-dimension continuum, declared the requirement for deepening of archive role in the integral part of continual global civilization processes. The last do not only accompanied by gathering information, but also generates threat for the archive inheritance, which spectre in the technological society is expanded. The current conditions, alongside with ecological, specific nature state, technological threat, related to the science and technical progress, or terrorist and military serious threats, should be called world-view ethics which determined by the level of nation's consciousness and of individual person, and social-political level that related to the political stability/instability of the country. Any crisis situations occurred in the society or state will cause intensified risk in the archive case, which, by its side, can lead to the considerable and irreversible loses, both in individual archive funds of some countries and in the whole archive inheritance. This question was so actual, that, all the second half of the XX century during the first years of XXI century of world civilization history, were related to the different scale disasters, destroying strengths and its outcomes. The scale of archive information lost, during the Second World War, armed conflicts at the east, 2003-2005 floods in Europe and technical catastrophes and accidents in Ukraine (fire in Kamenets-Podolski and the accident in the national Ukrainian library named in the honour of V.I. Vernadskii) was not, till this moment, certainly determined. Those incidents caused essential lost in the archive information.

The second component of the conception "archive ethics" or "archivist` ethics" is related with the realization of multi aspect international archive connections, satisfaction of society requirements for archive information. The actuality of the question is not related, in this case, to the access to the archive information (including using of the work position by the archivist to reach it), but promulgation of the information related to the individual or corporative interests, archive documents property rights, algorithm of archivist and end user discussions and the non political position of archives. Electronic technologies are actively developed during last ten years; these technologies expand, from one side, the ability to access to the archive information by the means of internet, but they bring, from another, intellectual threats. This is not only concerning the information access, but the use of this information in the internet auctions as distinguished by the Ukrainian archive service director Genadii Boryaka in "new threats to the national archive inheritance" as active circulation of the stolen archive documents in the internet auctions.

The third component is the most important, by the reason that it is basically related to the human factor: archivist understanding of his own mission (self understanding and professionalism) and the archivist treatment as performer of this mission of society (prestige of the profession) and state (appropriate maintenance and

social protection). We can remark that person's understanding of his responsibility before humanity for keeping their documental inheritance is not only professional ethics, but also a certain condition for him to fulfil his humanistic archive mission. The most important thing in this case is the level of the basic professional training of archive institutions employees. Impressionability of the human factor, accompanied by the low level of wages is leading us to the factor that the archivists were involved, themselves, in the evil theft of archive documents. Today, archive documents, by the reason of their high cost, light accessibility and by the reason of professional treason of their guardians, became the main object of sell-buy operations (what Jerzy Skowronek warns us about in his version of the Code of Ethics).

In a whole, the International Code of Archivist Ethics (1996) contains ethical norms, which regulate the behaviour of the archivist profession representatives, with no relation to the geopolitical disposition of their countries. The main role of the code is to state the standard models for the archivist behaviour, attention accentuation at the professional responsibility for keeping documentation, increasing of social rating for the participants of this profession and to increase people's trust to them. What is important in this code text is that it is done in the way helps to include any changes and improves to it and that helps each individual country to create its own code.

It is important for each country to apply these norms into practical work. It is impossible that any archive institution of any country can say that it did not face, during its activity, any situation incompatible with the code (document theft, unreasonable access prohibition, violation of personal information secret and irresponsible attitude to personal responsibilities). Even, virtual modelling of these norms could not prevent indivertible results – document lost, decreasing of social prestige of this profession, human right violation. During the process of practical work, algorithms of adequate reactions for the long period of time were created and important life norms of the archivist behaviour formed. It is not accidental that the special session of the XV International Archive Congress (Vienna 2004) was working under the denomination “Code of Ethics in Activity”.

The perceiving of the main statements of the Ukrainian Sociality Code, during 1996 – 2006, can be explained by one of the following statements in accordance with the session: from “without enthusiasm” (1996) to “realization” (2004). In many countries such stages were undertaken until they have reached this realization of the archivists: code text translation, its publication and discussion in the main publications, adaptation to the particular practical activity. The translation of the code to the Ukrainian language was done in April 1995 and it was published for discussions in the main Ukrainian review “Ukrainian Archives” before it was accepted at the MPA general assembly at Peking congress. For this reason, the document text was published in the Ukrainian Archivist Society publication “Archi-

vist: Ukrainian Archivist Society Herald”.

Management, but not contemplation, of the main code statements in practical activity, is at the present the main requirement, especially when those archive documents are stored in almost extreme conditions and the responsibility for its keeping is laid only on the archivists. It is worthless to say about the requirement of understanding of such document by the person who will consciously work in the field of archives. This person should accept the “archivist oath” when he is still sitting on student’s bench after passing first archive practice. Initiatives in the development of the national archive ethics code should be done by professional unities, while the realization of this code should be done by the cooperation with the State Archive Service.