

Appraisal and Deposition of Administrative Records: Principles and Methods Used in Israel

MOSSEK, Moshe - BUDOVSKI, Ilana, *Appraisal and Deposition of Administrative Records: Principles and Methods Used in Israel*. Atlanti, Vol. 18, Trieste 2008, pp. 339-342.

Original in English, abstract in English, Italian and Slovenian, summary in English

*The policy of evaluation of administrative records in Israel is based on the assumption that some of them have, first and foremost, great importance for the body that created them, to the general public and also for historical research. There is a high positive correlation among these values which contributes to the motives for preserving records of historical value. The first criterion is the **hierarchy criterion** which gives first preference to records produced by senior levels of the administration. The second one is the **functional criterion** which gives priority to those records produced by professional and essential units of the organization. The third criterion is the **chronological** one which gives preference to records from the "embryonic period" - before the establishment of the body, and to records from the first cognitive years. The next criterion is the **evaluation of records according to the accumulation of files within series**, which recommends systems of selection of important files and casual samples for preservation, but also entire preservation or entire elimination of series, according to the archival value of the files. In addition, records can be evaluated correspondence, regulations for implementation, reports of supervision and control and also administrative and monetary reports, surveys and publications are among those records that should be kept. Other important records are those which hold **unique and exclusive information**. Preference should be given to records which are **systematically ordered and listed** and lastly, **display records** such as audio visual records and those which have museum-like value.*

1. Basic assumptions

The policy of evaluation and appraisal of administrative records in Israel is based on several basic and universal assumptions, as follows:

- a. Records are produced by administrative bodies as a by-product of their activities.
- b. Records produced by these bodies are of value, first and foremost, to themselves.
- c. Some records also have legal value for the general public.
- d. Only a small percentage of records produced by those bodies are deposited permanently in archives.
- e. The deposited records have administrative and legal value for the organization, personal and legal value to the public and historical value for research.
- f. There is a high positive correlation among the three above mentioned values. This positive correlation contributes to the motives for preserving records of historical value which are suitable for research.

2. Criteria for appraisal and deposition of administrative records

a. The hierarchy criteria

Senior officials and high level units in the administration generally create the most important material for the work of the organization, records which are also valuable and important for research, therefore:

- 1) First preference of evaluation and deposition should be given to records produced by senior levels of the administration that initiate and determine the policy of the organization and follow up its implementation.
- 2) Second preference should be given to records produced by intermediate departments of the administration that are responsible for the actual implementation of the policy and report on it, to the senior levels of the admini-

stration.

- 3) Material produced by the low level units that only implement the policy of the body has the least importance.

b. The functional criteria

Every organization has two main kinds of units: professional and administrative. The first are specific and unique to each organization, the others are a variety of administrative units such as: manpower and finance, accounting, supplies, logistics. These units generally create large amounts of routine records and forms, most of which usually have low archival value. On the other hand records produced by professional units contain, in general, valuable material for the organization and also for research.

- 1) Therefore, the first priority for deposition of records must be given to those records produced by professional, specific and essential units.
- 2) Second preference should be given to administrative, general and standard units.

c. The chronological criteria

Records from the early years of the existence of the organization are in most cases important for the body concerned but also important to research. Of special importance are those records which deal with the establishment of the body: the reasons for its creation, the ideas regarding its purposes, and the expected contribution to the founders and to other relevant factors.

It is obvious that these records are not to be found on the premises of the body concerned but in the offices or archives of the bodies which were involved with its creation. It is recommended that these records should be located, copied and transferred to the archives of the body concerned. Therefore, the order of priority according to the chronological criteria should be as follows:

- 1) Records from the "embryonic period" regarding the organization, before its establishment.
- 2) Early records from the first cognitive years.
- 3) Late, new and current records.

d. Evaluation of records according to the accumulation of files within series

Records are usually accumulated in files within series. Each series is evaluated according to different principles and methods of appraisal, as follows:

- 1) **Personal files:** In cases where all the files in the series are valuable we keep the entire series. In cases where all the files are valueless we eliminate them but we keep some casual samples. In some cases we select the files and keep the valuable ones, but also take a small representative sample of files.
- 2) **Issue files:** We deal with issue files according to the same principles and methods as we deal with personal files.
- 3) **Ordinal series:** Files in this series are organized in al-

MOSSEK, Moshe - BUDOWSKI, Ilana, **Valutazione e deposito dei documenti amministrativi: principi e metodi usati in Israele**. Atlanti, Vol. 18, Trieste 2008, pp. 339-342.

La politica di valutazione dei documenti amministrativi in Israele è basata sull'assunto che alcuni di essi assumono prima o poi grande importanza per il proprio ente creatore, per l'utenza e per lo storico. C'è una correlazione estremamente positiva fra questi valori che contribuiscono alle ragioni per la conservazione di documenti di valore storico. Il primo criterio è quello gerarchico, che fa preferire i documenti prodotti dal livello più alto dell'amministrazione. Il secondo è il criterio funzionale, che fa preferire i documenti prodotti da professionisti ed unità lavorative essenziali dell'amministrazione. Il terzo è quello cronologico, che dà la precedenza ai documenti prodotti nella fase embrionale – prima dell'istituzione dell'amministrazione – ed ai documenti della fase iniziale. Il criterio successivo è quello della valutazione dei documenti a seconda dell'accumulo dei fascicoli all'interno delle serie, che presuppone sistemi di selezione dei fascicoli più importanti nonché salvataggi a campione, ma pure conservazione o eliminazione di intere serie, secondo il valore archivistico dei fascicoli. Altri importanti documenti sono quelli recanti informazioni uniche ed esclusive. La preferenza dovrebbe essere data ai documenti che sono sistematicamente ordinati ed inventariati, ed in ultimo a quelli audio visuali ed a quelli aventi valore museale.

MOSSEK, Moshe - BUDOWSKI, Ilana, **Vrednotenje in odlaganje upravnega gradiva: zasnova in metode, ki so v uporabi v Izraelu**. Atlanti, Zv. 18, Trst 2008, str. 339-342.

Politika vrednotenja upravnega dokumentarnega gradiva v Izraelu sloni v prvi vrsti na dejstvu pomembnosti posameznega dokumenta. Pomembnost pa se naslanja na različne kriterije pomembnosti arhivskega in dokumentarnega gradiva: 1. pomembnost ustvarjalca, 2. splošni družbeni pomen in na zgodovinski pomen, 3. kronološki pomen, 4. vrednotenje gradiva glede na vrsto zbirk (unikatni dokumenti, listine, gradivo pomembnih osebnosti itd.). Avtorja zato razpravljata o vseh teh vrstah vrednotenja arhivskega in dokumentarnega gradiva v Izraelu.

SUMMARY

Israel records management systems and archival methods are based on three professional traditions in chronological order: the British, which was used during thirty years of British mandatory rule in Palestine, since the end of World War I, the Central European tradition, brought over by German archivists who immigrated to Palestine in the mid thirties and the American professional methods which

have a very significant influence on Israel's archival work, as in many other countries in the world. This may be the reason for the large number and wide variety of methods and criteria for appraisal and evaluation of records used in Israel. The examination of records from a large scope of angles and aspects enables the archivist to better judge whether to deposit the records in the archives selectively or entirely, or to eliminate them. In this way criteria can be adjusted to the various contexts and forms of records and to the different accumulations of files. The methods used in the Israel State Archives and in most municipal and public archives in Israel regarding the evaluation of material, is taught in the archive schools of the universities and the academic colleges and also in training courses organized by the Government and local authorities training centers. This gives an official uniform policy for appraisal of records which helps the dialogue among the archivists themselves, and the dialogue between the archivists and the public administration. This simplifies the professional work of evaluation and ensures that important material for the administration, for the general public and for historical research will be kept in the archives in an optimal way.

phabetical, numerical or chronological order. In general, all files in these series have the same value, therefore if the files are valuable the complete series should be kept. If the files are valueless the series should be eliminated. However, some casual samples of these files should be kept.

- 4) **Subject files:** Are in general of varying values. Therefore, it is recommended to select and keep only files that are important to the organization or to research.
- 5) **Correspondence files.** As far as their value is concerned, they are like subject files and should therefore be treated in the same way.

e. Criteria regarding the type of records

Records produced by administration bodies include a large variety of records from the point of view of content and type. They have different values with regard to their necessity to the administration, to the public and to research. Following is a recommended order of priorities, according to their archival value and their importance to the three factors mentioned above. As they are all organized in series, they should be evaluated according to the methods and principles of files accumulated in series, as in the criteria described above.

- 1) Protocols, summaries and minutes of boards and committees.
- 2) Essential correspondence of senior and intermediate levels.
- 3) Regulations for implementation, reporting, supervision and control.
- 4) One-time or periodic memos and reports.
- 5) Administrative and monetary audit reports.
- 6) Publications and communications.
- 7) Surveys.

f. The circumstances criteria - six W's and one H

A simple and easy way of evaluating records is to ask one of the questions below. If the record supplies a significant and meaningful answer to one of those questions the material is valuable and suitable for preservation. The questions are as follows:

- 1) **Which** actions were taken according to the content of the records?
- 2) **When** did these actions take place?
- 3) **Where** did these actions happen?
- 4) **How** were they taken?
- 5) **Why** were they taken?
- 6) **Who** participated in these actions?
- 7) **What** were the consequences and the results of these actions?

g. The detail and extent of information criteria

The value of records may be tested according to the quality, variety and comprehensiveness of the information. Those which contain a large store of data and detailed information on great amounts

of items are certainly preferable to those which contain poor and marginal information, as seen below.

- 1) Detailed information on many items.
- 2) Detailed information on a few items.
- 3) Superficial information on many items.
- 4) Superficial information on a few items.

h. The exclusiveness and uniqueness criteria

The exclusiveness and uniqueness of the information is a significant and important consideration for the appraisal of records. The more unique and exclusive the information within the records, the more precious and valuable they are in regard to preservation:

- 1) Records having unique information.
- 2) Records having exclusive information.
- 3) Duplicated and printed records.

i. The feasibility of access to and use of the material

The practical factor in evaluation of records is significant especially when large amounts of records are involved. Unlisted records and those which are in disorder make appraisal much more difficult, in extreme cases even worthless. Accordingly, preference should be given as follows:

- 1) Systematically ordered and listed records.
- 2) Systematically ordered but unlisted records.
- 3) Unlisted and unorganized records.

l. Display value criteria

Unusual records which have outstanding, representative or museum value should be preserved for research, educational and heritage purposes and use.

- 1) Records having unique historical value.
- 2) Visual records-posters, still photos, films, videos etc.
- 3) Audio records, tapes, CD's, etc.
- 4) Items having museum like value.