

The 20th Century Archives in Greece. Technical and Professional Issues

ARATHYMOU, Spyridoula, **The 20th Century Archives in Greece. Technical and Professional Issues**. Atlanti, Vol. 19, Trieste 2009, pp. 175-178.

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

The 20th century has been a difficult century for Europe and for the rest of the world. A lot of disasters and changes took place. But also, the 20th century will remain in human history as the time of technological evolution which had as a result huge changes in everyday life. The combination of disasters and technological evolution created a very interesting archival scenery in matters of content, form and use. Greece is a country which was formed in the 1830's but not until 1949 had it acquired the territories it has today. Two world wars, two Balkan wars, immigration, civil war, various dictatorships and restoration of democracy are Greece's 20th century history in brief. These facts are reflected in the Greek modern archives. Their content is considered as a treasure for researchers of various disciplines. But there are some limitations for archivists and for users, as well. One case consists of records that are written in languages other than Greek, such as Osmanic. Most archivists cannot read them and work on them and most users cannot do so, as well. There is also a big number of archives that are connected to the country's recent political and social history. For various reasons, they are not deposited to State Archives and users cannot consult them and this doesn't have to do with the consultation rules for archival material. Another issue for the last century's archives, which is not only a Greek fact, is the form of archives. It changes and evolves all through the 20th century and it brought up various challenges for archivists. From paper to floppy disk, cd, dvd, digital object. It has been a radical change for society and for archival institutions, as well. New description and preservation demands which gave a new, fresh air to archival profession. Greek archivists tried and still try to keep up to these changes but

The 20th century has been a difficult period for Europe and for the rest of the world. A lot of disasters and changes took place. But also, the 20th century will remain in human history as the time of technological evolution which had as a result huge changes in everyday life. The combination of disasters and technological evolution created a very interesting archival scenery in matters of content, form and use. Information's appearance and transmission changed radically and a new era rose which inaugurated the informational revolution of nowadays.

Greece is a country which was formed in the 1830's but not until 1949 had it acquired the territories it has today. Two world wars, two Balkan wars, immigration, civil war, various dictatorships and restoration of democracy are Greece's 20th century history in brief. These facts are reflected in the Greek modern archives. Their content is considered as a treasure for researchers of various disciplines. But there are some limitations for archivists and for users, as well. One case consists of records that are written in languages other than Greek, such as Osmanic. Most archivists cannot read them and work on them and most users cannot do so, as well.

As Greece was occupied by the Ottoman Empire for more than 400 years and some of the territories it has today as Greek Macedonia, Thrace were acquired from the modern Greek state at the beginning of the 20th century, there is a lot of archival material in Ottoman language. Besides the older Ottoman archives, there are very interesting records dated at the beginning of the 20th century. They give us valuable information about the public administration and social issues of the territories which were still under Ottoman occupation, at that time. Unfortunately, there are only a few Greek scholars who are able to read Ottoman language and there are even fewer the ones that are employed in archival services which preserve this kind of material. Also, there are a lot of possible users, who are unable to consult these archives. The scholars that have a good knowledge of Ottoman language study this material and, from time to time, they publish their research. But this is not enough, as there is a big need for more people with these qualifications.

Apart from the Ottoman archives, there are also archives of the 20th century in Italian language, mostly at the region of Dodecanese, in South Aegean Sea. The islands of Dodecanese were the last region

to be united with the Modern Greek state in 1948. So, there are a big number of records, not only administrative ones, in Italian. Of course, there a lot of scholars and archivists who know Italian language but there has not been done a lot of work on these archives, unfortunately.

There are also a big number of archives that are connected to the country's recent political and social history. For various reasons, some of them are not deposited to State Archives and users cannot consult them and this doesn't have to do with the consultation rules for archival material.

After World War II, from 1946 until 1949, a devastating civil war took place in Greece. Its wounds can be seen even today. A lot of records from that period have been destroyed but fortunately enough, there are some organizations which managed to preserve such records. One of them is ASKI (Archives of Contemporary and Social History). Its archival collection mostly consists of the archive of the Greek Communist Party "Esoterikou" (meaning internal in a way) which was founded after the big split of the Greek Communist Party in 1968. Also, the period between the end of the Greek civil war in 1949 and the restoration of democracy in 1974 was a very difficult one, characterized by political unbalance, social and political persecutions but it was also a time during which many social and political movements, legal and illegal, appeared. This explosive social and political scenery produced an equally 'explosive' archival material. The administrative archives of the Cold War and Military Dictatorship period still hide secrets. A lot of them, like the Police archives, were never deposited to the State Archives and it is unknown if they will ever be. Also, a very important political archive, that of the Greek Communist Party, is said to open soon for the public. This archive is believed to be a treasure for researchers and for thousands of citizens, too.

During the last century a new archival category was born, the audiovisual archives. In Greece, these archives are preserved in various services. The most important are the Greek Film Depository, the Archive of Greek Radio and Television and the Centre of Greek Cinema. They have done great efforts on the preservation of their holdings; they have digitized most of their collections and presented them on the Web.

Another issue for the last century's archives, which is not only a Greek fact, is the form of archives. It changes and evolves all through the 20th century and it brought up various challenges for archivists. From paper to floppy disk, cd-rom, dvd, digital object. It has been a radical change for society and for archival institutions, as well. New description and preservation demands gave a new, fresh air to archival profession. The new forms of digital preservation save vital space for archival institutions and reassure the safekeeping of records. Greek archivists tried and still try to keep up to the new facts but not always in a successful way in practical issues.

Most of the employees of the State Archives and of other archival institutions are not professional archivists and this has caused several problems in terms of the use and preservation of archival material. Until now, a lot of archival services do not describe their

not always in a successful way in practical issues. So, it appears that the 20th century was a very interesting and challenging one and it inaugurated a new era for the archival profession.

ARATHYMOU, Spyridoula, Gli archivi del XX secolo in Grecia. Questioni tecniche e professionali. Atlanti, Vol. 19, Trieste 2009, pp. 175-178.

Il XX secolo è stato un secolo difficile per l'Europa e per il resto del mondo. Sono avvenuti numerosi disastri e cambiamenti. Ma il XX secolo rimarrà nella storia dell'umanità anche come il secolo dell'evoluzione tecnologica che ha comportato come risultato un enorme cambiamento nella vita quotidiana. La combinazione di disastri ed evoluzione tecnologica ha creato un interessantissimo scenario dal punto di vista archivistico per quel che concerne i contenuti, la forma, e l'utilizzo. La Grecia è un paese che si è formato negli anni '30 dell'800, ma fino al 1949 non ha acquisito i territori che oggi possiede. Due guerre mondiali, due guerre balcaniche, immigrazione, guerra civile, varie dittature ed il ripristino della democrazia costituiscono la sintesi della storia della Grecia nel XX secolo. Questi accadimenti si riflettono negli archivi della Grecia moderna. Il loro possesso è considerato un vero tesoro per i ricercatori di svariate discipline. Ma ci sono alcune limitazioni per gli archivisti e per gli utenti, al tempo stesso. Un caso è quello dei documenti scritti in lingue diverse dal greco. La maggior parte degli archivisti non è in grado di leggerli o di lavorarci su, così come la maggior parte degli utenti. C'è anche un gran numero di archivi che riguardano la più recente storia politica e sociale del paese. Per svariate ragioni, non sono depositati presso gli Archivi di Stato e gli utenti non possono consultarli; e ciò non ha nulla a che fare con le regole per la consultazione del materiale archivistico. Un altro problema riguardante lo scorso secolo, che peraltro non concerne la sola Grecia, è quello della forma degli archivi. Essa cambia e si evolve lungo tutto l'arco del XX secolo, portando nuove sfide agli archivisti. Dalla carta al floppy disk, CD, DVD, materiali digitali. E' stato un cambiamento radicale per la società e pure per le istituzioni archivistiche. Nuove esigenze di descrizione e conservazione che hanno portato un'aria nuova nella professione archivistica. Gli archivisti greci hanno cercato e tuttora cercano di far fronte a questi cambiamenti, ma non sempre con successo. Così, il XX secolo sembra essere stato interessante e pieno di sfide, ed ha inaugurato una nuova era nella professione archivistica.

ARATHYMOU, Spyridoula, Arhivi XX. stoletja v Grčiji. Tehnična in strokovna vprašanja. Atlanti, Zv. 19, Trst 2009, str. 175-178.

Dvajseto stoletje je težko stoletje za Evropo in

za ostali svet. Bilo je veliko nesreč in velikih sprememb. Po drugi strani pa je dvajseto stoletje tudi čas tehnološkega napredka. Kombiniranje nesreč in tehnološkega napredka je ustvarilo zanimivo arhivsko sceno tako na vsebinskem kot na oblikovnem in uporabnem področju. Grčija je dežela, ki se je oblikovala ok. l. 1830, a današnje ozemlje ima šele po letu 1949. Bila je v dveh svetovnih vojnah, v dveh balkanskih, imela je veliko priseljevanje, državljansko vojno, bila po vplivom diktatorjev in povsem kratko vzpostavitev demokracije. Vsa ta dejstva so tudi vplivala na sodobno grško arhivistiko. Nedvomno bodo morali to upoštevati vsi raziskovalci katerekoli discipline. Poleg tega pa bo še treba upoštevati, da niso vsi dokumenti pisani v grščini, ampak tudi v drugih jezikih (turščini), kar dela težave arhivistom že sedaj. Nekateri arhivisti so še privrženci prejšnjih političnih sistemov, kar ima za posledico težje prilagajanje tudi uporabnikom, ki zato težje dostopajo do arhivskega gradiva. Tudi tehnološki razvoj, ki ga je ponudilo računalništvo, zahteva posebno prilagajanje, t.j. prehod od papirja do digitalnih oblik (diskete, digitalizacija, cd, dvd, itd.), kar pomeni radikalno spremembo v družbi in prav gotovo tudi na arhivskem področju. Vsemu temu morajo slediti tudi grški arhivisti, tako danes kot v prihodnosti.

SUMMARY

The 20th century has been a cornerstone for human history. The events which took place in that century are reflected in the various types of archives which were produced during that time. Greece, due to its strategic geographical position, was involved in various wars and suffered of national disasters. Also, some very important administrative, social and political changes took place in Greek territory and naturally they can be traced in the recent Greek archival wealth. Also, the 20th century has been characterized as the century of informational revolution, as information appeared in new forms, and preserved in new media, other than paper. Computer technologies inaugurated a new era for information sciences and especially for archival science. They gave a new, fresh air to archival profession and made it more demanding than ever. Unfortunately, Greece has not yet proved that can keep up to the new demands of archival science and profession due to various reasons.

holdings according to the international standards or in the worst of cases, they have never heard of them. This fact has resulted into chaotic scenery regarding the description of archival material and the appearance of EAD and other standards just made things worse. There are only a few institutions using EAD to present their finding aids on the Web and the Greek State Archives are not unfortunately among them.

Apart from the describing standards and all the new technologies regarding archives, Greek archivists have also problems with the new forms of archival material. The new forms, electronic and digital are foreign to them. Of course, this has also to do with their lack of education regarding new technologies. The case of electronic records is still foreign to Greek archivists, at least to the older ones and unfortunately it has not become, till now, a serious subject of academic discussion.

Fortunately enough, digitization projects, funded by European programs, have been realized all over the country. A lot of institutions profited from these programs and managed to digitize some or all of their collections. Since last year, the results of most of these efforts have been presented to the public and there is a lot to be seen in the near future.

Unfortunately, Greece cannot be proud of the way it handles its archival wealth. The problems have their roots in past mentalities, according to which archives were valuable only for academics and especially historians and there was no need for qualified archivists. This mentality has an impact even today. Professional archivists struggle for the establishment of archival scientific practices in their institutions and there is a lot to be done.

Besides Greece, the new archival forms and the appearance of metadata have become a challenge for archivists all over the world. The archival profession becomes fresh and the archival science has become more demanding than ever. New technologies give the chance to archival science to get rid of old mentalities and practices and be the cornerstone of information society.

DEPOSITORIES OF 20TH CENTURY ARCHIVES

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ARCHIVES

- ASKI (Archives of Contemporary and Social History) - <http://www.askiweb.eu/index.php>
- EDIA (Society for the Preservation of Historical Archives 1940-1974) - <http://www.edia.gr>
- “Eleftherios Venizelos” Foundation- Digital Archive - <http://85.72.35.68>
- Greek Communist Party Archive (not open to public yet)
- Konstantinos Mitsotakis Foundation - http://www.ikm.gr/5_ELL_HTML.aspx

AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVES

- Greek Film Depository - <http://www.tainiothiki.gr>
- Archive of Greek Radio and Television - <http://www.ert-archives.gr>
- Centre of Greek Cinema- Digital Cinema Archive - www.gfcdigital.gr
- National Audiovisual Archives - www.avarchive.gr
- National Opera Archives - <http://85.72.51.203/ElsWsConsumer/>

UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

- Archives of Agricultural University - <http://www.aua.gr/gr/arxeio>
- Historical Archive- University of Athens - <http://www.archive.uoa.gr/>