

Belarusian Archives in the Modern Society

ANDREI RYBAKOU, DR.

Director

Belarusian Research Institute for Documentation Science and Archival Affairs (BelNIIDAD), Minsk, Belarus

+375172867693

e-mail: rybakou@belniidad.by

Belarusian Archives in the Modern Society

ABSTRACT

The present-day status of Belarusian archives in the society is rather contradictory. On the one hand, archives managed to achieve great success in constructing the archival facilities for preservation of archival documents, creating the legislative basis for their work. The State Programme *Archives of Belarus* adopted by the Belarusian Government in 2010, will contribute to the development of archives with the additional financial support. Belarusian archives became more open and proclaimed free access to the archival fonds and documents preserved in their holdings. They organize exhibitions, including virtual ones, actively publish archival documents, cooperate while doing their work with domestic and foreign scientific-and-research institutions, libraries, museums and other establishments. The Belarusian archives play very important social role in the modern Belarusian society. No doubt, the status of archives in Belarusian society and the prestige of archival profession have highly increased during the last 20 years. As a result, in 1998 the professional archival holiday was established in Belarus by the special legislative act. On the other hand, some problems still exist in archival sphere. The principal one is liquidation of independence of the archival regulatory body in the country in 2006 and its integration into the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus. Other problems are traditional: lack of state financial support, rather low level of salary in the archives, necessity to set up and maintain the modern equipment, etc. Nevertheless, the solution of the archival problems in greater part depends on the desire and willingness to solve them. Though the archives changes with the society in and for which they do exist, the profession of archivist can still be described with such special features as devotion to archives, devotion to archival work.

Gli archivi di Bielorussia nella società moderna

SINTESI

L'autore dell'articolo prova a mostrare lo stato degli archivi bielorusi nella società al giorno d'oggi. Sono diventati più aperti ed è stato proclamato il libero accesso ai fondi archivistici ed alla documentazione conservata nei loro depositi. Si organizzano mostre, anche virtuali, si pubblicano attivamente documenti, si coopera con il lavoro di istituzioni scientifiche e di ricerca nazionali ed estere, con biblioteche, musei ed altri istituti. Gli archivi bielorusi recitano un ruolo molto importante nella moderna società bielorusa. D'altro canto, esistono ancora alcuni problemi attinenti la sfera archivistica. Sebbene gli archivi cambino con la società nella quale e per la quale esistono, la professione dell'archivista può ancora essere descritta con lo speciale carattere della devozione agli archivi ed al lavoro d'archivio.

Beloruski arhivi v sodobni družbi

IZVLEČEK

Trenutni družbeni status beloruskih arhivov je precej kontradiktoren. S tem, ko so arhivi pripravili zakonske podlage za svoje delo, jim je uspelo doseči, po eni strani, velik uspeh pri ustvarjanju ustreznih pogojev za varstvo in hrambo arhivskega gradiva. Državni program „Beloruski arhivi“, ki ga je leta 2010 sprejela beloruska vlada, bo z dodatno finančno podporo prispeval k razvoju arhivov. Beloruski arhivi so z razglasitvijo prostega dostopa do ohranjenega arhivskega gradiva postali bolj odprti za javnost. Organizirajo razstave, tudi virtualne, aktivno objavljajo arhivsko gradivo, sodelujejo pri delu z domačimi in tujimi raziskovalnimi institucijami, knjižnicami, muzeji in drugimi ustanovami. Beloruski arhivi imajo pomembno vlogo v beloruski družbi. Nedvomno se je status arhivov v beloruski družbi in prestiž arhivske stroke močno povečal v zadnjih dvajsetih letih. Kot posledica tega, je bil v Belorusiji na osnovi posebnega zakonodajnega akta, leta 1998 uradno razglašen strokovni arhivski praznik. Po drugi strani pa stroko še vedno tare veliko problemov. Osnovna težava je ukinitve neodvisne arhivske službe v državi, do katere je prišlo leta 2006, in njena integracija v okvir Ministrstva za pravosodje Republike Belorusije. Ostali problemi so standardni: pomanjkanje finančne podpore s strani države, nizke plače, potreba po vzpostavitvi in vzdrževanju sodobne opreme, itd. Ne glede na vse, pa so rešitve problemov odvisne od želje in volje po rešitvi le-teh. Čeprav se arhivi spreminjajo z družbo v kateri, in zaradi katere obstajajo, pa je za poklic arhivista še vedno potrebna predanost arhivskemu gradivu in delu.

Беларускія архівы ў сучасным грамадстве

РЭЗЮМЭ

Аўтыр артыкула спрабуе выявіць сучасны стан архіваў у беларускім грамадстве. За апошнія гады яны сталі больш адкрытымі, абвешчаны свабодны доступ да архіўных фондаў і дакументаў, якія ў іх захоўваюцца. Архівы арганізуюць выставы, у тым ліку віртуальныя, актыўна публікуюць архіўныя дакументы, супрацоўнічаюць з айчыннымі і замежнымі навукова-даследчымі інстытутамі, бібліятэкамі, музэямі і іншымі ўстановамі. Беларускія архівы адыгрываюць вельмі важную сацыяльную ролю ў сучасным беларускім грамадстве. З іншага боку, у архіўнай сферы існуе шэраг праблем. Іхця архівы змяняюцца разам з грамадствам у якім і для якога яны існуюць, прафесія архівіста па-ранейшаму вымыгае ад тых, хто ёй займаецца, такіх характэрных якасцей, як адданасць архівам, адданасць архіўнай справе.

1. INTRODUCTION

As it is stated in the Universal Declaration on Archives, archives are a unique and irreplaceable heritage passed from one generation to another [1]. There is no need to convince professional archivists in the importance and value of archives, it would just be enough to mention the statement of known Canadian archivist Arthur Doughty the monument to whom has been erected in his native land for his great contribution to the preservation of history of his country: “Of all national assets, archives are the most precious. They are the gifts of one generation to another and the extent of our care of them marks the extent of our civilization” [2].

In the Belarusian legislation the concept “archive” is applied for designation of the organization or structural division of the organization performing reception, storage and use of archival documents. The concept “fonds” is applied for designation of documents stored in archives and the whole amount of the documents which are stored or to be stored in archives, constitutes the National Archival Fond. Therefore, speaking about modern Belarusian archives, we shall mean specialized institutions, in which archival documents and archival fonds are stored.

The present day condition of the Belarusian archives is controversial. On the one hand, they are paid great attention, on the other there is a number of problems to be solved.

2. BASIC ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BELARUSIAN ARCHIVES IN THE LATE 20TH - EARLY 21ST CENTURIES

At present the system of the State Archival Service of the Republic of Belarus includes 169 bodies of archival management and the state archival establishments. In the state archives of Belarus over 13 million files are stored containing documents since 1391 up to now, including documents of the supreme power bodies, state bodies, public associations, political parties, etc.

The network of the state archival establishments constantly develops in Belarus. Thus, in the early 21st century the network of territorial (city and regional) archives has been formed, which primarily carry out such an important social function as storage of documents on personnel of liquidated organizations [3]. In 1991 the Belarusian Research Institute for Documentation Science and Archival Affairs (BelNIIDAD) was founded, being a leading scientific institution on development of theoretical and methodological issues of documents and archival affairs management, in 1998 the Belarusian Scientific and Research Centre of Electronic Documentation functioning as the state archive of electronic documents, was established [4, pp. 196-197].

A comprehensive regulatory framework in the archival sphere has been developed in Belarus. Since 1994 the national archival law [5] has been effective in the country defining kinds and legal status of archives, principles of their organization. In 2005 the Rules of Work of the State Archives of the Republic of Belarus [6] were approved, which defined the operating procedure of the state archives, their tasks and functions in the preservation of the state part of the National Archival Fond. Since 1997 the Rules of Work of Archives of Organizations have been applied in the country, regulating practical issues of storage of and work with archival documents in all organizations of the country irrespective of form of ownership [7].

To provide uniformity of registration and organization of archival storage of such specific categories of documents as the scientific and technical and audio-visual documentation, the following regulations were approved: in 2003 the Rules of Work with Scientific and Technical Documentation in Institutions, Organizations and at Enterprises of the Republic of Belarus [8], in 2007 the Rules of Work with Scientific and Technical Documentation in State Archives [9] and the Rules of Work with Audio-visual Documentation in State Archives [10].

At present the new archival law, Law on Archival Affairs, is to be adopted soon [11]. This law shall replace the version of the law On the National Archival Fond and Archives in the Republic of Belarus, effective since 1999. Adoption of the new law is expected in 2011 and will promote the perfection of legal regulation of archival sphere. It is worthy of special note that the new law is supposed to contain mandatory requirements to all the organizations irrespective of the form of ownership, structure and legal status to establish archives for their long-term storage (over 10 years) documents.

To improve the quality of acquisition of the National Archival Fond the State Archival Service of the Republic of Belarus is authorized to monitor preservation of archival documents in the archives of organizations, and also at the stage of office-work. According to Article 33 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus On the National Archival Fond and Archives in the Republic of Belarus the functions of state control and supervision over preservation, accounting and use of the National Archival Fond documents are assigned to the State Inspection of Archives and Records Management, specially established for this. The functions of state inspectors are performed by the officers of managerial bodies and establishments of the State Archival Service, including the most qualified employees of the state archives.

Workers of archives of the organizations are also legislatively authorised to control the process of not only archival, but also day-to-day storage and use of documents in records management of the organizations. Thus, according to the Records Management Guideline for Organizations of the Republic of Belarus [12] the archive of the organization supervises over the work on formation of files in office-work, compiling of the files nomenclature of the organization, participates in examination of documents value and definition of terms of their storage, etc.

Activity of the State and archives on formation and preservation of the National Archival Fond is supported by the norms of the legislation defining the responsibility of the organizations and citizens for violation of the established order of archival storage of documents and provision of access to them. Thus, an unlawful denial of access to the archival document is determined as administrative offence. The Code of the Republic of Belarus on Administrative Offences sets responsibility for unlawful denial of access to the archival document (Article 22.10) in the form of a fine in the amount of appr. EUR 180. Article 22.11 of the said Code provides similar penal actions for the organizations failing to ensure appropriate conditions for storage of archival documents appeared in their activity, and also for the withdrawal from archives of its premises and their use for other purpose, for refusal of transfer of documents to the state storage in statutory cases [13].

The Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus provides for more serious punitive measures in cases of plunder, destruction, damage or concealment of archival documents (Article 377). Thus, the similar actions in relation to the documents of the National Archival Fond transferred to the state storage, shall be punished by a penalty, or arrest for the term up to six months, or restraint of liberty for the term up to five years, or imprisonment for the same term [14].

The process of constant development of legal regulation in archival sphere, development and introduction of new technologies, techniques, means and ways of work of archivists calls for the highly skilled staff. It should be noted that in the last 20 years the issue of professional training for the state archives and archives of organizations in Belarus has been solved as a whole, and that makes it possible to satisfy the need of the specified establishments in professional archivists [4, pp. 200-201].

The attitude of the State to archives has changed to the better in the recent years. It could be confirmed by the *Archives of Belarus* State Program adopted by the Government of the Republic of Belarus in 2010, the implementation of which was scheduled for 2011-2015 [15]. It is stated in the program that preservation of archives is the major goal of the State by virtue of direct and organic relation of archives to the historical past, and archives in the most concentrated way symbolize this past

as one of the attributes of nationhood. The society's level of civilization is judged in the world by the condition of archives, and the information potential of archives is used for many years for scientific, political, economic, welfare, administrative purposes and is directed to the satisfaction of needs of the State and its institutions, protection of legitimate rights and interests of citizens of the country.

The state program is directed to the provision of necessary material and technical conditions of preservation and acquisition of the National Archival Fond, widening of access to archival documents and provision of citizens, society, the State with retrospective documentary information, and also introduction of information products and technologies in archival sphere.

The solution of the above program tasks presupposes activity on improvement of material base of archival establishments, observance of regulatory conditions of storage of documents in the state archives, complex work on improvement of a physical condition of archival documents (first of all of those having special value), their back-up copying and restoration, systematic updating of the National Archival Fond with all kinds of permanent storage documents, including electronic ones, and also with documents (their copies) on the history of Belarus, stored in foreign archives.

Besides, within the framework of implementation of *Archives of Belarus* State Program it is planned to organize the publication of documentary sources on the topical problems of the history of Belarus, of archival directories on the structure and contents of documents of the National Archival Fond, increase the number of historical and documentary exhibitions, create electronic expositions of archival documents, provide the participation of the State Archival Service of the Republic of Belarus in the organization of joint international exhibition and publishing projects.

An indispensable condition of implementation of the program should be the development and extensive introduction of information technologies in the activity of state archives, and also provision of the state archives with the up-to-date equipment and the required modern software products.

For the above goals it is supposed to allocate from the state budget, in addition to the planned financing, the sum equivalent to EUR 22 million within the five years of the program implementation.

Prior to the approval of *Archives of Belarus* State program, in the 2003-2010 period a sectorial Program on Preservation of Archival Documentary Heritage as a component of an information resource of a society has been consistently implemented in the archival sphere for the last seven years. In spite of the fact that activities of this program have not been supported by additional financing, as a result capital repair and reconstruction of buildings of nine state archives have been made, additional buildings and premises have been allocated and redesigned for seven state archives. All this made it possible to improve the storage conditions of archival documents of the National Archival Fond.

3. THE ROLE AND VALUE OF ARCHIVES IN THE PRESENT-DAY BELARUSIAN SOCIETY

Considering the diversity of archives activity at the present stage of the Belarusian society development, it would hardly be possible to comprehensively define their role and value within the limits of one article. One could just specify the basic components of this issue reflecting social, scientific, cultural and practical aspects of archives existence in and for the society.

First of all, archives in the Republic of Belarus perform an important social role. Most obviously this function of archives is revealed on the example of territorial (city and regional) archives formed in the early 21st century and providing storage of documents on personnel of liquidated organizations (today there are 124 such archives). Preservation of this category of documents is necessary for provision of the rights and guarantees of citizens for social security (pensions, allowances, etc.). The state archives participate in its realization by issue of archival information of social and legal nature (for example, on inquiries of citizens about the employment history, labour conditions, etc.) [3].

It should be noted that the legislation acts of the Republic of Belarus stipulate obligations for the liquidated organizations to transfer for storage the documents, including those confirming the work record and remuneration of labour of workers [16]. It creates preconditions for preservation of all documents necessary for satisfaction of the above social inquiries of citizens.

As a whole in the last few years the state archives annually fulfil about 30 thousand inquiries of social and legal nature coming from citizens and organizations. Archives consider annually up to 8 thousand thematic inquiries, and their number constantly grows. In this respect one should note a steady growth of genealogic inquiries: their quantity more than doubled in the last five years. The latter indicates to the growing role of archives as major sources of information about family and kin history for the Belarusian citizens, and also for the foreign citizens addressing the Belarusian archives.

With a view of popularization of archives activity, and also availability to the public of the information containing in the documents of the National Archival Fond, the state archives are actively publishing collections of archival documents and the scientific research papers compiled with participation of both central and regional state archives. Thus, in 2010 the state archival establishments published 23 documentary collections and scientific editions on the basis of archival documents (compared with 13 and 16 collections of documents and scientific editions published respectively in 2008 and 2009). The issue of many documentary collections is quite often accompanied with presentations highlighted by mass media. The analysis shows that archives now publish more collections of documents and archival directories only in one year than for the whole second half of the 20th century

The important factor promoting effective publishing activity of the Belarusian archives is their cooperation with the Belarusian scientific organizations, and also with foreign archives and scientific institutions. At present the issue of creation of a special centre on the basis of the National Archive of the Republic of Belarus is considered, which will promote launching of extensive publishing activity in the archival sphere.

The important direction of popularization of the use of archival documents is holding of exhibitions of archival documents by the state archives. Almost 170 various exhibitions have been organized by archives in the last two years. In the course of such exhibitions archivists not only manage to show that the archival document can become the same attractive exhibition object as a museum piece, but also to draw attention of the public to the national documentary treasure of the country. Inter-archival, inter-branch and international exhibitions are more often organized with participation of the Belarusian archives. Museums and libraries even more often act as partners of archives.

The organization of virtual exhibitions becomes a promising developing activity of the Belarusian archives. Such exhibitions are regularly organized, for example, on the official site *Archives of Belarus* of the State Archival Service [17]. Illustrative is the cooperation of the Belarusian archives with the largest national Internet portal TUT.by, which promotes exhibitions of archival photo and video documents. Thus, the *World Photo* project has recently been launched, within the limits of which TUT.by portal places unique photos stored in Belarusian archives, which have been made by correspondents of various news agencies, newspapers and magazines in many world countries on all five continents from early 20th century till the Second World War [18].

Both text and audio and video documents are published at similar exhibitions and that helps to raise wide public interest to them. Organization of virtual exhibitions with placement of digital copies of archival documents on subject Internet sites makes them accessible to a wide range of Internet users, providing at that preservation of originals.

The opportunity of organization of virtual exhibitions is conditioned in many respects by increasing digitalization rates of archival documents. Thus, in 2010 the amount of the archival documents digitized by the state archives has grown by 30 % in comparison with 2009 and has made 2,736 stock units of paper documents (464,778 sheets of documents and microphotocopies, 915 tracing papers), 14,431 stock units of documentary photographs, 558 stock units of phonographic documents, 19 stock units of video documents, 55 stock units of filming documents. No doubt, such volume covers only insignificant part of documents of the National Archival Fond (in particular, the amount of the paper documents digitized in 2010 was approximately only 0.025 % of paper documents stored in the state archives). At the same time the scientific and methodological approaches to digitalization of documents of the state archives developed at present will enable reaching a steady growth of both quantitative and qualitative indicators of digitalization of archival documents.

The documents of state archives are also widely used by cinematographers in creation of documentaries and video films, television programs by both national and foreign broadcasting companies

and film studios. The subjects of similar films and programs cover the periods from the distant historical past till the 20th century events. Among them a steady interest of cinematographers and TV producers is retained to the topics related to the Second World War.

The opportunity for such an active use of archival documents is explained by the openness of the Belarusian archives during the last twenty years. As it is noted in the book *Access to Archives* [19] written by Charles Kecskemeti and Ivan Szekely, Belarus is one of the countries implementing principles of freedom of access to archival documents and their use, including those set out in Recommendation No. R (2000) 13 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on a European Policy on Access to Archives [20].

Understanding of a role and the importance of archives for successful activity of the organizations is reflected in a growing tendency among the private organizations to order their archival fonds according to the established archival norms. In so doing, such striving is often caused not only by realised responsibility for violation of the required procedure of archival documents treatment, but also by the comprehension that the ordered archive is a valuable source of information for daily activity, and the repository of corporate memory. The working practice of state archives shows annual growth of the amount of orders from the state and non-state organizations on archival processing of their documents, organization of the due order of their storage.

The role of the Belarusian archives in the solution of issues of documents management going beyond direct archival work in its traditional understanding, has sharply increased in the recent years. Considering the importance and the necessity of creation of a basis for cooperation of archival establishments and other organizations involved with a view of development of standards in the field of document management, a technical committee *Records Management* was established on the basis of BELNIIDAD. It is the association of experts representing the interested member organizations, formed on a voluntary basis to work out national, interstate and international (regional) standardization in the field of document management, with a view of provision of uniform technical policy in this sphere.

Standardization in the Republic of Belarus is considered today as a priority direction of development in various fields of activity, implemented with account of the international practice. In this regard the maximal application of the international standards is one of determinant principles of national standardization. It provides high level of domestic standardization and certification, corresponding to the requirements of national economy [21; 22].

Development of standards in the field of archival work and management of documents is historically justified and is a traditional way of legalising at the state level of requirements to documenting and organization of work with documents. In the conditions of application in the Republic of Belarus of ISO international standards in the field of document management and archival work the cooperation of organizations within the framework of technical committee *Records Management* will be quite important for conducting of coordinated works on standardization in the corresponding area, and also for development of document management sphere and archival work in the country in view of modern trends and international practice.

In general one of the features of Belarusian archives in the last two decades was that they have become much more open for a society than in the previous period. They play a prominent role in various spheres of economic, scientific, social and cultural life of the country.

A professional holiday, Day of the Archivist was officially founded by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus in 1998 as the recognition of merits of archivists before the society, their contribution to preservation of the cultural heritage of the country, and also for the increase of the role of archives and the prestige of a profession of archivist [23]. Belarusian archivists celebrate their professional holiday on October 6th, since on this day in 1994 the first national archival law was adopted. The decree stipulates that the professional holiday is celebrated in honour of recognition of merits of workers of a certain profession, branch of economy or a field of activity, or in view of their special importance for the national economy. And though Day of the Archivist is not declared a day off, it allows putting this profession side by side with such trades as the teacher, the doctor, etc. the importance of which has been highly estimated at all times and in any society.

It should be noted that the International Council of Archives (MCA) admits that such holiday is one of the tools enabling archivists in all countries to draw the attention of fellow citizens and authorities of their country to the issues of document management and to their archival storage and once again emphasize the importance of preservation of archival documents as collective memory of a society. In connection with the above the MCA General Assembly held in November 2007 in Quebec (Canada) adopted the decision to celebrate the International Day of Archives annually on June 9th [24].

4. BASIC PROBLEMS OF THE BELARUSIAN ARCHIVES AT THE PRESENT STAGE

Despite considerable achievements in the development of archives, increase of their status and value in a society in the recent years, the Belarusian archivists have to face a lot of problems. It should be noted with regret that in a present-day Belarusian society a pragmatic attitude to archives is still prevailing. They are often recollected only when there is a need for the retrospective information containing or may be contained in archival documents. As a result sometimes there is a conflict between the expected needs of the users addressing the archival fonds and real capabilities of archives to satisfy these needs, including the absence of documents the users are interested in, complexities in the search and prompt delivery of the information stored, etc.

The basic problems of the Belarusian archives at the present stage are traditional. One of the main ones is liquidation in 2006 of independence of the archival sphere control body in the country and its inclusion in the structure of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus [25]. The absence of independent archival branch control body limits capabilities of its development.

A traditional problem is the low level of financing of archival establishments. The fact that in 2010 the national archival establishments received only 5.3 % of the finances originally requested for repair of buildings and purchase of the equipment, is quite indicative. The planned financing of the state archives of some regions of the country has not exceeded 80-85 % either. State program *Archives of Belarus* is supposed to eliminate to a certain extent the drawbacks of current financing of archival establishments within the next five years.

In the conditions of a limited budgetary financing the establishments of the State Archival Service have to independently look for the money resources. Among such sources one can note paid works and services on scientific and technical processing of archival documents, depository storage of archival documents etc. rendered to various organizations on a contractual basis. As a result of extra-budgetary (commercial) activity the amount of revenues earned by archival establishments in 2010 made 28.2 % of the budgetary financing (for comparison: 19.5 % in 2008, 29.4 % in 2009). We shall note that Belarusian archives are almost the only archives in Europe having the right not only to earn money, but also to use it independently in compliance with the financial legislation and book keeping and accounting legislation.

The strategy of further development of the state archives in regard to their acquisition of electronic documents remains uncertain. Today only BelNICED accepts electronic documents for the state storage. At the same time from the point of view of prospects of development of modern technologies and acquisition of archives all the state archives should be ready to accept the electronic documentation for storage. Otherwise all state archives working today can turn to historical archives (i.e. they will cease to accept new documents), and only one archive, archive of electronic documents, a division of BelNICED, will accept new documents. We believe that such situation, devoid of any logic, can only be justified at the initial stage while defining the status of electronic documents, testing and mastering of the technique of their archival storage. Moreover, splitting of archival fonds into two parts ("electronic" and "paper"), their storage in different archives contradicts to one of key principles of archival work, the indivisibility of archival fonds [26; 27].

At present the technologies and methods of archival storage of electronic documents undergo certain approbation. In this regard it already became obvious that besides scientific and methodological issues a lot of problems of provision of state archives with necessary resources have to be solved, including:

Provision of archives with the expensive equipment;

Manning of archives with qualified technical personnel for servicing of computers, including adjustment and maintaining of the software (system administrators);

Training of archivists, traditionally got used to work with paper documents, in the principles and methods of work with electronic documents.

The necessity of the solution of the above issues is inevitable. Moreover, a number of state archives are compelled to solve such problems on a routine basis, because the organizations as sources of acquisition of such archives extensively pass over from "paper" to modern information technologies of document creation. First of all the activity of the state archives accepting scientific and technical, filming, photo and phonographic documentation should be noted. Today such documents are quite often created and stored exclusively in electronic form. As an example it is possible to mention digital audio and video documents of various mass media, compiled in great volumes, three-dimensional electronic design documentation, geoinformational systems, etc.

One of topical problems is considerable limitation of the areas for storage of the archival documents coming from organizations - sources of acquisition of the state archives. In this connection the state archives are compelled to conclude with the large ministries and departments the agreements on prolongation of storage periods of the documents in their archives, subject to transfer for permanent storage in the state archives according to the law. Thus, the documents of such bodies as the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Committee of State Security, National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and some others, though constituting the major part of the National Archival Fond, however are not handed over, with rare exception, for storage to the state archives and, as a matter of fact, are outside of their supervision and control.

The low social status of archival workers is a matter of special concern. Despite of regular and uninterrupted budgetary financing of work of archivists, the level of their salaries remains one of the lowest among budget-financed employees, which does not promote the attraction of new and also preservation of the existing qualified personnel.

The low social status of archival workers in many respects is the reason of high turnover of staff. It makes 11 % on the average in the recent years. Archivists quite often transfer to the archives of the commercial organizations attracted by higher wages and more comfortable working conditions, and in some cases change the field of activity at all.

More extensive popularization of work of the archives, wider information of the public on the problems to be solved by archives is considered as one of the ways of solution of the above problems. It is not by chance that after visiting archives and familiarisation with the fonds stored there, with archival exhibitions many high-ranking officials in charge of decision-making on financing archives and increase of wages of its workers, note that it is perfectly unexpected for them what diversity of activity the archives are engaged in today and that their work is connected not only with storage of "warehouses of papers", that archives are complex organisms, the components of which not only cooperate with each other, but also with an external world (state bodies, commercial organizations and physical persons).

5. CONCLUSION

The role and value of archives undoubtedly have essentially increased in the Belarusian society in the recent years. Considerable success has been reached in the development of archives, improvement of their material base, increase of the status of archives and the profession of archivist.

At the same time constantly changing conditions of existence of archives in an external world make the archives face new problems, put forward additional requirements to the profession of archivist. A modern archivist should not only able to perform traditional archival work, to have a good command of history, to be skilled in the work with paper documents, etc. He should also have knowledge and skills in such areas as operative management of documents, up-to-date information technologies, informatisation and protection of information, administrative decision-making, civil and labour legislation, protection of copyrights and other intellectual property, etc.

The success in the solution of the above problems is connected with various factors, but the key

one is the aspiration to solve them. Practice shows that when the professional archival problems are being solved interestedly, informally, the success will inevitably come. And though the archives change together with the society in and for which they exist, the work of the present-day archivist is still characterized by such features as commitment and devotion to his work.

Sources, literature (Belarusian/Russian – English)

1. Universal Declaration on Archives.
Electronic resource: <http://www.ica.org/download.php?id=985> (last visit on 17th April 2011).
2. IAN E. WILSON, *The State of Canadian Confederation: To Know Ourselves. The Extraordinary Symons Lecture*. Toronto, 2008.
Electronic resource: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/about-us/012-216-e.html> (last visit on 17th April 2011).
3. Сведения о местах хранения документов, необходимых для исполнения запросов социально-правового характера // Storage places of records required for social and legal queries.
Electronic resource: <http://archives.gov.by/index.php?id=866407> (last visit on 17th April 2011).
4. ANDREI RYBAKOU, *Formation of Archival Service in the Republic of Belarus*, "Atlanti", 19 (2009), pp. 193-201.
5. Закон Республики Беларусь от 6 октября 1994 года «О Национальном архивном фонде и архивах в Республике Беларусь» (в редакции Закона Республики Беларусь от 6 января 1999 года) (Ведамасці Вяроўнага Савета Рэспублікі Беларусь, 1994 г., № 29, ст. 507; Национальный реестр правовых актов Республики Беларусь, 1999 г., № 4, 2/11) // *Law in the Republic of Belarus dated October 6th, 1994 On the National Archival Fond and Archives in the Republic of Belarus* (version of the Law of the Republic of Belarus dated January 6th, 1999), "Vedamasti Verkhovnogo Soveta Respubliki Belarus", 1994, n.29, p. 507; "The National Register of Legal Acts of the Republic of Belarus", 1999, n.4, 2/11).
Electronic resource: <http://www.pravo.by/webnpa/text.asp?RN=V19403277> (last visit on 17th April 2011).
6. Правила работы государственных архивов Республики Беларусь (утверждены постановлением Комитета по архивам и делопроизводству при Совете Министров Республики Беларусь от 25 ноября 2005 г. № 7). Минск, 2006 // *Rules of Work of the State Archives of the Republic of Belarus* (approved by Decision № 7 of the Committee on Archives and Records Management at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus dated November 25th, 2005). Minsk 2006.
Electronic resource: [http://www.pravo.by/pdf/2006-22/2006-22\(022-083\).pdf](http://www.pravo.by/pdf/2006-22/2006-22(022-083).pdf) (last visit on 17th April 2011).
7. Основные правила работы архивов центральных и местных органов государственной власти и управления, учреждений, организаций и предприятий Республики Беларусь (утверждены решением коллегии Государственного комитета по архивам и делопроизводству Республики Беларусь от 30 апреля 1997 г. № 5). Минск, 1997 // *Basic Rules of Work of Archives of the Central and Local Bodies of the State Power and Control, Institutions, Organizations and at Enterprises of the Republic of Belarus* (approved by Decision № 5 of the Board of the State Committee on Archives and Records Management of the Republic of Belarus dated April 30th, 1997). Minsk 1997.
Electronic resource: <http://www.pravoby.info/docum09/part31/akt31456/index.htm> (last visit on 17th April 2011).
8. Правила работы с научно-технической документацией в учреждениях, организациях и на предприятиях Республики Беларусь (утверждены постановлением Комитета по архивам и делопроизводству при Совете Министров Республики Беларусь от 6 ноября 2003 г. № 38). Минск, 2004, 92 с. // *Rules of Work with Scientific and Technical Documentation in Institutions, Organizations and at Enterprises of the Republic of Belarus* (approved by Decision № 38 of the Committee on Archives and Records Management at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus dated November 6th, 2003). Minsk 2004.
Electronic resource: [http://www.pravo.by/pdf/2004-3/2004-3\(070-111\).pdf](http://www.pravo.by/pdf/2004-3/2004-3(070-111).pdf) (last visit on 17th April 2011).
9. Правила работы с научно-технической документацией в государственных архивах Республики Беларусь (утверждены постановлением Министерства юстиции Республики Беларусь от 14 марта 2007 г. № 14). Минск, 2007, 76 с. // *Rules of Work with Scientific and Technical Documentation in State Archives* (approved by Decision № 14 of the Committee on Archives and Records Management at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus dated March 14th, 2007). Minsk 2007.
Electronic resource: [http://www.pravo.by/pdf/2007-106/2007-106\(012-041\).pdf](http://www.pravo.by/pdf/2007-106/2007-106(012-041).pdf) (last visit on 17th April 2011).
10. Правила работы государственных архивов Республики Беларусь с аудиовизуальными документами

(утверждены постановлением Министерства юстиции Республики Беларусь от 09.04.2007 № 27) (Национальный реестр правовых актов Республики Беларусь, 2007 г., № 110, 8/16255) // *Rules of Work with Audio-visual Documentation in State Archives* (approved by Decision № 27 of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus dated April 9th, 2007), "The National Register of Legal Acts of the Republic of Belarus", 2007, n.110, 8/16255.

Electronic resource: [http://pravo.by/pdf/2007-110/2007-110\(046-136\).pdf](http://pravo.by/pdf/2007-110/2007-110(046-136).pdf) (last visit on 17th April 2011).

11. Закон Республики Беларусь «Об архивном деле в Республике Беларусь» (проект) // *Law on Archival Affairs in the Republic of Belarus* (draft).

Electronic resource: <http://www.pravo.by/kbdpz/text.asp?RN=2011002001> (last visit on 17th April 2011).

12. Инструкция по делопроизводству в государственных органах и организациях Республики Беларусь (утверждена постановлением Министерства юстиции Республики Беларусь от 19 января 2009 г. № 4). Минск, 2009 // *Records Management Guideline for Organizations of the Republic of Belarus* (approved by Decision № 4 of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus dated January 19th, 2009). Minsk 2009.

Electronic resource: [http://pravo.by/pdf/2009-42/2009-42\(028-079\).pdf](http://pravo.by/pdf/2009-42/2009-42(028-079).pdf) (last visit on 17th April 2011).

13. Кодекс Республики Беларусь об административных правонарушениях от 21 апреля 2003 г. (Национальный реестр правовых актов Республики Беларусь, 2003 г., № 63, 2/946) // *Code of Practice of the Republic of Belarus* dated April 21st, 2003, "The National Register of Legal Acts of the Republic of Belarus", 2003, n.63, 2/946).

Electronic resource: <http://pravo.by/webnpa/text.asp?RN=Hk0300194> (last visit on 17th April 2011).

14. Уголовный кодекс Республики Беларусь от 9 июля 1999 г. № 275-3 (Национальный реестр правовых актов Республики Беларусь, 1999 г., № 76, 2/50) // *Penal Code of the Republic of Belarus* dated July 9th, 1999, "The National Register of Legal Acts of the Republic of Belarus", 1999, n.76, 2/50).

Electronic resource: <http://pravo.by/webnpa/text.asp?RN=HK9900275> (last visit on 17th April 2011).

15. Постановление Совета Министров Республики Беларусь от 15 сентября 2010 г. № 1322 «О Государственной программе «Архивы Беларуси» на 2011-2015 годы» (Национальный реестр правовых актов Республики Беларусь, 2010 г., № 224, 5/32479) // *Resolution № 1322 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus dated September 15th, 2010 on State Archival Program for 2011-2015*, "The National Register of Legal Acts of the Republic of Belarus", 2010, n.76, 2/50).

Electronic resource: <http://pravo.by/webnpa/text.asp?RN=C21001322> (last visit on April 17th, 2011).

16. Декрет Президента Республики Беларусь от 16 января 2009 г. № 1 «О государственной регистрации и ликвидации (прекращении деятельности) субъектов хозяйствования» (Национальный реестр правовых актов Республики Беларусь, 2009, № 17, 1/10418) // *Decree № 1 of the President of the Republic of Belarus dated January 16th, 2009 on State Registration and Liquidation of Economic Entities*, "The National Register of Legal Acts of the Republic of Belarus", 2009, n.17, 1/10418.

Electronic resource: <http://pravo.by/webnpa/text.asp?RN=Pd0900001> (last visit on 17th April 2011).

17. Тематические разработки архивных документов // *Thematic Usage of Archival Records*.

Electronic resource: <http://archives.gov.by/index.php?id=11> (last visit on 17th April 2011).

18. Всемирное фото. Князь Волконский, Агния Барто, Бела Барток и другие // *World photo. Prince Volkonsky, Agnia Barto, Bela Bartok and others*.

Electronic resource: <http://news.tut.by/culture/215290.html> (last visit on 17th April 2011).

19. CHARLES КЕССКЕМЕТ, IVAN SZEKELY, *Access to Archives*. Strasbourg, 2005.

20. Recommendation No. R (2000) 13 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on a European Policy on Access to Archives.

Electronic resource: <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=366245> (last visit on 17th April 2011).

21. КОРЕШКОВ В.Н. Качество как фактор конкурентоспособности национальной экономики (Проблемы управления, 2010, № 3, С. 21–32) // V. КОРЕШКОВ, *Quality as a factor of the national economy competitiveness*, "Problemy Upravleniya", 2010, n.3, pp. 21-32.

Electronic resource: <http://pu.by/iss/n36/Koreshkov36.pdf> (last visit on 17th April 2011).

22. Качество – пропуск в будущее. (Белорусское время, 10.01.2008) // *Quality is a pass to the future*, "Belarusian Time", January 10th, 2008.

Electronic resource: <http://www.belarustime.ru/belarus/economy/courier/d5496b9e608b4054.html> (last visit on April 17th, 2011).

23. Указ Президента Республики Беларусь от 26 марта 1998 г. № 157 «О государственных праздниках, праздничных днях и памятных датах в Республике Беларусь» (Советская Белоруссия, 27 марта 1998 г., № 82) // *Edict № 157 of the President of the Republic of Belarus dated March 26th, 1998 on state holidays and*

memorable dates in the Republic of Belarus, "Sovetskaya Belorussiya", 1998, n.82.

Electronic resource: <http://pravo.by/webnpa/text.asp?RN=P39800157> (last visit on 17th April 2011).

24. International Archives Day.

Electronic resource: <http://www.ica.org/1561/international-archives-day/celebrate-the-international-archives-day.html> (last visit on 17th April, 2011).

25. Указ Президента Республики Беларусь от 5 мая 2006 г. № 289 «О структуре Правительства Республики Беларусь» (Национальный реестр правовых актов Республики Беларусь, 2006 г., № 74, 1/7567) // *Edict № 289 of the President of the Republic of Belarus dated May 5th, 2006 On the Structure of the Government of the Republic of Belarus*, "The National Register of Legal Acts of the Republic of Belarus", 2010, n.76, 2/50.

Electronic resource: <http://pravo.by/webnpa/text.asp?RN=P30600289> (last visit on 17th April 2011).

26. ФЕДОСОВ, В.В. *Принципы, методы, терминологический аппарат архивоведения.* (Беларускі археаграфічны штогоднік. 2008. С. 179–185) // U.V. FIADOSAU, *Principles, methods, terminology of archives studies*, "The Belarusian Archeographical Year-Book", 10 (2009), pp. 179-185.

Electronic resource: http://belniidad.by/sites/default/files/bash/bash10_2009.pdf (last visit on 17th April, 2011).

27. АНДРЕЙ СУКАЧ, «Гибридные» дела: проблемы формирования и ведения в делопроизводстве, а также передачи на архивное хранение, Мінулае і сучаснасць: архівы ў сістэме гуманітарных ведаў. Мінск: БелНДІДАС, 2010. С. 382–383 // ANDREI SUKACH, *Problems of using hybrid files in daily activities and transferring them to archives*, "Past and Present: Archives in the system of humanitarian knowledge", Minsk 2010, pp. 81-386.

Electronic resource: <http://belniidad.by/sites/default/files/sukach-belniidad-conference-2009.pdf> (last visit on 17th April 2011).

SUMMARY

The present-day status of Belarusian archives in the society is rather contradictory. On the one hand, archives managed to achieve great success in constructing the archival facilities for preservation of archival documents, creating the legislative basis for their work. The State Programme *Archives of Belarus* adopted by the Belarusian Government in 2010, will contribute to the development of archives with the additional financial support. Belarusian archives became more open and proclaimed free access to the archival fonds and documents preserved in their holdings. They organize exhibitions, including virtual ones, actively publish archival documents, cooperate while doing their work with domestic and foreign scientific-and-research institutions, libraries, museums and other establishments. The Belarusian archives play very important social role in the modern Belarusian society. No doubt, the status of archives in Belarusian society and the prestige of archival profession have highly increased during the last 20 years. As a result, in 1998 the professional archival holiday was established in Belarus by the special legislative act. On the other hand, some problems still exist in archival sphere. The principal one is liquidation of independence of the archival regulatory body in the country in 2006 and its integration into the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus. Other problems are traditional: lack of state financial support, rather low level of salary in the archives, necessity to set up and maintain the modern equipment, etc. Nevertheless, the solution of the archival problems in greater part depends on the desire and willingness to solve them. Though the archives changes with the society in and for which they do exist, the profession of archivist can still be described with such special features as devotion to archives, devotion to archival work.

Original scientific article

Submitting date: 08.07.2011

Acceptande date: 14.07.2011