

Public Admission of Archival Studies in Slovenia: from Utopia to Reality

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ABSTRACT

In the last decades it became more and more clear that adopting numerous legal regulations related to archives and documents without establishing archival science as an autonomous scientific discipline is not an adequate response to demands of the future and progress in the information society era. One of the most important facts is the lack of education on which archival science can be based and which can provide the in-depth knowledge for both practical work and research. In this paper we shall present the importance of archival science theory, methodology and practice with a special emphasis on study programme which includes integrated, interdisciplinary and intercultural approach.

Pubblico ingresso degli studi archivistici in Slovenia: dall'utopia alla realtà

SINTESI

Negli ultimi decenni è diventato sempre più chiaro che l'adozione di numerose normative relative agli archivi ed ai documenti senza l'istituzione di una scienza archivistica come autonoma disciplina scientifica non è una risposta adeguata alle esigenze del futuro e del progresso nell'era della società dell'informazione. Uno dei fatti più importanti è la mancanza di educazione su cui la scienza archivistica può essere basata, e che può fornire la conoscenza approfondita sia per il lavoro pratico che di ricerca. In questo articolo verrà presentata l'importanza della teoria, della metodologia e della pratica della scienza archivistica con un particolare accento al programma di studio, che comprende un approccio integrato, interdisciplinare e interculturale.

Akreditacija študija arhivistike v Sloveniji: od utopije do realnosti

IZVLEČEK

V zadnjih desetletjih je vedno bolj postajalo jasno, da sprejemanje številnih zakonov in predpisov s področja arhivov in dokumentov, brez da bi arhivsko znanost hkrati opredelili kot samostojno znanstveno disciplino, ni pravi odgovor na zahteve, ki jih prinaša obdobje informacijske družbe. Eden večjih problemov je vsekakor manjko izobraževanja na katerem bi lahko arhivska znanost bazirala in ki bi hkrati ponujalo poglobljena znanja tako za praktično delo kot tudi za raziskave. V članku predstavljamo pomen arhivske znanstvene teorije, metodologije in prakse, s posebnim poudarkom na integriranem, interdisciplinarnem in multikulturnem študijskem programu arhivistike in dokumentologije.

INTRODUCTION

Different interpretation of terms closely related to archival science is the cause of significant confusion both in the practical work and in research and research methods (professional and scientific).

Archivology (Slovenian: "arhivologija") is an internationally established term that is defined as the study of managing and categorizing archival material. The English synonym for this term is "archival science". In Slovenian, the commonly used term is "arhivistika" (archivistics), defined by the Dictionary of Slovenian standard language as «the theory and study of professional work in archives». In the opinion of Semlič Rajh and Novak, there is a tendency to establish the term archivology ("arhivo-

logija”) as the study of different theoretical models of managing, storing and using archival material. Besides that it would be also necessary to develop the equivalent study of “arhivistika” (archivistics) as the actual practical knowledge in managing archival material and setting up necessary contexts (see Semlič Rajh, Novak, 2011).

A similar relationship that exists between the terms “arhivologija” (archivology) and “arhivistika” (archivistics) can also be seen between the terms “dokumentologija” (documentology) and “dokumentalistika” (documentalistics), where “dokumentologija” (documentology) is defined as the study of managing documentary material and “dokumentalistika” (documentalistics) is defined as the study of actual practical knowledge in managing documentary material (in English, “records management”). In Slovenian archival theory and practice there is still no precise distinction between the terms. The question whether “arhivistika” (archivistics) and “dokumentalistika” (documentalistics) as well as “arhivologija” (archivology) and “dokumentologija” (documentology) are two separate sciences or two disciplines of a single science remains open. Unfortunately, the issues of “arhivistika” (archivistics) as a science also remains open (see Semlič Rajh, Novak, 2011).

In order to simplify the explanation of contents in the present paper we shall use a single and, in a way, unified term “archivistics and documentology”, which refers to the management of acquired knowledge that is necessary to work with documentation from its creation, through its use, evaluation and protection, to its long-term storage. This knowledge is important in view of the existence of different systems and processes in handling documentation and it represents the basis for undisturbed dealing with documentation.

Archivistics and documentology are closely connected to the use of different technologies related to the creation of documents, their long-term storage and use. In recent years many processes are supported by complex information technology, or the information technology itself represents the environment in which archival and documentary content is created, stored and used. Processes for handling documentation therefore constantly require new knowledge and professional decisions that must remain valid for a longer period in documentation handling.

The findings of archivistics and documentology that are transformed into actions have the following main advantages:

- Long-term applicability of principles,
- Scientifically formulated principles have multi-purpose results such as:
 - transparency, availability, usability, operability, universality. These results are seen both in research and in practical use.
- Based on theoretical models, they enable the acquisition of complementary knowledge in historiography, philology, informatics and similar,
- Numerous measures to prevent abuse and falsifications are based on models and proven solutions from complementary situations in the field of protecting movable cultural heritage,
- They create favorable conditions for storing different types and forms of archival and documentary material including their context.

The main importance of archivistics and documentology lies in the fact that, by using different models and methods, it establishes order in processes of handling documentation and that by further developing the existing procedures, it restores the value of documentation that can be used both for archives’ own development and optimizing the operation of individual creators of archival material as well as for developing other legal entities and natural persons and activities that are directly related to the creators of public and private archival and documentary material. We should not overlook the fact that, by using different archivistics and documentology models, we protect and preserve important documents and information of archival value that enable us to develop and guarantee the stability of business and other entities. Stability of a wider social community is a logical consequence.

LEGAL AND EDUCATION CONDITIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARCHIVISTICS IN SLOVENIA

Slovenia has an extraordinary advantage in Europe when it comes to documentation handling procedures. Due to its specific industrial development in the past and the existence of an extensive and well preserved documentation, Slovenia needs appropriate procedures for handling documentation both in professional archival institutions and in individual companies or different local or state institutions (creators). In spite of the fact that Slovenia is strongly influenced by globalization, each country has the duty of protecting and preserving documents that represent its collective memory.

Legislation is the first step that Slovenia has taken in order to fulfill that duty.

Slovenia has gathered many laws on archives (under different names), from the first Slovenian Law on Archive Material and Archives, 1966 (Official Gazette, 4 -24/1966) and to this day (Žontar, 2007). The Natural and Cultural Heritage Act, passed in 1981 (Official Gazette, 1/1981), considered the archives exclusively as a cultural monument (Matič, 2010). The Act on the Organization and Working Tasks of the Republic Administration, passed on June 12, 1991, changed the status of the Archive of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, which became a body under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and was renamed. It took the name which it still has today: the Archive of the Republic of Slovenia (Žontar, 2007).

Due to the changes in society, the status of regional (historical) archives, which became independent public institutions, was also changed on the basis of the Institutions Act and the Enforcing Public Interest in the Field of Culture Act, passed in 1991 and 1994 (Semlič Rajh, 2010).

Indeed, it was a fact that the situation in Slovenian archival theory and practice was not satisfactory, particularly as a result of significant changes in organization and operation of social, cultural, educational and other institutions and organizations, particularly in the business sector, which were later privatized and which were recognized as large creators of records and archives (Klasinc, 1991). The necessity to prepare a new independent law governing archives led to the adoption of the new Archives and Archival Institutions Act in the year 1997 (Official Gazette, no. 20 /1997, 32/1997).

The new Protection of Documents and Archives and Archival Institutions Act, passed in 2006 (Official Gazette, no. 30/2006), brought an even greater change to the definition of archives and records service tasks. From the title of the Act one can see the ambition to regulate, in addition, also the field of records creation and management, which is an impressive task. Already the first article shows the magnitude of the tasks given to the archival profession: "The present Act governs the method, organization, infrastructure and implementation of capture and storage of documents in physical and electronic form, effectiveness and evidentiary value of such materials, protection of archives and conditions for use of archives, tasks of archival institutions and the public archival service as well as the related services, and supervision over the implementation." (Semlič Rajh, 2010). The proposal for the amendment of the Act of 2006 failed in the year 2011.

However, just by adopting legislation, declarations and regulations (which requires not only the increase of the number of employees but also modern, trained staff for modern and progressive tasks performed by the archives) without actually changing the understanding and knowledge of processes related to archives by taking into consideration the information society we live in, even the best legislation will unfortunately remain merely an instrument of repression and not a way to establish archival science as an autonomous scientific discipline.

In Slovenia we have several thousand creators of both public and private archival material that have their own archival services and departments employing around 2000 people who work on preserving documentary and archival material. We have also found that business technology companies that are currently working on the digitalization of documentary and archival material have a great need for adequately trained and responsible professional staff in accordance with the relevant Protection of Documents and Archives and Archival Institutions Act. Long-term storage of documentary and archival material is not only a professional and technical task, but also a socially responsible job that helps preserve cultural heritage and archival material as a cultural monument and the collective memory of a nation. Therefore it is necessary to provide companies (business entities) with a trained and responsible staff for archival and documentary tasks.

The system of public archival service also faces the issue of lack of adequately trained staff. Most of current employees received their education from faculties that do not provide specific knowledge in the field of archivistics and documentology. For that reason upgrading education is very important, since the current employees could gain adequate knowledge and methodology for analytical processing of material, including management skills for conducting development and research projects and programmes given the fact that their current education does not guarantee them adequate knowledge and skills.

The facts mentioned above were also presented at the congress of archivists that took place in Radenci in 2011. In the conclusions of the congress professional archivists and documentalists expressed their commitment to harmonization of professional standards and operating procedures for handling documentation and above all the need for education and formalization of professional knowledge (Klasinc, 2011).

A NEW STUDY PROGRAMME

When it comes to the Archival Science education has been and clearly still is the essential point. The awareness of the fact that qualifications for working with archives and documents are important and that they require an adequate response is a must. The random, unplanned and impulsive decision-making about educational goals has to be replaced by one strategic goal that is to raise the awareness and provide the education on the basis of which the Archival Science can be based.

New age times show the need for a new study programme that would closely interconnect the function of records and the way they are created, preserved and retrieved, the context in which information is generated, managed and used, and the social and cultural environment of records creation at different times and places.

The Alma mater Europaea the European Centre Maribor (ECM) established as an educational institution for the purpose of developing and executing the complementary and the in-deficit programmes, the towards Europe oriented applicable programmes as they are needed in the economic and the non-economic sector of Slovenia and of the Central Europe (and wider) has detected the needs and numerous dilemmas on the fields of Archivistics and Documentology. Also, the ECM was well aware of the fact that saving, a sustainable approach and responsible attitude towards different forms of documents especially in organizing them, the long-term preservation and use bring great and wider social benefits.

A group of experts on the fields of archivistics and documentology as well as from the higher education has within the ECM framework set a project to design a new master's study programme "Archivistics and documentology". The importance of archival science theory, methodology and practice was the building stone in creating a study programme that also includes integrated, interdisciplinary and intercultural approaches.

With this study programme we have mainly set the following fundamental goals:

Goal 1: To attract the highly qualified and motivated candidates from a variety of environments as well as with a wide range of different backgrounds. In the name of reaching the set goal the ECM is going to: follow the principles of equal rights; cooperate with the corresponding institutions and establish an efficient communication with the potential students including those outside of the Slovenian borders; cooperate with the suitable local and other employers.

Goal 2: Educating such students for the scientific and professional purposes on the field of documentation managing that they will be equipped with knowledge and skills in order to initiate the advanced practices with which they will significantly contribute to the development of the theoretical as well as the methodological cognition within the field.

Goal 3: To secure the permanent education for archivists and documentalists as well as for those outside the branch who are in need of such knowledge and skills.

Goal 4: To contribute to the development of complete expert activities on the field of the document managing through research and through publishing the research results.

Goal 5: Encouraging the interdisciplinary connections with the auxiliary and other related sciences and fields.

Goal 6: To establish and preserve the relationship of mutual support among the academic and professional communities on local, national as well as on the international level.

Goal 7: To enable innovative and permanent education and programmes for the professional development in archive and documentation centres as well as in the related institutions in Slovenia and abroad.

Hereinafter we summarize some key points of specially protected by copy write; Elaborate for establishing a masters study programme: «Archivistics and documentology».

The post graduate study programme of the second Bologna level Archivistics and documentology is a two year, four semester programme and it covers 120ECTS. It represents an independent study segment that is extended by a third Bologna level, a PhD study programme: Archivistics and documentology, a 180ECTS programme.

It includes a curriculum that ensures the fundamental contents that are then upgraded by the research work on the doctor study programme of the third level. Single subjects are grouped in thematic areas that are horizontally and vertically interconnected.

The obligatory subjects are spread through the four semesters within the two years of the graduate programme summing the 79 ECTS. They are complimented by the elective subjects with 14 ECTS (there are 11 different elective subjects to choose from) that ensure an individual selection by the students and are a part of the third semester. The third semester is also complemented by a 7 ECTS project work. In the last, the fourth semester a master's thesis worth 20 ECTS is a requirement. Together it adds to 120ECTS. The students then conclude their study by passing the eight obligatory subjects, two elective subjects, a project work and the Master's Thesis.

The programme of the Archivistics and documentology study is drafted in such a way, that it takes into the consideration a variety of profiles necessary for the expert, faultless managing of the documents throughout the entire life cycle. This means that the students due to their different interests and needs of their work with different types of documents can choose between those contents most suitable for their specific needs. On the basis of the theoretical findings from the first year, the students then in the second year through the practical, research direction up-grade their previous, theoretical knowledge. The history of the archival activities is about learning the specific expert solutions from the past based on different cultural, historical, political and other contexts. Safeguard of the archival material, on the other hand represents the interdisciplinary study contents with emphasis on the fields of Chemistry, Physics and Biology that are essential for a long-term material preserving no matter on the form of it and the students are getting acquainted with it only after they have successfully mastered the fundamental knowledge of the field. With a relative wide range of elective contents available to the students within the frame of the elective subjects and the project work they can successfully upgrade their specific knowledge and skills according to their expert professional interests.

In accordance with the determination of the goals of the study programme, the students will develop the following competencies:

- the basic expert skills for identification, search, acquisition, description, organizing, storing, preservation and securing the access to saved data structures and information on and from archival and documentary materials no matter on their physical form or technological mechanisms necessary for execution of these skills,
- the ability to understand operating of an institution or a service with emphasis on understanding the role and the meaning of the archival and documental function with the abilities for analysis, synthesis and solution foreseeing,
- defining the needs of the present and the potential groups of future users and development of services for satisfying those demands,
- the necessary skills for system evaluation and services so that they can be cost-effective and responsive to the needs
- expertise in the principles of the information technologies necessary for the planning, execu-

- ting, evaluating and managing, also for teaching and overseeing others, in using the already existing as well as computer supported information systems for managing the archival materials still in the nascent stage,
- the expertise and understanding of the processes on the field of the archival and documentational functions for efficient team work,
 - the expertise and skills for managing the research methods and procedures,
 - qualification for cooperation in research and presentation of results of the research in scientific and expert publications as well as at the meetings of expert and scientific associations,
 - an appreciation of values of the principle of intellectual freedom and the right to free access to information, at the same time as acknowledging the right to privacy of an individual that originates from the preserved archival and documentational materials and a confidentiality of the service,
 - an autonomy, a critical approach, striving for a high level of quality with taking responsibility for one's own work,
 - managing different manners of communication in global and multi-cultural environments,
 - the ability to reflect critically and the ability to develop social and communicational competences,
 - cooperating in activities of organizations striving towards improving the quality of professional services in archives, documentation centres as well as with the information work and work towards improving the position of these occupations in society,
 - expertise in and understanding of history and development of archivistics and documentalistics in relation to other sciences important for executing functions and operating archives and documentation centres,
 - the ability of planning and managing an efficient records and documentational service in most cases in the frames of an institution or inter-institutional organization and being accountable to an organization or an institution,
 - expertise and understanding of the institution development and the internal structures of the creators,
 - the ability of understanding archivistics and documentology and their influence on operating contemporary organizations dealing with a long-term preservation and archiving documentation,
 - becoming acquainted with the traditional forms of origin and handling documents,
 - the ability to analyse documents and familiarising with the procedures of operating with documents,
 - understanding that a document is an information carrier and its influence on creating information,
 - qualifying for work with different groups of users ,
 - the ability to analyze and specific, expert problem solving on the field of archivistics and documentalistics in institutions and companies by a creative use of research methods and procedures,
 - an interdisciplinary use of the fundamental knowledge from the field of Archivistics and Documentology as well as of other, related sciences important for the execution of functions and managing an institution or an undertaking that deals with a long-term storage of archiving documentation, in planning and organizing business and expert functions on international as well as on the national level,
 - the ability to place new information and interpretations into the context of development of expert functions,
 - the expertise and the ability of planning and the use of the informational-communicational technology and systems as support and data sources and information,
 - expertise for all expert functions for acquisition, preservation and expert handling of the material and information regardless of their physical form or medium on which they are written,
 - expertise for a long-term maintenance, managing, transforming and migration of the machine-recorded data and documents,
 - expertise in possibilities and in solving the interdisciplinary approach when it comes to answering questions about the documentation and its metadata.

We anticipate most of the students of the study programme to be from Slovenia. Therefore, the emphasis of the programme lies mostly on getting acquainted with the valid Slovene regional and other legislations. Also, the study contents are related to the understanding of the contents and contexts of the archival materials focusing mostly on the Slovene national-historical and cultural area. The acquisition of the corresponding expert knowledge is but impossible also in the absence of expertise in social and Government contexts since they are both reflected in the archival material that is preserved by the Slovene Public Records and upon which the later research and academic work of the students is to be based.

According to the carefully prepared contents that assure acquisition of the above described extensive spectrum of general and specific competencies we are convinced that we have created a study programme, with which a fundament of formal education of archivistics and documentology has been set. The study programme will be executed in the direction of educating students for scientific and expert purposes on the field of managing documentation and archival materials, who will be able to use their knowledge and skills for implementing the contemporary practices with which they will significantly contribute to the development of the theoretic and methodological cognition of the field. This will enable an easier, more transparent and equal development of the archival sciences also in the Republic of Slovenia.

CONCLUSION

The Masters study programme Archivistics and documentology originates from under the wing of and within the Alma mater Europaea – The European Centre Maribor and is a fruit of an extensive research and works of noted experts from the fields of archivistics, documentology, history, informatics, law and higher education. It is an interdisciplinary connection of knowledge and competencies, which leads to the fact that after graduating the students will represent a body of extremely interesting trained specialists for employers since they will with the acquired professional attitude towards the work ethics, intellectual freedom, access to information and protection of privacy resulting from data preserved in the materials be capable of proper attending the preservation of documentation as well as the national cultural heritage. By mediating the knowledge, the development of new skills within the frame work of international and multicultural, expert and research projects the wider, international frame of the study is to be achieved.

Together with adopting the corresponding, expert supported legislation success should not be absent. It would mean a winning triad EDUCATION – LEGISLATION – PROFESSION, which could take the development of archival sciences in Slovenia into a new, modern and to all associates an approachable, friendly and useful period. On the other hand, it would solve the open question of Archivistics that could finally, justifyingly and with all the honour be named a science.

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SUMMARY

We are witnessing adoption of numerous international and national legal regulations with reference to archives and documents. However, just by adopting legislation, declarations and regulations without actually changing the understanding and knowledge of processes related to archives by taking into consideration the information society we live in, even the best legislation will unfortunately remain merely an instrument of repression and not a way to establish archival science as an autonomous scientific discipline. Education is clearly a crucial point when it comes to archival science. We must be aware of the fact that qualifications for working with archives and documents are important and that they require an adequate response. Random, unplanned and impulsive decision-making about educational goals must be replaced by a strategic goal: to raise awareness and provide education on which archival science can be based. Modern times require a new study programme that would closely interconnect the function of records and the way they are created, preserved and retrieved, the context in which information is generated, managed and used, and the social and cultural environment of records creation at different times and places. The importance of archival science theory, methodology and practice was the building stone for the creation of a master's programme for archival sciences which also includes integrated, interdisciplinary and intercultural approach. After many years of "paper-rules-regulations-battles", it is finally ready to be presented in public and to educate its first students in the field of archival sciences.

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