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## INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES - A TOPIC FOR ARCHIVAL EDUCATION?

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** While the existence of international organisations as an expression of the multilateral 20<sup>th</sup> century has been widely researched, and included in curricula of political science, international relations and diplomacy, the international archives produced by and kept in the custody of these organizations, have not received similar attention in scholarly research or archival education.

**Method/approach:** This article is based on the analysis of archival legislation, standards and rules, and scholarly literature on international archives, and formulates key aspects worth integration into curricula of archival faculties and schools.

**Results:** International archives provide knowledge of intergovernmental cooperation and integration in the wider field of politics, science, culture and education. They also demonstrate the development of international cooperation and mobility of archivists and specificities of a multi-cultural and multi-lingual work environment.

**Conclusions/findings:** Based on the analysis, the article suggests the integration of international organisations and their archives into the curricula of archival faculties and schools as part of archival education and training.

**Keywords:** archival science, international archives, international organisations, archival education and training

## ARCHIVI TRANSNAZIONALI – UNA LEZIONE PRESSO LA SCUOLA ARCHIVISTICA DELL'ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI FIRENZE

### SINTESI

**Scopo:** Mentre l'esistenza di organizzazioni internazionali come espressione del XX secolo multilaterale è diventata un elemento centrale dei programmi di studio in scienze politiche, relazioni internazionali e diplomazia, gli archivi transnazionali prodotti da e sotto la custodia di queste organizzazioni non hanno avuto un'attenzione simile nell'istruzione e nella formazione archivistica.

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**Metodo/approccio:** Questo articolo si basa su lezioni tenuto presso il corso di archivistica biennale dell'Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Italia, dal 2015.R

**Risultati:** gli archivi transnazionali forniscono la conoscenza della cooperazione inter-governativa e dell'integrazione in un ampio campo della politica, della scienza, della cultura e dell'istruzione. Essi mostrano inoltre lo sviluppo della cooperazione internazionale e della mobilità degli archivisti e le specificità di un ambiente di lavoro multi-culturale e multilingue.

**Conclusioni/risultati:** Sulla base dell'esperienza didattica dell'autore, l'articolo suggerisce la considerazione delle organizzazioni internazionali e dei loro archivi come parte dei programmi per l'istruzione e la formazione archivistica.

**Parole chiave:** archivistica, archivi transnazionali, organizzazioni internazionali, formazione e formazione archivistica

## MEDNARODNI ARHIVI - TEMA ZA ARHIVSKO IZOBRAŽEVANJE?

### POVZETEK

**Namen:** Medtem ko je bil obstoj mednarodnih organizacij kot izraz večstranskega 20. stoletja široko raziskan in vključen v učne načrte politologije, mednarodnih odnosov in diplomacije, pa mednarodni arhivi, ki so jih te organizacije pripravile in hranijo v hrambi, niso bili deležni podobne pozornosti pri znanstvenih raziskavah ali arhivskem izobraževanju.

**Metoda/pristop:** Članek temelji na analizi arhivske zakonodaje, standardov in pravil ter znanstveni literaturi o mednarodnih arhivih in oblikuje ključne vidike, ki jih je vredno vključiti v učne načrte arhivskih fakultet in šol.

**Rezultati:** Mednarodni arhivi zagotavljajo znanje o medvladnem sodelovanju in povezovanju na širšem področju politike, znanosti, kulture in izobraževanja. Prikazujejo tudi razvoj mednarodnega sodelovanja in mobilnosti arhivistov ter posebnosti večkulturnega in večjezičnega delovnega okolja.

**Sklepi/ugotovitve:** Na podlagi analize članek predlaga vključitev mednarodnih organizacij in njihovih arhivov v učne načrte arhivskih fakultet in šol kot del arhivskega izobraževanja in usposabljanja.

**Ključne besede:** arhivistika, mednarodni arhivi, mednarodne organizacije, arhivsko izobraževanje in usposabljanje

## 1 INTRODUCTION

International organisations can be considered the institutionalised result of the multi-lateral and globalised 20<sup>th</sup> century, and their study has entered university curricula in political sciences, international relations, and diplomacy studies. Instead, the archives produced and kept by these organisations have not received similar attention in the scholarly field of archival science.

This article analyses specificities of records and archives management in international organizations and suggests considering this archival segment with its history, methods, and current challenges, as part of curricula of archival faculties and schools. Furthermore, it sheds light on the role of archives as source for understanding transnational governance, multilateral politics and diplomacy and looks at the role of international archivists in archival cooperation, knowledge exchange and the development and application worldwide of common methods, standards and principles.

Moreover, it provides information on the mission, services and responsibilities of international archives, in particular access provisions to these archives, identifies the international target audience and scholarly community consulting these archives, and offers insight in communication and outreach strategies for these audiences.

## 2 THE EMERGENCE OF INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES

Intergovernmental organisations have been established upon formal agreements between state governments, while members of nongovernmental international organizations are associations or individuals. Intergovernmental organisations (IGO) range in size from three member states to more than 190. While some IGOs have been established to achieve a single goal, such as the World Intellectual Property Organisation, other organisations have multiple tasks, such as the United Nations. Their organisational structures can be simple or highly complex, depending on their size, tasks and geographical presence (Clavin, 2005).

The Union of International Associations (UIA) counts, among its members, 73,000 international organisations from 300 countries and territories, of which 41,000 are active organizations. 1,200 new organisations are added every year. These international intergovernmental (IGO) and non-governmental organisations (INGO) have a global or a regional geographical scope (UIA, 2020).

In their contemporary form, international organisations appear with the Congress of Vienna. The *Commission Centrale pour la Navigation du Rhin (CCNR)*, established in 1815, is considered the first of this kind. A major step in the creation of international organisations was made in a series of conferences of European and non-European states in 1899 and 1907 in The Hague. These conferences developed rules regulating armaments and the conduct of war and are considered predecessors to the League of Nations, established after World War I, and the United Nations, established in 1945.

Since World War II, international organisations have spread rapidly in response to multi-faceted dynamics and the requirements of globalised societies. They range from political to economic, scientific to ecological, philanthropic to cultural, thus integrating all fields of human interaction (Knudsen & Gram-Skjoldager, 2014, Conway & Patel, 2010).

Established in 1945, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) took up responsibility to cater for and coordinate the global archival community and became the global reference point for the professionalisation and international cooperation of archivists. With the establishment of the International Council on Archives (ICA) by UNESCO in 1948, the ICA became the global hub for the archival community. As further landmarks in international archival cooperation, UNESCO, in the 1990s,

introduced the "Memory of the World" cultural heritage programme for documentary heritage. Then, in 2011, the ICA jointly with UNESCO proclaimed the 'Universal Declaration on Archives,' the first universal statement recognising the unique global value of archives for humankind (UNESCO, 2011).

### 3 THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES

Based on treaties, conventions, or other internationally recognised contracts signed by national governments, international organisations hold specific privileges and immunities that generally include the archives of these organisations, their inviolability, access protection and exemption from territorial law (Hofman, 2020). These archives manage and preserve the written documents recording the actions and decisions of international organisations and their governing bodies. They provide knowledge on intergovernmental cooperation and integration in the broad field of international politics, science, culture and education, and have, to a certain extent, influenced the methods and processes of archival work in a globalized world.

Regarding technical, and methodological aspects of archival management, it is noteworthy that these archives are marked by the absence of a specific 'national' archival 'school' or 'practice'. Archivists in international organisations have been confronted with diverse archival cultures and methods and had to find their own way in applying archival rules and principles to their work. This has led to a high consideration and relevance of international standards and their application in International Organisation's archives services (Duranti, 2007). International archives also require linguistic skills for their archivists, usually fluency in either English or French and a good knowledge of the other, a sense of multi-cultural understanding, and a certain degree of autonomy in terms of developing and applying rules and procedures (UNESCO, 1999, Uhde, 2006, and Lepper & Raulff, 2016).

The need for standardisation and harmonisation of methods and practice resulted in active cooperation of these archivists in the drafting and implementation of international standards (Bell, 2011). The main set of standards applied today worldwide, the General International Standard Archival Description ISAD(G) and the International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families ISAAR(CPF) were established and introduced in 1994 and 1996 under the guidance of UNESCO and the International Council on Archives (Da Fonseca, 2011, and Beyea, 2011). These first international standards on archival description were followed in 2001 by the records management standard ISO 15489 published by the International Standard Organisation (Reed, 2011).

The introduction of international standards has helped archivists in international organisations to raise their status and the authority of their profession within the organisations as laboratories for international cooperation. Ambitious international projects, conceived as a result of international archival cooperation, such as the open-source software for archival description ICA-AtoM, which had been launched under the auspices of UNESCO, and Europeana's portal dedicated to archives: the Archives Portal Europe is an ambitious project promoting interoperability in archival consultation and research on international level.

### 4 ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES

The consultation of international archives required considerable efforts in terms of travel and multilingual skills. The audience for access to archival reading rooms has therefore been rather limited. Diverse archival cultures and access rules, and lack of cooperation amongst organisations also limited consultation and research (Evans, 1987). Access rules to and disclosure periods of historical archives of international organisations vary

considerably. These may range from 20 years in the case of the United Nations archives in New York (UN, 2007) to 20-30 years for the International Olympic Committee archives (IOC, 2005), or reach up to 40-60 years at the International Committee of the Red Cross archives (ICRC, 1996). EU institutions and other European organisations open their historical archives to the public generally after 30 years (EC Regulation 354/83, CERN, 1997).

The concept of Freedom of Information and, in the European Union context, the Access to Documents Regulation of 2001, raised the citizens' and scholarly interest and claim for access to international organisations' records. The new transparency movement for public institutions, on national and international levels, added a new role for archivists as managers of public document registers and required a new effort in providing digital access to archival material. Finally, technological developments, such as the introduction of online inventories and the digitisation of primary sources, facilitated the access to international archives in recent years. The internet and information technology have provided further opportunities for international archives to expand access provisions and have triggered ambitious digitisation projects (Schlenker, 2020).

On the other hand, enhanced transparency, internet presence, online access and digital communications required an advanced protection of personal and sensitive data. The European Union's General Data Protection regulation of 2016 has been a milestone in the protection of private and sensitive data and has introduced the concept of archival processing of personal data in the public interest (European Union, 2016). Archivists, thus, not only obtained a new role as guardians of privacy but were also able to raise their professional profile within their organisations.

In the face of a globalised and diverse audience, international organisations' archives also have a particular interest in developing digital communication and outreach strategies. The Internet and social media ensure user-friendly, cost-effective, and efficient communication, and ensure the citizens' right to access public records. Press and media work, website development, exhibition curation, and the launch of educational and oral history programmes, are crucial activities for international archives to reach out to their international audiences and to raise the public's interest to engage actively with these archives.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Archives of international organisations safeguard, preserve and make accessible the evidence of international cooperation in the political arena, but also cover all areas of international human interaction in the fields of sciences, culture, education, sport, etc. While still being underused and understudied by scholars and rarely taught in archival faculties and schools, international archives are unique testimonies of the multilateral 20<sup>th</sup> century and the turn towards international political cooperation and integration in a globalised world.

International and networked archival practice has influenced the archival methods worldwide. With the emergence of transnational governance, multilateral politics and diplomacy, archives of international organizations have undergone a profound transformation. Access to these archives was initially difficult due to the need of travel and language requirements, but this has changed with globalisation and the advent of the digital era with its inherent exponential growth of digital-born and digitisation of analogue records.

These changes in the international archival sector also embrace organisational structures and responsibilities of archivists, the role in archival cooperation, knowledge exchange and the development and application of common methods, standards and principles.

The ongoing change in international archives is linked to the expanding international cooperation within the archival community under the auspices of UNESCO and the ICA.

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