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Electronic Records in the Russian Archives: Theoretical and Methodical Aspects

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The normative and legal base, methodical works and the experience of the Russian archivists and records managers with electronic records are considered in this report.

LARIN, Michail, **Documenti elettronici negli archivi russi: aspetti teorici e sistematici**. Atlanti, Vol. 17, N. 1-2, Trieste 2007, pp. 55-62.

In questo articolo vengono presi in considerazione la base normativa e legale, i lavori sistematici e l'esperienza degli archivisti e gestori di documenti russi con gli archivi elettronici.

LARIN, Michail, **Elektronski dokumenti v Ruskih arhivih: teoretični in metodični vidiki obravnavanja elektronskih dokumentov**. Atlanti, Zv. 17, Štr. 1-2, Trst 2007, str. 55-62.

Avtor v pričujoči razpravi predstavlja predpise, zakonodajo in metodologijo, ki obravnavajo pojav elektronskih dokumentov v arhivistiki, obenem pa izkušnje in prakso ruskih arhivistov in vodij arhivov, ko se srečujejo z elektronskimi dokumenti na arhivskem področju

SUMMARY

Despite of the existence of some laws, allowing to work with electronic records, there is no general law determining the bases of their functioning in the state records keeping and archives in Russia. It complicates the work of the archivists who, nevertheless, have successfully started to receive and store the electronic records in the archives. For the practical help to the archivists VNIIDAD is developing the methodical recommendations for the archives of

1. Introduction

The problem of electronic records is not new in the Russian archival science and records management. The so-called machine-readable records were created together with the computers. In the process of their technical perfection, miniaturization, improvement of ergonomics computers became the integral part of any specialist working place. With the production of new generation computers and the creation of communication information networks the unique opportunity of the documentary information exchange without paper use, that is the exchange of electronic records, appeared. So, a new type of records which are necessary for storing both in the current records keeping and in the archives was created. Moreover, some kinds of electronic records require long-term (permanent) storage.

In the report the question about the Russian archives readiness to solve this actual problem is discussed.

2. Legislative and normative aspects

The analysis of the existing legislative base should be started with the Federal law «On the archival matter in the Russian Federation» (2004). This law underlines that the Archival fund of the Russian Federation consists of the archival records irrespective of the kind of their carrier, including electronic records. However, there is no definition of the electronic record in the law, and also there are no legal bases for the work with electronic records there. That is, recognizing the fact of existence of electronic records, their equality with the records of traditional type, the law does not give any definite guidance norms for the archivists to be used in their work.

The same situation exists while considering the law «On the information, information technologies and information protection» (2006) which includes the same term «the electronic record» without its clear definition.

The Russian Federation Civil Code admits the opportunity of electronic records usage in civil and legal relations. The Russian Fe-

deration Code about administrative offences from December 30, 2001 (art. 26.7), the Criminal Code from December 18, 2001 (art. 74), the Arbitration Process Code from July 24, 2002 (art. 75) and the Code of Civil Procedure from November 14, 2002 (art. 71) allow to consider electronic records as written evidence. The branch codes contain the articles providing the work with electronic records in the appropriate branches and spheres: the Customs Code of the Russian Federation (art. 169), the Tax Code of the Russian Federation (part. 1, art. 80; part 2, art. 314), etc.

The technology of the electronic and digital signature using (the order of creation and application) is regulated by the Federal law «About the electronic and digital signature» from January 10, 2002, № 1-ФЗ. The law provides legal conditions of the electronic and digital signature using in electronic records.

This law has opened the perspective of the electronic records using in the management. The article 16 of the Law says: «The Federal government bodies, the governing bodies of the Russian Federation subjects, local government bodies and also the organizations participating in the records circulation with the bodies, mentioned above, use the electronic and digital signatures of the authorized persons of these bodies».

The advantages of this law can be the fact, that it is the unique law where the definition of the electronic record is given: «This is a record which information is submitted in the electronic and digital form».

Introduction of the new information technologies into the work of the state bodies and the support of electronic records circulation are provided by a number of government programs and decisions. For example, the Federal Target Program «The Electronic Russia», which is financed from the state budget, is valid.

This program includes a number of trends, covering the records management sphere, including: an openness of activity of the government bodies (the electronic government), general availability of the state information resources, assistance to the development of independent mass media, development and introduction of electronic trade systems and electronic records circulation by 2010. The program is based on the Concept of state government informatization, authorized by the Russian Government.

As a whole, it is necessary to recognize, that the legislative and statutory acts of the Russian Federation only in general regulate the questions of electronic records application in the state administration. The isolated character of electronic records legislative regulation complicates their complex application in all spheres of society and the state life and does not allow to use their advantages in comparison with the paper records.

3. Electronic records in records keeping

According to the data of Rosarchiv the volume of the records formed during the activity of Russian state bodies lately, makes about 250 billion sheets of records a year. It is stated that annually the

various organizations, and also similar methodical recommendations for the state archives which should keep the electronic records permanently. A List of typical administrative records which can be created only in an electronic base is made up. This List will be applied with the electronic records appraisal. During the research work the unsolved problems of the electronic records archiving were defined: the electronic record status, terminology, formats of electronic records storage and the electronic and digital signature. These questions require further scientific research work on the basis of practice studying.

growth of records volumes is 8-15 %.

The rapid growth of the information volumes is promoted by the level of the government computerization which has considerably increased in the last years. It is the additional factor influencing the state of the records and the information provision of administration.

It is expressed by the growth of the amount of electronic records produced in the government. Their number is annually doubled, while the growth of paper records volumes is considerably less intensive.

The records keeping and circulation automated systems including the new perspective information technologies in the practical activity of the state executive authorities is widely used.

The general tendency of developing the information resources of the Russian Federation state executive bodies is characterized by the constant increase of electronic information resources volumes only in the electronic and digital form without any traditional paper analogues.

The normative and methodical basis of work with the records in the state organizations of the Russian Federation is «The Typical instruction on records keeping in the federal executive bodies» (2005). The provisions of the instruction cover the organization of work with the records irrespective of their carrier base, including preparation, registration and control of their fulfillment carried out with the help of computer technologies. However, this instruction does not contain the detailed recommendations for work with electronic records.

According to the order of the Russian Federation Government the Russian Federation Ministry of information technologies and communications with participation of VNIIDAD and Rosarchiv specialists have developed a project «Regulations about the work with electronic records in the federal executive bodies» which will be put in power by the Act of the Government soon.

This project defines the rules of work with electronic records in the federal executive authorities. The electronic record is determined as an equivalent to the paper record there if its registration order was observed according to the given provision.

For the first time in the Russian records management and archival matter history there is a try to give an official status to the electronic record. So, within the Federal program «The Electronic Russia» VNIIDAD is entrusted to develop the detailed methodical recommendations for the work with the electronic records in the records keeping and state organizations archives, and also the recommendations to the state archives on the organization of constant (long-term) electronic records storage.

4. Methodical recommendations for the organization of work with the electronic records in the organizations archives

Now the preparation of the first variant of the Methodical recommendations for the work with electronic records in archives of the organizations is completed. It includes the following sections:

- *General provisions:*

concept of electronic records archives;

electronic records as an object of archival storage;

basic requirements to the work organization and technologies with the electronic records in the organizations providing their storage within the structure of the records fund and their transfer to the archival storage.

- *Appraisal of electronic records:*

normative and methodical bases of electronic records appraisal;

realization and registration of electronic records appraisal results.

- *Acquisition of electronic records archives:*

composition of the electronic records subject to the transfer to the archives;

inclusion of electronic records in the organization filing systems;

preparation of electronic records for the transfer to the archives;

migration of electronic records;

recording of the records on the electronic carriers;

requirements to the carriers registration with the electronic records, transferred to the archives;

making up and registration of the inventory of the electronic records, prepared in the structural division;

transfer of electronic records to the organization archives.

- *Preservation of records in the archives:*

measures on electronic records preservation;

requirements to repositories and storerooms;

regimes of electronic records storage;

disposition of electronic records;

means of electronic carriers storage;

special physical and technical processing of electronic records;

control of presence and state of electronic records;

protection of electronic records and program and technical means of the archives from the influence of harmful computer programs.

- *Organization of electronic records in the archives:*

electronic records within the fund of the organization;

organization of electronic records within the archival fund.

- *Control of electronic records in the archives:*

general requirements to the control of electronic records in the archives;

registration units of electronic records;

system of registration records of electronic records archives.

- *Finding aids to the records of electronic records archives:*

archival inventory of electronic records;

automated finding aids.

- *Use of electronic records archives:*

access order to the electronic records archives;

information provision of users in the electronic records archives;

fulfillment of citizens and organizations of social and legal character inquiries.

- *Order of electronic records transfer to the permanent storage in the state archives:*

temporary storage of electronic records of the Russian Federation Archival fund;

order of electronic records transfer to the permanent storage.

- *Appendices*

5. Methodical recommendations for the organization of electronic records permanent (long-term) storage

Preparation of the methodical recommendations for the work with electronic records in the state archives, those archives which are permanently keeping the records of the Russian federation Archival fund and which are receiving these records from the archives of organizations is simultaneously carried out.

These rules consist of the following sections:

- *General provisions:*

general principles of electronic records storage;
preservation of archival electronic records;
temperature and humidity conditions;
lighting conditions;
sanitary and hygienic regime;
fire protection measures;
security;
disposition of archival electronic records;
control of presence and conditions of archival electronic records;
protection of electronic records and program and technical means of archives from the influence of harmful computer programs (viruses).

- *Order of electronic records registration:*

organization of archival electronic records registration in the state archives;
control of recording and copying of archival electronic records on electronic carriers;
requirements to archival electronic records description, the inventory of registration units of archival electronic records;
finding aids system to the archival electronic records;
inventory of electronic records;

- *Acquisition of electronic records archives:*

acquisition of archival electronic records of the Russian Federation Archival fund;
list / database of acquisition sources of archival electronic records.

- *Appraisal of electronic records:*

order of electronic records appraisal;
order of archival electronic records reception;
reception of electronic records from the liquidated organizations;
transfer of archival electronic records from the archives to the archives;

- *Usage of archival electronic records:*

legal bases of electronic records usage;

general (basic) specifications on the archival electronic records usage;

organization and technology of access provision to the archival electronic records.

- *Appendices*

VNIIDAD has developed A *List of the typical administrative records created and formed in the federal executive authorities in the electronic and digital form with the detention periods of storage*. This List is important for realization of electronic records appraisal.

6. Problems

While developing the above mentioned records the specialists have faced a number of problems which complicate the practical fulfillment of the methodical recommendations in the archives activity. These problems are the following (in brief):

- First of all there is an unsolved question what the electronic record is. The specialists think that now we only should speak about the replacement of traditional paper records by their electronic analogues. Such records should be included into the records keeping filing system and then transferred to the archives. Also there is a question on the destiny of new modern information resources: databases, electronic registers, web-records, digital copies of traditional records etc. We suggest to study this question more deeply and then give a perfect answer.

- The question about the electronic and digital signature is not solved in the methodical recommendations. It is obvious that the reception of electronic records with electronic and digital signature into the state archives complicates the activity of archives very much. It is necessary to provide an opportunity of the electronic and digital signature removal from the records while their transfer to the permanent (long-term) storage. But it is not clear as far as the legal value of the official information on electronic records given by the archives.

- We could not solve a problem of electronic records formats in which it is necessary to carry out:

transfer of original records to the storage;

creation of security fund of records;

creation of electronic records usage fund.

Today we offer to transfer the electronic records to the state archives in the format which the archives establish. Moreover, such transfer should be carried out only on the physical and detached firm carrier (an optical disk), without the use of information and communication networks.

So, the Russian archives, as well as the archives of other countries, closely are dealing with the problems of electronic records.

This activity is regulated by the legislation, statutory acts, standards and methodical instructions on the base of scientific principles in records management and archival matter.

Literature

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