

Paradigms and Perspectives of Archival Education in Romania After 1989

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the main trends of the archival education programs developed in post-communist Romania. Starting from the early history of the archival training and education institutions founded in Romania, our analysis tries to define the intellectual currents that influenced this evolution, to describe the current status, to identify the future evolutions and to propose suitable solutions.

Paradigmi e prospettive dell'istruzione archivistica in Romania dopo il 1989

SINTESI

Il presente articolo si focalizza sulle principali tendenze dei programmi d'istruzione archivistica sviluppati nella Romania post-comunista. Partendo dalla storia originaria dell'istruzione archivistica e delle istituzioni educative fondate in Romania, la nostra analisi cerca di definire le correnti intellettuali che hanno influenzato questa evoluzione, per descrivere lo stato attuale delle cose, per identificare le evoluzioni future e per proporre soluzioni adeguate.

Paradigme in perspektive arhivskega izobraževanja v Romuniji po letu 1989

IZVLEČEK

Prispevek se osredotoča na glavne usmeritve arhivskih izobraževalnih programov, ki so se razvili v postkomunistični Romuniji. Izhajajoč iz zgodnje zgodovine arhivskega usposabljanja in izobraževalnih ustanov, ki so bile ustanovljene v Romuniji, poskuša analiza opredeliti intelektualne tokove, ki so vplivali na ta razvoj, opisati trenutno stanje, opredeliti prihodnji razvoj ter predlagati ustrezne rešitve.

Paradigme si perspective ale formarii arhivistilor in Romania dupa 1989

REZUMAT

Prezentarea de față își propune să descrie principalele tendințe ale învățământului arhivistic din România post-comunistă. Începând cu cele mai vechi forme de pregătire arhivistică înființate în România, analiza noastră va încerca să definească curentele intelectuale ce și-au pus amprenta asupra acestei evoluții, să descrie starea actuală, să identifice evoluțiile viitoare și să propună soluții adecvate.

Before discussing the stage of the archival studies after 1989 and present day, a brief historical overview of the archival education in Romanian lands before 1989 will be useful for those unfamiliar readers. I will not insist here on the general institutional evolution of the Romanian archives for contextualization as several contributions had been already published including also in the journal "Atlanti".

Archival education in Romania before 1989

In 1862, soon after the unification of the archival administration in Romanian Principalities (i.e. the foundation of the General Directorate of the State Archives), a project regarding the creation

of an *Institute of Paleography* is drawn in order to ensure the essential elements of the professional formation for the future archivists. As the title of the institute shows, the curricula was based on the main auxiliary sciences of history, among them the study of the old scripts (mainly Cyrillic and Greek) being considered the most important. The famous French *Ecole des Chartes* represented the model to be followed by the future institute.

However, the project did not come to be realized due to various reasons, the most important being the budgetary restrictions and the pure lack of interest shown by the authorities of that time towards the archives in general. Therefore, most of the archivists continued to be recruited among graduates of secondary schools or of Faculties of History from Bucharest and Iași. Despite this, the Archives found various ways to collaborate with the academic and university milieu, mainly due to the initiatives of its directors general. For example, Dimitre Onciul, Director General (1900-1923) and Professor in Medieval History at the Faculty of History at the University of Bucharest, conducted most of his seminars of auxiliary sciences not in the University classrooms, but in the rooms and repositories of the State Archives, using original medieval documents and seals as didactic material (what could be called today *archival pedagogy*). Thus, according to some of his successors, such as C. Moisil or A. Sacerdoțeanu, by training historians in the archives, Onciul succeeded in bringing some of his former students in the Archives after their graduation, either as paleographers or archivists.

After 1918, when a much greater Romanian state emerged together with new political strategies envisaging the integration of the unified territories, the authorities could be more easily convinced by a project to create a special school for archivists, as the new state acquired also several tens of kilometers of archives. In this context, Constantin Moisil, Director General (1923-1938) and renowned specialist in auxiliary sciences, inaugurated in 1924 the *Practical School for Archivists and Paleographers*, its legal existence being made official by the first Law of Archives in Romania, issued in 1925.

The school was affiliated to the State Archives (the director general fulfilling also the task of rector) and granted a B.A. degree in Archivistics and auxiliary sciences after the completion of a two year period of study. The alumni were usually employed by the State Archives. The level of academic requirements being so high, only 30 students from a total of 854 (c. 3,5%) were awarded the graduate diploma until the year 1940. The institutional and budgetary dependence to the Archives was made clear by the fact that the school was located within the headquarters building of the Archives, nearby the quay of Dâmbovița river. Most of its professors were renowned university scholars (among them illustrious historians such as Constantin Moisil, N. Cartoian, Henri H. Stahl, P.P. Panaitescu, C.C. Giurescu, Ioan C. Filitti), with very few archivists (i.e. the Director General) being members of the teaching staff.

In 1938, the school changed its name in *Graduate School of Archival Studies* and was included in the category of special graduate schools with 3 year courses. The school was put under the joint authority of the State Archives and University of Bucharest.

French historian Robert-Henri Bautier noted in 1943 that the school was ruled by the General Director of the State Archives, as rector. The average number of students per annum was around 10 and the University of Bucharest issued the diplomas and monitored the activity of the teaching staff. In 1943, Bautier counted 11 courses, all being related with the auxiliary sciences of history (among them, courses on Medieval and Modern Archaeology and Graphology) and noted that most members of the teaching staff, including Aurelian Sacerdoțeanu (director of the Archives from 1938 until 1953 and, of course, rector of the school) were educated in France, mainly at the prestigious *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* (EPHE) from Paris.

Being a specialist in the critique of Romanian medieval texts, Sacerdoțeanu imposed that the practical courses (including the study of the paleographies) would be held first, in order to make the students able to access the content of the old historical documents, and only in the last year of study, the generalizing courses would be taught.

In early 1941, following Sacerdoțeanu's initiative and efforts, the school begun to edit a new scholarly journal named *Hrisovul* (eng. *The Charter*), who acknowledged many important contributions in the domain of auxiliary sciences of history; unsurprisingly, several articles dealt with the critique of medieval texts. It collected primarily the most representative studies of the professors, students

and researchers of the school. The appearance of the journal was not prevented by the decision of the authorities to disband the school in 1941, in a time when WW2 was engulfing all Europe. A year later, the school was put again in function along with the *Institute of Archival Researches*. Bautier remarked that the Institute copied the structure and curricula of the EPHE, being more oriented towards the practical critique of the historical sources and archives, while the school retained the theoretical approach. The term "archival researches" made clear the fact that the archives were purely an object of historical research, the Institute being oriented to the study of institutions and legal customs in Romanian lands during the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period.

In 1948, when the Romanian Communist Party managed to take full power in the state, the School was transformed in the *Institute of Archival Studies*, following a clear Soviet model; for short term, it was named also the *Institute of Archival Studies, Bibliology and Museography*. Significantly, the journal *Hrisovul* ceased to appear in the same year. In 1950, the existence of the institute came also to an (expected) end. In short and midterm perspective, the decision of the communist authorities can be explained as a pre-requisite for preparing the transfer of the State Archives from the Ministry of Public Education to the Ministry of Interior (as it happened next year). On the other hand, the School couldn't ensure the necessary ideological approval, being too much oriented towards an independent critical approach of the historical sources and thus perceived as "carrying the inheritance" of the old "bourgeois" regime. No need to stress that for the new Romanian authorities, strongly supported by the Soviet Union, wiping out any such inheritance was a top priority.

However, a certain compromise regarding the archival education was made. Thus, after 1950 many of the courses in archival science and auxiliary sciences previously held at the Institute were transferred at the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest, where a special chair of archival studies was created in order to ensure a minimal specialization for the future archivists. Sacerdoțeanu (who was removed from the directorate of the Archives in 1953, to be replaced by a long list of police and security generals) was appointed the titular of the chair, holding this position until 1970. After his retirement, the chair of Archival Studies was suppressed, only a course of auxiliary sciences being maintained (changed after 1981 with the denomination "special sciences of history").

In 1980, following the memoirs and reports initiated by the State Archives, the Ministry of Interior approved the foundation of a Center for Archival Specialization (rom. *Centrul de Perfecționare Arhivistică*), whose scope was to train archivists from the State Archives in various old scripts (Cyrillic, Slavonic, Latin, Greek, German, Hungarian, Turkish) needed for the appraisal and description of the historical medieval and pre-modern archives. Moreover, the Center organized also courses in archival science designed mainly to specialize the personnel appointed for archival services in other public institutions. The training programs were supported mainly with experienced personnel from the Archives and with university professors for the paleography courses. As one can easily notice, the "traditional" model of archival education dating before WW2 was still in function. On the other hand, the special focus put on the paleographical study (which disappeared completely from the curricula of the Faculties of History) could be easily justified by underlining the need of deciphering and publishing those historical documents to be included in the collections of sources prepared as an ideological tool of an increasing nationalistic political regime¹.

Archival education in Romania after 1989

Following the collapse of Ceaușescu's personal regime, in 1990 January 28th a memoir concluded by the leading archivists of county branches of the State Archives (mainly from the Transylvanian counties) and addressed to the post-revolutionary leadership of the Ministry of Interior enlisted nine requests, among them the re-foundation of the School of Archival Studies. This request was fulfilled in 1991, when the Centre for Archival Specialization was transformed into the *National School of Archival Studies*, upon the initiative of Ioan Scurtu, historian specialized in the interwar Romanian politics, university professor and Director General of the State Archives (1991-1996). A rather controversial figure in the academic milieu, being associated with the former communist regime, Scurtu tried to

1. Between 1974-1989 several collections of sources (counting many volumes each), clearly ideologically biased, were published, among them collections on the figure of prince Michael the Brave (who allegedly realized the first Union of all Romanian territories in 1600), on the Great Peasant Uprising from Transylvania (which allegedly opposed Romanian peasants against Hungarian nobility in 1784) or on the Union of the Romanian territories in 1918.

revitalize the old tradition dating from Sacerdoțeanu's times. However, in the legal context of that time, it proved impossible to found a special high school under the institutional dependence of the Archives. Thus, in 1992 he succeeded in creating the *Faculty of Archivistics* within the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Police Academy, while the School remained a center for archival training designed for undergraduate archivists and also for specialization of the archivists employed at the State Archives (a status very similar to that of the Centre active in 1980-1991).

The rather unnatural institutional framework in which the new Faculty appeared – the Police Academy being essentially a higher education institution put under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior and dedicated to the formation of police, penitentiary and firefighting officers, with a limited academic autonomy, having quasi-military organization and special internal regulations even nowadays – was considered to be the only solution available at that time, as the University of Bucharest was unable to host and finance a new faculty. Moreover, this solution was much easier to adopt given the fact that the Archives remained after 1989 under the authority of the Ministry of Interior, although there were several attempts to change this affiliation². It is doubtful that Sacerdoțeanu, the classic figure of the Romanian Archivistics whose scientific inheritance is invoked after 1989 by most Romanian archivists³, would have agreed to such solution... Anyhow, like his illustrious predecessor, Ioan Scurtu cumulated in 1992-1994 both the position of Director General and that of dean of the Faculty, ensuring a strong bond between the two institutions. Even the siege of the Faculty was established (until 2010) in a former office building of the Archives.

The curricula of the new faculty was created following to a great extent the model of the interwar School of Archivistics, the general history courses, auxiliary sciences and paleographies taking the largest share. The Archivistics was studied following a three folded scheme of Italian⁴ and Soviet inspiration: *Archivology* (general introduction into the theory and terminology of Archivistics), *Archivotechnics* (including basically the main archival operations: appraisal, arrangement, description) and *Archiveconomy* (the principles and practices regarding conservation and valorization of the archives). To these, several other courses were added such as Bibliology and Museography, Economic History, History of the Romanian Language, Demography, Historical Geography, History of the State and local Institutions, Administrative Law, IT applications in Archivistics. However, each year a new curriculum was drafted and changes were made, especially in the second category of courses, depending on the availability of the part-time teaching staff. In general, the full time professors were recruited from the former archivists, while the part-time professors came mostly from the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest and the research institutes of history of the Romanian Academy.

The courses lasted for 4 years and after successful completion, the students (whose average number is 25 per series) were awarded a B.A. diploma in History and Archivistics, which entitled them to be directly employed at the State Archives without any prior test, following the same system as in the case of the other alumni of the Police Academy. This changed in 1999, when the first statute of the civil servants in Romania was issued (Law no. 188) – since then, nobody could be employed as civil servant without firstly taking part in a public competition for a given number of positions. Since 1999, the archivists were assimilated in status with the civil servants.

The Law of Archives (1996), the Statute of civil servants (1999) and the archival education

The provisions of the Statute of the civil servants regarding the compulsoriness of the public non-discriminatory competitions for positions in the National Archives created a problem regarding the application of the Law of Archives, issued three years earlier, in 1996. According to this law, the personnel destined for archival work in the National Archives of Romania (furthermore NAR) and in the other public and private institutions, which administered archival material, were to be trained in

2. In 2005 intense negotiations were carried in order to transfer the Archives to the Ministry of Culture and National Patrimony, however without result. Other proposals in 2007-2008 suggested the transfer of the Archives under the direct authority of the Government.

3. Sacerdoțeanu is the author of the first Romanian scientific treatise on Archivistics (*Arhivistica*, published in 1970) and since then a synthesis in comparable academic quality and rigor has not yet been published.

4. The influence of the Italian Archivistics was the greatest in the interwar Romania and Sacerdoțeanu's manual bears greatly this influence.

the newly created *National School for Archival Training* (NSAT) and at the Faculty of Archivistics. The NSAT (derived from the former National School of Archivistics), affiliated at the NAR (until 2005), offered introductory and specializing courses for undergraduate and graduate archivists both from the Romanian Archives and from other public institutions or private companies. The Faculty offered the only graduate diploma in Archivistics in Romania of the year 1996. Practically, the Law of Archives established a clear monopoly of both educational institutions in the formation and specialization of future archivists.

However, even if this monopoly has still legal force, the Statute of the civil servants from 1999 created an important breach in it, as it was no longer mandatory to employ an archivist only from the alumni of the Faculty of Archivistics. Thus, after year 2000 several other higher education institutions created graduate and/or postgraduate programs in Archivistics. In 2005-2010, the University of Bucharest hosted a post-graduate program in Archivistics, where several experienced archivists from NAR held courses such as *Management of Archives*, *Electronic Archives* or *Historical Archives*⁵. Similar collaborations were established between Babeş-Bolyai University from Cluj and the Cluj county branch of NAR and between "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University from Iaşi and the Iaşi county branch of NAR. In all cases, Archivistics was integrated in the same traditional framework, either as specialization or as chair within the faculties of history and closely associated with the auxiliary sciences of history⁶.

Nowadays, seven public and two private universities in Romania offer courses of Archivistics in their curricula at the graduate level. However, only the Faculty of History of the Babeş-Bolyai University from Cluj offers a specialization in Archivistics, while the other institutions integrated the Archival science among the auxiliary sciences of history (in some cases only as an optional course). The "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University dropped its specialization in Archivistics in 2012, while other masters degree programs were also abandoned. The main cause of this decline lays in the fact that the number of positions offered by the National Archives decreased slowly (with a short increase in 2007-2008), ending in a total block since 2009, with no further employment made⁷. The same situation occurred in the private sector, where the number of available positions for graduate archivists shrank – in fact, most companies preferred to hire undergraduate personnel and specialize it in basic archival work through NSAT, where the introductory course lasts only 12 weeks (6 weeks teaching and 6 weeks practice)⁸.

The status of NSAT itself changed after 2005, when it was transferred as a subordinate unit to the Faculty of Archivistics until nowadays. The separation from NAR caused the dilution of the institutional cooperation links (all archivists from NAR, who taught courses at NSAT, renounced to do it) and after 2007, when a new leadership came in 49 Elisabeta Blvd., the rift was completed. The NAR decided to renounce completely at any collaboration both with the Faculty and NSAT (considered to be "too conservative", having "obsolete" training programs and "being under the control of a quasi-military organism" i.e. the Police Academy) and tried to create their own centre for archival training, however without success⁹. The political and economic crisis, which affected Romania after 2008, prevented any serious and profound reformation program, including also the replacement of the outdated

5. The data were provided by Bogdan Popovici, one of the archivists that taught courses in this program.

6. For information on the curricula of the graduate programs including Archivistics see the following websites (all being accessed in June 25th, 2013): <http://istorie.unibuc.ro/cursuri/anul-i-licenta/stiintele-auxiliare-ale-istoriei/> (University of Bucharest), <http://hiphi.ubbcluj.ro/studii/licenta/arhivistica.html> (University of Cluj), <http://history.uaic.ro/studenti/studenti-licenta/studii-de-licenta-programe-analitice/> (University of Iaşi), http://www.uav.ro/files/umaniste/documente/2_AP_2012-2013..pdf (University of Arad), <http://isp.univ-ovidius.ro/images/pdf/orar/semII-2013/orar4.pdf> ("Ovidius" University from Constanţa), <http://fig.usv.ro/www/pagini/specializari/Istorie.pdf> ("Ştefan cel Mare" University from Suceava), http://www.litere.uvt.ro/3_ist/lic/planuri_invatamant/2012-2013/istorie.pdf (Western University from Timişoara), <http://ssn.hyperion.ro/ssg/istorie-prezentare> ("Hyperion" University, Bucharest), <http://www.spiruharet.ro/facultate/33/riif/30/istorie.html> ("Spiru Haret" University, Bucharest).

7. The budgetary crisis that hit Romania after 2008 was the main cause.

8. This introductory course was developed since 1996 and the Law of Archives established it as a minimum requirement for the personnel appointed to manage the archive of every public and private agency.

9. Even before 2007, in some counties local associations of archivists organized training courses for undergraduate archivists, using mainly the logistics and personnel of the county branches of NAR. The centre was seen as an institutional form of specialization for those archivists employed at NAR only.

Law of Archives with a new law¹⁰. This failure did not change the nature of the relations between NAR and the Faculty/NSAT, which remained at the same lowest level.

In this context, after 2008 the alumni of the Faculty of Archivistics found the doors of the National Archives closed and the only available jobs were those offered by other public administrative bodies (a small number) and by the companies specialized in archiving services, which begun to develop in Romania in the last decade. These companies sought to employ either former experienced archivists (retired or even fired after a severe restructuration of posts in the National Archives in 2011¹¹), or alumni of the Faculty of Archivistics. This emergent market will develop furthermore as a new law regarding the companies of archiving services has recently passed this year¹², aiming to clarify their juridical status and also the competences of the National Archives in this sector.

Present status and future prospectives

Presently, both NAR and the Faculty of Archivistics/NSAT start almost from the same level of knowledge and expertise. Although NAR is currently implementing a project for the informatization of its public services (until 2014) and created also new professional standards, this did not determine changes in its principles, methodologies and techniques applied. Moreover, NAR still suffer from a huge deficit of personnel able to use and implement most updated methods in Archivistics, including IT applications.

In their turn, the Faculty of Archivistics/NSAT continues to maintain the traditional curriculum dominated by history and auxiliary sciences (partly due to the lack of available specialized teaching staff) with too little room for courses on Records and Information Management, Preservation and Management of Digital Records and Archives, Reference and Access, Preservation. In the last years, the faculty strove to change its curriculum in order to prepare the students for the job market by diminishing the share of history related courses, however, only to a limited extent due to the small flexibility allowed for the refreshment of the teaching staff. On the other hand, the research component remains under-represented – the faculty has not managed to initiate any major research project in the field.

While the present is grim, the future can be brighter, provided that several conditions would be met. Firstly, the blockage in the collaboration between NAR and Faculty of Archivistics/NSAT needs to be surpassed. To my opinion, NAR should renounce the attempts to strictly control all the forms of educational programs in Archivistics, retaining only the function of monitoring the quality of these programs, moreover as for the moment it does not participate in the job market for the future archivists. NAR needs to be institutionally separated from any type of educational program in Archivistics to avoid potential conflicts and interferences. On the other hand, a profound institutional and administrative restructuration of the Faculty of Archivistics and NSAT is mandatory in order that they could efficiently function and easily adapt their training programs to the requirements of the market. At present, the Police Academy, due to its specific organizational and budgetary features, allows little room for genuine academic performance (including research) and even less for flexibility in designing new training programs – to my opinion, this cannot be changed significantly, given the actual legislative context. In fact, both NAR and the Faculty of Archivistics/NSAT need a more intellectually challenging and flexible environment, in which the preoccupation for the quality and efficiency of the education and research programs in Archivistics should prevail in front of institutional dependencies and budgetary limitations.

This new environment (which can be imagined as a radical institutional and legislative reorganization) should encourage also a radical rethinking of the strategic paradigm regarding the future of

10. The project of a new law on Archives elaborated in 2008 is still available on the website of NAR (http://www.arhivel-enationale.ro/images/custom/image/Pdf-uri/Proectul_Legii_Arhivelor.pdf), although the procedures of its approval by the Romanian Parliament ended in an administrative blockage, which lasts until present. The project does not mention anything about the Faculty of Archivistics and/or NSAT, leaving the archival training at any level on behalf of those agencies of professional training accredited by NAR (art. 14). It is not clear whether the term "agency of professional training" (used in Romanian legislation mainly for those programs of professional reconversion of the unemployed) designates also any graduate or post-graduate programs in Archivistics or not.

11. In 2011, the scheme of personnel of NAR was diminished with c. 50%!

12. Law no. 138 published in May 7th 2013, which completed the Law of Archives from 1996.

archives and archival education in Romania. For example, NAR should develop the Archive pedagogy which could be an important component in the formation of the future archivists¹³. The Faculty of Archivistics/NSAT should find a place along with other graduate and post-graduate programs in Archivistics in a real competition for the job market. In this context, the cooperation with the leading companies providing archival services will be crucial; this can play also an important role in developing major research projects and activities. Last but not least, the international cooperation within and outside EU needs to be further developed for a complete connection and updating with the newest global trends in Archivistics.

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SUMMARY

The approach of our paper is twofold. Firstly, we draw the main lines of the evolution of the main education and training programs in archival sciences organized in Romania before and after 1989. Secondly, we define

13. At the moment, this type of interaction between the interested public (mainly college and university students) and the county branches of NAR does not operate as a regular and institutional program, but only following local initiatives and personal relations. There is no position of archival pedagogue and no program to address such issue. Annually, NAR organizes the *Day of the Open Doors* (addressed to the general interested public wishing to visit the archival repositories), cooperates with schools in a special week called *A different school*, when non-didactic activities are carried. NAR also participates in the *Night of the museums*, when its permanent and temporary exhibitions of archival materials are opened to the public 24/7. However, until nowadays such type of actions were not pedagogically oriented, but rather managed as public relations activities

and discuss the most significant paradigms of archival education applied, focusing on contents and methods, also keeping an eye on the relations and tensions between the “traditional” historical paradigm (still dominant also in the Faculty of Archival Sciences) and the newly emergent paradigm in Romania, which privileges the information management and its communication to the public. The aim of this presentation is to describe the actual stage, identify the current trends in the field and project a prognosis on short and midterm within the broad frame of the development of archival theory and practice in Romania.

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