

# Training of Archivists in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Some Reflections

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## Training of Archivists in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Some Reflections

### ABSTRACT

The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought numerous changes to Archival science. Not only employees of different archives, but also universities, resp. educational institutions, which trains these workers, have to cope with them. Archivists will still need „traditional“ knowledge of Auxiliary historical sciences or History of administration in the future, but simultaneously it will be necessary to develop a more significant specialization in information science or create directly „Cyber archival science“. Archivists should obtain at least basic knowledge of computer science or so-called History informatics, Digital humanities and Cyber security. However, the knowledge gained at the beginning of archivist's career is not sufficient for the entire duration of its course - and so besides university education or other special trainings possibilities for further education and the expansion of professional competencies in different areas must be developed.

**Key words:** Czech Republic, Archive Education, Tuition of Archival Science, Auxiliary Historical Sciences, Informatics, Digital Humanities, Digitization, Lifelong Learning

## La formazione degli archivisti nel XXI secolo: alcune riflessioni

### SINTESI

La fine del XX secolo e l'inizio del XXI secolo hanno portato numerosi cambiamenti nell'archivistica. Non solo i funzionari dei diversi archivi, ma anche le università e i responsabili degli istituti scolastici, che formano questi lavoratori, devono far loro fronte. Gli archivisti avranno ancora bisogno in futuro delle conoscenze "tradizionali" delle scienze storiche ausiliarie o della storia dell'amministrazione, ma allo stesso tempo sarà necessario sviluppare una specializzazione più significativa nella scienza dell'informazione o creare direttamente una "cyber-scienza archivistica". Gli archivisti dovrebbero possedere conoscenze almeno basilari di scienze informatiche o della cosiddetta storia informatica, umanesimo digitale e cyber-sicurezza. Le conoscenze acquisite all'inizio della carriera dell'archivista non sono sufficienti per tutta la durata del percorso professionale e quindi oltre alla formazione universitaria o ad altre opportunità di formazione speciale devono essere sviluppate possibilità di ulteriore istruzione e l'allargamento delle competenze professionali in diverse aree.

**Parole chiave:** Repubblica Ceca, formazione archivistica, scienze storiche ausiliarie, informatica, umanesimo digitale, digitalizzazione, formazione permanente

## Nekaj razmišljanj o usposabljanju arhivistov v 21. stoletju

### IZVLEČEK

Konec 20. stoletja in začetek 21. stoletja sta v arhivsko znanost prinesla številne spremembe. Ne samo zaposleni iz različnih arhivov, ampak tudi univerze, oz. izobraževalne ustanove, ki usposabljaajo te delavce, se morajo spoprijeti z njimi. Arhivisti bodo v prihodnosti še vedno potrebovali »tradicionalno« znanje o pomožnih zgodovinskih vedah ali zgodovini uprave, hkrati pa bo potrebno razviti pomembnejšo specializacijo na področju informacijske znanosti ali ustvariti neposredno »kibernetsko arhivsko znanost«. Arhivisti morajo pridobiti vsaj osnovno znanje s področja računalništva ali tako imenovane zgodovinske informatike, digitalne humanistike in računalniške varnosti. Vendar pa pridobljeno znanje na začetku arhivske kariere ne zadošča za celotno trajanje dela, zato je potrebo poleg univerzitetnega izobraževanja ali drugih posebnih usposabljanj razviti možnosti za nadaljnje izobraževanje in širitev strokovnih kompetenc na različnih področjih.

**Ključne besede:** Češka republika, arhivsko izobraževanje, poučevanje arhivske znanosti, pomožne zgodovinske vede, informatika, digitalna humanistika, digitalizacija, vseživljenjsko učenje

Průprava archivářů v 21. Století: několik úvah

### ABSTRAKT

Konec 20. a počátek 21. století přinesl do oboru archivnictví četné změny, s nimiž se musí vyrovnávat nejen pracovníci nejrůznějších typů archivů, ale i školy, resp. vzdělávací instituce, které tyto pracovníky připravují. Ani v budoucnu se archiváři neobejdou bez „tradičních“ znalostí pomocných věd historických či dějin správy, současně však bude třeba rozvíjet výraznější specializaci na informační vědy, nebo přímo „kyberarchivnictví“. I když technická stránka archivace zřejmě zůstane úkolem specialistů v tomto oboru, spolupráce archivářů a informatiků bude nadále nezbytně potřebná a archiváři by měli získat alespoň základní informace v rámci informatiky či tzv. historické informatiky (History Informatics), Digital Humanities nebo kybernetické bezpečnosti. Znalosti získané na prahu kariéry ovšem rozhodně nevystačí po celou další dobu jejího průběhu, a tak vedle univerzitní či jiné speciální výuky archivnictví (a vlastního sebevzdělávání) musí být rozvíjeny i možnosti dalšího vzdělávání a rozšiřování odborných kompetencí, a to v různých oblastech a různou formou.

**Key words:** Česká republika, archivní vzdělání, výuka archivnictví, pomocné vědy historické, informatika, Digital Humanities, digitalizace, celoživotní vzdělávání

Archival science belongs to one of the oldest branches of human society. Over the centuries a whole network of archives has been set up to store numerous documents of significant scientific, cultural, economic, legal and administrative value. Until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century these documents were created on parchment or paper and therefore, their processing requires special procedures and knowledge (paleographic, linguistic, general and special historical and others). But the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought a major change into the form of records: usage of modern information technologies, massive expansion of computers and consequently the Internet use created not only new possibilities of accessing archival documents online, but the necessity of digitizing the material and requirements for managing these activities as well. In particular, there is a need for preservation of electronic records that have never had other than a virtual form.

## 1 Changes in the teaching of Archival science

Not only employees of various archives, but universities, resp. educational institutions have to cope with all above mentioned demands too. The new situation raises a number of questions about the form and content of archival education which has been traditionally focused primarily on acquiring a knowledge needed for processing of older types of material, i.e. as a part of History with particular emphasis on Auxiliary historical sciences (especially Paleography, Diplomatics, Sigillography, Chronology, etc.). It is obvious that traditional knowledge will still be crucial for archivists in the future. Not only for the research of earlier period but recent times as well. Although for example paleographic knowledge will not be as urgent as before. But there is also a question of preparation of future archivists for new requirements that are more or less in the field of Informatics, i.e. in the technological area. Finding the optimal form of training in this direction is therefore, a task currently addressed by all universities, colleges and other schools, which prepare future archivists, regardless of borders. Due to the social importance of archives not only for scientific and cultural but also for purely practical reasons (storage of documents for the public or institutions, such as records important for retirement, etc.). This problem does not only concern university teachers, students or archivists, but has a significant general impact as well - although the role of archives in the information society and the corresponding training of archivists has not yet been a subject of wider discourse (Sulitková, 2017).

The issue of archival education, its development, tasks and prospects was addressed by the International Visegrad Conference organized by the Czech Archival Society and the Institute of Archival Studies and Auxiliary Historical Sciences of the Faculty of Philosophy of the South Bohemian University from 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> March 2012 in České Budějovice (Ryantová, 2014a). Representatives of all seven universities from the Czech Republic, where Archival science can be studied (Prague, Brno, České Budějovice, Hradec Králové, Pardubice, Olomouc, Ústí nad Labem) in various types of programs (bachelor, master, doctoral; either full-time or combined), attended the conference. Foreign colleagues from Slovakia,

Hungary, Poland, Germany (although the Marburg Archivschule has a different character than other universities) and the Netherlands accepted an invitation as well. Individual papers introduced the content and specifics of teaching at these particular schools as well as in French-speaking countries (*Čtvrtník, 2014*). The further development and additional training of archivists were also mentioned.

### 1.1 „Traditional“ preparation - Auxiliary historical sciences

Nowadays, the „traditional teaching“ of Auxiliary historical sciences (in particular, Paleography, Diplomatics and History of administration) has certainly not been questioned and an emphasis is still put on the importance of language skills of future archivists (*Bláhová; Bak; Madejska; Ryantová, 2014b; Menne-Harritz; Poncet, pp. 398-400*). But currently there are foreign studies (mainly from the German region and Austria) dealing with issues of further direction of Archival science and its perspective within the information society. These studies do not deny that main concepts or principles of archivist's work (the principle of provenance, the evaluation of archival documents with regard to preservation of their content, structure, context and authenticity) must remain in effect and they concentrate on definition of relationship and work of archivists and historians in archives (*Kretzschmar, 2013a, 2013b; Keitel, 2011; Kluttig - Kretzschmar - Lupprian - Reininghaus - Schäfer - Schneider-Kempf - Wartenberg*). While on the one hand, the work of archivist is restricted to the role of servant of „higher social needs“ (*Marckhgott; Marckhgott - Zauner*), resp. the role of archive to „service facilities“, on the other (as a way of preventing such a role) emphasis is placed on the restoration of „synthesis“ of archivist and historian and on the possible enhancement of function and importance of archives (*Hochedelinger; Schuster*). This is also related to the emphasis on proper teaching of auxiliary, resp. fundamental historical sciences (or more accurately on its renewal, especially after study programs has begun to disappear from German and Austrian universities), but on the acquisition of relevant historical knowledge as well. It is precisely the set of competencies acquired in this way that can contribute to the responsible evaluation of importance of processed archival materials which can be subsequently reflected in the quality of archival tools and can make a practical use of archival material more effective. In addition to fulfilling requirements of this „basic level“, the combination of work of archivists and historians, resp. the application of relevant knowledge (including Auxiliary historical sciences and History of administration) also enables the development of „higher level“ archival work, i.e. the search for solutions to scientific tasks that can contribute to further enhancing the importance of archives. All this despite the fact that finding an optimal balance between the mission of archive as an institution caring for archival documents and as a research institution mediating archival wealth will probably always be a difficult problem.

### 1.2 The second focus of Archival science - Cyber archival studies?

However, in the future, the emphasis on traditional historical education will most likely represent only one eventuality which will be related to the work of preserving, accessing and using classical archival material. The massive rise of new technologies, along with the change in the way information is recorded and the associated increase in number of electronic archival documents will create a new type of archives and the „split“ concept of Archival science will respond to this appropriately. In addition to focusing on classical sources preserved in the analogue form a specialization on digital objects will be developed - in this context there is even a talk about the central position of Archival science in the „scientific canon of information age“ or within the „information galaxy“ (*Keitel, pp. 35-37; Kretzschmar, 2013b, p. 153*). Modernization of teaching is already evident abroad at the Archivschule in Marburg (*Becker*), the Fachhochschule in Potsdam (*Schwarz*), the Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung in Vienna (*Winkelbauer, 2014; Brunner; Winkelbauer, 2012*) or at universities in Lublin (*Konstankiewicz*) and Budapest (*Körmendi*) as well as in the Czech Republic, particularly at universities in Hradec Králové, České Budějovice, Ústí nad Labem and Prague (*Němečková; Grulich, 2014, 2015; Ryantová, 2014b; Sulitková, 2014; Ebelová*). But it will be necessary to respond to other new impulses and adapt teaching lessons to them adequately. According to some opinions, in addition to so-called scientific archivists, who will find their use mainly in archives with the predominance of analogue archival documents, professional archivists will be profiled. They will be less oriented on History and more on Informatics (*Čtvrtník, 2014*). There is also a possibility of „cyber archivists“ for whom historical knowledge will still be important (*Grulich, 2015*). In this context and with regard to changes in Archival science the issue of professional identity of archivist is addressed too. Although specifics of various countries and archives and particularly differences between Europe and America are not always taken into account (*Čtvrtník, 2015, pp. 386-387; Cox, 1990, 1993, 2011; Cook; Ketelaar*).

### 1.3 The evaluation of archival documents

Qualified selection of documents for archival storage and their responsible evaluation remain an important question for both analogue and digital documents. A discussion on this issue has been taking place in connection with the rise of new technologies for some time now, especially in the Netherlands, Switzerland, France and Germany (*Menne-Harritz; Poncet, pp. 398-400; Keitel, 2010; Archive im digitalen Zeitalter; Kretzschmar, 2010; Kretzschmar, 2013a, p. 9, 22; Kretzschmar, 2013b; Bischoff*). It mainly focuses on various types of official records. The highly specialized approach to evaluation of documents in the field of state administration is best described in Switzerland by the so-called prioritization theory („Priorisierung“) which was introduced at the beginning of the 1990s in the local Federal Archive (*Bütikofer; Čtvrtník, 2009*). In this case it is not only the application of source criticism, which is again a historical knowledge (*Bischoff, p. 51*)<sup>1</sup>, but given that selected documents serve as testimony of a certain time period, emphasis is placed on the fact that archives and archivists are significantly involved both in the creation of historical memory and in ensuring transparency of administrative acts in the pre-archival stage. In essence they become a guarantee of democratic social processes (*Menne-Harritz*). All these questions concern not only Records management (and the problem of registry together with the subsequent creation of archival funds), but also the modern Diplomatics and Archival theory which often remains on the edge of interest. This applies to Archival science in the Czech Republic as well. Although it is possible to follow up some studies which were created primarily on the basis of a debate that has been underway since the late 1960s (*Šamberger; Babička - Kalina; Sulitková; Kušik; Rákoš; Wolfshörndl; Ridener*). Apart from the issue of *Records management* as the initial stage of future archival care, *Archive management* will also be important in integrating archives into the whole social framework (*Kretzschmar, 2013a, pp. 18-27; Rumschöttel*). The preparation of future archivists should take into account these facts.

### 1.4 Informatics, Digital humanities

On the other hand, purely technical issues of computer science (i.e. the technical side of archival work) are likely to remain a task for specialists in this area. Although a collaboration between archivists and computer scientists will still be indispensable in connection with the accessibility of archival documents online (*Sulitková, 2011*). It will be desirable to acquire at least basic knowledge of Informatics or so-called History informatics and Digital humanities (*Burkard - Vogeler - Gruner*)<sup>2</sup>. It will be needed, for example, during the creation of digital editions (*Graf; Vogeler, 2006, 2009*) or in 3D modelling and in cooperation with other fields (mainly Historic preservation, but Archaeology as well; *Grulich, 2015, p. 39*). And of course cyber security issues will be relevant too. However, the use of information technology is certainly not limited to Archival science. Nevertheless systematic education in computer science remains unresolved and encounters various difficulties which includes unclear definition of content in this fast and spontaneously developing sub-sector, problems associated with the workload of suitable specialists, etc. (*Dvořák*).

## 2 Further education of archivists

Particularly due to the rapid development of information technologies and the change in requirements (not only) for the profession of archivist it is clear that the knowledge gained at the beginning of archivist's career is not sufficient for the entire duration of its course (i.e. several decades). Therefore, besides university education or other special trainings (and self-education) possibilities for further education and the expansion of professional competencies must be developed. This concerns not only university-educated archivists, but other employees and conservators as well. And it is not just about aforementioned issues of Records management, Digitization and Informatics, but also about education in Law or in other disciplines in the form of various courses or other short-term professional trainings in lifelong learning<sup>3</sup>. In the case of university education, the cooperation with professional archivists is highly desirable and similarly the cooperation (if possible) of archives with specialists from the academic

1. F. M. Bischoff assigns archival wealth to so-called remains as part of classical theories of the historical source (Johann Gustav Droysen, Ernst Bernheim).

2. In the Czech Republic these issues are not yet sufficiently addressed.

3. As part of the debate on archival education at the National archive conference of the Czech Republic in Liberec on April 27, 2017, the suitability of courses concerning „occupational burnout“ or resistance to stress associated with, for example, the performance of Records management was mentioned in this context.



sphere is equally suitable - but the initiative should be on the side of archives or central archival authorities. All the more so because they are often immediate drivers of various changes which require the relevant extension of competencies and for which the university teaching, due to the frequency of these changes and the impossibility of rapid change of study programs, does not have the opportunity to respond adequately. As an example of such activities may serve accredited courses organized by the Budapest City Archives (*Haraszti*). Various archival societies or associations can have an important role in this respect as well. This is the case in France, where the Association of French Archivists (Association des archivistes français) offers a wide range of different special courses (*Čtvrtník, 2015, p. 392; Grippon; Verry; Martinez - Dejob*). And something similar also exists in other countries (e.g. Switzerland, Canada, Australia; (*Čtvrtník, 2015, p. 393; Egloff; Nahuet; McCausland*). Moreover, France can serve as an example of a country, where other opportunities for further education are provided by state authorities. Whether it is the Département de la Formation des Scientifiques et Technique within the Direction générale des patrimoines or the Institut national du patrimoine which is a specialized supplemental training institute for cultural heritage until recently reserved only for graduates of the École nationale des chartes. Both institutions are mostly funded by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication (*Čtvrtník, 2015, p. 392; Čtvrtník, 2016; Nougaret*).

In the Czech Republic the organization of various professional formations has not yet received much support either from the superior authority, i.e. from the Department of Archival Administration of the Ministry of the Interior (with the exception of organizing several training courses) or from the Czech Archival Society and individual archives. Therefore, a proposal to establish a separate Archival Institute has emerged recently. The Institute would be similar to the German Archivschule in Marburg or to the French Institut national du patrimoine and it could provide long-term (as well as short-term) professional formations. But the idea of its focus are more far-reaching: it could concentrate on research activities as well and on solving some special problems from the area of Archival science, but also from related fields (such as Records management, Information science - information, their administration and processing, and Management of cultural heritage; *Čtvrtník, 2015, pp. 393-399*). Both in terms of integration into organizational structures (whether within the Ministry of the Interior, which includes state archives in the Czech Republic, or within the Academy of Sciences, where there is rather a trend towards merging institutes, not creating new ones) and the necessary funding the establishment of the Archival Institute does not look very real at the moment.

### 3 Conclusion

The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought numerous changes to Archival science. Not only employees of different archives, but also universities, resp. educational institutions, which trains these workers, have to cope with them. Experts from various countries agree that archivists will still need „traditional“ knowledge of Auxiliary historical sciences or History of administration in the future, especially since main concepts and principles of archivist's work must remain in force. But in view of the changed way of recording information, it will be necessary, in addition to focusing on classical sources preserved in the analogue form, to develop a more significant specialization in information science or create directly „Cyber archival science“. Even if historical knowledge will still be important. The purely technical issues of computer science (i.e. the technical side of archival work) will probably remain the task for specialists, but collaboration between archivists and computer scientists will still be indispensable and archivists should obtain at least basic knowledge of computer science or so-called History informatics, Digital humanities and Cyber security. Due to the rapid development of information technologies and the change in requirements (not only) for the profession of archivist it is obvious that the knowledge gained at the beginning of archivist's career is not sufficient for the entire duration of its course. Therefore, besides university education or other special trainings (and self-education) possibilities for further education and the expansion of professional competencies in different areas (not only in Records management, Digitization, Informatics, but also in Law, etc.) must be developed. Various courses or other short-term professional trainings in lifelong learning should represent an appropriate platform for this. The main initiative should be in this case on the side of archives (or archival societies) or central archival authorities. All the more so because they are often immediate drivers of various changes which require the relevant extension of competencies and for which the university teaching, due to the frequency of these changes and the impossibility of rapid change of study programs, does not have the opportunity to respond adequately. The existence of special institutions for further education would represent an ideal solution for this situation.

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### SUMMARY

The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought numerous changes to Archival science. Not only employees of different archives, but also universities, resp. educational institutions, which trains these workers, have to cope with them. Experts from various countries agree that archivists will still need „traditional“ knowledge of Auxiliary historical sciences or History of administration in the future, especially since main concepts and principles of archivist's work must remain in force. But in view of the changed way of recording informa-



tion, it will be necessary, in addition to focusing on classical sources preserved in the analogue form, to develop a more significant specialization in information science or create directly „Cyber archival science“. Even if historical knowledge will still be important. The purely technical issues of computer science (i.e. the technical side of archival work) will probably remain the task for specialists, but collaboration between archivists and computer scientists will still be indispensable and archivists should obtain at least basic knowledge of computer science or so-called History informatics, Digital humanities and Cyber security. Due to the rapid development of information technologies and the change in requirements (not only) for the profession of archivist it is obvious that the knowledge gained at the beginning of archivist's career is not sufficient for the entire duration of its course. Therefore, besides university education or other special trainings (and self-education) possibilities for further education and the expansion of professional competencies in different areas (not only in Records management, Digitization, Informatics, but also in Law, etc.) must be developed. Various courses or other short-term professional trainings in life-long learning should represent an appropriate platform for this. The main initiative should be in this case on the side of archives (or archival societies) or central archival authorities. All the more so because they are often immediate drivers of various changes which require the relevant extension of competencies and for which the university teaching, due to the frequency of these changes and the impossibility of rapid change of study programs, does not have the opportunity to respond adequately. The existence of special institutions for further education would represent an ideal solution for this situation.

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