Vlatka LEMIĆ*

Appraisal in ARHiNET Archival Information System

* pročelnica Odjela za informacije i komunikaciju i Razvojne, matične i dokumentacijske službe HDA, Hrvatski državni arhiv, Marulićev trg 21, 10 000 Zagreb

At the end of 2006 Croatian State Archives started the construction of new archival information system which should cover all archival functions: keeping, preserving, arranging and using of archival records. Technical characteristics of new information system include WEB application with MSSQL server as a basis and C# computer language. Advantages of this solution are building of uniform base and uniform system of data protection with minimal costs (installation, maintenance and data backup). New unique archival information-evidence system includes few modules: Description of archival material, Archival documentation, National archival service' central evidences, Service for archival records outside archives and User service. System is created on modular basis which practically means design and implementation of particular modules as separate. Changing of regulations at the end of 2007 enables inclusion of all records owners and creators in Croatia into ARHiNET system. For the records creators and the owners under the supervision of Archives, ARHiNET facilitate listing of archival units in their possession, that is, support the documentation management in records offices. By processing and describing of archival records by their creators, in the early phase and before their transfer to Archives, an early accessibility of data is enabled, and the procedure of records transfer are much more facilitated. The delivery of lists of archival records to the competent Archives is automated: the authorization of the authorized person is sufficient. ARHiNET supports functions of appraisal of records and automatic production of records schedules, as well as records disposal lists and transfer lists to the Archives. This article describes experiences of Croatian archival service in the applying procedures of appraisal and disposal of archival records in

Implementation of the national archival information system

By launching ARHiNET, a network program solution for describing, processing and the management of archival records, the Croatian State Archives (CSA) took up establishing an information and documentation system of the Croatian archival service. ARHiNET enables the search and retrieval of data through the Internet, and in the same time allows access to all program functions used for keeping, preserving, processing and using archival records. This is made possible by a system that administrates user rights and the access rights to particular data.

ARHiNET provides not only the possibility processing of archival material but it also supports all types of documentation on archival material, use and digitalization of archival records and other tasks associated with the management of archival records. For that reasons it presents a complete solution for the work of the archival institutions. It is open to all creators and owners of archival materials which enables the processing and describing of archival holdings in non-archival institutions, makes its documentation and preservation easier, protects it and permits availability of data.

System development began in the second half of 2006 and in October the first version, containing converted data on the archival holdings from various data bases was installed on the server of the CSA. Training of archivists to work with the new system was organized first in CSA and after that in regional state archives and the sequence of operations was defined: description of archival units and records creators, entry and processing of finding aids, data entry into the acquisitions and deposit lists, as well as the entry of data on the records creators and owners under the supervision of archives.

In October 2007 the online Register of archival fonds and collections of the Republic of Croatia, which is an integral part of the ARHiNET system, was opened to the public and an online access to the data on archival records kept in the archives, as well as other institutions which hold archival material was provided. The Register currently contains data on 14.000 fonds and collections, 14.000 creators and 6.000 records creators and owners, more than 4.000

finding aids and 2.500 bibliographical units on archival holdings, as well as digital copies of particular documents. Data are being entered and continually updated on the basis of the submissions by records creators and owners under the supervision of the state archives. The Register contains basic data on archival material that enable the users to find out which fonds, collections or single documents are to be found in Croatia and in which institution particular records are kept. Alongside information on the records content there are also data on supplementary sources, finding aids which can be useful for more detailed research and on bibliographic units containing information on particular archival material. From the normative database of the records creators one can find out where and when single persons, families and corporate bodies who created particular archival material lived, worked, acted and which records were created through they activities. Data in Register can currently be searched and retrieved by simple search using the word from the name of an archival unit, records creator or records owner, by classification codes and by dates of records creation. Digital images of records, if existed, are also available to public as well as full texts of finding aids, transliterations and translations of particular documents.

Within a period of one year (from October 2006 when the system was installed on the server of the CSA till October 2007 when it was made public) all state archives joined the project which enabled performing information-documentation service about archival records on national level. The introduction of ARHiNET for other public and private records owners in October 2007 marked the second phase in its realization and the continuation of activities regarding integration and exchange of data among the institutions creating and keeping archival material. Around 350 employees from more than 80 various institutions are currently registered in the system.

Legal framework regarding the protection of archival material

Archives and Archival Institution Act issued in 1997 defined archival service as an obligatory public service of special interest for the country and archival material as cultural heritage. Proceeding from the principle that all archival material constitutes part of the Croatian cultural heritage, measures for its protection had been introduced, according to which obligations of owners of public and private archival records are defined, as well as the responsibilities of the state archives.

Creators and owners of public records are obliged to take proper care for their records till the transfer to the competent archives and to insure adequate location and equipment for their storage and protection. This also includes delivery of lists of archival records to the archives, notifications of all changes, consulting with archives before any measures concerning records are taken and rendering possible for the employees of the archives to supervise the keeping of the material.

Owners of private records are obliged to notify the competent archives on material in their possession, to ensure their protection

the framework of ARHiNET system.

LEMIĆ, Vlatka, La selezione in ARHi-NET, sistema d'informazione archivistico. Atlanti, Vol. 18, Trieste 2008, pp. 307-316.

Alla fine del 2006 l'Archivio di Stato Croato ha iniziato la costruzione di un nuovo sistema informatico archivistico che dovrebbe coprire tute le funzioni archivistiche: tenuta, conservazione, gestione, ed utilizzo dei documenti archivistici. Le caratteristiche tecniche del nuovo sistema includono applicazioni WEB con data base MSSQL server e linguaggio di programmazione C#. I vantaggi di tale soluzione sono la costruzione di una piattaforma uniforme ed un sistema di protezione dati con costi minimi (installazione, manutenzione e backup dei dati). I moduli inclusi sono pochi: descrizione del materiale archivistico, documentazione archivistica, evidenze del Servizio archivistico centrale, servizio per i documenti al di fuori dell'archivio, e servizio utenza. Il sistema è creato su base modulare, che in pratica significa che il design e l'implementazione di particolari moduli sono separati. Il cambiamento legislativo alla fine del 2007 permette l'inclusione di tutti i creatori e possessori di archivi croati nel sistema ARHiNET. Per i creatori e possessori di archivi sotto la supervisione dell'Archivio, ARHiNET facilita l'inventariazione dei documenti in loro possesso, cioè supporta la gestione documentale nei loro uffici preposti. Attraverso la gestione e descrizione dei documenti da parte dei loro creatori, nella prima fase e prima del loro trasferimento all'Archivio di competenza, viene attivata da bell'inizio l'accessibilità ai dati, ed il procedimento di trasferimento dei documenti è molto più facilitata. La consegna degli inventari al competente Archivio è automatizzata: l'autorizzazione dell'operatore preposto è sufficiente. ARHiNET supporta funzioni di selezione dei documenti e di redazione in automatico di schede documentali, così come di elenchi di scarto ed elenchi di trasferimento all'Archivio. L'articolo descrive le esperienze del servizio archivistico croato nell'applicazione di procedure di selezione e scarto di documenti archivistici all'interno del sistema ARHiNET.

LEMIĆ, Vlatka, Vrednotenje v arhivskem informativnem sistemu ARHiNET. Atlanti, Zv. 18, Trst 2008, str. 307-316.

Proti koncu leta 2006 je Hrvatski državni arhiv pričel z novim arhivskim informacijskim sistemom, s katerim je želel pokriti več postopkov v arhivih, od skladiščenja do uporabe arhivskih dokumentov. Tako je nov sistem za popisovanje obsegal naslednje module: opis arhivskih dokumentov, samo arhivsko dokumentacijo, arhivske centre na nacionalni ravni, centre za arhivske dokumente zunaj arhivskih ustanov in službo za uporabnike arhivskega gradiva. Po spremembi arhivske zakonodaje pa so se vsi ustvarjalci arhivskega

in dokumentarnega gradiva na Hrvaškem priključili na sistem ARHiNET, ki podpira funkcije vrednotenja dokumentacije, avtomatično ustvarja šablone za popisovanje dokumentacije, prav tako pa zbirne liste popisanega gradiva. Tako so v članku prikazane izkušnje pri delo z dokumentacijo v sistemu ARHiNET.

SUMMARY

At the end of 2006 Croatian State Archives started the construction of a new archival information system which should cover all archival functions: keeping, preserving, arranging and using of archival records. Technical characteristics of new information system include WEB application with MS SQL server as a basis and C# computer language. The advantage of this solution is building of an integrated base and a unique system of data protection with minimal costs (installation, maintenance and data backup). This new unique archival information-evidence system includes few modules: Description of archival material, Archival documentation, National archival service' central evidences, Service for archival records outside archives and User service. The system is created on modular basis which practically means which practically means design and implementation of particular modules as separate projects and their continuous connecting in a unique system. Changing of regulations at the end of 2007 enables inclusion of all records owners and creators in Croatia into ARHiNET system. For the records creators and owners under the supervision of state archives, ARHiNET facilitates listing of archival units in their possession, that is, supports the documentation management in records offices. By processing and describing archival records by their creators, in the early phase and before their transfer to archives, early accessibility of data is enabled, and the procedure of records transfer are much more facilitated. The delivery of lists of archival records to the competent archives is automated: the authorization by an authorized person is sufficient. ARHiNET supports functions of appraisal of records and automatic production of records schedules, as well as records disposal lists and transfer lists to the archives. This article describes first experiences of Croatian archival service in the applying procedures of appraisal and disposal of archival records in the framework of ARHNET system.

and keeping, arrange and list them and allow the archives their examination and, if required, to make safety copies. In case records owners are unable to arrange and make list of documents, it is their obligation to let the archives do so and if they cannot meet conditions for keep and maintain it properly, the archives is entitled to take over the material and hold them until proper conditions are ensured.

Conditions of keeping and preservation of archival material outside the archives and of private material classified as cultural good are defined by *Regulations for Preservation and Keeping of Archival and Current Records outside Archives* issued in 2004. This includes all records and documents, official and business documentation created, accumulated and used in the conduct of activities of private persons and corporate bodies, regardless of the form, sort, source and acquisition methods. *The Regulations* defines organization and documentation, technical equipping and storing of archival fonds, professional staff and internal regulations for preservation of archival material. According to *Regulations* archival material must be organized in documentation collections/units formed from records created by particular creator, collection of documents of the same type or purpose, or documentation created by particular activities. On account of their quantity, diversity and easier keeping and protection, they can be organized into smaller documentary units. Documentary collection/unit is usually formed according to its original organization, i.e. classification of the documentation that it contains, or in a way that eliminates existing mistakes and defaults.

The Regulations also defines filing and keeping of the material after they had been documented and registered, technically equipped and sorted into archival units. The owners are obliged to ensure adequate place and equipment for the keeping of archival material and to have trained staff for the tasks concerning protection and processing of archival material.

All issues regarding organization, documentation, transfer, keeping, selection and disposal of archival material, records owners regulate by their own regulations for preservation and keeping of archival and current records. The application of the regulations should be authorized by competent state archives and it defines:

- mode of record keeping,
- mode of creation, processing and handling of files and documents in process,
- mode and period of internal transfer of records,
- mode of office record-keeping documentation and other documentation on records,
- technical equipping, identification and disposal of records,
- place, conditions and methods of keeping of the archival material,
- regulations for use of archival material,
- retention period and process of appraisal and disposal of records,
- process of the destruction of disposed material and the process transfer of records to the competent archives,
- obligations and responsibilities concerning handling, processing and protection of archival material.

Delivery of lists of archival records to the archives

The obligation regarding the delivery of lists of archival records to the state archives is defined in the paragraph 7 of the *Archives and Archival Institution Act* and elaborated in the paragraphs 5 and 6 of the above mentioned *Regulations*. According to the *Regulations* each owner is obliged to hand in the list of all archival material i.e. documentation collections and units in his possession. Such list must contain following categories: title and name of creator, time of records creation, quantity of records, medium and type of records, content description as well as the list of smaller units that the documentary collection is divided into. The owner is obliged to notify the competent archives about all changes within fifteen days period.

The owners are obliged to make a list of archival units for each and every fond and collection in their possession. This list must contain data on documentary units that the collection is divided into and archival units in each documentary unit. Description of documentary units in the list encloses ordinal number, reference code of the unit, title, content (description of the material, files or activities it refers to), medium, type and the quantity of records, technical units, time of creation and additional remarks.

The list of archival units in collection contains data on ordinal number, reference code, title, type, time of creation, retention period and technical units. This list can be replaced with some other register by the owner containing the data mentioned above, under the condition that it comprises all units of the documentary collection and none of those which do not belong to it. The owner has the obligation to deliver once a year a list of archival records to the competent archives, showing the stand on the last day of the previous year.

By the complementation of the *Regulations* from October 2007 the mode of delivering the lists of archival records had been changed; since then the lists are being handed in via electronic forms. This was introduced for the purpose of more accurate documentation, better search possibilities and more effective data exploitability.

The *Regulations* defines two modes of electronic form delivery: either by a direct entry into the data base of the competent archives or in the form of an electronic model (xml directory with structured register data) defined by the Croatian State Archives.

Records owners who wish to make a direct entry into the archival data base are not obliged to keep their own lists of archival records, in electronic or traditional form, since the data base has the function of the evidence of their holdings. Data base where state archives in Croatia keep records about archival material of records creators and owners under the supervision of state archives is a constituent part of the national archival information system ARHiNET. In order to be able to enter and search the data, a prior registration at the competent state archives, is needed.

Records owners who decide to deliver lists via electronic form use the xml directories through xml scheme which can be found on the ARHiNET web page[1] where all owners can open and download

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1. www.arhinet.arhiv.hr/Public/ZML.aspx.

them. Those who use this electronic form are still obliged to keep their own lists of records according to the paragraphs 5 and 6 of the *Regulations.*

Instructions for the delivery of lists of archival records :

The given schemes are filled in using the xml editors (there are many those free of charge in the Internet, e.g. Liquid XML Studio 2008 - Freeware 1.0.8, Peter's XML Editor 2.0 or WmHelp XmlPad 3.0.2). Forms that had been filled in are handed in to the archives on a CD and if filled in properly, data is automatically read by the system. Xml directories are intended exclusively for conversion, i.e. for importing of data from various registers by various records owners and creators into a unique national archival system; they do not serve as tools for everyday operations while making a list of archival records.

Delivery of lists of archival records via ARHiNET

Records creators and owners can manage their required evidences of documentary collections and units directly into the ARHi-NET system. In that case they need not invent their own documentation system nor worry about technology (software and hardware) since all they need is an Internet connection. Evidences kept in the ARHiNET system are compatible with regulations and standards,

the issue of delivery of lists of archival records to the competent ar-
chives is automatically solved since everything is done in the unique
system and in the same time the archives additionally help the recor-
ds owners in organising their holdings and keeping records.

Registration on the ARHiNET:

After the records owner had contacted competent archives and
arranged the level of service, it is the task of the archives to educate
its staff in the system and conduct a registration process enabling
access to the closed part of the system. After the user had received a
registration confirmation via e-mail, they can begin using the sy-
stem.

Example of list of archival records in ARHiNET:

Besides supporting the required evidences of documentation
collections and units, ARHiNET allows the records creators and ow-
ners outside the archives to make use of all options for description
and management of archival material. Processing and describing ar-

chival records by the original creators, in the early phase and before deposing them in archives, provides earlier availability of data and makes it easier for the creators to prepare archival records for the deposit and the transferring procedure itself. The data on archival records registered by the creator are simply integrated into the archival description after the materials had been taken over to the archives, which considerably accelerate and shorten the processing of archival records. The delivery of lists of archival records to the competent archives is fully automatic: the authorization of the authorized person is sufficient. The system supports the functions of appraisal of records and automatic production of records schedules, as well as records disposal lists and transfer lists to the archives. It is sufficient to enter the time limit of keeping of an individual listed unit or entire of records. After the transfer of records to the archives, data are simply included into the fond which the archival records belong to. The records creator can always access the data on their archival material regardless of the fact they had been deposited to the archives.

Legal framework and practice regarding the appraisal of archival material

Regulations for Appraisal and Procedures of Selecting and Disposal of Archival Records from 2002 define actions and procedures as well as their practical implementation, appraisal criteria and records owners' categorization. There are several appraisal criteria according to which obligation, need and interest and single or public use of keeping the records according to the specific terms are being determined:

- significance of records creator's activity and functions,
- legal regulations and standards that determine obligations and retention period of records,
- business needs and supervision over records creator business,
- protection of rights and interests of individuals or groups,
- public interest in access to facts documented by records,
- documentary and information value of records,
- significance of records for culture, history and other social sciences,
- value of records as cultural heritage.

The significance of entirety of records that is made by individual creator for documenting its activities and functions is being determined through categorization. It represents the base of supervision and acquisition policy of an archives and records creators are being classified into three categories. Categorization of public and private records creators is ratified by Croatian Archival Council on suggestion of state archives according to their professional competencies and archives give creators the formal certificate of categorization upon its announcement in the official paper.

Lists of records with retention periods that are determined for the implementation of procedures of appraisal and disposal are also prescribed by the *Regulations.* Three kinds of lists are defined: general, functional (for particular business activities) and special lists. General and functional lists are defined by Croatian Archival Council and suggested by CSA, and special lists that include all types of recor-

ds by specific creator are defined by a record creator itself. General list refers to the records that are produced or saved by performing administrative or general functions, and functional list to the records that are produced or saved by a specific business activity. Special list contains holdings produced by a specific records creator, and has to be in accordance with its classification plans and administrative and business functions. Special list with retention periods that are based on general and functional lists is obligatory for all records creators and is being approved by competent state archives.

Although the *Regulations* prescribe that general and functional lists should be made within one year from issuing the *Regulations*, they have not been adopted yet. Records creators had the same period for creating their special lists, but most of them did not meet these provisions. Because of lack of regular legal acts, when creating special lists Recommended records retention period list and Recommended list of records of permanent values issued in the appendix of the *Regulations* are used. Other obligations defined by the *Regulations* also did not come into practice yet, and CSA is still the only state archives that created the list of categorized records creators under its supervision in accordance with proper procedure.

Issues concerning records management organization and practices, organization of documentation and procedures of disposal and transfer of records, as well as defining records retention periods are the most frequently asked questions that records creators asked archives. By inclusion of data and documentation about records creators and owners under the state archives supervision into a unique system, basic preconditions for prescribing and unifying the criteria for their categorization have been fulfilled. Comparison of records creators according to their business activities and functions will facilitate their valorization and appraisal of records created by them. Gathering lists of archival records of all records creators into a unique system enables, for the first time, comparison of criteria for defining retention periods as well as records designated for permanent keeping. Recommended list of records of permanent values defines several functions - general and organizational one, administrative, legal, business and self-government one; personnel, financial and commercial one; statistics, planning and analysis of all business areas; investment, building and development one; and informational and documentational one - but only a thorough analysis of existing data will enable realization of prescribed regulations and making of professional standards and guidelines.

Example description of records owner in ARHiNET:

Instead of conclusion

Defining and gathering all data concerning archival records and records' creators and owners at one place, that is implementation of unique system of registering and arranging of archival material provides integration and exchange of data of state archives. In the same time, it enables checking quantities and quality factors of status of arranging of archival holdings, monitoring and documenting of particular areas of archives and archival service activities, as well as comparisons between existing data and de facto situation.

Present work in the system resulted with major changes in the unifying description and presentation of archival units, standardization of documentation and reports on archival material, and standardization of procedures concerning particular areas of archives activities. Possibility of integrated access to data and statistics and documentation on archival profession as a whole, rationalized and improved quality of central national archival documentation service. This justifies the decision to introduce the unique information-evidence information system as well as on good professional and tech-

nical planning of its development and implementation. Its implementation enabled integration of data and services in archives and in the same time users have access to all information on registered material and its creators and holders at one place.

The unique national archival system enables better professional supervision concerning preservation and arranging of archival material in non-archival institutions, as well as, facilitate registering and protection of archival units in their possession and accessibility of data. Inclusion of all records holders and creators into ARHiNET system, that is gathering data on archival material at one place solves the problem of documenting archival materials outside state archives network. Archival material kept in other cultural and scientific institutions has so far been outside reach and influence of archival profession and by arranging and presenting it in the unique system, archival service will accomplish complete access into status of archival material at the national level. Further goals of ARHiNET includes continuation of activities on standardisation and control of records, activities on integration and exchange of data among the institutions that keep archival material and on rationalisation and standardisation of business processes in all Croatian archives.