

Educational and Practical Aspects of Training Archivists on the Modern Stage

LIUDMILA N. VARLAMOVA, Ph.D.

associate professor, Vice-Dean of the Records Management and Technotronic Archives Department of the Russian State University for the Humanities
e-mail: lvarlam@yandex.ru

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses some aspects of training archivists on the present stage and suggests the ways of its improving according to the current needs. In the modern world there are several types of archives: historical, technotronic, digital, business archives etc. It should be noted that in many countries all these archives are not so clearly structured and often have a mixed character. University archivists' curriculum must include many special subjects which will enable training highly qualified professionals capable to work in all types of archives. However, a limited number of hours in the curriculum makes it practically impossible. Each university must solve this problem independently with regards to its faculty (staff), technical equipment and market's demands. An essential aspect of this work might be a differentiation between Bachelor's and Master's programs as well as the continuity of the former and the latter.

Key words: training, education, archivists, archival studies, educational programs, curricula

Aspetti teorici e pratici della formazione degli archivisti sul palcoscenico moderno

SINTESI

L'articolo parla di alcuni aspetti della formazione degli archivisti che nella fase presente suggerisce i modi del suo miglioramento secondo le esigenze attuali. Nel mondo moderno ci sono diversi tipi di archivi: storici, tecntronici, digitali, d'impresa, ecc. Si noti che in molti Paesi tutti questi archivi non sono così chiaramente strutturati e hanno spesso un carattere misto. Il curriculum degli archivisti delle università deve includere molte discipline speciali che consentiranno la formazione di professionisti altamente qualificati in grado di lavorare in tutti i tipi di archivi. Tuttavia, il numero limitato di ore nel curriculum rende ciò praticamente impossibile. Ogni università deve risolvere questo problema in modo indipendente per quanto riguarda la relativa facoltà (il personale), le attrezzature tecniche e le esigenze di mercato. Un aspetto essenziale di questo lavoro potrebbe essere una differenziazione tra i programmi di Bachelor e Master, nonché la loro continuità.

Parole chiave: formazione, archivisti, studi archivistici, programmi formativi, curricula

Izobraževalni in praktični vidiki sodobnega usposabljanja arhivistov

IZVLEČEK

Avtorica v članku obravnava nekatere vidike usposabljanja arhivistov in predlaga načine za njegovo izboljšanje v skladu s trenutnimi potrebami. V sodobnem svetu obstaja več vrst arhivov: zgodovinski, tehnološki, digitalni, poslovnih arhivi itd. Potrebno je opozoriti, da v mnogih državah ti arhivi niso tako jasno strukturirani in imajo pogosto mešan karakter. Univerzitetni arhivski kurikulum mora vsebovati mnogo posebnih predmetov, ki bodo omogočili usposabljanje visokokvalificiranih strokovnjakov, ki bodo sposobni delati v vseh vrstah arhivov. Vendar omejeno število ur v kurikulumu to praktično onemogoča. Vsaka univerza mora ta problem rešiti neodvisno glede na svoje fakultete (osebje), tehnično opremo in zahteve trga. Bistveni vidik tega dela je lahko diferenciacija med diplomskim in magistrskim programom ter kontinuiteta prvega in drugega.

Ključne besede: izobraževanje, usposabljanje, arhivisti, študij arhivistike, izobraževalni programi, kurikulum

The introduction of informational technologies into all spheres of life and activities of the State and society has led to quality changes in the objectives of the preservation of documentary heritage and has made the ways of their achievement much more difficult. Well established techniques of disposition, description, registration and accounting of traditional paper documents, as well as of those on magnetic tapes (media) and film carriers (media) are still in demand. However, they cannot be fully applied to digital records. At the same time, there are some aspects of digital records' preservation which are not studied in full although partly standardized.

In fact, on the modern stage there are several types of archives:

- traditional (nowadays historical) archives which preserve retrospective information on paper (papyrus, rolls, maps, paper documents etc.);
- technotronic archives preserving information on non-paper carries (records on magnetic tapes, film carriers (media) etc.);
- electronic or digital archives which preserve information on digital carriers (media) (most modern records);
- archives of business and public organizations, private archives storing the documents and records on any carriers (media);
- departmental archives of State bodies which store their documents and records on selected carriers (media);
- archives providing business services in storage and preservation of documents and records on carriers (media) submitted by the client.

Russian State archives have a strict specialization according to the type of stored documents and records and to that of their carriers (media). For example:

- Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts¹ stores papyrus, rolls, maps, old paper documents etc.
- Russian State Archive of cinema and audio-photo-records² stores video- and audiovisual records, documentary films, photos etc.
- Russian Archives of the Russian Federation³ store the documents and records on different carriers (media) coming from Federal executive bodies.

Even though in many countries this division in conventional and many State archives keep the documents and records on different types of carriers (media), all of them are in different depositories as they need special preservation conditions. Speaking of the latter, it must be noted that this concept has several aspects (access, safety, protection etc.), including the documents' and records' guaranty of preservation (ensuring the preservation) both content and physical. These practices also include installment temperature, humidity, light, anti-dust and anti-bacterial control etc.

It is important to note that not all State archives can really influence the policy of State bodies and even of these archives' acquisition officers in the questions of records management. That is why different aspects of records' size and structure, their formats and software (used to create them and having a great impact on their further preservation) are beyond their competences. It is mainly connected with a lack of competence of archives' staff in using informational technologies in management and archives as well as with non complex regulatory base in this area. All of this eventually results in the situation when State archives have to take into deposit the records which they might not be able to reproduce in the long run.

Despite a large number and variety of standards, specifications, requirements and recommendations elaborated worldwide, only a few countries have successfully solved the problem of digital archival storage and preservation. It is to be noted that in those countries the National Archive or a similar body is responsible for the archives and at the same time in charge of State records management.

The Russian Federal Archival Agency⁴ regained their control over State record keeping and documentation support of management in 2016 after more than a 20-year break. This gives grounds for belie-

1. Russian State Archives of Ancient Acts. - www.rgada.info.ru.

2. Russian State Archives of cinemas and audio-photo-records. - www.rgakfd.ru.

3. Russian Archives of the Russian Federation. - www.statearchive.ru.

4. Russian Federal Archival Agency. - www.archives.ru.

ving that in the near future the situation with regulating the creation of electronic records (as a part of digital records used in management) to be stored and preserved in State archives might change for the better.

However, nowadays the archives not only preserve documents and records, but they also provide numerous services for their usage and popularization, which is impossible without informational technologies. So, the latter are introduced in the work of all types of archives (e.g., traditional, historical) as without those technologies the archives will not be widely accessible and in high demand. Thus, traditional documents' (on paper, film, magnetic carriers (media) etc.) digitization is very actual for all kinds of archives, yet the problems of the use and storage of their digital copies have not been solved yet. This work cannot be carried out without qualified staff. The personnel for each type of archives must be specially trained to work with documents and records specific for their archives.

Archives of business and public organizations (companies) have always been completed with documents and records on different carriers (media). Centralization management of this process enabled those archives to include all necessary requirements into local regulatory acts referring to records management on the stage of a record's creation. This simplified the process of the records' transfer for storage in the archives of those structures and consequently ensured the preservation, safety, accessibility etc. of the former. The archives of these structures also need professional staff who must be able to work with all types of informational resources on different carriers (media).

All the above said gives a general picture of the issues which modern archivists are facing and which are to be taken into account in relevant curricula. However, due to a limited number of respective hours in the curriculum the question arises if it is possible in principle.

In my opinion, the task of studying all the aspects of archival storage of such different documents and records on so different carriers (media) within one educational program seems to be hardly achievable without a decrease in the quality of professional training.

A few approaches might be suggested to solve this problem.

The first approach will involve dividing Bachelor's programs into three basic types depending on the future work in:

- (1) traditional and historical archives;
- (2) technotronic archives;
- (3) digital archives.

The set of subjects will be different in all the three educational programs.

The first type of educational program will be focused on the studies of sources, national and world history, characteristics of different paper documents and specifics of their storage, preservation, restoration and conservation. According to the objectives of this educational program special attention should be paid to traditional professional subjects while applied aspects of informational technologies used in the archives area will be dealt with much less deeply.

The second type of educational program should be concentrated on the history of scientific and technical progress, on the records created on non-paper (magnetic, film etc.) carriers (media), on the characteristics of these records, on technical equipment to support and reproduce the latter, on the carriers (media), as well as on the specifics of the preservation, restoration and conservation of both carriers and records. In this educational program the main attention should be given to special historical and professional subjects focused on the types of the information and carriers (media) and to applied modern informational technologies used for creating modern video- and audiovisual records and photos.

The third educational program will focus on the history of the automatization and informatization of the professional spheres (e.g., management), on the variety of modern digital records (managerial, personnel, technical, audiovisual and video records etc.) and on the modern records management systems where the records are created, used and stored until their transfer to the archives and also on informational technologies which ensure their subsequent preservation, authenticity, reliability and accessibility in digital archival systems. This program should be concentrated on the practices of creation of documents

and digital records (or electronic records as a part of digital records) dealing with the modern period of national and world history. A special interest will be given to modern informational technologies and systems used in different professional spheres (e.g., management) and in archives, because these systems must be interoperable.

Those Bachelor's programs must continue in Master's programs which are also to be differentiated.

The first two Bachelor's programs could be completed by Master's programs in Humanities with emphasis on informational technologies used for digitizing documents on paper and non-paper (e.g., film, magnetic) carriers (media) aiming to create a digital reserve and user funds of the documents and records stored and preserved in archives.

The Master's program following the third type of Bachelor's program should concentrate on technological aspects, that is on the informational technologies for developing the systems of preservation, protection, safety of digital records stored in those systems.

The second approach will consist in elaborating an extensive BA program encompassing studies of all kinds of documents and records on different types of carriers (media), but in bare outlines with the aim to train broad specialists in archival work. In the first two years the students will study more general subjects while in the last two years they will be offered a wide range of special subjects which can help the students to choose their future specialization (oriented on archival market needs). This approach suggests that the chosen specialization should be continued in the Master's program which will refine and deepen the students' knowledge in the relative field. In this case the Master's program will depend on students' choice of special subjects which was made in the last year of Bachelor's course. As a rule, students' preferences are formed in view of the market needs.

While the first two approaches depend on the university management, their staff and technical equipment, the third one will be determined by archival market needs.

The third approach is based on educational programs which will respond to archival demands and include only special professional subjects. At the same time university archival research centres might provide services to different companies in a wide range of archival questions. These services could be offered in different ways (e.g., qualification upgrading or professional retraining courses). This approach is also important because many archivists who graduated several years ago need upgrading their professional level. These Bachelor's and retraining programs will be developed on and connected with the needs of archives. The diversity of Master's programs will also depend on the demands of archives which will be the main employers. These can be individual programs adjusted by the university to the customers' needs and assembled out of professional subjects.

Whichever approach the university chooses, its curriculum must include the following groups of subjects:

- historical subjects (national history; world history; national and international history of archival studies etc.);
- traditional professional subjects (archival science: theory and practice; State, municipal and departmental archives; business archives; personnel archives; methods and techniques of physical preservation of archival sources; methods and technologies for using archival information; methods and techniques of archives' acquisition; archival risk management etc.);
- modern professional subjects (informational technologies for archives: introductory course; formats of records; systems for long-term preservation of archival records; methodology and technologies of digitizing, migration and emulation of records; archival consulting and outsourcing etc.);
- records management subjects (document science; organization and techniques of records management; electronic records management systems etc.);
- juridical subjects (informational law; archival law; administrative law etc.).

The correlation of these subjects will influence the focus of the educational program and as a result, qualification and specialization of university graduates.

As Bachelor's programs in archival science are proposed by two departments of History and Archives College of the Russian State University for Humanities (the Department of Archives and that of Records Management and Technotronic Archives)⁵, it is difficult to expect a unified concept of educational programs' creation. The educational program of the Department of Archives is traditionally focused on training specialists for State, municipal and departmental archives where documents of the relevant bodies are mainly submitted in paper form. As far as the educational program of the Department of Records Management and Technical Archives is concerned, it trains professionals for audio-video, technical and economic archives which complete their funds mostly with records on special or digital carriers (media).

The Russian archival science school has a very long history and rich experience in regulating all aspects of archival practices. These knowledge and experience are reflected in Russian educational archival programs. However, the same as other countries, we are on the verge of global changes in the sphere of modern archivists' training. Dynamic development of informational technologies and digital archival area compels us to reconsider our educational programs and approaches to their creation.

SUMMARY

In the modern world the introduction of informational technologies has led to qualitative changes in the area of archival sources' preservation. The techniques and technologies for paper and non-paper documents' disposition, description, registration and accounting which have stood the test of time cannot be fully applicable to digital records. The aspects of long-term preservation of the latter have been understudied so far, which may present risks of the records' loss. Yet, digital records are actively created and used in all professional spheres, which means that they will be submitted to the archives in the near future. So, universities should upgrade their curricula in order to train archivists of the future, able to work with new kinds of documents and records as well as to assess the risks of long-term preservation of archival sources in view of their formats and carriers (media). A few approaches to the elaboration of new educational programs can be suggested. The first approach consists in developing Bachelor's programs based on the types of archives and their specifics. The second approach involves elaborating an extensive BA program including studies of all kinds of documents and records on different types of carriers (media), but in bare outlines with the aim to train general archivists. All these programs should continue on the Master's level where they will make the knowledge previously gained much deeper and more specialized. While the first two approaches depend on the university management, their staff and technical equipment, the third one will be determined by archival market needs. The third approach will involve the professional training according to the programs elaborated on the basis of archival market's needs. At the same time universities archival research centres might provide consulting services on a wide range of archival questions including retraining and upgrading of archival staff. Whichever approach the university chooses, its curriculum must include the following groups of subjects: historical, traditional professional, modern professional, records management, juridical etc. The correlation of these subjects will influence the focus of the educational program and as a result, qualification and specialization of the university graduate.

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5. Russian State University for Humanities. - www.rsu.ru.