

National Archives of Romania and Archival Strategies: a Brief Historical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The modern institution of the National Archival Service was established in Romania in 1831/1832, as a response to the modernization of the State and the lack of a repository for “old papers”. The institution had mandates during the following decades that were also mirrored in the institutional subordination. After the WW1, State Archives became a center for culture and history for “older archives”, despite some attempts of getting involved in the active cycles of records. The Communism regime brought a dramatic shift in institutional and archival mindset dimension. Nowadays, the archivists are facing new challenges. Based on this tradition and the post-modern realities, the author essays to answer if there is a need for a new archival strategy or not.

L'Archivio Nazionale di Romania e le strategie archivistiche – Una breve analisi storica

SINTESI

La moderna istituzione del Servizio Archivistico Nazionale venne effettuata in Romania nel 1831/1832, come risposta alla modernizzazione dello stato e per la mancanza di un deposito per le “carte vecchie”. Nei decenni successivi l'istituzione ebbe mandati rispecchiati nella subordinazione ministeriale. Dopo la Prima Guerra Mondiale l'Archivio di stato divenne un centro per la cultura e la storia per i “vecchi archivi”, nonostante il tentativo di venir coinvolto nella gestione degli archivi correnti. Il regime comunista portò un drammatico cambiamento nella dimensione della mentalità istituzionale ed archivistica. Al giorno d'oggi gli archivisti stanno affrontando nuove sfide. Basandosi su questa tradizione e sulle realtà post moderne, l'autore cerca di rispondere al quesito se ci sia bisogno o meno di una strategia archivistica.

Državni arhiv Romunije in arhivska strategija: kratka zgodovinska analiza

IZVLEČEK

Sodobna institucija nacionalne arhivske službe v Romuniji, je bila ustanovljena v letih 1831/1832, kot odgovor na modernizacijo države in pomanjkanje prostora za „star papir”. Institucija je imela v sledečih desetletjih podoblastila, ki so se odražala tudi v institucionalni podrejenosti. Po Prvi svetovni vojni je Državni arhiv postal kulturni in zgodovinski center za “starejše arhivsko gradivo”, čeprav so že takrat obstajali poskusi, da bi se arhiv vključil v aktiven življenjski cikel gradiva. Komunistični režim je prinesel dramatično spremembo v dimenziji razmišljanja, tako na področju institucij, kot na arhivskem področju. Danes se arhivi soočajo z novimi izzivi. Na osnovi tradicije in post-modernistične realnosti, poskuša avtor v prispevku najti odgovor na vprašanje, ali je nova arhivska strategija potrebna, ali ne.

Arhivele Naționale ale României și strategiile arhivistice – scurta analiză istorică

REZUMAT

Instituția modernă a Arhivelor Statului a fost înființată în România în 1831/1832, ca răspuns la modernizarea Statului și la lipsa unui loc de păstrare pentru vechile documente. Misiunea instituțională a Arhivelor Statului în perioada următoare s-a reflectat și în diferitele subordonări administrative. După Primul Război Mondial, Arhivele Statului au devenit un centru de cultură și istorie al arhivelor istorice, în ciuda unor încercări de a se implica în faza activă de creare a documentelor. Regimul comunist a adus o schimbare dramatică sub raport instituțional și conceptual. Astăzi, arhiviștii sunt în față unor noi provocări. Pe baza tradiției și a realităților post-moderne, autorul încearcă să răspundă în ce măsură este nevoie de o nouă strategie arhivistică sau nu.

Not once, writing about the history of National Archives Services means having a chronological narration of facts: *it was founded in...*, *it was extended for...*, *it increased its holding with...* and so on. Not contesting the importance of such generic information, I consider it is more important to reveal the context of activity for a National Archives Service: not only when it was founded, but also why; not only when it was extended, but what functions it performed; not only the changes that occurred in its development, but also the rationale behind any change. In this way, it might be clearer—at least in my opinion—what really is an institution, what is its place within the state institutional framework, what is the social attitude towards it and why, and, even more important, what are the relevant information to envisage the archives in future and near future. Having a study case for Romania, this is the aim of the present paper.

We intend, therefore, to have a quick review of different functions carried out by the institution of National Archives of Romania (hereafter *NAR*) since its foundation to date: what were the changes, if any, in the part played by *NAR* in Romanian society; what was the impact of its actions and of changes; and, maybe, some thoughts for the future.

A proper start in our presentation is to have a brief overview over historical background of the country. Historically speaking, Romania is the result of the separate evolution of three main principalities: Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania. The first two have many features in common: autonomous evolution at the beginning, massive Orthodox denomination and Slavonic chancellery tradition, a common Ottoman ruling. Since 1859, the two principalities were unified, generating the so called Modern (“Old”) Romania. On the other hand, Transylvania belonged to the Hungarian Kingdom and had a different state establishment: an authoritative Catholic denomination, Western European institutional framework and, since the end of 17th century, Austrian governance. After the WWI, the “Great Union” resulted in the formation of “Great Romania” that inherited all these different and sometimes divergent traditions. Despite some territorial losses after WWII, Romania is the state that emerged at the end of WWI.

1. Romanian principalities: From the beginning to first Constitutional Arrangements

Moldavia and Wallachia developed at the border of Western European civilization, being influenced rather strongly by Byzantine and Slavonic cultural model. The oldest charters preserved, issued by the Chancelleries of these two principalities, date from the second half of 14th century. Even it can be accepted that not all the issued documents have been preserved, the tardiness of this first documents seems to reveal a low activity of producing documents, further reflecting a not very active and developed administrative environment.

The rising of complexity in administration is attested in the next centuries and so is the raise of the number of documents and the tools for working with documents. Different institutions at central and local level seemed to have had registers and seemed to have preserved, for different time periods, their relevant records. The relevancy was almost exclusively focused on the issue of taxes and properties. This is also true for private noble families or for those who have different fortunes granted by charters. Despite these facts, one does not have clear information about a specific place for accumulating archives¹. On the contrary, some scholars showed that the Ruler’s Court was moving though the country, and so the Chancellery; therefore, a general archives of the principality has little chances to exist. Some studies indicate information from 17th-18th century, stating that both public and private papers, relevant and opposable to third parties, were deposited in the archives of the Metropolitan Church of the country; however, it seemed this was a private intention and not a formal rule of the country. Only in the second half of the 18th century, this became mandatory, being stated in the different codes of law. Also, there are some notices showing that most of the governors took the archives of their office with them when dismissed. In this regard, a formal interdiction is attested at the end of 18th century, ordering that official papers should be transferred to the new appointed governors; this interdiction will also exist in the next decades.

About the technical matters—I could not identify any literature regarding how the archives were

1. In this paper, the term “archives” is used with the Romanian meaning that is the whole of records produced by a creator. That is, it is not assumed the English difference between *records* and *archives*.

arranged, nor formal procedures for professional activities. It looks like the only “archival” aspects involved were preservation and the trustworthy repository. (Actually, the lack of safety for the archives was a real issue, destruction of records being attested many times.)

As conclusions, one can notice as the main characteristic the slow development of the idea of trustworthy public repository under the authority of the Church, the lack of the concept of institutional archives (*records*), the mixture between public functions and private ownership over archives created. Also, the reasons for preserving records seemed to be the nobility and economic (either fiscal or real-estate). This implies there was not a tradition of continuity of documentation for public offices activity.

2. State Archives-activity up to the general law of 1925

Occupied by the Russian Army in the second decade of the 19th century, the two principalities faced important modernization reform in the administration area, involving the issue of records. For instance, since 1828, it was completely forbidden the “privatization” of office records; in the same year, orders have been issued for creating proper institutional archives.

The first Constitutional Arrangements-called *Organic Regulations*-were issued in 1831 (Wallachia) and 1832 (Moldavia), under the strong influence of Russian General Pavel Kiseleff. By these acts, the ‘feudal’ institutions ceased to exist and new, modern institutions were founded. The situation resulted was that the new institutions held large amount of old archives, most of them unnecessary from the point of view of current business and functions. Far from being destroyed, these archives were supposed to be moved to a new created institution, the State Archives. So, in the first phase of its existence, the State Archives were regarded as a repository for the unnecessary records created by the institutions, mainly for those belonging to the “Ancien Régime”. This fact is mirrored by the administrative subordination of the institution, to the Ministry of Justice (Moldavia) and Ministry of Interior (in Wallachia). Huge amount of files have been transferred in the following years, in improper venues where the repositories have been improvised, in the capitals of the two principalities. The archival techniques were practical ones, that is organizing files by transfers and by creator and in a chronological order. Some other regulations imposed some “sections”: Documents, Administrative and Legal (in Wallachia it was a fourth one, the Military).

The amount of archives generated the need for appraisal. A regulation from 1855 prescribed that all the files that are not used for current business anymore should be destroyed. Fortunately, this regulation was not implemented, otherwise it would have meant the complete destruction of historical sources; anyway, the simple fact of existence of such a regulation show a certain political perspective over the place and part played by the institution.

In 1859 the unification of the two principalities occurred. In 1862, the two State Archives merged, and it was established only one institution, with two departments, in former capitals. The intention was to centralize all the holdings in Bucharest, but political context blocked this action. The same disposition of the Council of Ministers decided that a better subordination for the State Archives would be to the Ministry for Cults and Education, step that marked a change of paradigm in the social place of the institution. From now on, the Archives are regarded as a center for historical sources, and not only as a repository for public institutions. The Archives were supposed to be divided in two main departments: Historical Department (for holding the historical documents and records of public properties) and State department (for records generated by administrative, juridical and legislative institutions). The main professional task was the producing of inventories of the files held.

An important notice should be made on the religious archives. In 1863, the lands and goods of the monasteries were confiscated by the State. In this context, a large amount of very important historical documents have been transferred to the State Archives.

Several regulations in the following decades elaborated the legal and procedural framework for the activity of the State Archives. Despite these legislative actions, the real life showed a quasi-indifference of the Government on the archival matters. Some important scholars have been appointed as Archivists of the State, but their efforts were barely successful in creating a modern, endowed institution. No one from any projects aiming for a new building for the archives has been approved; not

once, reports to the ministry showed the ruins where the archival holdings were preserved, but in vain. In some instances, because of the degradation of storage area, some private houses have been rent and the holdings were stored there.

As a conclusion, the early modern times brought in Romania the foundation of the institution of State Archives. Seen initially as a repository for the unnecessary records of different institutions, this perspective has changed in time and the institution became a repository for historical state records. The archival techniques were derived from practical necessities, and theoretical approaches were lacking. Despite the interest for history and despite important works edited based on the holdings, the social interest for the archives was rather poor and the budgeting was reflecting that. The severe lack of proper buildings and storage areas was a constant issue in this time.

3. Transylvania: its archives up to 1925

Transylvanian archives showed a more elaborate evolution. The developments of Hungarian Chancellery and the social relationships were more similar to the Western European model, with more settled regulations and sharper struggle of interests. During the Middle Age, in Transylvania (as voievodate included in Hungarian Kingdom) there have been two general trustworthy repositories (*loca credibilia*) in Alba Iulia (*Gyula-Fehérvár*) and Cluj-Mănăstur (*Kolozsmonostori*); they were entrusted with the ability of preserving charters and of authenticate records based on the copy they hold. After the fall of the Kingdom (1526), in the new Principality of Transylvania, the general customs for preserving records remain the same. It must be noted that churches, noble families, different administrative institutions and the cities kept a rich archival material, as a record of their activities. Scholars have identified—even from these times—different intentions for archival arrangements, and different rules for managing records.

Since the end of 17th century, when Transylvania is occupied by Habsburg Empire, the activity of administration was increasingly professional and bureaucratic; this can be noticed in the production of records and in the interest for processing the archives. Different procedures for managing records were imposed; the registration system was introduced; some interests in retro-processing the old archives have been shown. Despite the fact that some “Central Archives” have been founded in Vienna (1749) and Budapest (1756), centralization of archives did not occur.

After the *Ausgleich* (1867), Transylvania was again incorporated to the Hungary and it lost its autonomy. Under these circumstances, based on the principle of centralization, after the foundation of modern Hungarian State Archives (1874), some archival fonds of the former medieval and modern Transylvanian central institution have been transferred to Budapest, in 1875. After several years, the archives of the two religious Chapters in Alba Iulia and Cluj have also been transferred there.

During 1870–1920, a rich archival material has been collected by private foundations, like Transylvanian Museum Society. Also, the older Saxon city archives have been re-arranged, based on modern archival principles, influenced by the Austrian historical school. In this regard, one can mention the existence of the first public historical archives from Transylvania in Sibiu, in 1877.

As a conclusion, the archives in Transylvania reflect a more complex and organized administrative activity. There have been two trustworthy central repositories, administered by the Catholic Church, but also archives of the public and private bodies and noble families. Since the 16th century, there is information about “archival” activities over these records, activities that came to a higher intensity during 18th century. The principle of centralization was applied after 1874 for the public archives of the central institution of the state that led to the fact that, even today, the records concerning the territorial administration of Transylvania are abroad.

4. State Archives between 1925 and 1951

After the WWI, in 1925, a new Act on the organization of the State Archives has been issued. In many ways, this Act is the modern foundation for Romanian State Archives, setting a more professional and coherent framework for the institution. It also unifies the different archival provisions and ensures a unique legal system for the protection of archives. The institution of State Archives was under the authority of the Ministry for Education. It implemented the principles of decentralization, having territorial branches. The staff had to have a certain academic training, in this respect a special

school being founded. The State Archives had to transfer, after 30 years from the creation, the old records from the public institutions, royal family. It could also collect coins, medals and other “old objects connected with the history of Romanians”.

The whole approach showed that the Legislator saw the State Archives as historical repositories and a research institution. In this respect, a journal of the State Archives has been issued, and one can notice the edition of technical archival studies, that indicates a higher awareness on specific problems of the profession, besides classical documents publication. Very important studies and the implication of high profiled scholars raise the academic status of the State Archives.

The relationships with administrative creators of records were not as good as it were supposed to be. Firstly, all the issues regarding creating the records were completely independent of the professional guidance. The several administrative handbooks issued during the Interwar period showed, by permanent occurrence of the topic, the complex and unsatisfactory situation in managing records in public offices. Besides, the rush for waste paper led to unimaginable situations. For instance, an official decision has been issued in 1926, enforcing that all the institutional past records should be rendered to the “Society for protecting the young girls” and the last was supposed to sell them to paper mills in order to get money. After a while, this approach was abandoned, and those public past records should be bidden. In 1938, all the institutional records should be sent to paper mills. An apocalyptic order-fortunately, not enforced after the strong opposition of the State Archivist-stated in 1943, that, in 30 days, all the public institutional records should be send to paper mill as waste paper...

One important topic-on which only the archivists seemed to have been interested and not the Romanian Government-was the claiming of archives of the former alienated territories. This aspect was regulated by the Peace Treaty after WW2, but all the diplomatic discussions held were carried out by the employee in the Foreign Ministry and not the archival experts. As a result, many essential archival holdings about the history of Transylvania remained in the custody of Hungarian State Archives. This issue have been permanently denounced by the archivists, but the lack of understanding from politicians made the situation unchanged.

As a closing line for this time span, one can notice an improvement, in respect of professionalism, for the State Archives in Romania. The institution got a modern legal framework, and, also because of developments and the foundation of a training school, the archival science in itself recorded an evolvement. The historical academic reputation of the institution got higher, because of the professional work and the high-profiled academics that directed it. On the other side, the perspective of a peripheral social role of the institution from the perspective of the government, the miserable wages and the quasi-ignorance of the administration on archival matters undermined severely the activity of the institution and its missions.

5. Communism and State Archives (1951-1996)

Not a first-line institution for the communist State, the State Archives was not directly affected by the regime shift in 1948. Only 3 years lately, a decree has changed the administrative subordination, from Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Interior. Two years more, the State archivist, a reputed professor, has been dismissed and, after another try with a “civilian” manager, it opened the time for police officers as State Archivists-that lasted until the fall of Communism. This subordination reflects a duality of mission intended. On the one hand, the Archives were supposed to be the same shelter for historians, to be the repository of historical facts that were supposed to be revealed. On the other hand, these facts had to be strictly controlled and supervised.

The first years of the new regime were characterized by a fury against the oppressors’ records, but in short time, probably also due to the fact the USSR-the model state in those times-has already a proper policy about archives, a set of new legislation and procedures have been developed. The legislative response of the State was rather slow-only after 6 years from the change of status- and not once its “archival” interests were connected with economic ones (a decree stated that archival processing should be faster because there is a need for paper recycled). Despite that, one can notice an unprecedented development of archival science, both regulatory and technical. Main source of inspiration were the Interwar Romanian professional developments, some Italian archival science influences and a solid Soviet archival practice. In this respect, new important professional terminology has been adopted (for

instance the concept of “archival fonds”), national standards for managing and scheduling records, for processing the archives or for appraisal have been developed etc. Since 1960s, there have been also developed and implemented a safety microfilming program and also an acquisition microfilming program; the latter allowed for the State Archives to copy many historical sources from abroad. Also, since 1970s, an automated system for retrieval of information in the finding aids started to be developed.

Adoption of the Soviet concept of “State Archival Holdings”² allowed for the State Archive to enlarge its authorities over the creation phase of the archives lifecycle. Procedures for the proper management of records have been adopted for any public creating institution, and the State Archives had the right of inspection.

Two decades of archival practice and regulating efforts led, in 1971, to the adoption of a new Archives Act, a coherent and modern legislation for those times. The archival system envisaged by the Act has, as a core, the State Archives with several other specialized archives, like the Movies Archives, Television Archives etc. All the public institutions must have respected certain guidelines for managing their records, from registration to appraisal and transfer. After 30 years, the permanent records should be transferred to the State Archives, whose responsibility was to make them available for historical research and other cultural activities.

In 1971 the unique manual for archival science has been edited-ironically, by the last “capitalist” Archivist of the State, at that time retired. Afterwards, it was an attempt for the State Archives to edit a Compendium of Archival Science that did not succeed; only a *Dictionary for Auxiliary Science* has been edited. Beside the archival science publications, the State Archives edited a lot of documentary catalogues and inventories, guides etc., with the explicit aim to be part of the Historical research institutions. This last aim explains in part why the archival science in itself was not necessarily a main goal for an archivist’s career.

Starting from 1950s, the State Archives network was largely extended, covering the whole territory of the country. Later on, also during the Communist regime, new buildings for archives have been built, covering around 40% of territorial branches of the State Archives. Several “campaigns” of accessions brought large amount of archival material into State Archives custody. Of course, on the other hand, the expansion of the collecting policy to the whole range of public (= all) administrative, economic and cultural bodies generated a severe insufficiency of repositories. This is how, even today, there are Divisions that had not transferred records since 1950s, despite the 30 years rule for accessions.

About the private records in Communism-persons or organization-there have been a mix of policies, hard to separate in proper and improper. In a first stage, in 1950s, the State Archives refuses to buy records from the older families belonging to former “landlords” and “bourgeoisie”, because this would be a way of enriching them with people’s money. On the other hand, if the holders do not donate them to the Archives, they could be accused of hiding their “dirty past”. From the Church, administration has confiscated the parish registers dated prior to the implementation of civil registration (1865 in Old Romania and 1895 in Transylvania); these have been transferred to the Civil Offices at the beginning of 1950s and, from here, after a time, they have been transferred to the State Archives. Another milestone was in 1970s, when the Government decided to clarify the relationships with Museums, Libraries and Archives. Therefore, all the materials of archival nature and with historical relevance had to be transferred to the State Archives, all the heritage books to Libraries etc. Under these circumstances, the private persons were compelled to sell to the archives their papers; historical churches or organizations that might have old documents relevant for general national history also had to transfer them to the State Archives.

The access to archives was another sensitive issue. Started with the Soviet model, of having a personal research file at the reading room, with credentials from the working institutions and so on, the access system get more relax in time. Of course, access to the records about sensitive topics was still

2. In many translations, the form used was “State Archival Fond” (or even worse, “State Archival Fund”). This translation is fundamentally wrong, firstly because this form of the word (*fond*) have not in English dictionaries the meaning of “accumulation of records” and secondly because it does not cover the conceptual and professional meaning. This concept (State Archival Holding) does not mean there is one archival fonds in the State (as erroneously Michel Duchein stated), but the whole of archival heritage, fonds and collections of documents, of national relevance, that exists in a State.

limited, and this was mainly informally and arbitrarily decided by the head of the divisions. The creation, in 1970s, of the “special holding”, that brought from different fonds, altogether, the records and files referring to sensitive topics (mainly with respect to the State interests), the accumulation of huge backlogs of unprocessed archives increased the number of motivations for access denial. On the other hand, a convenient topic and a good reputation as historian generally open the gates.

To conclude, the Communist Era meant for the State Archives an unequaled time of development, both for legal and for institutional and professional framework. The professional guidelines that are considered now as Romanian archival tradition have been grounded and developed mainly in these times. The habit of having national rules for processing archives allowed for standardization, but also, in time, led to a sort of “standardization” of minds. The policies during those five decades are a mixture of fortunate and unfortunate options and decisions, but the history book for Good and Bad is waiting yet to be written.

6. After communism...

After the fall of the Communism a new Archives Act has been issued. In its main features, it was the Act in 1971. The name of the institution has been changed to National Archives of Romania (NAR). There have been eliminated some provisions that proved to be inapplicable (the control over Movies Archives, for instance), but also some good provisions (functional retention schedules). Complete liberties for the archives of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Secret Services have been grounded. A strange Appendix to the law enumerates several cases for granting access but, because of the ambiguity of the text, it created sometimes more restrictive conditions for researchers than previously.

The interest for recent history brought in Romania the model of collecting the repression archives of the Communism to an external, new created institution, *National Council for the Study of Archives of the State Security*. Despite the name, it collected not only the former secret service archives, but also fragments of fonds from other institutions. The National Archives had not any methodological implications and, after years, it will be seen how the fonds have been processed and how professionals were the historians employed there as archivists. Not to mention that there have been intentions that the National Archives transfer some of its holdings to this new institution...

In my opinion, the main issue with the law in 1996 is that it reflects a complete lack of understanding of how a democratic, free-marketed society works. In transition times, NAR needed visionary leaders, but they lacked. The institutional missions envisaged for the institution was an idealistic one, impossible to be properly applied. For instance, the omission of any reference to propriety of records and the provision that NAR should transfer under its custody all the records of historical importance created in Romania (no matter the owner) undermined the whole archival system. The obligation to coordinate and to assist all the creators of records in Romania (for free!) generates again a set of obligation for the institution that cannot be fulfilled.

Moreover, when in need, the politicians did not hesitate at all to expand the functions of the institution, of course, omitting the allocations of extra resources. For instance, the legal obligation of transferring the payrolls from all bankrupted communist enterprises urged to NAR to fill up the repositories with temporary records, and abandoning the transfer of historical fonds. Also, due to some legal changes, all the smallest businesses that bankrupted required their records to be transferred to the NAR. These permanent administrative and legal fights deflect the institution from its main mission, of dealing with history. But history was not a priority anymore for decision-takers, and not once questions like: “why are you keeping all this dusty trash?” have been heard.

The evolvement of modern social challenges the institution took by surprise. The FOIA or Data Protection Act created a huge contrast with the access regime granted by the NAR, issuing a lot of scandals about the lack of transparency and openness of the institution. In most cases, it was only because the archivists respected their own, outdated law, and not because, organically, they wanted the archives closed for researchers. Moreover, the IT system started since 1970s have been abandoned and the lack of resources blocked, until recently, any attempts of implementing modern ITC; the reading rooms furnitures, in most cases, dates back to 30-40 years. In such circumstances, the reaction of the researchers is often like in front of a time leap.

The challenges on the “archival market” were another new, surprising aspect for NAR. Many institutions require becoming autonomous in preserving their archives and not transferring them to NAR. Private archiving company, whose legal framework lacks almost completely, claim to spare all the public institutions from the storing and processing their archives for a convenient amount of money. Not to mention the increasing sector of digital archiving, in front of which National Archives seems, professionally, competed outdated.

The last two years, since the Depression arose, brought the darkest time since the WW2 for the National Archives of Romania. The administrative rank of the institution has been lowered, the staff has been reduced to 50%, the tasks grew despite the same or, sometime, least resources.

A new Archives Act is in stand-by since 2008. It defines, in our opinion, a modern framework for the archives and for the National Archives. Unfortunately, the decision takers have some other priorities. For instance, to promote other legal initiatives, that require for the National Archives to transfer back to private bodies and sometime public institutions, their respective historical fonds; of course, these new institutions are supposed afterwards to get public money for preserving important historical archives. Another provision requires that all the ministries become historical archives for their records, and NAR should only keep the “orphaned old papers”.

7. Closing remarks

An important Romanian archivist noted in 1946: “Archives is an institution whose part is hardly understandable for many; this is why there is such a less flattering opinion about its workers. The secret of good renown for workers and the institution is in the hands of the archivists”. Is it really so?

In some occasions, I have claimed that a close relationship with administration in order to support it for proper management of records and a policy of increasing the number of user will help for a raising of institutional profile. Despite that, this short history of Romanian State (National) Archives showed that there is a constant place for the institution within the administrative framework of the State; and this is not a front place.

The Past showed that, in normal times, archivists, if they are trained enough and realistic enough, can generate solutions for decision takers in professional matters, but these solutions proposed will always been shaped by other interests, less professional, at governmental level. However, in depression, no matter what archivists or other professionals in the fields would want, there will be moments when only the politicians, with much or less education, will dictate. And no matter how good specialist you might be as archivist, and how hard you work for being trained to read Latin or Slavic, if the decision-taker of the State will tell you to pick up apples, this is what an archivists should do. Or, of course, leave the State Archives.

The post-Communism times challenged a lot the NAR. The decreasing interest for history reduced the number of academic researchers; even though the number of the non-academic users has been dramatically increased, the total amount of users from the society that are served by the Archives is very small. And so the institutional profile and so budgeting will be. In my opinion, a very capitalist approach showed that historical archives are not a good business. And the support of the State stands exclusively on the level of understanding of the politician.

On the other hand, the society has some expectations. If the users are accustomed with Google approach: “I want this, you instantly give it to me”, then you may not call them in person to the reading room, give them some big book to read them and then order the files and then wait for some days to receive the files. They will not enjoy you, they will not support you. The archivists and the institution of National Archives must step in 21st century. And yes, the infrastructure costs a lot, but our training and open-mindedness rests very much on our own.

Far from me the intent to support the idea that we are unique in misery. In my opinion, the Romanian pictures, or fragments of it, can be found anywhere in the World. Yes, there are archival systems that are more suited than others and that showed they can survive better. But the core fact is that our World is facing a transition. National Archives have born at the dawn or during the Modern Age as a response to some social needs. Are these needs real anymore? I do not have the answer but the next years or maybe decades will reveal it.

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SUMMARY

The history of Romanian state archives started back in 1831/1832. Since then, there can be identified 4 general periods. One, the early stage, between 1831-1925, characterized by a shifting role of the institution, from repository for public central institutions, under the subordination of Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior up to center for historical documents, in the subordination of the Ministry for Education. The second phase, between 1925-1951, characterized by modernization, beginning of archival thinking and a raise of institutional profile like a main source for history. The Communism brought for State Archives the third phase (1951-1989/1996), defined as both historical sources repository and a guardian for history, under the authority of the Ministry of Interior. This time meant also a real professional and infrastructural development. After the fall of the Communism, the (now) National Archives is facing the problem of a new world, both Capitalist and post-modern, and the new challenges seem to overwhelm the institutions and the archivists. Despite the deep conviction of the author that an increase of relationship with administration for managing records and an increase of the number of users, the reality shows that "archival policy" depends mainly on political decision-takers and their culture.

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