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ARCHIVAL SCIENCE IN UNIVERSITY STUDY PROGRAMS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Abstract:

This article tackles the on-going question of the role of historical archives in the Republic of Serbia. Unlike other countries in the region of former Yugoslavia, Serbia still does not have up to date law concerning archives. Lack of such legislation created difficulties, especially in this day of age when digitization and e-archives are taking over the spotlight and becoming a norm and it is discouraging to even mention that the Republic of Serbia lags behind today's norms. This article will present study programs in the Republic of Serbia that are oriented towards the archival science.

Key words: archives, Republic of Serbia, history, roles, education

L'ARCHIVISTICA NEI PROGRAMMI DI STUDIO UNIVERSITARI NELLA REPUBBLICA DI SERBIA

Sintesi

Questo articolo affronta la questione in corso sul ruolo degli archivi storici nella Repubblica di Serbia. A differenza di altri paesi della regione dell'ex Jugoslavia, la Serbia non dispone ancora di una legge aggiornata sugli archivi. La mancanza di tale legislazione ha creato difficoltà, soprattutto in questo periodo in cui la digitalizzazione e gli archivi digitali stanno prendendo il sopravvento e diventando la normalità, ed è scoraggiante anche ricordare che la Repubblica di Serbia è in ritardo rispetto alle norme odierne. Il presente articolo presenterà i programmi di studio nella Repubblica di Serbia che sono orientati verso l'archivistica.

Parole chiave: archivi, Repubblica di Serbia, storia, ruoli, istruzione

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ARHIVISTIKA V UNIVERZITETNIH ŠTUDIJSKIH PROGRAMIH V REPUBLIKI SRBIJI

Izvlaček:

Pripevek se ukvarja z vprašanjem vloge zgodovinskega arhiva v Republiki Srbiji. Za razliko od drugih držav v regiji in držav bivše Jugoslavije Republika Srbija še zmeraj nima zakona o arhivih, ki bi ustrezal sodobnemu času. Pomanjkanje takšnega zakona je povzročil kaos in prav nič spodbudno ni videti, da v današnjem času, ko so digitalizacija in e-arhivi v središču pozornosti, arhivisti v Republiki Srbiji poskušajo reševati probleme, ki so v evropskih in svetovnih arhivih že zdavnaj rešeni.

Ključne besede: arhivi, Republika Srbija, zgodovina, vloga, izobraževanje

ARHIVISTIKA U UNIVERZITETNIM STUDIJSKIM PROGRAMIMA U REOUBLICI SRBIJI

Sažetak:

Ovaj članak se bavi sveprisutnim pitanjem o ulozi Istorijskog arhiva u Republici Srbiji. Za razliku od ostalih zemalja iz regiona i bivše Jugoslavije, Republika Srbija još uvek nema zakon o arhivima koji bi odgovarao vremenu u kome se nalazimo. Nedostatak takvog zakona stvorio je kaos i pomalo je obeshrabrujuće videti da se u današnje vreme, kada se u centru pažnje nalazi digitalizacija i e-arhivi, arhivisti u Republici Srbiji još uvek pokušavaju da reše probleme koji su prevaziđeni u evropskim i svetskim arhivima još odavno.

Ključne reči: arhivi, Republika Srbija, istorija, uloga, edukacija

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world archives are independent administrative, cultural and scientific institutions. Every country has its own special ways of governing such institutions and efficient organizing of such institutions is in public's benefit. This article is interested in the question of what happens when such legislation is missing from the legal corpus of a state, and it will be analyzed on the case-study of Serbia.

In the Republic of Serbia the role of archives is not clearly defined. This is the consequence of a lack of a special law concerning archives. Unlike its neighbors and states from former Yugoslavia, Republic of Serbia never tackled the question of archives more seriously. Working groups were formed with a task of creating new archival legislation, however one must ask: How efficient are these working groups and what are their working results in the last decade of their existence?

It is hard to talk about serious questions such as digitization or block chains in the Republic of Serbia when basic questions of archives are left unanswered. That is why we must ask ourselves what the role of an archive is? What documents are kept there and for how long? What kind of education should archivist have? Who will decide what education levels and skills are needed to become an archivist?

It is fair to say that only when these questions are answered it is possible to start the conversation and work on the digitization and the creation of e-archives. The general law regarding archives and archival material in the Republic of Serbia dates back to 1994. After this legislation only few legal provisions, regulations and instructions concerning archives were issued. Yet, they are not enough to govern archives in a correct manner. The need for a new legislature about archives is evident and it is a hot topic among Serbian archivists for over two decades.

One of the problems in the Republic of Serbia is the lack of education that is strictly oriented to the archival science. In the law concerning the archives from 1994 it is stated that "archivist can be a person with a BA degree of education and archival assistant can be a person with a high school degree".² Therefore, it is clear that this paragraph is not clearly defined, which in turn creates a problem since it leaves a lot of space for misuse. The employment of people who are not fit to work as archivists is also a concern. In the former Yugoslavia this was not the problem since archival science was in its pioneering days. During that time archivists were creating guidelines and instructions on which modern archival science is based. Such efforts are still used as frame for archiving in the Republic of Serbia.

From theory to practice in archival courses

In the last few decades there was a shift in the way in which information are stored and kept and this change affected archives in a great manner. As ways of archiving were rapidly changing it become evident that trained professional staff is needed. Unfortunately, this problem is also the least tackled in Serbia. Though this is not surprising since half of the staff in archives is not sufficiently educated to even work in the archives, as they lack formal archival training and education. Since the only qualification for the job of an archivist is to hold a certain level of a degree, there are cases where very responsible jobs (such as the surveillance and the sorting of archival materials in registries outside and inside archives) are in hands of people who hold degrees of kindergarten teachers or chemists. This poses a serious problem,

2 „Zakon o kulturnim dobrima“ [Law on Cultural Heritage], Službeni glasnik RS 71/94, last accessed on June 18, 2019, http://www.komunikacija.org.rs/komunikacija/casopisi/arhiv_sr/1996_1997_1-4/d003/show_download?stdlang=ser_lat

since these persons who should give guidance on how to archive certain documents are not sufficiently (or at all) trained to do that job. They also lack the knowledge about proper archival practice. Even the staff which holds those degrees close to the archival science field, such as a historian or a jurist, are still not trained well enough. I myself was not prepared to be an archivist when I started working in the archives seven years ago, since there were no formal courses taught on the universities. Thus, the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade offers a subject named "*Introduction course for historical studies*" in the first year of BA studies. (Syllabus, 2019) I have attended this class and the only thing that was learned there is how to take notes from the historical document.

There is also a subject in the PhD studies in the History Department named "Archival science" and it is stated by the syllabus that the aim of this study course is that it should provide doctoral students the training to explore the most important issues of archival theory and practice. This involves the improvement of methodological approaches in the field of archives, creating professional standards, materials, regulations, and the class holds 10 ESPB credits. This course is divided into several topics and every week is dedicated to the certain topic such as an introduction course for archival science, archival science and historiography, archiving methodology, valorization of archival material, protection of registry materials and archival materials outside the archives and the methodological approach to the development of analytical inventory. Obligatory literature for this course consists of books: Б. Лекић, *Архивистика, Завод за уџбенике и наставна средства, Београд* 2006, Laura A. Millar, *Archives principles and practices*, Facet Publishing, London 2010, Christopher Kitching, *Archive Buildings in the United Kingdom 1993-2005*, Phillmore, West Sussex, 2007, Amanda Bevan, *Tracing your Ancestors in the National Archives*, The National Archives, London 2007, *What are Archives, Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives*, Edited by Louise Craven, Ashgate, Hampshire 2008. (Syllabus, 2019) The course consists of lectures, exercises (discussion and presentation of the work), practical work and individual consultations. This course is mostly used as a tool in usage of an archival material while writing a thesis and not as a course dedicated to educating future archivists.

There are similar courses held on the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, even better organized and students there can learn about archival science in a period of over a year in four different courses. Unlike courses held in the Faculty of Philosophy these courses are more complete and better organized. These courses are present since 2006 on the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade and are a part of the Department for the Librarian Studies. Course "Archival science introduction" is obligatory for all the students that are a part of the Department for Librarian Studies. The course is divided into several parts that correlate with suitable historical sciences such as paleography, diplomatic or genealogy. This course is obligatory in the fifth semester (3rd year of study) and it is divided into two main parts. Course "*Arhivistika 1*" aims to give students a historical and theoretical knowledge of this science, as well as some empowerment to work with the registry materials. This course offers the knowledge of the origin and development of archives in Serbia, starting from the initial idea of creating archives of the "*Društva srpske slovesnosti*", through the adoption of the national archives, the formation of today's Archives of Serbia, and with the formation of the Archives of Yugoslavia and historical archives around the Republic of Serbia. At the end of this part of the archival course students are introduced to the structure of the network of archives in Serbia. It should be noted that the students are introduced with the structure of those archives in the region that, in content documents which possess significant information for the Serbian history and culture,

such as the National Archives of Dubrovnik, National Archives in Zagreb, Historical archive and State Archives in Montenegro. (Đorđević, 2019) In the sixth semester students have a course called "Arhivistika 2" in which they study about archival material in the archives, their preservation and protection, the structure of funds and collections inside Historical archives, its use, and publishing. (Đorđević, 2019) This module is also offered in the PhD studies on the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade and it is named "Scientific work in the Archives" (Naučni rad u arhivima). This course is both theoretical and practical. Namely, PhD student from the Department of Library and Information Science, which have undergone a complete archival course are provided with more detailed work with scientific sources, methodologies used in archival science and norms of publishing archival materials. It is also stated that students of this course should become more familiar with the work of specialized archives such as the archives of Academy of Serbian Arts and Sciences or Archives of Radio Belgrade. (Đorđević, 2019) For the PhD students from other departments in the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, there is a brief course that lasts one semester in which students can learn about history of the archives and usage of the archival materials in a scientific work. (Đorđević, 2019) Both of these course exams are taken practically: writing a scientific work based on archival materials. In regards to the high school education, the only related to the archival field in Serbia is the Legal Administrative High School where students can learn to become administrators.

What does the future holds?

It is noticeable that all these courses are connected to the archival science in a small scope and not one of them is fully oriented to cover all fields which are important for a fully trained archivist. Lack of education is compensated by numerous courses held by archivists across Serbia but this is not the long term solution. New academic programs and courses related to the archival science and protection of the cultural heritage should contribute to the formation of a new profile of professionals who will have complex interdisciplinary approach to the protection of the archival material, as well its presentation to the interested public. For such purposes modern archival experts are needed to be the leaders in future activities and to quickly and efficiently implement new technologies as a form of preventive conservation and general presentation of cultural heritage.

In the field of conservation of cultural heritage, where we have archival materials, there are few courses in the Faculty of Applied Arts. (Syllabus, 2019) On the private faculty Alfa BK in Belgrade there is an MA program "Protection of cultural heritage". (Syllabus, 2019) There are some high school programs that are archivist-oriented, but that is also not enough knowledge and skills for a fully trained archivist. It is obvious that all these courses and study programs are not on the satisfactory level concerning the future of the archival science, especially in the modern age where the need for trained archivists is expressed. It is less likely that this topic will become a priority in the institutions in the Republic of Serbia any time soon. To conclude, archivists of the future need to obtain knowledge both from archival and IT science. It is already evident that e-archives are the future of the archival science but practical knowledge of basic archiving is still very much needed. Hope remains that in the future we will obtain such archivists that are skillful in both fields.

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SUMMARY

In modern world archives are independent administrative, cultural and scientific institutions. As it is expected every country has its own special way of governing such institutions and efficient organizing of such institutions is in everyone's benefit. As ways of archiving were rapidly changing it become evident that trained professional staff is needed. Unfortunately this problem is also least tackled. Though this is not surprising since half of the staff in archives in the Republic of Serbia is not sufficiently educated to even work in archives. It is evident that study programs in the Republic of Serbia are not on the satisfactory level concerning the future of the archival science, especially in modern age where the need for trained archivists is needed. It is less likely that this topic will become priority in the Republic of Serbia any time soon. With problems such as lack of basic guidance for the archives on the national level, question of education for the future is far away from the field of the debate. Archivists of the future need to obtain knowledge both from archival science and IT science. Hope remains that in the future we will obtain such archivists that are skillful in both fields and can be educated in courses and program specially designed to achieve such goal.

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