

## Main Stages of Archives Development in Russia

*MIKHAIL V. LARIN, DR., PROF.*

Director, All-Russian Scientific and Research Institute of Archives and Records Management (VNIIDAD),  
Russia, Moscow, 117393, Profsoiuznaia ul., 82,  
e-mail:www.vniidad.ru; larin@vniidad.ru

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#### *ABSTRACT*

Main stages of archives formation and development in Russia from the period of the Old Russian state up to now are shown in this report. There are three large periods of archives history: period from the ancient times till 1917, the Soviet period till 1991 and a modern period. The basic characteristics and peculiarities of each stage of archives history in Russia are presented.

### Le principali tappe dello sviluppo degli archivi in Russia

#### *SINTESI*

Vengono mostrate in questo articolo le principali tappe della formazione e dello sviluppo degli archivi in Russia dal periodo del vecchio Stato di Russia ai giorni nostri. Ci sono tre grandi periodi nella storia degli archivi: il periodo antico fino al 1917, il periodo sovietico, e quello moderno. Vengono presentate le caratteristiche basilari e le peculiarità di ognuna di queste tappe della storia degli archivi in Russia.

### Glavne faze razvoja arhivov v Rusiji

#### *IZVLEČEK*

Prispevek obravnava glavne faze oblikovanja in razvoja arhivov v Rusiji vse od obdobja stare ruske države do danes. Obstajajo tri velika razvojna (zgodovinske) obdobja: starejše obdobje do leta 1917, sovjetsko obdobje vse do leta 1991 in moderna doba. Predstavljene so osnovne značilnosti in posebnosti posameznih faza zgodovinskega razvoja arhivov v Rusiji.

### Основные этапы развития архивов в России

#### *АННОТАЦИЯ*

В докладе рассматриваются основные этапы становления и развития архивов в России от древнего русского государства до наших дней. Выделены три крупных периода истории архивов: от древнейших времен до 1917 года, советский период до 1991 г. и современный период. Раскрыты основные характеристики и особенности каждого из этапов истории архивов в России.

## The archives in the Old Russian state and the Russian centralized state (IX-XVII centuries)

Written records in the Old Russian state were very popular. A lot of inscriptions on handicrafts-men' products, and also writings on birch bark of XI-XII centuries show a wide spreading of literacy. Masses of records were packed in churches and monasteries. According to the chronicle a large collection of books, transferred by Yaroslav Mudryj, was kept in a temple of St. Sofia in Kiev. Many books and various records were stored in the Novgorod Sofia cathedral.

In Novgorod more than 600 writings on birch bark which are valuable historical sources were found. They give an opportunity to recreate political, economic and cultural life of that time. Such writings were also found in Staraya Russa, Pskov, Smolensk, Vitebsk and other cities. Their authors

were representatives of the widest layers of society: handicraftsmen, townspeople, peasants. It testifies to the old cultural traditions of our ancestors. There was a set of archives in Novgorod. The Sofia cathedral in the Kremlin was the most ancient repository of records.

### The Moscow grand-ducal archives

A significant amount of records originated as a result of the Moscow principedom state apparatus activity.

In XVI century the central position among repositories of written materials was the Moscow grand-ducal (imperial) archives. The inventory of 70th years of XVI century for archives records reached us. There is information about 233 boxes and chests in which records were stored and which have been numbered. The records of Boyar's Council, personal office of the Tsar and the Ambassadorial office were included there.

The materials of Imperial archives have strongly suffered at the beginning of XVII century. Some records were grasped by interventionists. The materials, saved from intervention, as a part of the Ambassadorial office archives, were included into the Moscow main archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Now they are kept in the Russian state archives of historical acts (RGADA).

In XVI-XVII centuries a large mass of records were gathered in the Offices, managing definite branches of management.

As a result of local authorities activity the archives of local institutions were created. The Imperial Code of laws of 1550 obliged "to store carefully" all the records of state institutions. The composition of records was various. They were stored in boxes and chests which had labels with instructions of materials stored in them. Archival files began to be numbered, the location was indicated on the items.

So, in the Russian state in XVI-XVII centuries a wide set of archives was created, a system of records description appeared and also the first principles of records preservation.

### Archives in the Russian empire (XVIII century-1917)

From the first quarter of XVIII century a new stage in archives development has started. It was a result of the radical reforms made by Peter the Great government. Transformations in the system of state machinery led to essential changes in archives area in two directions: creation of archives under new higher, central and local institutions and organization of archives of abolished establishments. As a result of these transformations archives separated from office-work (records keeping) and became independent structural parts of institutions legally fixed in the General regulations of 1720 (the main law about state government). The activity, carried out by Peter the Great, made strong influence on the further development of archives.

A special chapter in "General regulations" is devoted to archives. For the first time in the world practice according to "General regulations" obligatory transfer of records by institutions to archives after expiration of definite period of time was provided. For the files having lost their practical value, the disposal date was three years. At the same time the order of files transfer to archives was established and special posts - archivists appeared in the state institutions.

In 1712 the Moscow historical senatorial archives was created, in Petersburg - the active senatorial archives. Now their records are in RGADA.

The Moscow archives of foreign affairs Board became the first historical archives in Russia. There were materials of the Ambassadorial office there. These records contains information about foreign policy of the Russian state of 15-17 centuries, major events of internal life of the country, and the history of imperial family. At the end of 18 century there were 80 staff persons in the archives.

## Archives of local institutions

At the beginning of 18 century the archives under the newly-formed provincial institutions, where the records of these institutions were stored, were created. At the same time a set of judicial bodies and local governments archives appeared. These records are a valuable source on history and economic development of various regions.

## Archives of the higher, central and local institutions in XIX century

At the beginning of XIX century some higher and central institutions were transformed and that event led to state machinery complication. A wide set of archives has been created at the higher, central and local establishments.

In 1811 the main law of the new-formed ministries activity "General regulations about ministries" was approved. More subdivided system of archives was established as they were created at each department.

As a result of the reforms in the middle of XIX century (in 1861 - serfdom cancellation) a system of state institutions have changed. In these conditions one can see the revival of archival work because of mass transfer of abolished and transformed institutions records into archives: new historical archives are created, the existing ones are reorganized. There were uniform archives which were under the departments of common affairs or ministers' office-work in the majority of the ministries. A set of archives of the higher and central institutions has changed not very much.

At that time a prominent Russian archival scientist N.V.Kalachev organized the first educational institution in Russia for archivists training - the Petersburg archaeological institute (it began to work in January, 1878).

The aim of this university was to prepare professionals. There were 12 disciplines in the institute: paleography, chronology, numismatics, ancient geography, etc. Annually 15-20 archivists graduated from the institute.

## Provincial scientific archival commissions

Since 1884 provincial scientific archival commissions were created. The increased interest to country' history, development of study of local lore was a base of their creation. These commissions had to look into the files of local institutions planned for destruction. They became the peculiar cultural centers at place which led to distribution of historical knowledge and archives development.

So, there was a considerable set of archives in Russia till 1917. In total there were more than 120 thousand governmental and public archives in the country. But there was no one supervising body, they were in submission of various departments. A number of historical archives, which has played a positive role in rescue archives from damage, their order and use, has been created. Some principles of records selection, ways of their classification, records storage and archival files description have been developed.

## Archives during the first years of the Soviet power (October 1917-1921)

The October revolution has destroyed the former state machinery, and created new state authorities. It caused abolition of old government agencies archives. So it was necessary to preserve pre-revolutionary archives, masses of which were spontaneously destroyed at that time.

In 1917-1920 years the bases of archives organization have been founded in our country. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 1918, the Decree on reorganization and centralization of archives management was adopted. Centralization of archives management was established and the central archival authorities were created in the country.

In the first points of the Decree the main essence of radical reorganization in the branch' management was defined:

all archives of government agencies were liquidated and the records, stored in them, formed the uniform State archival fund (EGAF);  
the Main agency of archives management controlled the State archival fund.

The uniform State archival fund included the archival records of government and public organizations, trade unions, co-operative establishments, scientists, writers, composers and also churches and monasteries. On April 22, 1919, the Decree on archival files storage and destruction which has established a disposal date in institutions was accepted; the institutions were prohibited to destroy any records without permission of Glavarhiv; the Decree created a system of state expert bodies.

In 1920 the Archives of October revolution was opened. There were about 200 funds in it till 1925.

### Centralization of archives management (1922-1929)

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, 1921, Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) confirmed Regulations on the Central archives of RSFSR. All archival institutions united into the Central archives (Tsentrarhiv) of RSFSR. The Central archives was assigned to manage archives in RSFSR institutions. Provincial archival agencies in the field of scientific and theoretical work were submitted to Tsentrarhiv.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of April, 1929, the Central archival agency (TsAU) of the USSR was formed for general control of archives.

### Completion of creation of archives management administrative system (1930-1945)

After creation of TsAU of the USSR an attempt to reconstruct all the system of state archives was made.

As a result of changes by 1938 under the direction of TsAU of the RSFSR there were the following institutions: the State archives of feudal epoch; the Special department of the Central historical archives; the Mezhevoj archives; the State archives of foreign policy; the Central archives of revolution; the Central archives of October revolution.

In 1928 “archival course of training”, which provided four-year term of archival specialists education, was founded at the Moscow state university, history and archeology department of ethnology faculty. But training of archivists in separation from practice could not give positive results.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, 1930, the Institute of archival science was created under TsAU of the USSR for archivists' preparation in Moscow. The training term was two years. In 1934 it was transformed into the Moscow state historical and archival institute (MGIAI) with four-year term of training. It was a new educational institution. It also became the research centre on archival science problems. MGIAI began to let out high quality historians and archivists strengthening the prestige of their profession.

In 1938 archival institutions were transferred into the system of the National commissariat of internal affairs (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD)) of the USSR. TsAU of the USSR was transformed into the Main archival agency of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the USSR. Archival departments in NKVD republics, regions and provinces were organized for archives management there. Transfer of archives of People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the USSR has concentrated their attention to execution of this administrative and political body's tasks. One of the main aims of archives was strict preservation of state secrets. A lot of records and even the whole funds became inaccessible to scientific and practical use. Before the war on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March, 1941, Regulations about the state archival fund and a set of state archives were accepted. According to them the State archival fund was approved as uniform fund within the USSR. Also the status of the State archival agency (GAU) as a body of all-union value raised. There

were 266 central, republican, regional, provincial archives in the country at that time. Besides, a huge set of regional and city archives was created.

### Archives in 1945-1980

In 1946 as a result of administrative reform and transformation of national commissariats into ministries, the Mail archival agency (GAU) of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) of the USSR became the Main archival agency of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs. During several post-war years state archives were engaged in monitoring of records availability, state, control and systematization.

Changes in status of archives and archivists and attitude of society and state to them were connected with "khrushchev's thaw". Some easing of ideological control, access to many funds, publication of materials about stalin repressions promoted a growth of interest to archives, enhanced the prestige of archivists and historians in the public's opinion.

At the beginning of 1960 the archival service from submission of the Ministry of Internal Affairs became under the Council of Ministers of the USSR. On the 28th of July, 1961, Regulations on the Main archival agency under the Council of Ministers of the USSR (Glavarhiv) and a set of central and state archives of the USSR were confirmed. The primary goals of Glavarhiv were the following: preservation of records of the State archival fund of the USSR (GAF); scientific, organizational and methodical management of state and departmental archives. So, a system of central state archives of the USSR consisted of nine archives: the Central state archives of October revolution, supreme government and state bodies of the USSR; the Central state archives (TsGA) of national economy of the USSR; TsGA of the Soviet army; TsGA of the Navy of the USSR; TsGA of literature and art of the USSR; TsGA of historical acts; TsGA of film-photo-phono-records; the Central state historical archives of the USSR; the Central state military history archives of the USSR.

In 1966 the All-Russian scientific and research institute of records and archives management (VNIIDAD) was created.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of April, 1980, the Council of Ministers of the USSR approved the Act "On status of the State archival fund of the USSR and the Main archival agency under the Council of Ministers of the USSR". It confirmed the existed stable structure of archival science management, state archives and scientific institutions.

### Archives at present stage

As a result of society democratization, its increasing openness led to a wide access to information, including archival records. Despite of financial and administrative problems, the changes in archives system, unprecedented growth of interest to the Russian history of XX century promoted the increase of archivists prestige. There were a lot of newspaper and journal publications, devoted to archives of Post-Soviet Russia period, in the Russian and foreign press. The state, by turn, began to give more attention to archival system reforms. The new country leaders, approaching to undermine power of the Communist Party of the USSR (CPSU) and security structures, protecting it, tried to seize their archives. By this time on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, 1991, the President of the Russian Federation signed the decrees "On archives of Committee of state security" and "On the party archives".

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, 1990, the Committee on archives under the Council of Ministers of RSFSR (Roskomarhiv) was created on the basis of Glavarhiv of RSFSR. In October, 1991, after the USSR collapse and the Russian Federation formation the central state archives of the USSR and other archival institutions on the territory of the Russian Federation, subordinated before to Glavarhiv, and also CPSU archives have been transferred to Roskomarhiv. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, 1992, Roskomarhiv, becoming the assignee of archival bodies of the USSR and RSFSR, was transformed into the State archival service of Russia, and on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, 1996, - into the Federal archival service of Russia.



On the 9<sup>th</sup> of March, 2004, by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation N. 314 "About system and structure of the federal executive bodies" the Federal archival service of Russia was changed into the Federal archival agency under the Ministry of culture and mass communications of the Russian Federation. The decree of the President of the Russian Federation N. 724 from May 12, 2008, "Questions of system and structure of the federal executive bodies" the Federal archival agency became dependent on the Ministry of culture of the Russian Federation.

According to the Constitution of the Russian Federation archival science is under the authority of the Russian Federation and the Russian Federation subjects. The Federal law, adopted on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, 2004, N. 125-FZ "On archival science in the Russian Federation" regulates organization of storage, acquisition, control and use of records of the Russian Federation Archival fund and other archival records regardless of their ownership forms, and also archival science management in the Russian Federation.

A modern system of archives in Russia is presented by four types: state archives, departmental archives, not state archives, municipal archives.

State archives are divided into two types: archives of federal level and archives of the Russian Federation subjects. The Federal state archives include historical, not completed archives and completed specialized archives. As a whole state archives of the Russian Federation subjects also are presented by similar subtypes of archives. Departmental archives are formed into three types: current archives of departments, current archives of institutions, organizations, enterprises which are included into departmental systems, and specialized branch departmental funds with centralized storage organization of historical and operative records.

State archives are specialized state institutions, the main part of institutions' system of the Russian archival service. In order to provide permanent (timeless) storage of the state part of the Russian Federation Archival fund, entrusted to it, they carry out control of archival records, preservation, are acquired with records of state organizations and transferred records of not state organizations and physical persons; create and improve finding aids to archival records and information technologies; provide conditions for archival records use by legal and physical persons, put into practice information services for public authorities and independent use of archival records in interests of strengthening the Russian statehood, satisfy society needs in retrospective documentary information.

Thus, by organizing, preserving and using of archival records, state archives participate in collecting, processing, accumulating, storage, search and distribution of archival information. They represent a special information system, being as subjects of information processes. Moreover, archival records and information technologies of state archives are an object of relations of physical and legal bodies, state, an object of property, author's and other rights, and are protected by the law.

Not state archives include not less than six types: archives of privatized enterprises, archives of banks and other commercial structures, archives of parties, trade unions and social movements, archives of officially registered private funds, archives of creative associations, archives of religious confessions.

Municipal (regional and city) archives are presented by archives of local governments and cooperated archives, basically keeping records of local institutions, organizations, enterprises for staff.

Speaking about archival science authorities of the Russian Federation subjects, it is necessary to point out that they have no uniformity of status and names which were taken place in the Soviet period. There are archival departments, agencies, committees there now. According to the active legislation, the Russian Federation subjects solve the problems of archival management by themselves, except those, which are solved with the Russian Federation or jointly. In spite of status distinction of archival bodies of the Russian federation subjects, their problems and functions are similar. The overwhelming majority of them are included into the structures of executive authorities, confirmed by regional legislation. While these structures are uniformed, status of archival bodies and also their names are specified and coordinated with the scale of activity.

Archival science state bodies of the Russian Federation subjects have the authority to define and solve a wide range of problems independently. They can settle the problems of personnel, financial, material provision of subordinated archives activity, change (compliance with the corresponding procedures) archives systems of the Russian Federation subjects, their profiles, actual current tasks of acquisition, preservation and archival records use.

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## SUMMARY

The Russian archives have passed a long and difficult way. At the initial stage of development archives were as places of records storage at different institutions of state, church, judicial bodies, etc. Step by step archives has become an independent institution with a definite range of aims and functions. It took place in the period of Peter the Great reign with the help of approval of General regulations of 1720, which actually initiated the organization of the Russian archives. In the pre-revolutionary period of time archives developed within the departments under which they have been organized. During the Soviet period there was a centralized system of state archives, operating within the administrative system in strictly regulated conditions. This system helped to organize storage and management of archival records quite effectively. At the same time it was a closed system with a complicated access to archives. Now the centralized control system of archives has lost its value. There are archives of federal level under the Federal archival agency, regional state archives and municipal archives, managed by corresponding regional and municipal bodies in the country. Private archives appeared. Thus, there was a real decentralization of archives management.

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