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## AN OVERVIEW OF SELECTED HISTORICAL PERIODS IN ARCHIVING UP UNTIL THE FOUNDATION OF THE IIAS INSTITUTE AND OF THE ATLANTI JOURNAL ALL THE WAY TO THE PRESENT DAY<sup>2</sup>

Every science has its beginning, development and significant stages. This is also the case for archival science, which is nowadays regarded as an independent, academic, multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary science. Over the last couple of decades, interest in the history of archival activities, in archival science itself as well as in contemporary archival theory and practice has grown considerably.

**The first period** in the history of archival activities is known for the writings in the caves of Altamira (Spain) and Lascaux (France). These can be considered the oldest existing archival documents. The messages and traditions conveyed by these sketches fulfil a triple purpose:

- a) Firstly, that the information contained in the writings be preserved, mainly as a demonstration of how to hunt wild and often large animals. Thus, their goal is to pass on such information from one generation to the next.
- b) Secondly, to help others to overcome fear of large animals by demonstrating that even animals which are several times bigger and heavier than humans can be defeated, thus also overcoming the fear of the outside world.
- c) Thirdly, to serve as a type of calendar.

Thanks to such interpretations of the records' purpose and to descriptions of the information recorded—which originates from an age prior to the invention of writing—the scope of historical research of archival activities has been widened all the way back to 40,000 BC.<sup>3</sup>

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2 This article is dedicated to Dr. Miran Novak, Dr. Zdenka Semlič Rajh and all those who have helped me found and run the Centre for Technical and Professional Problems in Archives (*Arhivski center za strokovno-tehnična vprašanja*), which in 1985 became the International Institute for Archival Science. I would also like to dedicate this article to all the authors of papers and to the many friends who have helped me with *Atlanti: Review for Modern Archival Theory and Practice* from 1991 to this day. Although an analysis of the Institute's 35-year-long activity and of the 30 years of publishing of the *Atlanti* journal has not yet been conducted, let us look at some numbers. So far, approximately 20 official Institute members were appointed across the world every year, which accounts for a total of approximately 700 archivists. Each yearly issue of the *Atlanti* journal contained 35-40 articles, resulting in a total of approximately 1000 articles. Each issue was approximately 400 pages long, resulting in a grand total of 12,000 pages published over a thirty-year period.

3 In his book entitled *Storia dell'archivistica italiana*, above all in the introduction, Elio Lodolini clearly divides archival history into the time prior to the existence of writing and the time after the existence and development of writing. At first, his approach was met with scepticism by archivists, who did not take his division very seriously. However, they were proven wrong. Lodolini also took into account information recorded in writing on unusual, non-traditional writing surfaces. Lodolini's division has lately been adopted by Slovene archivists (as well as by many others).

This first period also includes archival activities in Ancient Egypt. Many records which have been preserved from this period were written on a variety of materials, such as stone, wood, ceramics, papyrus, bones, etc. Writing techniques and writing materials also varied: from stone cutting and printing to applying different pigments as well as using writing or drawing ink.<sup>4</sup>

**The second period** in the history of archival activities corresponds to the development of archival theory and practice in Ancient Greece and in the Roman Empire. At this point, let us consider the term used for the space or the building where archival material was stored and where the archive-administration unit operated in Ancient Greece. The word in question is *Archeion*.

At the time of the Roman Empire, archival theory and practice were well-established. The word *Archivum* was used to designate specific detached buildings, i.e. institutions where archival material of importance for the history of the Roman Empire was stored. The Roman historian Tacitus is known to have stated that while writing his last book on the history of the Roman Empire, he consulted archival material from the many archives present in Rome at the time.

Also important for this period is the town of Ptuj (*Petovio*), an independent Roman town in present-day Slovenia where the profession of archivist is often mentioned in archaeological research. To this day, as many as fourteen Roman monuments in which archivists are mentioned have been discovered in Ptuj. The presence of a large number of archivists is not surprising considering that, since the town was established under Emperor Trajan, many financial offices were based there. *The archive institution was known as a tabularium, while an employee thereof was called a tabularius.* The word *tabularium* (*tabularia* in the plural form) was used not only for buildings where archival material was stored, but also for registers which made it possible to store material according to a certain logic. These two words not only designated the provincial imperial archive in a province's capital city, but were also used for secondary, subordinated finance or tax offices, such as those present in the town of Ptuj—then Petoviona. The term *tabularium civitatis* actually designates town (municipal) archives where documentary material relating to the administration of a town or community was kept (e.g. various decrees and the town's "accounting books"). Thus, archivists were employed wherever detailed bookkeeping was needed as well as in places where documents needed to be stored safely and data had to be readily accessible and verifiable (Visočnik, 2019, 11–27).

**The third period** in the history of archival activities corresponds to Charlemagne's reign, i.e. from the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. This period marks the beginning of a new era and of a new way of dealing with archival material. It is believed that—when making Aachen the political centre of his State—Charlemagne (who died in 811) designated a special area (possibly even a whole building) for the storage of archival material. Unfortunately, this piece of information is not easily verifiable due to the lack of reliable sources.<sup>5</sup>

Such was the state of affairs which laid the foundations for the establishment and the development of archival institutions in later days. These were first established in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and were managed according to strict rules for storing, filing and anno-

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4 For additional information on writing systems and the development of letters see *The Atlas of Languages. The Origin and Development of Languages Throughout the World*.

5 Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, "The Life of Charlemagne", which was written on the basis of available documents. The text states that Charlemagne had ancient laws and historical events recorded in writing and stored (*scripsit memoriaeque*) in a large library.

tating the documents, as well as for ensuring their physical protection. These developments led to the establishment of independent archives or, in some cases, archive collections and departments. The earliest among them are to be found in medieval towns,<sup>6</sup> churches (monasteries) and in the dwellings of noble families (castles) (Preinfalk et. al, 2012, 65–90). Before long, such collections (or archives), came to be generally considered as actual institutions and were entrusted with preserving and protecting archival material.

**The fourth period** corresponds to the end of the Middle Ages, when the so-called archival administrative units were established. These included archive offices situated in the castles of emperors and kings, in important monasteries and in independent medieval towns. Documents stored in such offices included privilege acts, records of town council meetings, notary books and accounting books. At a later stage, various deeds were also stored here. This is when documents started being divided into documents which were used in day-to-day matters and historical documents which were stored in the archive permanently.

At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, so-called secret archives started appearing across Europe. These archives were closed to the public and were used to store documents relating to existing or abolished offices, services, etc. In 1612, the Vatican Secret Archive was founded in Rome. Although nowadays the archive is no longer closed to the public, it is still known under its original name. As a general rule, only archival material relating to past papacies is accessible to the general public.

The end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of the foundation of historical archives, where archival material pertaining to the state administration as well as other unimportant deeds relating to abolished monasteries and land tenure were stored. Thus, archives were no longer treasuries of governmental rights, but became storage centres for historical documents. Consequently, they were the ideal place for conducting historical research.

**The fifth period** is known as the time when new modern archives were first established (such a definition was popularised at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century). In fact, archives were new not only in terms of their structure and contents, but also in terms of their accessibility to the wider public. By this time they were already part of the State apparatus, which played an important role in implementing laws and various regulations. Especially important was the law promulgated in 1813, which made it illegal to destroy old archival material. A court decree issued in 1786 required public offices to keep a documental record of all the cases they dealt with. This decision impacted the development of archival activities in the Slovenian regions, too (Žontar in Vilfan, 1970).<sup>7</sup> At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, important archive institutions were established (often as part of a museum). Later on, independent archives were also founded and the *origin principle* became an increasingly important aspect of archival theory and practice. In the Slovene regions we should not forget to mention the important contributions made to this end by Anton Aškerc, town archivist of Ljubljana.

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6 Archival activities are mentioned in town statutes and notarial acts (Dubrovnik – in 1278, notary Tomasino takes office; Ptuj – statutes from the years 1376 and 1513), chronicles, etc.

7 Jurij Wallner, historian at the Ljubljana Regional Archive since 1887, followed the original arrangements. Only later did Anton Aškerc – in his capacity as archivist of the town of Ljubljana (since 1898) – implement the origin principle despite the opposition of historian and regional archivist Franc Komatar. The origin principle is still in force today. A crucial role in defining this principle was played by Dutch archival theorists, who stated that “archive material should be preserved in its original form, which should also be maintained in the future, if necessary”.

In addition to the origin principle, we should also mention the *selection* and the *discarding* principles which help us decide what constitutes archival material. The oldest regulation on the matter was drawn up in the Royal Office in Vienna on 24 March 1832. It stated that documents which may turn out to be useful or important and documents which may end up having historical value must not be destroyed. To ensure compliance with this regulation, Anton Aškerc, the town archivist of Ljubljana, established a commission proceeding and appointed two historians and a member of administrative staff who oversaw the discarding process (Vilfan, 1959).

**The sixth period** started after the end of the Habsburg dynasty, at the end of the First World War (1918). In the Slovenian regions this period continued under the First Yugoslavia, where major archives were already operating in Zagreb, Belgrade and Dubrovnik. Slovenia had three archives. The first was the Regional Archive. Its predecessor—the archive collection of the Museum Society of Carniola—was renamed Carniola Regional Archive in Ljubljana only in 1887, following the example of Graz Regional Archive (1868). In 1926, the former was renamed State Archive and operated inside the National Museum of Ljubljana. The second was Ljubljana Town Archive, which was founded in 1898, when archivist Anton Aškerc came into office. The third was the Banovina Archive in Maribor, which operated from 1933 onwards. Until the beginning of the First World War, these three archives together employed just three archivists (Žontar, 1968).<sup>8</sup>

A relevant fact for the history of archiving should be mentioned at this point. Namely, that these three archives followed the principle of division of financial funds and respected the initial organisational structure. Nevertheless, despite the signing of the Archives Convention in 1923, which sanctioned the return to Slovenia of archival material stored on Austrian soil (Zwitter, 1967), there were very few developments in the field of archiving. The Second World War caused considerable destruction and much archival material suffered a dire fate. On a brighter note, on 20 October 1944 the Slovene National Liberation Committee (SNOS) issued a decree on the protection of archives. Moreover, soon after the end of the war, population registers kept in Austria were returned to Slovenia. Unfortunately, they were returned to the archives rather than being handed back to their original owner—the Church.

## THE SEVENTH PERIOD AND TECHNICAL ISSUES

When keeping track of the many definitions of archiving and archival sciences, we often come across the definition of archiving as the study and research of technical issues which significantly impacted the history of archival activities. Although this aspect might indeed be included in some definitions, it should be noted that a more serious approach to the research of technical archiving issues only developed in the 1960s and 1970s. On this account it is worth mentioning some reliable international bibliographical sources on the topic: Michel Duchein, *Les bâtiments d'archives départementales en France* (Paris 1956) and Michel Duchein, *Les bâtiments et équipements d'archives* (Paris 1966; revised in 1985). Michel Duchein's book *Les bâtiments d'archives 1965–1985* (Paris 1987) provides an interesting overview of the archives in France, which also applies to Germany, Italy and other countries.

Except for the book titled *Arhivska tehnika* by Jože Žontar (Ljubljana 1972), there were no independently published books on the subject of archiving until 1992, when the au-

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8 See also the article by Sergej Vilfan, 70 let mestnega arhiva ljubljanskega (1898).

thor of this paper published the book *Materialno varovanje klasičnih in novih nosilcev informacij v arhivih*. The book (selected chapters or the book in its entirety) is included in the prescribed study material in all three of the study programmes offered by the Archival Studies Department at AMEU ECM. Attention should also be drawn to a series of articles relating to the *Discussions on expert and technical issues in archives*. These articles were included in the publication *Modern Archives*, which was published from 1979 to 2003.

### **THE EIGHTH PERIOD: FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ARCHIVAL SCIENCE (IIAS) AND THE ATLANTI JOURNAL TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A THREE-CYCLE UNIVERSITY PROGRAMME IN ARCHIVAL STUDIES**

This period goes from 1985 to 1991—when Slovenia achieved independence—and from 1992 to the present day. Nowadays, a three-cycle university programme in Archival Studies is available in Slovenia: a Bachelor's degree in Archive Management, a Master's degree in Archive and Record Management and a PhD in Archival Sciences.

During this period, archiving in Slovenia started standing on its own feet: the *Atlanti* journal was first published, a new law on archives was drawn up, a wide range of topics in the field of archival sciences were being researched and the number of members of staff in archives grew steadily. Nevertheless, archives in Slovenia were at a standstill: they registered no growth; a larger archive network failed to develop; no good legislation on archiving was implemented nor were the State Security Administration (UDBA) archives and special archives protected. Thus, archivists were often defenceless against political interventions into archival theory and practice (this was also the case before 1991, however after this date there was a great increase in the number of political parties). Similarly, there was a lack of awareness regarding the importance of preserving archive material, if we exclude the introduction of three-cycle university programmes in Archival Studies at Alma Mater Europaea.

**The International Institute for Archival Science (IIAS)** was a continuation of its predecessor, the Centre for Technical and Professional Problems in Archives. The foundation of the Centre and subsequently of the Institute is closely related to the *Discussions on expert and technical issues in archives*, which started in 1978–1979 and led to the publication of a journal. The journal, which was initially called *Arhivi* (Archives) and subsequently renamed *Sodobni arhivi* (Modern Archives), was last published in 2003. The Centre's foundation in 1985 ensued from the activity of Slovene archivists within the former State of Yugoslavia. It was the result of a collaboration with the neighbouring countries of Austria, Hungary and Italy. At a later stage, the collaboration was extended to include other countries across Europe and the world. The Centre, which later became an Institute, conducted a wide range of research on expert and technical issues in archives and published a large number of papers. These were written by experts and scientists from Slovenia and elsewhere and were first published in the journal *Sodobni arhivi* and subsequently in the *Atlanti* journal. From 1986 to 1991, the Centre, i.e. the International Institute for Archival Science, played a significant role in addressing expert and technical issues in archives. As a result, it gained an important role on an international level. Thus, it no longer operated as part of the Provincial archive in Maribor, but was brought under the aegis of Maribor University. This is when the Centre started publishing the *Atlanti* journal and broadened the scope of its activity from expert and technical issues to the wider field of archival sciences. In the last few decades, the Institute has conducted a wide range of activities, which stand out in an overview of expert and scientific publications. Activities include some high-visibility projects, such as the

publication of the *Glossary of regional historical terminology* in three languages (Slovenian, German and Italian). The Institute also organised the *Isfabus International School for Archival Building Studies*, the *Blue Shield Conference* under the auspices of UNESCO, etc. The publishing of the *Atlanti* journals and the organisation of the Archival School in Trieste were stepping stones which in 2006 led to the opening of an IIAS department hosted by the Italian State Archives in Trieste. Thus, the Institute was renamed the International Institute for Archival Science of Trieste and Maribor. The *Atlanti* journals contain papers presented at the yearly *International Archives Day* conferences. The papers are published by the Institute's official members, who are leading archiving experts from all over the world. For additional information on the Institute's activities, visit the website [www.iias-trieste.maribor.eu](http://www.iias-trieste.maribor.eu). Today, the Institute has over 20 regularly appointed active members, however, occasionally it also cooperates with a large number of archiving experts the world over.

In 2019, a new, English-language journal began publication alongside *Atlanti: the Atlanti+ Review for Modern Archival Theory and Practice*. We hope that in the near future these publications will be included in the database for scientific journals and listed in the scientific citation index (SCI), thus earning the authors of the papers points for contributing to research on an international level. To date, two issues (numbered 29/1 and 29/2) have been published as supplements to the *Atlanti* journal. The journal's distant future is in the hands of young Masters of Archives and Records Management and Doctors of Archival Sciences. For more information on the three-cycle study programmes offered by the Archival Studies Department at AMEU ECM, visit the website: <https://en.almamater.si/>.

**The year 2020 marks 35 years since the foundation of the Institute and 30 years since the *Atlanti* journal was first published. We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our many colleagues, supporters, sponsors, friends, acquaintances and outstanding experts in the field of archival sciences and express our heartfelt thanks to each and every one of them by quoting our motto:**

**"Archivistica amor noster, semper et in aeternum".**

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**No typology.**