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A FEW REMARKS ABOUT PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF ARCHIVISTS IN ITALY

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Pregledni članak

Ključne riječi:

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Autor u tekstu navodi osnovne aspekte arhivskog obrazovanja u Italiji.

U Italiji se riječ "arhivist" odnosi na dva zanimanja: akademski obrazovane javne službenike s diplomom arhivistike, koji rade u državnim arhivima ili drugim institucijama gdje je pohranjeno važno povijesno gradivo te zaposlenike koji, na nižim razinama birokratske piramide, rade s aktivnim ili polu-aktivnim spisima. Obrazovanje za ta dva zanimanja je različito, prvo je formalni studij, drugo je neformalno usvajanje radnih postupaka tijekom obavljanja posla.

Pri većim državnim arhivima postoji 17 arhivskih škola. Usprkos različitom povijesnom razvitku pojedinih regija, struktura i program svih škola su određeni zakonom i identični. Tri glavna smjera odsjeka studija su arhivska znanost, paleografija i diplomatika. Tečajevi, čije utemeljenje seže u 18. stoljeće, prilagođavaju se potrebama vremena. U budućnosti će doći do reforme studija te će se, vjerojatno, stjecati različite diplome: jedna za klasično i jedna za moderno gradivo. Kao moguća reforma predloženo je odvajanje škola od arhiva ili osnivanje jedne škole s nekoliko lokalnih ogranaaka, što bi arhivistima omogućilo upoznavanje s regionalnom poviješću i administracijom.

Autor najznačajnijim odlikama talijanskoga arhivskoga obrazovanja smatra: ravnotežu između teorije i prakse; pridavanje važnosti pravu i administraciji kako bi

se shvatio značaj institucija, stvaraoca gradiva; različiti stadiji u "životnom ciklusu" gradiva su shvaćeni kao sukcesivne faze jedinstvenog procesa; vrednovanje i odabiranje su izrazito važni; podučava se metodika primjene načela provenijencije i prvobitnog reda; sređivanje gradiva je prioritarno, potom slijedi njegov opis; dužna pažnja je posvećena arhivskoj tehnici; evaluira se isplativost novih tehnologija; izučava se arhivska etika.

Permanento obrazovanje je potreba na koju Društvo arhivista Italije odgovara organiziranjem seminara o specifičnim temama i kontroverznom pitanjima struke.

Sažetak izradila Živana Hedžbeli

The following short contribution is intended to inform members of the Croatian Archives Society about essential aspects of archival professional training in Italy.

To begin with terminology. I would like to draw your attention to the ambiguous character of the word "archivist", encompassing at least two different jobs within the Italian bureaucratic tradition.

In the first meaning the word indicates an official civil servant provided with a university degree plus an archival sciences diploma, working in State Archives or other institutions holding important historical archives.

The second meaning concerns an employee simply working with current or semi-current records at one of the lowest levels of the bureaucratic pyramid.

These two kind of archivists are given quite different training.

The first one (historical archivist), after a university degree in law, history, political sciences or humanities (4 years) has to attend a two year archival course (possibly parallel to their university courses).

One becomes an archivist of the first kind only by passing a national examination including written and oral exams (history, law, administrative history, political economy, public accountancy, statistics, foreign languages ...).

On the other hand, no specific training is required for lowest level employees: they learn by doing, imitating their senior colleagues, absorbing correct as well as incorrect procedures.

Seventeen Schools of archival studies are run by the most important of the State Archives. The large number, almost one School in each region, is due to the relatively recent date of national unification (1861), resulting in deep differences in regional administrative history. Structure and programs are imposed by law and therefore are identical everywhere. The Schools offer three main branches of study: 1) archival sciences (archival theory, arrangement and description methods, history of archives and archival legislation; 2) paleography (latin and modern); 3) diplomatics (pontifical, imperial, private documents).

Other courses discuss: history of the institutions of the region where the school is established, history of local archives, chronology, sigillography, heraldry, numismatics, cryptography, terminology, archival technology (buildings, equipment, damage prevention, conservation, emergency procedures ...), electronic archives (although not all these topics are discussed in every school).

The foundation of archival schools dates back to eighteenth century. Since 1765 courses in archival studies were given at the University of Bologna and later (1785) at the public archives of the same town.

The first archival schools originally devoted to the training of employees were opened to outsiders in 1840 (Milan) and 1820 (Turin, university) as well as 1826 (Turin, Royal archives school).

Following the unification of Italy in 1861, the teaching of paleography and diplomatics, cancelled from the university curriculum continued in State archive schools. Archival science was in fact underestimated until 1874, when all schools had to adopt it.

Later on, under the archival law of 1939, the archive schools' diploma was required for a number of careers outside State archives. Teachers were sometimes university professors, but mainly they were archivists. Today archival schools continue to be open to the general public.

Currently a number of universities organise archival science courses and a special school for archivists and librarians has been established within the university of Rome.

Since 1978 new faculties were created to teach "Protection of cultural heritage", but they are criticized for trying to offer a general training to people devoted to the safeguarding of quite different kind of objects. A similar risk occurs when archivists are trained in library and information sciences.

The future of Italian archival schools might trend towards a diversification of diplomas: one for handling documents from the middle-ages to modern times and another one for contemporary records (in this case there would be no need for knowing latin, but attention would be paid to new kind of documents).

Suppression of archival schools or their subordination to universities are solutions suggested from time to time, but to separate theory from practice would be a major disadvantage.

Sometimes an archivist is tempted to become a full-time teacher, thus losing a permanent comparison between theory and practice in everyday work and a fruitful reciprocal influence of both aspects.

Among the proposed reforms, one suggests the establishment of a national archival school with a few local branches to give archivists a common basic training.

Archivists training would be integrated in regional schools in order to specialise them in history of local institutions and archives. These local studies are needed in Italy due to the different administrative traditions until 1861.

It is impossible to summarise all the contents of teaching in Italian schools, but I would like to emphasise some points I consider to be relevant.

- Italian schools tend to balance the teaching of theory and practice. Theory is felt to be the instrument for problem solving of any kind, as mere practice is only empirism. Moving from sound archival theory, it would be easier, for example, to realise that a file containing paper documents, photos, floppies etc., shouldn't be splitted away into different storage areas, unless very serious conservation problems suggest it and always preserving the intellectual unity of the original file.
- Italian schools attach great importance to a legal and administrative background in order to allow archivists to understand the internal procedures of institutions which created the archives.
- At the moment schools offer a common professional background to "historical" archivists and archivists who produce archives (records) in today's administrations. In contrast to other national traditions where archivists are more sharply set apart from records managers, in Italy the different steps of the life cycle of documents are considered to be successive phases of a unique process. In other words this link is felt to be not only in the interest of a good access to archives for historical purposes, but first of all in the interest of administrations who produce records. An example of how "historical" archivists can help records creators to adopt more reliable and efficient filing and retrieval methods, can be found in the recent reorganisation of the Pentagon electronic archives, in which two Italian archivists were involved. State Archive Schools, in competition with private schools, from time to time organise seminars to update the professional knowledge of employees in State and local administrations.
- Appraisal and disposal dilemmas are additional fields in which being intellectually well equipped is thought to be particularly important. Rather than little historical value, which seems to be a very subjective criteria, a better approach for destroying documents if felt to be keeping at least essential testimony of the records creator's functions and activities.
- Italian schools teach how to apply the principle of provenance and of original order. A. Mulè in her report at the Beijing international congress, said these should remain the bedrock of the profession. This emphasis is intended to guarantee the most objective and impartial conditions of access to archives for every kind of users, present and future. In fact, historical fashions change over time: the best way to preserve archival context in favor of all researches is to keep archives as they

were organised by their creators. Teaching how to restore and to handle archives whose original order was lost is not easy. Worse still is if the restoration proves to be impossible. Some help comes from studying the creator institution and an additional help from the study of the documents themselves, in order to discover the main functions they were designed to fulfil.

- Arrangement of archives is considered a priority, so description comes later, once the original shape of the fonds has been restored. By this process the structure and the relations among individual documents is not hidden from researches. Schools have to devote attention to archival technology as it is no use to be able to read a medieval parchment if one cannot keep the physical decay under control. Heat, humidity, fire, radiation, pollution, biological infection and theft are sources of dangers the archivist often can quite easily prevent provided he doesn't lack the relevant knowledge.
- An important aspect of teaching concerns the fact that often in contemporary administrations an archive and a documentation center coexist, possibly inside the same computer. Although data could be shared, the key question is which function they serve. Two different agencies can share a unique information system but the archivist has to recognise that there are virtually two archives in one.
- An archivist should also be aware of costs and benefits evaluation. For example even new technologies might be an unadvisable investment, when not fully understood and carefully dominated.
- Schools should also have to consider the role of deontology, as even in a country provided with a good archival law, many doubts or conflicts can arise in the course of ordinary archival work. The recently approved code of ethics of the International Council on Archives offers a background for the solution of ethical dilemmas, which will play an important role in archival education.

A short comment on the up-dating of professional knowledge will serve as a conclusion to this note.

The schools offer professional training which will have to be specialised in the two main directions of historical archivists and records creators, but much still needs to be done in the field of permanent training.

Local administrations sometimes have recourse to private schools, although their quality is not always appreciable.

The Society of Italian Archivists is making an effort by organising seminars on special topics and by setting up working groups on controversial issues such as selection and disposition, reform of archival legislation, ISAD-G standard for archival description, etc.