

Despite the fact that Archive is not located in the City Hall building, when the need arises to see a particular file or a simple document, it is scanned and sent to the pertinent service in digital form for response. This process is very important because it introduces us to the municipal council services document scanning and deployment of Document Management Systems.

The organization of the Municipal Archives, at the moment, is not yet finished. Among other things, we must create conditions so as not to lose track of internal requests for documentation. In the end, a specific form was created for the requisition of documentation to the Archives. The employee or service that requests the document will then have a period of 15-30 days to return the documents to the Archive. All these new forms were based on the rules and procedures proposed by the Directorate General of Archives.

In Portugal, unfortunately, there are many municipalities where the service is nonexistent or executed by administrative staff without any specific training in archival science. The need for better organization and access to documents of local government makes, however, the establishment of the Office of the Municipal Archive fundamental not only for the smooth running of council services but also as a basis for more informed policy decisions.

Completion of Data Collection Sheet was also vital to support the decision of the retention periods and final destination of the documentation reviewed by allowing the documents in excess to be removed, thereby promoting the smooth operation of archival storage. This is in the benefit of the Archive and of the local authority, which can count on a well structured and organized Archive Service. “The assessment document has a key role in the documentation life cycle, insofar as it defines which documents will be preserved for administrative or research and in which moments can they be eliminated or kept permanently, according to the value and potential use for the administration that created them and for society.”

When an entity does not have a selection table in the Law, the archivist is faced with a scenario of overwhelming documentation production that has not been the target of evaluation. In this case, DGRQ – Archives General Direction may direct the person responsible for the Archive to make an assessment report.

*Daniela Alexandra Tavares Carmona**

Lone Arrangers Roundtable of the Society of American Archivists

The archival profession is most certainly a varied one. There are so many different kinds of archival repositories – from ones housed in universities and colleges, to organizations large and small, to corporations and nonprofits. One characteristic that many of these repositories share – even if many of their other characteristics differ – is that many are managed by archivists who can be considered “lone arrangers”. Lone arrangers are archivists who are themselves the only archivist working in their repository – or with minimal staff to assist.

* Câmara Municipal do Entroncamento, Portugal. Translated in English by Gabriela Alexandre.

Archivists in lone arranger settings find themselves doing all of the tasks that would – in a larger setting – be done by multiple people. Lone arrangers find themselves performing all the tasks that it takes to keep their archives running and accessible. Unlike archivists at larger institutions who have other archivists that they work with, lone arrangers must rely heavily upon their own knowledge, savvy, and understanding of the profession to run their archives.

Indeed, lone arrangers find themselves to be, by necessity, knowledgeable about all aspects of an archival repository – from processing manuscript collections to donor relations to records management – and everything in between. The charge can be a bit daunting. That’s why it’s reassuring to know that there is help out there in the form of the Lone Arrangers Roundtable of the Society of American Archivists.

The Society of American Archivists (SAA) is heavily propelled by its membership. While the organization has a staff that runs the core of operations in Chicago, the organization is truly national – even international – in its membership and full governance. Besides the staff at the SAA headquarters in Chicago, SAA has a President and Vice-President and other officers – such as a Treasurer, etcetera. Working in tandem with the officers and the staff is the SAA Council, which acts as the elected governing body of SAA. Underneath this “super structure” of leadership come the various committees, subcommittees, sections, and roundtables of the organization.

The Lone Arrangers Roundtable finds itself as a part of the large web of leaders in SAA. It is the primary body within the Society of American Archivists to provide education, communication, and support for and by lone arranger archivists. The group formed as a result of specially arranged lunches for lone arrangers sponsored by SAA during its annual conference from 1999 to 2002. In 2002, luncheon attendees gathered signatures to create a formal roundtable. SAA formalized the group in 2003. The roundtable’s first meeting was at the SAA annual conference in Los Angeles in the Summer of 2003, where a chair and a co-chair were elected by its members.

The mission statement of the Lone Arrangers Roundtable is:

“To provide education, stimulate communication, and encourage support between archivists working in «lone arranger» settings. The term “lone arranger” includes those working alone or in very small staff situations.”

The roundtable currently is the eighth largest roundtable in SAA in terms of its sheer membership numbers. As there are twenty-seven roundtables, the fact that this roundtable is the eighth largest speaks to the fact that there are many lone arrangers out there who seek the resources and camaraderie it provides.

The roundtable seeks to fulfill its mission to provide education to its members – and anyone else who seeks such assistance – through a few different venues. Central is the roundtable’s website: <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/lonearr/index.asp>. It is loaded with resources on everything from arranging and describing collections to records management to outreach to technology. Additionally, there are papers given by lone arrangers from conferences addressing lone arranger issues and links to social networking sites for lone arrangers and links to regional archival organizations.

Communication opportunities are central for lone arrangers – perhaps more so than for other archivists. Lone arrangers do not have the luxury of posing questions to and seeking advice from colleagues who are physically present in their own archives.

Therefore opportunity for lone arrangers to be able to talk with one another is key. The roundtable has a healthy and active listserv through which lone arrangers can post a question or a concern and get assistance from fellow lone arrangers within a short amount of time. It's been gratifying to see that it is an active venue, and one in which it's clear that posters – as well as its readers – receive answers to the questions that they have asked, and get to discuss particulars of these issues. It's a collegial, informative, and pleasant point of exchange.

Additionally, there are a few social networking sites designed specifically for lone arrangers. One is the Lone Arrangers Ning: <http://lonearrangers.ning.com/>. This site was created by the current vice-chair of the roundtable and a lone arranger colleague. Also there is the Lone Arrangers page in Facebook. These sites are additional venues for lone arrangers to be able to ask questions of each other, discuss issues, and to meet each other.

The roundtable has officially endorsed sessions at the SAA annual conference. These sessions address issues that explore, discuss, and seek solutions for several lone arranger-specific issues. SAA allows for two sessions to be endorsed by each roundtable. In the past few years, the sessions sponsored by the Lone Arrangers Roundtable have dealt with varied issues – including preservation of materials, time management, processing strategies, etcetera.

The Society of American Archivists has contracted the roundtable's vice-chair, Christina Zamon, to write a book addressing specific issues and concerns of lone arrangers. It will be a combination of practical information and case studies written by lone arrangers from all over North America.

A final project that the roundtable has just begun to work on is a travel grant. This travel grant would help to fund lone arrangers who would like to attend SAA's annual conferences, and to attend the Roundtable's annual business meetings in person, but cannot because they have no budget to travel and cannot afford to pay out-of-pocket.

To conclude, being an archivist who is also a lone arranger is deeply satisfying and endlessly interesting. Lone arrangers are, by nature – and necessity – constantly learning new skills and taking initiatives to ensure that their collections are fully and properly cared for and made available. The Lone Arrangers Roundtable of the Society of American Archivists is a resource and a support to this varied and vital population of archivists.

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