

# ARCHIVAL STUDIES IN THE WORLD

## **Records Management Inspection Service in Croatia (an overview from State Archive in Split)**

The ancient idea and the entire concept of "archive" exist as necessary response to the practical need of a man to keep record of public, private, administrative, political and other legal transactions and events, or in order to demonstrate and illustrate relevant historical facts. Modern European archives were created by the contemporary authorities with the intent to convey conspicuous quantities of data in one, central place that can be easily accessed and consulted.

The records management inspection service as a constitutive unit within the body of the State Archives represents a specific and very useful form of cooperation between the Archives and the records creators. The main goal of the records management inspection service in Croatia are inspection, registration, appraisal, weeding approval and taking into custody of the potential archive material (acquisitions). Within the records management activity, the communication with the records creators is of extreme importance even though methodologies and models may differ from one country to another.

The "funny" fact is that for a certain part of the archival community the first impact with the expression "heritage protection of archival material" outside the archive environment does not reveal much about the records management procedures and does not disclose its full contents. To a certain point, however, the (slight) existing diversity in forms of cooperation with the creators as well as the process of the protection of archival material (in the international archival community) can be understood and even regarded as positive.

The records management inspection service (RMIS) in State Archive in Split registers and categorizes all potential records creators. The RMIS range goes from regular general inspections to extraordinary inspections, if needed. Extraordinary inspections can be necessary in case the records are being moved to another location, or in case records creators change radically their standard business organization, etc., or in any other occasion when necessary to preserve the records and guarantee their security.

The protection of archival material in Croatia is performed through the service of protection of archival material carried out outside the archives also known as records management inspection service (RMIS). The RMIS, as a process undertaken at the system level, is supposed to participate actively in creating the preconditions necessary to establish new, better standards in archive management. Before the complete assessment and classification of materials and the evaluation of the creator itself is done, one cannot expect improvements at the primary care and security level, nor is able to undertake a policy of systematic acquisitions in the archives. Long story short: no serious improvement is possible without RMIS.

Therefore, the most obvious conclusion is that neither secondary operation cannot be completed, a fact that undermines the basic function of archives. Some steps have been made to organize and standardize legal acts, classification of creators etc. and to improve work of RMIS. What is important are the ways to implement legal obligations and regulations in practice, and to standardize methods in order to turn them into a recognizable know-how. All archives in Croatia supervise the selection and preservation of archival records through regular general and extraordinary inspections. After the inspection is completed, it is customary to issue a written report with deliberations on the given measures. Experience shows that the creators' approach in the performance of their duties appears to be more serious if they are given a written document. Closely related to this topic is the control of the implementation of sets of measures given to the creators. The control and constant supervision is necessary for preservation of records.

A further task in the protection, preservation and maintenance of archives is the appraisal and weeding approval. This segment of the protection is of great significance. If RMIS does not perform this part of the process with the due accuracy, some written documents could be lost forever and some could never be substituted with materials of equal importance. While performing this vital task, archivists rely mostly on the discretion and the requirements of certain laws issued to regulate the bureaucratic and the administrative aspect of the matter without considering the high value of information from the historical point of view.

Almost all local government officials are eligible for records management assistance by the records management inspection service. They are, therefore, fully responsible for filing the records destruction notice together with the records management inspection in case any public records is destroyed within the weeding approval. All records made by the records creators or other staff members on charge of records creation (record keepers) must be catalogued in order to avoid unauthorized destruction of records. To facilitate the records creators' (record keepers) tasks, State archives create legal acts such as Lists of records containing data on the record retention period or the duration of the record in the archive i.e. whether a record will be kept forever or not.

The final phase of the process of protection of archive materials is its acquisition. If all of the above mentioned procedures are performed correctly and the level of protection and conservation at this point of the procedure is satisfying, the acquisition is a purely formal act, in accordance with legal requirements and guidelines of the archival profession. The handover must be performed with extreme care for this is the last occasion to correct omissions and to complete the incomplete files. When records are ready for the acquisition in the archives they should be completely and thoroughly organized. The records management inspection service assists and monitors the acquisition policy of the Archives due to its delicacy and importance: without the adequate records management inspection service it would not be possible to perform systematic analyses of the archives in order to preserve them and increase their efficiency as a part of the national cultural heritage.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in Croatia a theoretical connection between Archives and the records creators existed, but in practice it started to exist only after 1945. But since then a lot has changed: the modalities in which records creators operate, the way they store and manage their documents (digitalized electronic format), the media etc. In the modern era, with rapid changes occurring, it is not hard to realize the importance of

the efficiency of the updated and upgraded archive system and also that the mere inspection of the archives of records creators is not sufficient by itself to keep the system together. The best practice experiences show that the monitoring of the entire life cycle of the document is recommended. Only when RMIS are thoroughly informed about the whole process concerning the document they can be efficient in its preservation to the future generations. It is also important for the archivists to become more active in creating legal acts and professional standards regarding the records preservation based on their experience. The role and the position of modern archives and records offices are determined by a complex network of components among which there are the laws regarding the records management, the quality of the archival service, practical, continuous records consultation and rapid changing technology (digital records).

With the evolution of the records (i.e. the media on which they are saved) it is important to make sure the classic archival methods follow the pace. Electronic records topic raises a set of delicate questions of almost romantic nature such as those on the necessity of keeping traditional records and centralized archives. Nowadays, in the world of electronic records the document's life cycle is different in comparison to what it was a couple of decades ago. The documents are easier to transfer but, in the same time, more difficult to protect. A great number of archivists all over the world are now in contact with new kind of records such as virtual archives, digitalized ones, etc. In 1997, the ICA (International Council on Archives) released *The Guide for Managing Electronic Records from an Archival Perspective*. ICARUS – International Centre for Archival Research organized in Vienna in 2010 the international conference dedicated to the “Archives on the Web – Experiences, Challenges, Visions”. It is thus obvious that there is a tangible need for a fast on-line access through which the vast majority of users satisfy their necessities for images of documents with no originals needed. In the era of IT the preservation of archive documentation becomes more low cost but in the same time high quality and high tech; the people get the large amount of information in a very small amount of time increasing their research effectiveness.

However, the electronic records have not changed the basic nature of the records creation. Documents exist because the administration needs them in order to work properly and they still need to be consulted because of their value as a historical and a part of cultural heritage. The foundation of the idea of the archive has not changed a bit: the documents are preserved as evidence. What changed are the ways the documents are kept, as well as the access to the records. Unlike the paper materials or microfilms, the digital technologies allow multiple access to the same document at the same time with almost no space required. However, while electronic record technology increases the efficiency of local records, it also brings some risks: those records and their information can be easily lost.

Nowadays archivists must maintain the basic function and purpose their profession and that of archives as well and preserve documents of great historical significance no matter on what platform. Essential future challenge for the archivists is to preserve the archives importance within the administration. At the end of 2006 Croatian State Archive started the construction of a new archival information system which should cover all archival functions: storage, preservation, management and facilitate the use of archival records. ARHiNET is a web application that includes several modules: Security and authorization, Description and processing of archives, Archival register and documentation, Creators and holders of archival material, Preservation of archives,

Digital contents, and Education. It is currently the national archival system in the Republic of Croatia, and it is recognized by the Ministry of Culture as the national project, as part a of the e-Croatia program, the operational plan of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. ARHiNET serves as an integrated system on the national basis for the exchange of information among institutions that keep archival records and archives portal for all information regarding the archival material of any kind and content relevant for Croatia. This Register contains all the necessary data on fonds and collections, archival units, almost 19,500 records creators and 7,000 holders of archival material.

Another challenge of the modern records management inspection service is to organize training courses for record creators. In Split, such courses are organized about twice a year. Several members of the archive staff, from every department, give a lecture and then, about two months later, a commission from Zagreb comes to examine the record creators and issues their certificates.

The main aim of the course is to inform records creators about records management, about the tasks of archive, about legal acts and standards that concern them as records creators. Archives need to be more involved in the records creators work. The Law says the records will be taken into custody of the archives only if they are arranged and listed, so it was logical for the records management inspection service to organize education for the records creators. In that way the records management inspection service helped record creators to care for and to protect properly their records, to repair them when necessary and made preparations for taking records into custody of the archives.

The first set of regulations on the professional training of the records creators was passed in 1988. This regulation determined the degree of education for the personnel who works in the records creation, its minimum level and the timing for its examination. For example: the records creators of category I and II are obligated to give their records to archives, they must have at least one of the employees that had passed the exam. These regulations also determine the Program of the exam that consists in legal acts concerning the preservation of records, the old ones and those still active, basic business managing, basic physical preservation, registration and arranging of the records and weeding approval. One of the problems of this typology of training is that all of it is made of basic notions and mainly theoretical. There is no such section as practice even though it is the most necessary aspect of the entire training program. Furthermore, the problem that encompasses it all is that, in general, the people do not realize the real value of the primary measures of care and preservation performed by the records creators. The latter is solely a psychological fact but it is of great importance in the perspective of the perception of the appreciation the records creators might have of their work.

## **Conclusion**

By constantly monitoring the work of records management inspection service in Croatia over a certain period of time it is obvious that some improvement must be done such as the incrementation of the staff in the records management inspection service, the necessity of the continuous work on the training of the records management inspection service personnel, incrementation of the influence on the active life of documents, establishment of homogeneous standards of records management inspection service in whole Croatia, motivation for the staff, enhancement of abilities of records management inspection in order to improve and update the existing set of laws. Long story short, the

records management inspection service is undergoing a period of evolution during which it will be “forced” to adapt.

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## The Archive of Taranto Meteorological and Geophysical Observatory

The Meteorological and Geophysical Observatory “Luigi Ferrajolo<sup>1</sup>” is located in Taranto, in the South of Italy. Even today, it is one of the most ancient observatories in Italy and abroad. In 2011 this institute celebrated 120 years of scientific life in the country.

The history of this institute is related to Luigi Ferrajolo’s life, its founder and first director between 1891 and 1968, when he decided to retire and to leave the management to the present director, Vittorio Semeraro.

According to a Ferrajolo’s interesting essay, *Profili di climatologia Tarantina* (Profiles of Taranto Climatology)<sup>2</sup>, various meteorological observations in Taranto began on April 1, 1866 at the Royal Coast Guard, after the establishment of the meteorological service of Italian Navy for weather forecasting.

At the beginning, Taranto thermo-pluviometric station started working in 1878 at the city hall, but the activity was stopped in 1884<sup>3</sup>.

Luigi Ferrajolo, when he was only 13 years old, installed in his house at Via S. Martino 31 a small thermo-pluviometric station, using some rudimentary instruments that he himself built although he was very young. The observations were so accurate that impressed Cosimo De Giorgi<sup>4</sup>, director of Lecce Observatory and founder of *Rete*

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<sup>1</sup> Luigi Ferrajolo (Taranto, 1878-1971). After studying Physics of the Earth in Naples, he was the founder and first director of Taranto Meteorological and Geophysical Observatory; this institute, recognized by the Italian Ministry of Air Force, entered in the international circuit of European observatories. Later he became also a geophysicist in the Italian Royal Air Force. He was a member of several scientific associations in Italy and abroad. He also invented a simple horizontal pendulum seismograph. Among his scientific publications: *Per l'emissione di un bollettino meteorologico internazionale radiotelegrafico dall'Italia*, “La Meteorologia Pratica” 5 (1924), 4, p. 141-143; *Osservazioni meteorologiche del 1927*, Taranto, 1928; *L'andamento del clima in terra jonica nel 1928*, “Risveglio Agricolo di Taranto” 7 (1929), 4, p. 109-113; *Saggio di Climatologia aeronautica dell'isola di Rodi*, “Rivista di Meteorologia Aeronautica” 1 (1937), 3 and 4.

<sup>2</sup> Luigi Ferrajolo, *Profili di climatologia Tarantina*, “Terra Ionica”, 1926, 11-12, p. 1-14.

<sup>3</sup> Cosimo De Giorgi, *Studi sul Clima di Lecce e della Penisola Salentina - Dal 1874 al 1892 - Relazione al Consiglio Provinciale di Terra d'Otranto, al Consiglio Municipale di Lecce ed al Comizio Agrario del Circondario di Lecce*, Lecce, 1892, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Cosimo De Giorgi (Lizzanello, 1842-Lecce, 1922). He studied Medical Science and Surgery in Pisa and Florence. He devoted himself to study seismology, meteorology, geology, paleontology, geography, history, archeology and agriculture. In 1874 he founded Lecce Meteorological Observatory and later Salento Meteorological Network. Among his scientific publications: *Note statistiche sul clima di Lecce e della regione salentina desunte dalle osservazioni eseguite nell'Osservatorio di Lecce dal 1875 al 1914*, Lecce, 1915; *La distribuzione della pioggia sulla*