Archival Buildings in General and the Case with the Archival Buildings of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia

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ABSTRACT

This paper explains the necessity of suitable archival buildings and repositories for storage of archival holdings, the conditions in the repositories, the suitability of archival facilities, their ability to survive in emergencies, as well as the possibility of their adaptation. The paper also cite the issue of whether to plan a new or to adapt an existing building. Considering the fact that the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia has recently relocated in a new building, there some points of view regarding the characteristics of the old and the new building.

Key words: Suitable archival buildings, repositories, construction characteristics, emergencies, adaptation

L'edilizia archivistica in generale ed il caso dell'edificio dell'Archivio centrale della Repubblica di Macedonia

SINTESI

Questo documento spiega la necessità di disporre di edifici d'archivio e depositi adatti per la conservazione degli archivi; le condizioni nei depositi; l'idoneità dei servizi archivistici, la loro capacità di sopravvivere in caso di emergenza; così come la possibilità del loro adattamento. L'articolo cita anche la questione della pianificazione di un nuovo o dell'adattamento di un edificio esistente. Considerando il fatto che l'Archivio di Stato della Repubblica di Macedonia si è recentemente trasferito in un nuovo edificio, si forniscono alcuni punti di vista per quanto riguarda le caratteristiche del vecchio e del nuovo edificio.

Parole chiave: edifici archivistici idonei, depositi, caratteristiche costruttive, emergenze, adattamento

Arhivske stavbe s posebnim ozirom na stavbo Državnega arhiva Republike Makedonije

IZVLEČEK

Prispevek pojasnjuje nujnost ustreznih arhivskih stavb in skladiščnih prostorov za hrambo arhivskega gradiva, skladiščne pogoje, primernost arhivskih objektov, njihovo sposobnost za preživetje v izrednih razmerah kot tudi možnost njihove adaptacije. V članku se obravnava tudi vprašanje, ali načrtovati novo ali adaptirati obstoječo stavbo. Glede na dejstvo, da se je Državni Arhiv Republike Makedonije pred kratkim preselil v novo stavbo, prispevek predstavlja nekaj stališč v zvezi z značilnostmi stare in nove stavbe.

Ključne besede: primerne arhivske zgradbe, skladišča, gradbene značilnosti, nesreče, adaptacija

Архивските згради воопшто и случајот со архивските згради на Државниот архив на Република Македонија

АПСТРАКТ

Овој текст ја објаснува потребата од соодветни архивски згради и депоа за чување на архивски материјал, како и условите во депоата, соодветноста на архивските простории, можноста за нивно опстојување во вонредни состојби, како и можноста за нивно адаптирање. Со оглед на фактот дека Државниот архив на

Република Македонија неодамна се пресели во нов објект, овој текст исто така дава осврт кон некои карактеристики на старата и на новата зграда.

Клучни зборови: Соодветни архивски згради, депоа, градежни карактеристики, вонредни состојби, адаптации

1 The necessity of suitable archival buildings and repositories

Archival buildings and archival repositories are facilities that provide a proper environment for the purpose of storing archival holdings that require permanent protection for historic and lifetime storage, upkeep and preservation. Archival buildings and archival repositories must be high-performance buildings whose systems must be designed to operate permanently at a very high level with zero tolerance for failure. The often irreplaceable nature of the materials to be permanently stored and preserved in this type of building requires a life-cycle analysis and thorough approach to its design and construction.

The building type for the Archives must be designed to accommodate the loads of the materials to be stored; the sensitive environmental needs of different materials to be permanently stored and preserved; the functional efficiency, safety, security, and comfort of the visiting public and operating personnel; and the protection of the archival materials from fire, water, and man-made threat.

To accomplish this complex goal, there must be undertaken an inclusive, integrated or whole building design approach that optimizes and balances the various design objectives to achieve the desired high-performance building. This process must involve the users of the building (professional archivists) and design professionals from the beginning of the project.

An Archival Building must have working environments that are safe, secure, healthy, comfortable, durable, aesthetically pleasing and be accessible. Administrative office space, archival and preservation office space, and permanent storage space for the stored archival and record materials must be accommodated.

Important issues for Archives and Record Storage Buildings are:

- storage of archival materials to maximize efficiency, utilize building cubic space;
- flexibility for change of mission, new materials to be stored, and archival technologies;
- provision for archives expansion - vertically, horizontally;
- protection of the archived materials is a principal design driver for this building type;
- compartmentalization of storage areas to limit involved area of catastrophic loss in case of fire or system failure;
- fire protection of the stored materials;
- safety of staff and visitor occupants;
- temperature and humidity requirements that might vary for different types of materials stored in archival areas and in the archival/preservation office areas;
- daylight for employee amenity, but not that would harm archival materials or adversely affect sensitive indoor environmental conditions;
- controlled access to archive storage areas;
- secure and safe loading and receiving areas; and
- secure and controlled public/researcher access (Acker and O'Connell, 2010).

Every repository must meet certain basic requirements. They are:

a. preservation of documents in complete security, hence the need for safe storage areas, protected against fire, humidity, excessive sunlight, insects, rodents, burglars, etc.;
b. production of documents to those requiring them, hence the need for space for listing, packing, labelling, catalogues and inventories, search room;
c. repair of damaged documents;
d. documentary reproduction - microfilm, photocopying, etc.

All Archival buildings must incorporate a number of space types to meet the needs of staff and visitors. These spaces may include: offices, visitor support spaces, employee support spaces, archival storage spaces, archive access corridor(s), operation and maintenance spaces.

Every archival building must consider full accessibility for all workers and visitors to the building and they must contain flexible storage arrangements to house growing collections of materials with varying storage and environmental requirements. An adequate space for storage, preservation and repair of electronic information and media systems should be included in the program.

Among the most important things when designing a new or adapting an old building for an Archive, besides safeguarding the archival holdings is the health, safety, and comfort of the employees.

When building a new or adapting an old buildin we have to utililize strategies such as increased fresh air ventilation rates, the specification of non-toxic and low-polluting materials and systems, and indoor air quality monitoring. Consider separately exhausted or separated space for air polluting materials used in any archival preservation process.

Individualized climate control in office spaces that permits users to set their own, localized temperature, ventilation rate, and air movement preferences is desired. However, critical requirements for archival material may require a constant environment.

It is widely accepted that worker satisfaction and performance are increased when office workers are provided stimulating, dynamic, working environments. Access to windows and view, opportunities for interaction, and control of one's immediate environment are some of the factors that contribute to improved workplace satisfaction.

Natural and man-made threats from the past have focused attention on protection of occupants and assets. Through comprehensive threat assessment, vulnerability assessment, and risk analysis, security requirements for individual buildings are identified, and appropriate reasonable design responses are identified for integration into the building design.

Protection of occupants, assets, and building contents is of paramount importance. Protection of valued archival materials from fire and smoke, water, and inadequate environmental conditions, will require robust building and system design, and reliable, durable, and integrated system sensors, monitors, alarms, and protection devices. In addition man-made threat security shall require controlled access and surveillance systems.

To avoid troubles with the navigation of the movement through the building we must mark the safest exit route from the building. There must exist safety plans and they must be evaluate on a regular basis.

Fire protection system design becomes a critical design element involving extensive fire-rated construction and pressurized water delivery to sprinkler or water mist systems. Fire protection systems must be designed to put out fire as quickly as possible, with minimal collateral damage to structure and contents.

Also include ability to rapidly vent heat and smoke from fires. This may be difficult to achieve for archives and storage facilities located in basements and underground caverns.

Given the long-term perspective required for an archives facility, the building will have to accommodate changing technologies for storage and handling of archival materials, change in the nature of the stored materials themselves, changes to building systems and materials over time, and possible change or redefinition of mission.

2. New archival building or adapting an existing building for the needs of the Archives

Whether the question is to plan a new building or to adapt an existing building, nothing useful will be achieved without a precise brief. It would be wrong for the archivist to expect the architect to

draw up the brief. The archivist knows the needs of his service, but the architect knows the solutions which will satisfy these needs. Close collaboration between the architect and the archivist is indispensable for the satisfactory completion of an archival building. However, in the practice things do not always fall out this way.

Whether it is a question of building or adapting, the architect knows the latest technical developments and is responsible for the actual works (Duchein, 1985).

When it comes a word of old buildings the cost is usually lower since there are normally no major works to be carried out on the main structure of the building. It is possible to re-use old repositories by modernization of their interiors.

In favour of new buildings is the obvious advantage of the grater convenience and flexibility.

The proper choice of a site for an archival building is of a great importance. Many mistakes can subsequently be corrected, but not the choice of a bad site. The whole future of an archive service can be jeopardized by such a mistake.

Unfortunately, the „ideal site" is very difficult to define. Many factors enter into the reckoning, some of them contradicting others.

At least it is possible to define without hesitation sites which should be completely avoided:

- sites with intrinsic dangers: land liable to flooding; unstable sites (e.g. hillsides, where the sub-soil is of clay and liable to land slides); damp, swampy sites; land liable to the effects of heavy seas; land subject to termite infestation, etc.
- sites with dangerous surroundings: sites near factories with a high degree of air pollution, or near installations of high fire or explosive risk (gasometers, petrol tanks, explosive depots, etc.), or near possible strategic targets (airfields, major railway centres, etc.). Such sites should be rigorously avoided. Under no circumstances should an archivist agree to build a repository on a site with these major disadvantages.

It is always possible to leave the heart of an archive service in a town centre (offices, search rooms, catalogue rooms, etc., i.e. those part of direct service to the public) and to spread the storage accommodation which is the most cumbersome part, out around the edges of the town. Such a solution is both practicable and acceptable.

Once the site has been chosen, thought must be given to the possible orientation of the building and whether to build the repository above or below ground.

A multi-purpose archive building is composed of three (or four) basic elements:

1. storage areas (strong rooms);
2. working areas for the staff;
3. areas open to the public (the offices of the director and his assistants fall between these two categories);
4. (possibly) official residence (Duchein, 1985).

There is one fundamental principle to be observed in linking these different elements and drawing up the plan of the buildings: the strong rooms must be isolated from the rest of the building to ensure their protection against fire. This can be achieved either horizontally or vertically; put another way, the strong rooms can be built either physically separated from the other areas or separated from them by thick walls or placed above or below each other with fire resisting floors and ceilings.

It is important to consider whether to put repositories on the upper or lower floors. It seems logical to place the heavier elements (repositories) in the lower parts of a building.

No archivist can claim to have done his job properly, when building or adapting a building for his service, if he has not provided for extensions sufficient for the foreseeable future.

3. The case with the archival buildings of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia - Central part

The State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia was established on 1st of April 1951, as a result of the previous history of attempts and efforts to form this institution in the frames of other institutions. For example immediately after the Second World War, the role of transitory archives was played by the Faculty of Philosophy, the Institute of National History and the Museum of Macedonia, and as of 1949, within the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia Aleksov, 2006).

In the period between 1951 and 1961, the archives network of Macedonia was completed with the establishment of nine regional (city) archives in Skopje, Ohrid, Bitola, Shtip, Kumanovo, Prilep, Veles, Strumica and Tetovo. In that period six modern Archive special buildings were built in the Republic of Macedonia. These are the buildings of the State Archives (the central part), and the Departments' buildings in Skopje, Bitola, Shtip, Ohrid and Veles. Until today in the Department in Prilep, a new repository was built, and the building in Strumica was reconstructed. The Departments in Kumanovo and Tetovo are in strong need for new buildings. However, the space available for the records keeping and preservation is insufficient and some Departments cope with severe problems in this regard.

In some aspects all of the buildings being used by the Departments of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia are outdated and they need serious interventions in order to adapt them to the new standards.

The State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia, its central part, since 1951 till December 2013 was situated in a purpose built building.

Picture 1. The old building of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia

Picture 2. The old repository of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia

From January, 2014, the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia is relocated in a new building.

Picture 3. The new building of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia

Picture 4. The premises of the repository in the new building

This building is equipped with a permanent fire protection system and uses a new automatic fire suppression system.

Climatic conditions is based on the control of the air intake and constant air circulation. Conditions of temperature and relative humidity will be maintained within acceptable limits and highly controlled.

The State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia, its central part is situated in a building, that is shared with the Archeological Museum and the Constitutional Court.

The Archives premises are at the sixth, seventh and on the eight floor. The repository is on the sixth floor, and the administrative part is on the other two floors. So far, only the administrative part is functioning in the new building. The repository is not yet relocated in the new building, because the plan is to keep the old repository, and use the new one for the future acquisition activities.

Besides the repository at the sixth floor, in the new building at the seventh floor there is a 345 m^2 storage capacity used as a storage room for the library.

Unfortunately the reading room is only 58 m^2. Whole space for the administrative part counts 1572 m^2, and that is the size of the repository too.

The new building is situated in the centre of the town, by the river Vardar, that flows through the city of Skopje, and is very attractive and remarkable and greatly contribute to overcoming the prejudices regarding the archives as a collection of dirty, useless old papers.

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SUMMARY

Archival buildings and archival repositories are facilities that provide a proper environment for the purpose of storing archival holdings that require permanent protection for historic and lifetime storage, upkeep and preservation. Archival buildings and archival repositories must be high-performance buildings whose systems must be designed to operate permanently at a very high level with zero tolerance for failure. The often irreplaceable nature of the materials to be permanently stored and preserved in this type of building requires a life-cycle analysis and thorough approach to its design and construction. All Archival buildings must incorporate a number of space types to meet the needs of staff and visitors. These spaces may include: offices, visitor support spaces, employee support spaces, archival storage spaces, archive access corridor(s), operation and maintenance spaces. Every archival building must consider full accessibility for all workers and visitors to the building and they must contain flexible storage arrangements to house growing collections of materials with varying storage and environmental requirements. An adequate space for storage, preservation and repair of electronic information and media systems should be included in the program. Among the most important things when designing a new or adapting an old building for an Archive, besides safeguarding the archival holdings is the health, safety, and comfort of the employees. Natural and man-made threats from the past have focused attention on protection of occupants and assets. Through comprehensive threat assessment, vulnerability assessment, and risk analysis, security requirements for individual buildings are identified, and appropriate reasonable design responses are identified for integration into the building design. The State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia, its central part, since 1951 till December 2013 was situated in a purpose built building. From January, 2014, the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia is relocated in a new building.

Typology: 1.04 Professional Article

Submitting date: 13.03.2015

Acceptance date: 09.04.2015