

# Professional Training and Retraining of Archivists in the All-Russian Scientific and Research Institute for Documentation and Archives (VNIIDAD)

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## ABSTRACT

In Russia, state and municipal archives are in conditions of lack of archivists with specialized education and rising average age for practicing archivists. At the same time the requirements to the archival profession are changing rapidly in the era of information technology and digital data. Together with the constant modification of programs of the higher education institutions the new forms of training and retraining of archivists are developing. The paper presents the role of the All-Russian Scientific and Research Institute for documentation and archives (VNIIDAD) in professional training and retraining of archivists and records managers in Russia. Actual questions concerning organization of training process and the subject-matter of the proposed courses in modern conditions are covered.

**Key words:** archival education, Russia, continuing education, professional retraining, professional training, VNIIDAD

Formazione professionale e riqualificazione degli archivisti nell'Istituto scientifico e di ricerca per la documentazione e gli archivi di Russia (VNIIDAD)

## ABSTRACT

In Russia gli archivi statali e comunali mancano di archivisti con formazione specializzata, e vi è un aumento dell'età media per la pratica archivistica. Allo stesso tempo, i requisiti per la professione archivistica stanno cambiando rapidamente nell'era della tecnologia informatica e dei dati digitali. Insieme con il costante aggiornamento dei programmi degli istituti di istruzione superiore, si stanno sviluppando nuove forme di formazione e riqualificazione degli archivisti. L'articolo presenta il ruolo dell'Istituto di ricerca scientifica panrusso per la documentazione e gli archivi (VNIIDAD) nella formazione professionale e riqualificazione degli archivisti e dei responsabili documentali. Sono presentate proposte effettive riguardanti l'organizzazione del processo formativo e l'oggetto dei corsi proposti.

**Parole chiave:** formazione archivistica, formazione permanente, riforma professionale, formazione professionale, VNIIDAD

Strokovno usposabljanje in izpopolnjevanje arhivistov v Vseruskem znanstvenem in raziskovalnem inštitutu za dokumentacijo in arhive (VNIIDAD)

## IZVLEČEK

V Rusiji se državni in občinski arhivi soočajo s pomanjkanjem specialno izobraženih arhivistov in naraščanjem povprečne starosti aktivnih arhivistov. Istočasno se zahteve arhivskega poklica v dobi informacijske tehnologije in digitalnih podatkov hitro spreminjajo. Skupaj s stalnim spreminjanjem programov visokošolskih zavodov se razvijajo nove oblike usposabljanja in izpopolnjevanja arhivistov. Avtorica v prispevku predstavlja vlogo Vseruskega znanstvenega in raziskovalnega inštituta za dokumentacijo in arhive (VNIIDAD) pri strokovnem usposabljanju in izpopolnjevanju arhivistov in delavcev, ki delajo z dokumentarnim gradivom v Rusiji. Zajeta so aktualna vprašanja v zvezi z organizacijo procesa usposabljanja in vsebina predlaganih predmetov.

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**Ključne besede:** arhivsko izobraževanje, Rusija, nadaljevalno izobraževanje, strokovno izpopolnjevanje, strokovno usposabljanje, VNIIDAD

Повышение квалификации и профессиональная переподготовка архивистов во Всероссийском научно-исследовательском институте документоведения и архивного дела (ВНИИДАД)

В настоящее время государственные и муниципальные архивы России оказались в условиях острой нехватки специалистов с профильным образованием и повышения среднего возраста архивистов. В то же время стремительно изменяются требования к архивной профессии в эпоху информационных технологий и цифровых данных. В связи с этим развиваются новые формы профессиональной подготовки и переподготовки архивистов, наряду с изменением учебных программ профильных вузов. В докладе представлена деятельность ВНИИДАД в области повышения квалификации и переподготовки кадров в области архивного дела и документационного обеспечения управления. Затрагиваются актуальные вопросы организации учебного процесса и информационного наполнения учебных курсов в современных условиях.

## 1 Professional training of archivists as one of the directions of activity of VNIIDAD

The All-Russian Scientific and Research Institute for documentation and archives (VNIIDAD) was created in 1966 and is widely recognized to be the main scientific center for research in the field of documentation and archival sciences, records and archives management in Russia, as formerly it was in the USSR. The Institute also works out and develops rules, regulations, standards, instructions, guidelines and methodic recommendations for records and archives management (*for an overview, see Ларин М.В., Юмашева Ю.Ю., Янковая В.Ф et al., 2016 and Ларин М.В., 2016*).

Since 1997 one of the directions of activity of VNIIDAD is professional training and retraining of archivists and records managers organized in the form of educational courses, seminars and workshops, both resident and non-resident.

The idea of creation of the specialized center for professional development and training of archivists and records managers in VNIIDAD appeared as an answer to the challenges faced by the archives and society in Russia.

## 2 The main reasons and premises for creation of specialized educational center for archivists in VNIIDAD)

### 2.1 The dearth of archivists with specialized education

In spite of the activity of the Institute for history and archives and other higher education institutions, the lack of specialists with profile education in state and municipal archives is more and more obvious. The reason is that graduates of institutes and colleges do not go to work in state or municipal archives just because they are not obliged to do it and they do not have stimulus to work there. The proposed salary is low; the social status is not very prestigious. The level of education given in the Institute for history and archives of RSUH is traditionally very high and its graduates can easily find job in different commercial structures. As a result we have a lack or even absence of graduates of specialized higher education institutions in archives.

In this connection the then head of the Federal archival service (later the Federal archival agency, Rosarchiv) V.P. Kozlov wrote the following: "Liquidation of the institute of distribution of young specialists has deprived the branch of stable inflow of young professionals", and complained that "the training of historians and archivists in public higher education institutions is becoming a forge of manpower for non-public structures" (*Козлов, 2001, p. 7*).

The archives have to fill up staff vacancies by specialists with another higher or secondary technical education. These archivists need a professional retraining in the short term in order to correspond to skill standards and to get relevant and current knowledge, which is compact and concrete enough to be practically used.

## 2.2 New challenges in the digital era

The other set of problems is connected with the development of new information technologies and their impact on the archives.

The work of archivists and records managers has fundamentally changed. In the digital era they must be able to work with digitized records and born-digital records, to use informational technologies in their daily work, to create electronic finding aids and make expositions of archival documents in electronic form, etc.

Technical colleges and higher education institutions are constantly updating their educational and training programs in order to meet the challenges of the changing environment (*for an overview see Larin M., 2014*).

But what if the archivist is not the beginner, but the experienced specialist with classical historical and archival education? Sure the experience and the classical education have their benefits, but these specialists need to renew their professional skills, to learn how to deal with new types of documents which appeared and how to use new technologies in their work.

These challenges of digital society have precipitated a demand for new forms of training programs for archivists.

## 2.3 Changing regulatory legal environment

Archives in Russia are moving towards greater transparency of information. At the same time they have to balance between different freedoms, individual rights, and public and private interests. These are very difficult legal issues, and it is extremely important that archivists were aware of the current changes in legislation. So they need to have an opportunity to study it at special courses and to have consultations with the specialists in the archival legislation and adjacent laws and regulations.

## 2.4 The necessity of continuing education and training of practicing archivists

All the archivists in the country are obliged to maintain and raise their professional level at special courses and to confirm the fact by an appropriate certificate. The aim is to update regularly theoretical and practical knowledge of archivists in response to the changing requirements to qualification level and the necessity to develop and implement modern methods of solving professional tasks.

These requirements compel archivists to look for special educational centers able to provide an appropriate training and to issue officially valid certificates.

There are a lot of commercial training centers which can render this service to the archives, but there is no adequate control over the quality of proposed courses.

In this situation the existence of such a center in the leading scientific institute for documentation and archives is for the benefit of the system of archival institutions in general, for the archivists who need to be sure that they will get not only a certificate, but also the knowledge to be practically used.

## 2.5 Labor market situation requires retraining programs for applicants wishing to change profession

Labor market implies that an applicant with specialized education has more chances to get a desired job. Applicants realize also that the reputation of the certificate program provider is considered as part of the value of the certificate.

Creation of the professional training center in VNIIDAD meets the need of the labor market for qualitative retraining of specialists in order to help them in job search.

## 2.6 The necessity of interrelation between records management and archives

The composition and the contents of the archival funds, the quality of information we can get in the archives vastly depend on the state of records management systems in organizations - creators of do-

cuments. The interrelation and succession between records management, current archives and historical archives are indispensable. VNIIDAD organizes courses for archivists from different types of archives (including special courses for municipal archives, archives of organizations, specialized archives, etc.) and for records managers of different levels. They are based on the statutory requirements and professional recommendations. So the principles of work with documentation are elucidated for all the stages of the document lifecycle.

## 2.7 The need for a common professional training platform for the archives of the CIS countries

After the dissolution of the USSR, the area of scientific activity of VNIIDAD and implementation of its results reduced from the all-Union to the All-Russian level. It must be mentioned though that the similar institutes in Ukraine and Belarus were created. Archives in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) have their common history and traditions and similar problems. They expressed willingness to have a common professional training platform where they could realize exchange of experience and to learn the achievements of the Russian archival theory and practice. This became possible with the help of the International Council on Archives (ICA) and of the Federal archival agency of Russia. The Professional training center in VNIIDAD was authorized to organize international training courses under the aegis of EURASICA branch of the ICA.

## 3 The history of creation of the center for professional development and training of archivists and records managers in VNIIDAD

In the above mentioned circumstances Rosarchiv was searching for the solution to this set of problems. It was found due to the initiative of the direction of VNIIDAD to organize training courses for archivists on the basis of the Institute. It was approved by Rosarchiv in 1997. The first training course was held 12-14 May, 1997 on the following subject: "Organizational and methodic foundations of work of municipal archives". It was realized with participation of such prominent Russian specialists in archival theory and practice as A.N. Artizov, M.V. Larin, V.F. Privalov, A.N. Sokova, V.D. Banasyukevich, and others.

Soon it was realized that this activity needs to be organized on a regularly basis and have to cover different aspects of archival work. Integrative approach to continuing archival education and training was embodied in 1999 with creation in VNIIDAD of the specialized center for professional development and training of archivists and records managers (Russian abbreviation of the name of the center in English transcription looks like OCPK). The decision of creation of OCPK in VNIIDAD was made by the Rosarchiv Board 29 September, 1999 at the suggestion of VNIIDAD. The decision was motivated, among others, by the fact that VNIIDAD is the leading scientific center in the field of archives and it has a high prestige among the archival and other institutions (*for the history of OCPK, see Ларин М.В., Юмашева Ю.Ю., Янковая В.Ф et al., 2016, p.328-334*)

OCPK was created as a self-supporting subdivision of the institute, but in the beginning its activity was directed only on the future results. The license of the Ministry of education of Russia was obtained in 2000 for the five-year period. The other licenses were given to VNIIDAD by the Federal service for supervision in education and science, which was authorized for issue of licenses. The last obtained license is valid for the unlimited time period.

The first license gave VNIIDAD a right of conducting educational activity in the sphere of professional training of employees of archival institutions and records management services. Since 2006 VNIIDAD has a right to realize retraining professional programs.

## 4 International training programs

In 2003 VNIIDAD got a status of the basic organization of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on training and retraining specialists in archives and records management of the CIS countries. It was fixed in the decision of the Council of the heads of governments of CIS countries of 18 September, 2003. According to the statutes of the basic organization its main functions are:

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1. realization of education and training activity in the spheres of archives and records management;
2. coordination of scientific and cultural cooperation of the CIS countries in the spheres of archives and records management.

OCPK VNIIDAD is realizing international training programs not only for the archivists of the CIS countries, but also for archivists of other countries, as it has already been done for Vietnamese and Mongolian specialists, for example.

## 5 Forms of professional training and retraining of archivists and records managers

The forms of organization of professional training and retraining of archivists and records manager are different so that everybody could find an appropriate variant.

There are one-week and two-week resident courses which are the most intensive and require full-time off-the-job training. They are held in the premises of VNIIDAD and with the practicums in different archives and IT-companies.

One-day seminars and workshops are usually dedicated to particular professional issues and are also conducted in the classrooms of VNIIDAD. Sometimes they are held in the form of webinars.

The training may also be organized in the form of in-job courses in customers' organizations.

We also realize non-resident one-year programs of distant education (including retraining). They end with a final written work and a written test.

If the short courses are open for everyone, one-year courses require that participants had a certain level of education (secondary technical education, higher education or unfinished higher education in different fields and specializations).

Instruction is provided by the lecturers from the scientific staff of VNIIDAD and by external teachers drawn from the ranks of archivists, IT specialists, professors of educational institutions.

The courses are paid for by the participants or the organization sending them to study. There are also programs supported by Rosarchiv, Ministry of culture or by ICA.

Course graduates receive a course certificate issued by VNIIDAD in the officially prescribed form.

## 6 Subject-matter of professional training and retraining in VNIIDAD

Every year two main course catalogs are composed: for records management courses and for archives courses. The thematic range of courses, seminars and workshops proposed in these catalogs is based on the analysis of the statistics of the previous period and on the demand forecast for the forthcoming year. Usually there are some basic courses covering all the aspects of work of records managers and archivists. There are also courses focusing on particular subjects, for example, archival description, use of archival documents, acquisition policy and practices, preservation of archives, and so on. Some courses are aimed to present the ways of use of information technologies in archives, for instance, creation of expositions of archival documents on the Internet, or electronic finding aids. Among the most popular in the last years are the courses covering different aspects of work with electronic documents. There are also courses for specific types of archives: audiovisual archives, archives of scientific and technical documentation, archives of personnel files, etc.

## 7 The main results of the activity

During the 16-year period of activity of OCPK VNIIDAD more than 14 thousand people fulfilled its educational and training programs (*for the statistics, see Ларин М.В., Юмашева Ю.Ю., Янковая В.Ф et al., 2016, p.328-334*). Every year from 40 to 45 courses are held. The training programs to be proposed are always deeply analyzed in order to correspond to the expectations of the users.

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The training courses were performed not only in Moscow, but also in many other regions of Russia. The courses took place in Saint Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Khabarovsk, Stavropol, Murmansk, Norilsk, Lipetsk, Izhevsk, Yekaterinburg, Kaliningrad, Bryansk, Kaluga, Tver, Petrozavodsk, Vologda, Pskov, Penza, Orel and many other cities and towns of Russia. They were organized for state and municipal archives, as well as for industrial enterprises, financial institutions, and other companies and organizations.

There were also held 10 international seminars in the VNIIDAD premises for 185 archivists of CIS countries with the participation of leading Russian and foreign specialists as lecturers. First of the seminars was realized due to the financial support of the ICA, the others were supported by the Russian side. The subjects discussed at the seminars range from “Standards for archival description” (2005); “Methods of preservation of archival documents” (2006); “Classification of archival documents and finding aids in archives” (2007) to “Problems of archival storage of electronic documents” (2009) or “Accessioning and ingest of electronic documents” (2014).

## 8 Training courses as a way of popularization of the results of the scientific activity of VNIIDAD

All the activity of VNIIDAD is intended to provide scientific and methodical support to records management services and archives of different types and different levels (federal, regional, municipal archives, archives of government institutions and private companies). It is obvious that the Federal archival agency and VNIIDAD itself are interested that the results of the scientific activity of the Institute were in demand and were used in practice.

With the creation of the Educational center we found the new form of popularization and information support for our intellectual products. Alongside with the conferences and round tables, educational courses and trainings contribute greatly to the achievement of this goal. The content of the lectures given by our specialists is based mainly on the results of their professional activity, all the participants of our training programs are supplied with a set of textbooks, manuals, instructions, recommendations and other scientific and educational material either in traditional, or in electronic form. And these are mainly scientific and practical editions of VNIIDAD. Besides, the participants of the courses have an opportunity to precise for themselves some points from the books with their authors.

## 9 Conclusion

The courses of professional training and retraining of archivists in VNIIDAD have become an indispensable part of the system of continuing archival education and training in Russia. For VNIIDAD it is not only the way of commercial activity, but also the possibility to disseminate professional knowledge, to share best practices and achievements of archival science.

In the changing word and in conditions of fast development of information technologies it is important to upgrade regularly the teaching programs in order to correspond to the needs of archives, demands and expectations of the society. One of the conditions for the effective functioning of the courses is introduction of new forms of training including online teaching programs, organization of webinars or presentation of recorded courses on the Internet.

VNIIDAD has a solid experience of professional training and retraining of archivists, not only Russian but foreign as well. It has a high reputation and values it. VNIIDAD is doing its best to maintain traditionally high level both in scientific research and in organization and performance of professional training of archivists.

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### SUMMARY

Since 1999 professional training and retraining of archivists of Russia is one of the main activities of the All-Russian Scientific and Research Institute for documentation and archives (VNIIDAD). Now it is an important part of the system of continuing archival education and training in Russia. Alongside with the higher educational programs professional training is one of the ways to improve professional level of archivists and records managers in the country. The training is realized in the form of one-week and two-week resident courses, one-day seminars and workshops, and non-resident one-year courses of distant training and retraining. There are various teaching programs which cover basic principles, specific questions and topical problems of archives and records management. More than 14 thousand people have already completed successfully professional training in VNIIDAD. As the basic organization of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on training and retraining specialists in archives and records management of the CIS countries VNIIDAD also realizes international training programs.

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