

Training of Archivists in Romania: Challenges, Limits and Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The profession of archivist is part of the regulated professions in Romania which implies setting up the responsibilities specific to the profession by the regulatory authority, i.e. the Romanian National Archives. This reality overlaps its own functioning law, which imposes the National Archives' mission and precise responsibilities. This paper envisages the way in which the training of archivists is carried out in Romania starting from the legal framework governing the profession, the content of the professional standard for the archival profession, and continuing with those developments in the Romanian contemporary society which clearly indicate the need to establish a training programme adapted to the current requirements of the profession.

Key words: training, education, archivist, Romania, electronic archives

La formazione degli archivisti in Romania: sfide, limiti e prospettive

SINTESI

La professione di archivista fa parte delle professioni regolamentate in Romania, e implica l'individuazione delle responsabilità specifiche da parte dell'autorità di regolamentazione, cioè l'Archivio nazionale rumeno. Questa realtà si sovrappone alla legge di funzionamento, che impone missione e precise responsabilità dell'Archivio Nazionale. Il testo illustra il modo in cui la formazione degli archivisti viene articolata in Romania, a partire dalla cornice giuridica che disciplina la professione, il contenuto dello standard professionale per la professione archivistica e prosegue con quegli sviluppi della società contemporanea romana che indicano chiaramente la necessità di istituire un programma di formazione adeguato alle attuali esigenze della professione.

Parole chiave: formazione, istruzione, archivista, Romania, archivi elettronici

Izobraževanje arhivistov v Romuniji: izzivi, omejitve in perspektive

IZVLEČEK

Poklic arhivista spada v Romuniji med regulirane poklice, kar pomeni, da regulativni organ, to je Romunski državni arhiv, določi odgovornosti, specifične za poklice. Ta realnost se prekriva z arhivskim zakonom, ki določa nalage Državnega arhiva in njegove pristojnosti. Avtorica v prispevku obravnava izvajanje usposabljanja arhivistov v Romuniji, izhajajoč iz pravnega okvira, ki ureja poklic in vsebine strokovnega standarda arhivskega poklica v Romuniji. Nadaljuje s prikazom razvoja romunske sodobne družbe, ki jasno kaže na potrebo vzpostavitve programa usposabljanja, ki bo prilagojen trenutnim zahtevam poklica.

Ključne besede: usposabljanje, izobraževanje, arhivist, Romunija, elektronski arhivi

Formarea arhiviștilor în România: provocări, limite și perspective

REZUMAT

Profesia de arhivist face parte din categoria profesiilor reglementate din Romania fapt care presupune stabilirea competențelor specifice profesiei de către autoritatea de reglementare, Arhivele Naționale. Această realitate se suprapune pe legea proprie de funcționare a Arhivelor Naționale, care fixează misiunea instituției și atribuțiile specifice. Lucrarea de față are în vedere modul în care se realizează pregătirea arhiviștilor din România, pornind de la

cadrul juridic de reglementare a profesiei, conținutul standardului profesional pentru ocupația de arhivist și continuând cu acele evoluții din planul societății românești contemporane care indică cu claritate necesitatea configurării unui program de pregătire adaptat la cerințele actuale ale profesiei.

Cuvinte-cheie: pregătire, educație, arhivist, România, arhive electronice

The archival profession has experienced in the last decades developments marked by major changes occurring in the society as a whole, under the impact of the progress of modern technologies and the way these have influenced the social and cultural practices. Various theoretical and analytical contributions have highlighted altogether the impact of these radical changes upon the archival theory and practice as emerging documents have changed their nature / features. (*Ketelaar, 2007, p. 27; Delmas, 1993, p. 171; Delmas, 2001, pp. 25-37; Rumschöttel, 2001, pp. 143-155*). Dollar (1992) includes among the technological imperatives that affect the traditional archival landscape three aspects: 1. The change in the form of documents; 2. The change of working methods, and 3. The changing in technology.

Redefining the archival thinking in the context of the information society and adapting the archivists' training needs to the new realities cannot ignore the way the archivists' mission is regulated from a societal perspective, through the tasks set out in the specific legislation. Despite the globalization of the archival science (*Ketelaar, 2004, pp. 14-15*) and that the professional challenges may be, to some extent, the same regardless of country, each society establishes individually the importance and functions of the Archives, configuring the mandate of the archivists' professional body and its action parameters. Starting from these premises the archival training framework should also be defined, in a 21st century where the society's expectations are much influenced by the perspectives offered by the information and communication technologies, where the constraints in space, time and environment plummeted considerably.

Our research considers the way in which the training of archivists in Romania is carried out, starting from the profession's implementation regulatory framework and continuing with those developments in the contemporary Romanian society that clearly indicate the need to adjust a training programme adapted to the current requirements of the profession.

1 Legal framework

The legal framework which regulates the archival activity in Romania is represented by *the National Archives Law No. 16/1996*, republished in 2014. The republished version of the law includes supplementing notes to the original text from 1996¹ prepared during 2013 and in the previous years, but does not contain amendments regarding the personnel training in the archival field.

According to art. 3 (1) of the Law 16/1996, republished, the Romanian National Archives carries out 'the management, supervision and special protection of the National Archival Fonds' comprising in this category 'official and private, diplomatic and consular records, memoirs, manuscripts, proclamations, callings, posters, sketches, maps, filmstrips and other such evidences, seal matrixes as well as physical and electronic photographic and audio-visual recordings of historical value created in Romania or by Romanian creators abroad' (art. 2). The listing of these documents' categories indicates the mainstream, even exhaustive approach of the types of documents with historical value found in the regulatory scope, and the different medium of documents with historical value belonging to the National Archival Fonds (both the traditional ones represented by paper, parchment, etc., and those represented by other storage media).

Currently in Romania a large portion of archives is still generated on paper. Regarding the management of these physical records/archives, the legislation in force provides viable solutions both in terms of the archival processing algorithm and of the requirements of professional development training by

1. The Law (1996) was subsequently supplemented and amended by the Law 358/2002 amending and supplementing the Law on the National Archives; the Government Emergency Ordinance No. 39/2006 amending and supplementing the National Archives Law, approved with amendments by Law no. 474/2006; Law no. 329/2009 on the reorganisation of some public authorities and institutions, rationalisation of the public expenditure, business support and respect the framework agreement with the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund; Law no. 138/2013 amending and supplementing the National Archives Law No. 16/1996.

virtue of a local tradition that preserved over time. Thus, looking on how this profession is performed, the republished Law 16/1996 comprises the role of the Romanian National Archives in the management and special protection of the National Archival Fonds (Chapter II) and defines how the following activities are executed: the physical and intellectual control, selection, and deposit of permanent records at the National Archives, the storage and use of documents that are part of the National Archival Fonds. The legal provisions are buoyed by the Working Instructions concerning the archival activity at the creators and holders of records approved by the National Archives' management since 23rd May 1996. They very clearly indicate what staff with archival responsibility should do, and respectively know concerning the archives from the institutions creating and keeping documents. Performing specialised control on how the creators meet their obligations under the law in force, archivists have the necessary overview in term of staff knowledge and competences.

Art. 32 of the National Archives Law provides that 'the training, certification and vocational training of specialised personnel working in the National Archives, as well as employees of the other archives' creators and keeper's units are done through the Faculty of Archival Studies and the National School Archival Vocational Training², institutions responsible also, at a reasonable level, for the professional development needs in the spirit of those mentioned above. According to its organisational structure, meaning that it functions as a higher education institution, the Faculty of Archival Science, along with other higher education institutions that have included in their curricula the archival qualification, provides initial training in archives, acknowledging the fact that the profession of archivist is part of the regulated professions' category in Romania³. The regulated profession is a professional activity or group of professional activities, access to which, the pursuit of which, or one of the modes of pursuit of which is subject, directly or indirectly, by virtue of legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions to the possession of specific professional qualifications.

The National Archives is the competent authority that regulates the professional recognition of qualifications for archivist and archival clerk professions. Specifically, the occupational standard establishes what a person must know and be able to do to be considered competent in the workplace. Occupational standards include a detailed description of tasks, knowledge and skills needed for an effective performance at the workplace, under legal responsibilities. They are reference documents for higher education institutions since there is an intrinsic connection between education, research and practice, i.e. the labour market.

With a view to the archives filed, the occupational standard for the archivist profession - official since 2013⁴ - defines the professional specific competencies for all those who undertake archival duties within the Romanian National Archives, as well as within other public and private organisations, as follows:

1. Development of working instruments
2. Coordination of archives creation and its management
3. Determination of historical and practical value of documents
4. Coordination of conservation activities in repositories
5. The use of archives
6. Electronic records management.

Nevertheless, the minimum level of education mandatory to accede to the profession is graduating with a bachelor's degree in one of the following fields: language and literature, applied modern languages, history, cultural studies. This illustrates the basic preparation and clarifies the current national response of the professional body with a view at the 'electronic information revolution', as Bearman calls it (1994).

The first five units of competence specific to the archivist profession are prominently folded on the current regulatory framework and on the content of the theoretical and practical curricula for becoming a qualified archivist. In connection with the electronic records management skill looms the great challenges concerning the transition to electronic records whose share will increase in the local institutional framework, in so far as it is not already a living reality. To illustrate more precisely the current back-

2. Regarding the activity of these institutions, see Diaconu (2009), Chelaru (2013), Cheșcă (2014).

3. As per Law No. 200/2004, with subsequent amendments and supplements.

4. The proposed date for reviewing the content was set for November 2016, but this failed to materialise.

ground is sufficient to note that, in parallel with the National Archives Law, a legislation relating to the electronic records was developed. This includes: Law No. 455/2001 on electronic signature, the e-commerce Law No. 365/2002; Law on the archiving of electronic documents (No. 135/2007); Decision No. 1130/2008 on the technical and methodological norms for applying Law no. 135/2007, Order no. 493/2009 on the technical and methodological rules for the enforcement of Law No. 135/2007 on electronic archiving of documents, etc.

The regulatory and supervisory authority in the field of electronic archiving and its service providing is the Ministry of Communications and Informational Society (MCIS)⁵, the forum that endorses the implementation of information and communication technology in all sectors, according to the national strategies. The paradox is that, according to the main law governing the electronic archiving of records (art. 2 of Law 137/2007) 'the archival processing activities of electronic documents is in compliance with the National Archives Law No. 16/1996, subsequently amended and supplemented', although the latter contains provisions applicable to the electronic archiving to a very insignificant extent. Following the evolution of the legal acts relating to this issue it can be seen that concerning the methodological rules for the application of electronic archiving law, as they were conveyed in 2008, it was confirmed that 'the electronic archiving of documents is governed by the same rules applicable for paper-based documents and falls under the provisions of the archival law in force'⁶. One year later, the Order of the Ministry of Communications and Information Society recorded that 'checking compliance with the Law 135/2007 as well as with this order falls under the Ministry's responsibilities, which shall act through the control personnel authorised for this purpose (Art. 4 (1)). We recall in this context that according to art. 2 of Law 16/1996, republished, the category of documents that are part of the National Archival Fonds includes also the 'electronic records with historical value', whose management, supervision and special protection is provided by the Romanian National Archives.

Lacking a well-defined legal framework in a coherent manner that should clarify the duties of the institutions or organisations in regard to the electronic records management, and perceived in accordance with the tasks and mission of the Romanian National Archives, the immediate consequences are felt in several areas:

a) The first is directly related to the need to adjust the training of archivists, whether we refer to the initial or continuing training, on the basis of a clear curricula generated in terms of roles and obligations as set out by the legislation, in such a way as to be similar to the method applied to the traditional archives. Archivists cannot ignore the challenges raised by the creation of the digital content without assuming major risks in terms of loss of relevant information in relation to present, to which they should ensure long-term preservation.

The way in which the specific competence on electronic archiving is described in the current form of the archivists' occupational standard, the content of the respective training based on the encompassed competence elements, emerges in very general terms and without concrete origins that should exist in the law governing the field. According to them, the archivist: 1. creates electronic databases ... in accordance with the technical specifications of the law, 2. Analyses the physical archive (in order to clearly define the rules for documents scanning and taking into account the specific requirements of working with electronic archive or retrieval of information), 3. Captures documents, 4. Indexes the digital information, 5. Archives the stored information.

b) Configuration of the training framework:

In a first instance, this can be done by establishing a closer link between the academic institutions and professional body so as to enable the transfer of knowledge between theory and practice, and to reduce the lack of skills that are directly related to the technological development and new professional requirements. Otherwise, the immediate risks affecting the professional status and the way the profession is performed are revealed in taking over and tackling the challenges outlined by the digital revolution of other professional groups (*Kallberg, 2012, p. 39*). For instance, IT professions are increasing their profes-

5. Decision 1130 of 2008 established as the regulatory and supervisory authority in the field of electronic archiving the National Communications Authority, regulation which seized to be incorporated into the Order 493/2009, where the Ministry of Communications and Information Society is mentioned..

6. The provision is reproduced identically in Order 493/2009, under Art. 12.

sional influence and positions within the strategic e-government work. Both sides could benefit in the context in which the academic institutions would accomplish a better linkage of skills achieved during the learning process with the actual requirements of the profession and would go thorough, in return, the transformation from the traditional approach of archival science regarding the history and anillary sciences of history towards one focused more on new technologies and the digital environment. This transitional phase is undertaken, in fact, also by universities from abroad concerning the profile and content of specialised archivistics studies (*Ryantová, Wanner, 2014, pp. 153-154; Marosz, pp. 141-147*). The practitioners may consider that the academic institutions could provide: 1. An already existing infrastructure necessary to create postgraduate courses or programmes designed to help building the skills that are required to be developed, 2. Presentations of good practices and/or successful projects in terms of professional training within the framework of some international scientific events, or 3. the possibility to engage within EU funded projects dedicated to the education and vocational training segment, and that should target a better relationship between the initial and continuing training, the creation of a methodology and the appropriate tools for such a professional strategy.

The second option - by creating an adequate framework for continuous professional training within the National Archives or endorsed by professional associations. We consider courses customized especially for archivists, based on the training needs identified in the archives system starting from the evaluation of outcomes in performing the duties and specific objectives, from the changes in the regulatory framework, or the emergence of such strategic documents capable of influencing the activity, or even from requests from the archivists themselves. Self-training, even though it plays an essential role in any kind of training activity, is not sufficient and must be accompanied by ways to improve the vocational training so as the practitioners are able to establish that set of available and generally applicabile rules and operational processes. These should be applied in their own sequence, at different stages in the archival activities applied to the content and structure of the electronic records or of the electronic document and records management systems etc. Once these guidelines are configured, they should be transposed into an official form acknowledged by the institutions. Then they should clearly create the regulatory framework of all related activities and processes to the electronic records and to the digital environment in general.

2 The political agenda and its effects on the content and nature of the future archives

Outside the legal framework envisaged so far in the present study, it is compulsory to consider the political factor when we refer to the prospect of the future archives and to those called upon to manage them. Apparently, this does not directly, but rather implicitly influence the process of creating the new archives as a result of the strategic documents underlying public policy.

Looking back and giving the evolution occurred over the last years in Romania, we find that since September 2003, the concept of e-government - the use of the information technology by the government, the parliament and the public institutions in relation to their citizens - started to be present in the public speech and got materialized in the form of the National Electronic System which was launched back then⁷. The public information system aimed to use the electronic technology in communication, the creation and implementation of automated information systems, and in the development of the state's information infrastructure.

The evolution of e-government systems was assumed by all government programmes that succeeded each other, and included, inter alia, the gradual transition of database creation, configured into the information systems. The development was determined in all countries by legislative measures related to the public administration's services offered online, which coincided with the rapid evolution of the Internet. The first step was to swap the solutions used for paper to the electronic formats, but in time governments have developed massive aggregations of information that no longer have the characteristics of traditional documents, and which will have to be assessed and managed from an archival perspective by the practitioners. Ensuring the interoperability between these databases is a challenge in itself as well.

Even though currently the e-government solutions for improving the efficiency of the public admi-

7. For process reconstitution see www.e-guvernare.ro et alii e.g. electronic payment system of taxes (eTax), electronic procurement (SEAP): www.e-licitatie.ro.

nistration in Romania are underdeveloped⁸, the European Commission estimating that ‘the digitisation of the public administration has been slow and fragmented’, the current political agenda contains the digital convergence among one of the major aspirations of the information Society as an attempt to adapt to the objectives set by Europe 2020⁹ and undertaken by Romania for the year 2020. The priority is to continue with the implementation of the “Digital Agenda” (integration of the Romanian ICT market within a strong and coherent European market), namely achieving the goals set in the National Digital Agenda for Romania in 2020 approved in February 2015¹⁰. For meeting the benchmarks set by the Digital Agenda for Europe 2020, it is mandatory to allow priority for the investments the ICT field.

Thus, through the government programme it is estimated that ‘it is required to intervene extensively and enable all fields of action concomitantly to ensure synergies between the administrative reform and the introduction of e-government modern concepts, social e-inclusion, promoting innovation and developing the infrastructure for digital services, implementing programmes and actions intended to increase the security of activities in ICT ... as well as developing strategies and programmes to increase the use of tools of the information society in all areas (reducing the gap with other countries on the contribution of ICT in the development and modernisation of the society), developing local ICT industry especially in software production’ (2020 Programme, p. 117).

As a natural consequence, the Ministry of Communications and Informational Society (MCIS) is implementing a series of projects designed to achieve the objectives assumed by Romania in the European framework¹¹. Among them, the one that envisages a major impact at national level on how to structure and function the electronic public services is represented by the creation of the National Interoperability Framework (CNI). This reference document is currently under public debate and is addressed to all those involved in defining, designing or implementing the electronic national public services. In addition to promoting a standardized approach for the implementation of information services and applications and ensuring the interoperability across Romanian borders (within EU borders), the project is particularly important as it addresses, inter alia, principles related to the need of long-term preservation of electronic records, as appropriate also to formulate a single policy for long-term storage of electronic data, especially for information which is routinely shared between public services and for information that is shared across borders, especially data registries (CNI 2016, p. 17).

All those listed so far demonstrate the validity of technological imperatives affecting the traditional archival landscape, mentioned at the beginning, respectively: The change in the form of documents, change of working methods, and finally the changing in technology.

3 Conclusions

In light of these foreseen developments, the issue arises to what extent the changes in society are found in the content of current and forthcoming training of archivists. The present study revealed the relatively high gap between the existing regulatory framework governing the management of electronic records and the lack of clear understanding of the responsibilities or how these should be applied by archivists when looking at digitally born archives. Things are not simple at all from this perspective because although the archiving of electronic documents is regulated and supervised by the Ministry of Commu-

8. According to the Country Report for 2016 available at http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2016/cr2016_romania_ro.pdf.

9. One of the priority themes is the creation of a ‘Digital Agenda for Europe’ to speed up the rollout of high-speed internet and reap the benefits offered by a digital single market. (EUROPA 2020, p. 6).

10. ‘The National Strategy regarding the Digital Agenda for Romania - 2020’ was developed by the Ministry for Information Society. The document takes over and adapts to the Romanian context the items of the Digital Agenda for Europe, one of the seven flagship initiatives of Europe 2020. The Digital Agenda sets out the major role that the use of information and communication technology (ICT) will have to play in achieving the objectives of Europe 2020. The text defines four areas of action: 1. E-Government, Interoperability, Cyber Security, Cloud Computing and Social Media - field which aims to increase efficiency and reduce costs in the public sector in Romania by modernising the administration; 2. ICT in education, culture and health - the field which aims to support these technologies at sectoral level; 3. ICT in e-commerce, as well as research, development and innovation in ICT - area which aims at Romania’s regional comparative advantages, and supports the economic growth in the private sector; 4. Broadband and digital infrastructure services - area aimed at ensuring the social inclusion. (Strategia 2020, p. 14).

11. These are broadly presented on the Ministry’s website at: https://www.comunicatii.gov.ro/?page_id=2150.

nications and Informational Society - purely technologically speaking - the Romanian National Archives has responsibilities in the management and special protection of the National Archival Fonds which also contains 'electronic records' with historical value. The lack of consistency in the legislation is likely to delay the set up of a well-definite content and training adapted to the needs of the current archivist profession, which increasingly requires a more serious information component applied to the field. Although there is still room for discussion on how to create a structural training, in terms of its content, without completing the current legislative framework, things cannot evolve positively in such a way as to be able to confirm an appropriate professional status.

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SUMMARY

The archival profession has experienced in the last decades developments marked by major changes occurring in the society as a whole, under the impact of the progress of modern technologies and the way these have influenced the social and cultural practices. Among the technological imperatives that affect the traditional archival landscape three aspects are considered very important: 1. The change in the form of documents; 2. The change of working methods, and 3. The changing in technology. Redefining the archival thinking in the context of the information society and adapting the archivists' training needs to the new realities cannot ignore the way the archivists' mission is regulated from a societal perspective, through the tasks set out in the specific legislation. Our research considers the way in which the training of archivists in Romania is carried out, starting from the profession's implementation regulatory framework and continuing with those developments in the contemporary Romanian society that clearly indicate the need to adjust a training programme adapted to the current requirements of the profession. Although the archiving of electronic documents is regulated and supervised by the Ministry of Communications and Informational Society - purely technologically speaking - the Romanian National Archives has responsibilities in the management and special protection of the National Archival Fonds which also contains electronic records' with historical value. The lack of consistency in the legislation is likely to delay the set up of a well-definite content and training adapted to the needs of the current archivist profession, which increasingly requires a more serious information component applied to the field. The evolution of e-government systems was assumed by all government programmes that succeeded each other, and included, inter alia, the gradual transition of database creation, configured into the information systems. Although there is still room for discussion on how to create a structural training, in terms of its content, without completing the current legislative framework, things cannot evolve positively in such a way as to be able to confirm an appropriate professional status of archivists.

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