

Records - Management - Archives





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Introduction

Probably all aspects of human activity are reflected in documentation recorded in the past and still being written today. It may take the form of medieval manuscripts, modern account books, emotional personal letters, official letters, maps and plans, colour or black and white photographs, documentaries and feature films, audio recordings of human speech, as well as contemporary e-documents. Each is a sign of its times. It reveals documentation technique, how records were formulated and offices managed, and even the social sensitivity and organisational culture of many institutions. Today it is an important source of knowledge. Research on documentation is conducted by historians and archivists who uncover the past, and by administrators exploring the principles of office organisation, sociologists analysing complex social processes, artists in various fields seeking inspiration, as well as private individuals researching the roots of their own families. Contemporary documentation created in offices, institutions and private individuals is no less important. It is prepared for legal, evidentiary and informational purposes, as well as to satisfy emotional needs, recall memories and record important moments in life.

Nevertheless, for documentation to become a source of knowledge, it must be permanently recorded, subject to well-planned management processes, stored in the best possible conditions, elaborated and made available in a way that, on the one hand, protects the medium and, on the other hand, provides access to the information contained therein. This is no easy task. A host of factors have a direct or indirect impact on content, degree of preservation, and the possibility of long-term storage and sharing. Archives lead the way in terms of collecting documentation. They create a safe haven for materials that no longer fulfill their original role, are not used for the current running of particular offices, but are still functional and, in many cases, even priceless as archival materials. Archives are responsible for collecting, safe storage, good processing, and making the collected materials widely available. However, they no longer have any influence on the form of the documentation and its content, unlike the law firms, institutions and offices of today that produce contemporary documentation on a

mass scale. A huge proportion is created in digital form, which means that the documentary source of knowledge will soon change switch from traditional to electronic.

The aim of this publication is to indicate selected factors that influenced the process of creating historical sources, their state of preservation and availability. The ten articles collected in this volume discuss how and to what extent political changes, armed conflicts, economic, social and the technological transformations that have taken place in Central and Eastern Europe over the decades have influenced both documentation that has survived and is still being produced today. Each article represents an attempt to grasp significant changes from the past and present to show their impact on documentation, the process of its management as well as archives themselves. The areas of interest include the partition of Poland, political events, World War II and the conflict in Ukraine, digitisation, the legal environment of the European Union, the development of information technologies and the work of social archives.

Due to the homogeneity of the volume, the authors include both Polish and foreign researchers representing various research centres and areas of interest, as well as different experiences. They include theoreticians and practitioners, who share their knowledge, reflection and professional experience in their texts. We were honoured that 14 authors accepted our invitation to be published in this volume, arranged according to topic. The texts were divided into four thematic blocks: armed conflict, political changes, social transformation and technological evolution.

The volume opens with a chapter by Marlena Jabłońska and Iryna Martiash: *Ukrainian Archives in Wartime: Trauma and Responsibility for the Future*. It is a reaction to the Russian-Ukrainian war that has been ongoing since 2014 and the occupier's actions aimed at destroying the cultural heritage and statehood of Ukraine. The authors outline the action taken by both sides involved in the conflict, recall legal acts affecting the fate of the Ukrainian archival resources and discuss the scope of the damage so far. They also draw attention to people's attitudes as well as the action that has been taken to secure Ukraine's documentary heritage.

In *Erasing the Evidence of Crime? On the Unique Holocaust-Documenting Sources That Survived World War II*, Alicja Bartnicka reveals how those who orchestrated and committed the crimes of the Holocaust spoke about them. The question posed in the title is just a pretext to present characteristic and less familiar sources regarding the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question'. By analysing three types of archival materials – file documentation, photos and recordings created by members of the Nazi apparatus of repression – the author not only reminds us of German consistency, brutality and lack of inhibition

regarding the crimes committed, but also states that it was Germany, a nation trying to destroy evidence of crimes, that best documented the Holocaust.

The section on the impact of political change on the documentary heritage of Europe opens with *The Memory of a People Without a State: Polish Documentation Work During the Period of Partitions (1773–1918)* by Krzysztof Syta. In his historical considerations, the author transports the readers back to the period of Poland's annihilation by Russia, Prussia and Austria, particularly to the processes of Polish denationalisation in favour of Germanisation and Russification. These actions, as noted in this chapter, were largely offset by Polish efforts to preserve national identity and traditions by collecting, creating and securing all historical memorabilia of a legal nature. The chapter presents the documentation work performed by various types of archives, libraries, collections of public institutions and private collectors.

Today's paradigm that archives should be open to the general public is an evolutionary, gradual process. This is especially apparent in *The Impact of Political Change on Access to Archival Materials After World War II: Based on Selected Countries in Central and Eastern Europe*. Hadrian Ciechanowski, Milana Sribniak, Stsiapan Zakharkevich and Adam Zitek reveal the transformations that have occurred regarding access to archival materials in Belarus, the Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia), Poland and Ukraine in a changing political and international situation. The background for the discussed issues is the turbulent history of post-war Central and Eastern Europe, located in the Soviet sphere of influence, and the implementation of communism with all its consequences.

Katarzyna Łukasiak takes readers to the reality of contemporary, united Europe in the chapter *Legal Basis for Document Management in the European Commission*. The author presents the development of regulations governing the principles of handling documentation in one of the most important bodies of the European Union, beginning her analysis from the year 2002. The starting point in the considerations is a discussion of the institutional development of the Commission, followed by its internal structure and, finally, the documentation management standards applied over the course of twenty years.

When examining the various factors that influence the shape of preserved historical sources, we cannot forget about social change – the subject of the third section of the volume, consisting of two chapters. The first, by Magdalena Wiśniewska-Drewniak, entitled *Community Archives and Change: The Motivation For, and Impacts Of, Independent Archival Activity*, illustrates the motivations underlying the creation of grass-roots, independent documentation initiatives. The author presents six examples of Polish social archives, the focus of the narrative being the evolution of selected social archives over recent years in Poland. The next chapter – *Deliberations of the International Congress of Archives in Florence and the Polish Methodology of Selection and Disposal* – was

written by Robert Degen. The starting point is a discussion of the gradual establishment of relations between Polish archivists and the world beyond the Iron Curtain, an important aspect of which was participation in the 3rd International Congress of Archives in Florence. The analysis includes the outcomes of the Florentine debates and the contextualisation of Polish practices regarding appraisal and disposal in an international setting.

The challenges of the 21st century along with the ongoing digital revolution have had their impact on archives and documentation management. Some authors chose to focus on technological evolution, the theme of the fourth and last part of this volume. It opens with Marcin Smoczyński's chapter *From Traditional to Digital Documentation: The Transition Period in Electronic Records Management in Poland*, who examines the EZD PUW system for the electronic management of documentation as the most modern environment for producing historical sources of public provenance in Poland. As shown by an analysis drafted on the basis of information from 311 local government and administration units, Polish office administration is currently at the initial stage of a great process that aims to move away from the dominant paper form of documents in favour of the increasingly wider use of electronic documentation created and stored by EDRMS.

The next chapter of *The Digitisation of Archives in Poland and the Processes That Preceded It* by Agnieszka Rosa analyses the course of technological change in Polish state archives. The first part of the text deals with the genesis and processes preceding and enabling subsequent digitisation: the development of finding aids and the construction of an archival information system, the implementation of scientific information in archival science, computerisation and informatisation of archives. In the second part, the author refers to the operation of Polish archives in the realities of the digital world, including the creation of solutions, products and services, the digitisation of archival resources and their digital availability.

The volume concludes with Dorota Drzewiecka's *Electronic Record Management in Central European Countries as Experienced by the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland: A Comparative Study*, comparing the extent to which electronic document management systems have been implemented in public administration offices in three Central European countries: Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Based on legal acts, surveys and analysis of the literature, the author presents the legal and actual status of office computerisation in the selected research group, and also identifies specific solutions applied in individual offices of the Polish, Czech and Slovak public administration.

The volume is noticeably heterogeneous, as are the factors influencing the process of creating historical sources, their condition and availability. The collected works certainly do not exhaust the wide spectrum of research issues, but

we hope that they will constitute a starting point for further discussion on records, management and archives.

This volume, like all previous ones, was created thanks to the involvement of many people: authors, editors, translators, employees of the Faculty of History of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and its representatives. We would like to thank each of you for your commitment, without which it would have been impossible to present you with this volume.

Assoc. Prof. Marlena Jabłońska
Dr. Marcin Smoczyński
Toruń, 11 June 2024

Armed Conflicts

Ukrainian Archives in Wartime: Trauma and Responsibility for the Future

Abstract

Russia launched a hybrid war against Ukraine in February 2014. The conflict entered its second stage on 24 February 2022, when Russia launched a full-scale military invasion. The unlawful annexation of Crimea and the occupation of areas of Donetsk and Luhansk have raised fears that Ukrainian culture and statehood may be obliterated. Archives and their resources were considered to have the potential to play a significant role here, which is why the occupier very quickly began to take over these institutions and the archives stored there. This chapter presents an outline of the actions taken by both the Russians and Ukrainians, considered in terms of trauma. The main legal acts regarding the fate of Ukrainian archival resources are referred to, while also mentioning the attitudes and actions of those involved. The scope of destruction is also presented along with a discussion on the nature of the work undertaken to safeguard Ukraine's documentary heritage.

Keywords: Ukrainian Archives; hybrid war; Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine; preservation of archives

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, marking the beginning of a new and devastating phase in a war that had already been ongoing in a hybrid form since 2014. At this stage of the Russian aggression, there is clear evidence of the collective trauma that has emerged as a result of the Kremlin's intentions and threats towards Ukraine. The illegal annexation of Crimea and the occupation of parts of Donetsk and Luhansk have provoked fears of the destruction of Ukrainian culture and statehood. This trauma has developed gradually over time, and is particularly pronounced in the first regions that experienced aggression.

Ukrainian archives played a crucial role as institutions of memory, although they were also highly coveted by the aggressor state. Russian ideologues sought

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to manipulate historical facts and actively searched for documents that would support their unsound theories, all in order to deny Ukrainians their rightful claim to their unique history and rich culture.

The condition of the State Archives in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea within the archival system highlights the indelible impact of war. The collective trauma that arose during this period was not only caused by Russia's aggression but also by the collaboration of some individuals affiliated with archivists, librarians, and museum workers. It was emotionally overwhelming to comprehend how the staff of Crimean cultural institutions accepted the stark new 'unreal reality' without much opposition.

After the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014, the State Archives in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea changed its name to the State Archives in the Republic of Crimea within days. This was done under the leadership of collaborators who were still officially civil servants of Ukraine. The archives then began integrating with the Russian archival industry under 'simplified procedures', in violation of international law. Archivists in Simferopol hastily exchanged signs and topics of research with representatives from Russian archives, all the while being welcomed with bread and salt. In 2015, illegitimate legislative acts were produced, concerning archival matters on Ukrainian territory that were annexed by Russia. Based on Ukrainian archives, new bodies and archival institutions were created that were subordinated to Russia.

Instead, two orders were registered in the Ministry of Justice in Ukraine. They are titled *On the Place of Storage of Documents Exported from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol by Legal Entities Ceasing Their Activities*, which was dated 13 January 2015 No. 21/5,¹ and *On Ensuring the Storage of Documents Taken Out of the Temporarily Occupied Territory and the Territory of the Anti-terrorist Operation*, which was dated 7 September 2015 No. 1077/27522.²

The initial order mandated that the State Archival Service of Ukraine (SAS) implement measures to guarantee the safekeeping of documents removed from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by defunct legal entities that require archival storage. The second order expanded the scope of the first and effectively superseded it. Consequently, SAS became responsible for receiving, documenting, and securely storing all relevant documents from both the temporarily occupied territory and the anti-terrorist operation region.

Although preparations were made to evacuate various items from state archives, the evacuation of documents in particular was not properly organised. Unfortunately, as a result of the Russian Federation's occupation of the Au-

1 *Nakaz Ministerstva yustytzii Ukrainy vid 13 sichnia 2015 r.*

2 *Nakaz Ministerstva yustytzii Ukrainy vid 7 veresnia 2015 r.*

tonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine lost control of approximately two million units of collected documents from the National Archive Fund. These documents were previously stored in archival institutions located in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.³

During the onset of the hybrid war initiated by Russia, archivists faced a challenge that had been widely debated at the start of the 21st century – how to counteract the effects of the numerous disasters that occurred globally in the latter half of the previous century. The international archival community explored this topic, among others, at the *Archives and Society: What to Store? Reception and Selection* conference held in Reykjavik between 10–13 October 2001.

In 2002, the *Concept of Protection of National Interests in Archival Affairs*⁴ was developed in light of the risks and challenges posed by various threats. These threats were categorised as natural disasters, underfunding of archives, political pressure on archivists, human error resulting from recruitment of under-qualified and unmotivated staff, and a societal perception of the archivist profession that does not align with its core mission. The objective was to understand these challenges better, based on the Ukrainian Research Institute of Archival Affairs and Documentation framework, and establish measures for their prevention and management.

To safeguard the archival industry from potential threats, experts have put forth a proposal to establish a holistic framework of measures within the overarching national security system. This will encompass information and cultural domains and ensure that the archival sector is well-equipped to contend with any eventualities. Furthermore, periodic assessments will be conducted to evaluate the preparedness of the archival industry in responding to potential risks.

The proposed concept was introduced and put up for discussion within the academic yearbook *Studies in Archival Affairs and Documentary Studies*. It is worth noting that the concept did not explicitly specify military conflicts as a qualifying threat to archives. However, armed conflicts and terrorism were later identified as a distinct group of threats in Ukrainian archival studies in the abovementioned academic journal.⁵

However, despite the potential gravity of the situation, there was no comprehensive dialogue or concrete action taken to address this issue. At the time, it was impossible to foresee the catastrophic impact that the war would eventually have on Ukraine's archives during the second decade of the 21st century. However, in September of 2004, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine issued a crucial

3 Rozsekrečennâ radâns'kih arhiviv.

4 Skric'ka et al.: *Koncepciâ zahistu*, pp. 53–79.

5 Matâš: *Arhiv u tehnogennomu suspil'stvì*, pp. 137–140.

order approving a set of *Guideline for the Application of Norms of International Humanitarian Law in the Armed Forces of Ukraine*.⁶ These guidelines specifically outline measures for protecting cultural artefacts and archives in the event of an armed conflict.

In the same year, Russia introduced the *On Archival Work in the Russian Federation (Об архивном деле в Российской Федерации)* law, granting the country unrestricted access to all archival documents on its territory, regardless of their origin, creation, medium, ownership or storage location. This decision conveyed a clear message to the international community: Russia has no intention of returning archives obtained through conquest. The American researcher, Patricia Kennedy Grimstead, once referred to this policy as the revival of the Cultural Cold War with Europe.

The aforementioned law resulted in the transfer of state archive documents from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Archive Fund of the Russian Federation. Russia regarded files produced between Ukraine's independence restoration and the unlawful annexation of Ukrainian land as part of its own historical records.

The employees of the Donetsk and Luhansk archives deserve much recognition for their bravery in preserving historical documents, even at the risk of their own safety. In contrast to the Crimean archivists, they were able to save these precious records and transport them to Ukraine-controlled territory. Nadiia Bucenko, who served as the director of the State Archives of the Donetsk region from 2004 to 2015, documented the perilous circumstances that these workers faced and the importance of their actions in her published works.⁷

Based on the archivist's recollections, the occupation of archive buildings by representatives of illegal armed formations in the Donetsk region in early April 2014 posed a significant threat to the work of archivists. The seizure of power also rendered it impossible for some archivists to access their workplaces in occupied cities. Additionally, computer equipment was immediately removed from archives, making certificate printing extremely difficult. Though unpaid, archivists persevered in their work despite the challenging circumstances.

Amidst the shelling in Sloviansk, the head of the labor archive for the city council experienced a heart attack. Unfortunately, due to the circumstances, the ambulance was unable to arrive in time, marking a devastating first loss among archivists.⁸ The situation worsened during the takeover of the Mariupol and Pokrovsk city council buildings, resulting in fires that destroyed archival docu-

6 *Kerivnictvo po zastosuvannû norm*, p. 144.

7 Bucenko: *Dolâ arhivnih ustanov*, p. 198.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

ments and critical administrative records of the city's executive committees, their subordinate departments, and other related institutions.

Within two months, Donetsk fell under occupation. On 4 July 2014, armed men seized and captured Building No. 2 of the State Archives of the Donetsk region, taking seven employees hostage. Fortunately, the leadership of Ukrderzharkhiv and the regional state administration promptly took action, resulting in the attackers leaving the archive. However, as a consequence of the incident, the employees of the archive were dismissed. The state archive of the Donetsk region was evacuated to Druzhkivka, although some of the archives remained under occupation.

Only on 1 December 2014 did the Prime Minister of Ukraine issue an order No. 1875/2/1–14 *On the Export of Documents of Archival Institutions*.⁹ However, the response received by Ukrderzharkhiv on 8 December 2014, made it impossible to take any action to evacuate the archives:

According to the headquarters of the Anti-Terrorist Center at the Security Service of Ukraine, today the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk are under the control of representatives of illegal military formations, who commit numerous terrorist acts related to the taking of hostages, state and public buildings, blocking and damaging the objects of the transport system, and therefore it is impossible to ensure the evacuation of documents of the National Archival Fond from these cities.¹⁰

The National Archives Fund's documents were beyond retrieval, as Ukraine had lost control of the state archives in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, including those belonging to city councils, district state administrations, institutions, enterprises, and organisations located in the occupied territories.

In 2016, a monitoring visit to the region by the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union showed that insufficient preparations had been made to safeguard cultural objects in emergency situations or during an armed conflict. Consequently, significant losses in the cultural sector were sustained. As a result of the findings, the participants of the visit called for improvements to the current legislation to hold those who harm cultural objects accountable.¹¹ The Ministry of Defence's Order No. 164 of 23 March 2017, issued *Instructions on the Procedure for the Enforcement of International Humanitarian Law in the Armed Forces of Ukraine*,¹² which specified that cultural values, including archives, are under the protection of international humanitarian law.

The risk of Russia's armed aggression has been identified as a potential threat to Ukraine's archival system in the newly proposed Strategy for the Development

9 Ibid., pp. 203–204.

10 Ibid., p. 204.

11 Bida et al.: *Zi šitom či na šiti?*, p. 34.

12 *Nakaz Ministerstva oborony Ukrainy vid 23 bereznia 2017 r.*

of Archival Matters for the Period Until 2025.¹³ To address this risk, the draft proposes introducing a special mode of storage and use of documents in a digital format, establishing rules and procedures for protecting archival information resources during periods of military conflict, climate change, and pandemics, and creating robust information protection systems as part of the archival industry's information and telecommunication systems. The goal is to prevent any loss or damage to historical documents and ensure that they are preserved for future generations.

The process of digitising archival documents rose in importance when the State Archival Service of Ukraine prioritised it. In July 2021 the service introduced an electronic resource called *[Not] Lost Archives of Crimea*, which offered online access to nearly 400,000 copies of documents from the National Archive Fund of archival organisations of Autonomous Republic of Crimea.¹⁴ However, this caused Russian propagandists to spread fake news about the “theft of the Ukrainian regime of the Crimean archives.”¹⁵ Nonetheless, the unlimited information space gradually evolved into a zone of opposition against Russian aggression.

The ongoing hybrid war and full-scale invasion by Russia has caused extensive harm to the National Archive Fund of Ukraine over the past year. Under the guise of a brutal ‘special operation’, the war has been waged with the purported goal of ‘denazifying’ Ukraine and ‘liberating’ Russian-speaking citizens from the alleged ‘oppression of Banders’. In this war against Ukrainian history and culture, the Russians have been wreaking havoc by destroying cities, villages, cultural artefacts, and innocent lives. This leads to immeasurable suffering for the Ukrainian people and threatens the ideals of democracy all over the world.

The Russian invaders purposefully targeted and wreaked havoc on vital institutions of historical preservation, such as museums, libraries, and archives. In the initial days of the conflict, Russian rockets set fire to the Museum of History and Local Lore in Ivankiv, located in the Kyiv region, which held notable pieces by renowned folk artist Maria Prymachenko. Additionally, they targeted the National Museum of Hryhorii Skovoroda in Skovorodinivtsi and the archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (SSU) Office in Chernihiv region. While some of Prymachenko's artworks were saved, the attack on the SSU Office of the Chernihiv region resulted in the irretrievable loss of over 13,000 KGB files due to a direct hit by a Russian rocket.¹⁶

13 *Strategià rozvitku arhivnoï.*

14 *Anons: [Ne] vtračeni arhivi Krimu.*

15 *Kak tormony pomogli.*

16 *Kotlárskij: Iz-za rossijskogo vtorženià.*

In the territories under temporary occupation, the Russian invaders have launched a systematic looting campaign, targeting cultural artefacts and historical records. Libraries have been stripped of valuable publications documenting Ukraine's history and culture. Museums in Mariupol, Kherson, and Kherson regions have been plundered. The State Archive of Kherson Region and the Kharkiv State Scientific Library, among other cultural institutions, have also fallen into their hands. The State Audit Service of Ukraine has lost control over 86 million units, which accounts for one and a half percent of National Archive Foundation of Ukraine (NAF) cases as of November 2022.¹⁷

The rampant and inhumane behaviour of the Russian forces egregiously violates established international humanitarian law. According to the UN General Assembly Resolution No. 3314 from 14 December 1974, these merciless actions constitute acts of aggression, which include:

- Invading or occupying the territory of another state, even if temporary;
- Bombardment, the use of any weapons, and any other kinds of attack against the territory, naval vessels, or aircraft of another state;
- Blockading the ports or coasts of another state or carrying out any acts of similar effect;
- Attacking the armed forces, vessels, or aircraft of another state or engaging in any other hostile acts against its forces;
- Providing support to another state in its commission of an act of aggression or participating in such acts jointly with another state;
- Covertly or overtly sponsoring armed bands, groups, irregulars, mercenaries, or terrorists to carry out acts of armed force against another state.¹⁸

The global democratic community has come together to support Ukraine in its admirable fight against aggression, which has helped to preserve Ukrainian culture. The Republic of Poland has played a crucial role in providing unprecedented aid to Ukraine, including support from Polish archivists to their Ukrainian counterparts. In 2022 alone, the central archives received over six million hryvnias in charitable aid, including essential equipment such as restoration tools, computers, diesel generators, materials and specialised safes.

Following the large-scale military invasion of Russian troops, Ukrainian archivists have been dedicated to ensuring the consistent functionality of their archival institutions, preserving all documents and facilitating access to important archival information. They have worked tirelessly to address the pressing issues of evacuating archives and documenting any criminal acts committed by raskists in the field of archival affairs. A central focus of their efforts has been

17 "Suspiľ'ne sprotiv" pro Deržavnì arhivi v Ukraïni.

18 *The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3314 (XXIX): Definition of Aggression.*

bearing responsibility for ensuring the future of their institutions and the information contained therein.

In pursuit of this objective, the state archives initiated a documentation of Russia's transgressions in Ukraine. To this end, the H. S. Pshenychnyi Central State Cinema-Photo-Phono Archive of Ukraine, implored individuals in possession of audiovisual materials to surrender photo, video, and phono documents that chronicle the developments of the Russian-Ukrainian war and are indicative of the aggressor's atrocities. Upon Ukraine's triumph, the archives will incorporate thousands of documentary proofs of Russian war crimes into separate collections, which will be open to users globally.

The future of archivists rests on their responsibility to ensure the preservation of archival documents. This holds particularly true in times of danger, such as during the mass attack of Russian troops on Kyiv when evacuating NAF documents from central archives became precarious. To address this challenge, the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine has been negotiating with foreign partners about relocating and digitizing the archives of totalitarian regimes. Recently, an agreement was signed with the National Archives of Great Britain, allowing for the storage of digitized archives at no cost. The actions of archivists today will help ensure access to key historical information for generations to come.¹⁹

Due to the declaration of martial law in Ukraine, access to reading rooms has been temporarily suspended until further notice. The evacuation of archival documents has become a challenging task due to constant missile attacks and shelling of Ukrainian territories. However, progress was made in April 2023 with the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Institute of Culture and History of Germans in North-Eastern Europe at the University of Hamburg and the Directorate for the Operation of the Complex of Buildings of the Central State Archives of Ukraine. This Memorandum grants over two million hryvnias in charitable donations for the repair of specific archives and the installation of additional archives on the premises of the complex of buildings of central state archival institutions located in Kyiv. These new archives will occupy a total area of 605 square meters.

The archival repository serves a crucial role in safeguarding the preservation of valuable documents held by NAF. This includes the secure storage and management of archived documents that have been evacuated from active zones of the war. To illustrate, a significant number of over 11,000 documents, accounting for 93%, were evacuated from the Kostiantynivka State Archive in the Donetsk

19 "Suspìl'ne sprotiv" pro Deržavnì arhìvi v Ukraïni.

region, while the Severodonetsk State Archive in the Luhansk region saw more than 31,000 documents, that is 90%, evacuated for safekeeping.²⁰

To further support and sustain the work of archival institutions amidst the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, a charitable account has been opened to facilitate donations towards the restoration of functional and safe working environments, as well as to help preserve Ukraine's invaluable documentary heritage.

Thanks to the digitization of extensive archives, researchers have been able to continue their work despite physical limitations. Digital copies are readily accessible on archive websites, and SAS has gone a step further by launching the Interarchival Search Portal in May 2022. This comprehensive information resource provides a single access point to the archives and has been modelled after the efficient Polish search archive system.²¹

SAS, along with its advisory groups, has remained focused on implementing the key provisions outlined in the Strategy of Archival Development until 2025. After consulting with the public, SAS has effectively optimised its network of central archives by merging the Central State Archive of Public Associations of Ukraine and the Central State Archive of Foreign Ukrainian Studies, as well as the Pshenychnyi Central State Cinema and Photo-Phono Archive of Ukraine, with the Central State Electronic Archive of Ukraine. As a result, two new archives have been established: the Central State Archives of Public Associations and Ukrainian Studies, and the Central State Audiovisual and Electronic Archives.²²

In response to the challenges posed by the war, SAS engaged in both informational and international activities. On 10 March 2022, the organisation's head, Anatolij Khromov, requested that the International Council of Archives suspend cooperation with state bodies in the field of archival matters in countries deemed accomplices of Russian military aggression, including the Russian Federation, the Udmurt Republic, the Republic of Tatarstan, and the Republic of Belarus. The Executive Committee of the International Council of Archives adopted the request and suspended cooperation until peace is achieved on terms acceptable to Ukraine and the security and sovereignty of persons and institutions that protect its cultural heritage are ensured.

As part of this effort, SAS and state archival institutions terminated the validity of bilateral agreements on cooperation with Russian and Belarusian state bodies and archival institutions. They also denounced agreements on the exchange of documents and stopped responding to requests from citizens and institutions of Russia and Belarus.

20 *Z Deržavnogo arhivu Konstântinivki.*

21 *Mižarhivnij pošukovij portal.*

22 *Postanova Kabinetu Ministriv Ukraïni vid 28 červnâ 2022 r.*

In an interview with the SAS head, Anatolij Khromov, on 18 April 2022, it was revealed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine had informed Ukrderzharkhiv about the termination of certain documents. Khromov stated that there were no prospects for establishing any cooperation between specific archival institutions of Ukraine and the Russian side within the framework of bilateral agreements.

SAS has made a request to international partners to support Ukrainian archivists in their initiative to terminate bilateral international interdepartmental agreements with archival institutions of the aggressor state, Russia.

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine has taken action against individuals and entities involved in the unlawful confiscation and destruction of valuable archival documents stored in archival institutions on temporarily occupied territory. The initiative includes imposing sanctions on eight individuals and six legal entities, including Oleg Lobov, the 'head' of the so-called State Committee for Archives of the Republic of Crimea, his deputy Tatiana Sharova, Andrey Artizov, the head of the Federal Archival Agency (Rosarkhiv), and several other institutions such as the State Committee for Archives of the Republic of Crimea and the State Treasury Institution of the Republic of Crimea.²³

During times of war, students who are training in a profession hold a special responsibility towards the future. In light of the challenges confronting the Archival Service of Ukraine, and the potential for reform in the midst of Russia's large-scale invasion, an anonymous survey was carried out between 1 and 10 November 2022. The focus group for the survey consisted of 100 students, and comprised of 58 individuals from the Drahomanov National Pedagogical University, 21 students from the National Aviation University, 16 from the Bohdan Khmelnytsky Cherkasy National University and five from the Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts. All the students were in the process of studying archival studies, making the focus group particularly unique for this purpose.

All surveyed participants unanimously identified warfare as the most pressing challenge facing Ukrainian archives. They expressed concerns over the potential loss, looting, and destruction of valuable documents by the invading forces. Moreover, the ongoing war initiated by Russia has significantly damaged the Ukrainian archival system. To prevent archives from falling into the occupiers' hands, safeguarding them in secured locations appeared the top priority for preservation. In addition, 92% of respondents acknowledged the pressing need to implement an archival reform despite the ongoing crisis. They stressed that archival reform is a vital component of national security and regarded archives as a valuable national information resource. Therefore, such reforms cannot be delayed any longer.

23 *Ukraina zaprovadžuê sankcii.*

86% of the respondents defined the essence of archival reform as the digitisation of archives, the development of legal support for this process, and the expansion of access to archival information. The participants considered this reform critically necessary, citing reasons such as strengthening the archival system against potential hacker attacks from Russia and preserving the heritage and true history of Ukraine. Similarly, 75% of the respondents indicated that the problems of archival affairs in the early 1990s were rooted in the Soviet legacy. They emphasised the need to declassify archival documents that were classified during the Soviet era and to expand access to documents deliberately falsified by Soviet scientists. Respondents expressed concern that after the restoration of independence, documents and securities were being interpreted in the Russian way, making it difficult to distinguish between real Ukrainian history and fiction. They also denounced the appropriation of Ukrainian documents by Russia after the collapse of the USSR. These findings generally align with the conclusions of scientists working on reforming the archival industry and the author of this chapter, who has been professionally involved in the development of archival affairs in Ukraine since 1994.²⁴

The invasion by the Russian occupiers has been a deeply traumatic experience for Ukrainians, intensifying during the transition from hybrid to war-phase. Despite this, archivists have shown remarkable resilience in facing these challenges through their professional environment. As risks continue to threaten the national archives and the global archival heritage, it is critical to acknowledge the daily efforts of Ukrainian archives. Despite the existing war, steps have been taken to reorganise and strengthen the archival institution, prioritising the physical preservation and digitalisation of essential documents, as well as creating e-exhibitions to highlight the war's non-accidental nature. Through the documentation of Soviet policies of suppression and opposition to national self-awareness, these archives present the world with the truth of what is happening.

Since 2014, Russia has been waging a modern war against Ukraine, starting with a hybrid form and escalating into a large-scale military invasion from 24 February 2022. The conflict began with the illegal annexation of Crimea and occupation of parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. The Russian Federation has been threatening to destroy Ukrainian culture, making Ukrainian archives institutions of memory that are of utmost importance. The aggressor state's ideologues have sought to justify their anti-academic theories that deny the right of Ukrainians to their own history and culture.

The year 2022 saw the beginning of a devastating war as Russian forces launched an assault on Ukrainian history and culture. Cities and villages were destroyed, and countless cultural sites were targeted in a shocking act of genocide

24 Matáš: *Arhivni reformi*, pp. 127–128.

against the Ukrainian people, putting the very values of democracy at risk. The national archival heritage of Ukraine was also threatened due to the aggression of Russian invaders, who began looting cultural treasures and removing essential publications from libraries. Museum artefacts from Mariupol and Kherson regions and documents from the State Archive of Kherson Region were among the countless treasures at risk.

Despite facing such trying times, Ukrainian archives quickly adapted to ensure the sustainable functioning of archival institutions and the preservation of precious cultural heritage. Heroic resistance from Ukraine was met with support from democratic nations around the world who united to help save Ukrainian culture.

After the Russian military invasion, Ukrainian archivists shifted their focus to maintaining the functioning of archival institutions, preserving and providing access to important archival documents, and ensuring the safe evacuation of these records. With the mass attack on Kyiv, the evacuation of the NAF documents from central archives was deemed too dangerous. Despite this challenging situation, the SAS and its advisory bodies continued to work towards implementing the Strategy for the Development of Archives until 2025, which had been approved prior to the start of the war. They were also dedicated to capturing and documenting any archival-related crimes committed during this tumultuous time.

During the war, Ukrainian archives have been working diligently to respond to the challenges that have arisen. In light of the martial law declaration, access to reading rooms has been temporarily suspended. However, efforts have been underway to intensify the digitisation of archival documents, which will allow researchers to continue their work remotely. Moreover, SAS has recently launched the Interarchival Search Portal, which serves as a comprehensive one-stop source for access to digital archives, modelled after a similar system in Poland.

Ukrainian archives are diligently maintaining their archival front through daily work and ongoing reorganisation of the system of archival institutions. Despite the war, there is increased attention to ensuring the physical preservation of archival documents and the digitisation of archival funds. Additionally, they are preparing e-exhibitions to inform the world about the truth of the war and its non-accidental nature. These exhibitions showcase evidence from preserved archival documents that highlight the Soviet policy of suppression and opposition to any manifestations of national self-awareness.

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Erasing the Evidence of Crime? On the Unique Holocaust-Documenting Sources That Survived World War II

Abstract

This chapter aims to highlight the most significant and unique, yet disquieting sources from the history of the Holocaust, which endured the challenges of the wartime era and have survived to this day. It focuses on three main types of materials: file documentation, photographs, and recordings produced by members of the German repressive apparatus. The analysis of the sources has also shed light on the way the perpetrators themselves spoke about their crimes.

Keywords: Holocaust; World War II; Einsatzgruppen crimes; Third Reich; war crimes

The military operations conducted by the National Socialist Third Reich during World War II provided cover for the heinous crimes committed in the process. The defeat at Stalingrad in February 1943 marked the first stage of failure for the Nazi state, causing panic in leadership circles. However, the inevitability of total defeat was not its sole reason for that matter.¹ The crimes committed by Germany during World War II were not only meticulously planned and executed with precision, but they were also extensively documented. This documentation was carried out by the commanders of various operational groups responsible for these acts, as well as the civil administration apparatus in the occupied territories and the perpetrators themselves. The magnitude of the atrocities was so staggering that covering them up in any manner would have been impossible. However, despite the enormity of the crimes, the Germans spared no effort in attempting to conceal or destroy evidence of mass extermination.

One of the earliest large-scale actions of this nature occurred with Heinrich Himmler's order of May 1943 to eliminate the sites of mass executions in Eastern Europe. A specialized Sonderkommando, code-name 1005, was assigned the task of exhuming and cremating the remains from the Einsatzgruppen massacres, which resulted in the deaths of over 900,000 individuals categorized as 'un-

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1 Hayward: *Zatrzymani pod Stalingradem*, p. 10.

desirable elements' (including Jews, Communists, and representatives of the intelligentsia or state administration). Concealing the evidence of these crimes posed a significant challenge due to both the sheer number of victims and the time-consuming process of exhuming and cremating the bodies.² By mid-1944, the Germans extended their efforts to camouflage the atrocities and murders that occurred in concentration camps or extermination camps. This involved initiating evacuations of remaining prisoners from concentration camps, accompanied by the removal of substantial quantities of various materials, equipment, and documentation. In November 1944, orders were issued to close and dismantle the gas chambers in all camps. At Auschwitz, the pits used for burning corpses were buried, and the mass grave areas were covered with earth and turf. Furnaces and crematoria were dismantled, while gas chambers were either destroyed or converted into anti-aircraft bunkers.³ The meticulous efforts to cover up World War II atrocities provided fodder for Holocaust deniers. They contended that the absence of gas chambers could suggest that the extermination of the Jews never occurred.⁴

However, the Holocaust did occur, and on a scale unprecedented in the history of mankind. Despite the Germans' attempts to conceal the remnants of their crimes, copious evidence has survived. These materials not only confirm the magnitude of the murders but also offer insights into the motivations and perspectives of the perpetrators. This chapter aims to spotlight the most significant and unique sources from the history of the Holocaust that withstood the challenges of the wartime era and continue to exist today. Throughout the analysis, the focus remains on sources produced by the perpetrators. Due to the limited space, selected materials representing three main types – printed sources, audiovisual materials, and photographs – are included. Examining these sources will not only offer a historian's perspective on the essential materials documenting German atrocities but will also shed light on how war crimes were addressed, discussed, and interpreted by the perpetrators themselves.

While the history of the Holocaust is generally considered well-researched today, historians still grapple with questions that may remain unanswered. One of the most crucial of those concerns the moment when Adolf Hitler made a definitive decision regarding the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question'. Strikingly, there is no signed order by the Führer of the Third Reich explicitly outlining a specific plan and guidelines for the extermination of the Jews. The only document signed by Hitler, which reveals the criminal intentions of the National Socialist regime, is his mandate to carry out the T4 Programme (*Aktion T4*) on

2 Rhodes: *Masters of Death*, pp. 260–261.

3 Evans: *Wojna Trzeciej Rzeszy*, pp. 624–625.

4 Lipstadt: *Denying the Holocaust*, p. 8.

1 September 1939.⁵ This order initiated a programme of physically eliminating 'lives unworthy of life' (*Vernichtung von lebensunwertem Leben*), resulting in the murder of around 200,000 individuals with disabilities or handicaps between 1939 and 1945.⁶ Although the document is concise,⁷ it unequivocally outlines its intentions. However, among the source materials from the Third Reich, there is no document of comparable significance explicitly addressing the extermination of the Jews. This absence complicates the reconstruction of decision-making processes and allows various interpretations.

Undoubtedly, one of the most significant documents concerning the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question' is the protocol of the conference held on 20 January 1942, at the Wannsee Mansion near Berlin. The uniqueness of this source lies in its explicit presentation of the comprehensive plan for the extermination of European Jews. According to researchers, the Wannsee Protocol unequivocally indicates that the SS, Security Police, and Security Service actively executed this crime, with the support and complicity of state authorities, civilian occupation authorities, and the party.⁸ Despite common misconceptions, the Wannsee conference itself is not the moment when the decision to murder European Jews was made. Its significance, as revealed by the referenced document, was different. The conference did not involve a debate on whether to exterminate the Jewish community. Instead, the primary focus of the discussion was on how the entire process should be organized and implemented. Participants of the Wannsee conference deliberated on the methods of elimination and destruction, albeit attempting to clothe their objectives in euphemistic terms.⁹

The protocol from the conference session holds historical significance, particularly due to the inclusion of a table compiled by SS statisticians depicting the distribution of Jews in Europe and the Soviet Union. While the figures within the table did not accurately reflect the factual state at the time, the list of countries included leaves a lasting impression. Notably, the list encompasses countries that were not under German occupation during that period (such as Great Britain) and neutral countries during World War II (including Sweden, Spain, Portugal, or Switzerland).¹⁰ The incorporation of these nations in the list implies that the plan for the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question' aimed to encompass all European Jews. This suggests that the National Socialist Third Reich did not intend to postpone the implementation of this project until after the war.¹¹ Adolf

5 Refer to *Hitlers Euthanasiebefehl* and *Hitlers Euthanasiebefehl Faksimile*.

6 Götz: *Obciženi*, pp. 9 and 21.

7 See photo 1 at the end of the chapter.

8 Longerich: *Konferencja w Wannsee*, p. 9.

9 Ingrao: *General Chronology of Nazi Violence*.

10 See photo 2 at the end of the chapter.

11 Longerich: *Der ungeschriebene Befehl*, pp. 175–184.

Eichmann, responsible for organizing train transports with Jews to extermination centres, drafted the protocol of the Wannsee Conference. The document was prepared in thirty copies, with only one surviving to the present day, now housed in the Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin (*Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts Berlin*).¹²

The meticulous documentation of crimes by the National Socialists is further demonstrated by a telegram intercepted by the British from Hermann Höfle. He served as the chief of staff of Operation Reinhardt (*Einsatz Reinhardt*) and was responsible for coordinating the activities of SS and police commanders in various districts of the General Government. Under Operation Reinhardt, initiated in the spring of 1942 shortly after the Wannsee Conference sessions, a systematic dispatch of trains carrying Jews to mass extermination centres commenced. In January 1943, Höfle transmitted a telegram to Adolf Eichmann in Berlin and Franz Heim, the deputy commander of the Security Police for the General Government in Kraków, using an encrypted message. British intelligence successfully intercepted and decrypted the document using the Enigma machine, but the contents of the telegram remained incomprehensible. Höfle reported: “Re: 14-day report Operation Reinhard. Registered arrivals until 31 December 1942, L 12761, B 0, S 515, T 10335 totalling 23611. Situation [...] 31 December 1942, L 24733, B 434508, S 101370, T 71355, totalling 1274166”.¹³

The information in the telegram aimed to provide the exact number of victims in the Majdanek, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka camps as of 31 December 1942. In this context, ‘L’ represented Lublin or the Majdanek camp, ‘B’ denoted Belzec, ‘S’ indicated Sobibor, and ‘T’ stood for Treblinka. During this period, 23,611 Jews were transported to the camps. The second set of figures outlines the total number of Jews deported by the Germans during Operation Reinhardt throughout 1942: “Lublin/Majdanek – 24,733, Belzec – 434,508, Sobibor – 101,370, Treblinka – 713,555, total – 1,274,166”. In the original telegram, presented in the insert with photos at the end of this chapter, one digit ‘5’ is missing from the number of Treblinka victims. This appears to be a typographical error, and upon correction, the total becomes 1,274,166, aligning with the number of Jews ‘funnelled’ (*durchgeschleust*) through the camps in the General Government. Indeed, such a number is reflected in SS statistics reported to Heinrich Himmler in March 1943.¹⁴

When interpreting Höfle’s telegram, it is important to consider that the numbers it contains likely represent those deported in rail transports, rather than

12 *Besprechungsprotokoll vom 20. Januar 1942*, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin: *Inland II-Geheim*, sig. R 100/857, fols. 166–180. See also Klein: *Die Wannsee-Konferenz als Echo*; Idem: *Die Wannsee-Konferenz*; Gerlach: *Die Wannsee-Konferenz*, pp. 7–44.

13 See photo 3 at the end of the chapter.

14 Libionka: *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 79.

those specifically murdered in the gas chambers. While it is evident that a sizeable portion of the deportees met their demise in extermination centres or due to deadly labour (as witnessed, for instance, in Majdanek), it is crucial to acknowledge the relatively small number of Jews who managed to escape from the transports. However, this acknowledgement does not alter the fact that the Germans approached the planning and execution of mass killings with shocking precision, which is evidenced by the telegram. The transcript of this document, decoded by British intelligence, was only declassified in 2000 and its original copy is archived in the fonds of The National Archives in London.¹⁵

The most unequivocal and audacious evidence of the Third Reich's criminality is found in Heinrich Himmler's Poznań speech, delivered on two occasions: 4 and 6 October 1943. The Reichsführer-SS addressed his trusted colleagues at the time, abandoning diplomatic and circumspect phrases related to the policy toward Jews.¹⁶ In this speech, Himmler tackled the issue of the 'evacuation of the Jews', explicitly terming it as a necessity to 'exterminate the Jewish people'. The primary purpose of Himmler's speech was to persuade the audience of the legitimacy of the extermination project.¹⁷ He cautioned against the belief among party activists that knowing a 'decent Jew' could alter their perception of the issue. It is noteworthy that during the Poznań meetings, Himmler not only emphasized the need for a 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question' but also made it clear to his audience that women and children were being murdered in Eastern Europe alongside men. Furthermore, he argued to the gathering that a "difficult decision had to be made to wipe this nation off the face of the earth". According to Himmler, it was imperative to prevent the future avengers of the Jews, represented by their children, from seeking retribution by killing the sons and grandsons of Germany.¹⁸

The texts of Himmler's Poznań speeches constitute the earliest known documents wherein a high-ranking government official openly discussed the mass murder of the Jewish population during the war. The Reichsführer-SS delivered these speeches based on notes, and starting in late 1942, they were recorded on gramophone records. These recordings were subsequently used to create a typescript, which Himmler personally revised and supplemented in the next stage. The three-hour speech on October 4 spans 115 pages and served as evidence during the trials of war criminals at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. Currently, this historical document is preserved in the collection of the Bundesarchiv in Berlin. Notably, Himmler himself seemed to recognize the

15 *Decode GPDD 355a distributed on January 15, 1943*, in: The National Archives in London, sig. HW 16/23; reprinted in: Witte et al.: *A New Document*, pp. 468–486.

16 Bartnicka: *Świątopogład*, pp. 393–394.

17 Padfield: *Himmler*, 2, pp. 332–345.

18 Bartnicka: *Zagłada Żydów*, pp. 281–291.

significance of his speech. When asked to make the text available for training purposes, he emphatically declined.¹⁹

Materials documenting the crimes committed by Germans during World War II include photographs, along with numerous documentary records preserved in paper form. The most significant of these photographs, which serve as undeniable evidence of German crimes, were captured by the perpetrators themselves. Following the outbreak of World War II, the occupation authorities in Poland imposed a ban on documenting reality through photography. Camera requisitions were imposed both in the lands incorporated into the Reich and in the General Government. The Warsaw District took additional measures by enacting an ordinance on 30 June 1941, prohibiting “professional photography in public streets, green areas, and parks”. Violators of these prohibitions faced fines or imprisonment, and similar orders were issued in other areas. Although the Germans permitted photography, it was restricted to personal use and subjects deemed neutral from the occupiers’ standpoint.²⁰

Following the war, the photographs served as recurring evidence in investigations and trials of perpetrators, acting as comparative material during investigative and research endeavours. Nevertheless, photographs, particularly original ones depicting German-committed crimes, have seldom undergone thorough analysis, verification, and in-depth criticism, as is expected when working with other historical sources. Photographs are frequently employed to illustrate daily life during wartime and aspects of occupiers’ policies. Such approach to these sources often leads to erroneous or overly generalized descriptions of the photos.²¹ Yet, photographs from the war and occupation period frequently reveal a compelling narrative. The events captured in these images, often extremely drastic, compel us to question the motivations of the individuals who took them.

The most illustrative example of this phenomenon is the extensive collection of photos that has been preserved to this day, documenting the crimes committed by the Einsatzgruppen in Eastern Europe. The Einsatzgruppen were operational units affiliated with the German army during World War II, which were assigned the task of eliminating or isolating “political and ideological opponents of the Reich”. In practice, these units conducted their tasks through the ruthless use of terror and the mass extermination of individuals deemed anti-German or anti-fascist activists. The criminal activities of the Einsatzgruppen commenced as early as 1939, shortly after the German attack on Poland. During this period, their

19 See Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde: *Persönlicher Stab Reichsführer SS*, NS 19/4010. For a reprint of the speech of 6 October 1943, see Smith et al. (eds.): Himmler: *Geheimreden*, pp. 162–183.

20 Urbanek: *Codzienność*, pp. 9–10.

21 Stempowski et al. (eds.): *Zbiór fotografii*, pp. 17–18.

actions targeted participants in the Greater Poland Uprising and the Silesian uprisings, leading members of the intelligentsia, Jews, and Communists. Crimes on an even larger scale occurred after the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Following the advance of four Wehrmacht armies, four Einsatzgruppen units (labelled A, B, C, and D) were deployed, with their primary task of exterminating Jews. In accordance with orders from Berlin, efforts were made to involve the local Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Polish, or Belarusian population in the act of killing Jews.²² However, before delving into the photographs, it is crucial to highlight the magnitude of these murders, the information about which has survived in the documentation and statistics prepared by the Germans themselves. An exemplary instance is the report of Einsatzgruppe A commander, Walter Stahlecker, dated 31 January 1942. This report detailed executions in the Baltic states and Belarus conducted by the end of 1941. Notably, the report was presented in the form of a map with numbers of liquidated Jews annotated alongside drawings of coffins.²³ By the end of 1941, Estonia was declared *Judenfrei*, indicating that all individuals of Jewish descent had been murdered.²⁴ This information, as indicated by the coffin symbols on the map, was conveyed in a veiled manner. The narrative of the crimes is further reflected in a quote referring to the area where mass murder was planned: “Resettlement site: there are eight ditches at the location designated for resettlement. A team of ten officers and soldiers is assigned to each ditch, and they should be rotated every two hours.”²⁵

The accidental discovery of Walter Stahlecker’s report in the lead-up to the Nuremberg trials brought the previously unknown crimes of the Einsatzgruppen to the attention of prosecutors. The original document is currently kept at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in the United States.²⁶ To further elaborate on the scale of Einsatzgruppen crimes, it is crucial to note that, according to the statistics prepared by various units by the end of 1942, just a few months into the war against the Soviet Union, Einsatzgruppe A reported the murder of 249,421 Jews. Einsatzgruppe B indicated 126,195 victims, while Einsatzgruppe C and D slaughtered 362,211 Jews between September and December 1942 alone.²⁷

These mass executions, conducted on an almost unimaginable scale, posed numerous challenges. Beyond issues related to organizing such crimes and their impact on the perpetrators’ psyches, the German command faced a problem that, from their perspective, was even more serious than the lack of ‘understanding’ for

22 Browning: *Geneza*, pp. 276–279.

23 See photo 4 at the end of the chapter.

24 *Stahlecker report*.

25 As cited in Snyder: *Skrwawione ziemie*, pp. 242–243.

26 National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland: sig. 238/2273-PS.

27 Rhodes: *Masters of Death*, p. 257.

these executions. It became evident that the mass murders had become a sensation, ‘magically’ attracting onlookers despite the ban on entering execution sites. Witnesses watched with interest, wrote letters, and discussed the events, causing news to spread rapidly through the occupied territories. Information also reached Germany, not just through casual observers but also through members of the Einsatzgruppen informing their families and friends about their participation in the executions of Jews. This communication occurred not only through letters but, as previously mentioned, by capturing moments of murder in photographs,²⁸ which were later sent to the Reich.

This situation posed a significant embarrassment for the Wehrmacht, as they sought to keep these crimes secret. Consequently, as early as July 1941, photographing the murder of civilians and mentioning it in letters to relatives was prohibited by an official order. Moreover, the confiscation of photographs and undeveloped films was ordered, so that they could be sent to superior authorities as ‘Secret Reich Matter’ (*Geheime Reichsache*).²⁹ The number of surviving photographs from this period, considering that only a month passed between the outbreak of war in Eastern Europe and the issuance of the order forbidding photographs of executions, attests to the scale of the problem.

Despite top-down directives, members of the Einsatzgruppen continued to document their participation in the crimes. One of the best-known photographs from that period was taken during the final massacre in April 1942 in the town of Vinnytsia in western Ukraine when the Einsatzkommando slaughtered all remaining Jews. In the centre of the photo is the victim: a Jewish man crouching over a ditch filled with bodies. Just behind him is a member of a German operative group pointing a gun at him, surrounded by other men in the same uniforms who are watching the execution.³⁰ This photo is often shown today not only as an illustration for descriptions of mass killings in Eastern Europe but also as an excellent example of the impact such events had on the sense of group responsibility among those involved in the executions. In this case, the perpetrator is one man, and his actions are watched by other members of the squad. The murder that is about to take place will leave its mark on both the person responsible for the execution and the observers. The former will prove that he is capable of shooting the Jew and that he obediently follows orders. For the fellow soldiers around him, it will be an example of valour, which they also aspire to demonstrate.³¹ A reproduction of the photograph from Vinnytsia is a permanent element of many exhibitions around the world. It is a feature of the Museum of the

28 See photo 5 at the end of the chapter.

29 Refer to Hilberg: *The Destruction*, pp. 331–335.

30 A reproduction of the photograph is included in the publication: Rhodes: *Masters of Death*, insert with photos from p. 146, no pagination of the insert.

31 See photo 6 at the end of the chapter.

Second World War in Gdańsk, Berlin's Topographie des Terrors, The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, and the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem.³²

The crimes committed by the Einsatzgruppen were not only documented through reports from commanders or photographs but also captured in a recording that reveals the entire process of the liquidation of Jews. This amateur footage was filmed by a German Kriegsmarine soldier Reinhard Wiener during a stroll in Liepaja (Libau), Latvia, using his Kodak 8 mm camera. The video, lasting just over a minute, portrays Jewish men being brought to the execution site by a truck. After disembarking, they were directed over a dug hole where they were going to be shot. The footage displays the executions of three groups of victims, surrounded by soldiers, including Kriegsmarine personnel, and civilians. Many onlookers positioned on the embankment above can be seen watching the execution. What is particularly shocking is the apparent lack of emotional response from the bystanders witnessing the shooting of the Jews. Civilians are standing and watching as the Jews jump out of an open truck, rush toward an open pit, and are then murdered. Notably, one onlooker is quietly smoking a cigarette. The distinct sound of gunshots is evident, as captured by a running dog in the frame, showing clear signs of fright. Its reaction is far more telling than the inaction of the people watching the execution. The footage also reveals the presence of SS men, local Latvian militia, and German police units. Undoubtedly, this recording is unique, and its existence was likely not known by the Germans themselves.³³ However, it highlights the alarming ease of access to sites of mass executions, as a casual passer-by could inadvertently stumble upon them.³⁴ Wiener's recording is currently kept in the collections of the Bundesarchiv and the Holocaust Museum but is not publicly accessible.³⁵

Regarding archival audiovisual material, it is worth noting that the Germans produced propaganda films during the war to reinforce the National Socialist image of the Jew. A prominent example of this is the footage from the Warsaw Ghetto, where a film crew arrived in early May 1942 to document Jews in their workshops. On the following day, the filmmakers aimed to shoot in the office of Adam Czerniakow, the chairman of the Warsaw *Judenrat*, placing a large menorah on his desk to emphasize the Jewish character of the place. During the recordings, the filmmakers focused on extreme poverty, exemplified by begging children on the streets, or on luxury, such as in cafes. A few days later, the crew

32 For more information on the interpretation of this photo: *July 1941, a Member of the Waffen-SS Shoots a Jew*.

33 Struk: *Holokaust w fotografiach*, pp. 103–104.

34 Reinhard Wiener referred to the circumstances in which he recorded the film in an interview made available by Yad Vashem Institute, see Wiener: *Massenerschießungen*.

35 *Einsatzgruppen Shooting of Jews; Juden Execution in Libau 1941*.

requested a presentation of the mikveh with 20 Orthodox Jews and 20 elegantly dressed young women. These individuals were coerced to strip naked, after which they were paired: a young girl with an old Jewish man and *vice versa* – a young man with an old woman. The filmmakers forced them to engage in sexual intercourse, recording the entire ordeal.³⁶ However, the film was ultimately set aside for the archives, as the Germans chose not to show it publicly.³⁷ The recording, though likely only a portion of it, was discovered after the war. National Socialist propaganda refrained from using this material due to the fear that, instead of generating the anticipated hatred against Jews, the scenes of the tragic life in the ghetto might provoke sympathy.³⁸

An invaluable historical document, encompassing both a narrative of the events documented and accompanying photographs, is the Jürgen Stroop Report, which presents the perspective of a National Socialist dignitary responsible for suppressing the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. The report, comprising 75 pages, was produced in three copies immediately after the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943. It provides information on the reasons behind the liquidation of the enclosed district, citing issues with the Jewish population, such as alleged spread of disease, involvement in illegal trade, and price inflation. In the Report, Stroop references the Great Liquidation Action, conducted from 22 July 1942, which resulted in the displacement of approximately 300,000 Warsaw Jews by September of that year and their subsequent sentencing to death at the Treblinka extermination camp. The account of events is complemented by 52 black-and-white photos capturing moments when Jews hiding in bunkers were forced out or when buildings were set ablaze. Each photograph bears a hand signature in Gothic script. One of today's best-known photos from that time is titled *The Jewish Quarter in Warsaw is no more!*³⁹ This image features a several-year-old boy standing among a group of men and women, with the child's hands raised in surrender and his face expressing a grimace of fear and uncertainty.⁴⁰ This photo, now an iconic symbol of the Holocaust, carries not only immense emotional weight but also serves as testimony to barbaric crimes.⁴¹

All three surviving copies of the report, prepared by the Germans, are currently housed at the NARA in Washington, the Bundesarchiv Koblenz, and the

36 Cesarani: *Ostateczne rozwiązanie*, p. 659.

37 Gutman: *Żydzi warszawscy 1939–1943*, p. 179.

38 Excerpts from this recording are available online. See e.g. Henryk z Jeleniej Góry: *Propaganda hitlerowska*.

39 See photo 7 at the end of the chapter.

40 The photo is part of the collection of the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*, further: IPN) under file number AIPN 2971/34. A reproduction of the photograph was included in the IPN publication: Stempowski et al.: *Zbiór fotografii*, photo insert *Selected Cards from the Album Series*, no pagination of the insert.

41 See Jankowska: *To najsłynniejsze zdjęcie z getta*; Kała: *Zdjęcie z likwidacji getta*.

Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw. In 2020, the Institute of National Remembrance deposited a Polish copy of the report at the Warsaw Ghetto Museum, which plans to feature it in an ongoing permanent exhibition.⁴² The document served as evidence during the Nuremberg trials.⁴³ Notably, its drafting is particularly noteworthy. The Germans are portrayed in laudatory terms as the best, most heroic, and distinguished individuals, while Jews are depicted using dehumanizing terms such as rats, vermin, lice, or, at best, thugs. This narrative, prevalent during the Third Reich, was undoubtedly intended to contribute to the dehumanization of those who, by participating in the uprising, aspired to die with dignity. The Stroop Report is another document in which the Holocaust is veiled by terms like ‘resettlement’, ‘clearing’, ‘displacement’, ‘pest control’, ‘repair’, and ‘construction’. However, the accompanying photographs leave no illusions about the intentions and actions of the authors of these acts.⁴⁴

Among the photos taken by German war criminals during the war, there are some that capture moments from their ‘off-duty’ lives. An especially notable source on this subject is an album discovered in 2007, named *The Höcker Album* after Karl Friedrich Höcker, who was probably the owner of the album and the author of some of the included photographs. This belief is substantiated by the fact that Höcker appears in far more photos than any other figures captured in them. Moreover, on the title page under the photo of Höcker and Commander Richard Baer, there is a caption that reads “With SS Commander Stubaf. Baer, Auschwitz 21.6.44”. Höcker is also the only person in the entire album who appears alone in any of the photos, clearly identifying him as the owner. The history of this collection is remarkable and suggests that a great deal of material from WWII may still be undiscovered. The album was found in 1945 by an American counterintelligence officer in an apartment in Frankfurt and later taken to the United States. For many years, the collection remained unknown until January 2007, when the officer anonymously donated it to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., requesting that his identity not be revealed.

Karl Höcker, the owner of this valuable album, was a German officer and an adjutant in several concentration camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he was transferred in May 1944.⁴⁵ During his stay at this extermination centre, he collected and took the 116 black-and-white photographs in question, depicting the lives and living conditions of the officers and administrators in charge of the concentration camp complex. Some photos capture formal events like military

42 A compilation of the report with the document in its entirety was published in 2009, see Żbikowski (ed.): *Stroop: Żydowska dzielnica*. In April 2013, the IPN also decided to publish the Jürgen Stroop Report free of charge on its website. See Stroop: *Żydowska dzielnica*.

43 Rousseau: *Żydowskie dziecko*, p. 104.

44 On Jürgen Stroop Report, see Żydowski Instytut Historyczny: *Raport Stroopa*.

45 *Höcker Karl-Friedrich Gottlieb*.

funerals and the dedication of a new hospital. However, a sizeable portion of those photos depict the camp's officers relaxing at the personnel centre known as Sola-hütte. This resort property, located just thirty kilometres from the camp complex, had an old cottage at the disposal of German officers. These photos from *The Höcker Album*, which document the officers' downtime, are considered the most striking from today's perspective, as they show cheerful staff officers in the company of young women – shorthand writers, typists, or guards – commonly known as *SS-Helferinnen* or 'helping women'.⁴⁶ All individuals in these photographs are beaming with smiles, drinking, singing, and probably joking, all while the most critical stage of the extermination of the Jews is being carried out in Auschwitz.⁴⁷

In the context of the significance of the photos included in *The Höcker Album*, the timing of their creation is particularly noteworthy. These photographs were taken between June and December 1944, with the end date confirmed by a Christmas tree in the background of one of Karl Höcker's photos.⁴⁸ Historically, this period aligns with the extermination of hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews, who were transported to Auschwitz in the spring and summer of 1944 following the Third Reich's invasion of Hungary in March of the same year. It is estimated that 450,000 Hungarian Jews were killed in Auschwitz during this harrowing period. The scale of the crime was so immense that the crematorium ovens could not handle all the corpses, necessitating additional mass graves to be dug on the camp grounds.⁴⁹ The photos from *The Höcker Album* are now viewed with chilling significance, as they document moments of heartfelt joy among German officers at the very time when genocide was occurring in close proximity.⁵⁰

In addition to its macabre significance, *The Höcker Album* conceals another dark secret. One of the photos captures the camp's most notorious commanders, Richard Baer (left), and Rudolf Höss (right), with Josef Mengele (centre), known as the 'Angel of Death' by camp inmates, accompanying them.⁵¹ Mengele, a physician by training, directed medical experiments at the camp, focusing on twins in particular, subjecting them to numerous tests in hopes of developing methods to increase the number of multiple pregnancies in German women. His duties also included conducting selections on rail platforms, deciding who among the prisoners would be shot immediately and who should be temporarily spared and put to work. *The Höcker Album* contains as many as eight photographs featuring Mengele, a significant revelation, as, before the transfer of this collection to the Holocaust Museum in Washington in 2007, no known photo-

46 See photo 9 at the end of the chapter.

47 Wilkinson: *Picturing Auschwitz*.

48 See photo 8 at the end of the chapter.

49 Rees: *Holokaust. Nowa historia*, pp. 449–450.

50 *Auschwitz Through the Lens of the SS*.

51 See photo 10 at the end of the chapter.

graphs depicted this sadistic perpetrator at the camp. All photos of Mengele were taken at the SS Solahütte resort, and, according to album analyses, they were captured on 29 July 1944 during a ceremony celebrating Höss's second term as senior garrison officer.⁵²

Rebecca Erbelding, museum archivist at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, who received the album and recognized its significance, emphasized:

The album reminds us that the perpetrators of the Holocaust were human beings, men and women with families, children and pets, who celebrated holidays and took vacations... These people were human beings... and these photographs remind us what human beings are capable of when they succumb to anti-Semitism, racism and hatred.⁵³

Significantly, this unique source remains poorly known to this day, including among Holocaust history professionals. The same holds true for another album from Auschwitz, which interestingly comes from almost the same period as *The Höcker Album*.

The Auschwitz Album, the official name given to this album of photos, is currently the sole surviving visual source documenting the mass extermination process at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Initially titled *The Resettlement of the Jews from Hungary (Umsiedlung der Juden aus Ungarn)*, it chronicles the period when the Germans accelerated the deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. The photos were captured by two SS men, photographers from the camp's *Erkennungsdienst*. While their identities are not entirely certain, they are most likely Bernhard Walter and Ernst Hoffmann, who served as director and deputy of the unit.⁵⁴ The *Erkennungsdienst's* responsibilities included taking fingerprints and identity cards from prisoners not sent for extermination.⁵⁵ *The Auschwitz Album* comprises 56 pages and 193 photographs, although it should be noted that originally there were more photos. Lilly Jacob-Zelmanovic Meier, a Holocaust survivor, discovered the album and donated it to Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre in Jerusalem. Before it entered the museum's collection, some of the photos were distributed to survivors who identified their relatives and friends in them.⁵⁶

The photos were captured in late May or early June 1944, coinciding with the period depicted in *The Höcker Album*. They portray the arrival of Hungarian Jews from Carpathian Ruthenia at the Auschwitz death camp. This photographic

52 See Malinowski: *Auschwitz*.

53 Wilkinson: *Picturing Auschwitz*.

54 Bruttman et al: *The "Auschwitz Album"*, pp. 22–44.

55 Wontor-Cichy: *Erkennungsdienst*, p. 14.

56 *The Auschwitz Album*. The Yad Vashem Institute has published all of the images from *The Auschwitz Album* on their website, see *The Auschwitz Album. Arrival*.

documentation holds great significance, as the deportation of Jews from Hungary reached its peak in the early summer of 1944. Moreover, it is crucial to note that there are no other existing sources providing an inside view of the complete implementation of the Final Solution plan at Auschwitz. Throughout this period, a dedicated rail line was extended from the train station outside the camp to the platform within it. Numerous photos in this album were taken directly on the platform.⁵⁷ Subsequently, a selection process was conducted by doctors and SS guards, dividing the prisoners into two groups. Those considered fit for labour were sent to the camp, where they underwent registration, had their belongings confiscated, and were assigned to barracks. The others were directly sent for extermination in gas chambers. In addition to capturing the moments of selection, the photos also portray the waiting times for both groups – those chosen for work and those designated for extermination. The latter, seemingly oblivious, quietly await in a nearby birch grove located adjacent to the crematoria. The photographs in *The Auschwitz Album* also document the operations of the warehouses, where the possessions looted from the prisoners were sorted. It is important to note that while the album comprehensively portrays the entire process involving Jewish prisoners, it does not depict the moment of extermination in the gas chambers.⁵⁸

Given the profound importance of this source and its unparalleled nature, questions arise about the intended purpose behind capturing these photos. According to historians, the album was likely created for high-ranking officials of the National Socialist state, aiming to showcase the efficiency of Auschwitz.⁵⁹ This conclusion is drawn from two primary considerations. Firstly, the album itself is focused on administering the Jews upon their arrival at the camp. Secondly, the timing of the photos coincides with Adolf Eichmann's acceleration of deportations of Hungarian Jews, as well as the period when Rudolf Höss was dispatched to Auschwitz to oversee the entire operation. Considering these factors, the album is interpreted as an instance of "internal propaganda designed to exhibit systematic execution in implementing the Final Solution to the Jewish Question".⁶⁰ When contrasted with these findings, the previously described *Höcker Album* takes on an even more chilling significance.

The discovery of *The Auschwitz Album* is accompanied by a remarkable story. Given that the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question' was intended to remain a secret, this type of photographic documentation lays bare the criminality of the National Socialist regime. Lili Jacob, the donor who contributed this photo collection to the Yad Vashem Institute, was among the Auschwitz-Birkenau

57 See photo 11 at the end of the chapter.

58 *The Auschwitz Album*.

59 See photo 12 at the end of the chapter.

60 *The Auschwitz Album*.

prisoners selected for working at the camp. During the evacuation, Jacob, like numerous other prisoners, was transferred to work in other camps within the Reich. This led her to the Dora concentration camp, where she lived to witness liberation. Due to her declining health, she was admitted to hospital, which was set up in the former SS barracks. It was there, in a cabinet next to her bed, that Lili Jacob accidentally stumbled upon an album of photos documenting the deportations of Hungarian Jews. Upon careful examination, she quickly realized that the photographs featured members of her family and friends who had been condemned to extermination in Auschwitz. The exact circumstances of how the album ended up in Dora remain unknown, but it is noteworthy that the camp was over 640 kilometres away from Auschwitz. The world became aware of the existence of *The Auschwitz Album* in the 1960s when it was presented as evidence during the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials. However, Lili Jacob only chose to donate it to Yad Vashem's collection in the 1980s. The album was initially published in 1981 in the book *The Auschwitz Album*, edited by Serge Klarsfeld.⁶¹

In analysing the crucial sources documenting the Holocaust crimes, several key conclusions arise. First, it was naive for the Germans to believe that, even without explicit orders regarding the extermination of Jews, they could conceal genocide committed on such a massive scale. The cited documents in the article make it clear that controlling the flow of information often eluded the German command, as soldiers, operational group members, and witnesses independently documented these atrocities. Destruction of mass graves, files, and gas chambers, along with top-down directives mandating secrecy, failed to conceal the Holocaust.

Secondly, the Holocaust was best documented by the Germans themselves. While it is challenging today to estimate the proportion of files generated by the National Socialist repression apparatus that survived from the period of the Third Reich state and the German occupation, given the substantial destruction of records at the war's end, the surviving documentation still offers a comprehensive view of the perpetrators. Despite the loss of a considerable number of files, the available documentation provides a compelling perspective. It is evident that the extermination of Jews during the war was a top priority for Germany, surpassing other concerns of that time, and it was meticulously documented. This is substantiated not only by the referenced reports but also by photographs and recordings of executions. The very creation of such materials, intended to display participation in mass crimes, prompts reflection on the purpose of these actions and raises profound questions about human morality.

Finally, the sources referenced in the chapter, some well-known and others less familiar, serve as evidence of German consistency, brutality, and a disturbing lack

61 Hellman et al.: *The Auschwitz Album*.

of inhibitions regarding the crimes committed. The Jews were reduced to mere numbers in tables designating units for liquidation or as figures next to coffins symbolizing the atrocities that had occurred. Simultaneously, these mass crimes, which indeed took place, were veiled by euphemistic slogans such as ‘land clearing’ and ‘deportations’, while being meticulously captured through photography for internal propaganda purposes. The photos shed light on the duality experienced by the perpetrators: one reality encompassing their brutal but (necessary) daily work, and another portraying their ordinary life outside of these horrifying acts. The directives to organize quiet evenings with cultural activities or gatherings, proposed as a countermeasure to the stress of extermination and as an alternative to excessive alcohol consumption during the execution of crimes, originated from the highest echelons of the National Socialist leadership. This concern aimed to address the mental well-being of soldiers engaged in such harrowing tasks, which could end in their dehumanization.⁶² Despite this, the unsettling realization that many of those who were involved in the extermination process could compartmentalize the acts of murder from their everyday lives magnifies the horror of the genocide they perpetrated.

[Translated by Tomasz Leszczuk]

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⁶² Browning: *Zwykli ludzie*, pp. 302–303.

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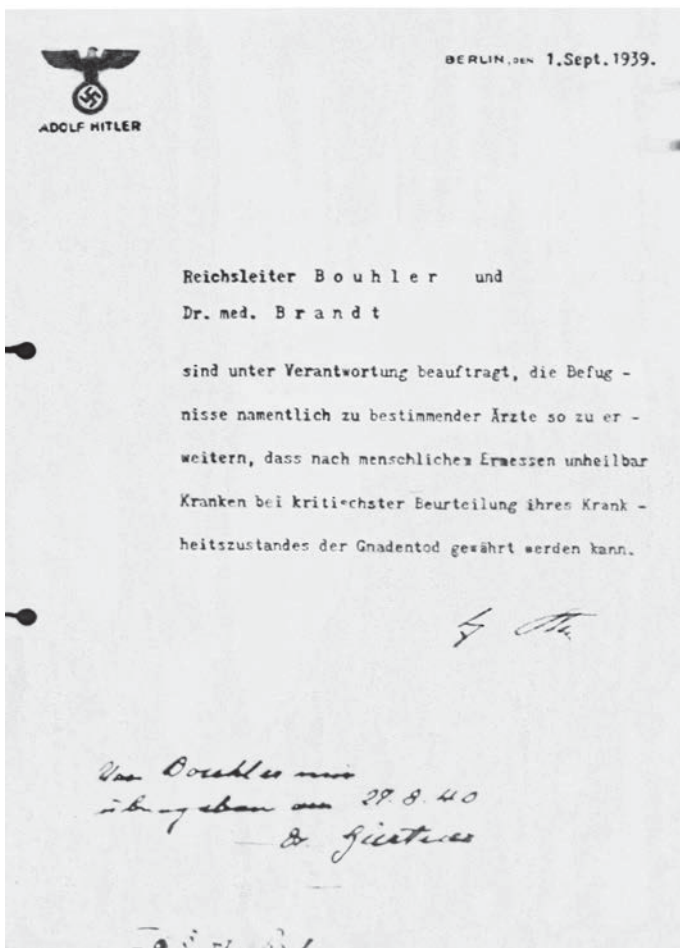


Photo 1. Adolf Hitler's order for *Aktion T4*, dated 1 September 1939 (Wikimedia Commons)

Land	Zahl
A. Altreich	131.800
Ostmark	43.700
Ostgebiete	420.000
Generalgouvernement	2.284.000
Bialystok	400.000
Protectorat Böhmen und Mähren	74.200
Estland - judenfrei -	
Lettland	3.500
Litauen	34.000
Belgien	43.000
Dänemark	5.600
Frankreich / Besetztes Gebiet	165.000
Unbesetztes Gebiet	700.000
Griechenland	69.600
Niederlande	160.800
Norwegen	1.300
B. Bulgarien	48.000
England	330.000
Finnland	2.300
Irland	4.000
Italien einschl. Sardinien	58.000
Albanien	200
Kroatien	40.000
Portugal	3.000
Rumänien einschl. Bessarabien	342.000
Schweden	8.000
Schweiz	18.000
Serbien	10.000
Slowakei	88.000
Spanien	6.000
Türkei (europ. Teil)	55.500
Ungarn	742.800
UdSSR	5.000.000
Ukraine	2.994.684
Weißrußland aus- schl. Bialystok	446.484
Zusammen: über	11.000.000

Photo 2. Population of Jews in Europe - a note prepared for the Wannsee Conference, 20 January 1942 (Wikimedia Commons)

GPDD 355a 2.

12. OMX de OMX 1000 89 ? ?
Geheime Reichssache! An das Reichssicherheitshauptamt, zu
Händen SS Obersturmbannführer EICHMANN, BERLIN ...rest missed..
- 13/15. OLQ de OMX 1005 83 234 250
Geheime Reichssache! An den Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspol.,
zu Händen SS Obersturmbannführer HEIM, KRAKAU.
Betr: 14-tägige Meldung Einsatz REINHART. Bezug: dort.
Fs. Zugang bis 31.12.42, L 12761, B 0, S 515, T 10335 zusammen
23611. Stand... 31.12.42, L 24733, B 434508, S 101370,
T 71355, zusammen 1274166.
SS und Pol.führer LUBLIN, HOEFLE, Sturmbannführer.

Photo 3. Telegram from Hermann Höfle to Adolf Eichmann and Franz Heim, January 1943 (Wikimedia Commons)

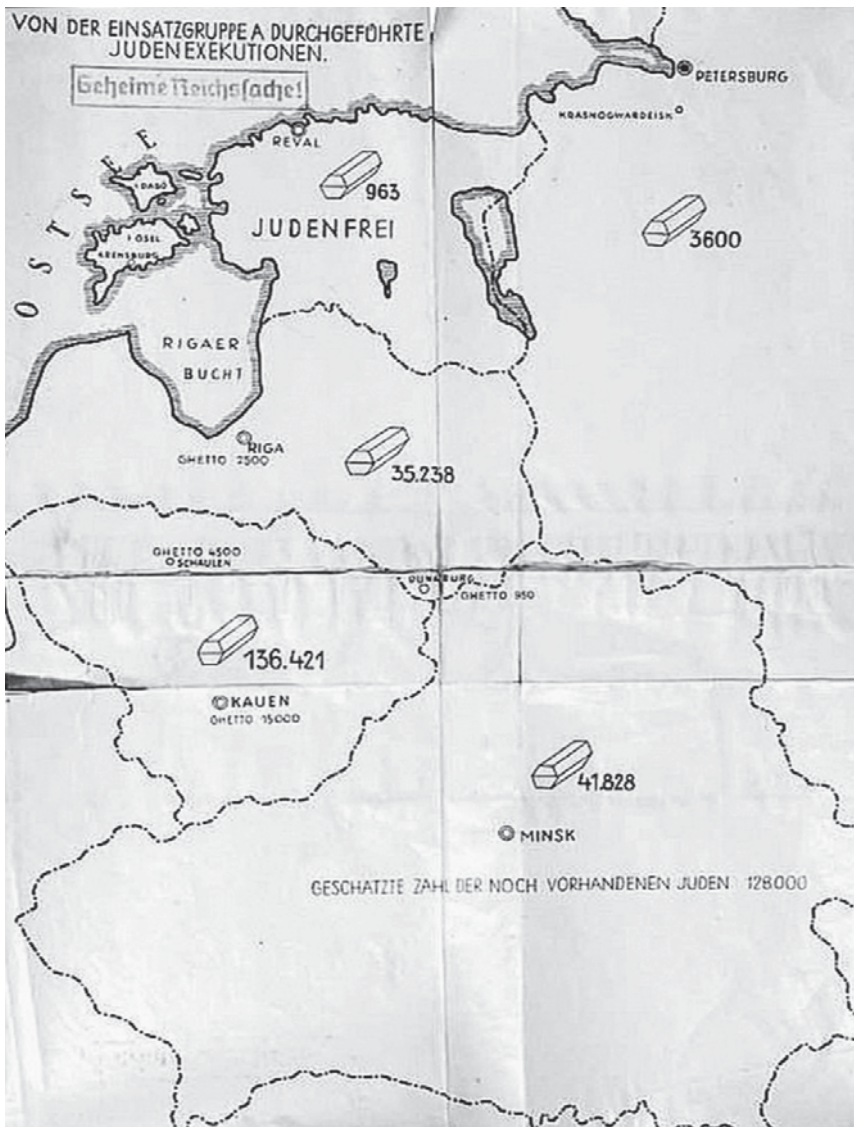


Photo 4. Report by Einsatzgruppe A commander, Walter Stahlecker, 31 January 1942 (Holocaust Encyclopedia)



Photo 5. Photo of an execution by Einsatzgruppen units in Eastern Europe (Holocaust Encyclopedia)



Photo 6. Massacre in Vinnytsia in western Ukraine, during which the Einsatzkommando slaughtered all surviving Jews, April 1942 (Wikimedia Commons)



Photo 7. Jewish civilians captured during the suppression of the Ghetto Uprising (Photo from *The Strop Report*)



Photo 8. Karl Friedrich Höcker at the Christmas tree (Photo from *The Höcker Album*)



Photo 9. SS officers and SS-Helferinnen partying in Solahütte (Photo from *The Höcker Album*)



Photo 10. From the left, Richard Baer, Josef Mengele and Rudolf Höss, Auschwitz 1944 (Photo from *The Höcker Album*)



Photo 11. 'Selection' of Hungarian Jews on the platform at Auschwitz-II-Birkenau in German-occupied Poland, May/June 1944 (The photograph is part of *The Auschwitz Album* collection donated to Yad Vashem by survivor Lili Jacob)



Photo 12. Birkenau camp, group of Jews walking towards gas chambers and crematoria 2 and 3, 27 May 1944 (Photo from *The Auschwitz Album*)

Political Changes

Krzysztof Syta

The Memory of a People Without a State: Polish Documentation Work During the Period of Partitions (1773–1918)

Abstract

The final partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795 marked a pivotal moment in Polish history. One of the primary endeavours undertaken by the partitioning states was the denationalisation of Poles through processes of Germanisation and Russification. Despite these efforts, Poles persisted in preserving their sense of national community and tradition, heavily relying on the collection of documentation depicting the former splendour of the Polish-Lithuanian state and action taken during the partition period. The aim of this chapter is to acquaint readers with Polish documentation work during the partition period, with a particular focus on public and private archives, libraries, and collections.

Keywords: private archives; foundation libraries; private collections; private libraries; collecting; documentation activity; Polish lands of the 19th century

Introduction

In the unique circumstance of being a nation without a state during the partition period (1795–1918), Poles created and preserved documentation in two main areas. Firstly, the administrations of the partitioning states played a significant role. They secured documentation from Polish offices dating back to the pre-partition period, while also generating and amassing ongoing documentation. Secondly, Poles themselves actively participated in documenting efforts, focusing on preserving the archival heritage of the former Commonwealth and documenting various aspects of social life. There was a fundamental disparity in the purpose of documentation between the partitioning states' administrations and the endeavours of Polish society. The authorities of the partitioning states collected documentation and established institutionalised archives primarily to efficiently administer the seized territories. Conversely, Polish documentation

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activities were predominantly driven by the aim of preserving the memory of their state and its people. Quoting the words of librarian and archivist Michał Marczak (d. 1945), who spent considerable time safeguarding the Tarnowski family's collection housed in Dzików, "during the period of political captivity, it was the collections of mementos of the past that became an enormously important factor in maintaining one's nationality, in preserving one's affiliation with Western culture and in effectively defending spiritual distinctiveness."¹ This publication focuses on the archival collections created in the Polish lands during the Partitions, through collaborative efforts involving Poles. It provides a comprehensive overview of the titular issue.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, one of the largest and most populous states of 18th-century Europe, was completely absorbed by its neighbours in a little more than two decades during the second half of the 18th century. The years 1772, 1793, and 1795 marked successive stages in the collapse and final partition of the Polish-Lithuanian state.² In 1772, the first Partition Treaty was signed by Austria, Prussia, and Russia. Austria acquired approximately 83,000 square kilometres; Prussia obtained 36,000 square kilometres, and Russia annexed 92,000 square kilometres of Commonwealth territories. In the second partition, which occurred in 1793, only Prussia and Russia participated. The territorial gains for both countries were significantly larger than in the first partition. Prussia acquired 57,000 square kilometres, while Russia annexed an extensive area of 250,000 square kilometres. The third partition once again involved three countries. Austria acquired 47,000 square kilometres; Prussia took control of 48,000 square kilometres, and Russia annexed 120,000 square kilometres of territory.

The Napoleonic era brought a glimmer of hope to the Poles for the restoration of their state. In 1807, the Treaty of Tilsit was signed between Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte of France, Tsar Alexander of Russia, and King Frederick William III of Prussia, resulting in the creation of a quasi-sovereign Duchy of Warsaw from the lands of the second and third Prussian partitions. However, in practice, the Duchy remained subordinated to France. In 1809, following the Franco-Austrian War, part of the Polish lands seized by Austria during the Third Partition were annexed to the Duchy of Warsaw. In 1815, as per the provisions of bilateral treaties concluded during the Congress of Vienna between Austria, Prussia, and Russia, the territory of the Duchy of Warsaw was divided among these three countries. The largest portion formed the Kingdom of Poland, united by a personal union with Russia. Initially it was granted significant autonomy, which was gradually curtailed by the Russian tsars. Eventually, after the suppression of the

1 Marczak: *Zbiory archiwalne*, p. 1.

2 See fig. 1 at the end of the chapter.

January Uprising (1863–1864), the Kingdom of Poland was completely abolished, and the region, known as the Vistula Country, was fully integrated into the Russian Empire. Following the Congress of Vienna, Prussian authorities pledged to maintain relative autonomy for Poles within the Grand Duchy of Posen, established in 1815 from lands of the Duchy of Warsaw. However, these promises proved largely illusory, as the Greater Poland population, like the rest of the lands of the former Commonwealth, faced Germanisation. The only partition where Poles were able to maintain and even foster their national traditions, culture, and engage in public life was Galicia, under the rule of the Austrian Habsburgs. A political ephemera of the Free City of Cracow, with an area of about 1160 square kilometres, also established as a result of the Vienna Congress in 1815 with substantial autonomy for its Polish inhabitants, existed until 1846 when it became part of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, one of the numerous provinces of the Habsburg Empire.³

With the dissolution of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the vast majority of archival fonds and records from state offices, both central and local, which had operated within its territory until 1795, were appropriated by the administrations of the partitioning states. As early as 1794, significant portions of the archival fonds from the central offices of the Polish-Lithuanian state were transported from Warsaw to St. Petersburg by the Russians. This notably impacted such fonds as the Crown Metrica and the Archives of the Permanent Council.⁴ Subsequently, the Russians relinquished some of these archives to the Prussians. In 1799, the Prussian authorities established the *Polnisches Archiv* (Polish Archive) under the supervision of the Białystok Kamera authorities in Białystok. This archive, which included fragments of the aforementioned records given to the Prussians by the Russians, endured until 1807 when Białystok became part of the Duchy of Warsaw under the Treaty of Tilsit. Consequently, the fonds of the Polish Archive were divided between Prussian and Polish authorities.⁵ A similar archive to the one set up by the Prussians in Białystok, known as the Polish Archive, also operated in Warsaw at that time. Its inception coincided with the Prussian occupation of the city. The Krasiński Palace housed a collection of remaining archives and records from the central offices of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that had not been taken by the Russians, primarily consisting of financial records. Following the establishment of the Duchy of Warsaw in 1807 and later the Kingdom of Poland in 1815, the fonds of the Polish Archive in Warsaw were partly absorbed by their respective financial

3 Historical and political description of the Polish lands based on: Topolski (ed.): *Polska w czasach nowożytnych*; Kallas 1999.

4 Tomczak: *Zarys dziejów*, pp. 260–261.

5 On the Polish Archive in Białystok, see Stojanowski: *O tak zwanym "Archiwum Polskim"*, pp. 29–64.

authorities and partly integrated into the National General Archive. The Austrians, on the other hand, had to make do with the control over the archival fonds and records from local offices within the territories they occupied. Consequently, the citizens of the former Commonwealth were not only deprived of their state, previous rights, and often personal property but also of access to resources documenting the history of their country and its inhabitants.

The administrations of the partitioning states at the turn of the 19th century tried to take under their supervision not only the documentation produced by the central state offices, but also local ones, including, above all, the records of the county and land courts, and the documentation of cities, to a much more limited extent. Only the documentation held by religious institutions and private individuals remained beyond the direct oversight of the partitioning authorities. However, it became apparent over time that even these resources had piqued the interest of the partitioners.⁶ The approaches of the various partitioning states to securing and preserving documentation seized as a result of partition varied. This divergence stemmed in part from the manner in which the documentation was acquired. Notably, the transfer of some of the documentation, court records in particular, was executed through active succession. The Austrian authorities were the most efficient to address this issue, as in the early 1780s they amassed in Lviv a vast collection of court books from across the Austrian partition, with the exception of Cracow and its surrounding areas.⁷

State Archives

Periods of increased autonomy experienced by Poles in the territories of the former Commonwealth prompted their endeavours to establish administrative archives. These archives, largely modern for their time, emerged as independent institutions not only tasked with collecting fonds but also engaged in processing them and making them accessible. The first of such archives was the National General Archive, established by decree of Frederick Augustus I of the House of Wettin (d. 1827), who held the titles of Duke of Warsaw and King of Saxony. This archive was founded upon the basis of the institution established in Warsaw by Prussian King Frederick William III (d. 1840) in 1800, known as the Royal South Prussian Main National Archive. Notably, the founding decree of the National General Archive emphasised its public character. Today, the National General

6 For further insights into the archival policies of the late 18th and early 19th-century partitioning authorities and the authorities of the Duchy of Warsaw regarding local administration records of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, refer to Mencil: *Losy*, pp. 23–35.

7 Sochaniewicz: *Archiwum Krajowe*, p. 32.

Archive is recognised as the oldest institutional archive in Poland, operating under the name the Central Archives of Historical Records. Throughout the partition period, its directors and staff were predominantly Polish. Its fonds, initially comprising archives from central offices dating back to the Old Polish period, expanded throughout the 19th century to include records from the central offices of the Duchy of Warsaw (1807–1815) and its successor, the Kingdom of Poland during the autonomous era (1815–1867). To a considerable extent, the National General Archive can be regarded as one of the few state archives in the Polish lands during the partition period that maintained a distinctly Polish national character, both in terms of its fonds and personnel.⁸

The state archives in the Austrian partition also merit recognition as being ‘Polish’ during the partition period. An earlier notable effort in this regard occurred in the early 1780s when Austrian authorities successfully gathered documentation produced and amassed until then by Polish offices, primarily courts, from the region known as Galicia, which demarcated Polish lands under Austrian control. These documents were housed in the premises of the former Bernardine monastery in Lviv, hence the archive became commonly known as the Bernardine Archive. However, from 1784 onwards, it operated officially under the name *Caesareo-regium antiquorum actorum terrestrium et castrensiuum Galiciensium tum corroborationis documentorum officium*. Notably, the administrator of this archive was a Pole named Antoni Poletyło, who held the title of regent. In 1810, the archive fonds was placed under the administration of the nobility court in Lviv. Over the ensuing decades, as the legal significance of the documentation from the Bernardine archives diminished, Austrian authorities opted to transfer custody to the autonomous authorities of Galicia. In 1877, the Diet of Galicia and Lodomeria made the decision to establish two archives with similar names in Lviv and Cracow, known as the National Archives of County and Land Records. The rationale behind this decision was articulated as follows: “retrieving the archives of county and land records is, as it were, a duty of honour for our country. The collection of county and land records is the most valuable monument of our historical and social existence”.⁹ A year later, both archives commenced their operations. The core of their fonds consisted of former land court and county office and court records from the Polish lands occupied by Austria following the First (1772) and Third Partitions (1795). Over time, their fonds expanded to encompass other archives from the Old Polish period and documentation produced during the partitions. The fonds of both archives also consisted of deposits,

8 Tomczak: *Zarys dziejów*, pp. 264–270. For a series of articles on the history of the Central Archives of Historical Records in the 19th century, see Stebelski (ed.): *Księga pamiątkowa*; Krochmal: *Kalendarium*, pp. 13–119.

9 Sochaniewicz: *Archiwum Krajowe*, p. 37.

including those from municipalities in towns and villages. The Polish character of these two archives of county and land records was further evidenced by their staff composition. Until Poland regained its independence in 1918, the directors and staff of both institutions were distinguished Polish scholars, primarily historians, many of whom held professorships at the universities of Cracow and Lviv. In Cracow, the archive was led by directors such as Michał Bobrzyński (d. 1935), Zbigniew Kniaźiołucki (d. 1905), Franciszek Piekosiński (d. 1906), Stanisław Kutrzeba (d. 1946), Stanisław Smolka (d. 1924), serving from 1878 to 1919. In Lviv, during the same period, the archives were headed by Ksawery Liske (d. 1891) and Oswald Balzer (d. 1933).¹⁰ Importantly, the staff of both archives contributed significantly to academic research by publishing numerous scientific papers and source editions based on the fonds of their archives. Particularly noteworthy was the publication of sources in the series *Akta grodzkie i ziemskie z czasów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z archiwum tak zwanego bernardyńskiego we Lwowie w skutek Fundacyi śp. Aleksandra hr. Stadnickiego*, which was issued between 1868 and 1925. Of the 25 volumes published in this series, the final three appeared after the conclusion of World War I.¹¹

To a certain extent, the State Archive in Lviv, established in 1908, can also be regarded as an archive with a 'Polish' character, given the so-called autonomy of the Polish lands within the Austrian partition. It was established on the basis of records dating back to the First Partition (1772) under the central government of Galicia, known as the *Gubernium*, and subsequently, from 1849, the Governorate. It was overseen initially by the Polish legal historian Alojzy Winiarz (d. 1912), Later, from 1912 onwards, it was led by Eugeniusz Barwiński (d. 1947), a Polish historian of Ukrainian origin.¹²

The period of autonomy of the Kingdom of Poland from 1815 to 1863, though severely curtailed following the suppression of the November Uprising in 1831, brought about the establishment of the first organised state archival network in the Polish lands. In 1825, General Józef Zajączek (d. 1826), the viceroy of the Kingdom of Poland representing Tsar Alexander I, initiated the establishment of a network of archives of historical records. This initiative was officially sanctioned by Tsar Nicholas I in February 1826. The network eventually comprised eleven archives, which were organisationally subordinated to the civil tribunals of

10 Nowacki: *Archiwum Krajowe*, pp. 67–82; Dolinowski: *Gromadzenie*, pp. 259–282; Stoksik (ed.): Kamiński: *Zarys dziejów*, pp. 48–70.

11 From 1868 to 1914, the Galician National Department served as the publisher of the series, encompassing volumes 1 to 22. The final three volumes were published after World War I by the Scientific Society of Lviv.

12 For further insights into the origins of the Lviv State Archive and its fonds, refer to Winiarz: *Z dziejów*, pp. 55–68, 145–163; Idem: *Archiwum*.

the 1st instance.¹³ The primary objective behind the establishment of these archives was to preserve documentation, particularly books, dating from the Old Polish period and produced by local authorities, including land courts, county courts and offices. Over time, documentation from certain cities in the Kingdom of Poland from the Old Polish era also found its way into the fonds of these archives. These archives primarily served historical purposes, with their two-person staff mainly involved in record-keeping and conservation work, with minimal emphasis on developing fonds. The network of archives of historical records remained in operation until 1880 when it was dissolved by a resolution of the Russian State Council. With the exception of the Archives of Historical Records in Lublin, whose fonds were transferred to Vilnius, and the fonds of the Archives of Historical Records in the Cracow province, previously housed in Kielce but transferred to Austrian authorities in Cracow in 1854, the fonds of the remaining archives were transported to and deposited in the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw.¹⁴

To a certain extent, the archives in Kiev, Vilnius, and Vitebsk, established by a decree of Tsar Nicholas I in 1852, were also Polish in character. All bore a similar name – the Central Archives of Historical Record Books. Furthermore, they were all situated in territories of the former Commonwealth, which were directly annexed by Russia after the third partition. The purpose behind their establishment was to centralise and safeguard archival fonds from courts and city halls operating in the region during both the Commonwealth era and the Partition period. With the exception of the Vitebsk archive, which was disbanded in 1903 and its fonds transferred to the archive in Vilnius, the other two archives survived until the outbreak of World War I. The Polish character of these archives was primarily evidenced by their fonds. The Vilnius archive housed the largest and most diverse assortment, encompassing not only official archives but also materials from local government bodies, churches, monasteries, and private sources. Notably, until 1865, the majority of the staff at the Vilnius archive were Polish. However, following the suppression of the January Uprising, a rapid process of Russification of the staff ensued, similar to the developments observed in the Vitebsk and Kiev archives previously.¹⁵

13 Such archives were established in Kalisz, Kielce, Lublin, Łomża, Piotrków, Płock, Radom, Siedlce, Sieradz, Warsaw. Notably, Kielce had two archives, one for the Kielce province and another for the Cracow province, with the authorities of the latter based in Kielce. It's important to note that Cracow, as per the provisions of the Congress of Vienna, held the status of a Free City from 1815.

14 For a comprehensive overview of the history of the archives of historical records network, refer to Mencil: *Z dziejów*, pp. 37–63; Tomczak: *Zarys dziejów*, pp. 270–274.

15 Tomczak: *Zarys dziejów*, pp. 279–281. For an overview of the Vilnius archive, refer to Mienicki: *Archiwum*.

In the Polish territories of the Prussian partition, the Prussian authorities established two historical state archives (*Staatsarchiv*), which compiled fonds from various sources spanning the Commonwealth era to the partition period. Regarding the latter, these archives primarily contained records from state administrative offices during the Duchy of Warsaw and Prussian administration. The first archive to be founded was the State Archive in Poznań in 1869, followed much later by the archive in Gdańsk in 1901.¹⁶ Unlike the archives established in the Austrian and Russian partitions, both Prussian archives were predominantly staffed by German historians and archivists. Exceptions to this norm included individuals such as Józef Lekszycki, who worked at the Poznań archive, and Józef Paczkowski, who served as the head of the Polish state archival service from 1919 to 1926 and was associated with the Gdańsk archive for several years.¹⁷

Libraries

During the partition period, the private and social initiatives of the cultural and economic elite of Polish society played an exceptionally important role in securing documentation reflecting the activities of Polish society. These initiatives aimed to collect, preserve, and sometimes develop and make available various types of collections with library, museum, and archival materials. Libraries were particularly crucial for gathering record documentation. Besides amassing book collections, they frequently acquired archival manuscripts or record documentation. Typically, both public and private libraries collected documentation dating back to the Old Polish period, consisting mostly of privately owned records belonging to individuals and families. It is worth noting that in the old Polish law-archival tradition, there was often no clear distinction between private and public records. Archive materials associated with various public offices and functions often found their way into the private archives of the individuals who held them. Additionally, records of public provenance were incorporated into library collections. This phenomenon even extended to the records of the royal chancellery.¹⁸

The tradition of establishing library fonds in the Polish lands was firmly rooted by the end of the 18th century. Notably, Poland saw the establishment of its first public library as early as the mid-18th century, known as the Załuski Library, located in Warsaw. Established by the brothers Andrew Stanisław (d. 1758) and Józef Andrzej (d. 1774) Załuski, in 1747, the collections were opened to the public

16 Kupczyński: *Organizacja*, pp. 87–102.

17 Tomczak: *Zarys dziejów*, pp. 281–286; Radtke: *Dzieje*, pp. 25–50.

18 For more on the subject, refer to Syta: *Akta kancelarii*, pp. 187–204.

in 1747. After the demise of the founders, the library was officially declared the National Library in 1780. By the close of the 18th century, it had amassed an extensive collection of prints, library manuscripts, and archives. Regrettably, in 1794, following the collapse of the Kościuszko Uprising and the capture of Warsaw by the Russian army, its collection was dispersed during transportation to St. Petersburg. However, part of its collection was returned to Poland after the conclusion of World War I.¹⁹

The Zamoyski family, bearing the Jelita coat of arms, stood among the social elites of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the late 16th century. The family's prominence was established by Jan Zamoyski (d. 1605), who held the esteemed positions of Grand Chancellor of the Crown and Grand Crown Hetman. He laid the foundation of the Zamoyski Family Entail (*Ordynacja Zamoyska*), which remained under the family's stewardship until World War II. Its nucleus was Zamość, situated within the Austrian partition after the third partition of Poland and incorporated into the Kingdom of Poland from 1815. Jan Zamoyski can be credited as the instigator of the library and archival collection within the *Ordynacja* lineage of the Zamoyski family. Around the turn of the 19th century, the 12th principal heir (*Ordynat*) of the Zamość estates, Stanisław Kostka Zamoyski (d. 1856) transferred the library and the historical portion of the archival fonds – primarily family records – from Zamość to the so-called Blue Palace in Warsaw. Subsequently, the Zamoyski Foundation Library was established there. Within a short period, the archival fonds began to expand rapidly, encompassing archives with the character of 'ancient' souvenirs, comprising records of various provenance originating from the Polish lands dating back to the Middle Ages. Regarding the archival materials of state provenance amassed in the archives of the *Ordynacja* lineage of the Zamoyski family, the majority are associated with the former Crown Archive, which preserved state privileges and diplomatic correspondence of the royal court. It is undeniable that the oldest among them were incorporated into the Zamoyski Archives through the efforts of Jan Zamoyski (d. 1605), the Chancellor and Grand Crown Hetman, and his son Thomas, who served as the Grand Chancellor of the Crown (d. 1638).²⁰ In 1811, the library and manuscript collections previously amassed by the *Ordynacja* lineages of the family from Zamość and Klemensów, among other locations, were brought together within the Blue Palace in Warsaw, owned by Stanisław Kostka Zamoyski. A substantial portion of this collection comprised the fonds of the Zamoyski Academy, which was disbanded in 1784. These collections were made accessible to the public in 1868, with the inauguration of a newly constructed pavilion within the palace complex. In addition to printed and manuscript books,

19 For more on the Załuski Library, refer to Kozłowski: *Szkice*.

20 Zielińska: *Zbiory archiwalne ordynatów*, p. 174.

the library's fonds included a vast array of archived materials pertaining to the Zamoyski family, associated families, as well as records of public provenance – state, church, and municipal. The archival fonds of the Zamoyski Foundation Library encompassed records from dissolved monasteries, city registers, records from various institutions and public offices, personal archives of individuals from cultural and scientific spheres, and collections from various families. Tragically, during World War II, these invaluable collections suffered extensive destruction.²¹ However, remnants from the Zamoyski Foundation Library collection that have endured to this day are preserved in the National Library in Warsaw (comprising books and literary manuscripts) and the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw.²²

In 1844, Wincenty Krasieński (d. 1858) established the Krasieński Library as part of the Opinogóra Entail (*Ordynacja Opinogórska*). Initially, the library's collection was housed at Krasieński's estate in Złoty Potok near Częstochowa. After his passing, the collection was relocated to the Czapski Palace in Warsaw. The addition of the collection from the so-called Polish Museum, curated by the renowned art collector, bibliophile, and patron of Polish science and art, Konstanty Świdziński (d. 1855), in 1860 significantly augmented the Krasieński Library's collection. Among the archives housed in the Krasieński Library were fragments from the Chodkiewicz, Krasieński, Lubomirski, Potocki, and Radziwiłł archives.²³

During the latter half of the 19th century, another notable private library emerged in Warsaw, which boasted a substantial archive that was eventually made accessible to the public. Established by Alexander Przedziecki (d. 1871), a landowner, medievalist, and publisher of historical sources, this library originated in 1842 at his estate in Czarny Ostrów, located in Podolia within the Russian partition. In the early 1850s, Przedziecki transferred the collection to Warsaw, where it flourished under his son Konstanty (d. 1897) following his father's demise. Comprising over 22,000 volumes, the library's collection included a significant amount of archival material. Noteworthy collections encompassed archival materials from the Przedziecki and Tyzenhaus families, fragments from the Kościuszko and Sobieski family archives, documentation pertaining to Polish military units serving alongside Napoleon, and parchment documents. Regrettably, during World War II, the Przedziecki Library's collection fell victim to destruction.²⁴ However, the archives in the collections of the

21 Horodyski: *Zarys dziejów*, pp. 259–341.

22 For an inventory of the fonds from the Zamoyski Archives refer to Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (further: AGAD): *Archiwum Zamoyskich*.

23 Maleczyńska: *Książki i biblioteki*, pp. 98–99; Dachter: *Konstanty Świdziński*, pp. 17–24.

24 Sapała: *Biblioteka Przedzieckich*, pp. 273–318.

Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw have endured as part of two archival fonds – the Przewdziecki Archives and the Tyzenhaus Archives.²⁵

The aforementioned libraries include the Czartoryski Library, which remains extant to this day. Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski (d. 1823), general starost of Podolia, and his wife Izabela, née Flemming (d. 1835) are rightfully regarded as its founders. Following the passing of Adam's father, August Alexander, voivode of Ruthenia, in 1784, the couple relocated to Puławy, where they established a politically and culturally vibrant centre. Its societal influence during that era could be likened to the royal court of Stanisław August Poniatowski. Hence, the Puławy residence earned the sobriquet 'Polish Athens' during this period. Adam and Izabela actively engaged in collecting various forms of historical memorabilia, not only pertaining to their own families but also of national significance. In the early 19th century, Puławy witnessed the establishment of the first museum in the Polish lands, spearheaded by Izabela Czartoryska. Alongside museum collections, the Czartoryskis assembled library holdings and archival materials, of both private and public provenance. The collection received a significant boost with the addition of the library amassed by the art collector and bibliophile Tadeusz Czacki (d. 1813) housed in Poryck, Volhynia, following his demise. Fearing Tsarist reprisal due to his involvement in the November Uprising, Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (d. 1861) safeguarded the Puławy collection from potential confiscation and destruction by relocating it to Sieniawa. From there, the library was transported to Paris, where Adam's son Władysław (d. 1894) resided. Ultimately, the Czartoryski collection found its permanent home in Cracow, situated within the borders of Galicia, which enjoyed considerable autonomy from the Austrian authorities at that time. The exceptional value of the collection amassed by the Czartoryskis was underscored in a letter from the Cracow Academy of Learning to Władysław Czartoryski in 1874, describing it as "a compilation of manuscripts and historical artefacts of unparalleled value within Polish borders, holding immense potential for the endeavours of the Historical Commission and, consequently, the scholarly exploration of Polish history."²⁶ The Czartoryski Library in Cracow commenced its operations in 1876.²⁷ Among the most precious archival materials housed in the Czartoryski Library are the collections of family archives (e.g., those of the Chodkiewicz, Czartoryski, Denhoff, Lubomirski, and Sieniawski families), state and municipal administrative offices, religious institutions, and personal archives.²⁸ Fortunately, its collections, alongside other

25 For an Inventory of the Przewdziecki Archives, refer to AGAD: *Archiwum Przewdzieckich*; for the Inventory of the Tyzenhaus Archives, refer to *ibid.*: *Archiwum Tyzenhausów*.

26 Rederowa: *Materiały*, p. 14.

27 Maleczyńska: *Książki i biblioteki*, pp. 94–96.

28 Inventories and catalogues of the Czartoryski Library are available online, see: *Inwentarze i katalogi*.

holdings of the Czartoryski Dukes, remained intact during World War II and are currently preserved in Cracow within one of the branches of the National Museum in Cracow.

In 1817, with the approval of the Austrian authorities, the Ossoliński National Institute was established in Lviv, founded by Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński (d. 1826), a bibliophile, writer, historian, researcher, a man of many talents and interests, and an ardent patriot. Long before the Institute's establishment, Ossoliński harboured the idea of creating an institution that would serve the Polish people by preserving their shared heritage and fostering patriotic sentiments. The Institute comprised a library, known as the Ossolineum, a publishing house, and, formally from 1823, the Lubomirski Museum of Przeworsk, later relocated to Lviv. Throughout the 19th century, until the end of World War I, the Ossolineum amassed not only an extensive book collection but also a substantial archive of records spanning from the Middle Ages to modern times. It housed records of diverse provenance, contributing significantly to its richness and diversity. The Ossoliński National Institute emerged as a vibrant scientific hub, attracting prominent figures from Polish science and culture.²⁹ Its own publishing house facilitated the dissemination of information about the Institute's collections and research findings across various scientific disciplines.

In the Prussian partition of Poland, two prominent figures, Edward Raczyński and Tytus Działyński, played pivotal roles in amassing some of the most valuable library and manuscript collections during the 19th century. Both belonged to the affluent stratum of the Greater Poland landed gentry and shared a fervent passion for science and book collecting. Edward Raczyński (d. 1845), a prolific publisher of historical sources and a patron of science, accumulated a vast library collection at his ancestral residence, Rogalin, along with numerous archival manuscripts and privileges, including many parchment documents of monastic origin. In 1829, Raczyński founded a public library in Poznań, showcasing his collection of approximately 13,000 volumes.³⁰ The establishment of Tytus Działyński's library likely dates back to the late 1820s, when he inherited a castle in Kórnik, near Poznań, and its surrounding landed estates as part of the family estate division. Like Edward Raczyński, Działyński engaged in publishing historical sources based on his extensive collections. Upon the heirless passing of Tytus's son, Jan Kanty Działyński (d. 1880), who continued his father's legacy, Władysław Zamoyski assumed ownership of Kórnik and its library. In 1924, as part of the 'Zakłady Kórnickie' Foundation, Zamoyski generously donated the amassed collections in Kórnik to the Polish state.³¹

29 Trzynadlowski: *Zakład Narodowy*.

30 Kieniewicz: *Raczyński*, pp. 29–32; Kosman et al.: *Tytus Działyński*, pp. 38–39.

31 Maleczyńska: *Książki i biblioteki*, pp. 101–107; Kosman et al.: *Tytus Działyński*.

Family Archives and Collections

During the stateless period of Poland, private archives, particularly those established by noble families and descendants of the elite of the former Commonwealth, played a vital role in collecting and preserving archival materials that documented various facets of their activities. Until the late 18th century, prior to the ultimate collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, numerous archives were maintained by both the magnate and middle-class nobility, numbering in the dozens, if not hundreds.³² However, the organisation, content, and functions of these archives underwent significant changes during the 19th and early 20th centuries.³³ Studies by scholars such as Edward Chwalewik and Karol Buczek provide insights into the abundance of family and estate archives in the Polish territories immediately following the conclusion of World War I.³⁴ It is noteworthy that such archives were not limited to Polish lands during the partition period; families emigrating from Poland, whether voluntarily or forcibly, often transported various collections – comprising museum artefacts, library holdings, and archival materials – from their ancestral estates to new residences in Western European countries.³⁵

While family and estate archives were inherently private, the significant role played by their custodians in the social life of both the Commonwealth and the partitioned era imbues their collections with national significance. Consequently, these resources should be regarded as repositories of both national heritage and crucial documentation of the social, political, economic, and cultural endeavours of the Polish people. It is noteworthy that the public nature of private archives was acknowledged also during the Commonwealth era. In addition to preserving archival materials pertaining to their family histories, the creators and proprietors of family archives often actively sought out and collected a wide array of archival materials from various sources, encompassing diverse aspects of the past. Moreover, it is important to recognise that family archives not only housed historical materials but also documentation that shed light on the activities of the individuals behind these collections. Many of these individuals held prominent positions in the administration of the partitioned

32 The subject of family archives in the Old Polish period has been extensively explored in two monographs: Nowosad: *Archiwa*; Syta: *Archiwa*.

33 Syta: *Magnates*.

34 Chwalewik: *Zbiory polskie*; Buczek: *Nauka polska*, 7. 1927, pp. 1–97; Idem: *Nauka polska*, 12. 1930, pp. 1–85.

35 Examples include the Puławy collections of the Czartoryski family taken to Paris, the Branicki family collections in Montresor, France, or the Plater family collections in Rapperswil, Switzerland.

state and played significant roles in public life, further enhancing the value and importance of these archives.

Among the extensive array of family and estate archives in the Polish lands during the partition period, the most notable collections were amassed by families with a long-standing tradition of archival stewardship dating back to the pre-partition era. Key examples include the Branicki family of the Korczak coat of arms, the Chodkiewicz family of Młynów, the Czartoryski family, the Potocki family, the Radziwiłł family, the Tarnowskis, and the Zamoyskis. This list could certainly be expanded to encompass numerous other families of similar significance. The archival holdings of these families often encompassed a broad spectrum of materials, including records related to legal affairs, property management, economic activities, cultural pursuits, and personal/family matters, as well as involvement in political affairs. The practice of preserving documentation of both public and state significance within private archives, as observed in the Old Polish period, was a widespread phenomenon. Among the most remarkable instances of private archives housing materials of state provenance at the highest level are the Radziwiłł archives of Nyasvizh and the Zamoyski Family Entail Archives. In the case of the Radziwiłł archives, the authority to safeguard public records, primarily pertaining to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was formally recognised by an act of the Commonwealth Sejm in 1768.³⁶

The Radziwiłłs, being a large and prominent family, possessed multiple archives dating back to the Old Polish period. Among these, the most valuable documentation was amassed in Nyasvizh,³⁷ which had assumed the character of a collective family archive as early as the 18th century. However, the fate of the Nyasvizh archive in the latter half of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century was marked by complexity and drama. Its situation began to stabilise in the mid-19th century. During this period, the resources of the Radziwiłł archives were augmented by various means, including the incorporation of documentation from nearby monasteries dissolved by the tsarist authorities, as well as materials of private provenance, both personal and familial. However, there were also setbacks; a significant portion of the Nyasvizh archival material was transferred to the Wittgenstein family, who were connected to the owners of Nyasvizh, as a consequence of estate divisions in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Furthermore, it's noteworthy that from the 1860s onwards, the archive's holdings attracted the attention of researchers, primarily historians, from Poland, Russia, and other countries.³⁸ The diversity of materials preserved in Nyasvizh is difficult

36 Mikulski: *Dokumenty*, p. 76. On the exceptional importance of the collection of Warsaw Radziwiłł Archive as a repository of sources for the history of the former Commonwealth see Stepniak: *Archiwum*, pp. 5–9.

37 Nyasvizh now lies within the borders of the Republic of Belarus, in the Minsk region.

38 Jankowski: *Burzliwe losy*, pp. 35–68; Idem: *Archiwum Radziwiłłów*, pp. 131–168.

to overstate. Currently held in the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, the fonds of the so-called Warsaw Radziwiłł Archive – under which name the Nyasvizh archive is now recognised – is the second largest among family and estate archives in Polish archives, comprising more than 320 linear meters of archival materials.³⁹

Representatives of the Branicki family of Korczak coat of arms, whose legacy began with Franciszek Ksawery Branicki (d. 1819) a significant figure contributing to the downfall of the Commonwealth in the late 18th century, were prominent members of the landed and aristocratic elite in the Polish territories during the Partitions. They were responsible for establishing several archives situated in the regions of the Russian and Austrian partitions. A notably valuable library and archival collection was amassed in a palace in Sucha, situated south of Cracow in the Austrian partition, by Aleksander Branicki (d. 1877), a dedicated collector and traveller. His efforts were continued by his son Władysław (d. 1914). Their archival collection primarily comprised acquisitions obtained through purchases. These acquisitions originated from private collectors and antiquarians, including the collections of Andrzej Koźmian, Hipolit Skimborowicz, and Adam Mieleszko-Maliszkiwicz. During the interwar period, the collection from Sucha was under the ownership of the Tarnowski family. Unfortunately, the collection from Sucha was dispersed during World War II.⁴⁰ The largest portion of the archival materials is now stored in the holdings of the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw.⁴¹

A diverse archival collection was assembled by the Chodkiewicz family at their estate in Młynów, Volhynia, during the partition period. The creators of this collection were Jan Mikołaj Chodkiewicz (d. 1781) and his wife Ludwika, née Rzewuska (d. 1816). In Młynów, they managed to gather extensive fragments of archival resources dating back to the Chodkiewicz family's illustrious history in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The family archive saw significant enrichment with library, archival, and museum collections under the stewardship of their son, Alexander Chodkiewicz (d. 1838), a military officer, politician, collector, chemist. His deep interest in military affairs is evidenced by the substantial number of archival materials he amassed on the subject.⁴² The Chodkiewicz family preserved their collection in Młynów until the conclusion of World War I. Subsequently, with the consent of Mieczysław Chodkiewicz (d. 1933), the archives were relocated to Cracow. The archival materials from their holdings are

39 For an inventory of the fonds refer to AGAD: *Archiwum Warszawskie Radziwiłłów*.

40 Małysiak: *Biblioteka*.

41 For an inventory of the Branicki Collection from Sucha refer to AGAD: *Zbiór Branickich z Suchej*.

42 Peleszowa: *Zbiór akt wojskowych*, pp. 127–138.

presently housed at the National Archives in Cracow and the Czartoryski Library in Cracow.⁴³

During the partition period, members of the Potocki family, bearing the Silver Pilawa coat of arms, were notably active in gathering archival materials. They possessed several substantial archives situated in Krzeszowice, Łańcut, Radzyń, Roś, Tulczyn, and Wilanów.⁴⁴ The archive located in Krzeszowice, near Cracow, was established by Arthur Potocki (d. 1832), with subsequent owners being Arthur's son Adam (d. 1872) and grandson Andrzej (d. 1914) until the outbreak of World War I. The Potocki archives of the Krzeszowice line primarily amassed archives pertaining to its own members. A significant portion of this collection results from the collecting efforts of Andrzej Potocki and his wife, Katarzyna née Branicka (d. 1907).⁴⁵ The Potocki archive of Łańcut essentially continued the archive of previous owners of the landed estates, with Łańcut being a principal centre among them. The first Potocki family member to inherit these estates and properties was Alfred (d. 1862), brother of Arthur who founded the Krzeszowice line. Today, the collection of the Łańcut archive, preserved in the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, primarily comprises archives of a legal, property, financial, and economic nature, reflecting the legal and economic relations within the Łańcut Family Entail.⁴⁶ The most valuable materials were relocated in 1944 by the last principal heir, Alfred Potocki (d. 1958) to Vienna.⁴⁷ Another significant location where the Potocki family amassed archival materials in the 19th century was Wilanów, near Warsaw. At the end of the 18th century, Stanisław Kostka Potocki (d. 1821), a politician, writer, publisher, art historian and collector, became its owner. In 1805, he opened the collections of art and national memorabilia to the public, which had been gathered by the Lubomirski family, the previous owners of Wilanów. Aside from archival materials concerning the management of the landed estates and documentation of Potocki family members, the Wilanów archive also accumulated materials related to their collection of historical memorabilia. Stanisław Kostka Potocki initiated the collection of materials of private and public provenance. This endeavour was continued by his wife, Alexandra, née Lubomirska (d. 1831), and their only son, Alexander Stanisław Potocki (d. 1845). A significant portion of their collection, preserved to

43 Eadem: *Archiwum Młynowskie Chodkiewiczów*, pp. 115–128. For an inventory of the Chodkiewicz Archive in Młynów refer to Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie (further: ANK): *Archiwum Chodkiewiczów w Młynowie*.

44 The history and collections of the Potocki archives were the subject of the 8th volume of the journal *Miscellanea Historico-Archivistica*, published in 1997.

45 Palarczykowa: *Dzieje Archiwum Potockich z Krzeszowic*, pp. 93–117. For an inventory of the Krzeszowice Potocki Archive, refer to ANK: *Archiwum Potockich z Krzeszowic*.

46 For an inventory of the holdings of Łańcut Potocki Archive of about 79 linear metres in volume, refer to AGAD: *Archiwum Potockich w Łańcucie*.

47 Zawadzki: *Zarys historii*, pp. 25–33.

this day, is now housed in the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw under the name of the Potocki Public Archives.⁴⁸ Following the heirless death of Alexander's son, August (d. 1867) Wilanów remained in the hands of his wife Alexandra née Potocka for the rest of her life (d. 1892). After her passing, Wilanów was inherited by Ksawery Branicki, who was related to her (d. 1926), and subsequently by his son Adam (d. 1947). The holdings of the Wilanów archive underwent significant changes during the 19th century. This was, on the one hand, due to the exchange of archival materials between the Potocki and Branicki families, as well as the collection endeavours of Ksawery Branicki's wife, Anna of the Krzeszowice line of the Potocki family (d. 1953), along with her son Adam Branicki and his wife Beata (d. 1988). Consequently, the holdings of the Wilanów archive included the Potocki archives of Radzyń and Roś. Currently, most of the surviving archival materials from the Wilanów archive are stored in the holdings of the Central Archives of Historical Records.⁴⁹ The Potocki Archive in Tulczyn, Podolia, was initiated by Józef Potocki (d. 1722). Probably the largest section of this archive concerned Stanisław Szczęsny Potocki (d. 1805), one of the creators of the Third Partition of Poland, and his immediate family. The most valuable materials from the holdings of this archive were relocated to Paris in 1860 by Mieczysław Potocki (d. 1878). Today, the remnants of the Tulczyn archive are stored at the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Lviv.⁵⁰

The Tarnowski Archive, gathered in Dzików near Tarnobrzeg, which was situated in Galicia during the Partitions, also belongs to the group of exceptionally valuable holdings. The Tarnowski family was among the elite of Polish society from the late Middle Ages. As with other families, they fragmented over time into different lines and branches. The creator of the archives of the Dzików line of the Tarnowski family was Jan Feliks Tarnowski (d. 1842), who commenced assembling a library, a collection of paintings and other works of art, as well as archival materials in the palace there. Naturally, the foundation for his collecting activities was laid by the collections of Dzików's previous owners. The fact that Jan Feliks held a public office facilitated the accumulation of a large group of records of state provenance in his archives, dating back to the times of the Duchy of Warsaw and the Kingdom of Poland. He augmented the archival collection with records of the Małachowski and Humiecki families, which played significant roles in the 18th century, along with manuscripts from the era of Stanisław August Poniatowski. In addition to the historical archive, the Tarnowskis amassed archives of an economic, legal, and property nature documenting the management of the Tarnowski family's extensive estates. The Tarnowskis' collection in Dzików re-

48 For an inventory of this archival fund, refer to AGAD: *Archiwum Publiczne Potockich*.

49 On the holdings and history of the Wilanów collection, see Semkowicz: *Przewodnik*.

50 Szowkowskyj: *Dzieje*, pp. 105–111.

mained in their possession until World War II.⁵¹ Presently, the holdings from the Dzików archive are preserved at the National Archives in Cracow.⁵²

Private Collectors

Private collectors played a pivotal role in documenting the history of the Polish nation and state during the partition period. Typically, their interests extended beyond mere records to encompass various types of historical sources. Collecting became widespread among individuals driven by personal interest, scientific pursuits, prestige, or purely hobbyistic motivations. Additionally, some collectors sought collectibles from the past for purely financial gain. Among the vast array of collectors during the 19th and early 20th centuries, notable figures stand out whose collections have endured to the present day, comprising exceptionally valuable and extensive holdings. This distinguished group includes Julian and Kazimierz Bartoszewicz, Aleksander Czołowski, Zygmunt Gloger, as well as the previously mentioned Tadeusz Czacki and Konstanty Świdziński.

The collection of Julian and Kazimierz Bartoszewicz, now housed at the State Archive in Łódź under the collection named the Bartoszewicz Family Archive, primarily reflects the collecting endeavours of two members of this family: historian and editor Julian (d. 1870), and his son Kazimierz (d. 1930) – a publicist, literary critic, editor, publisher and bookseller. Originally assembled in Warsaw and later in Cracow, their collection was eventually bequeathed by the Bartoszewicz family to the city of Łódź following the conclusion of WWI. In addition to a wealth of artworks, historical artefacts, and a library, the Bartoszewicz family amassed a substantial archive comprising 730 record units. Among these are documents of Polish kings, privileges granted to ecclesiastical institutions, materials related to individuals holding various offices, correspondence, and newspapers dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. Furthermore, the Bartoszewicz Archive contains documentation portraying the life and active social and political engagements of the family members during the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries.⁵³

51 Marczak: *Zbiory archiwalne*, pp. 1–19.

52 For an inventory of the holdings of the Tarnowski Archives from Dzików refer to ANK: *Archiwum Tarnowskich z Dzikowa*.

53 Ugorowicz: *Z Krakowa do Łodzi*, pp. 185–204. For an inventory of the Bartoszewicz Archive refer to Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi: *Archiwum rodziny Bartoszewiczów*.

The creator of a highly significant collection of archival materials concerning the history of the Polish nation and state was Alexander Czołowski (d. 1944)⁵⁴. Throughout his life, he was closely associated with Lviv, where he began working at the Archives of Historical Records of the City of Lviv in 1891, assuming the role of director for an extended period. He also served as the director of Lviv Historical Museum, established in 1905. Engaged extensively in scientific and social endeavours, he amassed a vast collection of archival materials, which are now dispersed among several institutions in Poland (Warsaw, Wrocław) and Ukraine (Lviv). In addition to immensely valuable materials, Czołowski's collection includes royal privileges, records of public authorities from the Old Polish and partition periods, documents from municipal and rural governments, church institutions, and archives from magnate and noble families (such as the Mniszech, Rzewuski, and Sobieski families). Additionally, it comprises legacies and materials gathered by various historians, genealogists, and heraldists. The largest portion of Czołowski's archival collection is housed in the holdings of the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, comprising over ten linear meters of records.

One of the most intriguing 19th-century private collections of archival materials related to Polish history was assembled by Zygmunt Gloger (d. 1910). His interests spanned history, archaeology, ethnography, and regional studies. He curated his diverse collections at his estate in Jeżewo near Tykocin in Podlasie. Prior to his passing, he allocated them to several Polish social institutions, including a numismatic collection and archives bestowed upon the National Museum in Cracow. Consequently, they are now housed within the holdings of the National Archives in Cracow under the name Zygmunt Gloger Collection. This collection comprises nearly nine linear meters of archival materials spanning from the 16th to the 20th centuries. Primarily, these materials of public and private provenance pertain to the Podlasie region, encompassing family and personal records as well as excerpts from official records of the Old Polish period.⁵⁵

Archives, Libraries and Collections of Public Institutions

When discussing the documentation activities of Poles during the partition period, one must also consider the institutions of public life. These entities not only generated records throughout the 19th century but also collected documents

54 Bieńkowski: *Aleksander Czołowski*, pp. 47–54; Zielińska: *Zbiór archiwalny*, pp. 37–60. For an inventory of Alexander Czołowski's collection refer to AGAD: *Zbiór Aleksandra Czołowskiego*.

55 Pawlata et al.: *Zygmunt Gloger*, pp. 5–17. For an inventory of Zbigniew Gloger's collection refer to ANK: *Zbiór Zygmunta Glogera*.

of historical significance. The first significant group of such institutions comprised city halls. In the Prussian and Russian partitions, they were often compelled to relinquish their older archives dating back to the Old Polish period to the state archives. However, the situation was notably better for cities in Galicia. Here, throughout the 19th century, more than a dozen municipal archives of historical records were established, with varying degrees of organisation. Among the best-organised archives of this kind were the Archives of Historical Records in Cracow, the Archives of Historical Records in Lviv, and the Archives of Historical Records in Przemyśl.⁵⁶

The second group of institutions involved in collecting documentation on the history of Poland and Poles comprised scientific societies and educational institutions, particularly universities. The activity of libraries within scientific societies in the Polish lands commenced with the establishment of the library of the Society of Friends of Learning in Warsaw in 1800. However, its operations were terminated by the Russian authorities in 1832. Between 1821 and 1898, a library at the Scientific Society of Płock was active. Additionally, the collection of the Library of the Academy of Learning in Cracow is noteworthy; it operated from 1856 at the Scientific Society of Cracow and from 1873 at the Polish Academy of Learning.⁵⁷ The library of the Society of Sciences in Poznań commenced operations in 1857, while the library of the Society of Friends of Learning in Przemyśl began operating in 1909.⁵⁸ Higher education institutions also maintained their own libraries, often housing valuable manuscript and archival collections. The oldest among them was the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow, dating back to the early 14th century. Much younger was the library of Lviv University, which was up and running in the 1830s. The University of Warsaw Library had a tumultuous history from its inception in the first decade of the 19th century, which was largely due to the political situation in the Kingdom of Poland. The library of Vilnius University endured until the end of its existence in 1832, after which its collection was dispersed.⁵⁹

Concluding the examination of public institutions that collected documentation during the partition period in the Polish lands, it is essential to mention the archives and libraries of religious institutions. Many of these institutions faced repression by the partitioning authorities after the Uprisings, as part of the processes of Russification and Germanisation of the inhabitants of Polish lands. Despite these challenges, the extensive administrative structure of the Roman Catholic, Uniate, and Orthodox Church resulted in the establishment of nu-

56 Tomczak: *Zarys dziejów*, pp. 291–297.

57 Rederowa et al.: *Zarys dziejów*, pp. 7–46.

58 Maleczyńska: *Książki i biblioteki*, pp. 109–112.

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 61–81.

merous church archival collections. Throughout the 19th century, supreme authorities endeavoured to safeguard these collections from destruction and dispersal.⁶⁰

Conclusion

The preceding general overview of documentation work performed by Poles during the partition period vividly illustrates the widespread commitment to preserving national tradition and fostering a sense of national unity across the Polish lands. Alongside the archival materials housed in public and state archives and libraries, substantial collections were amassed by private collectors. Particularly remarkable were the efforts of the Polish elite, notably the landed gentry, who often continued the archival and collection pursuits initiated by their ancestors during the Old Polish period. Importantly, these collections, gathered through various means, were frequently maintained with professional care and made accessible to researchers interested in Polish national and state history. This dedication resulted in numerous scientific and popular publications, contributing to the cultivation of a conscious national identity among Poles as they entered the 20th century, ready to embark on the task of rebuilding their own state.

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60 Tomczak: *Zarys dziejów*, pp. 297–301; Maleczyńska: *Książki i biblioteki*, pp. 112–113.

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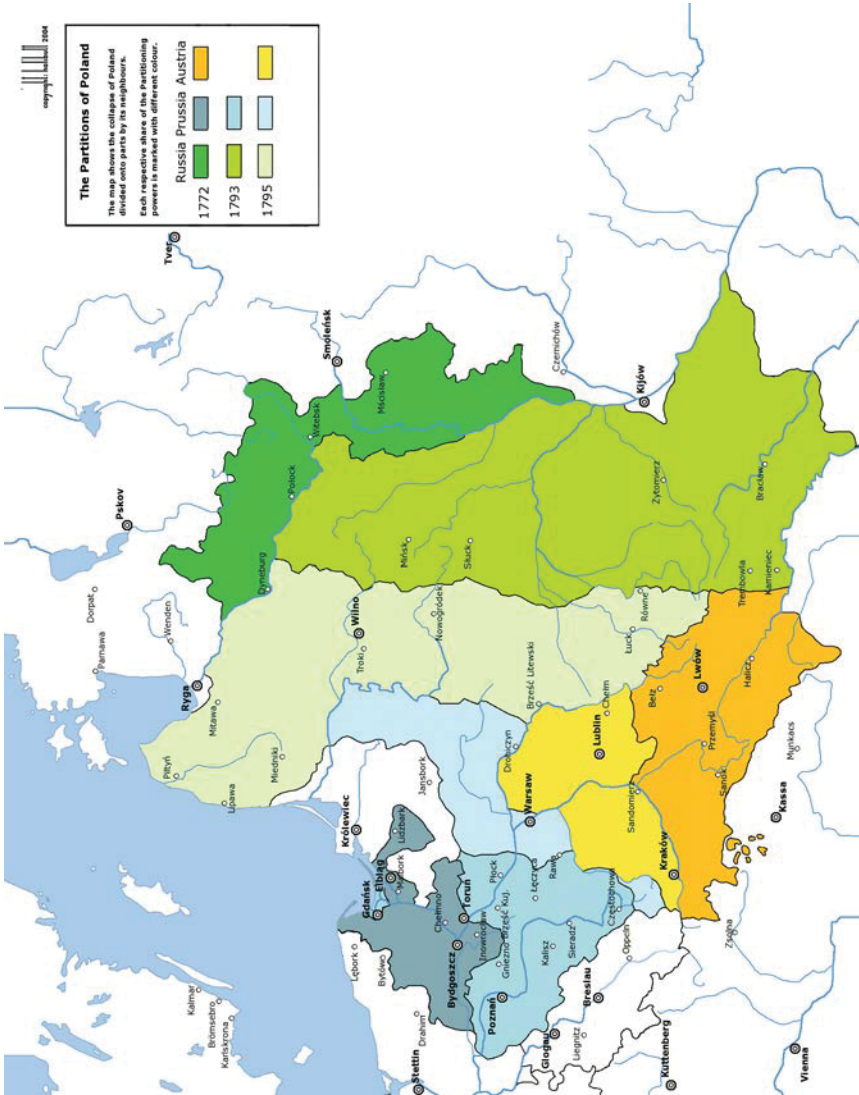


Fig. 1. Partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772, 1793 and 1795 (Wikimedia Commons).

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The Impact of Political Change on Access to Archival Materials After World War II: Based on Selected Countries in Central and Eastern Europe

Abstract

This chapter takes the examples of Belarus, the Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia), Poland and Ukraine to illustrate how access to archival materials changed as a result of the evolving political and international situation. The chapter was written on the basis of literature, legal acts and observations of archival reality made by the authors.

Keywords: accessibility; archives; Poland; Ukraine; Belarus; Czech Republic

Introduction

After World War II, Central and Eastern Europe found itself in the Soviet sphere of influence, and individual countries had a communist system imposed upon them or were directly incorporated into the Soviet Union. This brought many consequences for the functioning of the public sphere. The leading role of the Communist Party, democratic centralism, the operation of the security services and the often forced implementation of the new economic model and Marxist-Leninist ideology resulted in many civic restrictions, which also included access to public information. Importantly, the paranoia of constant threat and surveillance among the communist authorities deepened further as the Cold War progressed and relations with the countries of the global West periodically worsened.

However, a common political and economic model did not mean that all Eastern Bloc countries functioned in the same way or that they were copies of the

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Soviet ‘big brother’. Many differences existed between the individual countries of the bloc according to how the communist system was adapted to local conditions and traditions, as well as the temperament and resistance offered by the local population.

Furthermore, after the social and political upheaval of 1989–1991, which resulted in the fall of communism, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the Warsaw Pact, individual Central and Eastern European countries took different paths. The German Democratic Republic united with West Germany. Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and the Baltic states joined NATO and the European Union. However, Belarus and Ukraine long remained stuck between the Russian Federation and the ‘West’. Finally, in recent years, Belarus has been increasingly aligned with Russia; in 1998, the Union State of Russia and Belarus was established. Ukraine, however, headed down the path of democratisation, which finally took place after the Revolution of Dignity in 2014. The rift between the two countries has even increased as a result of the tragic experiences resulting from Russia’s aggression against Ukraine that began in 2014 and the outbreak of a full-scale war on 24 February 2022.

Archives – guardians of social memory – are one element of the public sphere and state administration. These repositories, although not commonly destroyed or falsified (as in Orwell’s 1984), sometimes contain information that is sensitive and/or inconvenient from the point of view of the authorities. On the other hand, the 20th century and almost the first quarter of the 21st century were a period when civil society underwent rapid development based on access to information, which is a key factor in promoting knowledge about the world, civic awareness and business decision-making. Therefore, it seems that the social changes and political upheaval that follows in their wake (also vice versa) influence how archives function, including the state and intra-institutional policy of access to archival materials.

This chapter takes the examples of four countries – Belarus, the Czech Republic, Poland and Ukraine – to present the changes that occurred in the provision of archives in Central and Eastern Europe after World War II. Individual countries serve as case studies, forming a basis upon which to draw conclusions regarding the changes that occurred in the discussed period in this part of the world. The selected countries include both former satellites of the Soviet Union (Poland, Czech Republic) and former Soviet republics (Belarus, Ukraine). These are also countries representing almost all development paths taken after the period of transformation in 1989–1991. The authors’ intention is to trace the impact of political changes on access to archival materials as comprehensively as possible, revealing all similarities and differences.

Belarus

The directions in which the Belarusian archives – as part of the Soviet archives – developed after World War II were mainly determined by shifts in their departmental affiliation, which was directly related to access to archival materials. In the years 1939–1960, the Belarusian archives were managed by the archival department of the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR). This resulted in the practical closure of the archives for non-departmental users. This state of affairs (before 1939, the Central Archive Department was supervised by the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the BSSR) was, in turn, closely related to the general situation of Soviet society in that period. On the one hand, archival materials constituted a documentary basis for “fighting the enemies of the people”. On the other hand, Soviet society since the late 1930s was based on the ideology of constant struggle against the enemies surrounding the country from the outside and the enemies lurking within. In this situation, all information about the activities of state bodies acquired a status ranging from ‘ministry only’ to ‘top secret’. Archival staff were also selected appropriately.

In this context, it was natural that changes in the subordination of the archival department coincided with the beginning of the ‘thaw’. On 1 March 1960, by decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Byelorussia (CPB) and the Council of Ministers of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (CM BSSR), the state archival service was excluded from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and directly subordinated to the CM BSSR, and in 1972 the Board of Archives at the CM BSSR was transformed into the Main Archives Administration of the Council of Ministers of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. The removal of archives from the structures of law enforcement agencies led to a certain liberalisation of accessibility (within quite narrow limits) for citizens. However, the general rules governing the operation of archives were established by the USSR. It is therefore difficult to find any local specificity in the Soviet period, especially since there were no separate regulations issued for the republic. However, one may focus on some aspects of Soviet regulations that influenced the operation of archives in the independent Republic of Belarus.

The 1983 Regulations on the Work of the State Archives of the USSR,¹ which was the pinnacle of the development of Soviet archival methodology, contained a special chapter entitled *The use and publication of documents from the USSR State Archival Resource*. Scientists who were citizens of the USSR could work on documents “on the basis of letters from organisations competent in the area of research”. Students of higher education institutions were required to provide

1 Vaganov (ed.): *Osnovnyye*, p. 240.

grounds in the form of “a letter from the university [...] justifying the need to work with archival documents”. However, citizens not representing any organisation only had access to documents “exceptionally, on the basis of a personal request”.²

Personal files were created for the researchers, and the reading room employees had the right to check the notes that the researchers had made about the files. Each archival case was allocated a special ‘sheet of use’ on which the researcher had to record the date, sheets, purpose and nature of inquiry regarding the archive material. Copying documents was permitted only “within the scope of the research area”. In practice, only “matters related to the topic of study” were submitted for reading.³ Therefore, research topics were controlled from two sides: the delegating organisation and the archive itself. At the same time, no more than 20 case files and five inventories could be in the hands of any one reader.

At the same time, a system of party archives operated in the USSR (and in the BSSR). Its pinnacle was the party archive of the Institute of Party History. Access to its documents was even more restricted. Until the 1970s, documents from such archives were available only to members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, while Komsomol members could also work with them. Secret documents were not made available, and whether or not other materials would be made available was decided by the secretaries of the Central Committee and regional committees at the request of the heads of the party archives. In the 1970s, non-party people began to be admitted to party archives, but only in individual cases and only on the basis of referrals from organisations and institutions. After completing the work, the director checked the researchers’ notes and, if necessary, could delete some of them. Publication – this also applies to articles with quotations from documents – could only take place with the knowledge and consent of the party organisation.

Independence in 1991 led to major but piecemeal changes in the organisation and operation of archives in Belarus. After the liquidation of the CPB and the Institute of Party History, its archives were transferred to the state archives. Initially, from 1992 to 1995, the Central Party Archive of the CPB continued to operate ‘independently’ in the former building of the Central Committee CPB, with its own director, retaining its own staff and forming, at the level of the General Directorate, a certain unity with the former central State Historical Archive of the BSSR, located in another area of Minsk (together they were called the National Archives of the Republic of Belarus, not to be confused with the institution that currently bears this name). During this period, some foreign

2 *Osnovnye pravila raboty*, Art. 7.1.4.3.

3 *Ibid.*, Art. 7.1.4.7.

researchers managed to work very fruitfully with the documents, which was reflected in a number of published monographs. In 1995, the ‘first’ National Archives of the Republic of Belarus were closed. The historical archive became an independent entity once more (as the National Historical Archive of Belarus), and the resources and staff of the former party archive were fully incorporated into the structure of the former Central State Archive of the October Revolution and Socialist Construction of the BSSR (from 1992 to 1995 – Belarusian State Archive), which it was physically moved to the premises of the party archive and was named the National Archives of the Republic of Belarus.

In 1994, a law was passed in the Republic of Belarus *On the National Archival Resource and Archives of the Republic of Belarus*.⁴ One of the chapters of the act was entitled *The Use of Documents from the National Resource of the Archive Republic of Belarus*. A number of general regulations regarding the publication of collections, the organisation of exhibitions, and more, roughly corresponded to Soviet standards. However, Article 28 (*Procedure for using documents of the national archival resource of the Republic of Belarus*) stated that “every citizen of the Republic of Belarus has the right to access archival documents in order to obtain complete and objective information”.⁵ The use of archival documents is prohibited or restricted in just three cases, when it might: a) damage the interests of the Republic of Belarus, b) harm the preservation of archival documents (in such a case a copy is issued instead of the original [this was a complete reversal of the Soviet approach whereby, on the contrary, the original was issued only if there were no copies]), or c) lead to a violation of the law. There was also a grace clause of 30 years regarding access to documents containing state, military, commercial or official secrets valid from the moment the documentation was created. The law did not provide for any other restrictions on accessibility.⁶

Yet, at the same time, in Belarus, due to the lack of its own regulations governing the state archives, those from the USSR were still officially in force (the first regulations for the state archives of the Republic of Belarus, which corresponded to the provisions of the legislation of the Republic of Belarus on citizens’ access to information, were only issued in 2006⁷), and people continued to work in the archives who were accustomed to the old procedures. These two factors

4 *Zakon Respubliki Belarus ot 6 oktyabrya 1994 goda*, p. 507.

5 Ibid.

6 The new act of 2011 slightly clarified and expanded this list. Restrictions are allowed if access to documents may involve disclosure of state secrets, commercial secrets and other legally protected secrets, harm the preservation of archival documents, violate the rights and legitimate interests of citizens, result in any other violation of the law. The maximum limitation of 30 years on access to secret documents has been lifted. There was a restriction of 75 years from the date of creation on access to documents containing information related to the personal secrecy of citizens, *Zakon Respubliki Belarus ot 25 noyabrya 2011 goda*, Art. 29.

7 Adamushko (ed.): *Pravila*, p. 256.

combined to create an interesting research scenario – the specifics of how Belarusian citizens made use of archival documents in this period (until 2006). One should also note that the effects are still felt today.

In fact, it turned out that some provisions of methodological documents pertaining to their application were contrary to the regulations of the new act. However, this does not mean that archivists opted in favour of the legal provisions. On the contrary, by establishing local, written and unwritten rules for how reading rooms should operated, Belarusian archives sometimes introduced even more restrictions than Soviet regulations suggested. For example, the National Archives of the Republic of Belarus (the one established in 1995) allowed students to work with documents only from their third year of study (out of five). At the historical archive (National Historical Archives of Belarus), the university referral also required, besides the research topic, the name and surname of the student's academic supervisor. At all archives, the 'research topic' was clearly interpreted as the topic of the particular course thesis, and the degree to which the ordered case files complied with this topic was established (at the historical archive) by the director or head of the reading room. The number of files issued was often less, and time permitted shorter, than Soviet regulations: ten units, one week of use, no opportunity to order new files until the old ones had been handed over. Characteristically, with the exception of 'course' restrictions for students, the above examples remain relevant even now. Common reasons for refusing to issue documents also included files being damaged or undergoing conservation, as well as formally declassified (and not only) cases in the documents of high value category, which automatically put them in the category of files to be issued only with the consent of the director.

Such practices of working with archive users stand as testimony to a fairly stable 'culture of prohibition' based on a certain 'presumption of guilt' regarding the potential user of archival documents. This represents an archival culture whereby archivists considered it their duty to prevent any potential negative consequences of working with archival documents, from damaging someone's good name to "falsifying historical truth". Particular cases of dishonest work perpetrated by document users that actually occurred could be passed down in the oral tradition of a given archive's collective as examples confirming the need for 'vigilance'. In turn, an attitude developed and persisted among archive users that archives are "places where secrets are kept" and this fuelled a desire to reveal them.⁸

The 'culture of prohibitions', clearly grounded in the times of People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs archive subordination, was quite effectively

8 For more on this phenomenon see Bialiauski et al.: *Archives*, pp. 43–55; Idem et al.: *The Archive*, pp. 115–129.

transferred from the older to the younger generation of both archivists and researchers. Recently graduated former students of archival studies, during which special attention was devoted to the principle of the ‘archives’ public’, after several years of working in archives would become no less conservative ‘guardians’ of documents, zealously ensuring that users do not dare to secretly photograph or that they do not unintentionally discover some secret (life, state, etc.), and in some cases they even actively work to narrow the scope of use even further. This can be interpreted as a reaction to a ‘loss of control’ over archival collections, which is undergoing a revival attempt in the context of the general tightening of state control over society. The ‘archive as a place’ aims to bridle ‘the archive as a collection of documents’. The scales have tipped the other way once again. Of course, this is not a description that covers all archivists, but tends to highlight a certain trend observed in most cases. Such trends also explain recent changes in the subordination of the archival sector. In 2006, it was once again deprived of its independent status and transferred to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus as the Department for Archives and Office Work, which symbolically closed the circle of its numerous resubordinations, as from September to December 1988 it was already subordinated to this Ministry.

The Czech Republic

After the end of World War II, the pre-war structure of archives continued to function in Czechoslovakia, operating as separate institutions attached to individual ministries or within their range of jurisdiction – e.g., archives of internal affairs, agriculture and foreign affairs. In addition, some archives were subordinated to the Ministry of Education, Sciences and Fine Arts – e.g., the Moravian Land Archive in Brno or the Land Archive in Opava. For this reason, previous discussions regarding the implementation of archival reform and the creation of a unified network of state archives were revived. This was of particular interest to researchers whose work was hampered by different rules governing the use of individual archive resources. According to the regulations that would make the Central Archives of the Ministry of the Interior in Prague (Ústřední Archiv Ministerstva vnitra) accessible to private individuals, anyone (professionally and privately) could study unless officially obstructed and unless the study “harmed in any way the interests of the state, or did not intentionally undermine the honour and good name of a third party.”⁹ Therefore, it was nec-

9 Národní archiv: *Archivní registratura: Ústřední archiv Ministerstva vnitra (1946–1948)*, sig. 1a–3, box No. 3: *Řád pro užívání archivu ministerstva vnitra v Praze soukromými osobami, 1948.*

essary to indicate the purpose of the research and prove professional knowledge. Moreover, only archives over 50 years old and that had been organised could be made available. The regulations also defined the possibility to make copies, general rules of conduct in the reading room, the number of archival materials to be made available to researchers, etc. Contrary to contemporary practice, finding aids (indexes, catalogues, etc.) were not allowed other than with the consent of the director of the archive. Researchers could usually only study materials selected by employees, and they could take notes from these. However, only archive employees were responsible for preparing a verbatim copy, and for a fee. At the turn of the 1950s, the protection of sensitive information and private matters was already a consideration – their publication was only possible with the consent of the archive. “If it can be proven that a researcher has used archival material in a way that does not comply with scientific principles or would be inconsistent with state interest, he or she may be permanently deprived of access to the archive and held criminally liable”.¹⁰ Therefore, the politicisation of archives and associated restrictions are clearly visible.

Only in 1954 did it become possible to reform the system, on the basis of which a network of state archives was created. The rules for recording and sharing materials would also be standardised.¹¹ It was the requirement for various confirmations of the study purpose and numerous applications in individual archives that posed the main problems for researchers and were the reason why they would frequently complain.¹² In connection with this, there was also a public discussion during which historians demanded greater opportunities to study archival documents. According to the disclosure regulations, researchers could use archives older than 50 years or possibly from before 1918. However, the war years and the path to building socialism also piqued the interest of the historical sciences and journalism. Therefore, the use of younger materials was allowed, but only with the consent of the relevant authorities.¹³ Researchers also had to sign a commitment that the information obtained from the archives would be used for designated purposes only. Only notes could be taken from documents made available.¹⁴ Photocopies and detailed descriptions could only be made the archive

10 Národní archiv: *Archivní registratura: Ústřední archiv Ministerstva vnitra (1949–1950)*, sig. 184/25, box No. 35: *Řád pro užívání archivu ministerstva vnitra v Praze soukromými osobami*, 1950.

11 *Vládní nařízení ze 7. 5. 1954 o archivnictví*.

12 Národní archiv: *Archivní registratura: Státní ústřední archiv (1955–1967)*, sig. 410, box No. 40: *Studijní řád SÚA – návrh na úpravu*, 1956.

13 This concerned the Directorate of Archives of the Ministry of the Interior (*Archivní správu Ministerstva vnitra*) and the individual directorates under the regional administrations of the Ministry of the Interior (*krajské správy*).

14 Národní archiv: *Archivní registratura: Státní ústřední archiv (1955–1967)*, sig. 410, box No. 40: *Instrukce náčelníka AS MV: doložka k badatelskému listu*, 1962.

at an additional charge. The possibility of using inventories and other aids was decided by the archive staff – e.g., in the reading room.¹⁵

The openness of archival resources was also influenced by the Cold War, spy mania and the pressure applied by the communist regime to secure confidential information. Protected material included various types of maps, plans, data about existing facilities or court documentation less than 75 years old, which contained sensitive information about living people or their relatives.¹⁶ All foreign researchers had to obtain consent for research, and their presence had to be reported to the authorities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In the years that followed, these rules did not change much. Despite various restrictions, it would not appear that fewer researchers visited the archives than in the interwar period.¹⁷ The type of documents, the researcher's affiliation and the purpose of the study were primarily relevant.

Gaining access to the archives of the communist party was more complicated. From the mid-1950s, a network was built, consisting of the archives of the central committees (The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Communist Party of Slovakia), party research institutes (since 1969, the Institute of Marxism-Leninism) and the archives of the national committees of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Communist Party of Slovakia. The above-mentioned institutions collected not only materials generated by the activities of party organisations, but also took control of documents from other archives about the history of the workers' and communist movements, participation in the resistance movement, etc.¹⁸ The collected materials served both propaganda and historians. However, on the one hand, the emphasis on presenting the past 'correctly' and, on the other hand, maintaining control over access to fonds and collections, presented the party leadership with certain dilemmas. The solution was to strictly monitor archive activities and individually consider requests for access to archives. It is therefore not surprising that the doors of the archives were not open to all researchers.¹⁹ Those who were allowed to access party files were subject to strict rules. For example, photocopying or copying entire documents

15 Národní archiv: *Archivní registratura: Státní ústřední archiv (1955–1967)*, sig. 410, box No. 40: *Studijní řád Státního ústředního archivu – návrh na úpravu*, 1956.

16 Národní archiv: *Archivní registratura: Státní ústřední archiv (1955–1967)*, sig. 410, box No. 40: *Směrnice o nahlížení do písemností uložených v archivech a spisovnách*, 1965.

17 E.g. in 1925, 1926 and 1927 the Ministry of the Interior in Prague recorded 1,571, 2,305 and 2,142 visits by researchers, in 1951, 1952 and 1953 it was even more: 2,163, 2,348, 2,405. In the 1960s and 1970s an average of 6,000–7,000 visits by researchers to *Státní ústřední archiv* (Central State Archives in Prague), previous name of the *Národní archiv* were recorded. Benešová: *Přístup k archiváliím*, pp. 140, 144.

18 Blodigová: *Fondy*, pp. 225–258.

19 Sommer: *Angažované dějepiscectví*, p. 143.

was forbidden. The notes prepared by the researchers were supervised and, interestingly, they were considered to be the archive's property.²⁰

This situation changed after 1989, when the communist regime became a thing of the past. The materials collected by the party archives were covered by legislation regarding the return of the property of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to the people of the Czech and Slovak Republic.²¹ Most of the fonds and collections from the central rung were taken over by the Central State Archives in Prague (*Státní ústřední archiv*), which, despite the complicated situation, managed to ensure their accessibility immediately after taking over the party files.²² The shift in the political situation in Czechoslovakia significantly widened the possibilities of studying other archival collections. Historical sciences were no longer subject to ideological pressure and political influence. The main restrictions at that time resulted primarily from the technical state in some archives, their equipment, and the size of their storage facilities and reading rooms. The Central State Archives in Prague, for example, was located in fourteen buildings, which of course made it difficult to transport documents and operate a reading room. This state of affairs is also illustrated by statistical data, which show an increase in the number of researchers after the archive was moved to a new location in Prague Chodov, part of which was put into use in 1995.²³ With the opening of the country's borders, the number of foreign researchers also increased.²⁴

After 1993, Slovaks were also included as foreign researchers. However, the dissolution of the federation resulted primarily in the division of some archives between the two new states. The rules of sharing changed drastically from that moment. Anyone could examine files, without the need to be affiliated with research institutions, but in practice only documents older than 30 years were accessible (younger ones could only be accessed in exceptional cases and with the consent of the archive director). It was still possible to refuse access to archival materials if they contained information that threatened the interests of the state or violated the rights of private individuals.²⁵ Nevertheless, restrictions related to the use of inventories and other search tools were lifted. Historians also slowly

20 Národní archiv: *Komunistická strana Československa: Ústřední výbor (1945–1989) – všeobecné oddělení*, box No. 7: *Studijní řád Archivu ÚV KSČ*.

21 Zákon z 16. 11. 1990 o navrácení majetku.

22 Zitek et al.: *Ústřední výbor*, pp. 360–362.

23 In the years 1990–1996, the Central State Archives in Prague were visited by an average of approximately 1,000–1,300 researchers from Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic, and between 1997–2002 1,500–3,000 researchers visited. Benešová: *Přístup k archiváliím*, p. 145.

24 Compared to previous years, however, it was not such a significant increase, because, for example, no more than 500 people from abroad visited the Central State Archives in Prague. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

25 Národní archiv: *Archivní registratura: Státní ústřední archiv (1955–1967)*, sig. 70.0: *Badaatelský řád SÚA, 1997*.

adapted to the modern working methods of historians, who use fewer pencils and more cameras and various types of scanners. Therefore, such devices were allowed to be used freely in archive reading rooms.²⁶ Of course, sensitive information also included archives created as a result of the activities of the communist security apparatus. In addition to coming to terms with the past and uncovering what had previously been confidential, these documents were relevant due to transparency laws, which, for example, excluded former secret police collaborators from holding certain positions.²⁷ However, access to these files was not universal and restrictions applied to personal data or sensitive information. Applicants who were victims or injured parties also had special rights.²⁸ A significant change was brought about by the adoption of the Archiving Act in 2004. According to this standard, archives older than 30 years and those created as a result of the activities of state bodies prior to 1 January 1990 could be made available, which enabled relatively free research on the communist period. The legislation also includes certain restrictions related to the protection of the personal data of living persons.²⁹ However, such reservations do not apply to documents related to the functioning of the security apparatus, political parties and social organisations that were part of the National Front (*Národní fronta*), as well as military and some civilian courts, prosecutor's offices, and organs of the Nazi repressive apparatus (pursuant to an amendment to the above-mentioned act).

Despite certain restrictions related to the protection of personal data, the legislation in question provides access to the most important archival documents researching the communist period (fonds of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the security apparatus and the judiciary). However, this exception does not apply to other archives. Especially since the entry into force of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2016, the type of information contained in documents has been more closely scrutinised. For example, civil status books and population censuses underwent some revision, which were available in digital form on the websites of some archives. Data that may relate to living people has been anonymised.³⁰ However, this significantly complicated the digitisation of archival resources.

26 According to the regulations of the National Archives in Prague from 2009, researchers could bring, in addition to notebooks, cameras, video cameras and other similar devices into the reading room. Národní archiv: *Archivní registratura*, sig. 12.01: *Pokyn ředitelky Národního archivu, kterým se vydává Badatelský řád Národního archivu*, 1. 7. 2009.

27 Cf. *Zákon ze 4. 10. 1991* and *Zákon z 28. 4. 1992*.

28 Cf. *Zákon z 26. 4. 1996* and *Zákon z 8. 3. 2002*.

29 If the documents contained personal data, the archives had to announce their intention to make them available, and if there was no response from the people whom the documents concerned, they could be submitted for study, *Zákon z 30. 6. 2004 o archivnictví a spisové službě*.

30 Borůvková: *Analýza dopadu GDPR*, pp. 73–77.

Making archival materials accessible online has recently become one of the most important jobs facing Czech archives. Determining the principles of digitisation and how to make copies available is the responsibility of individual archives. The most extensive digital archives (online reading rooms) include the Archive of the Security Services website (*Archiv bezpečnostních složek*), the digital archives of the Land Archive in Opava (*Zemský archiv v Opavě*) or the Regional State Archives in Třebon (*Státní oblastní archiv v Třeboni*).³¹ Contemporary researchers can increasingly benefit from technological progress and the related development of archival science. As a result, working conditions are completely different today than 70 years ago. Researchers were able to appreciate the benefits of remote access to archives – e. g., during the Covid pandemic.³² In addition to the records themselves, search tools are also available online in various forms. Scans of inventories exist in PDF format or lists of fonds to which subsequent archival documents are attached. A variety of software also makes it easier to find information – e. g., in the Archive of the Security Services e-reading room, an OCR (Optical Character Recognition) search engine may be used. The transfer of archive activities to cyberspace has also brought various challenges, including emphasis on the quality of technology, security, etc. Only time will tell to what extent this has been successful.

Poland

After the end of World War II, during the initial period, the regulations regarding the operation of archives introduced in the interwar period were in force.³³ The first formal restrictions on access to archival materials were introduced in 1950 under instructions attached to the decree of the Minister of Education of 15 May 1950 on the protection of state and official secrets. These regulations obliged archivists to provide explanations only within the limits necessary to deal with a specific matter and only within the scope of the official competences assigned to each of them. Moreover, the instructions stipulated that the entire contents of the archive should be covered by official secrecy, regardless of the categorisation of files as open or confidential.³⁴

In the ordinance on state archives issued in 1951, the communist authorities established new rules for the operation of state archives. However, accessibility

31 Cf. *eBadatelna Archivu bezpečnostních složek; Digitální archiv Zemského archivu v Opavě; DigiArchiv of State Regional Archives Trebon.*

32 For example, the Archive of the Security Services electronic reading room is visited by increasing numbers of people: in 2018, 1,676 researchers visited the physical reading room, and 1,384 people visited the electronic reading room, *Zprávy o činnosti archivu.*

33 For more see Mamczak-Gadkowska: *Archiwa.*

34 Grot: *Ku przeszłości otwartej*, p. 90.

was treated in a completely peripheral manner, as it was only indicated that it was the responsibility of the state archives.³⁵ The Stalinist constitution of the Polish People's Republic, introduced in 1952, had a much greater impact on this sphere of archive work, which obliged citizens to diligently guard state secrets.³⁶ The new constitution also did not contain a provision on the freedom of scientific research, which was included in the constitution of 1921. Therefore, it marked a step towards politicising access to archival sources. As Dariusz Grot points out:

Even the state's commitment to caring for the development of science was tempered by the reservation that this science be based on 'the achievements of leading human thought and progressive Polish thought' – to which it is impossible not to attribute political connotations. Public authorities, determined to create a new image of the past, had no reason to present interested parties with historical evidence as it stood thus far.³⁷

In 1952, the General Director of the State Archives (GDSA) issued regulations on public research facilities in the state archives. According to the regulations, obtaining access to the archives required the permission of the director of the archives or, in the case of restricted archival materials, the permission of the GDSA. The application for a permit had to be accompanied by a letter of recommendation from a scientific institution, university or government office. A sole exception in this respect was made for independent scientists. The application itself also had to include information about the materials the user wanted to use as well as the topic and work plan. Therefore, scientists and employees delegated by state offices or institutions were able to make use of archival materials. However, the regulations did not allow access for private individuals.³⁸ The requirements for obtaining consent were relaxed slightly in April 1955, when the requirement to submit a work plan based on archival records was waived. At the same time, however, it was specified that each research topic would require a separate permit.³⁹

It was only in 1957 that the Minister of Culture and Art issued comprehensive regulations stipulating the rules for using archival materials. Under the new regulations, archival materials (originals or copies) could be made available for scientific research and official purposes, to promote science and national culture, and in the interest of private individuals. A permit still needed to be obtained, but the

35 *Dekret z dnia 29 marca 1951 r. o archiwach państwowych.*

36 Biernat: *Udostępnianie*, p. 14.

37 Grot: *Ku przeszłości otwartej*, p. 92.

38 Archiwum Państwowe w Toruniu: *Wojewódzkie Archiwum Państwowe w Bydgoszczy Oddział Terenowy w Toruniu* (further: APT WAPB OT), sig. 134: *Zarządzenie nr 7 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 20 maja 1952 r. w sprawie regulaminu publicznych pracowni naukowych w archiwach państwowych.*

39 *Ibid.*: *Zarządzenie nr 10 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 20 kwietnia 1955 r. w sprawie regulaminu udostępniania materiałów archiwalnych w pracowniach naukowych, Archiwum Państwowe w Toruniu.*

entities authorised to apply and the authorities issuing the consent were differentiated. Applications to the director of the archive could be submitted by state authorities and administration bodies, institutions, state-owned enterprises, cooperative and cultural associations, as well as scientific institutions, universities, publishing houses and creative work unions. The regulation also permitted the use of archival materials for private purposes. In the case of foreign institutions and citizens of foreign countries, only the GDSA could issue consent having consulted with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was also strongly emphasised that those who had obtained permission to use archival materials could use search tools and means of copying or making reproductions. Access could be refused due to the archives' state of preservation, disorganisation in the fond, or for other specially justified reasons. The permit could also be withdrawn if the permit holder did not comply with its terms or with the regulations of the archive's research facility, or if he or she was not prepared to conduct independent archival research.⁴⁰ The regulation also allowed for the possibility that the user might become acquainted with the content of the archives through an archivist who, at the request of his superior, would conduct a search in the resources. The regulations allowed for compulsory mediation, and therefore the possibility of denying an interested party access to documents. It seems that this was a deliberate action, because, apart from obvious facilitation, intermediation could become a form of restriction should the authorities consider certain information to be prohibited or require selective accessibility.⁴¹ It is also worth noting that allowing users to use resource records as well as information and search tools was not the norm in the Eastern Bloc at that time, or especially in the Soviet Union, where archivists performed the tasks of 'political officers' in that they would select what information was available to the user.⁴²

In 1960, the GDSA tightened the regulations issued by the minister. Pursuant to Ordinance No. 10 of 29 June 1960, the GDSA introduced chronological restrictions on the powers of archives directors and managers to grant consent to access to files. Consent to the disclosure of files created before 1 January 1950 was given by the director of the archives, while consent to the disclosure of younger files would be granted by the GDSA. However, local branches and district archives could only grant access to files from before 1 January 1945 (consent to view files from the 1945–1950 period was granted by the director of the main archive). These restrictions did not apply to the use of archives for official purposes, the only condition being that the user should have appropriate authorisation issued by a government office, institution or enterprise. Anyone using archival materials

40 *Zarządzenie Ministra Kultury i Sztuki z dnia 22 marca 1957 r. w sprawie korzystania z materiałów archiwalnych.*

41 Grot: *Ku przeszłości otwartej*, p. 100.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 115.

also had the right to use finding aids related to them.⁴³ Only five years later were the procedural problems in obtaining access to archival materials slightly eased by levelling the rights of directors of central and provincial archives and managers of local branches and district archives.⁴⁴

In February 1964, the GDSA restricted access to files for foreigners, deciding that the files pertaining to the authorities, government offices, institutions and enterprises of the Polish People's Republic could not be made available to citizens of foreign countries before the end of 1975. Only after this date would they be accessible on the basis of applicable regulations, while maintaining a 30-year grace period from the moment the archives were created.⁴⁵

An important step towards limiting access to archival materials for 'undesirables' was taken in 1968. Pursuant to the Ordinance of the Minister of Education and Higher Education of 13 January 1968 amending the ordinance on the use of archival materials, the rules for granting consent to access archival materials were to be modified. Under the new regulations, consent for access to archives created before 1 September 1939 would be issued by the director of the archive. Access to documents created between 1 September 1939 and 31 December 1950 could be given by the director of the relevant archive in consultation with the opinion-giving and advisory committee, while materials created after 31 December 1950 required permission from the GDSA at the request of the relevant opinion-giving and advisory committee. The composition of the opinion-giving and advisory committees was relevant throughout the process. It included the director of the relevant archive, a research employee from the department where the files were located, as indicated in the application, as well as a representative of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in the Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw (*Archiwum Akt Nowych*), and a representative of the presidium of the relevant provincial national council where provincial archives were concerned. So, a political factor was directly inserted in the decision-making process.

In the case of citizens of foreign countries, if the application was submitted by a Polish state office, scientific institution or political or social organisation then consent would be granted by the director of the archive. Otherwise, the GDSA would do so, in consultation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In this man-

43 Archiwum Państwowe w Bydgoszczy: *Wojewódzkie Archiwum Państwowe w Bydgoszczy* (further: APB WAPB), sig. 549: *Zarządzenie nr 10 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 29 czerwca 1960 r. w sprawie udostępniania materiałów archiwalnych w pracowniach naukowych archiwów państwowych.*

44 APT WAPB OT, sig. 23: *Zarządzenie nr 19 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 16 października 1965 r. w sprawie zmiany zarządzenia nr 10 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 29 czerwca 1960 r. w przedmiocie udostępniania materiałów archiwalnych w pracowniach naukowych archiwów państwowych.*

45 APB WAPB, sig. 901: *Pismo okólne nr 2 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 3 lutego 1964 r. w sprawie udostępniania obywatelom państw obcych akt PRL.*

ner, it was only possible to grant access to public records and files created before 1 September 1939, provided that the scope of disclosure was decided by the director of the archive or the GDSA. The General Director could also consent to making archival materials created between 1939–1945 accessible to scientific establishments and institutions of foreign countries whenever necessary for the purposes of prosecuting and investigating Nazi crimes.

Interestingly, in addition to the restrictions described, a provision was also introduced to ensure the protection of private individuals, stating that: “Accessibility of archival materials of a personal nature, family correspondence of living persons and deposits may be permitted with the consent of the interested persons and institutions or after the expiry of the grace period reserved by these persons and institutions”.⁴⁶

The amendment to the ordinance introduced in 1968 therefore abolished the previous dominance of formal criteria such as the accessibility of archives, the state of work or the preparation of candidates,⁴⁷ allowing for a political factor when deciding on whether archives could be made available.

This was also a step towards the accessibility policies in force in neighbouring countries, where access to archives was restricted, for example, according to “class criteria and opened primarily to Marxist historical research”. The literature also indicates that these countries allowed “more diversified rules of accessibility”.⁴⁸ At the same time, it is impossible to indicate a clear connection between the proposed changes and the political situation that took place in 1968, especially since the new regulations were issued in January and early March before the main wave of protests. Although this thesis is unsupported by evidence, perhaps the tightening of access to information was caused by a gradual decline in the confidence of the party and state authorities in the intelligentsia, whose dissatisfaction with the state’s cultural policy was growing and already apparent before March 1968.⁴⁹

The significance of the political factor in making archival materials available was emphasised in the GDSA circular letter of 5 April 1971, in which the General Director pointed out that with respect to foreigners, “deciding whether to make these files [created after 1939] available requires careful political assessment of the candidate, as well as the sources themselves”.⁵⁰ The above-mentioned

46 Zarządzenie Ministra Oświaty i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 13 stycznia 1968 r., § 1.3.

47 Biernat: *Udostępnianie*, p. 10.

48 *Ibid.*

49 For more see e.g. Skórzyński: *Nie ma chleba bez wolności*, pp. 68–74.

50 APT WAPB OT, sig. 23: *Pismo okólne nr 2 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 5 kwietnia 1971 r. w sprawie interpretacji Zarządzenia Ministra Oświaty i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 13 stycznia 1968 r. (MP nr 4 poz. 22) zmieniającego Zarządzenie Ministra Kultury i Sztuki z dnia 22 marca 1957 r. w sprawie korzystania z materiałów archiwalnych.*

guidelines for consultative and advisory commissions had to be followed in state archives. The political factor was also to be taken into account in relation to domestic researchers in terms of reproduction. In this regard, the GDSA decreed as follows:

In the matter of preparing photocopies or microfilms of files created after 1 September 1939 for national researchers, the following rule should be followed: a researcher who, as a trustworthy person, has been allowed to use the files at the request of the consultative and advisory commission, may receive photocopies or microfilms of these files, as long as they are not confidential or of special political importance. In the latter case, refusal to make a copy may also apply to earlier files. The provisions of the Ordinance should not be treated formally, but should be guided by the political intuition of the legislator.⁵¹

Therefore, in a surprisingly direct way, the GDSA expressed the idea of limiting access to archival materials for political reasons.⁵²

The legislation introduced in 1968 became the regulations on access to archival materials issued in 1977 by the GDSA. The regulations acknowledged and allowed that applicants for access to archival materials might also be people, but they were still not free from submitting institutional recommendations. At the same time, however, the possibility of making photocopies of archival materials independently was abolished. According to the new regulations, “permission to photograph archival materials may only be granted to specialised institutions (Polish Television, film studio, press, etc.)”⁵³. This was probably due to the fact that the archives already had appropriate infrastructure to provide services in this area, and therefore could conduct commercial activity in this field.⁵⁴

The provisions of the Ordinance of the Minister of Culture and Art of 1957 (as amended) were in force until 31 August 1984, when they were repealed.⁵⁵ However, voices had already been raised, questioning the need for political participation in the decision to grant access to archival materials from 1945–1950. This issue was tabled, among others, at a meeting at the State Archives in Toruń on 4 March 1980, attended by a representative of the GDSA.⁵⁶ The provisions of the 1977 regulations

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.: *Regulamin dla osób korzystających z materiałów archiwalnych w pracowniach naukowych archiwów państwowych. Załącznik nr 1 do Zarządzenia nr 11 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 18 maja 1977 r. w sprawie wprowadzenia regulaminów dotyczących udostępniania materiałów archiwalnych w pracowniach naukowych archiwów państwowych.*

54 Grot: *Ku przeszłości otwartej*, pp. 118–119.

55 *Zarządzenie Ministra Kultury i Sztuki z dnia 22 marca 1957 r.*

56 Archiwum Państwowe w Toruniu: *Wojewódzkie Archiwum Państwowe w Toruniu*, sig. 34: *Protokół z zebrania pracowników WAP w Toruniu w dniu 4 marca 1980 r. w sprawie zabezpieczenia zasobu archiwalnego.*

survived much longer because, despite losing their legal basis after 1983, they were only abolished in 2000. This does not mean, of course, that they were applied in their entirety after the changes that took place after 1989.⁵⁷ Generally, however, before the Act on National Archival Resources and Archives came into force, archives tried to restrict access, focusing mainly on serving professional researchers.⁵⁸ Access for foreign users was also limited by issuing separate price lists for services offered to citizens and institutions from capitalist countries. These generally included higher fees along with inflated exchange rates.

Relatively liberal provisions regarding access were introduced by the Act of 14 July 1983 on national archival resources and archives. According to the new legislation, archival materials were to be made available to organisational units and citizens for the purposes of science, culture, technology and economy, with the possibility that the GDSA might specify other purposes. However, the legislation stipulated that archival materials could be made available after 30 years from the date of creation, provided that they did not violate the legally protected interests of the state and citizens.⁵⁹ The legislator also provided for the possibility of earlier access to archival materials by applying to the Minister of Science, Higher Education and Technology to settle this issue by means of a directive.⁶⁰

Normally, access would be granted without the need to obtain consent, but directly by law.⁶¹ At the same time, however, the act did contain a provision allowing the director of the archive to refuse access to archival materials at his or her discretion, merely indicating that this may be done in certain justified cases.⁶²

It should be emphasised that the principle of free access provided for by this legislation, which does not stipulate the need for permission to access archives, was extremely modern, as it only became more widespread in Polish legislation at the turn of the 21st century.⁶³ At the same time, however, the statutory provisions concerned mainly archives located in facilities subordinated to the GDSA. Access to individual archives was regulated separately,⁶⁴ whose number increased in the years that followed (including after 1989).

As regards earlier access, the regulations issued in July 1984 delegated the decision to the director of the relevant archive, who was obliged to inform the GDSA about this decision. In relation to foreigners, consent would be issued

57 Grot: *Dostępność archiwaliów – stan prawny*, pp. 46–47.

58 Idem: *Ku przeszłości otwartej*, pp. 120–121.

59 Biernat: *Udostępnianie*, p. 13.

60 *Ustawa z dnia 14 lipca 1983 r. o narodowym zasobie archiwalnym i archiwach*.

61 Grot: *Dostęp do archiwów*, p. 14.

62 *Ustawa z dnia 14 lipca 1983 r. o narodowym zasobie archiwalnym i archiwach*.

63 Konstankiewicz: *Problemy prawne dostępu*, p. 194.

64 Grot: *Dostępność archiwaliów – stan prawny*, p. 43.

personally by the General Director.⁶⁵ The regulations on this matter were amended in 2000. The new regulation allows access to files of political parties created before 1989 in any situation, provided that it does not violate the interests of the state and citizens.⁶⁶ The 2008 amendment to the regulations did not introduce any significant help or hindrance regarding earlier access to archives.⁶⁷

Before 1989, archives could, and did, participate in hiding information for reasons that were not based on legal norms and were defined solely as the state's interest. Although cases of political censorship continued to occur under the auspices of archive legislation, they were relatively selective. The following items remained restricted: files of the Polish government in exile regarding the extermination of Polish officers in the USSR. However, it was possible to examine the documentation regarding Soviet war crimes committed in Poland after World War II without any major obstacles. At the same time, the right to refuse access was abused in order to maintain elite access to particularly valuable archives solely for researchers with recommendations or certificates. The discretionary nature of the proceedings of the state archives was questioned only in 1999 by the Supreme Administrative Court, which pointed out that in such cases it was necessary for the director of the state archive to indicate a legal basis for making such a decision.⁶⁸ Researchers themselves also drew attention to the discretionary behaviour of archives during the Polish People's Republic, citing information in their publications about problems gaining access to some archival materials. For example, Błażej Brzostek mentioned that:

[...] in 1989, active scientists had generally spent their entire lives under a regime of censorship, inaccessibility to archives and lack of autonomy for higher education⁶⁹ [...] Undoubtedly, the most significant event following 1989 was the process of so-called systemic transformation and political rivalries of the Third Polish Republic, and the research methods themselves were reflected in an entire complexity of phenomena, starting from the opening of archives and ending with the flourishing of social media.⁷⁰

Alongside the state archives, there was of course also a whole sphere of separate archives as well as the Department of Party History, and then the Central Archive of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party was established in its place, which mainly served historians acknowledged by the ruling party.

65 *Rozporządzenie Ministra Nauki, Szkolnictwa Wyższego i Techniki z dnia 25 lipca 1984 r. w sprawie wcześniejszego udostępniania materiałów archiwalnych.*

66 Szczepan: *Udostępnianie materiałów archiwalnych*, pp. 78–81.

67 *Rozporządzenie Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego z dnia 29 lipca 2008 r. w sprawie określenia szczególnych wypadków i trybu wcześniejszego udostępniania materiałów archiwalnych.*

68 Grot: *Ku przeszłości otwartej*, pp. 139–140.

69 Brzostek: *PRL – trwanie i zmiana*, p. 70.

70 *Ibid.*, pp. 72–73.

The approach taken by archives to the issue of accessibility shifted throughout the 1990s, but their hands were tied, largely due to the observance of procedures deeply rooted in archival awareness that had been in force since 1977. However, during this period, the public's right of access to archives achieved a breakthrough with the provisions of the *Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997*, which in Art. 61 established the right of the citizen to obtain information on the activities of public authorities and persons performing public functions. This right also includes access to archival materials. In this context, the provisions in force since 1984 imposing a 30-year grace period raised doubts as to their constitutionality.⁷¹

However, a fundamental shift in the approach taken by state archives to making available archival materials would only occur at the turn of the 21st century. In 2000, the then GDSA issued new regulations on the organisation of accessibility in state archives. These provisions lifted the need to obtain consent to view archival materials. From that moment on, access would be granted upon request, whereas previously accessibility, including to foreigners, would be given by way of a decision issued by the director of the archive. It was also stated clearly that archival materials should be made available to everyone as long as this would not violate the law. An obligation was also imposed to provide users with access to records, except when restrictions were necessary due to the protection of personal data or personal rights.

Restrictions on access to archival materials could be because of a lack of any records for given materials, the provisions of the Act on the National Archival Resource and Archives as well as specific regulations. The regulations also provided for restrictions on reproduction or limitation to one-time viewing or to selected pages or documents. Restrictions could be imposed due to the needs declared by the potential viewer or legal provisions protecting selected information. In principle, it was unacceptable to independently copy archival materials. However, the requirements for viewers to submit recommendations have been slightly relaxed. The request for submission was only possible in special cases and not standard procedure.⁷²

However, it seems that the previously applicable norms were deeply embedded in the minds of archivists, because the following year the General Director Daria Nałęcz sent instructions to them reminding them that they should not hinder people who want to use the resources and should not treat them in a bureaucratic manner. Only necessary restrictions should be applied. At the same time, Daria

71 Konstankiewicz: *Problemy prawne dostępu*, pp. 195–196.

72 Archiwum Państwowe w Toruniu: *Archiwum zakładowe* (further: APT AZ), sig. 20/5: *Za-
rządzenie nr 4 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 18 maja 2000 r. w sprawie
organizacji udostępniania materiałów archiwalnych w archiwach państwowych*.

Nałęcz reminded archivists that archives are for people who wish to read them, not the archivists.⁷³ This clearly indicates that practices that had been in force for years and a belief in the elitism of archives were firmly embedded in the minds of their employees.

In 2006, an amendment to the Archive Act abolished the separate procedure for making archival materials available to foreigners.⁷⁴ The next breakthrough occurred only 11 years after the above-mentioned regulations were issued. In 2011, viewers were allowed to independently copy archival materials in order to facilitate research work. It was stipulated that no more than 75% of each unit containing more than ten sheets could be copied at the same time (thinner files could be copied in their entirety). For this purpose, it became necessary to submit a declaration of independent copying that included the subject of the research work and the name of the fond and reference numbers of the units to be copied. At the same time, it was also allowed to photograph copies of archival materials, but copies for the purposes of one's own publication were forbidden.⁷⁵

The restrictions on independent copying were soon lifted. Since 2013 it has been possible to copy entire units without having to submit any declaration. The only restriction concerned the scope of how the copies would be used, which could only be created for non-commercial personal use (especially to support the viewers' research work). However, it was prohibited to obtain quality copies for journalistic and publishing purposes.⁷⁶ The new regulations, probably due to an oversight, did not allow people to photograph copies of archives on their own. This problem was fixed a year later.⁷⁷

In 2016, there was a major amendment to the statutory provisions regarding accessibility due to the regulation on the re-use of public sector information,⁷⁸ which served to implement European directives in this area.⁷⁹ The new regulations assumed that everyone was entitled to access archival materials, the only restrictions being the protection of classified information and other secrets safeguarded by law, as well as personal rights and personal data, or the need to maintain the integrity of components comprising the state archival resources.

73 APT AZ, sig. 20/5: *Pismo Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 26 września 2001 r.*

74 Konstankiewicz: *Problemy prawne dostępu*, p. 194.

75 APT AZ, sig. 92/14: *Zarządzenie Nr 15 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 22 grudnia 2011 r. zmieniające zarządzenie w sprawie organizacji udostępniania materiałów archiwalnych w archiwach państwowych.*

76 *Ibid.*: *Zarządzenie Nr 4 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 1 lutego 2013 r. w sprawie organizacji udostępniania materiałów archiwalnych w archiwach państwowych.*

77 APT AZ, sig. 95/10: *Zarządzenie nr 10 z dnia 28 maja 2014 r. w sprawie zmiany zarządzenia w sprawie organizacji udostępniania materiałów archiwalnych w archiwach państwowych.*

78 *Ustawa z dnia 25 lutego 2016 r. o ponownym wykorzystaniu informacji sektora publicznego.*

79 *Directive 2003/98/EC.*

The general access clause regarding access to archives was also lifted. In its place, restrictions were introduced relating solely to selected types of archival materials, such as civil status records and books, individual medical records, notarial records and land and mortgage registers, documentation of court and investigative cases, population records, and personal and payroll documentation of employers. At the same time, the restrictions do not apply if the applicant has special rights or pursues objectives that enjoy special legal protection that override the restrictions.

Another nod in the direction of the information society was made in the new regulations on access issued in 2017. The General Director of the State Archives, acknowledging the possibilities offered by modern technology, allowed the electronic delivery of “digital copies of archival materials and records, whose availability is subject to statutory restrictions, to identified users, on the condition that the transfer is secure and prevents access by third parties.”⁸⁰

Currently, the most significant restrictions result from the protection of personal data, especially GDPR provisions. Sometimes this leads to refusal of access not only to selected archival units, but even to records and search tools. This happens especially when the archive considers that they contain sensitive data. In such a situation, not only are they not published online, but even access to them by researchers sometimes requires long correspondence with the archive and proof that the information obtained will be processed in a way that is not only lawful, but also safe for the archive itself.

Ukraine: Access to Archival Documents in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (the 1950s–1980s)

The totalitarian control of the Communist party over all spheres of life in the Soviet Union was also represented in the centralised archival system of the state.⁸¹ The closedness of the system of Ukrainian archival institutions had a significant impact on citizens’ access to archival collections – in Soviet times, up to 50% of the documents of the State Archival Fond had limited access for use by researchers.⁸² Partial liberalisation of user access to archival documents took place during the so-called ‘Khrushchev Thaw’ marked by the chairmanship of the Central Committee of the Communist Party by Nikita Khrushchev. Special resolutions of the Committee and the Council of Ministers of the USSR dated 7 February and 18 April 1956, obliged archival institutions to provide documents

80 *Zarządzenie nr 24 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 18 maja 2017 r.*

81 Kalakura et al.: *Arkhivoznavstvo*, p. 82.

82 Chyrkova: *Dostup do arkhivnoi informatsii*, p. 38.

for scientific use and publication. During 1956–1957, the conditions for access to certain categories of archival fonds were revised, with the subsequent declassification of some documents and their introduction into scientific circulation.⁸³

By the end of 1957, 62% of archival documents in secret storage were declassified. Furthermore, Ukrainian archives began an active creation of a catalogue system, preparation of guides to archival collections, and archival description improvements.⁸⁴ However, the possibility of wider access and publication of archival documents by Soviet researchers was temporary – in 1959, a methodical letter addressed to archives management emphasised the need to prevent overly detailed coverage of archival collections in guidebooks, which eventually increased censorship and reduced the pace of fond declassification by archivists as well as research and journalistic activities.⁸⁵

The tendency to restrict access and the low informativeness of archival directories was consciously maintained throughout the Soviet period. In 1987, a new impetus for resuming the process of archival fonds declassification was given by the decision of the Chief Archives board “On expanding the access of researchers to documents stored in the state archives of the republic” and the establishment of special commissions to remove restrictions and expand access to the list of documents that were to be transferred to general storage.⁸⁶ However, the key events in the democratisation of user access to Ukrainian archives are related to the first decade after Ukraine gained independence.

Access to Ukraine’s National Archival Fond: Legal Framework

With the declaration of Ukraine’s independence in 1991, there was a surge in the democratisation of society after decades of totalitarian control. The need to revise the legislative regulation of many processes, including access to information, has become an important state priority. The first law that contributed to the declassification of documents was the Law of Ukraine *On the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression* of 1991, according to which the right of access to archival documents on rehabilitated victims of political repressions was granted to the victims themselves, their relatives, and, with the permission of the former, to researchers.⁸⁷ The adoption of the Decree by the Presidium of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine dated August 27, 1991 *On the Declassification of Documents of the Former Ukraine’s Communist Party Ar-*

83 Myschak: *Naukova robota*, pp. 21–22.

84 Chyrkova: *Dostup do arkhivnoi informatsii*, p. 38.

85 Myschak: *Naukova robota*, p. 27.

86 Chyrkova: *Dostup do arkhivnoi informatsii*, p. 39.

87 Matviichuk: *Kolizii mizh pravom dostupu*, p. 362.

chives also contributed to the large-scale liberalisation of the archival field in Ukraine. Only a small part (0.01–0.06% of the total volume) of these documents, created after 1960, remained in secret storage.⁸⁸

The 1990s became the era of democratisation of access to information in many countries and the introduction of the principles of freedom of information (FOI) into national legislation and international declarations. Following the example of the USA, France and other countries,⁸⁹ on 2 October 1992, Ukraine adopted the *Law On Information*; its Art. 5 declared the principles of openness, availability of information and freedom of its exchange. In addition to declaring the rights to freely receive, use, distribute and store information, Art. 10 defined free access to archival, library, and museum fonds.⁹⁰ However, freedom of information must take into account the balanced application of the right to information and the right to privacy (i.e., secrecy of correspondence, non-interference in private life).⁹¹ Therefore, the Law of Ukraine *On Information* also establishes the basic principles of handling confidential and secret information with limited access.⁹²

The Law of Ukraine *On the National Archival Fond and Archival Institutions* of December 24, 1993 played a significant role in reforming Ukraine's archival institutions and preserving the Ukrainian cultural heritage with open access for users,⁹³ where for the first time the legal principles of the functioning of the archival institution system were defined at the legislative level and a new integral category of culture and law was introduced – the National Archival Fond (NAF). The democratic approach was also established – everything that is not limited by law is available, based on Art. 34 of the Constitution of Ukraine regarding the right of everyone to freely collect, store and disseminate information, which is consistent with the Recommendation No. R (2000)13 of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers to member states on a European policy on access to archives.⁹⁴ The establishment of the National Archival Fond brought into the legal field the entire valuable part of the documentary heritage (more than 82 million units of storage⁹⁵), securing for NAF the status of national cultural property and a component of the world historical and cultural heritage.⁹⁶

The law has become the legal framework for the reorganisation of archival affairs in Ukraine, the implementation of reforms based on the principles of

88 Chyrkova: *Dostup do arkhivnoi informatsii*, p. 39.

89 Cook: *Freedom of Information*, p. 117.

90 *Zakon Ukrainy No. 2657-XII*; Usenko: *Problema zakonodavchoho zabezpechennia*, p. 335.

91 Matviichuk: *Koliziia mizh pravom dostupu*, p. 360.

92 Usenko: *Problema zakonodavchoho zabezpechennia*, p. 335.

93 *Zakon Ukrainy No. 3814-XII*.

94 Novokhatskyi: *Orhanizatsiia dostupu do dokumentiv*, p. 75.

95 *Natsionalnyi arkhivnyi fond*.

96 Dovzhuk: *Pravove rehuliuвання informatsijnoi spadshyny*, p. 47.

democratisation, and the protection of the rights of archive owners and information consumers. In addition, the Law guarantees access to archival documents from the moment of their receipt into state storage, as well as the right to use the NAF for Ukraine's citizens, foreigners, and stateless persons.⁹⁷ Grounds for restricting access to NAF storage units are also defined: scientific and technical processing, checking availability or condition, restoration – up to one year; documents with confidential information – for 75 years from the time of creation (the restriction can be terminated earlier with the permission of the fond creators or their heirs). At the regulatory level, the issues of physical access to archival documents were regulated by the Procedure for the use of NAF documents dated 24 November 2005, and later by the Procedure for the use of NAF documents belonging to the state, territorial communities, approved by the order of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine No. 2438/5 dated 19 November 2013 (with amendments).⁹⁸

In the context of user access to the NAF, it is also worth highlighting the Law of Ukraine *On State Secrets* dated 21 January 1994, according to which a material carrier of information is given a seal of secrecy. An important aspect of this law is the prohibition to conceal information about human rights violations and abuses by authorities and officials.⁹⁹ At the same time, the law does not prescribe a maximum period of classification, which allows extending the validity of the seal of secrecy by the President of Ukraine on his own initiative or based on the proposals of state experts.¹⁰⁰

The process of systematic review of the Soviet heritage continued slowly and was partially accelerated by the Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 37/2009 of 23 January 2009 *On the Declassification, Publication and Study of Archival Documents Related to the Ukrainian Liberation Movement, Political Repressions and the Holodomor in Ukraine*. During the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko, expanding access to retrospective information, primarily about political repressions and the Holodomor of 1932–1933, was identified as one of the priority directions for the development of the archival field.¹⁰¹ In particular, a special sector was created in Ukraine's Security Service Archive to review archival files of the Soviet period. During 2009, about 16,000 archival documents were declassified (only 2–4% of the total number).¹⁰²

After the Revolution of Dignity, the next stage of expanding access to archival documents began; it was codified legislatively in the Law of Ukraine *On Access to*

97 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

98 *Nakaz Ministerstva iustytzii Ukrainy No. 2438/5*.

99 Matviichuk: *Kolizii mizh pravom dostupu*, p. 365.

100 Zakharov: *Deiaki problemy dostupu*, p. 355.

101 Matviichuk: *Kolizii mizh pravom dostupu*, p. 367.

102 Zakharov: *Deiaki problemy dostupu*, p. 356.

the Archives of Repressive Bodies of the Communist Totalitarian Regime 1917–1991, according to which the state guarantees free access to archival information of repressive bodies and ensures the digitisation of storage units. Documents about natural disasters and man-made disasters, facts of human rights violations, illegal actions of state authorities are not subject to access restrictions; however, victims of repressive authorities have the right to restrict access to archival information about themselves.¹⁰³

Access to Ukraine's National Archival Fond: Practical Aspect

Expanding access to the National Archive Fond is an important priority for Ukrainian archival institutions which are also obliged to ensure the preservation of retrospective information. Since each reference to the original shortens its life,¹⁰⁴ archives provide users with copies of documents and only in case of their absence – originals.¹⁰⁵ For a long time, the archival legislation of Ukraine lacked standardised regulations regarding the procedure for copying archival documents – only few archival institutions allowed users to photograph documents freely and free of charge with their own devices.¹⁰⁶ Copying of archival documents being paid was explained by the low funding of Ukraine's archival field. In 2019, further liberalisation of access to archival documents took place: the order of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine No. 3862/5 of 3 December 2019, amended the Procedure for using NAF documents belonging to the state and territorial communities, according to which users were allowed to photograph archival documents using their devices.¹⁰⁷

Predominantly, requests for access to archival information in Ukraine are of a social and legal nature: about work experience, employment, stay in the occupied territories, etc. Social and legal inquiries are made free of charge, while answers to inquiries related to property or genealogical searches are provided by the archives as a paid service. Citizens often apply for confirmation of property rights to land and real estate. Thus, by ensuring the fulfilment of socio-legal requests, providing copies of documents and certificates, archives also play an important social role.

To ensure wider user access to the NAF, archival institutions are improving the activity of users' proactive informing and digitisation of documents. Ukrainian archives create and improve reference tools; since 2000, the branch program

103 *Zakon Ukrainy No. 316-VIII.*

104 Novokhatskyi: *Zabezpechennia dostupu*, p. 350.

105 *Zakon Ukrainy No. 3814-XII.*

106 Usenko: *Problema zakonodavchoho zabezpechennia*, p. 345.

107 *Nakaz Ministerstva iustytzii Ukrainy No. 3862/5.*

Archival Collections of Ukraine provides archives with guides and annotated registers of fonds and descriptions. An important segment of the reference system is the central fond catalogue, created in accordance with the national descriptive and ISAD (G) international standards.¹⁰⁸ Ukrainian archival institutions also carry out research and publishing activities, introducing into scientific circulation a large array of sources about important and tragic events in the history of Ukraine, such as the Holodomor of 1932–1933.¹⁰⁹ From 2019, the main priorities in the activity of the Ukrainian state archives include the digitisation of all processes of archival affairs and records keeping, as well as the promotion of the wide use of archival information for the implementation of research, socio-cultural, and other needs of citizens, society, and the state.¹¹⁰ An important priority in the activities of the State Archives Service of Ukraine at the current stage is ensuring equal access to archival information of all categories of users (which was reflected in the first Strategic Goal of the Strategy for the Development of Archival Affairs for the period until 2025,¹¹¹ repeatedly emphasised by the head of State Archival Service of Ukraine Anatolii Khromov in his appeals and interviews).

Websites of archival institutions are the main tools for providing remote online access to the information resources of archives. Since the creation of the first websites of Ukraine's archival institutions in the early 2000s, a large array of archival reference guides and NAF documents has been published.¹¹² Ukrainian archives are engaged in active exhibition activities – mostly documentary exhibitions dedicated to significant historical dates and events. The global COVID-19 pandemic intensified the publication and constant updating on the official websites and social network pages with the information about the process of NAF documents digitisation, as well as reports on the access to digital versions of archival fonds descriptions.¹¹³

In the conditions of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia since 24 February 2022, the need to digitise archival documents to create backup copies and ensure user access under martial law has become an extremely urgent priority. An important result of the long-term digitisation of documents was the presentation on 11 May 2022, of the Interarchival Search Portal – the platform for accessing digital resources of Ukrainian archives, which united digitised resources of three state archives, as well as separate thematic digital document collections *via* AR-

108 Novokhatskyi: *Zabezpechennia dostupu*, p. 77.

109 Chyrkova: *Dostup do arkhivnoi informatsii*, p. 43.

110 Paliienko: *Socio-Cultural Mission*, p. 117.

111 *Stratehiia rozvytku arkhivnoi spravy*, p. 15.

112 Maistrenko et al.: *Biuletyn Haluzevoho tsentru*, p. 110.

113 Sverdlyk: *Orhanizatsiia dostupu*, p. 8.

CHIUM.¹¹⁴ Since then, the portal, created by the company Archive Information Systems in cooperation with the State Archival Service of Ukraine, has been constantly updated with new digital collections.

Therefore, the problem of providing access to archival documents in Ukraine has undergone a significant transformation throughout recent history and modernity, which reflects the political and social changes in the country that took place after the fall of the Soviet totalitarian regime and gaining independence. They are related to the processes of state democratisation, the response to society's demand for openness, transparency, and free access to archives and archival information.

Summary

The cases discussed above reveal that archives in Central and Eastern Europe have followed a very similar path in terms of accessibility policy. During the communist period, an approach that restricted access to archives and the broad use of political criteria when granting consent to use archives prevailed throughout the Eastern Bloc. Access restrictions applied to both foreigners and citizens of individual socialist countries. This confirms common knowledge that communist governments were highly distrustful of people's ability to search for information that we would now call public. At the same time, it is impossible to state unequivocally that the political transformations taking place during the communist period, including those resulting from changes at the highest echelons of the party, had an impact on the scope of accessible archival materials. However, what seems more important is the attitude of successive teams of party and government authorities towards society as well as the public's protest against the restrictions imposed upon them. Examples include the changes introduced in Polish archives in 1968 (the official introduction of a political factor when deciding on consent to access to archives) and the growing social unrest, which culminated in March of that year.

However, the departmental subordination of archives was of tremendous significance. Much greater freedom of accessibility existed in periods when they were located in ministries dealing with culture or science. At the same time, access criteria were tightened when archives were subject to the so-called 'strong-arm' ministries.

Nevertheless, the doors were opened at different widths in individual countries. It seems that archive-users in Poland enjoyed relatively greater freedom than in the other countries in this study. At the same time, the satellite states had

114 *Mizharkhivnyi poshukovyi portal.*

less restrictive access policies than the Soviet republics. These differences resulted from political differences within the Eastern Bloc.

An important turning point in the transformation was the 1989–1991 period, when the communist system finally collapsed in Europe. However, changes in the 1990s unravelled relatively slowly. The reforms introduced in the operation of archives did not result in an immediate change in the approach taken by archives and the archivists themselves to the accessibility of records. As the presented examples indicate, for many years they continued to strive to limit visitors' access to archival materials or remain attached to procedures introduced in the previous regime. In the case of Belarus, these aspirations continue.

The actual change, correlated with increasingly profound social changes, only occurred in the 21st century, when wider access to archives was granted, copying files was permitted, and records and archival materials themselves began to become available on a large scale *via* the Internet. Modern technologies are increasingly used in archives, making it easier for visitors not only to access records but also to use them – for example, in e-reading rooms or *via* OCR technology.

It should also be emphasised that after 1990, in all the countries discussed, the opening of archives also included wide access to archival materials created by communist parties. This allowed the public to learn about the twists and turns of how the previous system functioned, and many historical works relating to this period were written as a result. It was also part and parcel of coming to terms with the past and individual countries attempting to embark on a new path of development with a 'clean slate'. However, access to the materials of the former security services was restricted, which seemed to result from the strategy adopted in a given country to deal with this legacy and hold those who acted to the detriment of society accountable. A good example is the Institute of National Remembrance restricted collection, which existed until June 2017 and remained secret for the security of the Polish state.

The policy of liberalisation did not mean that restrictions on access to archival materials were completely abolished. However, after the political changes, they ceased to have a political character in most countries. The archives focused on protecting citizens above all by restricting access to sensitive data contained in the archives, whose disclosure could have a negative impact on their lives. The rights of private persons, such as property rights and copyrights, also began to be protected. However, the state's interest is protected to a lesser extent, which basically boils down to limiting access to archival materials covered by secrecy clauses. Traditionally, restrictions are applied due to the need to maintain the integrity of the archival resource.

However, in the 21st century, phenomena began to occur that made access to archives more difficult. The increasing restrictions result primarily from the

growing desire to protect the privacy of private individuals. At the time of writing this chapter, for member states of the European Union, they result primarily from the provisions of the GDPR, which, despite good intentions, sometimes lead to excessive restrictions not only in access to archives but also in their records. It is true to say that sometimes they bear similarities to restrictions that existed in the socialist period, albeit for different reasons.

To sum up, one should mention that the main political upheaval that influenced the policy of archive accessibility was the introduction of the communist system in Central and Eastern Europe after World War II and then its collapse in 1989–1991. Social transformation – the gradual awakening of societies suppressed by the communists and the subsequent evolution towards a civil society – was of much greater importance for the liberalisation of the policy of access to archival materials. This seems to be true for most countries. However, the case of Belarus, which is an authoritarian state ruled by a dictator, indicates that these trends may be stopped or reversed if socio-political changes move, as is currently the case in some European countries, towards ‘strong-arm’ governments limiting civil liberties and protecting themselves against citizens with too much access to knowledge about their activities.

[Translated by Steve Jones]

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Katarzyna Łukasiak

Legal Basis for Document Management in the European Commission

Abstract

This article presents the development of regulations for handling documentation in the European Commission, taking into account selected reasons why particular solutions were adopted. The analysis starts from 2002 and covers the current legal status (as of December 2023). It is contributory in nature and focuses on general regulations applicable to the entire administrative apparatus of the Commission.

Keywords: European Commission; management of records in the European Commission; record management

Introduction

The European Commission (EC) is one of the main bodies of the European Union (EU) and plays a key role in shaping and implementing EU policy. It is an independent institution that serves to implement EU law and safeguard treaties. Correctly recognised as the EU's government, it is its executive body.

How the EC and its administrative apparatus works has been the subject of numerous analyses conducted from very different angles by representatives of various academic disciplines.¹ Investigations of the methods used by its apparatus and internal structure reported the literature do not discuss the broadly understood issue of dealing with documentation as an important part of the institutions scope of activity. It ought to be acknowledged that effective document management is a key element of the EC's work, as it enables the transfer of information, decision-making and supervision of activities within the EU.

This article is contributory in nature, and its primary goal is to draw attention to the currently applicable document management regulations applicable in the

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1 See Witkowska-Chrzczonec: *Pozycja prawna*; Spence et al. (eds.): *The European*; Calka: *Komisja*; Hofmokl: *Pozycja*; Nugent: *The European*; Rewizorski: *Komisja*.

EC and to present some selected examples illustrating the complexity of this phenomenon. This research object requires that this process be viewed from a historical perspective and that the rather specific internal structure of the Commission be taken into account, which determines what solutions have been adopted to standardise office and archival work.

To this end, one simple research method was used, namely criticism and analysis of written material collected – texts, academic literature and legal norms, which form the cornerstone of these considerations.

The article is divided into several parts. The first offers a cursory analysis of the EC's institutional development, while the second one concerns its internal structure – which is particularly relevant because the principles of document management are largely determined by its internal structure. The following sections of the article refer strictly to the EC's document management standards. This is a complex topic and every aspect of office organisation, internal structure, principles of office and archival work, method of performing office work, the circulation of written material and the organisation of the office and archival service could be the subject of separate, in-depth research.

Origin and Institutional Development of the European Commission

The history of the EC reflects the changes taking place in the structures of a Europe in the process of uniting, and its system evolved as such.² Its predecessor in the years 1952–1967 was the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community,³ and the Coal and Steel Community itself was the starting point for the establishment of the following: the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). These communities were established by the Treaty of Rome, which entered into force on 1 January 1958.⁴ Each was given its own institutions. In the case of Euratom, its commission was the management body,⁵ as was the EEC Commission, which had executive functions. The communities' commissions and the High Authority of the ECSC operated as separate institutions until 1967. It was rightly argued then that maintaining a huge apparatus, duplicated in structure and separate for each of

2 Witkowska-Chrzczonec: *Pozycja prawna*, p. 25.

3 The High Authority of the ECSC was the executive body of the ECSC established under Article 7 of the Treaty of Paris, which established the ECSC, signed on 18 April 1951.

4 *Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community* [1957].

5 The Euratom Commission operated from 1958 to 1967. Under the Treaty establishing a single Council and a single Commission of the European Communities, its jurisdiction was taken over by the Commission of the European Communities, and then the European Commission from 1992 under the Maastricht Treaty.

the communities, seemed inappropriate from the very beginning. Therefore, upon signing the Treaty of Rome, they approved an additional convention establishing a merger – the establishment of certain common institutions for the European Communities. As regards the Commission, their merger took place in the second stage of structure unification.⁶ The Merger Treaty of 8 April 1965 established, among others, a single and common commission – The European Community Commission.⁷ This state of affairs came into force in 1967, and from that moment on, the three European Communities had four common bodies – including the European Community Commission. The current EC has been operating under this name since the Maastricht Treaty came into force (1 November 1993) and the establishment of the EU.⁸

To sum up the above brief and systemic considerations regarding the genesis of the Commission, we must remember the achievements of its predecessors. It was their organisation and experiences that shaped its internal administrative system, including procedures for handling documentation. The EC gradually grew in terms of its members, the degree of specialisation of its administration and the number of officials employed there.⁹ In the context of the research undertaken, the key factors include the influence of individual Member States, the reforms of the Presidents as well as the local and state administrative systems, which have changed over the years and therefore could have influenced the form of archival work performed in the EC as well as its adopted rules of office.

The Internal Structure of the European Commission

The European Commission, as the central body in the European decision-making process, plays a key role in shaping EU policy. After the Treaty of Lisbon came into force, the legal basis for its operations is contained in Art. 13, 17 *Treaty on European Union* and Art. 244–250 *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*.¹⁰ It also has internal regulations, which play a special role in office matters. The importance of the EC's decisions and the implementing acts issued

6 Galster (ed.): *Podstawy*, pp. 47–48.

7 *Treaty Establishing a Single Council and a Single Commission of the European Communities* [1965].

8 The Maastricht Treaty established the European Union, but it did not end the existence of either the EEC (the name was changed to the European Community) or Euroatom. This treaty formally separated the concepts of 'European Union' and 'European Communities'. Only after the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force in 2009 were the above-mentioned Community organisations transformed into a single European organisation under a common name – the European Union, in: Galster (ed.): *Podstawy*, p. 66.

9 Witkowska-Chrzczonec: *Pozycja prawna*, pp. 53–54.

10 Rewizorski: *Komisja*, p. 267.

on their basis ought to be emphasised, as they largely regulate the principles of office and archival work within its apparatus.

The EC system, as previously underlined, evolved organically, and institutional changes were succeeded by shifts in its internal structure. Over the years, the procedure for appointing its members, the composition of the Commission itself and the structure of its subordinate units also underwent modifications.

Analysis of the internal structure of the EC in the context of its office structure is particularly relevant, to which end it ought to be perceived as a hybrid institution that defies easy description. As rightly argued in the literature, it can be viewed as a college of commissioners headed by a president, acting as an initiator of European integration, and at other times as a 'bureaucratic supercenter administering the EU' mediating between the interests of member states.¹¹

The organisation of the EC is quite complex, as its operations are directed by the College of Commissioners headed by the President and is divided into thematic departments, the so-called Directorates-General. Specific administrative matters are handled by additional EC services and the programmes established by it are managed by executive agencies. This structure employs approximately 32,000 full-time and contract employees. They include policy officials, academics, lawyers and translators who are part of the European civil service.¹²

The most important body is the College of Commissioners, which manages the work of the EC. Currently, it comprises a team of 27 commissioners,¹³ who make joint decisions that set the political direction of its operations.

The College of Commissioners operates under the political direction of the President. Moving down the hierarchy, vice-presidents come next, followed by commissioners – ministers in the EU government. This structure of the College of Commissions is supported by cabinets modelled on the French civil service and established to support commissioners in their work.¹⁴

The commissioners' cabinets, defined in the literature as the 'political arm of the Commission', play a key role in the mechanism of the EC's work. In accordance with the internal regulations, each commissioner has a cabinet, intended to assist their work and prepare the decisions to be taken by the committees, and the rules regarding the composition of the cabinet and how it operates are established by the President.¹⁵

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 322–323.

12 *Commission Staff*.

13 *Treaty on European Union*, Art. 17 (4).

14 Rewizorski: *Komisja*, p. 271.

15 *Rules of Procedure of the European Commission*, Art. 19 (earlier versions of the *Rules of Procedure* in Art. 16 referred to the Cabinet of Commissioners as "personal staff to assist in its work and in the preparation of Commission decisions").

Members of the cabinet are the commissioner's most trusted and close collaborators – secretaries, assistants, advisors, and experts. Although the composition of the cabinet has undergone transformation over the years in connection with numerous reforms within the Commission,¹⁶ it should be stated that they have developed from minor 'commissioner's secretarial offices' towards a significant and quite extensive mechanism that shapes EU policy.¹⁷ Today, the office staff numbers from around 20 to 30 people.¹⁸

The cabinet members are highly qualified. The flow of information seems to play the key role in how the offices function. It is the members of the cabinet who inform the commissioner about the state of knowledge on a given topic, as well as about planned, current and future issues discussed in plenary.¹⁹ Records managers play a special role in this structure. Currently – and this ought to be emphasised – each cabinet employs documentation managers and archivists. In the offices of the president and his or her deputies, it is standard practice to employ more than one specialist in this field and at least one manager or archivist in other offices.

The vast majority are document management specialists, although there are cases when only an archivist is employed or someone holding the position of documentation manager and archivist at the same time.²⁰ Regardless of the nomenclature, a duplication of responsibilities may be observed: managing documentation and archives, preparing files for College of Commissioners meetings and for the weekly Heads of Cabinet meetings and senior members of the cabinet ('Hebdo'), and processing applications to access documents. It should be emphasised that the documentation manager is also a local security officer (LSO), a specialist in the Code of Good Administrative Procedure, a liaison inspector for legal affairs and data protection, and a coordinator of IT resources and legislative processes.²¹

The organisation of work and the internal structure of cabinets largely depend on the preferences and habits of commissioners or the head of their cabinets. Due

16 *Inter alia*, Prodi's reform. During his term in office he carried out an internal reform of the Commission aimed at, among others, internationalisation of offices and reducing the number of their employees. He introduced, *inter alia*, the principle that the head of the Cabinet or his deputy should not come from the same country as the commissioner, see Witkowska-Chrzczonowicz: *Komisja*, pp. 236–237.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 243.

18 Analysis based on the composition of the Commissioners' Cabinets (as of 30.10.2023), see *The Commissioners*.

19 Witkowska-Chrzczonowicz: *Pozycja prawna*, pp. 242–244.

20 Documents management officer/archives; Document management officer (DMO); Archives; Document management specialist; Archives, see *The Commissioners*.

21 Analysis based on the composition of the Commissioners' Cabinets, see *The Commissioners*.

to the multitude of duties that befall commissioners and their apparatus, cabinets are a key element linking commissioners with relevant services.

Commissioners also head thematic departments called Directorates-General (DG), which are responsible for different policy areas.²² They perform a number of functions and play a key role in the extensive administrative apparatus of the EC.

DGs are therefore an integral cog of the structure of the organised administrative apparatus of the EC, which are often identified with ministries in state structures. Their formidable role in the process of creating EU law and shaping policy is particularly centred on the flow of information between the various structures of the EC. Depending on the number and complexity of the tasks entrusted to them, they employ on average from 150 to 500 permanent employees.²³ The DGs are headed by directors general who report directly to commissioners (it is not a rule that one commissioner reports to one DG, which may, to some extent, affect the efficiency of work or the flow of information). Structurally, DGs are split into smaller directorates and these, in turn, into departments. Most of them are divided into three to six directorates, although there are some that exceed this average.²⁴ Their gravitas of their role, their increasing number of tasks and the prospect of EU expansion also oblige them to perform strictly technical work, such as collecting information, preparing reports, which translates into dynamic shifts in their system. Over the years and as a result of numerous internal reforms, their number has fluctuated.²⁵ There are currently 34 DGs across the EC.²⁶ Each includes units responsible for document management in the office and archives, as well as employees responsible for organising office and archival work.²⁷ This is confirmed not only by legal acts regulating how documentation is to be handled (discussed later in the chapter) – internal documents of individual DGs – but also by numerous initiatives and reforms aimed at rationalising work and information flow. This requires thorough analysis, and detailed research in this area would allow for a full illustration of the practices in force. It is also worth adding that DGs, as part of the EC's Digital strategy, take numerous actions aimed at eliminating paper (*Paperless Ini-*

22 DGs develop, manage and implement EU policies, regulations and funding programmes, see *How the Commission is Organised*.

23 Witkowska-Chrzczonec: *Pozycja prawna*, p. 246.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 247.

25 In 1958 there were nine DGs. Between 1999–2004, the chairman of the Commission, Romano Prodi, proposed reducing the number of directorates from 42 to 36, and in 2008 there were 28 of them, see Witkowska-Chrzczonec: *Pozycja prawna*, pp. 247–249. In 2012, a 29th DG was added to the EC, see Rewizorski: *Komisja*, pp. 295–296.

26 *Departments and Executive Agencies*.

27 See, *inter alia*: *Annual Activity Report 2022*, p. 49; *Annual Activity Report 2021*, pp. 82–83.

*tatives*²⁸). Some report on successes in this area, steps or action undertaken to achieve the digital transformation of the Commission and, as a result, the wider use of ICT tools and electronic documents.

A special role in the structure of the entire EC is played by the Secretariat-General (SG), an institution that offers administrative support for its entire apparatus. It operates alongside DGs and performs a number of tasks.²⁹ It plays a key role in ensuring the smooth functioning of the Commission and the implementation of its work. It provides administrative support, offers a channel of two-way communication between commissioners and services, supervises inter-ministerial coordination, and ensures information security.³⁰ These are not the only tasks that befall the SG, and its key area of jurisdiction in the area of interest here is what may be broadly termed the management of EC documentation, for which the Transparency, Document Management and Access to documents department is responsible.³¹

The significant role played by the SG in how the Commission functions involves coordinations the development of procedures for handling documentation. It is the SG that coordinates the internal activities of the Commission. It oversees the flow of information and cooperation between individual EC units and EU institutions. It formulates good practices and proposes changes to improve all aspects of the EC's work, including document management. Importantly, the SG is the first element of the EC's administrative structure, where all letters and applications, including from other institutions, are sent. They are not immediately redirected towards the relevant DGs, but officials working in the SG are acquainted with them and send them to the appropriate Directorates.³²

One may assume that local experience and the traditions of the Chairman of the Commission or its Director General have a significant influence on the development of management processes (which certainly affects the handling of documentation) in the SG. The SG development strategy for 2020–2024 under the leadership of President Ursula von der Leyen includes optimisation and digitisation of processes *via* information systems, as well as the wider use of electronic signatures and artificial intelligence to improve overall process efficiency.³³ In turn, a *communiqué* from 2016 on data, information and knowledge management recognised that data, information and knowledge are the EC's key assets.³⁴

28 E.g.: *Management Plan 2023*, p. 28.

29 *Secretariat-General*.

30 Spence et al. (eds.): *The European*, p. 75.

31 *SG Organisational Chart*.

32 Witkowska-Chrzczonec: *Pozycja prawna*, p. 258.

33 *Strategic Plans*, p. 50.

34 *Communication to the Commission; Strategic Plans*, p. 51.

Hence, the jurisdiction of a documentation manager will likely be expanded to include duties related to broadly understood data management.³⁵

In addition to the DGs responsible for implementing Commission policy in specific areas, and the SG, which plays a key role in ensuring coherence, the EC has given rise to a number of services³⁶ constituting an organised administrative apparatus that assist the Commission. Their legal status and system is complex. Some of them report directly to the commissioners, others to the president. Like DGs, their number and scope of responsibilities vary.³⁷ The current composition of the EC services includes 14 institutions and six executive agencies.³⁸ These services deal with administrative matters, while the executive agencies implement the programs established by the Commission.³⁹

A special niche in this structure is occupied by the Historical Archives Service (HAS), which reports to the commissioner. Since its establishment in 1983, which requires a broader context,⁴⁰ its goal has been to manage the historical heritage of the EC. It is based in Brussels and currently employs 40 people. The responsibilities of HAS include collecting EC documentation, processing and storing it, providing access to archival records older than 30 years, and then transferring the archives to the European University Institute in Florence (EUI) for long-term storage. Archivists create numerous internet tools and search engines that assist the sharing and use of resources.⁴¹ HAS can claim to bridge the

35 “In implementing the corporate data governance and data policies, the Secretariat-General’s local data management team will identify and designate the data owner and the data steward(s), and instruct them to share and keep up to date the metadata of their data assets in the EC’s data catalogue (once operational). Where needed, data owners will design and document processes for data collection/creation, acquisition, access, sharing, use, processing preservation, deletion, quality, protection and security. The information systems providers will make any necessary changes to the information systems used for storing, managing and disseminating these data assets to implement the aforementioned requirements and processes. The Secretariat-General will also put in place an informal data governance board which will provide a space where staff with data related roles (such as the local data correspondent, the data protection coordinator, the document management officer, the local security officer, the information resource manager and the intellectual property rights correspondent) can coordinate related activities, and share knowledge and experience, hence helping the Secretariat-General advance with the implementation of the data policies”, *Strategic Plans*, p. 52.

36 *Rules of Procedure of the European Commission*, Art. 21.

37 Witkowska-Chrzczonec: *Pozycja prawna*, p. 262.

38 *Departments and Executive Agencies*.

39 *How the Commission is Organised*.

40 The year 1983 was particularly important. At that time, a strategy was established for storing documentation, archiving it and permanently storing it in a specially established unit: the Historical Archives of the European Union. The establishment of HAS is therefore the result of a broader policy regarding access to files and the regulation of the documentation management process in Community bodies.

41 *Historical Archives Service; The Mission; Les archives*.

gap between the Commission and the academic community and public opinion and is identified as the guardian of the EC's documentary heritage, which makes an important contribution to building the future of the EU.

The role of HAS in the process of shaping the permanent documentary legacy of the EC should be underlined. If necessary, and in situations specified in the Common Commission-Level Retention List for European Commission files (which will be discussed later in the work), it conducts a review (valuation) of the collected records, files and archival records in cooperation with the Directorate General or equivalent service from which they originate, or its successor.⁴² From an academic point of view, this service deserves analysis because it defies easy characterisation. One might say that it plays a key role in the document management process throughout the EC's apparatus, having been established as an intermediate repository.

In addition, the Commission, throughout its extremely extensive structure, maintains numerous offices and representations in all Member States and over 120 third countries and international organisations.⁴³

Document Management in the European Commission: Legal Basis⁴⁴

The wide administrative apparatus of the EC requires appropriate action and decisions regarding the effective and transparent flow of information. The important role played by the Commission's office management in this context, the principles by which the documentation of completed cases is handled, its organisation and the factors that have shaped it have not as yet been the subject of a separate academic analysis.

While the document management procedures of the modern EC consist of the provisions of Internal Regulations, Commission Decisions and implementing acts issued on their basis – and they largely unify the standards of document management throughout the entire apparatus – its origins do require some thorough research.⁴⁵ The process of forming principles for the EC's office and

42 *Commission Decision of 6 July 2020*, Art. 16.

43 Barcz et al.: *System instytucjonalny*, pp. III.50–III.53.

44 In 2010, the European Commission published the current rules governing document management in a single volume. The purpose of bringing them together in one volume was to make them more accessible and easier to navigate, thereby facilitating their application in the day-to-day work. The publication contains all the regulations in force in the Commission at the beginning of 2010; see European Commission: *Document Management*.

45 At this stage of the research, it was not possible to determine what had been done previously in this area. This does not mean that no action was taken. However, this requires thorough research and a detailed analysis of the source material, which will certainly be the next stage of research on the EC's office space.

archival work should be examined more broadly and deeper into the past, starting from when the High Authority of the ECSC and the Commissions of the other ECs were established. While the EU institutions of the time, including the Commission *via* the SG, organised office procedures, including the reception, registration, transfer of incoming documentation, its further circulation and archiving, none of the institutions of the then European Communities in the initial period considered developing long-term strategies for storing archival records and procedures for removing documentation unnecessary for current operations and without historical, legal or administrative value. It was only in 1977, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the ECSC, that a more reflective stance was adopted. The then Chairman of the Commission, Roy Jenkins, took the initiative to open the archives of the three European Communities (including the EC Commission) to the general public and to introduce archival services. Roy Jenkins, as a historian, was aware of the need to preserve sources. Moreover, he was an advocate of opening archives to the public, thus wanting to promote the idea of European integration. These were not the only motives, and the others were determined by the development of international organisations and the idea of opening resources to society.⁴⁶

His declaration went hand in hand with administrative reforms initiated by British Deputy Secretary-General Christopher Audland to establish an effective archival service at the Commission.⁴⁷ This is not without significance because on 18 March 1986, the Commission Decision (No. SEC (86) 388) on the management of its documents entered into force. This may be assumed to be an implementing act in response to the Council Regulation (EEC, EURATOM) No. 354/83 of 1 February 1983 concerning the opening of historical archive materials of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community for public inspection. Pursuant to Art. 9, “each institution may establish detailed rules for applying this regulation internally”.⁴⁸ Taking into account the above, one may think that the decision of 1983 organised the rules at that time for dealing with European Community Commission documentation.⁴⁹ This decision remained in force until 2002, when new regulations were adopted on 23 January 2002, regulating document management in the Commission until 2021.

Thus, at the beginning of the 21st century, rules regarding office work were included in the EC’s Internal Regulations and in the above-mentioned Decision of 2002. The first defined, among others, the procedure for authenticating Commission documents (Art. 18), the written procedure for making Commis-

46 Schlenker: *Integrating*, pp. 53–54.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

48 *Council Regulation (EEC, Euratom) No. 354/83*.

49 This topic requires thorough academic research. At present, this chapter does not undertake a detailed analysis in this respect.

sion decisions (Art. 12), the responsibilities of the Secretary General who, according to the provisions of that time, was responsible for ensuring the necessary coordination between services at the preparatory stage and ensured compliance with the rules regarding the submission of documents (Art. 17). It is also worth mentioning that the attached Code of Good Administrative Conduct for EC staff in their dealings with the general public regulates the rules whereby documents submitted to the Commission in various forms and through various channels are handled. These were not office regulations describing how to perform particular office jobs but were instead provisions regulating various procedures, such as how to deal with inquiries delivered by letter, e-mail, telephone, mass media, or requests for access to EC documents. It is worth noting that both the regulations and the above-mentioned code emphasise that the Commission and its entire apparatus are obliged to make decisions in a coordinated manner. Therefore, cooperation between the Commission services at every stage of handling a case, and therefore its documentation, must be planned.

Considering that every form of the EC's work involves preparing documents that must be managed on the basis of uniform principles for all directorates-general and services, it changed its Internal Regulations in 2002 by adding a *Provisions on document management* annex.⁵⁰ These standards were in force throughout its apparatus until 2020 and, significantly, were adopted during the times of Romano Prodi, considered an effective reformer of its internal system. An important aspect was the appeal to the EC's leadership and services to establish an organisational structure – both for individual units and the institution as a whole – that would coordinate the offices of the entire Commission as well as its individual offices. It was rightly concluded that only such a system would make it possible to implement uniform document management procedures and then supervise this process. In order to implement the above in accordance with the regulations, it was obliged to establish at least one document management centre in each unit of the Commission and to appoint an official who would be responsible, *inter alia*, for horizontal coordination between these centres and other interested parties. Document management officials appointed in each unit of the Commission, in accordance with Art. 11 formed an interdepartmental group of document management headed by the Secretary General. The task was to coordinate the process of implementing the principles of document management, work together on their regulatory provisions, conducting training and considering all matters.⁵¹

In addition to guidelines on the organisation and structures responsible for document management in the Commission, the 2002 framework regulations

50 *Commission Decision of 23 January 2002*, p. 23.

51 *Ibid.*

defined the concept of documents and files,⁵² the general principles of document management, describing in particular registration, filing, storage, appraisal and transfer to the historical archives. These generally defined rules were intended to enable the preparation, receipt and storage of documents, their identification as well as the easy exchange of information. The regulations required the Secretary General to adopt and update regulatory provisions, taking into account, *inter alia*, technological and scientific development – including archive studies and community research in this area. Significantly, the standardisation of document circulation within the Commission services and the need to ensure access to archival records and documents formed the basis for changes in internal standards for individual units. Directors-General and heads of services were responsible for their implementation. It is also worth adding that responsibility for the coordination of this process lay with the SG, which, in cooperation with the directors general and heads of services, was responsible for compliance with the regulations.⁵³

It has been frequently underlined that the well organised Commission's office management is supposed not only to facilitate information exchange, but above all to facilitate and provide immediate information on matters for which the Commission is accountable.⁵⁴ To this end, the Commission was already striving to simplify and modernise office and archiving procedures, planning to introduce electronic archiving based on a set of uniform rules and procedures applicable to all its services.⁵⁵ The path towards an 'e-Commission' described in a white paper issued in 2000 confirmed these intentions, which consequently led to a concerted effort to implement IT systems to electronically manage documents and procedures.⁵⁶

The transformation towards the e-Commission began at the beginning of the 21st century, and in 2004 – two years after the adoption of framework rules for office and archival work applicable throughout the EC's apparatus – procedures for dealing with electronic and digitized (digital) documents were already standardised. The procedure was similar. Upon the Commission's decision is-

52 A “document shall mean any content drawn up or received by the Commission concerning a matter relating to the policies, activities and decisions falling within the institution's competence and in the framework of its official tasks, in whatever medium (written on paper or stored in electronic form or as a sound, visual or audio-visual recording)”. The second, key concept, defines a file as follows: a ‘file shall mean the core around which the documents are organised in line with the institution's activities, for reasons of proof, justification or information and to guarantee efficiency in the work”, *Ibid.*

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Ibid.*

55 *Commission Decision of 7 July 2004*, p. 9.

56 *Reforming the Commission*.

sued on 7 July 2004, its internal rules were amended by adding, as an annex, the Commission's provisions on electronic and digitised documents.⁵⁷

They defined the conditions to be met in terms of the authenticity, integrity, inviolability, availability and reliability of electronic documents and to be applied to documents created or received by the Commission throughout its apparatus. In standardising the nomenclature, the following concepts were defined: electronic document,⁵⁸ document digitisation, life cycle of a document,⁵⁹ EC's document system⁶⁰ as well as electronic signature. On this basis, the EC regulated the reliability of electronic documents, electronic procedures and the rules for sending documents *via* any means of electronic communication – fax, e-mail, electronic form or through a website. Only when a specific provision of EU or national law or agreement required the use of specific forms of transmission or specific formalities did those provisions apply. This growing documentation within the EC's apparatus was to be kept for the entire required period in appropriate conditions. Firstly, documents should be kept in the form in which they had been prepared, sent or received. Secondly, the technical conditions for storing electronic documentation are supposed to ensure the integrity and availability of the collected information and metadata throughout the management period. These objectives are to be achieved by a special electronic storage system covering the entire life cycle of documents, while respecting the security rules applicable to the Commission. This required ensuring appropriate security measures to safeguard IT systems and any personal data stored.⁶¹

The Directors-General and Heads of Service of the Commission were charged with the application of these provisions, and they were obliged to take the necessary measures to develop, implement and then use a system that would implement the above standards, in accordance with Art. 8 and in coordination with the directorates-general and services and then adopted by the Secretary-General in consultation with the Director-General for IT. It is worth adding that the latter was obliged to implement the system in compliance with the provisions of the above decision and update implementing standards in accordance with the de-

57 *Commission Decision of 7 July 2004*, p. 9.

58 “electronic document: a data-set input or stored on any type of medium by a computer system or a similar mechanism, which can be read or displayed by a person or by such a system or mechanism, and any display or retrieval of such data in printed or other form”, *Ibid.*

59 “life cycle of a document: all the stages or periods in the life of a document from the time it is received or formally drawn up within the meaning of Article 4 of the provisions on document management until its transfer to the EC's historical archives and its opening to the public or until its destruction within the meaning of Article 7 of the said provisions”, *Ibid.*

60 “EC's document system: all documents, files and metadata drawn up, received, recorded, classified and stored by the Commission”, *Ibid.*

61 *Ibid.*

velopment of information technologies and new tasks befalling the Commission.⁶²

Until 2021, the above decisions, resulting in the Commission changing its internal regulations to include provisions on document management in 2002 and provisions on electronic and digital documents in 2004, constituted a common set of rules and procedures applicable to all services. These were not the only regulations organising the EC's office management. Pursuant to Art. 12 of the 2002 regulations a directive was given to issue regulatory provisions. In the initial period, until 2009, as many as five acts of this type were adopted, covering the entire life cycle of a document, regardless of the medium.⁶³ At the same time, it was emphasised that effective implementation of regulatory provisions depends on well-organised document management in each service, employee training and modern electronic document management and archiving systems. Therefore, a natural obstacle standing in the way of harmonious implementation of these regulations was their dispersion, which is why in 2009 a simplified standard came into force which regulated the office and archival policy of the entire EC in a transparent, legible and individual manner. The extensive regulatory act – Implementing Rules for Decision 2002/47/EC, ECSC, Euratom on document management and for the Decision 2004/563/EC, Euratom on electronic and digitized documents – issued in 2009 met the requirements in terms of ensuring a coherent system to manage documentation throughout its life cycle.⁶⁴

Another executive act, which is extremely relevant from the point of view of document management, issued pursuant to Art. 6 of the 2002 regulations and regulatory provisions, was the common Commission-level retention list for European Commission files (CRL). Its first version was adopted in 2007, then revised in 2012,⁶⁵ followed by another revision five years later, in 2019.⁶⁶ The latest one from 2022, the so-called the third revision of the CRL, aimed to simplify and update it in view of changes in law and personal data protection requirements.⁶⁷

According to the definition adopted in the regulatory acts, CRL is a “regulatory document that sets the conditions and retention periods for the various types of Commission files. The common retention list is applicable to all Commission departments”.⁶⁸ The qualification of documentation adopted for the

62 Ibid.

63 *Registration and Keeping Registers of the Institution's Documents; Filing and the Management of the Institution's Files; Preservation of the Institution's Files; Appraisal and Transfer of files to the EC's Historical Archives; Electronic and Digitised Documents.*

64 *Implementing Rules for Decision 2002/47/EC, ECSC, Euratom.*

65 *Common Commission-Level Retention List for European Commission Files.*

66 *Common Commission-Level Retention List for European Commission Files – second revision.*

67 *Common Commission-Level Retention List for European Commission Files – third revision.*

68 *Implementing Rules for Decision 2002/47/EC, ECSC.*

needs of the European Commission from an academic point of view requires thorough analysis. Throughout the entire administrative apparatus of the Commission, this documentation is organised in the form of a storage schedule and is based on classification, thematically distinct matters undertaken at a high level, grouped into categories according to specific work of the Commission and that reflect the types of documentation created. The CRL structure is rather complex. Each thematic group of documentation is assigned a unique code/character, which in the columns that follow contains a quite detailed explanation of the content. Storage periods refer to the so-called administrative retention period (ARP) and archival. The former, ARP, is the period of storage of documentation in the unit's registry, in the directorate or service that produces it, and results from the provisions of law, explained in detail and specified precisely in years due to, for example, the need to process personal data. Then, the CRL indicates possible action to be taken depending on the type of documentation. The documentation evaluation process consists of a first and second review. The first takes place at the end of the storage period in the APR and applies to all documentation and ends with its disposal or transfer to the historical archive of the Commission, in some cases after sampling or selection.⁶⁹ In the historical archive, a second inspection may take place if the regulations require it. It is also worth adding that at this stage a large part of the materials are classified as permanent storage. If the procedures require that selected categories of documentation be subjected to a second review, it must take place no later than 25 years after the files are closed.⁷⁰

The SG is responsible for the implementation and updating of the CRL within the Commission structures, in close cooperation with all departments, taking into account the organisational context and legal obligations.

69 "Selection is a particular form of appraisal where the aim is to preserve a certain number of files on the basis of subjective criteria (importance, media impact, etc. of the activities covered by a file's content). The files are not necessarily representative for the larger body from which they were selected." *Common Commission-Level Retention List for European Commission Files – second revision*, p. 3.

70 See *Retention, Transfer and Elimination*, in: *Implementing Rules for Decision C(2020) 4482*, pp. 25–32; *Common Commission-Level Retention List for European Commission Files – third revision*.

Currently Applicable Document Management Regulations in the European Commission

The currently applicable catalogue of regulations regarding EC document management consists of the following:

- Commission Decision on document management and archives.⁷¹
- Commission Implementing Rules on document management and archives.⁷²
- Third revision of the Common Commission-level retention list for European Commission files.⁷³
- Privacy statement concerning the management and (short- and medium-term) preservation of Commission documents.⁷⁴
- Privacy statement concerning the management and long-term preservation of the European EC's archives.⁷⁵

The first of them, the decision on the management of documentation and archival records, came into force in 2021 and repealed the previously analysed provisions from 2002 and 2004, added as annexes to the Internal Regulations of the EC. In line with its recitals, it was underlined that throughout the entire apparatus records⁷⁶ (which is a broader concept than a document) should be managed in a uniform manner, requiring that all staff members be responsible for their proper management in terms of the policies, processes and procedures for which they are responsible.⁷⁷ Comparing this regulation with previous ones, it is more extensive and detailed. It defines the necessary concepts, discusses the process of creation, digitisation, capture, registration, filing plan, requirements for computerised processes and systems, the legal effects of electronic signatures, seals, timestamps and registered delivery services, the validity of documents and procedures, the provision of data and information within the Commission as well as security issues. In terms of managing archival records, it outlines the principles of storage and preservation, as well as disposal and transfer to the archive. What is also relevant is that it indicates the responsibilities of the HAS established within the structure and to defines the rules for transferring archival records to the EUJ.

71 *Commission Decision of 6 July 2020.*

72 *Implementing Rules for Decision C(2020) 4482.*

73 *Common Commission-Level Retention List for European Commission Files – third revision.*

74 Privacy statement concerning the management and (short and medium-term) preservation of Commission documents.

75 *Document Management and Archival Policy.*

76 “record means information, received and created in the form of a document, a collection of data or other form in a digital or analogue medium that is captured in an official repository and managed and maintained as evidence and as an asset”, *Commission Decision of 6 July 2020*, Art. 3.

77 *Ibid.*, recitals 1 and 27.

Legal regulations regarding the processing of personal data contained in archival records are also mentioned. It is also worth adding that the regulatory recitals of this decision largely refer to the Community system of personal data protection and meet the legal requirements in this regard. All employees were instructed to implement the decision, but it is worth emphasising that, similarly to the 2002 standards, an order was issued to organise a network of document management officers, whose main task was to maintain a modern and effective records management system in the subordinate unit and coordinate with other services under the supervision of the SG, which in turn was responsible for the application of this decision and the adoption of the corresponding regulatory provisions.

The remaining standards create a catalog of regulatory acts to the above decision and impose obligations arising from EU provisions on the protection of personal data. Therefore, the second of them contains the regulatory provisions issued pursuant to Art. 22 of the 2020 Decision and – in accordance with the idea of developing regulatory provisions – implement, specify and explain in detail the general provision contained therein. This is a highly detailed act relating to the entire life cycle of a document with explanations and instructions for performing specific office tasks, principles for office work and archival policy, explaining the issues of valuation, storage in current archives, in the historical archives of the Commission and the EUI. As a consequence of its adoption, the regulatory provisions from 2009 lost their binding force and, compared to this regulation, were simplified. However, this should be a separate topic of research.

Another regulation in document management is the aforementioned CRL, and the last two outline the principles of personal data processing. They provide information about the office work to be undertaken and, therefore, about the processes to which data is subjected throughout a document's life cycle. One of them explains the purpose, legal legitimacy, processes, processing time of personal data collected in the documentation during the first stage of management (in the office), while the other deals with the archive, taking into account the importance of temporary and perpetual storage.

Summary

The principles regarding how documentation should be handled have evolved due to a number of factors. Particular attention should be directed towards the complexity of EC structure, which in turn affects the document management process. Its apparatus comprises a vast array of organisational units which, in accordance with applicable regulations, manage documentation in a coordinated and, as a rule, uniform manner. The high document management standards, regulated internally, as well as the organised service of documentation managers

and archivists working in horizontal and vertical structures should be positively appraised. One ought to keep in mind that the EC (as well as other EU bodies) strives to create open data systems that coordinate all efforts towards creating uniform rules for dealing with documentation throughout the EU structure. Therefore, the regulation of office and archival work should be comprehensively repeated and positively appraised, so that each stage of the documentation life cycle clearly refers to the most important objective: the creation and preservation of historical sources.

Furthermore, each of the discussed aspects of office or archival work requires and deserves its own thorough academic analysis. Research in this area should take into account factors that have long been influential, such as the specific circumstances of operation involving the need to adapt to the requirements of multilingualism, the need to coordinate the efforts of commissioners and subordinate officials from 27 Member States with different administrative traditions and various documentation cultures. It is also important to note the position of its members and their influence on the solutions adopted in the internal running of the institution, and therefore the impact of local or state office and archive systems. These issues are perfectly illustrated by the EU's motto 'United in diversity', which reflects the essence of the EU as a specific international organisation which, on the one hand, strives to unite the efforts of member states to achieve common goals, and, on the other hand, takes into account their specificity. This 'unity in diversity' refers to various aspects of operation, including the document management procedures of Union bodies, including the Commission.

[Translated by Steve Jones]

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Social Changes

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Community Archives and Change: The Motivation For, and Impacts Of, Independent Archival Activity¹

Abstract

Community archives are grassroots, independent documentation initiatives. This chapter focuses on the motivations behind creating community archives and their impact, particularly focusing on documenting and provoking change. The chapter describes several examples of Polish community archives on various topics with diverse types of collections. The author also emphasises how social archives have changed and evolved in recent years in Poland.

Keywords: community archives; independent archives; social change; documenting change; stories of everyday life

It is difficult to find one coherent, concise and clear definition of the term *community archive* in the literature. Yet, this term has been used in archival science for decades, especially in regions such as Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. From the very outset, researchers (as well as practitioners) had difficulty defining it, a situation that still holds true today. This can be proven by two quite recent scientific articles: literature reviews written at a very similar time which, besides the existing definitions, also describe problems related to understanding and describing the term *community archive*. One article was written by Welland and Cossham in 2019² while the second was penned by Poole in 2020.³ Significantly, not only are both of these articles written in English, but they also only analyse definitions and descriptions of the phenomenon made in English, ignoring other languages. Although neither article offers a brief answer as to what community archives are, both of them definitely point to the fact

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2 Welland et. al.: *Defining the Undefinable*, pp. 617–634.

3 Poole: *The Information*, pp. 657–687.

that it is a problematic, ‘umbrella’ term, that varies depending on the context and is obscure, yet at the same time relevant and with its own historical background.

Polish also has an equivalent of this term – *archiwum społeczne*, where the word *społeczne* can be understood as “relating to society or a part of it; created by society and shared by it; designed to serve the public; working selflessly and voluntarily for the good of some community; organized by some community independently, without the participation of the state”.⁴ Therefore, the Polish version of the term does not refer to community, like the English version, but rather emphasises features such as grassroots activity, focus on the common good and common property, in a spirit that is voluntaristic and non-state in nature. Polish researchers and the entire archival community involved in community archives (including the archivists themselves) are yet to conclude what the definition of a ‘community archive’ is. Perhaps there will never be one, because, like in the UK or US, Poland is moving away from creating strict, ‘textbook’ definitions of a community archive in favour of a broad and inclusive understanding of this diverse area. Time will tell whether this is the right path and what consequences it may have in the future – for example, in the context of creating a community archive network, researching or teaching about them, or building their image.

Nevertheless, in this text, with reference to how this term is traditionally defined in Poland, and in order to ensure appropriate inclusiveness, I understand community archives as independent, grassroots initiatives for the collection and long-term preservation of broadly understood archival materials, often run by non-governmental organisations, and sometimes by informal groups and individuals too. The defining features are grass-roots action, independence and the collection of certain materials with the intention of long term preservation.

The text focuses particularly on the Polish context of how social archives function and landscape of community archives. It is based primarily on an analysis of academic literature and other publicly available sources and on a re-analysis of interviews with community archivists recorded as part of the *Community Archives in Poland – Multiple Case Study* project in 2016–2019.⁵

In this chapter, change drives the narrative about community archives in a particular way. Although it was not a separate analytical category in the 2016–2019 project, the presence of this category both in the literature and, above all, in interviews with community archivists turned out to be so relevant that it became a significant reason for initiating another research project regarding community

4 Społeczny.

5 The project itself, financed by the National Science Centre, Poland, lasted from 2016 to 2019. In 2015, the first interview was recorded as a pilot study (without funding), while the last interview was recorded in 2018, before the final phase of the project. Wiśniewska-Drewniak: Inaczej to zniknie.

archives in Poland: *The Impact of Independent Community Archives*, which began in October 2023.

It is worth returning to why community archives are created and underlining that they are not the result of state, local government, church, etc. authorities. In this sense, they are created bottom-up and independently, although in practice they may cooperate to varying degrees with institutions representing the *de facto* 'authority' and might be financed and controlled by it (e.g., local municipal libraries, local government cultural centres). Community archives are not created top-down by decree, but are completely voluntary. They did not need to be created, and yet someone took the decision to do so and then made the effort to start a documentation project; often without any education or experience in this field. That is why the question about the reasons for this kind of independent archival activity is so important, including in the theoretical aspect.

Two clear aspects exist that link community archives and change in the context of the emergence of independent documentation initiatives, their goals and objectives, and origin stories. Firstly, this concerns archives created because of occurring transformations and in order to document them. "It used to be different, and then it changed" – these are, for example, initiatives aimed at documenting the past that is, by definition, different from the present, sometimes for the sake of sentiment and nostalgia, but also to build a narrative around the passage of time and the ubiquitous, increasingly rapid shift in different areas of life. Showing the past and its 'otherness' may also be a source of entertainment, but it can also constitute a means of building an identity based on the past – for example, building a narrative along the lines of "here we were, now here we are". "It's about to change / it's changing as we speak – we need to record it!" – this is another motivation behind the creation of many community archives, observing the changes taking place and feeling the need to preserve an image for the future even before the change. This image could be tangible (e.g., buildings, streets, urban fabric) or intangible (e.g., traditions, songs, games, stories about someone's life or work, social structure, peer relations).

Secondly, this is also a question of community archives created in order to bring about change – for instance, transforming the perception of a place, phenomenon, social group or historical narrative – or to provoke some real change in people's lives. This type of community archive (politically motivated – in the loosest sense of the term) is mentioned in English literature particularly often and very often concerns the archives of minority, ethnic, religious and marginalised groups.

Although these two areas of motivation (documenting change and documenting for change) seem to be separate, in reality the lines are blurred and many community archives combine these motivations to some extent. Therefore, the results in the rest of the chapter are divided into archives (cases) – without

categorising them according to motivation related to documentation or causing change.

Miastograf

Digital Archive of Łódź Citizens *Miastograf.pl* (*Cyfrowe Archiwum Łodzian Miastograf.pl*) is a grass-roots initiative run by a non-governmental organisation (the Topografie association), initiated by several young residents of Łódź – a large city in central Poland, which experienced its heyday in the modernist period, while its fame and fortune came from the textile industry, and then from the film industry in the 20th century. At the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, Łódź was labeled a city in decline, a ‘city of bums’⁶ – dangerous, neglected, poor and without prospects. Fortunately, this image has changed for the better in recent years. Their community archive is called *Miastograf*, which can be translated as ‘Citygrapher’, because its goal is to re-present and describe the city. The aim of the archive is to collect and make information about old Łódź available – primarily in the form of oral history recordings and copies of photographs showing the city in the past. The idea of the initiative is to present Łódź’s past from the perspective of an ‘ordinary person’.

The association was established in 2007, at a time when many young Łódź residents began to leave the city in a quest for better prospects. This change was one of the driving forces for the creators of *Miastograf* to focus on building local identity:

The association was set up to describe the city [...] to move around in a virtual world and read the city on many levels while walking through it. So not only historically, [...] but so that we can also get a glimpse into its soul. I mean, read people’s memories about this place. [...] To give the city context and build an identity, the identity of Łódź. Łódź still has problems with its own identity, and when the Association was established [2007] and when everything started to work, there were even wider gaps in this respect. 2007/8 was a time when people began to leave Poland en masse and the Association was created in response to what we saw around us – our friends thought there was nothing here in Łódź, it had no relevance, no history, a completely hopeless city. [...] That’s what it was all about – to give the city some context, to give it an identity. In this respect, the situation has already started to improve a little. The city authorities have started to see the value in the city itself, in the development of the downtown area, because there wasn’t much going on there. But now it’s all changing. It’s a constant process – building

6 This is a reference to a highly controversial and widely reported statement by one of the most famous Polish actors, Bogusław Linda, who spoke in an interview about Łódź in reference to its declining film industry: “Today, the city is dead; it’s a city of bums.” Warchol: *Bogusław Linda o Łodzi*.

identity as well as what we actually do in the archive, which is describe the city. This is the kind of project that can't possibly end.⁷

Another change that often drives the creation of community archives is related to something in danger of being forgotten and the need to rescue it. This was also the case with Miastograf, whose creators wanted to record the memories of the city's oldest inhabitants – because they would soon pass away and their memories would be no more. On the other hand, this was also because they have memories and information about a 'city that no longer exists' – i.e., Łódź from the past, before the war, and also before the huge transformations related to, for example, the enormous reconstruction of the city fabric in the period following World War II:

[...] we wanted the ordinary people of Łódź, especially our senior citizens, to capture their memory of this city, which was completely different. Sometimes, especially at the beginning, we managed to find residents who still remembered pre-war Łódź, but this is still slightly possible. But even the Łódź of the communist times is already fading and is completely different from today's Łódź, so even interviews with people living and working in the 1950s and 1960s are becoming more and more valuable.⁸

In the spirit of 'saving what is about to disappear' (and therefore, in a sense, anticipating a change for the worse), the instigators of Miastograf also recorded interviews with people representing disappearing crafts, such as tile-stove setters, lace-makers, brush-makers, stained glass-makers, or corset-makers.⁹

The Miastograf collection also includes contemporary, originally digital photographs of the city taken by members of the association in order to document the changes currently taking place in Łódź. Michał Gruda, co-founder of Miastograf, talked about photographing transformations in the urban tissue as follows:

I post my photos on the website [Miastograf.pl] and I kept posting completely new ones, because Łódź is changing a lot, so I took photos of places that were being reconstructed or changed in some way, or a street about to be rebuilt. And in fact, a photo taken today will be historical tomorrow.¹⁰

7 Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, Wydział Nauk Historycznych, Katedra Archiwistyki i Zarządzania Dokumentacją (further: UMK WNH): Magdalena Wiśniewska-Drewniak: *Interview with Michał Gruda about Digital Archive of Łódź Citizens Miastograf.pl*, 5. 11. 2015, Łódź (digital recording).

8 Ibid.

9 An example fragment of a statement by Zofia Filipowicz, a brush maker: Filipowicz: *Jedna szczyotka*.

10 UMK WNH: Magdalena Wiśniewska-Drewniak: *Interview with Michał Gruda*.

Bronowice Community Archive

Bronowice Community Archive (*Bronowickie Archiwum Społeczne*) operates in a somewhat similar vein, documenting the locality and what used to be, what is disappearing and what will soon disappear. It is a digital archive that includes the recorded memoirs of the inhabitants of Bronowice Małe and copies of documents donated by them (mainly photographs) concerning the history of everyday life and traditions of Bronowice – once a village near Kraków, now part of the city itself.

The theme of the archival holdings is the local heritage of Bronowice Małe, the changing nature of the topography and development of Bronowice (which transformed dramatically after the village was incorporated into Kraków), fading traditions related to the celebration of various holidays, important personalities associated with Bronowice, the childhood of local residents – games, school and church-going, helping out at the farm, health practices, crafts, the world of ghosts and witchcraft, as well as World War II and the residents' perspective on important historical events (e. g. the arrival of the Red Army in January 1945).¹¹ To a large extent, it is a rescue operation, consisting in recording intangible heritage that is in danger of fading into oblivion due to generational and cultural shifts, to preserve it for the future (in the form of a document/record – e. g., a recording of an oral history interview).

Natalia Martini, archive coordinator, writes in one of her articles about the strong but endangered local identity:

Conversations with younger members of the local community show that 'being from Bronowice' is an important component of their identity. At the same time, they share a strong belief that they are the last generation to cultivate this local aspect of identity.¹²

The archive founders also mention that their motivations include the recent, progressive disappearance of local Bronowice identity based on the rural origins of the area:

The reasons for this process include the ongoing modernisation of the district where the former Bronowice Małe is located, resulting in a shift in the social composition of the residents. Starting from the 1970s, when the first blocks of flats in the Widok Housing Estate were built on former farmlands, an intensification of modern residential development has been observed. New housing estates [...] attract new residents, often tenants rather than owners, showing little interest in the history and tradition of the district. These phenomena are accompanied by an increase in horizontal social mobility among the 'old' residents of Bronowice, which translates into a weakening of the connection with one's place of residence, especially among the younger generation of

11 Wąchała-Skindzier: *Życie codzienne*, p. 20.

12 Martini: *Bronowickie Archiwum Społeczne*, p. 13.

Bronowice residents, who are increasingly moving out of their family homes in favour of other parts of Kraków. So, this obstructs the intergenerational transfer of knowledge about local history and traditions, which is also caused by the observable change in the family and household model that once prevailed in Bronowice. As a result, Bronowice has fewer and fewer *pnioks* (as people who have lived here for generations are called) and more and more *ptoks* (i. e. newcomers).¹³

The purpose of the archive is, on the one hand, to “save the old image of the local world from oblivion, which is becoming blurred under the influence of changes, whose results leave a lasting mark on the material fabric of the past”¹⁴ and, on the other hand, to encourage the involvement of community members in local activities and initiatives as well as to counteract social disintegration between the younger and older residents (both in the sense of biological age and length of residence in Bronowice).¹⁵

It is therefore easy to observe the meaning of change in the case of the action taken by the Bronowice Community Archive. On the one hand, changes in the district and its disappearing rural character along with endangered intangible heritage, spurred action to save cultural heritage; on the other hand, there was a desire to counteract harmful changes in the social fabric (loss of local identity, social disintegration).

Grybów Saga

Of particular interest from the perspective of Polish history are community archives illustrating how a given territory or community looked, for example, before World War II, restoring the memory of former inhabitants. An interesting example are community archives which show how important was a Jewish community for a particular location, counteracting the fact that the Jewish community was not only physically, but also symbolically removed from this location and from local memory.

An example of such activities is Grybów Saga – Community Archive of Grybów (*Saga Grybów – Społeczne Archiwum Grybowa*). Grybów is a small town in southern Poland. One of the archive’s endeavours is *Silent Memorial – Grybów*

13 Private Archive of Magdalena Wiśniewska-Drewniak: *An Offer From a Non-Governmental Organisation to Carry out a Public Task Submitted in 2014 on the Basis of the Civic Initiatives Fund Program for 2014–2020 Entitled Bronowice Community Archive*, section II.2 (document received from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy as part of access to public information).

14 Martini: *Bronowickie Archiwum Społeczne*, p. 16.

15 Refer to Private Archive of Magdalena Wiśniewska-Drewniak: *An Offer From a Non-Governmental Organisation*, section II.2.

Saga, a project that involves installing murals in the town space that refer to its past, that reflect photographic portraits from the archive's collections:

At the heart of our activities is connecting, rebuilding broken or damaged ties, bridging divides. In a mosaic of murals, we combine various national, religious and cultural groups that lived in our town and our region and would meet in the market square and on the streets of Grybów. Besides Polish Roman Catholics, they also included Greek Catholics as well as Orthodox Lemkos and Jews. [...] By painting their faces on the walls of our streets and villages, we symbolically brought them back home [...]. With this project, our saga, we want to show that Polishness can and should be inclusive, not exclusive.¹⁶

This hyperlocal project is therefore somewhat universal in nature and oriented towards social goals, promoting knowledge as well as tolerance:

Through the local tales and micro-stories of the Grybów Saga, we convey universal values and relationships. Grybów itself, as a mini homeland, is a saga for us – a story, a myth, a stream of memory, an intertwining of the multi-threaded history of individual people, families and places. Due to the tragic events of the 20th century that painfully afflicted the Grybów region, we strongly emphasise specific areas of the local collective oblivion, restoring the memory of the Jewish and Lemko communities of Grybów and the region. Our endeavours help bring together people of different cultures, religions, languages, social groups and mentalities and connect generations.¹⁷

Storytellers of the Lower Town

Storytellers of the Lower Town (*Opowiadacze Historii Dolnego Miasta*) is a group of local enthusiasts of the history of the Lower Town district of Gdańsk, which, although it has a historical appeal, with beautiful architecture and a rich past, is often overlooked in the minds of tourists (visiting only the neighbouring Main Town, central district), and is still not well perceived by local residents. The Storytellers use their community archive to collect interviews with residents, photographs, postcards and other materials about the Lower Town district.

The Storytellers are a product of the district's formal revitalisation – because although the group was not established by the city authorities, the impulse to start a community archiving initiative, and then establish an association, was the result of sparking the interest of the local community in the district's history, initiated by meetings with representatives of the Gdańsk City Hall. Then, encouraged by these meetings, the residents began to organise themselves and a

¹⁶ "Cichy Memorial – Grybowska Saga".

¹⁷ *Archiwiści społeczni o sobie*.

group was created that called itself the Storytellers, and one of their goals was to collect historical sources about the district.¹⁸

An important motive in the work of the Storytellers is the transformation of the district – from prosperous and prestigious at the turn of the 20th century to neglected and decaying during the communist period after World War II, and now regaining its splendour thanks to revitalisation projects and new investment. The 20th century was a period of major change in the urban fabric of the district, and in certain details such as the liquidation of the tram line that once ran through the district. Jacek Górski, the chief community archivist, spoke about these numerous changes, which can be observed thanks to the materials from the Storytellers' archive:

If we wanted to take a photo like that now [with a tram passing through the Lower Town], we would never manage. So it's always like this, for example, there is a house that was later renovated and its facade looks completely different. Or there was a fence and after a while the scrap-metal men came and cut it up and the fence is no longer there. How fantastic it was, how it looked, how ornate it was! It turns out that there it is in the photo and then the fence no longer exists. [...] Or some other banalities – oh, a tree used to grow here. In fact, I remembered that there used to be a tree growing here and so on... Based on these photos, we can take a step back in time to that moment where the photo was taken, usually in the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s. Even contemporary photos in some places make us laugh, because what was taken a year ago is sometimes already history, and what a history!¹⁹

This statement strongly conveys the sense of change taking place now – what is currently part of the district and its present may soon become part of its obscure past. This also involves active revitalisation projects in this area.

One of the goals of the Storytellers is also to improve the image of the district, which suffered particularly in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, primarily due to the authorities neglecting this district. Its image was so bad that even city officials at the beginning of the revitalisation process (around 2014) did not believe that it was possible to successfully initiate action to improve the 'soft tissue' of the Lower Town district, as one of the initiators of the project was warned (later a member of the Storytellers community):

Those were the beginnings when someone in City Hall in Gdańsk told him that with Lower Town he shouldn't expect too much. If he got any photos, it would be a miracle. If people got involved in anything at all, they would congratulate him. Because it's that kind of district. Unfortunately, the Lower Town had actually been labeled as a dan-

18 UMK WNH: Magdalena Wiśniewska-Drewniak: *Interview with Jacek Górski about Archives of Storytellers of the Lower Town in Gdańsk*, 13. 1. 2018, *Gdańsk* (digital recording).

19 Ibid.

gerous area not worth doing anything, inhabited by people who certainly don't want to help. But in our opinion this is an old label from times when things looked quite different here...²⁰

The association has published, *inter alia*, a series of subjective guides to the Lower Town and a book about the history of the district until 1945 – both publications richly illustrated with stories and documents collected by the Storytellers who also participate in the Local Guides project – organising guided tours during which they show visitors the sometimes obscure gems of their district.

LGBTQIA+Fem History Club

LGBTQIA+Fem History Club (*Klub Historyczny LGBTQIA+Fem*) was established by the Q Foundation from Warsaw. The club documents the history of the community of non-heteronormative people in Poland and the history of feminism, collecting materials from the 20th and 21st centuries including oral history, leaflets, brochures, zines, magazines, books, photographs and files. Among its statutory goals, the Foundation lists the following: education in diversity, improving the mental well-being and promoting the health of non-heteronormative people, preserving the cultural heritage of the LGBTQ community and building an open society.²¹

The creators of the archive document the history of non-heteronormative people in Poland with the very clear aim of saving it from destruction, under the belief that this heritage is at risk mainly for political reasons and due to the oppression of sexual minorities in Poland:

KP: We do it so that what they [members of the LGBTQ+ community] remember and this whole history is not lost. Because they will die. Their archive will disappear and, in general, all the information they previously knew will also evaporate. [...] There is a need because it will disappear and no one will know about it. Before someone starts doing something about it... suddenly there will be a hole. Because no one cares.²²

An important aspect of the archive's work is to affect change by bringing the history of LGBT+ people into the historical mainstream, and thus attracting interest among professional historians as well as public heritage institutions. One of the goals of the archive is also to induce positive social change by strengthening the identity of LGBT+ people by referring to the past of the non-heteronormative

20 Ibid.

21 Private Archive of Magdalena Wiśniewska-Drewniak: *Statute of the Q Foundation of 9 August 2017*, § 4.

22 UMK WNH: Magdalena Wiśniewska-Drewniak: *Interview with Agnieszka Wiciak and Kamil Prykowski about LGBTQIA+Fem History Club, 4. 8. 2018, Warszawa* (digital recording).

community. These historical references are made possible thanks to the archives collected by the History Club, because the story of this social group is not covered by other heritage institutions:

AW: Today it is more about strengthening identity. That you weren't the first, that there were people before you, that it's ok, that you have your own history, that this is a certain community, environment, whether you like it or not – you are part of this environment and you have something to relate to. These people somehow managed to cope in times when things were much worse than today. Today there are a million organisations, a million psychologists who can help you and won't be homophobic. A school that, for the most part, tries to help. [...] And then, how was it? It was unimaginably worse. Today you have the Internet, you want to meet someone – you can try online dating and no one has to know about it. There was a time when you had to gauge by sight whether someone was gay/lesbian and you took a risk. Unless you knew about certain places because someone had taken you there before. [...] Those were completely different times. But the people and the 'problem' were the same. This helps strengthen identity. A little perhaps for the kids, the young people who have trouble coming to terms with it. Or older people who have trouble reconciling themselves. But the older ones have already lived a while and probably know a little more.²³

In this way, the History Club combines clearly defined archival and historical goals that also aim to change, or rather create, an official narrative about the history of the Polish LGBT+ community, to strengthen the identity of, and assistance, the members of this community.

General Elżbieta Zawacka Foundation

The second biggest community archive in Poland is General Elżbieta Zawacka Foundation: Pomeranian Archive and Museum of the Home Army and Polish Women Military Service (*Fundacja General Elżbiety Zawackiej: Archiwum i Muzeum Pomorskie Armii Krajowej oraz Wojskowej Służby Polek*). The founder of this archive was General Elżbieta Zawacka (aka Zo), born in Toruń in 1909. In the interwar period, Zawacka was an instructor of the Women's Military Training academy. During World War II, she helped defend Lviv in 1939 and acted as a liaison between the underground armed forces in occupied Poland and the Polish government in exile in London. She was also the only woman in the *Cichociemni* special unit and fought in the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. After the war, in communist Poland, she was repressed, imprisoned and discriminated against for her patriotic actions during the occupation.²⁴

23 Ibid.

24 Minczykowska: *Cichociemna*.

Despite this, Zawacka made it her life's goal to document the history of the occupation, which contradicted the official communist narratives about World War II. In the 1960s, Zawacka had already begun collecting source materials focused on three areas, which currently constitute the three main sections of the Zawacka Foundation's archive: the history of the 1939–1945 underground in Pomerania (northern Poland), the history of the Women's Military Service, and the history of the Home Army's Foreign Communications Department *Zagroda*. Until the political turning point of 1989/1990, Zawacka and her colleagues operated illegally, in secret, repeating certain underground patterns of activity. After the fall of the communist regime in Poland in 1990, this community archive transformed into a legally operating foundation (third sector organisation).

From the very beginning, the Zawacka archive focused on documenting the history of ordinary soldiers, which is why the main part of the collections are personal dossiers – each corresponding to one person. The archive contains over 8,000 personal stories (individual files).²⁵

Zawacka noticed two very important topics that, in her opinion, had been omitted from official historical narratives. Firstly, she believed that the role of the underground during the occupation in Pomerania was underestimated, both by historians and public opinion. Secondly, which was quite a modern view of history at that time in Poland, she considered that the role of women in the armed forces of World War II was understated. The current President of the Foundation recalls Zawacka's motivation for creating a grassroots archive:

If it weren't for her, I believe that no one would have studied the underground in Pomerania. After all, no historian has written about it so far. Probably the only book of its kind is from the 1970s, by Ciechanowski... Just like in Silesia, everyone thought that there was no Home Army there. Because it only operated in the General Government. But that wasn't the case at all. The same with women. I remember her saying that they make up half of the nation yet no one cares about them, no one wrote about them. After all, she managed to write all these volumes of *Women of Virtuti Militari*,²⁶ and all these stories of women. These are incredible collections of accounts [of women serving] on all fronts, in various services.²⁷

The motivations for creating the archive are therefore related, on the one hand, to creating a counter-narrative about the history of World War II – in the period up to 1990. Zawacka and her colleagues documented the fate of the soldiers and the

25 Zawacka-Wakarecy: *Przedmowa*, p. 10.

26 This is a biographical publication edited by Elżbieta Zawacka, presenting the profiles of Polish women awarded the highest war decoration – the Order of *Virtuti Militari*, see: Zawacka (ed.): *Słownik biograficzny*.

27 UMK WNH: Magdalena Wiśniewska-Drewniak: *Interview with Dorota Zawacka-Wakarecy about Pomeranian Archive and Museum of the Home Army and Polish Women Military Service*, 26. 9. 2017, *Toruń* (digital recording).

underground because they were aware that this history was banned or censored, and therefore endangered, during that period. The purpose of building the archive was also to create a source base for future historical research and, as a result, to promote knowledge of this topic – and so to induce change as well in terms of knowledge about, and perception of, the history of World War II in Pomerania and the role played by women in the armed struggle during that time. The latter may be described in current terms as ‘herstory’, ‘feminism’ and ‘counteracting marginalisation’.

Currently, as new generations have arrived and old soldiers have departed for their eternal duty, the Foundation has been much less active in terms of collecting materials. Previously, however, the archive strove to rescue documentation because its founders were aware of the rapidly ageing generation of World War II participants who needed to be reached as quickly as possible. Currently, the Foundation still conducts a vibrant educational and outreach programme, organising lectures and workshops for people of various ages (including children), academic and popular science meetings and conferences, while also publishing, *inter alia*, biographical dictionaries and materials from organised sessions. All this work is aimed at expanding knowledge and awareness of the fate of participants in World War II.

Closing Remarks

One more aspect linking community archives and change is noteworthy: how much the environment of community archives has changed recently and how it has helped develop the movement of independent archival activities in Poland. In this era of digital and technological revolution, it is much easier to maintain a community archive (even one that is exclusively digital). Archivists have recording devices at their disposal (e.g. for recording oral history interviews), digital cameras, scanners, as well as computers and external drives. It is easier to create or copy archival materials, easier to manage and describe them. Finally, and most importantly, the Internet is a great environment for sharing archives, organising events and activities around them, and creating communities. An important factor in revitalising the community archives movement is perhaps also the growing popularity of various cultural activities in the virtual world, as well as action to digitalise culture and cultural heritage undertaken by state and local government institutions and third sector organisations.²⁸

Interest in local and family history has also been growing in recent years, which to some extent can also be linked to the increased popularity of the

28 Dziągiewski et al.: *Procesy digitalizacji dziedzictwa*.

grassroots archives movement. In 2007, 64% of respondents believed that knowing about their family's past was important; this increased to 80% in 2018.²⁹

Finally, a major shift in the landscape of community archives in Poland came in 2020 with the establishment of the Centre for Community Archives – a cultural institution co-created by the Ministry of Culture and the largest Polish community archive (the KARTA Centre). The Centre for Community Archives works for the benefit of the grassroots archives community by organising congresses of community archivists, publishing educational materials³⁰ and running further education courses and consultations for archives, as well as promoting the idea of community archiving. In addition, it creates a database of community archives in Poland,³¹ and administers a free system for describing community archives – the OSA (Open Archival System)³² – as well as an online portal for publishing community collections.³³ The Centre for Community Archives has helped professionalise community archives tremendously, offering support for this area of grassroots activity and creating connections between community archives in Poland.

It is worth noting that one of the Centre for Community Archives' priorities is also to make community archives more sustainable. This should be briefly mentioned in the context of change, which is this chapter's axis of narrative. Change in the case of community archives also means change in the community archives themselves.

Because community archives are run primarily on a voluntary basis, they depend to a large extent on the energy and free time of the people who create them. Change in these categories, as well as generational change (i.e., handing over the archive to younger archivists) is a big challenge for many small community archives. Lack of permanent funding, organisational support and stable partners in the public sector, or computer equipment failures are all factors that also affect the sustainability of community collections. The ephemerality of community archives – that is, their creation and disappearance – is one of their characteristic features. Constant change is the bread and butter of the community archives movement. Michał Gruda, co-founder of Miastograf, even said during the interview, “We are here today, but where we'll be in a year, we aren't really sure.”³⁴ On the other hand, sometimes the motivations and principles of an archive may also change and evolve for various reasons. For example, as in the case of Miastograf, the focus of the collected materials might shift (the founders

29 Rogulska et al.: *Historie rodzinne*.

30 E.g. Pankowska-Dowgiąło (ed.): *Podręcznik*.

31 *Baza archiwów społecznych*.

32 *Otwarty System Archiwizacji*.

33 *Zbiory społeczne*.

34 UMK WNH: *Interview with Michał Gruda*.

of this archive initially put more emphasis on oral history, and then moved over to photos).³⁵

Community archives are a highly diverse and complex phenomenon, as well as very susceptible to constantly changing social contexts. On the one hand, they document, or seek to provoke, change (each in their own way). On the other hand, they are sensitive to any changes around them. It is worth looking at community archives (both individually and more broadly, as a phenomenon) taking into account the wider context: local, historical, as well as the specific context of a given archive, including its social goals and founding principles. Looking at community archives as mere collections of materials is missing the point as this would only expand our database of primary sources about the past and teach us little about the present. Community archives can teach us a great deal about the present, including changing perceptions and uses of the past, as well as the evolving roles of archives and their impact on people and communities.

[Translated by Steve Jones]

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Robert Degen

Deliberations of the International Congress of Archives in Florence and the Polish Methodology of Selection and Disposal

Abstract

A report entitled *The Selection of Archives for Permanent Preservation*, presented at the 3rd International Congress of Archives in Florence, painted a picture of selection and disposal methods used worldwide. The summary of Collingridge's theses published in *Archeion* enabled Polish archivists to put their practices in an international context. The solutions applied in Poland seemed not to differ from those used globally, and the Polish comprehensive system of appraisal and disposal solved similar problems to the English Grigg system.

Keywords: archival selection; appraisal and disposal; Polish archival science; methodology for creating and developing archival holdings in Poland; *wykazy akt*; International Congress of Archives in Florence

Introduction

Archival science is a discipline that generalises the methods applied in collecting, keeping, arranging and providing access to archives. Locally, it must take into account the specificity of archiving processes that result in the creation of archive holdings, but its scope of interest includes practices encountered and regulated in archives worldwide. The quest for such broad generalisations is an interesting research area, almost on a par with discovering the mutual relations between local archival practices and the inspirations to which they were subjected.

Polish archival science is no exception in this respect. Research on the history of selection and disposal focuses on the pioneering nature of Polish solutions,¹ the incorporation of concepts from outside Poland,² or creative inspiration that

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1 Koberdowa: *Problemy zabezpieczenia*, p. 27.

2 Bielińska: *Z problematyki zabezpieczenia*, pp. 128–129; Degen: *Kształtowanie państwowego zasobu*, p. 20; Idem: *The History of Selection*.

came from abroad.³ In the latter case, direct reference is made to international archives congresses.

The International Congress of Archives in Florence took place on 25–29 September 1956. Archives of almost 40 countries were represented there. The participants met at two Florentine palaces – Vecchio and Uffizi – they discussed three important issues, but in Polish archival studies, the Florentine deliberations are primarily considered in the context of arrangements regarding selection and disposal,⁴ which is the subject of this chapter. The aim of this research, however, was not to uncover Florentine inspirations in Polish archival theory and methodology, but to answer two slightly differently formulated research questions:

- What impression of the Florence discussion on selection and disposal did Polish archivists receive?
- In what light did it cast the solutions applied in Poland?

Answers to both questions are preceded by a brief history of the renewal of international contacts by Polish archivists after the tragedy of World War II.

The main source of information about the Florentine congress was a report on the proceedings published in *Archeion*.⁵ The picture of selection and disposal processes in Poland in the mid-1950s was painted *via* the provisions of the basic legal acts of the time⁶ as well as established procedures described in publications selected from the extensive literature on the subject. These included works by Henryk Altman,⁷ Maria Bielińska,⁸ Zdzisław Chmielewski,⁹ Robert Degen,¹⁰ Roman Kaczmarek¹¹ and Gustaw Kaleński.¹²

3 Chmielewski: *Problemy archiwistyki*, p. 53.

4 Altman: *Trzeci Międzynarodowy Kongres*, pp. 235–236.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 235–246.

6 *Dekret z dnia 29 marca 1951 r.; Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 26 kwietnia 1952 r.; Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 19 lutego 1957 r.*; Rosowska et al. (eds.): *Zbiór przepisów*.

7 Altman: *Aktualne zagadnienia*; Idem: *Zagadnienie selekcji akt*.

8 Bielińska: *Akt jako obiekt archiwalny*; Eadem: *Stan i zadania archiwów*; Eadem: *Z problematyki zabezpieczania*.

9 Chmielewski: *Problemy archiwistyki*.

10 Degen: *Kształtowanie państwowego zasobu*; Idem: *Urzędnicy*; Idem: *The History of Selection*.

11 Kaczmarek: *Składnica akt*.

12 Kaleński: *Brakowanie akt*; Fishbein (trans.): Kaleński: *Record Selection*.

International Relations Restored by Polish Archivists

Before September 1939, representatives of the Polish archival community were active participants in international academic life.¹³ The principles adopted by world archival science were reflected in theory and methodology, and archivists from Poland could easily look at the Polish field through the prism of the global achievements of archival science.¹⁴ Just after 1945, the international endeavours of Polish archivists ground to a halt.¹⁵ The iron curtain that fell across Europe, from Szczecin on the Baltic Sea to Trieste on the Adriatic Sea, had a role to play in this. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that in the first years after the war, the greatest challenges facing the archival community in Poland involved how to organise the archival network, reconstruct archives, recover records confiscated by the Germans during World War II, and secure documentation from before 1945, including in the territory of northern and western Poland (the so-called Recovered Territories), and finally, to take care of current records of state authorities and institutions.¹⁶

Polish archivists learned about the development of archival science and changes in the archival field abroad in the first post-war decade from literature trickling into Poland *via* the editorial office of the most important Polish archival journal, *Archeion*, among others.¹⁷ This periodical occasionally presented the work of foreign archives and the achievements of local archival scientists. Indeed, amidst news from the archival world, information about the endeavours of Soviet archivists and those from other Eastern Bloc countries came to the fore,¹⁸ although the Polish community was not completely cut off from the results of research undertaken by colleagues from the other side of the iron curtain.¹⁹

13 Mamczak-Gadkowska: *Archiwa państwowe*, pp. 362–363.

14 Also the selection and disposal procedures it uses. Cf., among others, Degen: *The History of Selection*; Manteuffel: *Brakowanie akt*.

15 It is difficult to consider as such the trips abroad made in 1947 and 1949 by Polish archivists to recover Polish archives: Adam Stebelski (to the British and American occupation zones in Germany) or Kazimierz Kaczmarczyk (to Czechoslovakia). *Sprawozdanie Wydziału Archiwów Państwowych z działalności w roku 1949*, p. 465.

16 Tandecki: *Archiwa w Polsce*, pp. 26–38. Cf. reports on the activities of the Department of State Archives and the General Directorate of State Archives, including Rybarski: *Wydział Archiwów Państwowych; Sprawozdanie z działalności Wydziału Archiwów Państwowych za rok 1948; Sprawozdanie z działalności Wydziału Archiwów Państwowych za rok 1949*; Bielińska: *Działalność Naczelnej Dyrekcji*.

17 *Wydawnictwa nadesłane do Redakcji*, 17; *Wydawnictwa nadesłane do Redakcji*, 18; *Wykaz wydawnictw nadesłanych do redakcji*.

18 E. g.: Bachulski 1948: *Literatura archiwalna*; Idem: *30-lecie reformy*; Gerber 1951; Reychman: *Z węgierskiej literatury*.

19 See, e.g.: Bachulski: *Archiwa gospodarcze*; Idem: *Archiwa zachodnio-europejskie*; Dobrowolski: *Festschrift*; Manteuffel: *The American Archivist*; Mickiewiczowa: *Archiwum Narodowe*.

The situation changed in the middle of the 1950s along with the political ‘thaw’ in the Eastern Bloc countries after Stalin’s death. It was largely thanks to this that Polish archivists established the first official post-war contact with colleagues from abroad. In September 1954, two archivists from the Soviet Union visited Poland, followed a month later by the director of the State Archives in Budapest.²⁰ In 1955, Polish archives began a program of microfilming Poland-related documents kept in Austria, East Germany, Sweden, Italy and the Soviet Union.²¹ In the spring of the same year, a delegation of several people took part in the second *Round Table of Archives* conference in Namur (Belgium), after which the same group visited the directorate of the French archives. It was the first official visit of representatives of the Polish state archives to the West. It became a pretext to explore the international archival landscape, because it was then that the Polish community learned about the genesis, structure and responsibilities of the International Council on Archives (ICA) as well as the action it undertook.²² It was also in 1955 that the *Archeion* editorial team began regularly publishing reviews of world archival literature.²³ At that time, the contents of the first three volumes of *Archivum* (from 1951–1953) were presented – a periodical published in Paris under the patronage of UNESCO.²⁴ From it, Polish archivists learned that during the first two international congresses in Paris (1950) and The Hague (1953), the following topics were raised: matters related to controlling the methods used by file creators to store documentation, the principles of microfilming files and the need to standardise archival terminology. Archivists from Poland only took part in the Third International Congress of Archives in Florence in 1956, and a year later Poland joined the ICA.²⁵

The Polish delegation to the congress held in the capital of Tuscany consisted of four members. It was headed by Henryk Altman, and its members included Tadeusz Mencel, Adam Stebelski and Zbigniew Wójcik.²⁶ All delegates were experienced archivists, although Altman and Mencel were most familiar with the issue of selection. The former, then the General Director of the State Archives, had previously participated in the conference in Namur, and so had learned

20 Bańkowski: *Pobyt w Polsce; Ihnatowicz: Pobyt w Polsce.*

21 Bielińska: *Stan i zadania archiwów*, p. 12.

22 Altman: *Aktualne zagadnienia*, pp. 207–210.

23 The call for this publishing work arose, for example, during the proceedings of the Third Archival Methodological Conference in Warsaw in January 1955, cf. Pańków: *Trzecia archiwalna konferencja*, pp. 6, 17.

24 Maciejewska: *Archivum*.

25 Altman: *Aktualne zagadnienia*, p. 207; Chmielewski: *Problemy archiwistyki*, p. 53. In the same place, Chmielewski states that “few Polish representatives participated in the first two international congresses”, but this statement was not supported by a reference to the source of the information.

26 Altman: *Trzeci Międzynarodowy Kongres*, p. 235.

about the latest global trends and solutions in appraisal and disposal. This would later become the subject of his academic reflection.²⁷ The latter served as the Director of the State Archives in Lublin in the middle of the 1950s, and during the meeting in Florence he briefly presented the Polish mechanism of appraisal and disposal.²⁸

Selection and Disposal During the Deliberations of the Florence Congress

A report on the congress in Florence was written by Altman, covering all days of the meeting and discussing the working sessions devoted to:

- new installations of archives (Session 1),
- selection and disposal (Session 2),
- private archives (Session 3).

While preparing the text, he did not yet have the records that would later be published in *Archivum*.²⁹ However, it can be considered that he tried to accurately reflect the theses of the reports, which constituted the starting point for the discussion in each session, and noted the most important voices from the floor.

The focus of the report from the second working session was John H. Colingridge's *The Selection of Archives for Permanent Preservation*.³⁰ This is the origin of all generalisations, later presented in a text published in *Archeion*.

According to Altman, in the mid-1950s, selection of archives was one of the most difficult contemporary problems in archival science and boiled down to the need to select “among modern records, those and only those that will have lasting value for future historical research”.³¹ Basically, all archival networks worldwide faced the need to develop an optimal method of selecting records for permanent storage, but the mechanisms they introduced were not the same. To some extent, local differences were a consequence of variations in levels of economic development and political systems. In highly industrialised countries with strong traditions of local government, it was impossible to introduce uniform procedures for all state organisations. Meanwhile, in socialist countries, the state archives exercised centralised control over the process of records production by

27 See Idem: *Aktualne zagadnienia*, pp. 215–220; Idem: *Zagadnienia selekcji akt*.

28 *Deuxième Séance de Travail*, p. 38.

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 25–42.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 25–32.

31 Altman: *Trzeci Międzynarodowy Kongres*, p. 238.

government offices and other state institutions, which made it possible to introduce national standards for appraisal and disposal.

Despite the observed differences in disposal procedures, it was possible to notice some similarities in fundamental aspects: in the 1950s, there was no country in the world where state institutions could destroy documentation through their own volition. Typically, jurisdiction in this area was determined by archival law. However, in some cases it happened that the obligation to monitor selection and disposal resulted only from a well-rooted practice.

The most common method of supervising the destruction of documentation by institutions was the obligation for state archives to approve lists of files to be disposed of. Lists of records to be destroyed were usually made independently by file creators for the needs of each disposal. In some countries, officials as well as employees of state archives would prepare the censuses. In some archival networks, file creators were allowed to request lists of files of lasting importance from state archives and, upon receiving them, to destroy all records not specified in these archive lists. Sometimes it was decided to regulate this obligation *a priori*. A certain group of archival administrations prepared top-down lists of files subject to destruction for all state institutions, to be supplemented and expanded as detailed regulations were issued by departmental authorities. Although in some countries state archives had the right to visit government offices, they could not check the implementation of their own recommendations regarding selection and disposal.

Altman pointed out that the global archival community had serious reservations about the appraisal and the disposal of files in archives that were separate from general archival networks and regulated these matters independently. It was noted that even if these institutions had qualified archival staff, the decisions they made might have negative consequences for the quality of records permanently preserved. It was emphasised that before a decision was made to destroy a certain group of documents, the value of files created by all institutions constituting state administration in general should be assessed. Only then would future historians have a chance to comprehensively study state operations.

Until the mid-1950s, in no country in the world had archives defined a complete set of criteria that would determine whether documents needed to be preserved for historical reasons. If any were formulated at all, they were limited to an obligation to preserve records created before a pre-specified date regarding an important political or constitutional event, and sometimes there was an obligation to permanently classify all files created during pivotal moments in history. The criteria developed tended to be legal rather than historical, although the vast majority of archival administrations described records worthy of permanent preservation in very general terms. Typically, they simply prohibited the de-

struction of records “of lasting legal, administrative, historical, scientific or cultural importance”.³²

Regardless of the disposal control mechanisms operating in individual countries, nowhere in the world was the role of archivists in the process of appraisal called into question. It was widely believed that the final decision should rest with them regarding which files would be permanently preserved due to their source potential for future historical research. There was also consensus that the evaluation process was not complicated if it concerned series of files with similar content. In this case, archivists had no trouble deciding whether to permanently preserve or destroy the series of files under assessment. Series of mixed content were a different case, and such a clear decision could not be made without a thorough analysis of the contents of each folder.

One way to solve problems regarding selection and disposal was to develop comprehensive solutions in this area, and here Altman cites the example of the English Grigg system, which marked “an attempt to establish a general plan to solve the problem of disposal”.³³ English offices and archives were to move away from previous practice, whereby the Public Record Office would confirm file lists with records preservation periods prepared by government offices. This solution was not conducive to reliable appraisal: the state archivists who approved the lists did not know the office’s files thoroughly. The new English mechanism was to consist of two stages. The first phase would proceed without the participation of Public Record Office representatives: each file would be reviewed by creators within five years of its creation, and it was their duty to indicate all files that had lost their practical significance. As a consequence, all documentation that had become irrelevant to the particular government office was to be destroyed after five years, and records that the creators deemed of importance were to be selected for further storage and the next stage of selection. The second phase of evaluation was to occur 25 years after the records had been created. Then, departmental record officers appointed in each office would be responsible for selection. When reviewing all files, taking into account their relevance to official purposes or value for future research, the officers were to indicate records for permanent storage. It was assumed that decisions would be primarily based on the titles of the files, but it was expected that the decisions could be verified by analysing the actual content of the records under evaluation.

In addition to the two-stage approach and the formation of a corps of departmental record officers, Altman drew attention to three conditions necessary for the Grigg system to operate efficiently, and for him ‘efficiency’ meant striving

32 *Ibid.*, p. 240.

33 *Ibid.*

“towards the maximum elimination of records that should not be preserved”.³⁴

These were:

- developing a clear and to-the-point classification system for records that would enable the content of the materials to be precisely determined based solely on the title, without the need to know the content of files,
- pre-defining the principles for selecting sample files from among homogeneous and mass-produced documents, such as population census files or civil status books,
- working on the principle that records eligible for preservation are those that contain the maximum amount of information while occupying the minimum amount of space.

While presenting the discussion on the Collingridge report, Altman drew attention to four of the 19 voices present: Pierre Sardella, Antonio Lombardo, Miguel Bordonau and S. D. Pilkevitch. What he found interesting was the establishment of a permanent subcommittee at UNESCO to deal with missing files, the transfer of materials to state archives no earlier than after 50 years, the preservation of more important records on better quality paper, and – not surprisingly, but not necessarily for substantive reasons – the Soviet method of selecting files based on a system of expertise.

Polish Solutions in the International Context

When presenting the proceedings of the second session of the Florentine congress, Altman did not refer them to the Polish reality, even though Collingridge referred to it several times.³⁵ He merely noted that Mencil’s speech on the system of supervising the disposal and on the classification of files into categories in Poland aroused some ‘serious interest’.³⁶ Altman also avoided appraising solutions applied abroad, which may have been somewhat surprising. Polish archivists, slowly opening up to the world, already happened to look critically at ideas introduced by archival networks in the GDR or Czechoslovakia, pointing out similarities and disregarding concepts and methods that had no chance of being accepted in Poland.³⁷ This may have been partly due to the reporting style of the text, but it may also have been a manifestation of self-censorship. Perhaps this is what prevented Altman from emphasising the similarities between healthy,

34 Ibid., p. 241.

35 *Deuxième Séance de Travail*, pp. 26, 28, 29, 31.

36 Altman: *Trzeci Międzynarodowy Kongres*, p. 242.

37 Bielińska: *Z problematyki zabezpieczania*, pp. 128–129.

socialist Polish and foreign archival science, most of which – after all – had developed in the countries of the ‘rotten West’. However, an experienced Polish archivist reading the report from the Florence congress could easily relate the application of a solution in Poland to international practice.

1. As in most countries in the world, no state institution in Poland could destroy its own records without supervision. This principle was introduced just after the end of World War I³⁸ and was retained after 1944/1945. The state archives were responsible for issuing consent for disposal, and at that time this obligation was included in the decree on state archives of 29 March 1951.³⁹ The procedure of applying for approval to destroy documents was also regulated by law.⁴⁰ Differences in the supervision of disposal resulted from the political changes introduced by the communists after World War II. Whereas before 1939 only state offices had to apply for permission to destroy records, after the reconstruction of the local administration system (1945), the *de facto* liquidation of local government, the nationalisation of industry and agriculture, there was no institution in Poland that would remain beyond the control of the General Director of the State Archives and the network of archives under his management.
2. Poland was one of many countries where, in order to obtain consent for records disposal, institutions had to supply the relevant state archive with a list of files intended for destruction. Officials producing files as well as specialists in storing records not needed for current official duties were involved in the process of identifying materials for destruction. Positions of archives officers appeared in all Polish state institutions in the 1930s, along with the obligation to create archives there as an ongoing concern, referred to at the time as file repositories (*składnica akt*).

The value of the files was first appraised by officials. Typically, two years after its creation, they had to divide the documentation into two groups (archival categories):

- A (archival classification symbol for materials for permanent storage),
- B (archival classification symbol for records to be destroyed),

and forward the list to the file repository. To make this task easier for employees, individual ministries were already developing archival classification lists before 1939 (*a priori* lists of records with a given storage period),⁴¹ which were consulted with state archives.⁴² After the war, the archival administration

38 Degen: *Urządnicy*, p. 547.

39 *Dekret z dnia 29 marca 1951 r.*

40 Rosowska et al. (eds.): *Zbiór przepisów*, pp. 15–17.

41 Degen: *The History of Selection*, p. 67 and footnote 59 on this page.

42 *Idem: Urządnicy*, pp. 249–251.

began to develop lists of archival qualifiers for use by offices on its own. The first such compilations, initially framework ones, were created in 1952.⁴³

From the repositories, category A files were transferred to the state archives after five or ten years, and category B documentation was destroyed after a specified period of time had elapsed. Before disposal, files with temporary value were assessed by a committee composed of, *inter alia*, an archives officer and the official who had created them. A list of files to be destroyed was drafted, which each office sent to the appropriate (in terms of territory) state archive. The archive analysed the submitted list and usually gave consent to the destruction of the files on this basis. In the event of doubt, a state archivist could visit the repository and appraised the value of the records selected for destruction on the spot.⁴⁴ Regardless of such *ad hoc* inspections, state archivists had the right to visit all file repositories and check the state of the materials stored there.⁴⁵

3. A negative phenomenon occurring in the Polish archival field, but specific not only to it, was the extraordinary nature of some archives. Branches of the ministries of national defence and interior affairs were excluded from the network subordinated to the General Director of State Archives. Despite their ministers declaring that their regulations followed a similar approach to appraisal, state archives did not monitor these processes.⁴⁶ The problem was not only the negative consequences of assessing the source potential of military and security files without of the information context of materials created by other departments of administration. First of all, the state archives did not know what these file creators considered to be worth storing permanently and whether they were actually taking into account the historical value of the records when disposing of them.
4. The purpose of selection, and therefore the main criterion for choosing documentation for permanent storage in Poland, was the same as in other countries that had already decided to define it. After the post-war decree on state archives (issued in March 1951), it was decided that the area of interest of Polish archives would be the state archival fonds (*państwowy zasób archiwalny*),⁴⁷ defined a year later as ‘archival materials’ (*materiały archiwalne*) that have “historical political, social, economic and scientific significance”, created from the work of “primary, central and local state authorities and offices and their bodies, former local government authorities, economic and

43 Kaczmarek: *Składnica akt*, pp. 37–40; Jaros: *Brakowanie*, p. 35.

44 Kaczmarek: *Składnica akt*, pp. 8–19, 21–24.

45 Degen: *Kształtowanie państwowego zasobu*, pp. 24–28.

46 Antkiewicz: *Kształtowanie zasobu*, pp. 14–22; Krupska: *Zarządzanie dokumentacją*, pp. 118–119.

47 *Dekret z dnia 29 marca 1951 r.*

- professional local government authorities, state and cooperative institutions and enterprises, banks, social and cultural institutions and associations”.⁴⁸ While it is true that initially the ban on destroying records thus defined arose from tradition, in 1957, the regulation on the state archival fonds clearly stated that archival materials defined in this way deserved permanent preservation.⁴⁹
5. In terms of archival science, Poland was among those that developed their own criteria for assessing documentation for historical reasons. In 1934, the first Polish selection and disposal manual was published.⁵⁰ Then, cut-off dates were defined, before which documentation could not be destroyed, and a ban on disposing of records produced in historically important periods was introduced. In the former case, this involved the years 1866–1867, which marked a political turning point across the territory of all Polish lands divided in the 19th century between the Kingdom of Prussia, the Habsburg Monarchy and the Russian Empire. According to Polish archives, the accession of Prussia to the North German Confederation, the introduction of autonomy in Galicia and the liquidation of the remnants of the autonomy of the Kingdom of Poland, the reorganisation and full Russification of the administration of the Vistula Land had this special constitutional character, justifying this cut-off date. In turn, the years of World War I and the time when the borders of Poland reborn were finally established, constituted a period for which it was recommended to ban the destruction of files due to the complexity of the historical process.⁵¹ Even before the war, historical reasons justified the preservation of, *inter alia*, records created during work on the final drafts of legal regulations, materials proving the participation and role of outstanding people in important historical events and their personal files.⁵² After the war, in the new socio-political reality, materials considered worth preserving concerned sabotage, the fight against the class enemy and social riots, records illustrating socio-political changes, describing events particularly relevant to the construction of socialism in Poland, presenting the basic living and working conditions of workers.⁵³
 6. In the mid-1950s, Poland had its own comprehensively designed selection and disposal system, which was just taking its final shape. The Grigg system piqued the interest of Polish archivists and was even the subject of a more

48 *Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 26 kwietnia 1952 r.*, pp. 258–259.

49 *Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 19 lutego 1957 r.*, p. 122.

50 Kaleński: *Brakowanie akt*. Kaleński's manual was translated into English and published in *The American Archivist*, Fishbein (trans.): Kaleński: *Record Selection*.

51 Fishbein (trans.): Kaleński: *Record Selection*, p. 31.

52 *Ibid.*, pp. 33–35.

53 Degen: *Kształtowanie państwowego zasobu*, pp. 17–18.

detailed study,⁵⁴ but was treated – at least in the first years – as an intriguing solution, albeit not entirely suited to Polish reality.

In Polish institutions, there was no need to create positions analogous to English departmental record officers. As mentioned earlier (point 2), in Poland, officials with similar responsibilities had already appeared before 1939. A separate issue was the employment of appropriately trained archives officers, but it was assumed that technical schools educating the staff of file repositories and, above all, further education addressed to this group would ensure a sufficient level of professional staff qualifications in the near future.⁵⁵

In Poland, as in England, it was decided to introduce a multi-stage selection procedure. In both networks, this solution was intended to reduce the amount of records appraised in subsequent evaluation phases, although the action undertaken at the first stage of selection was conceived differently. In Poland, the importance of files for file creators was not taken into account. It was not the period of validity for official purposes that determined the survival or destruction of records after a maximum of 5 years from its creation. In Poland, the files' creators were assessed. This idea emerged in 1953, and in 1955 it was decided that all state institutions in Poland would be assigned to one of two groups:

- files' creators who definitely did not produce category A files,
- institutions whose repositories contained both category A and B files.⁵⁶

As in England, in Poland a decision was taken to appraise the value of records primarily based on the titles of the files and in this procedure the so-called *wykaz akt* were used. They were not the exact equivalent of the English 'disposal schedules', but a combination of the records classification scheme and retention schedule commonly used in Polish offices. *Wykazy akt* appeared in offices in the early 1930s with the implementation of a principle that records created in different positions at work would be combined into files according to a pre-prepared classification. At that time, the *wykazy akt* were *de facto* 1:1 mapping of the detailed division of activities undertaken in individual officers positions.⁵⁷ Already a few years before the outbreak of World War II, *wykazy akt* helped Polish officials combine documentation of many small, but thematically related matters into files. This structure of reference files made it possible to easily assign archival classification symbols, because the probability of creating files with divergent content was minimal. Assigning the records to the appropriate archival category (A or B), especially when using the aforementioned

54 Nawrocki: *Brakowanie*, pp. 12–21.

55 Bielińska: *Akt jako obiekt archiwalny*, p. 147.

56 Degen: *Kształtowanie państwowego zasobu*, p. 20.

57 Smoczyński: *Wykaz akt*, pp. 28–29.

archival classification lists (point 2), did not pose any major difficulties. In the mid-1950s, *wykazy akt* began to be modified and archival category symbols were assigned to the classes of documentation listed therein.⁵⁸

An issue unsettled in Poland in the mid-1950s were predetermined rules for appraisal of thematic homogeneous and mass-created records. Only in 1960, when the methods of selecting materials produced by socialised industrial enterprises and unifications were prescribed, was the order given that only files of the most outstanding employees be selected from among the workers' personal documentation.⁵⁹ Two years later, among the banking documentation, it was recommended to keep only selected, complete files of various banking operations (several examples of each type of operation) and one set of bank ledgers.⁶⁰ In 1973, a percentage of complaints and requests addressed to all state institutions was allowed to be randomly selected for permanent preservation.⁶¹

Summary

The mid-20th century was a time of lively discussion on how to deal with the problem of mass files. In a politically divided world, archivists managed to create grounds for mutual cooperation *via* international congresses. The first three meetings organised by the ICA in Paris, The Hague and Florence touched on the selection and disposal of records, albeit to varying extents. The last one, which took place in 1956, bequeathed, *inter alia*, a collective image of practices in this field used worldwide, which reached Polish archivists in the form of a report from the meeting, published in *Archeion*. Thanks to Altman's text – besides a significant dose of knowledge on how to deal with the mass production of records – Polish archivists gained a point of reference for their own system of appraisal and disposal, which had been developing in Poland since the 1930s. It turned out that it did not differ from international concerns, while in some areas it introduced unique activities and tools. The most important were the selection of files' creators and *wykazy akt*. The latter enabled the creation of records in the form of thematically homogeneous files and, in most situations, allowed the value of materials to be appraised based on their titles.

[Translated by Steve Jones]

58 Bielińska: *Z problematyki zabezpieczenia*, p. 126. See Chmielewski: *Problemy archiwistyki*, pp. 107–112.

59 Degen: *Kształtowanie państwowego zasobu*, p. 24.

60 Rosowska et al. (eds.): *Zbiór przepisów*, pp. 89–90.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

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Technological Changes

Marcin Smoczyński

From Traditional to Digital Documentation: The Transition Period in Electronic Records Management in Poland

Abstract

The chapter presents an analysis from 311 Polish local and government administration units regarding the use of the EZD PUW electronic document and records management system. Based on the collected research material, Polish public offices were categorised according to the implementation phase of this Information and Communications Technology tool and their stage within the transition period (between the traditional and digital form of documentation) was determined.

Keywords: records management; documentation management; public offices in Poland; electronic document and records management system (EDRMS); EZD PUW system

Introduction

Luciana Duranti embarks on her odyssey of records management in the great ancient civilisations – Mesopotamia, Greece and the Roman Empire.¹ However, these considerations can be taken further and effectiveness in dealing with documentation during its entire life cycle may be sought at the moment when someone begins to record his or her thoughts on any medium using any tool. This endeavour is then improved by seeking ever more effective methods. Through the continuous evolution of solutions and practices, it can be concluded that the history of records management is indeed one continuous period of transition – from one writing tool to another more convenient one, from one medium to another more capacious, sometimes more durable, and usually cheaper. Procedures and systems for organising the office also transformed. The 21st century is no exception and, in fact, this process has significantly accelerated, for various reasons. Digital transformation is currently the most important challenge facing records managers in many countries and has marked a turning point in “the

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1 Duranti: *The Odyssey*, p. 3.

efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including the processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records”.²

Poland’s introduction to the era of digital document management is a process that has been ongoing for a couple of decades, as reflected by research conducted by specialists and scholars in the field of records management, archival and social sciences.³ This is primarily of interest to office practitioners – those responsible for introducing modern technologies to the day to day work of public administration units – as well as to creators and administrators of electronic document management systems, and finally to officials as the main target users of electronic document and records management systems (EDRMS). In the face of the noticeably and relatively slow implementation of modern solutions, it may be claimed with some justification that Polish office work currently finds itself in a transition period between traditional paper and electronic document management models. The main purpose of this chapter is to determine at what stage of digital transformation selected units of Polish local government and government administration are. Due to the diversity of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) tools used to manage documentation in Polish public administration units, the scope of interest here is limited to local government entities,⁴ that, between 2011–2023, decided to implement (to any extent) the only non-commercial Polish EDRMS – the EZD PUW system developed by the Podlaskie Voivodeship Office.

The basic normative act regulating documentation management in the administrative units included in this study is the Ordinance of the Prime Minister of 18 January 2011.⁵ This standard included detailed office instructions, archival instructions and *wykaz akt* (a mix of retention schedule and classification scheme commonly used in Polish offices). Pursuant to the regulations, managers of administrative units are obliged to indicate the basic system (traditional, paper or based on an EDRMS used for performing office work in terms of documenting the process of handling and resolving matters in a given institution. In practice,

2 ISO 15489-1:2004.

3 *Inter alia*: Robótka: *Zarządzanie dokumentacją*, pp. 97–116; Karaś: *Od narzędzi*, pp. 117–138; Wlezień: *Dane gromadzone*, pp. 139–156; Smoczyński: *System elektronicznego*, pp. 184–217; Idem: *Nie tylko instrukcja*, pp. 215–225; Peplowska: *Dobre praktyki*, pp. 127–144.

4 Polish local government administration is divided into three levels: municipal (*gmina*), district (*powiat*) and voivodeship (*województwo*). The auxiliary bodies are: municipal offices (including some city offices and city-municipal offices), district offices and marshal offices. The study included government administration units – voivodeship offices. Poland is divided into 16 voivodeships, 314 districts/counties (*powiat*) including 66 towns/cities with county (*powiat*) rights, and 2,477 municipalities (*gmina*): 677 urban-rural and 1,498 rural.

5 *Rozporządzenie Prezesa Rady Ministrów z dnia 18 stycznia 2011 r.*

however, it is also possible to assist traditional office work with an EDRMS. This resulted in the discovery of a commonly used middle ground where an ICT system plays an important role despite the basic method being indicated as traditional. The same regulation also offers the possibility to indicate exceptions (in clearly defined cases) from the basic method of documentation by specifying classes from the list of files to which the exceptions will apply. Therefore, in Poland there exists a group of units where the system used is hybrid – institutions that have decided to operate in a traditional way can handle some cases solely in electronic form, and vice versa. Offices that, by definition, should document their work in an EDRMS may specify particular areas where the documentation shall be performed exclusively on paper.

Electronic Records Management System – EZD PUW

The EZD PUW system is one of the most popular electronic document and records management systems in Poland. Moreover, it is the only one to be developed on a non-commercial basis and available free of charge to interested parties. The history of this ICT tool dates back to 2009, when the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration commissioned the Podlaskie Voivodeship local government to run a pilot of the system in 2010. At the same time, work was underway on the aforementioned Ordinance of the Prime Minister of 18 January 2011, so the experiment was a kind of dummy run aimed at checking whether these solutions designed for document management (including electronic documentation) would work in the context of a functioning office. At that time, 74 groups of cases were selected for electronic management. An important aspect of the pilot was the development of an EDRMS, created independently at the Podlaskie Voivodeship Office, while the State Treasury would own the final product.⁶

The production launch of the EZD PUW system took place at the beginning of 2011, and from then on the number of project partners gradually increased,⁷ initially, in comparable institutions charged with similar tasks as the Podlaskie Voivodeship Office – other voivodeship offices. Later, EZD PUW was also used, *inter alia*, in central and local administration units (consolidated and non-consolidated), local government, universities, courts, health care facilities, schools and kindergartens, and in state archives. The EZD PUW system spread significantly throughout various types of organisational units from 2021 – after the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic when, due to danger to health, in-

6 *Krótką historią przedsięwzięcia.*

7 See fig. 1 at the end of the chapter.

stitutions limited direct contact, worked remotely or in a hybrid system, and offices functioned by communicating remotely *via* electronic documents. These circumstances undoubtedly made people more open to ICT tools, which led to an increase in the number of EZD PUW installations.⁸ Currently, 1,761 partners are participating in the project,⁹ and 278,161 workers use the EZD PUW system every day.¹⁰

The EZD PUW system,¹¹ like all ICT systems used in public offices, must ensure full interoperability and compatibility with other tools of this type in state institutions.¹² It must also have 14 functionalities as specified by the legislator back in 2006. These include the following: ability to group documentation into case files based on *wykaz akt*, assistance for qualifying documentation (allocation to temporary or perpetual storage in archival categories), full records of the processes undergone while handling and resolving individual cases, safeguards against the deletion and modification of completed case files (except in clearly defined cases), maintaining integrity between electronic documents and metadata, assistance for allocating documentation whose storage period has expired for destruction, support regarding the transfer of documentation to the state archive.¹³ In addition to the above, EZD PUW facilitates all office work, from the moment when new documents arrive to the transfer of documentation to the institutional archive.¹⁴ The system also includes an archive module where documentation is stored after losing current value.

The EZD PUW system's period of use in Polish offices will most likely end within the next few years but, within the scope of the project *EZD RP – electronic records management in public administration*, will constitute a basis for creating the EZD RP system,¹⁵ which is designed to act as a standardised tool for public administration, and even become its cornerstone for effective operation.¹⁶ The project is being run as a partnership programme involving Scientific and Academic Computer Network (*Naukowa i Akademicka Sieć Komputerowa*, NASK)

8 Smoczyński: *Biurowość*, pp. 310–336; see fig. 2 at the end of the chapter.

9 It can therefore be concluded that not all partners were indicated in the list on which fig. 2 is based.

10 As of 09.1.2024; *Partnerzy*.

11 See fig. 3 at the end of the chapter.

12 Interoperability understood as “the ability of various entities and the IT systems and public registers they use to cooperate to achieve mutually beneficial and agreed goals, taking into account the sharing of information and knowledge *via* the business processes they support, implemented through the exchange of data *via* ICT systems used by these entities”, according to the Act: *Ustawa z dnia 17 lutego 2005 r.*

13 *Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji z dnia 30 października 2006 r.*

14 User panel of EZD PUW system – see fig. 3 at the end of the chapter.

15 See fig. 4 at the end of the chapter.

16 *EZD RP – Elektroniczne Zarządzanie Dokumentacją w Administracji Publicznej*.

with the Podlaskie Voivodeship local government.¹⁷ The system is not only planned to be an extension of EZD PUW, but above all to simplify procedures and be more intuitive and user-friendly (thanks to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, WCAG).¹⁸ Some office work is to be supported by artificial intelligence.¹⁹ By the end of 2023, 140 EZD RP systems had been installed, and a total of over 850 entities had participated in the implementation process.²⁰

Work on the projects indicated above, EZD PUW and EZD RP, should be perceived positively for many reasons beyond increasing work efficiency, cost effectiveness and ecology. As research results have shown, the standardisation of electronic records management archive systems also constitutes a basis for record management in historical archives.²¹ In this context, integrated computerisation is becoming more relevant – designed and implemented in order to ensure that internal processes in offices are assisted by compatible tools, functional systems for electronic document management and implemented with the maximum use of data already possessed by the administration.²²

Study Group and Collection of Research Data

The starting point was to define the study group. The source material was the *List of institutions using the EZD PUW system based on an agreement with the Podlaskie Voivodeship local government* available on the system's website.²³ This helped identify 311 organisational units – local government and government administration offices that, between 2011–2023²⁴ partnered up with the Podlaskie Voivodeship local government to implement the EZD PUW system. This group included 241 city, municipal or city and municipal government offices, 51 district offices, 14 voivodeship offices and five marshal offices.

Requests for access to public information regarding documentation management were sent to all selected units. The following questions were asked:

1. What is the unit's basic method of documenting the process of handling and resolving official matters (pursuant to the Ordinance of the Prime Minister of 18 January 2011)?

17 *System EZD RP.*

18 *Funkcje systemu.*

19 *Automatyczna dekretacja z wykorzystaniem mechanizmów AI.*

20 *Ponad 140 produkcyjnych wdrożeń EZD RP.*

21 Pełowska: *Archiwa cyfrowe*, pp. 15–155.

22 *Program zintegrowanej informatyzacji państwa*, pp. 12–13.

23 *Partnerzy.*

24 The study included the Podlaskie Voivodeship Office in Białystok, where the implementation of the EZD PUW system took place before 2011, based on the ordinance of the Podlaskie Voivodeship local government of 31 December 2009.

2. Has the unit's manager indicated any exceptions to the basic method of documenting the process of handling and resolving cases by specifying classes from the list of files to which exceptions shall apply? If so, please kindly send a list of these exceptions.

The submission was accompanied by a request to send a list of exceptions to the basic (if any) method of documenting the process of handling official matters.²⁵

Units that responded to the inquiry and named the EZD P UW system as the ICT tool used were qualified for further analysis. They consisted of a total of 272 units, including 206 city, municipal or city and municipal government offices, 47 district offices, 14 voivodeship offices and five marshal offices. Institutions at an initial stage of implementing and using the EZD P UW system were disqualified.

Two separate study groups were distinguished according to the nature of the responses. The first were entities that had not fully implemented the EZD P UW system as the basic method of documenting the process of handling and resolving official matters but did indicate some exceptions – cases exclusively documented electronically.²⁶ In these offices, the EZD P UW system is just a tool that supports the traditional model. A total of 42 organisational units were categorised in this group,²⁷ including: 33 city, municipal or city and municipal government offices, five district offices, three marshal's offices and one voivodeship office. The second group included units where the EZD P UW system had been designated as the basic documentation management tool between 2011–2022. All of them also mentioned cases documented in a traditional way only. This group included a total of 24 units: 13 voivodeship offices, two marshal offices, five district offices and four city offices.²⁸ All organisational units are located on an interactive map available after scanning the QR code.²⁹

The next stage of the study involved analysing the source material gathered – the internal standards mentioned by the units, which specified exceptions to the basic method of documenting the process of dealing with official matters.

25 All research data collected in the course of the study are stored at the head office of the Faculty of History of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, ul. Bojarskiego 1, 87–100 Toruń.

26 *Rozporządzenie Prezesa Rady Ministrów z dnia 18 stycznia 2011 r.*

27 See fig. 5 at the end of the chapter.

28 See fig. 6 at the end of the chapter.

29 See fig. 7 at the end of the chapter.

Findings of the Study

Offices placed in the first study group that preferred paper documentation assisted by an ICT system, indicated some exceptions to the basic method of documenting the process of dealing with official matters. Here, depending on the practices adopted, the documentation of individual cases is sometimes performed in two ways: traditionally as well as electronically or, in some exceptional instances, exclusively electronically. While transitioning between paper and electronic methods, a hybrid form of documentation tends to occur (an electronic document and its identical printout) as well as the duplication of office work (which must be performed both for e-documents and on paper). This phenomenon should be perceived as suboptimal, especially in the context of process efficiency mentioned in the definition of document management, including the involvement of human resources and the costs involved in storing records (including ecological costs – the carbon footprint generated by maintaining servers).

The units included in the study mentioned an average of just 50 cases conducted exclusively electronically (the highest number = 288, and the lowest = 1), while 50% of these offices indicated less than 20 exceptions to the basic method of documenting the process of handling official matters. These data are particularly relevant if one takes into account the broader context – the total number of cases that can be dealt with by the office, specified in the standardised material list of files. On average, there are 705 groups in the *wykaz akt* for voivodeship offices, marshal's offices, district offices and city and municipal offices, which means that on average only 7% of all cases conducted within a given organisational unit are processed electronically.³⁰ This clearly indicates that in most of the units placed in the second study group, the implementation of the EZD PUW system was in its initial phase and the system's capabilities were only being used to a limited extent.

To obtain more detailed and diverse results, it is worth examining the collected research data categorised according to administration levels: municipal (including city offices), district and voivodeship (including for central and local government administration – voivodeship and marshal offices).³¹ The worst findings came from municipal, city and municipal and city offices. In these institutions, an average of just 33 cases were exclusively documented electronically, which constitutes 4% of all cases handled.³² The situation was slightly better

30 See fig. 8 at the end of the chapter.

31 The results present a general trend. Some organisational units (especially offices in cities with district/county rights) took advantage of the opportunity to expand the list of files, which resulted in an increase in the number of case groups.

32 See fig. 9 at the end of the chapter.

in district offices, where on average 45 cases were handled electronically – approximately 6% of all cases mentioned in the standardised material list of files.³³ Local government and government administration offices at the voivodeship level performed the most favourably in the study. In these entities, an average of 182 cases were handled exclusively *via* the electronic document management system, which constitutes almost 27% of the groups of cases that can be handled by the particular institution.³⁴ These findings clearly indicate that offices at the highest administrative level (provincial) analysed here are the best prepared to fully base their office work on an EDRMS.

Similar challenges were revealed by analysing the internal standards provided by offices that legally base their work on an EDRMS. Here, an average of 345 cases are still documented in a traditional or hybrid fashion – on paper and in an ICT system. In total, this constitutes on average almost 49% of cases that can be dealt with by a particular office.³⁵ These findings clearly indicate that the mere acknowledgement of an ICT system as the basic office tool does not guarantee its widespread use, and units classified in study group 2 should also expand the catalogue of cases that are to be handled exclusively electronically.

Further, more detailed information is yielded by an analysis according to administration level: municipal (city, municipal), district and voivodeship (voivodeship and marshal offices combined). For the four city offices that were classified in the second research group, document management for an average of 71% of cases (i. e. 527) is carried out in a traditional way.³⁶ The result observed at the district level was almost the same. There, the process of handling an average of 502 cases is performed on paper, which constitutes 72% of all cases that can be handled at the office.³⁷ The highest level of computerisation was demonstrated by voivodeship and marshal offices, where on average 36% of all cases (244) fell outside the electronic management system. It is worth noting that the vast majority of voivodeship offices decided to implement the EZD PUW system in the first years after the system was launched. The presented data clearly indicate that despite the passage of many years, documentation for over 1/3 of cases is still produced and collected in paper form.³⁸

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 See fig. 10 at the end of the chapter.

36 See fig. 11 at the end of the chapter.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

Summary

Document management in its global sense is currently passing through a transition period, after which information recorded on paper will be completely replaced by a digital medium. Polish office work is also undergoing increasingly intense digital transformation, currently manifested mainly by the implementation of EDRMS. This process has been ongoing for several years, and the number of institutions transferring their document management to an ICT environment is constantly growing (especially after the experiences related to the COVID-19 pandemic), although – as can be concluded on the basis of the collected research material – progress is still slow.

One of the most popular EDRMS is the EZD PUW system, the only ICT tool used on such a large scale, developed on a non-commercial basis and owned by the State Treasury. In general, between 2011–2023, this system was installed in almost 1,800 institutions (which, however, constitutes a small fraction of all the entities involved in Polish public administration), including over 300 local government and government administration offices. Within an unspecified time-frame, data will be migrated to a more modern system – EZD RP.

During the study, 311 entities were contacted, the vast majority of which are at the initial stage of implementing an EDRMS. Many offices have not taken any bolder steps beyond deciding to install the system. The next stage was to discover the exceptions to the basic (paper) method of documenting the process of handling official matters. As the analysis revealed, only 42 entities decided to do so, and to a very limited extent. The final stage of EDRMS implementation – its acknowledgement as the fundamental work tool – was achieved by only 24 offices. Despite this, in the vast majority of them, most cases are still processed in paper form (or in a hybrid version – traditionally and digitally).

The characteristics outlined above have revealed many challenges that decision-makers face in the computerisation of document management in Poland. The process should certainly pick up speed and follow a consistent course, striving to limit the internal circulation of traditional documentation as much as possible. In the light of the collected research material, one may emphatically state that the Polish office environment is at an early stage of the transition period between paper and electronic documents.

[Translated by Steve Jones]

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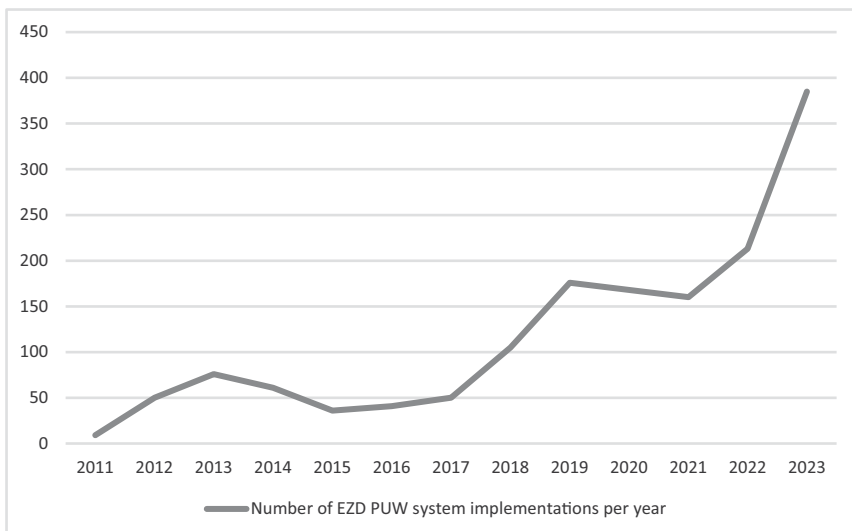


Fig 1. The rise of EZD PUW. Number of units using this EDRMS on annual basis. Own work based on: *Partnerzy*.

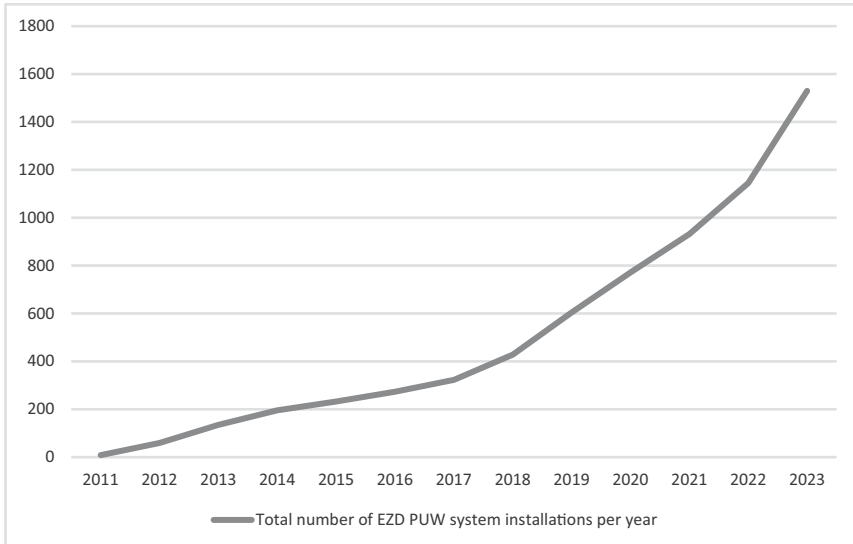


Fig. 2. The rise of the EZD PUW system. Total number of units using the system in a given year. Own work based on: *Partnerzy*.

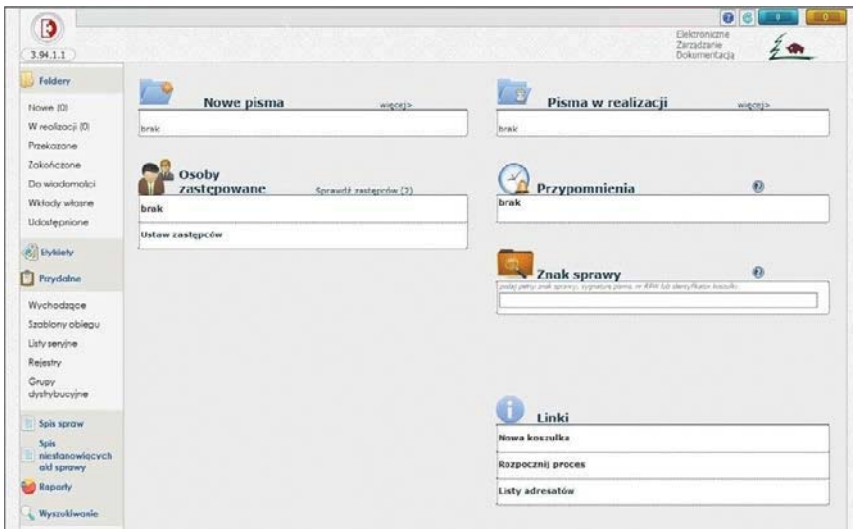


Fig. 3. EZD PUW system user panel.

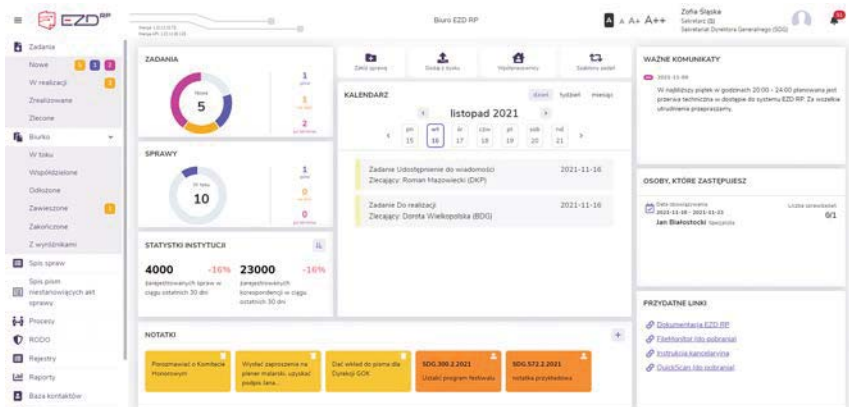


Fig. 4. The EZD RP system user panel (demo version).

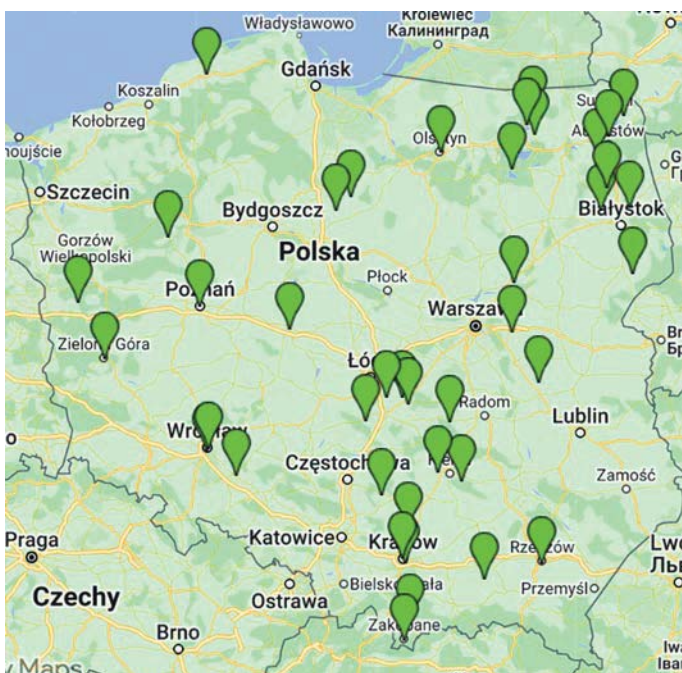


Fig. 5. Organisational units placed in the first study group. Map by Marcin Smoczyński.

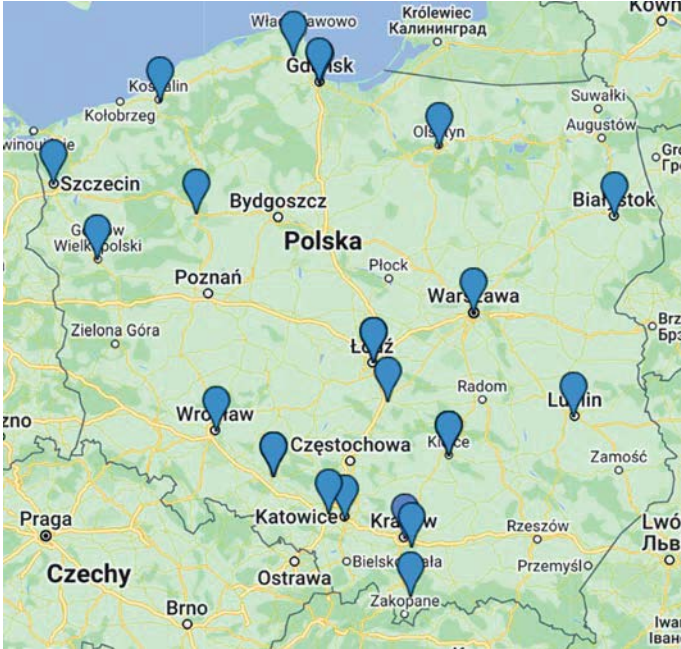


Fig. 6. Organisational units placed in the second study group. Map by Marcin Smoczyński.



Fig. 7. QR code to an interactive map containing the location of the organisational units included in the study.

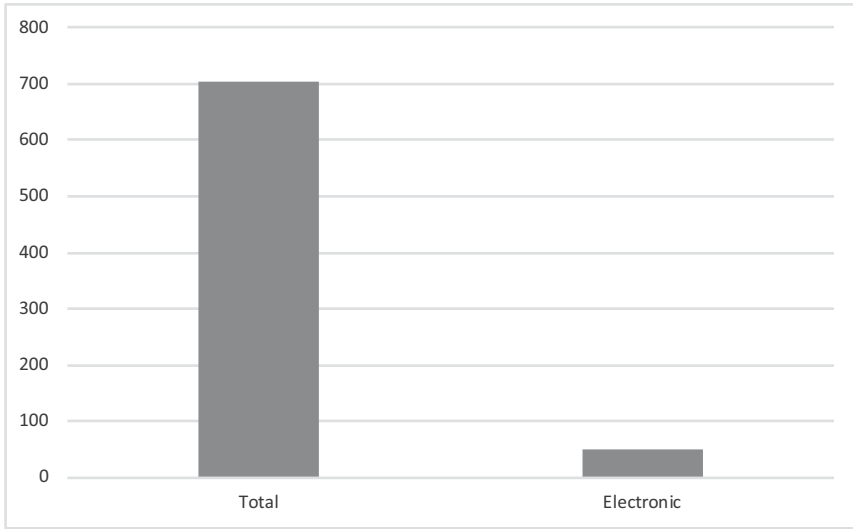


Fig. 8. The average number of all cases handled by the offices relative to the average number of cases handled electronically (study group 1). Graph by Marcin Smoczyński.

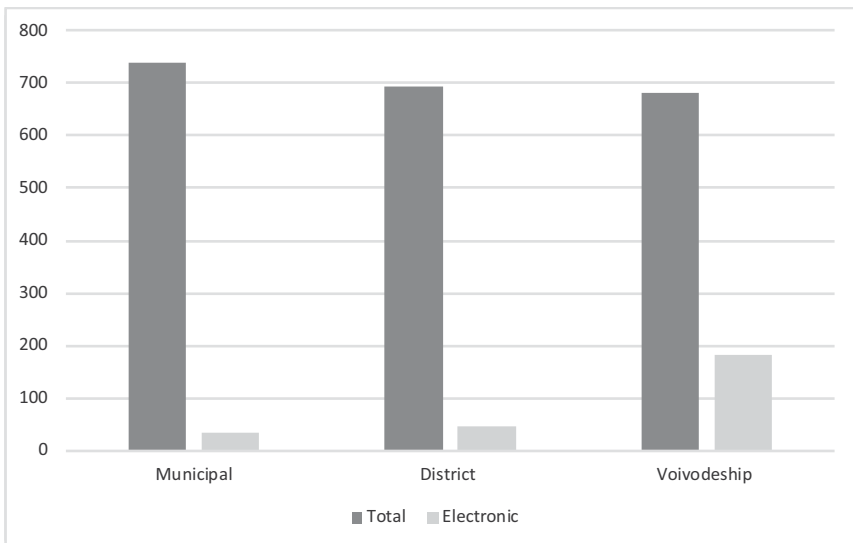


Fig. 9. The average number of all cases handled by the offices relative to the average number of cases handled electronically (study group 1 according to administrative level). Graph by Marcin Smoczyński.

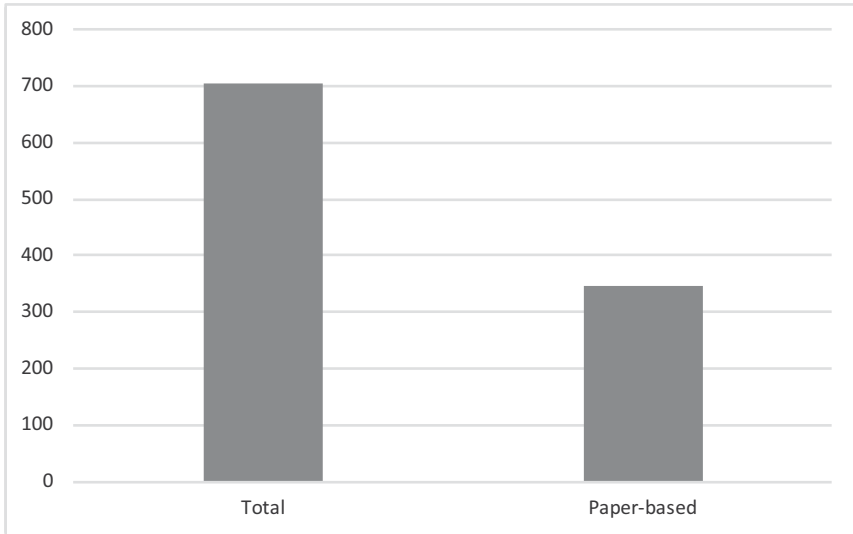


Fig. 10. The average number of all cases handled by the offices relative to the average number of cases handled on paper (study group 2). Graph by Marcin Smoczyński.

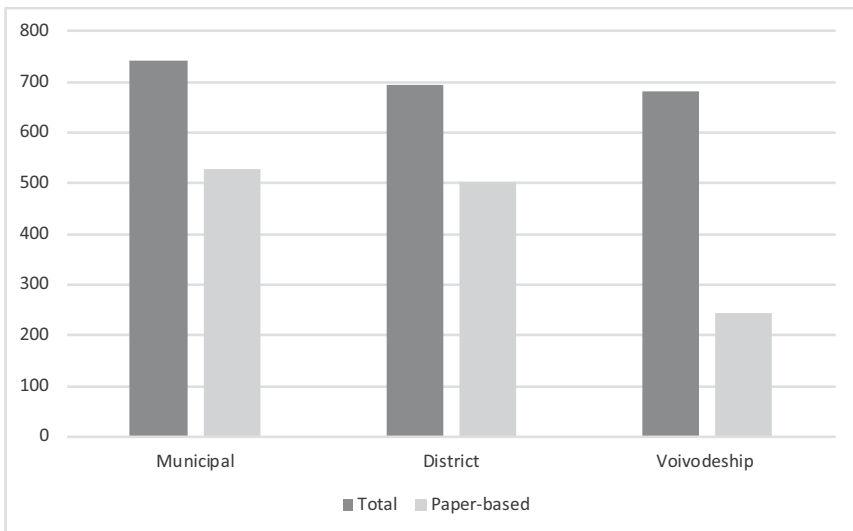


Fig. 11. The average number of all cases handled by the offices relative to the average number of cases handled on paper (study group 2 by administrative level). Graph by Marcin Smoczyński.

Agnieszka Rosa

The Digitisation of Archives in Poland and the Processes That Preceded It

Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the digitisation of archives in Poland. The first section deals with the processes preceding the digitisation of archives, while the second refers to the creation of digital solutions, products and services by state archives in an already computerised world. Digitisation has helped archives overcome a host of obstacles related to accessibility and information management. However, different archive networks are currently at different stages of development in this regard. When it comes to state archives, these issues are presented differently, based on the data from which the chapter was created, than in other types of archives.

Keywords: digitisation of archives; computerisation of archives; digitisation of archival materials; informatisation in archives; archival information system

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the digitisation of archives in Poland. The creation of digital infrastructure, digital services and tools was made possible by processes and events that occurred in archives even before digitisation. For this reason, the chapter first deals with historical circumstances including the standardisation of finding aids and the development of an archival information system, the application of scientific knowledge in archival science, computerisation, system construction and informatisation. This presents the general changes that took place in archives in Poland in the second half of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, when archives, like other cogs in the Polish state machine, were first subject to totalisation, and then to democratisation and liberalisation. The common axis of these changes are the people working in the archives and their needs, which archives are currently trying to meet by applying digital solutions.

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The chapter qualitatively analyses existing texts, in particular academic literature, finding aids, legal acts, methodological regulations and publicly accessible databases, systems and websites. It is also based on the knowledge and experience of the author, who is a lecturer at the Department of Archival Studies and Documentation Management at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, as well as a member of the academic council of the *Symposia Archivistica*¹ team that deals with research on the computerisation of archives, led by Prof. Bohdan Ryszewski.

In the chapter, the author refers to the following terms: democratisation, computerisation, informatisation, and digitisation. These terms are defined differently in the literature, so at the beginning it would be appropriate to state in what sense they are to be used in this chapter. By referring to democratisation, we mean the processes of including and sharing power and knowledge with the majority in society, while taking into account the rights and needs of minorities, which equally apply to archives. Computerisation describes the preparation period for the use, and then the subsequent use of the capabilities offered by computers in the everyday work of archives, as well as action aimed at involving computers, people and software in building systems. Informatisation, in turn, is used to describe action aimed at further equipping archives with hardware and software, building IT infrastructure and connecting and operating archives on the Internet. Digitisation, as used in the title of the chapter, is understood quite broadly, as the processes of creating digital solutions, products and services in an already computerised world.

The chapter consists of two main sections. The first presents the origins and processes preceding, and to some extent enabling, the digitisation of Polish archives, such as the aforementioned development of finding aids and the construction of an archival information system, the application of information science in archival science, computerisation and informatisation of archives. The second refers to the participation of Polish archives in the digital world – their digital products and services, such as the digitisation of archival resources and their digital accessibility.

1 See volumes in the series under the same title, which are the result of the team's work: *Symposia Archivistica*.

Finding Aids and the Development of an Archival Information System

First of all, this chapter presents the development of finding aids and their standardisation in Polish archives. There are processes that constituted the starting point for building the first electronic version of the archival information system, which in turn became the basis for the construction of digital search tools and services, as well as digital services for archive users.

The first attempts at standardising the resources in Polish archives with a uniform archival description were undertaken before World War II. Indeed, at the Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw – where some outstanding Polish archivists were employed at that time, including Ryszard Przelaskowski and Kazimierz Konarski – work was carried out to create general aids and central finding aids, such as a catalogue of archival fonds, a general and topographic inventory, or an inventory of inventories, the Central Fonds Catalogue with its own index, as well as the ‘Archival Vademecum’ for 19th century records.² Standardisation work was resumed after the war, but unfortunately most of the finding aids in the state archives, especially inventories, had been lost at that time. There was therefore a huge and immediate need to develop uniform solutions for archives with diverse archival holdings. The priority was to develop a unified inventory sheet, which found practical application in Polish archives soon after.³ The work on standardisation was assisted by the community of archivists associated with the Archival Section of the Warsaw Circle of the Association of Polish Librarians and Archivists in Warsaw,⁴ which included some outstanding Polish archivists. This led to a more rapid and efficient development of certain common principles and solutions that could be applied in archive practice.

During this period, the archival authorities initiated, in the facilities under their control, a project to make a thematic inventory of archival materials, *inter alia*, which significantly accelerated the creation of thematic finding aids. The first theme was the workers’ movement in Poland. Instructions were sent to all state archives in September 1949 to make inventory cards, which provided a basis for thematic catalogue.⁵ Soon, work was initiated centrally by the archival authorities on a guide to archival materials destroyed during the World War II between 1939–1945 and a summary guide encompassing the holdings of Polish

2 See Chorażyczewski: *O Ryszardzie Przelaskowskim*, pp. 45–46; Rybarski: *Sprawozdanie z działalności archiwów państwowych. Lata 1933 i 1934*, p. 194; Idem: *Sprawozdanie z działalności archiwów państwowych. Rok 1935*, p. 107.

3 Wolff: *Archiwalne karty*, pp. 151–163; Konarski: *Wstęp do inwentarza*, pp. 192–201.

4 See, e.g.: Rybarski: *Działalność Sekcji*, p. 229; Jankowska: *Działalność Sekcji*, pp. 291–292.

5 Rybarski: *Sprawozdanie z działalności Wydziału Archiwów Państwowych za rok 1949*, pp. 466–467.

archives,⁶ and in later years on the creation of a catalogue of archival materials on the history of rural Poland.⁷ The fruit of these quests formed the basis for creating nationwide thematic catalogues and archival guides of various scopes.⁸

In the 1950s and 1960s, the archival authorities in Poland published a number of methodological regulations stipulating how to organise, record, discard and describe various types of documentation.⁹ These publications enormously facilitated work on archive standardisation and unification, especially in terms of creating various types of finding aids. One of the most important provisions at that time was a directive, by order of the General Director of State Archives (GDSA),¹⁰ to prepare book 'inventories' for fonds and collections stored in state archives, which would then form the basis for the entire later integrated archival information system of state archives in Poland. A second was the introduction of mandatory records of holdings in state archives in the form of catalogues of fonds and collections on standardised 'A' fonds cards (for complete fonds), replicated in several copies, two of which were sent to the GDSA,¹¹ which, together with other fonds cards, formed the Central Fonds Catalogue.¹² The methodology for fonds catalogues in state archives was amended in 1972 in accordance with instructions from the 'Informatics and archives' team¹³ established in 1970 at the GDSA to deal, *inter alia*, with prospects for using information and search languages in archives, as well as using computers in archive work.¹⁴

6 See Bielińska: *II Zjazd Dyrektorów*, p. 506.

7 Barańska: *Działalność archiwów*, p. 230; Maciejewska: *Inwentaryzacja*, pp. 60–73.

8 See Bandurka: *Międzyzespołowe katalogi*, pp. 23–30.

9 See, e.g.: Registratura Naczelnej Dyrekcji Archiwów Państwowych: *Pisma okólne 1960–1970, Pismo okólne Nr 3 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 28 lutego 1961 roku [w sprawie sporządzania sumaryzsy i indeksów dla zespołów i zbiorów archiwalnych]*, pp. 57–74; *Instrukcja w sprawie porządkowania archiwaliów bankowych*, pp. 115–118; *Wytyczne w sprawie porządkowania akt gminnych rad narodowych*; *Instrukcja o porządkowaniu archiwaliów podworskich*, pp. 118–126; *Instrukcja w sprawie porządkowania archiwalnego zasobu kartograficznego*, pp. 128–145; *Wytyczne w sprawie porządkowania akt miejskich*, pp. 113–114; *Okólnik Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z 6 sierpnia 1959 roku*, pp. 94–97; *Zarządzenie Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z 28 lipca 1960 roku*, pp. 99–102; *Zarządzenie nr 8 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 22 maja 1961 roku*, pp. 146–162; *Zarządzenie Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z 2 lipca 1966 roku*, pp. 128–138; *Zarządzenie Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z 30 czerwca 1969 roku*, pp. 140–154.

10 See *Wytyczne w sprawie sporządzania inwentarzy książkowych*, pp. 163–166.

11 *Zarządzenie nr 10 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z 25 maja 1961 roku*, pp. 75–84; see also *Zarządzenie nr 17a Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych*, pp. 84–88; *Pismo okólne nr 15 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych*, pp. 88–92.

12 See the first entry in the legal act on Central Fonds Catalogue: *Zarządzenie nr 88 Prezesa Rady Ministrów z dnia 31 maja 1951 roku*, pp. 193–201.

13 See *Zarządzenie Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z 2 czerwca 1972 roku*, pp. 193–201.

14 Radtke: *Stan wykorzystywania materiałów archiwalnych*, pp. 21–47.

Before discussing the achievements of the 'Informatics and Archives' team, the work conducted by other teams related to the computerisation of archives in Poland, or presenting the further development of finding aids and the archival information system in Poland, an overview should be given on how Polish archives have benefited from information science solutions, and also to what extent the latter have influenced the computerisation and then the digitisation of archives.

Applying Information Knowledge to Archival Science and the Organisation of Archival Information

It soon became apparent that it was worth applying the achievements of information science to create practical solutions for archiving, especially discoveries that made it possible to rationalise the evaluation, processing and use (i. e., sharing) of archival materials.¹⁵ Priority was given to the possibilities of using information languages to create search characteristics for archival materials. Information science was quickly assimilated in archival science. Developed as a research issue within the framework of archival information, it was included in textbooks for teaching archival science,¹⁶ and also appeared in education programs for archivists¹⁷ – since 1973 at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, as part of the archival specialisation within the *Information Theory and Computer Science* course, and since 1980 at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin.¹⁸

In Poland, research development in the area of information science, as well as the first coordinated efforts to organise it, date back to the 1960s, when the concept of creating a centrally managed scientific, technical and economic information centre based on a collection of documentation cards was created. Such organisational measures were primarily aimed at connecting information science more closely with the needs of the national economy, centrally planned in a command-and-distribution system, which later, after the political changes at the turn of 1989/1990, unfortunately resulted in the failure of its development.¹⁹

Initially, the Central Institute of Scientific, Technical and Economic Information was established,²⁰ transformed in the following years into the Centre

15 Barczak: *Archiwistyka a cybernetyka*, pp. 93–94.

16 See Gołębowski: *System informacji archiwalnej*; Nawrocki: *Komputer w służbie archiwalnej*; Gołębowski: *Wprowadzenie*; Robótka et al.: *Archiwistyka*.

17 Kwiatkowska: *Uniwersyteckie kształcenie*.

18 Stepień: *Informatyka archiwalna*, p. 101.

19 See Adamus-Kowalska: *System informacji*, pp. 28–33.

20 *Uchwała nr 142 Rady Ministrów z dnia 10 kwietnia 1961 roku*.

for Scientific, Technical and Economic Information, together with the Institute of Scientific, Technical and Economic Information that was subordinated to it, as a science and research organisation.²¹ The regulations defined the concept of information work and distinguished categories of information centres, which also included state and company archives.²² In 1974, the Council of Ministers' Resolution No. 35 of 1971 spurred the construction of the National Scientific, Technical and Organisational Information System,²³ which also included archives.²⁴ The archival information system created in the archives was intended to be one of the specialised systems for information sources grouped thematically.²⁵

The archives were already being prepared for inclusion in the national information system. From the end of the 1960s, state archives employed people in positions intended for the purposes of information science. They prepared document cards²⁶ and provided assistance, including for visitor inquiries. It is also relevant to mention that the internal structure of many archives at that time was being reorganised (on order of the General Director of State Archives regarding the framework statutes of archives from 1970 and 1976), and the branches established to meet the new requirements included the archival information departments, often combined with registration and access.²⁷ In 1972, the Archival Information Centre²⁸ was established as part of the GDSA (which began operating on 1 January 1973,²⁹ and from 1 September 1985 until June 2008, it operated under the name of the Central Archival Information Centre).³⁰ This institution was primarily tasked with information work, gathering traditional finding aids in the form of fond files and archival inventories from individual archives, and later with creating and managing archival databases and information systems.³¹ In the solutions prepared in archives, attention was first turned toward the language of descriptors, which can significantly reduce the time needed to access information as well as entire thematic complexes in many

21 *Uchwała nr 35 Rady Ministrów z dnia 12 lutego 1971 roku; Uchwała nr 36 Rady Ministrów z dnia 12 lutego 1971 roku.*

22 Frączek: *Organizacja informacji naukowej*, p. 218.

23 *Koncepcja i program realizacji*; Kulikowski: *Zarys koncepcji*.

24 Barczak: *Rola i zadania*, pp. 6–8; Kolankowski: *Archiwa wobec SINTO*, pp. 10–12.

25 *System informacji naukowej, technicznej i organizacyjnej SINTO*, p. 26.

26 *Zarządzenie Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z 24 marca 1973 roku*, pp. 201–209.

27 Tomczak: *Zarys dziejów archiwów polskich*, pp. 442–443.

28 Kielbicka: *Archiwa państwowe*, pp. 8–11.

29 Koberdowa et al.: *Stan udostępniania archiwaliów*, p. 15; Kielbicka: *Archiwa państwowe*, pp. 8–11.

30 *Zarządzenie nr 28 Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 6 września 1985*; Laszuk et al.: *Centralny Ośrodek Informacji Archiwalnej*, pp. 50–51.

31 Robótka: *Wprowadzenie*, p. 105.

archival fonds at the same time, especially in the case of automatic data search.³² One of the Central Archival Information Centre's tasks was also to conduct archive user research. However, this was limited to tracking research topics and keeping lists of archive inquiries, recording data about users regarding their professions, education, age and place of residence.³³ However, the data collected about users did not have a significant impact on the solutions proposed by this institution in terms of computerisation, informatisation or the subsequent digitisation of archives.

Regarding the organisation of information activities in Poland, a serious crisis came at the end of the 20th century. On the one hand, in the early 1990s, Poland gained access to the Internet. On the other hand, after the transformation of the political system, the National Scientific, Technical and Organisational Information System, which had been built since the 1970s and had also dealt with archives, collapsed after its legal basis had been repealed. The departure from a centrally planned economy, which had also organised scientific research, resulted in the abandonment of censorship and a clearly outlined state policy regarding history. In terms of archives, this resulted, *inter alia*, in the abandonment of work involving registration and therefore controlling the research conducted by archive users or making documentation cards. However, unlike other similar specialised systems, in archives the idea of building an integrated archival information system and the coordination of such work by the Central Archival Information Centre was ultimately not abandoned. Moreover, the archival information system itself did not change, unlike other specialised systems in the National Scientific, Technical and Organisational Information System. At that time, the Central Archival Information Centre coordinated the computerisation of archives and the automation of traditional ones.³⁴

The institutional organisation of scientific information in Poland that had developed since the 1960s and included archives, along with the achievements of information science, resulted in the application of solutions in archives that, to a large extent, both prepared them for practical computerisation and helped construct and develop a modern IT archival information system, a digital product then equipped with digital services.

32 Barczak: *Archiwistyka a cybernetyka*, p. 95.

33 See, e.g.: *Wykaz tematów*, pp. 326–327; Stebelska: *Udostępnianie materiałów*, pp. 127–137; Radtke: *Stan wykorzystywania materiałów archiwalnych*, pp. 21–47; Gołębiewski: *Potrzeby informacyjne*, p. 89.

34 Dudek et al. (eds.): *Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe*, p. 68.

Computerisation, Archival Standards and the Informatisation of Archives

Computers were first used in archival work in the USA in the 1950s; in the Eastern Bloc countries, as well as in Western European countries, they began to appear and gain popularity in the 1960s. After the International Council on Archives began to deal with the computerisation of archives in the early 1970s and established the Committee for Computerisation, interest in the use of computers in archives, especially for electronic data processing, recording archival materials and creating information systems, grew significantly.³⁵

In Poland, the computerisation of archives initially aroused the greatest interest among archivists themselves, who saw the potential in using computers during their everyday work, although the first computers that could be used to work in archives would appear many years later. The state archival service began to establish academic research teams to deal with this issue in the archives under its control. In 1970, the most distinguished team in this field was established under the name 'Informatics and archives' and consisted of approximately ten members under the leadership of Prof. Stanisław Nawrocki from Poznań. They began research work related to the computerisation of archives. Initially the team endeavoured to identify the scope and methods regarding the used of computers in archives abroad, as well as to propose how computers might be used in Polish archives and make preparations in this direction.³⁶ The team did not have their own computers at their disposal.

The prospects for using computers in archives were also discussed outside the research teams established for this purpose. This issue was present in archives, at universities educating archivists, in scientific publications and at conferences. The conclusions drawn from two nationwide scientific conferences devoted to the accessibility of archival holdings in the early 1970s may serve as one example.³⁷ They concerned the possibility of using computers to solve problems connected with the poor state of processing of archival holdings and finding aids, which, according to the participants (archivists from universities and various types of archives, as well as researchers – mainly historians), had the greatest impact on the research interests of archive users and the accessibility of archives. It seemed particularly relevant to prepare more effective finding aids for mass files, in foreign languages and for large-scale and complex fonds.³⁸ It was believed

35 Nawrocki: *Informatyka archiwalna*, p. 201.

36 *Ibid.*: p. 202.

37 Tomczak (ed.): *Archiwa warsztatem pracy historyka*, 1. 1971; Idem (ed.): *Archiwa warsztatem pracy historyka*, 2. 1972, p. 104.

38 Ryszewski et al.: *Stan opracowania*, pp. 21–29.

that by using computers – for instance, by registering all the questions and answers received by users – finding aids could then be prepared appropriately, thereby improving the process of making holdings accessible.³⁹

The ‘Informatics and Archives’ team first dealt with improving finding aids and adapting them to automation and possible conversion. They devoted a lot of attention to various methods of indexing files, including creating keywords. This was considered to be one of the most important elements related to preparing files for processing and finding aids for their mechanisation. The team members prepared, *inter alia*, guidelines for developing subject indexes, instructions for preparing personal, geographical and subject indexes for inventories of file fonds, as well as drafting instructions for inventorying files.⁴⁰ A great deal of attention was also paid to the Central Fonds Catalogue itself. Given its high level of formalisation and uniformity, thought turned to electronic processing of the data contained therein as a matter of primary concern. First of all, the previously mentioned regulations were developed in a way that modified the fonds catalogue. The team members also prepared higher-level finding aids based on information from the Central Fonds Catalogue in the form of thematic guides about groups of fonds.⁴¹ They also attempted to improve access to archival materials and research on information users. Unfortunately, the submitted proposals related to the possibilities of collecting and processing data in this regard were not approved by the archival authorities.⁴²

Another achievement of the “Informatics and Archives” team was the creation of a thesaurus of archival science published in the form of a book.⁴³ It enabled sources of archival information to be indexed, for example when creating subject catalogues in archival book collections.⁴⁴ It also helped describe archival materials, but only formally, in terms of their archival and diplomatic features rather than their content.⁴⁵ Writing a thesaurus that would allow the content of the archives to be described was a huge challenge, ultimately beyond the team’s capabilities due to the sheer scope of issues that would have to be addressed.

In the 1980s, team members also made several attempts to implement archival computer programs. Therefore, they also contributed to the practical computerisation of archives. However, due to the lack of consistent and stable access to the right equipment (especially ‘microcomputers’, as they were called at

39 Wyczańska: *Perspektywy rozwoju*, pp. 1–21.

40 See, e.g.: *Okólnik Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z 26 stycznia 1974 roku*, pp. 209–217.

41 See, e.g.: Piechota et al. (eds.): *Miasta polskie. Dokumentacja archiwalna*.

42 Nawrocki: *Prace zespołu problemowego*, p. 34.

43 Idem: *Tezaurus archiwistyki*, p. 98.

44 Idem: *Prace zespołu problemowego*, pp. 31–41.

45 After Chorążyczewski: *Koncepcje komputeryzacji*, pp. 37–38.

that time), these attempts usually did not make it past the testing phase. However, the first practical use of computers in archives in Poland was the implementation of the AZAK project.⁴⁶ Despite some hardware difficulties, it was run by members of the 'Informatics and Archives' team. It was a program for institutional archives, made available through the General Directorate of State Archives to all state archives in Poland in the mid-1980s.⁴⁷ The state archives were responsible for collecting and processing computer-based information about institutional archives on documentation cards consisting of 50 fields.⁴⁸ The program was used until 1991. By that time, approximately half of the eleven thousand surveys regarding institutional archives in Poland – those subject to state supervision – had been entered into the database.⁴⁹ The program was suspended at one point due to lack of funds, but in the late 1990s the data collected was used to build the NADZÓR database, that assisted state archives in work related to the development of archival holdings, which in later years was made mandatory in state archives.⁵⁰ AZAK was the only program developed by team members that found any practical application for archives.

From 1991 and for the following few years, the team members – in cooperation with the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and the GDSA – helped run summer IT schools in Poznań for teachers and students of archival science as well as professionally active archivists.⁵¹ Thanks to this, the idea of computerising archives, knowledge about, and practical use of, computers in archives and possible solutions were disseminated in the archival environment.

The second important institution involved in training archival staff, and where work on the computerisation of archives had also been ongoing since the late 1980s, was the archival research centre in Toruń (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń). The work was led by Prof. Bohdan Ryszewski, who was the first in Poland to use microcomputers for archival matters. The findings of investigations and considerations regarding conceptual work were discussed during annual symposia in the years 1992–1998 and published in a series entitled *The Computerisation of Archives*.⁵² According to Prof. Ryszewski's team, the com-

46 Biernat: *O pracach*, p. 20.

47 Urzędowski: *Charakterystyka systemu AZAK*, pp. 276–281; see also AZAX.

48 Jabłoński et al.: *Rola systemu AZAK*, pp. 241–247.

49 Robótka: *System informacji archiwalnej*, p. 12.

50 AZAK – *pierwszy program do obsługi archiwum zakładowego*.

51 Galuba et al.: *Pierwsza letnia szkoła komputerowa*, pp. 393–394.

52 See the series *Komputeryzacja archiwów* in which papers presented at symposia were published: vol. 1: Ryszewski (ed.): *Problemy opracowania archiwów staropolskich*; vol. 2: Idem (ed.): *Problemy komputeryzacji archiwów*; vol. 3: Robótka (ed.): *Problemy zespołowości*; vol. 4: Eadem (ed.): *Problemy struktury zasobu archiwalnego*; vol. 5: Eadem (ed.): *Problemy opisu archiwaliów*; vol. 6: Eadem (ed.): *Problemy opracowania kartoteki*.

puterisation of archives was to be comprehensive and encompass all archive work. Therefore, it had to be preceded by a solid systemic analysis of various types of archives, an investigation of the structure of archival holdings, and the development of a national standard for archival information description. The starting point for the Toruń team was the FOPAR⁵³ universal format (standard) for archival description, developed especially for this purpose by Prof. Ryszewski, as well as theoretical considerations regarding the structural principle and the application of systemic analysis in archival science, as well as practical studies based on archival methodology and research on archival processes. The standard was then expanded in cooperation with specialists in particular types of documentation.⁵⁴

The main subject of research conducted by Prof. Bohdan Ryszewski's team was the structure of the archival holdings in relation to the problems involved in describing archival materials, while the proper functioning of computerised archival information systems depended on the standardisation of archival methodology.⁵⁵ The aim of the research was to clearly define all levels of the resource structure and apply them to the archival description standard. Under the leadership of Bohdan Ryszewski, a model for an archive IT system was also created, preceded by an in-depth system analysis. The model included the following elements: a main database of archive holdings as well as the following modules: supervision, archiving and registration, storage and conservation, processing, search, and access. The author envisaged that several databases would operate,⁵⁶ and need to coexist, in each module. Moreover, they were designed so that they might be integrated in the future.

However, the solutions proposed by Prof. Bohdan Ryszewski did not form the basis for constructing an integrated information system when the practical computerisation of archives became possible in Poland, and the Polish FOPAR standard did not become the foundation for describing the holdings stored in Polish archives. State archives chose a different path, creating small databases

53 See Ryszewski: *Problemy komputeryzacji archiwów*, p. 126.

54 For documents, see Chorażyczewski: *Ewolucja rozbudowy standardu FOPAR*, pp. 79–88; Idem: *Problemy archiwalnego opisu*, pp. 15–27; Stelmach: *Prace nad standardem opisu*, pp. 25–27; Tropak et al.: *Próbną wersją bazy danych*, pp. 37–52. For inscription books: Chorażyczewski: *Problemy archiwalnego opisu*, pp. 51–64; Hope: *FOPAR-owski model*, pp. 73–88; Szczuczko: *Model opisu księgi wpisów*, pp. 65–72. For seals, see Bednarek et al.: *Problem opisu pieczęci*, pp. 29–42. For geodetic and technical documentation, see Herdzin: *Uwagi o zastosowaniu standardu FOPAR*, pp. 65–73; Robótka: *Problemy opisu dokumentacji geodezyjno-kartograficznej*, pp. 53–63. For cartographic documentation, see Stoksik: *Uwagi na temat projektu*, pp. 75–78.

55 Chorażyczewski: *Koncepcje komputeryzacji archiwów*, pp. 42–43.

56 Ryszewski: *Aktualny stan badań*, p. 8.

that could be combined into larger entities in the future.⁵⁷ Moreover, international standards for archival description, primarily ISAD(G), were used to make search tools in databases at the Central Archival Information Centre, characterising the holdings of state archives at various levels of description.⁵⁸

The political changes in Poland after 1989 also spurred the practical computerisation of archives, combined with informatisation at the same time. Microcomputers were purchased for five state archives; a few years later, in 1998, all state archives and their branches had at least one computer, and in 2002, there were a total of 828 computers in the state archives network.⁵⁹

When Poland was connected to the Internet in 1991,⁶⁰ the popularisation of the HTML language in the mid-1990s gave archives new opportunities to share information and provide new quality services. In 1996, the GDSA, the central office managing the operation of archives in Poland, began operating an online archival service facilitating the publication of information about archives and their holdings online. Since 2001, a website has been accessible at the government address: www.archiwa.gov.pl. Moreover, in the same year, the Internet addresses of archive websites began to be registered in a common government domain (ap.gov.pl) in order to make it easier for users to search for information about archives. During this period, there was also a noticeable increase in the use of IT devices for copying documentation and sharing digital copies, which ultimately significantly influenced the appearance and quality of digital copies of archives presented on archive websites.

The next important stage in the computerisation of Polish archives, in accordance with the regulations in force,⁶¹ was the introduction of the electronic Public Information Bulletin in 2002.⁶² Public institutions, including archives, were given the obligation to publish information about themselves and their work on the Internet. The method of publishing information specified in the regulations provoked far-reaching changes in the structure, content and appearance of the websites of public institutions, including state archives.⁶³ It also changed the way citizens could communicate with public institutions using the Electronic

57 See *Stan i perspektywy*, pp. 120–133.

58 E.g. *Międzynarodowy standard opisu archiwalnego*.

59 Laszuk: *Komputeryzacja archiwów*, pp. 27–28.

60 On 17 August 1991, Rafał Pietrak, a physicist from the University of Warsaw, established communication based on the IP protocol with Jan Sorensen from the University of Copenhagen. This moment is considered to mark the symbolic date of the birth of the Polish Internet, Adamus-Kowalska: *System informacji archiwalnej*, p. 37.

61 See *Ustawa z dnia 6 września 2001 roku o dostępie do informacji publicznej*, as well as *Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji z dnia 17 maja 2002 roku*.

62 *Archiwa Państwowe*; Wajs: *Archiwa wobec e-rządu*, pp. 55–64

63 Flis: *Archiwa polskie a Internet*, pp. 65–76.

Inbox and obtain information on the activities of institutions through access to public information.⁶⁴

Along with the computerisation of archives and the development of various digital tools used in the daily work of archivists, various types of instant messengers (GaduGadu, Skype), e-mail, data conversion tools, calendars, etc., came the need to create an industry forum for archivists to exchange their thoughts and experiences. From 2004, archivists had their own tool for conducting on-line discussions. The IFAR Internet forum for archivists was a platform for exchanging industry information, covering issues related to archival methodology, the information system on the national archival holdings, the creation of databases, digitisation, and archiving digital materials.⁶⁵ In the same year, the Scientific Archival Portal⁶⁶ was also created as an industry information service for archivists, run from the bottom up by archivists. It disseminated information about the International Council on Archives, the latest archival publications from various countries, contemporary issues in archival science, domestic and international academic events, and archival standards emerging and used in other countries.⁶⁷

However, when it comes to IT tools for archive holdings, first of all, the SEZAM database (*System Ewidencji Zasobu Archiwów* [Archival Holdings Registration System]) was introduced in 1996 for use in all state archives. It included a list of archival fonds stored in state archives, supplemented with information given in the fonds card, as well as a systemic and material classification of record creators and additional search elements in compliance with the international standard of archival description ISAD(G).⁶⁸ In 2001, SEZAM was combined with the KANAPA database (*Księga Nabytków Archiwum Państwowego* [Book of State Archive Acquisitions]), which has been in use in state archives since 2000 as a tool for keeping records of acquisitions and losses. The SEZAM database has been available free of charge to users on the Internet since mid-2001.⁶⁹

In the second half of the 1990s, databases used to analytically describe the contents of archival fonds were also introduced in state archives. Depending on the type of documentation held in the archival unit, the description appeared in several types of databases. The IZA (*Inwentarze Zespołów Archiwalnych* [Inventories of Archival Fonds]) database was used to describe file documentation and was made available on the Internet in 2002. The SCRINIUM database registered documents created before the end of the 18th century. The KITA (*Kom-*

64 See, e.g.: *Wniosek o udostępnienie informacji publicznej*.

65 *Internetowe Forum Archiwalne IFAR*.

66 *Naukowy Portal Archiwalny*.

67 Laszuk: *Stan informatyzacji archiwów*, p. 191.

68 Idem: *System Ewidencji Zasobu Archiwalnego SEZAM*, pp. 91–98.

69 Idem: *Bazy danych w archiwach*, pp. 231–238; Idem: *Komputeryzacja archiwów*, pp. 30–31.

puterowa Informacja Techniczna [Computer Technical Information]) database described technical documentation, while the MAPY database described cartographic documentation. The SCRINIUM, KITA and MAPY databases were later merged with IZA.

At that time, databases resembling thematic guides or archival catalogues also appeared. The PRADZIAD (*Program Rejestracji Akt Metrykalnych i Stanu Cywilnego* [Program for the Registration of Civil Records and Status]) database facilitated the presentation of information about civil records, used mainly in genealogical searches, and was made available on the Internet in 2002. The ELA (*Ewidencja Ludności w Archiwaliach* [Census Records in Archives]) database integrated information on population censuses contained in the archives in one place, and was also made available on the Internet in 2002. The AFISZ database was designed as a registry for posters and leaflets relating to the history of the Holocaust, which could be supplemented with digital copies of archival materials.⁷⁰

Many tools used everyday at the archive also came in an electronic form. However, these databases corresponded more to the types of documentation kept by state archives, rather than to the functions identified as a result of a systemic analysis. The MIKROFILM database was a list of microfilms covering the resources of a given archive. The FILMIK database was a list of microfilms of Polish archival materials in archives abroad, stored in state archives. The TOPOGRAF database replaced the spatial inventory. Several databases significantly assisted the basic work performed by archives: the SUMA database (*System Udostępniania Materiałów Archiwalnych* [System for Accessing Archival Materials]) was used to record the provision of archival materials in the archives reading rooms. The PUZZLE database helped register the loan of files outside the archive, while the RAP database (*Rejestr Archiwalnych Poszukiwań* [Register of Archival Searches]) was used to record inquiries. The previously mentioned NADZÓR database was used to register supervised institutional archives and their holdings.⁷¹

Since 2003, state archives have also been obliged to maintain a nationwide database integrating information on the keepers of personal and payroll documentation and containing a list of liquidated employers whose documentation is stored. Soon, the SEZAM and IZA databases were integrated. They constituted the basic electronic system of archival information about resources stored in the state archives in Poland subordinated to the General Director of State Archives. In 2006 came a breakthrough in the process of building an archival information

70 Idem: *Komputeryzacja archiwów*, p. 32.

71 Ibid., p. 32; Chorążyczewski: *Koncepcje komputeryzacji archiwów*, p. 44.

system in Poland.⁷² The General Director of State Archives decided to create an Integrated Archival Information System, which was soon implemented by the National Digital Archives, established especially for this purpose.⁷³

Digitisation

The establishment of the National Digital Archives was a breakthrough event in the digitisation of archives in Poland.⁷⁴ It was not a new facility, but it was given a new name and assigned new duties related to the archiving of digital materials, including electronic documents and web resources, safe storage of digital data, provision of ICT tools for archives, digitisation of traditional archival materials, online publication of archival descriptions and scans of archival materials. The National Digital Archives was the first institution in Poland to systematically coordinate work related to managing digital products and services offered by state archives.⁷⁵ For this purpose, a Central Digital Repository was set up there – a central server room for archives, whose main role is to ensure the long-term security of data collected by archives, especially scans of archival materials.⁷⁶

The National Digital Archives took over work on the construction of ZoSIA (*Zintegrowany System Informacji Archiwalnej*) – the Integrated Archival Information System, which had been a work in progress since 2006. According to the plan, the system was to integrate knowledge about the national archival holdings in one place, from institutions holding state and non-state archival holdings, including libraries and museums. In the end, the system was supposed to offer tools enabling the presentation of data collected on the Internet, information about archival holdings at various levels of description and scans of archival materials. The main purpose of building the system was to enhance user accessibility to archival resources, not limited to where they are stored.⁷⁷ The ZoSIA system had been implemented in all state archives in Poland by the end of 2017.

In parallel with ZoSIA, an online platform for presenting data was developed in the form of the SwA (*Szukaj w Archiwach* [Search in Archives]) portal,⁷⁸ enabling access to descriptions of archival materials and their digital copies. The first version of the portal was released in 2009 and soon replaced other IT tools issuing information about holdings in state archives (SEZAM, IZA). In 2021, information

72 Żeglińska: *Komputeryzacja i digitalizacja w archiwach*, p. 81.

73 Dudek et al. (eds.): *Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe*, p. 68.

74 *Rozporządzenie Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego z 6 lutego 2008 roku.*

75 See also Pełowska: *Archiwa cyfrowe*, pp. 8–20.

76 Biernat: *Komputeryzacja a digitalizacja*, p. 26.

77 After Stępiak: *Koncepcja działania*, p. 350.

78 *Szukaj w archiwach.*

on genealogical materials, previously made by the state archives in the PRADZIAD database, was also added.⁷⁹ Currently, the portal contains 15 million descriptions of archival materials from 110 institutions providing access to archives, including not only all state archives, but also other institutions in Poland storing national archival resources, as well as institutions of the Polish diaspora.⁸⁰

The SwA portal is able to provide comprehensive information about the resources held in state archives in Poland thanks to a campaign initiated in 2016 by the then General Director of State Archives, Dr. Wojciech Woźniak, referred to as the retroconversion of finding aids. This involved transferring information from card and book inventories, delivery and receipt lists, working lists as well as all other registration aids available in paper form only to ZoSIA – the electronic archival information system.⁸¹

Currently, all state archives in Poland and over a 100 other institutions,⁸² storing state and registered non-state archival holdings use the ZoSIA system, which is the basic system for recording and describing archival holdings. Data and digital copies of archives stored in ZoSIA are systematically made available on the SwA website. These resources are available free of charge to anyone interested in using documentation stored in Polish archives. The website enables users to view archival materials stored in various parts of Poland from the comfort of their own home. To use the website, we only need Internet access and a web browser. In addition, users have access to a user panel where they can add tags, compile their own collections and arrange visits to state archives.⁸³ Users can also actively influence the content of SwA. Participation in the *Identify Material* program involves helping to describe photographs collected in state archives. By identifying people, places, objects or events depicted in photographs, users can help create descriptions of them.⁸⁴

Thanks to the digitisation of finding aids and the creation of an electronic archival information system, Polish archives were also able to participate in the construction of the Archives Portal Europe (APE) from the very beginning. From one website, APE provides Europeans with access to information about archival materials stored in various institutions throughout Europe. APE was established during 2009–2015 as part of two international programs: APENET and APEX, financed by the European Union. Polish archives have added three million items of descriptive data and over one and a half million digital objects to the portal.⁸⁵

79 Szukaj w archiwach. Zawartość.

80 Szukaj w archiwach.

81 See, e.g.: Piotrkiewicz: *Uwagi o retrokonwersji*, p. 97.

82 Currently 138 institutions.

83 See Szukaj w archiwach. Użytkownicy.

84 Szukaj w archiwach. Zostań archiwistą.

85 Archives Portal Europe.

Safeguarding and making digital copies of archive resources to be accessed *via* the Internet are two of the main aspects of the digitisation of these institutions. Before these tasks were delegated to the National Digital Archives for coordination, attempts were made to perform them in cooperation with various institutions. In 2002, a joint project was initiated involving the General Directorate of State Archives and NASK (*Naukowa i Akademicka Sieć Komputerowa* [Research and Academic Computer Network]) entitled *Polish Archive Treasures*. The www.polska.pl website featured approximately two hundred copies of archival documents, which were both visually attractive and related to the most important events in Polish history. Each document was presented with a formal description, transcription, translations, bibliography and a description of the historical event to which it relates.⁸⁶ Then, in cooperation with the state archives and the Polish Internet Library, in 2003 two archival fonds from the resources of the Archive of New Records were scanned and described: the Presidium of the Council of Ministers from the interwar period and the Political Bureau of the Polish United Workers' Party. These materials were made available on the www.pbi.pl website in 2004.⁸⁷ In the same year, preparations were underway to present more documents, this time as part of the *Cities in Archival Documents* project, run cooperatively by the GDSA and NASK. The project presented on www.polska.pl made it possible to discover documents from the resources of state archives and other institutions related to the history of several cities.⁸⁸

However, the project to digitise archival materials in state archives on a larger scale was only possible thanks to European funding. In 2013, the State Archives in Toruń and Bydgoszcz won a competition conducted as part of the Regional Operational Program of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship for the project: *Genealogical Sources Relating to the Inhabitants of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship*.⁸⁹ The aim of the project was to digitise civil records from the state archives in Toruń and Bydgoszcz and make them available on the Internet so as to enable free access for anyone interested in genealogy wishing to search for their roots.⁹⁰ The archives managed to make approximately 1.8 million scans of civil records (3.6 million pages of books) and create IT infrastructure to store and publish them online.⁹¹

In the years 2009–2014, 16 digitisation workshops equipped with professional scanning equipment were organised in the state archives. In 2011, the General Director of State Archives issued an order to digitise the archival re-

86 Flis: *Archiwa polskie a Internet*, pp. 65–76.

87 Laszuk: *Stan informatyzacji*, p. 191.

88 Ibid.

89 *Regionalny Program Operacyjny województwa kujawsko-pomorskiego na lata 2007–2013*.

90 See *Genealogia w archiwach*.

91 Biernat: *Komputeryzacja a digitalizacja*, p. 28.

sources of the state archives,⁹² thus standardising the digitisation process. In mid-2014, 14.5 million digital images of archival materials were published on the www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl website,⁹³ and currently there are almost 63 million scans.⁹⁴ The National Digital Archives is one of the four main centres for the digitisation of archival materials in Poland. Its responsibilities include the implementation of technological changes regarding the digitisation and storage of digital data, coordination of the collection and storage of digital resources, education of staff employed by cultural institutions conducting digitisation, making digitised materials available and the promotion of digital resources. For this purpose, it runs the aforementioned Central Digital Repository, which stores master and operational copies of archival materials prepared during the digitisation process by all archives and other institutions that put their scans on the SwA website.⁹⁵ Currently, widespread digitisation also enables archives to present materials on their own websites as well as various thematic or educational portals – copies of archival materials in various forms such as archival exhibitions, educational films, multimedia programs or thematic portals.⁹⁶ This makes access to historical sources extremely easy for anyone with an Internet connection and a browser.

Another important element related to the digitisation of archives is electronic documentation and management. Between 2006–2008, the GDSA cooperated with NASK to prepare the take-over of archival materials in electronic form from entities of interest to the state archives, held in Electronic Record Management systems, and therefore with special storage requirements.⁹⁷ This work resulted in a prototype of the Electronic Document Archive.⁹⁸ Ultimately, the project would adopt a different framework and form, and work was completed in 2020.⁹⁹ This resulted in the creation of the ADE (*Archiwum Dokumentów Elektronicznych* [Archive of Electronic Documents]), which enables state archives to collect documentation in electronic form, and archivists to transfer archival materials in electronic form to the appropriate state archive. In 2021, due to the implementation of ADE, further operational changes were made to the SwA website, primarily involving the possibility to share files from the ADE system.

92 Zarządzenie nr 13 z dnia 29 czerwca 2011 roku Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych.

93 Biernat: *Komputeryzacja a digitalizacja*, p. 27.

94 *Szukaj w archiwach*.

95 *Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe. Digitalizacja*.

96 See *Wystawy i prezentacje on-line* and *Portale tematyczne*.

97 Biernat: *Komputeryzacja a digitalizacja*, pp. 30–31.

98 Stępniaik: *Koncepcja działania*, p. 351.

99 *Archiwum Dokumentów Elektronicznych – nowe źródło innowacji*.

One of the main responsibilities of the National Digital Archives was also to secure born-digital documentation in the form of web resources.¹⁰⁰ In 2009, a pilot project for archiving the Polish Internet was undertaken. The National Digital Archives archived 46 websites of central-level institutions and state archives. The results were presented online, on the National Digital Archives website,¹⁰¹ but are no longer available. Unfortunately, due to controversial legal issues and the lack of regulations determining which state institution in Poland is obliged to safeguard and store web resources, comprehensive Internet archiving is currently not carried out by state archives. To some extent, one exception is the documentation project *A.D. Pandemic Archive* initiated by the GDSA in 2020. Its purpose is to document, using materials donated in traditional and electronic form (including blogs, vlogs, websites) the phenomenon of the pandemic and its impact on everyday, social, cultural and professional life in Poland.¹⁰²

Closing Remarks

The digitisation of Polish archives was preceded by several processes that would determine its scope. First of all, work began early on, even before practical computerisation and informatisation, on the theoretical computerisation of archives, as well as the standardisation of finding aids, the use of scientific information tools and solutions in archival science, and the construction of a traditional, followed by an electronic, archival information system. The construction of an archival information system in Poland can be said to have begun with the dissemination of systematised finding aids for various levels of description in the structure of archival resources, especially standardised inventory cards and structured access to the archival inventory. It was the introduction of methodological regulations regarding the construction of various types of finding aids that made it possible to later combine them into a system, first traditional, then also thanks to the development of traditional-electronic technology. In the meantime, attempts were also made to introduce formats aimed at standardising the description of archival materials,¹⁰³ taking into account the specificity of the holdings structure in Polish archives, offering a new perspective on the construction of archival information systems. Currently, the archival

100 Electronic public registers also remain within the National Digital Archives area of interest. However, the work is currently at the stage of selecting an appropriate archiving method, see Ciechanowski: *Rejestr rejestrów publicznych*, pp. 249–256.

101 See Woźniak: *Archiwizacja Internetu*, pp. 75–98.

102 *Archiwum Pandemii A.D. 2020*.

103 For example, the FOPAR standard, Ryszewski: *Problemy komputeryzacji archiwów*, pp. 27–60.

information system in Poland is at the stage of constant modernisation in terms of the integrated archival information system, while the digital SwA service is also periodically updated, not only allowing the user to independently search for information about archival materials, but also browse scanned copies. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that the various archive networks in Poland are currently at different stages along this development path and such differences are visible in the network of state archives, church archives or separate archives (state-owned archives outside of the supervision of the General Director of State Archives), where digitisation has not progressed as far. This chapter focused on aspects related to the development of digital services and tools in state archives, which have achieved the most and whose experience is the most representative.

In terms of digitising archives, the main agenda was as follows: create an electronic integrated archival information system, digitise archival materials and make their digital copies available on the Internet, organise the management of electronic documentation, including not only electronic documents and their management systems, but also public registers and web resources. What should be emphasised is that, as a result of the above, archives were able to overcome numerous obstacles related to access and information management. Today, the tools and services designed by digital archives can take into account the needs of those who use archival information. This is observable, for example, in the digitisation strategies of archives, where first of all archival materials that are in the greatest demand are scanned on a large scale and made available online – for instance, documentation used in research by genealogists¹⁰⁴ – such as census and registry office records. This trend is also visible in adapting search tools in IT archival information systems to user preferences. Often, structured searches are replaced by substantive searches using keywords. For unskilled users who do not know the specificity and complexity of the structure of Polish archival holdings, such solutions make searching for information and finding archives much easier.

[Translated by Steve Jones]

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104 See, for example: Chorążyczewski et al.: *Digitisation Policy or Memory Policy?*, pp. 192–197.

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Dorota Drzewiecka

Electronic Record Management in Central European Countries as Experienced by the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland: A Comparative Study

Abstract

This chapter attempts to compare the extent to which electronic document management systems have been implemented in public administration offices in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland. On the basis of legal acts and survey research, supplemented by literature, the legal and actual status of computerisation in a selected group of organisational units is described. Individual systems implemented in various offices are mentioned. Where possible, the name of the system and the manufacturer's website featuring product specifications are provided.

Keywords: ERM systems; electronic document management; computerisation of public administration

For a number of years, three neighbouring countries – the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland – have made a concerted effort to computerise a range of public services and, as a result, improve the quality of record management in offices of public administration. Currently, the Czech Republic has a three-tier administrative system divided into regions (*kraj*), counties (*okres*) and municipalities (*obec*). Local government administration has only two levels: *kraj* and *obec*, which are considered equivalents to Polish voivodeships and municipalities (*województwo* and *gmina*).¹ There are 13 regions in this country, excluding Prague and 6,258 municipalities. Slovakia features a similar administrative division: regions (*kraj*), counties (*okres*) and municipalities (*obec*).² The districts of Bratislava and Kosice have city rights: Bratislava is divided into 5 urban districts, and Kosice – into 4 urban municipalities. As in the Czech Republic, regions (equivalents of Polish voivodeships) and municipalities are local government

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1 *Okres* do not have any local government, they are only statistical and organisational units for courts, police and health care; Siwek: *Podziały wewnętrzne*, p. 542.

2 In the Czech Republic, a municipality may include several towns, while in Slovakia each village is a separate municipality.

units, while counties function solely as statistical units. Slovakia has eight regions and 2,927 municipalities. Poland has a three-level administrative division consisting of 16 voivodeships (*województwo*), 380 counties (*powiat*) (of which 66 are cities with county rights) and 2,477 municipalities (*gmina*) (urban, urban-rural and rural).

Each of the administrative units operating in these three countries performs tasks assigned by law, has its own management as well as an office that ensures that the relevant tasks are implemented. Each is officially acknowledged, by an archival act of legislation applicable to the given country, as the creator of archival materials with the obligation to safeguard them appropriately.

In all three countries, record management in public administration offices is admissible *via* an electronic system.³ Each organisational unit is obliged, in addition to traditional documentation, to accept electronic documentation, register and secure it. The detailed method of record management, including electronic documentation, is regulated by separate legislation.⁴ Standards for electronic record management systems have been introduced in each of the countries discussed.⁵ Archival materials created electronically are also to be transferred to the appropriate historical archive, and the transfer procedure follows standards that differ from the procedure for transferring traditional documentation.

In the Czech Republic, a National Digital Archive was established, which stores archival materials created as electronic documents as well as materials in traditional form (mainly paper) and then digitally converted (mainly as scans). The project to set up this National Digital Archive emphatically assumed the implementation of an effective public administration strategy (Smart Administration – Effective Public Administration and Friendly Public Services), as an interface between existing archive information systems and public administration (Portal of Public Administration, Czech POINT, etc.), and other institutions of national remembrance (libraries and museums), which may, in the future, also operate internationally.⁶

Slovaks decided to introduce the Electronic Slovak Archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Slovak Republic. As the official website states, it is “a repository of electronic archival documents created by public authorities and others. It also serves as a repository of digitised, originally non-electronic archival

3 Czech Republic: *Zákon ze dne 30. června 2004*, § 63; Slovakia: *Zákon zo 17. mája 2002*, § 16; Poland: *Ustawa z dnia 14 lipca 1983 r.*, Art. 6, sec. 1a.

4 Czech Republic: *Vyhláška*; Slovakia: *Výnos Ministerstva z 12. decembra 2011*; Poland: *Rozporządzenie MSWiA z 30. 10. 2006 r.* and *Rozporządzenie Prezesa Rady Ministrów z 18 stycznia 2011 r.*

5 Czech Republic: *Národní standard*; Slovakia: *Informačné systémy*; Poland: *Rozporządzenie MSWiA z 30. 10. 2006 r.*

6 *Projekt NDA III.*

documents”.⁷ In accordance with the Slovak Archives Act, the ministry issues standards for IT systems for record management and assesses how well these IT systems comply with the general standard. This government department ensures that electronic archival materials are safeguarded by storing them permanently, ensuring authenticity, credibility, integrity of content and readability. It decides on their disclosure and publication and issues methodological guidelines for how electronic archival documents should be managed.⁸ Before any documentation reaches the archive, it is registered. The principles of registration are regulated in methodological regulations issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.⁹

In Poland, a decision was made to establish an Electronic Document Archive where, after a specified period of time, all archival materials created in an electronic form (including those digitally converted from a traditional form) – by organisational units that produce the archival materials that constitute the state archival resource – are to be transferred. The primary source of archival materials in electronic form shall be the electronic record management systems operating within these organisational units.¹⁰ The job of the Electronic Document Archive will be to accept, secure and provide long-term storage for archival materials and provide access to them.¹¹

It is clear that each of these three countries has created an appropriate archive responsible for collecting digital archival materials and storing them long term. In each of these countries, the legislator pointed out the need to migrate both the materials themselves and their metadata. Requirements were outlined for the electronic systems to be used for record management, data recording formats and the structure of electronic documents. Currently, in each of these countries, work is underway to adapt the legal provisions to the changing reality and the constant forward technological march of the solutions adopted, which will differ if only in respect to the archive organisation system.

In order to compare how electronic record management systems operate, a study was conducted and a representative group of Czech and Slovak organisational units was selected. These included all regional offices and 20–30 municipalities from each country. A survey was sent to these units and consisted of three questions:

1. Does the office have an electronic record management system (a system that allows cases to be conducted exclusively electronically, whereby only elec-

7 *Elektronický archív Slovenska MV SR.*

8 *Zákon zo 17. mája 2002, § 24.*

9 *Správa registratúry.*

10 Understood as the basic method of documenting how cases are handled and resolved. The system requirements are regulated in the Regulation of the Ministry of Interior and Administration of 30 October 2006.

11 *System Archiwum Dokumentów Elektronicznych.*

- tronic case files are created)? If so, please state the name (link to the system's website) and year when it was introduced.
2. If not, does the office have IT tools that assist traditional record management (e.g., registers of incoming and outgoing correspondence, a list of ongoing cases, a list of documentation transferred to the office archive)? If so, please state its name.
 3. [Slovakia] Has the office already transferred documentation generated exclusively electronically to the Electronic Archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Slovak Republic?
[Czech Republic] Has the office already transferred documentation generated exclusively electronically to the National Digital Archives?

The answers were contrasted with research findings presented in articles written by the author of this text about Poland.¹² The questionnaire was sent to all 13 Czech regional offices, of which seven responded. The survey was also sent to 21 municipal offices, and eight responded.¹³ Prague City Hall also responded to the survey. In the case of Slovakia, the survey was sent to all eight regional offices, but only three responded. Out of 23 municipal offices, seven responded to the survey.¹⁴

Table 1. Electronic record management systems implemented in regional offices in the Czech Republic.

Regional offices	Name of system, year of introduction
Krajský úřad Jihomoravského kraje	GINIS by Gordic, ¹⁵ 2003
Krajský úřad Jihočeského kraje	No response
Krajský úřad Královéhradeckého kraje	No response
Krajský úřad Kraje Vysočina	GINIS by Gordic, ¹⁶ 2002
Krajský úřad Karlovarského kraje	Athena by S&T CZ s.r.o., ¹⁷ 2004
Krajský úřad Libereckého kraje	GINIS by Gordic, ¹⁸ no date
Krajský úřad Olomouckého kraje	GINIS by Gordic, ¹⁹ 2003
Krajský úřad Moravskoslezského kraje	No response
Krajský úřad Pardubického kraje	No response

12 Drzewiecka: *Systemy EZD*, pp. 9–25; Eadem: *Elektroniczna biurowość*, pp. 49–60.

13 Data from one municipal office were obtained from Dymešová: *Elektronické skartační*.

14 All collected data is stored at the Institute of History and Archival Studies of the University of the National Education Commission in Krakow.

15 *GINIS by Gordic*.

16 See footnote 15.

17 *Athena*. After entering the website address of S&T Cz company automatically redirected to Axians Czech Republic website.

18 See footnote 15.

19 See footnote 15.

Table 1 (Continued)

Regional offices	Name of system, year of introduction
Krajský úřad Plzeňského kraje	S&T CZ s.r.o., ²⁰ 2002
Magistrát hlavního města Prahy ²¹	No response
Krajský úřad Ústeckého kraje	eSSL by ICZ (Integrated Software and Network Solutions), ²² no date
Krajský úřad Zlínského kraje	No response

It is striking that among the responses sent from Czech regional offices, GINIS by Gordic emerges as the system leader. It should be added that the respondents clearly indicated that the system allows them to manage analogue, digital and hybrid documentation. The response sent by the National Office in Ústí nad Labem stated that this unit mainly creates electronic documents. Analogue documents are drafted only when necessary.

Table 2. Electronic record management systems implemented in municipal offices in the Czech Republic.

Municipal offices	Name of system, year of introduction
Městský úřad Benešov	No response
Magistrát města Chomutova	No response
Městský úřad Chvaletice	Munis ERMS by Triada, 2015 ²³
Městský úřad Česká Lípa	No response
Magistrát města České Budějovice	No response
Magistrát města Děčín	No response
Magistrát města Frýdku-Místku	No response
<u>Magistrát města Havířova</u>	GINIS by Gordic, ²⁴ 2020
Magistrát města Karviné	Geovap, ²⁵ no date
Magistrát města Kladna	No response
Městský úřad Klatovy	No response
Městský úřad Kroměříž	Geovap, ²⁶ no date
Městský úřad Kutná Hora	No response
Magistrát města Liberec	No response

20 S&T.

21 See Table 2.

22 eSSL by ICZ.

23 Dymešová: *Elektronické skartační*, pp. 85–86. An electronic system to assist office work has operated in the institution since 2004. In 2015 the decision was taken to install Munis ERMS for electronic record management.

24 *GINIS by Gordic*. Previously, the Ezop system was used, made by SoftHouse.

25 *Geovap*.

26 See footnote 25.

Table 2 (Continued)

Municipal offices	Name of system, year of introduction
Magistrát statutárního města Mladá Boleslav	No response
Magistrát města Mostu	No response
Magistrát města Olomouce	ICZ e-file, ²⁷ 2010 r.
Magistrát města Opavy	No response
Magistrát hlavního města Prahy	GINIS by Gordic, ²⁸ no date
Magistrát města Přerova	No response
Městský úřad Svitavy	VERA Ratusz, ²⁹ 2001
Městský úřad Tachov	Athena, ³⁰ 2007
Magistrát města Teplice	No response
Městský úřad Uherské Hradiště	VERA sp. s.r.o., ³¹ 2002

Based on the responses sent from Czech municipal offices, it is not possible to indicate a leader among the electronic documentation systems. Nor did any office clearly state that they use electronic documents exclusively. Most respondents wrote that both analogue and electronic documents are created.

Table 3. Electronic record management systems introduced in regional offices in Slovakia.

Regional office	Name of system, year of introduction
Banskobystrický samosprávny kraj	No response
Bratislavský samosprávny kraj ³²	No response
Košický samosprávny kraj	Fabasoft eGov-Suite, ³³ 2013
Úrad Nitrianskeho samosprávneho kraja	Fabasoft eGov-Suite, ³⁴ 2014
Prešovský samosprávny kraj	No response
Trenčiansky samosprávny kraj	No response
Trnavský samosprávny kraj	No response
Žilinský samosprávny kraj	Fabasoft eGov-Suite, ³⁵ 2003

27 ICZ e-file; the office only keeps electronic records of documents.

28 See footnote 24.

29 VERA Ratusz.

30 See footnote 17.

31 See footnote 29.

32 See Table 4.

33 Fabasoft eGov-Suite.

34 See footnote 33.

35 See footnote 33.

Despite only three responses from Slovak regional offices, Fabasoft is clearly the system leader. At the same time, the responses stated that their system not only registers electronic files, but also paper or combined (hybrid) files.

Table 4. Electronic record management systems introduced in municipal offices in Slovakia.

Municipal offices	Name of system, year of introduction
Mestský úrad Bánovce nad Bebravou	No response
Mestský úrad Banská Štiavnica	No response
Mestský úrad Bardejov	Korwin , ³⁶ 2000
Kancelária primátora hlavného mesta Slovenskej republiky Bratislavy	GINIS , ³⁷ 2007
Mestský úrad Brezno	CG DISS by CORA GEO, ³⁸ no date
Mestský úrad Bytča	No response
Mestský úrad Čadca	No response
Mestský úrad Detva	No response
Mestský úrad Dolný Kubín	CG DISS , ³⁹ 2016
Mestský úrad Dunajská Streda	No response
Magistrát mesta Košice	No response
Mestský úrad Levice	No response
Mestský úrad Michalovce	No response
Mestský úrad Nové Zámky	Memphis by DATALAN a.s., ⁴⁰ 2016
Mestský úrad Poprad	No response
Mestský úrad Rimavská Sobota	No response
Mestský úrad Ružomberok	No response
Mestský úrad Skalica	DIS (Documentation Information System), ⁴¹ 2015
Mestský úrad Trebišov	No response
Mestský úrad Tvrdošín	D-Com , ⁴² 2020
Mestský úrad veľký Krtíš	No response
Mestský úrad Žiar nad Hronom	No response
Mestský úrad Zlaté Moravce	No response

36 *Korwin*.

37 *GINIS*.

38 *CG DISS*.

39 See footnote 38.

40 *Memphis*.

41 No precise data.

42 No precise data.

In terms of Slovak municipalities, the research unfortunately did not ascertain the most popular system. However, it is worth noting that both Czech and Slovak respondents treated the second question similarly – by leaving it unanswered. Only two offices rejected the need to use additional tools since an electronic record management system has already been implemented. The only exception in this respect was the Municipality of the City of Prague, which mentioned several additional solutions.⁴³

The answers to the third question require some comment. Czech regional offices clearly indicate that for several years these units have regularly transferred documents created in electronic form to the National Digital Archives in Prague. Municipal offices are much less involved in this process: the City Halls of Karviná, Kroměříž, Tachov, Uherské Hradiště already have experience in the procedure of transferring electronic files, whereas the offices of Olomouc, Svitavy, Havířov have not yet been involved in this process. Prague City Hall has selected electronic documentation regularly since 2015. Documents selected during the process are transferred to the Czech National Digital Archives, which also serves as an advisory body in this regard. Furthermore, this archive is also responsible for conducting research on pre-archival care of documents in digital form and methodological activities.⁴⁴

Employees of the Municipality of the Capital City of Bratislava already have some experience in transferring electronic documentation to the Electronic Archives of Slovakia, as do officials from Bardejów and Twardoszyn. This process also occurred in the Žilina and Košice regional offices. The remaining respondents had no experience in this area.

When contrasting the above research findings with the Polish offices presented in the above-mentioned articles, it must be emphatically stated that technological progress in all organisational units, although noticeable has been far from rapid. Regarding public administration in Poland, most offices work in the so-called traditional record management system using various types of electronic record management systems to assist their work. These are often IT tools with limited functionality – for example, electronic registration of incoming and outgoing correspondence.⁴⁵ If an institution does use an electronic record

43 Independent file services – records of documents in paper form (e.g. a identification and legalisation book, records of applications for international driving licenses, identity document records). In addition, we maintain separate electronic records for selected types of documents (they have their own document/file registration numbers), e.g. Central Records of Contracts, Electronic Records of Accounting Documents, Records of documents and HR matters in the FLUX system. Traditional management for paper files in archiving journals and delivery books.

44 *Skartační řízení*.

45 Drzewiecka: *Elektroniczna biurowość*, p. 55.

management system to assist their work, in most cases traditional case files are created. In turn, those offices that have already implemented an electronic record management system as the main system create electronic case files and transfer them to the Electronic Document Archive.⁴⁶ Although electronic record management systems are increasingly the norm,⁴⁷ and government programs are being created to support their development,⁴⁸ there is still a long way to go before Polish bureaucracy is completely transformed.⁴⁹

The author's research on electronic office management in Poland showed that, apart from the government EZD PUW system,⁵⁰ there is no clear system leader, although some systems are more popular than others throughout the country.⁵¹ Data posted on the EZD PUW system official website indicate that the system is in place in 12 voivodeship offices, 303 municipal offices, 61 district offices and 6 marshal offices. However, there is no information whether this is the basic system adopted in these offices.⁵² Comparing electronic record management systems in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, it can be concluded that they have developed at a similar pace. However, our southern neighbours have significantly more IT systems that assist traditional record management. In most cases, traditional (paper) case files are still created, and those with historical value are transferred to the relevant archives. This state of affairs does not allow us to describe the development of office computerisation in an unambiguously positive manner, but often rather as a superficially implemented solution.

[Translated by Steve Jones]

46 Archival materials in electronic form must be submitted to EDA ten years after their creation, see *Regulation of the Ministry of Interior and Administration of 30 October 2006*, § 15, sec. 1.

47 An electronic record management system is “an ICT system for electronic document management enabling the performance of office work, documenting how matters are dealt with, and collecting and creating electronic documents”. See *Rozporządzenie Prezesa Rady Ministrów z dnia 18 stycznia 2011 r.*, § 2, point 13.

48 *Elektroniczne zarządzanie dokumentacją w systemie EZD RP*.

49 See fig. 1 at the end of the chapter. The diagram was also published in an article by Drzewiecka: *Systemy EZD*, p. 264. It was written on the basis of *Spółeczeństwo informacyjne w Polsce w 2020 r.* and *Spółeczeństwo informacyjne w Polsce. Wyniki badań*.

50 For more on the number of system implementations, see *Zestawienie instytucji wdrażających system EZD PUW*.

51 See Drzewiecka: *Systemy EZD*, p. 270 and Eadem: *Elektroniczna biurowość*, pp. 53–54. The system leaders include the following: *SIDAS*; *E-SOD*; *E-DOKUMENT*; *EZD PROTON*; *FINN 8 SQL*.

52 *Zestawienie instytucji wdrażających system EZD PUW*.

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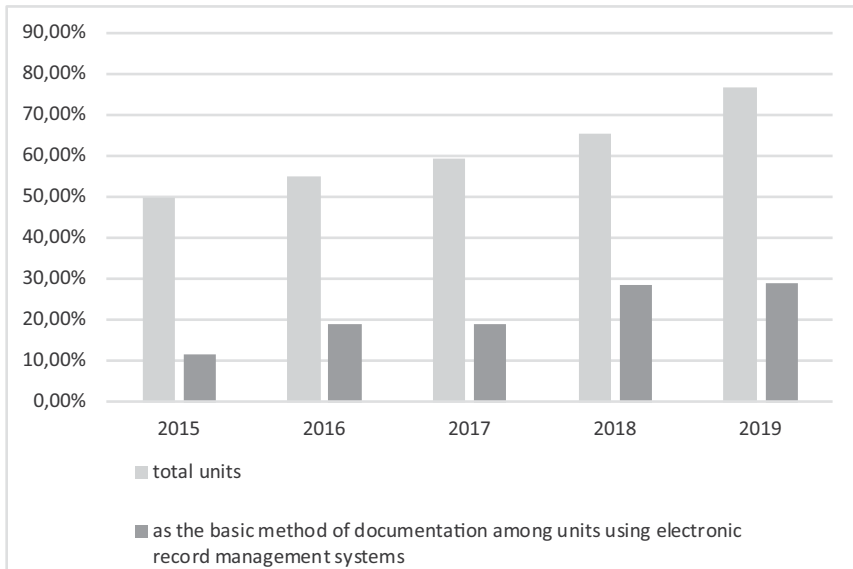


Fig. 1. Public administration units (state and local government) using electronic record management systems (in % of all units) and electronic record management systems as the basic method of documentation (in % of units using electronic record management systems) in 2015–2019. Graph by Dorota Drzewiecka.

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