

The International Scene

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The International Scene department is a forum for short substantive pieces on archival practices and issues in foreign settings. Particularly welcome are papers that illustrate archival practices or thinking that is not characteristic of the American archival scene. Articles by foreign archivists focusing on significant and innovative programs, projects, and activities in their institutions; observations of American archivists abroad; and commentaries by foreign archivists examining American archival practice and theory are of interest.

Occasionally International Scene features abstracts from foreign archival journals. The co-editors welcome inquiries from readers interested in preparing such abstracts.

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Archival Education in Spain

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(ALFRED E. LEMMON, TRANS.)

Spain is blessed with an abundance of archives which owe their existence to capable and dedicated archivists. The Spanish archival tradition began in the sixteenth century with the creation of the Archivo General

de Simancas [near Valladolid].¹ The decrees governing the Archivo General de Indias [Seville] were formulated in 1792. Several generations of the Ayala family were closely associated with the Archivo Gen-

¹The use of brackets [] indicates words added by the translator.—TRANS.

The author, Vicenta Cortés Alonso, received her Ph.D. in history from the University of Madrid in 1952, and has been an archivist since 1954, serving at the Archivo General de Indias, the provincial archives at Huelva, and as Inspector General of Archives. She is currently acting Chief of Department at the Archivo Histórico

eral de Simancas, while archivists representative of the Enlightenment were associated with the Archive of the Indies. While the nineteenth century has not been as fully studied in terms of archival history, the functions of archivist, librarian, and museum curator were fully recognized with the establishment of the Escuela de Diplomática [School of Diplomats] in 1856, and the appointment of the first faculty in 1858.² Archivists trained by the Escuela de Diplomática were destined to hold positions in government administrative and historic archives.³

The Department of History of the University of Madrid assumed responsibility for archival education in 1900, and a selection process for candidates desiring admission was in place by 1903.⁴ A program covering 350 themes common to the intellectual and organizational skills of archivists, librarians, and museum curators was established. Archivists studied paleography, diplomacy, epigraphy (the study of ancient inscriptions), archival theory, history of archives, legislation, philology, and institutions. These courses were designed to produce archivists capable of selecting, organizing, and describing documents from any time period or institution. In addition, archivists were trained in procedures to assist researchers.

The system endowed Spain with good archivists capable of caring for all types of

documents from the ninth century to the present. Testimony to that achievement is given by the *Bibliografía del Cuerpo Facultativo de Archiveros, Bibliotecarios y Arqueólogos 1858–1958*, which registers some 17,112 technical works in the three fields of archives, library science, and archaeology.⁵

The Spanish Civil War [1936–1939] caused the discontinuation of archival and library education in the history department of the University of Madrid. It was not until 1952 that courses for archivists and librarians were begun at the Biblioteca Nacional [Madrid] to fill the vacuum. The courses were designed to prepare individuals holding a *Licenciado* for the competitive examinations for government archival and library positions.⁶

In contrast to the Escuela de Diplomática and the university, where a common curriculum was followed for archivists, librarians, and museum curators, the training offered in the courses and workshops of the school and center of the Biblioteca Nacional were divided into those for librarians and those for archivists. As far back as 1930, examinations had been divided into three areas of specialization. The Spanish Civil War disrupted that policy, and a common examination policy was continued after the war until the 1950s, when the policy of separate examinations for the three fields was again instituted. During the 1960s the

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²Diplomatics refers to the study of texts, their dating, and other identification such as seals and watermarks.—TRANS.

³“La formación de archiveros en España,” *Archivos de España y América* (Madrid: 1979), 236–41.

⁴“Selección de personal de archivos: historia y futuro,” *Archivos de España y América*, 253.

⁵Compiled by Agustín Ruiz Cabriada in 1958 to celebrate the first century of the incorporation of an archival faculty.

⁶The *Licenciado* is a degree offered by Spanish universities. It has no direct equivalent to an American degree, being more than a B.A., but not an M.A.—TRANS.

program of courses in the Biblioteca Nacional, in accordance with Unesco terminology, became known as the Escuela de Documentalistas [School of Documentalists].⁷ New and traditional courses were taught, and a growing staff offered courses dealing with technological advances in the information sciences. During the 1980s the program's name was changed to the Centro de Estudios Bibliográficos y Documentarios.⁸

Subjects taught in the Escuela de Documentalistas included archival theory, history of archival institutions, paleography and diplomatics, conservation and reproduction, bibliography and source material, organization and methodology, and computer science for archives. The curriculum underwent several changes over the years, with some courses, such as the history of archival institutions, being dropped, and others added.⁹

Individuals from nonhumanities disciplines were admitted for the first time to the Centro. Those without prior studies in history, history of archives, classical languages, and related areas, however, had difficulty in following the classes on the organization, description, and evaluation of documents. It is necessary to stress that point, as the future of archives depends upon the training of archivists fluent in fundamental skills. Technological advances do not nullify traditional, fundamental archival training. Some archives are in danger of being converted to simple document collections, due to the confusion resulting from poorly trained archivists.

The Escuela de Documentalistas, later the Centro, was open until 1986. With its elimination, the programs designed by professionals for professionals disappeared. The

Escuela was not part of an official system, but for more than thirty years its classes served individuals preparing to enter the archival profession in both the public and private sectors. The teachers were highly recognized, experienced archivists whose goals were to prepare archivists to meet the requirements of both government and private archival institutions. During this time, no other program existed except brief courses in paleography offered in universities, research centers, and various archives, such as the Archivo General de Indias, the Archivo General de Simancas, and the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón. These were introductory courses designed to assist researchers rather than train archivists.

Following a trend already existing in other European countries, Spanish archival education had come to be considered an area of specialization. Archivists were trained to be entrusted with the care of documents, not only for government administrators and citizens, but also for scholars. As skillful as a secretary or notary may be in the production of documents, the archivists' responsibility was seen as being far greater. One differentiated between records management and the care of modern inactive documents, and the archival management of older documents of interest to historians. Such documents frequently pose difficulties in the areas of paleography and linguistics, placing them beyond the skills of untrained individuals.

While the attention given here to particular educational opportunities might seem excessive, it is important, as Spain is currently changing the norms for preparation and selection of personnel in Spanish government. The recent practice of general public notification of job opportunities is a

⁷The word *documentalistas* has not yet been accepted into the Spanish language by the Royal Academy of Spain; therefore, it does not appear in Spanish dictionaries. It refers to the administration of current documents produced by government agencies; the closest term in English usage is "records managers."—TRANS.

⁸It is referred to as Centro. The author participated in the first of these courses during 1952 and 1953; later she served as Professor of History of Archives during the 1970s.

⁹Michel Le Moél, ed., *Annuaire des Ecoles et des Cours de Formation Professionnelle d'Archivistes* (Paris: International Council on Archives: 1984), 31–33.

result of the profound changes resulting from the decentralization of Spanish government. The current preparation and selection process of archivists must be considered in light of the above.

Current Archival Training

Beginning in 1973 a program of advanced workshops was offered for Ibero-American archivists by the Escuela de Documentalistas. Entitled "Curso sobre Organización y Administración de Archivos Históricos" (Workshop in Organization and Administration of Historic Archives), it is given in the Escuela as a cooperative effort between the Spanish government and the Organization of American States to a class of ten to twenty students. These workshops, like other programs, include the theoretical and practical aspects of traditional archival education and relevant technological advances. The program includes sessions on planning, paleography and diplomatics, public and private archives, conservation, administration, technology, bibliography, business archives, organization and methodology (from 1975), computer science (from 1976), and statistics (from 1984). The workshops last four months, of which ten weeks are dedicated to technical classes and visits to archives, and the last six weeks to "hands-on" experience as interns in various archives. At the conclusion of the workshop, the students must present a paper on a selected topic.¹⁰

The closing of the Escuela de Documentalistas in 1986 prompted ANABAD, the Asociación Española de Archiveros, Bibliotecarios, Museólogos y Documentalistas (Spanish Association of Archivists, Librarians, Museum Curators, and Documentalists) to offer courses for interested individuals. A general course specifically for archivists, lasting approximately four months, was initiated in 1987. There are

also advanced courses for practicing archivists; currently, most courses are designed for archivists working in municipal archives. Future plans call for courses for archivists of ecclesiastical and business institutions, as well as family archives. The general course described above is modeled after the one offered for Ibero-American archivists, but without the internships.

ANABAD has also offered intensive courses of one week and one month's duration for municipal archivists, which cover municipal history and relevant legislation, archival theory, provenance, planning, description, computer sciences, records management, building design and equipment, and microfilm. An important component of these courses is a period of supervised work.

Since 1985 the extension division of the University of Seville and the Consejería of Culture of the Autonomía of Andalusia have been jointly offering a six-month archival course for *Licenciados*, which, in addition to general archival topics, offers sessions on government agency archives, local archives, notarial archives, private and business archives, and institutions and administrative law. The close relationship between the archival and legal professions in this particular course is obvious.

At the University of Granada, archival courses are taught in the School of Library Science. Individual archives and the ministries of culture of the various provinces organize short introductory courses, basically designed for individuals seeking entry-level positions in archives.

Beginning in the 1980s the Centro de Estudios Profesionales (Center for Professional Studies) in Madrid began offering various courses relevant to the development of paraprofessional librarians, archivists, and museum personnel. Archival theory and methodology are included in the offerings.

Archival education in Spain is similar to

¹⁰An account of this course appeared in *Diez años de cooperación archivística iberoamericana* (Madrid: Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana-OEA, 1986), 56–57.

that in other countries. At times, "grey areas" between the work of the archivist and the parallel professions of librarian and documentalist lead to anxieties relative to the teaching of the three fields.¹¹ Archivists must remain true to their standards. The educational norms for the three professions are appropriately distinct, as librarians and documentalists do not deal with primary documents. Regrettably, terminology continues to be employed incorrectly, with some collections which are not properly archives being referred to as archives, such as photographic archives.

The problem of archival education must necessarily be confronted. The problem is somewhat diminished, however, by an established procedure for the hiring of properly trained archivists.

Hiring of Archivists

Until recently, the basic system of personnel selection in Spain required applicants to present academic qualifications and to demonstrate their abilities by a series of specific tests. Government archival positions were filled in that fashion, and frequently the private sector followed their example.¹² For such examinations, acknowledged professionals and leading archivists comprised the Board of Examination, as they were believed to be the most able to recognize the necessary qualities in candidates.¹³

The examinations were composed of several parts, written and oral, theoretical and practical. They were designed to distinguish archivists capable of working in any type of archives with a variety of doc-

uments. Even the most modest historic archives of a Spanish province contains not only documentation of the past century, but frequently civil, financial, and ecclesiastical documents from the medieval period. Such archives are not stagnant and more material continues to be uncovered.

The Spanish provinces are now self-governing, and these examinations have been replaced with a new system calling for public notification of job openings. In this new selection process, unless there is a very specific job description, the position is open to all candidates holding an advanced degree from any school or university. The applicant selected might be a librarian or documentalist, or, for that matter, an engineer, chemist, or lawyer. As a result of this less-than-ideal situation, individuals totally lacking the necessary archival skills have applied for archival jobs, and basic archival skills may have to be taught on the job. The situation concerning the selection, and subsequent employment, of archivists is serious. ANABAD has voted its opposition to such a selection process, and is preparing programs for the "improvement" of archives, which are suffering from the effects of poorly trained personnel frequently working with erroneous guidelines. Corrective measures must be taken before the archival system suffers.

Another serious problem, affecting primarily small communities lax in their commitment to preserving their cultural heritage, is the creation of a single position to administer not only the archives, but the library, museum, and all other cultural activities. Some communities consider that

¹¹See the report Michael Cook edited of the Réunion d'experts sur l'harmonisation des programmes de formation en matière d'archives, Paris, 1979, entitled "Formation théorique et pratique des archivistes: rapport sur la situation actuelle des programmes de formation en matière d'archives et évaluation des besoins de personnel spécialisé dans ce domaine," 62 pp.; published in 1982. The most up-to-date essay on the worldwide situation is *Directrices para la preparación de programas de estudio sobre la gestión de documentos y la administración de archivos modernos: un estudio del RAMP* (Paris: Unesco).

¹²For information about legislation concerning the process of hiring archivists, consult "Selección de personal de archivos."

¹³In the more recent examinations (1985, 1987), the Board of Examiners was formed primarily of history professors, and the areas of paleography and diplomatics were omitted, as well as that of Latin translation. On the other hand, administrative law was given more attention. See *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 23 April 1985 and 27 March 1987.

the position of archivist can be assumed by a staff member whose other duties have nothing to do with archives. Fortunately, examples can be cited where proper procedures are followed in the hiring of archivists. Perhaps the best example of a plan for an archives prepared by a regional authority is the *Plan Regional de los Archivos Municipales de al Comunidad de Madrid*, prepared in 1985 by Ana Duplá del Moral. Regrettably, however, such a plan is not

the norm.

Spanish archivists are united in their concern for the training and selection of personnel for archival institutions. Spanish archives face decisions about new ideas and the effectiveness of old ones. The archives run the risk of being staffed by personnel ignorant of the profession, who will eventually abandon their archival career upon the realization of the little esteem they will enjoy.

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