

Education and the Role of the Archivist in Italy

LUCIANA DURANTI

Inevitably, the development of a nation's archives and the training and role of its archivists are intimately linked. As there still appears to be much debate in North America about both the role which archivists should adopt and the training which they should receive, it would perhaps be instructive to look at Italian archives and the education and role of Italian archivists.

Since at least the unification of Italy in 1860, Italian archivists have talked about archives as cultural assets and about the cultural role of the archivist. It was only in 1975, however, with the creation of the Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Properties and the inclusion of state archives under its jurisdiction, that archives became the official responsibility of a cultural agency.¹ In fact, the system of Italian state archives originated in the years following unification in response to administrative rather than cultural needs. Archives primarily were considered guardians of the rights of citizens by preserving all documents created by the former states and the new Italian state and making them acces-

sible for legal and financial use. To accomplish this large task for centuries of records, a complex system of archives was created under the direction of the Ministry of Interior. Today, the system survives intact under the Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Properties. The Central State Archives preserves the documentation created and accumulated by the ministries and central agencies of the Italian nation since unification and private papers of individuals of national significance. The Italian Parliament, Senate, and ministries of foreign affairs and defense each have their own historical archives. There are also ninety-five state archives in as many Italian provinces, which preserve documentation created by the former states of the Italian peninsula as they existed at the time of unification, documentation created by the provincial agencies of the Italian nation after unification, documents of the religious orders suppressed during the Enlightenment and Napoleonic periods, the archives of notaries, and private archives which the State owns or has on deposit. In addition, there

¹The Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Properties has four branches: Central Office for Libraries; Central Office for Environmental, Architectural, Archaeological, Artistic Properties; Central Office for Archival Properties; and General Direction for General Affairs and Personnel. The Central Office for Archival Properties has five divisions: General Affairs, State Archives, Nonstate Archives, Archival Technology, and Archival Documentation. The second division, State Archives, has jurisdiction over the Central State Archives and over ninety-five state archives. On the state archives depend the commissions of surveillance for records management in the state agencies; the seventeen schools of archival science, paleography, and diplomatics of the state archives; and forty sections of state archives. The third division, Nonstate Archives, has jurisdiction over eighteen archival superintendencies, which take care of all the archives owned by public institutions different from the state and by private persons or bodies. Therefore, virtually all the documents—active, semi-active and inactive, public and private—created and accumulated in the Italian territory are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Properties, which also controls the education and training of archivists and all publications in the archival field.

Luciana Duranti has been assistant professor in the Master of Archival Studies Program in the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, since 1 July 1987. She is a graduate of the University of Rome, Italy, where she received a B.A. in history in 1973 and an M.A. in archival science in 1975. She also holds a master's degree from the School of Archival Science, Paleography and Diplomatics of the State Archives of Rome. She served as archivist in the Italian National Research Council from 1974 to 1977, as archivist and assistant professor in the master's program in the State Archives of Rome from 1978 to 1982, and as professor-researcher in archival science in the Special School for Archivists and Librarians of the University of Rome from 1982 to 1987. She is a specialist in foreign archives, and currently teaches courses in archival science, diplomatics and paleography, and records management.

are forty sections of state archives in as many municipalities of great historical importance, some of which were once the capital of a state. They preserve local documents created for state purposes before unification and private papers relevant to the history of that territory. Finally, there are over eight thousand municipal archives preserving the records created by the organs of municipal government.

This system of Italian archives was built with the aid of a strong tradition of education for archivists. Archivists had to have a knowledge of all those disciplines necessary to understand the nature and significance of the records entrusted to their care. Consequently, they had to receive an independent education.

The first school for archivists was created in Bologna in 1765, and was followed by the schools of Milan (1770), Naples (1777), Padua (1806), Turin (1820), Palermo (1843), Venice (1854), and Florence (1856).² These schools, placed under the direction of the state archives, were at the university level, and their diploma was equivalent to a master's degree. As of 1840 they were public, open to everyone with a bachelor's degree. Their mandate was not only to train archivists, but also to promote an understanding of archives in society at large. Italian archival schools regularly educated large numbers of researchers. Students attending the schools in order to acquire a knowledge of paleography, diplomatics, and chronology, and to learn how to conduct archival research, often outnumbered

aspiring archivists.³

After unification, the Cibrario Commission was appointed in 1870 by the Italian government to define the nature of archives. The commission's final report, in which archives were defined as cultural properties, strongly argued that "the document which enters the archives enters the domain of history. If we put in archives officials provided with a large education, and maintain inside the archives a special training, so that not historical but archival works come out of them, archives assume the form and nature of scientific institutions."⁴

The national archival legislation of 1875 required aspiring archivists to pass a national open competition, in which competence in legal subjects was essential.⁵ After employment, each archivist had to enter and graduate from one of the schools of state archives. The archivists received a salary from their governments while attending courses full time.

The archival legislation of 1875, following the recommendations of the Cibrario Commission, affirmed the principle of the multiplicity of the schools, which were officially and uniformly called "Schools of Paleography and Archival Science." Decentralization was characteristic of the Italian archival system, so Italian archivists had to be trained in the historical district in which they worked.⁶ Consequently, schools were created over the years in all the most important state archives. In 1963 these schools all took the title "School of Archival Sci-

²In the rest of Europe, the first schools for archivists were created in Paris and Munich (1821), Vienna (1854), and Madrid (1859).

³This situation has continued from Italian unification to the present. For instance, in 1874 the school of Turin had 165 students, only seventeen of them aspiring archivists. In 1975 the seventeen schools of state archives had 3,491 students, only three of them aspiring archivists.

⁴"Sul riordinamento degli Archivi di Stato. Relazione della Commissione istituita dai Ministri dell'Interno e della Pubblica Istruzione con decreto 15 marzo 1870," in *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia*, n. 338, Florence, 9 December 1870.

⁵Legal competence was necessary because a large part of the material transferred to state archives immediately after unification was still active, even though the entities that created it had ceased to exist.

⁶The justification for the decentralization of archival schools is particularly valid in Italy, because there the principle of provenance is rigidly respected both for government records and private papers; each document must remain, by law, in the territory where it was created. An immediate consequence of the application of such a principle is that the best guide to research in Italian archives is the history of administration.

ence, Paleography and Diplomatics," and since that date they have been fixed by law at seventeen.⁷ A student can obtain his diploma before or after employment as archivist; it is also mandatory for nonstate positions (such as bank or corporation archivists). The two-year standardized program consists of courses in general archival science (archival theory), special archival science (history of institutions, intended as the history of the ways in which institutions express their activities and functions in documents and series), history of archives, archival legislation, conservation, Latin paleography, and diplomatics. Series of lectures are given in chronology, sigillography, heraldry, numismatics, and other allied disciplines.⁸

Even though the study of archival principles and practices was officially introduced in 1875 and in some schools "archival doctrine" was taught well before, archival science (theory) as an independent discipline began to develop only in the 1920s. The first Italian manual of archival science was written in 1928 by Eugenio Casanova.⁹ He detailed the history of archives from ancient to modern times and advanced a complex conception of archival theory and practice. His work has been widely hailed as "the most complete general text on the subject."¹⁰ True as that may be, Casanova must give way to Giorgio Cencetti as the progenitor of modern Italian archival sci-

ence and education.

The modern Italian archivist was born primarily through Cencetti's efforts to introduce into archival practice a scientific approach to the methodology of history as practiced by the archivist. He wrote about the "historical method" of arranging and describing documents, respect for their historical context, the continuity between current records and historical archives, and the permanent bond linking all documents in a sequence to one another.¹¹ None of these concepts was new, but Cencetti organized them into an autonomous archival theory with its own corpus of ideas. As one of the professors of the Special School for Archivists and Librarians at the University of Rome, Cencetti taught archival theory to archivists, aspiring archivists, and users of archives, thereby assisting in molding a new, autonomous profession.¹² Under Cencetti's guidance, archival science no longer strove to facilitate scholarly research of other disciplines which might use archives. Even though the application of archival principles facilitates research use of archives, since Cencetti's time, archival science has been studied primarily for its own sake. Students of archival science do not study individual documents, but rather the relationships among documents and *fonds* as a whole. Moreover, and most importantly, the goal of scholarly research in the archival field is the advancement of archival science and,

⁷The seventeen state archives schools are located in the state archives of Bari, Bolzano, Bologna, Cagliari, Florence, Genoa, Mantua, Milan, Modena, Naples, Palermo, Parma, Perugia, Rome, Trieste, Turin, and Venice.

⁸See Donato Tamblé, "The Teaching of Archival Science in Italy and the Role of the Schools of the State Archives," *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984-85): 247-48.

⁹Eugenio Casanova, *Archivistica* (Siena: Lazzeri, 1928).

¹⁰Lester K. Born, "Archives," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (1968), 2nd. vol., 329. See also, Adolf Brenneke, *Archivkunde* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1953), 1.

¹¹Actually, this method was called historical for the first time in the middle of the nineteenth century by Francesco Bonaini, archivist of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, not because its purpose was to be useful for the study of history, but because the recreation of original order was based on the history of the agency and of its archives. History was then the means, not the end of the science of archival arrangement. See Giorgio Cencetti, *Scritti Archivistici* (Rome: Il Centro di Ricerca editore, 1970); this is a collection of his articles written since 1937.

¹²There are two university schools for archivists and librarians in Italy—in Rome and in Florence. They are not to be confused with the seventeen state archives schools, which are at the university level but independent from the university, being under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Properties, not of the Ministry of Public Education.

thereby, the work of the archivist.

In analyzing the subjects necessary to the professional training of archivists, Cencetti objected to the study of administrative history divorced from the way in which each agency actually created its records and archives. He coined the term "special archival science" to encompass the archivist's study of the history of the growth and development of institutions through the influence of their activities on their records.

The birth of the discipline of archival science, which is only briefly outlined here, determined the future course of the education and training of Italian archivists as distinct from that of historians, librarians, or any other professional, and gave to all archivists a common intellectual outlook. We may best see how Cencetti's ideas worked themselves out by following the preparation of an archivist in Italy today.

In order to be eligible to participate in the national open competition for positions in Italian state archives, it is necessary to have a degree in the arts, philosophy, political science, or law, each of which requires some study of history. (The degree in history is quite new in Italy, first created in 1970 by the University of Genoa, but has not been widely imitated by other universities.) The current degree requirements for the open competition were set in 1963 and reflect the longstanding perception that only students of humanistic disciplines and law would have an affinity for archives.¹³ Today there is a growing tendency to re-

gard a background in a broader range of fields as extremely useful for prospective archivists, in view of the nature of many modern records the treatment and understanding of which requires extensive knowledge of such fields as economics, engineering, and architecture. Of course, in Italy all graduates, regardless of their field, have obtained a general knowledge of humanistic disciplines in high school. Moreover, they are trained at the university to study and do research in original documents. There is not an architect, for instance, who, before getting his degree, has not used archives for historical research on subjects related to his future work.

One of the arguments in favor of admitting all degrees to the open competition is that the real training for archival work begins with the study for the competition itself. In preparation, candidates often take university courses in the various disciplines which will be included in the competition. The examination is in two parts, one written and one oral. The written examination takes place seven or eight months after the announcement of a competition, and the oral exam after another seven or eight months, in order to give the candidates enough time to prepare. The timing of the announcement is determined by the availability of positions; the interval between competitions has never been less than three years.

The written examination consists of one essay on history and one on the history of Italian institutions and law. The questions

¹³Curiously, the passage of archives from the dependence on an administrative ministry to the dependence on a cultural ministry coincided with the evolution of the training of archivists, from one based on history, the arts, and literature, to one based on history, economics, and law. Actually, as Elio Lodolini pointed out in *Archivistica: principi e problemi* ([Milan: Franco Angeli, 1984], 230), such contradiction is only apparent; juridical training for archivists is necessary because archives are "cultural institutions," institutions of research where the scientific activity has as its subject the documentary material created during a juridical-administrative activity. The scientific work of the archivist—arrangement and description—is related much more to juridical than to humanistic sciences. In 1918 Antonio Panella explained that the historical method of arrangement leads to a juridical approach in archival studies. Arrangement by subjects could have as its foundation many branches of knowledge; instead, *le respect des fonds*—the preservation of the original order—implies only one branch, the history of institutions and law, with each agency being a juridical body. See Antonio Panella, *Scritti Archivistici*, ed. by Arnaldo D'Addario, Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato 19 (Rome: Ministero dell'Interno, 1955), 72. Today, after the development of archival science as an independent discipline, Italian archivists say that *le respect des fonds* requires one general branch of knowledge—history of institutions and law—and one specific branch—archival science.

cover the period from the fall of the western Roman Empire to the present, and there is no choice of topics.

The oral examinations, which are taken only by candidates who have passed the written one, are on the following subjects: history (same period as the written examination); history of Italian institutions and law (same period); constitutional law; administrative law; accounting methods of state government; archival science, history of archives, archival law and organization; organization of the Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Properties, and legislation on cultural properties; Latin; and one or more foreign languages.

These subjects have been designated by law in order to meet the needs of the job of archivist, needs determined in large part by the kind of material preserved in Italian state archives. When documents are transferred from creating agencies to state archives (there are no records centers in Italy), they have lost most of their administrative value and have already acquired historical importance.¹⁴ They are, however, open to various juridical or legal uses and must be, to use the words of Hugh Taylor, applied to a somewhat different but comparable context, "perceived as the original reality, the 'instrument,' tangible, concrete, and immensely powerful as evidence in a visually oriented society."¹⁵ Italian legislation provides for the education of archivists who must not only be historical research officers with extensive knowledge of political, administrative, and legislative history, but also government officials who can identify all the legal implications of the documentation in their custody and protect the rights of citizens. Knowledge of the state's accounting methods is required for

an understanding of financial records, but mainly because archivists are themselves administrators inside state government. Similarly, they must know all the legislation concerning the ministry of which they are officials. Language skills are obviously important, particularly for earlier records. The central subject of the competition should be archival science. Nevertheless, the legislation does not give it the same emphasis as history and the history of institutions and law, because knowledge of archival theory and practice is acquired primarily after a person has obtained a job, when he or she must study for the degree offered by the schools located in the state archives or the universities.

After winning a position by competition, neophyte archivists are on probation for six months, during which time they are trained in archival practices and techniques by the divisional or sectional chiefs of the archives where they are employed. After the archivist has gained a sound general knowledge of his archives and its operations, he is assigned to a particular section.¹⁶ In order to advance in the profession beyond the entry level, each archives official must attend courses and earn a master's degree from one of the schools of state archives or of the university archival schools.

Given the above-mentioned characteristics of the seventeen schools of state archives, and Donato Tamblé's explanation in *Archivaria* of their role and structure, it is now necessary to present the university schools in order to complete the picture.¹⁷ Archival science was first taught at Italian universities in 1925, when Eugenio Casanova, director of the State Archives of Rome, was appointed as chair of archival science in the Faculty of Political Science

¹⁴The only exception is the notarial archives, which receive notarial deeds at the retirement or death of each notary and, after one hundred years, transfer them to the state archives responsible for the district where the notary practiced.

¹⁵Hugh Taylor, "Information Ecology and the Archives of the 1980s," *Archivaria* 18 (Summer 1984): 16.

¹⁶Each section looks after a specific group of *fonds*. This means that Italian archives are internally divided according to the provenance of the material, never by media.

¹⁷Tamblé, "Teaching of Archival Science in Italy and the Role of the Schools of the State Archives."

at the University of Rome. Beginning in 1927, Casanova also taught archival science in the Special Section for Librarians and Archivists of the graduate School of Medieval and Modern History of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy at the University of Rome. Eventually, this special section became a graduate school, which, since 1963, has been independent of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy as the Special School for Archivists and Librarians. Also in 1925, Antonio Panella was appointed as chair of archival science in the Special School for Librarians and Archivist-paleographers of the University of Florence—in existence as such since 1875—where he taught until 1950.

The two schools of the universities of Rome and Florence have the only master of archival science programs offered by Italian universities. Added to the seventeen master of archival science programs of the state archives schools, Italy offers a total of nineteen master's programs.

Today, archival science is also taught as a single course in the faculties of arts of seventeen Italian universities and seven teachers' colleges. A great many students who are not preparing for archival work study archives in such courses in order to learn how to conduct research using archival materials.¹⁸

Brief mention should also be made of the School of Paleography, Diplomatics and Archival Science of the Vatican Archives, which was founded in 1884 as a graduate school of paleography, and is still today devoted mainly to the study of paleography and diplomatics.

In Italian universities, archival science finds its richest expression in the Special School for Archivists and Librarians of the University of Rome. It is useful, therefore, to examine the curriculum of the school's programs. The school aims to promote and develop scientific research in the spheres of archives, libraries, and allied documen-

tary disciplines, and to communicate the results of such research. The examination and definition of theory and methodology are undertaken not only to achieve progress in scientific work, but also to extend the cultural areas in which these professions are involved. The school offers a conceptual approach to the study of archival science which emphasizes that theoretical education is not separate from a consideration of the realities of work in archives and libraries, but is integrated with practical experience in handling original documentary material. The courses also provide students with the education necessary to enter the open competition for archival or library positions.

The school offers instruction leading to the three degrees of archivist-paleographer, librarian, and keeper of manuscripts. These degrees correspond to the North American master's degree in that the admission qualifications require students to have a first degree in a relevant discipline.

Each student's plan of studies must include the fundamental subjects of the chosen section, which provide the required professional qualifications, and at least three other subjects selected either from a list of eligible subsidiary subjects or from the fundamental subjects of one of the other two sections.

The fundamental subjects of the section for archivists are general archival science and the history of archives, special archival science, diplomatics, elements of law for archivists and librarians, the historical-juridical exegesis of Italian documents, Latin paleography, and the history of the administrative-legal systems of the Italian states. For the section for librarians, the fundamental subjects are the general study of books, or bibliology; bibliography; conservation of books; elements of law for archivists and librarians; Latin paleography; and cataloging and classification. For keepers of manuscripts, the fundamental sub-

¹⁸Elio Lodolini, *Archivistica*, 249–50.

jects are conservation, the science of manuscript books, elements of law for archivists and librarians, Latin paleography, Greek paleography, and the history of libraries.

The subsidiary subjects common to the three sections are technical applications to archives and libraries (essentially the study of applications of automation); chronology; the theory of documentation and its relationship to scientific research; medieval Greek; medieval Latin; medieval and modern juridical institutions and their documentary practices; auxiliary sciences of history; history of the administration of the Italian state since 1860; history of book engraving, decoration, and illustration; history of manuscript decoration in France, Spain, and Italy; and history of the manuscript tradition.

To obtain the degree, students must pass all the examinations in the fundamental and chosen subsidiary subjects, write an examination consisting of an essay of a practical nature involving knowledge of all the subjects studied, and write and orally defend a thesis on a topic related to one of the subjects in the plan of studies. The whole course of studies takes a minimum of two years to complete.

From the point of view of North American archivists, the heart and soul of Italian archival education is the instruction in general archival science and the history of archives, special archival science, and aspects of the study of law and its effect on archives.

General archival science treats principles and problems concerning the nature, creation, transmission, selection, preservation, arrangement, and description of archives, concentrating mainly on those preserved in Italy by state, local, and ecclesiastic bodies. Students also closely study the organizational problems and relationship with historical research of Italian archives from a chosen century, and examine the history of archives and archival guides of a foreign

country. Seminars and practical exercises take place in the State Archives of Rome, and special lectures are given in conservation and records management. There are also lectures in heraldry and sigillography.

Special archival science treats the general problems, theories, methodologies, and terminologies of archival organization in Italy and abroad, and also introduces the student to the scientific study of the relationship between the nature of bureaucratic organizations and the creation, purposes, and contents of archives in the historical context in which they were created. At the University of Rome, the study concentrates on the history of the institutions of the Papal State from the end of the Middle Ages to 1870, and on an analysis of related archives preserved in the State Archives of Rome. Students examine the criteria followed in the original arrangement of documents and the methodology adopted for their archival arrangement and description.

Legal subjects include the study of juridical rules, the evolution of Italian administrative law, constitutional law, the evolution of legislation pertinent to archives and libraries, current law relating to archives and libraries, and the legal status of the archives of ecclesiastical bodies. Studies in the historical-juridical exegesis of Italian documents concentrate on private archives in the medieval period and the origins of the Italian profession of notary. Students also study notarial archives of a chosen century.

The education of archivists in the special school reflects the effort begun by Cencetti to distinguish archival science from both library science and history, and from any other discipline. The objects in the care of archivists and librarians are different, and the procedures, methods, and corpus of ideas by which each profession is nourished differ in many respects. Nevertheless, in the school, there is a tendency to attenuate the differences and to give archivists and librarians a common education distinguished

only in areas of study constituting the autonomous, theoretical, and practical basis of each profession. Both the archivist and the librarian are a research officer who must know the various methodologies necessary to the research use of their distinct but closely related material. While there is every reason to promote mutual cooperation between the two professions and even to share an element of common professional preparation, this does not mean that the two professions are or should be interchangeable. In Italy it sometimes happens that an archivist becomes a librarian or vice versa; but in any such case, it is necessary to have specialized training for the profession to meet the requirements of open competition. Even more importantly, it takes considerable personal effort to give up the outlook and ideas, the *forma mentis*, of the one profession for those of the other.

It may be supposed that this is also true in North America, even though the situation of the two professions is quite different from that in Italy. Generally, Italian libraries do not have archival *fonds*, and if they have manuscripts, they are miscellaneous collections brought together artificially and not in the organic way in which archives are accumulated. Since such collections are almost always literary in nature and constituted by autonomous items—that is, not linked by an archival bond—they tend to be organized and described like books. Hence, there is little of the day-to-day commerce between archivists and librarians working in the same institutions that exists in many institutions in North America, where many libraries preserve private archives and many archives preserve miscellaneous collections and even materials considered, in Italy, to be the preserve of libraries, such as oral history materials. Consequently, greater interface between the

two professions exists in North America than in Italy, and this interface may be expected to be reflected in the education of the two professions. When it is not possible for persons with the distinct proper training to work with the very different materials of archives and libraries, it can only be hoped that the archivist-librarian or librarian-archivist will strive for objectivity, ensuring that one of the two professions does not prevail over or interfere with the other.

Although in Italy the materials to be cared for by archivists and librarians are carefully distinguished from one another in law and in practice, there is no similar distinction between the objects in the care of records managers and archivists.¹⁹ Italian archival theory makes no distinction between active records and archives, and assumes that archivists must control the entire life cycle of documents, as all records are archives from the moment they are created. The word “archives” is commonly used to refer to active records, and the word “archivist” to refer to the employee who looks after them in the agency in which they are created. Archivists in the various state archives always attend to the management of active records by determining the methods by which they are created, registered, classified, described, and preserved, and by controlling those activities through commissions established by law to superintend records keeping in all agencies of the state. Hence, there is but one ethos of archives; the attitudes of managers of active records and keepers of historical archives are not “antithetical” in Italy, as George Bolotenko argues they are in North America.²⁰

The training of archivists in Italy, therefore, emphasizes the continuity between active records and historical archives. Designated to work with both current and historical archives, archivists receive training

¹⁹See Luciana Duranti, “Records Management in Italy,” *American Archivist* 49 (Fall 1986): 459–62.

²⁰George Bolotenko, “Archivists and Historians: Keepers of the Well,” *Archivaria* 16 (Summer 1983): 19, and “Of Ends and Means: In Defence of the Archival Ideal,” *Archivaria* 18 (Summer 1984): 242.

in the methods by which records are created and maintained, and they imbibe a theory which assumes a community of interest between records managers and archivists (to use North American terminology) to provide, as R. Scott James puts it, "identification, preservation and availability of the greatest number of permanently valuable records."²¹ Ultimately, there is one ethos of records keeping, as many North American archivists have recognized; the difficulty is to get that ethos accepted in society. It hardly seems that the way to do it is to emphasize the distinction between the records manager's concern for efficiency and the archivist's concern for history. Rather, as Jay Atherton has argued, the continuity inherent in the management of records and archives and the common service function of records managers and archivists ought to be emphasized.²² The documentary sources for history are born and must be defended in the making of files in the offices.

The attainment of a degree from a school of state archives or from a university archival school concludes the specific training of Italian archivists both in archival science and in those disciplines auxiliary to archival science, knowledge of which facilitates the communication of archives to all kinds of researchers.²³ With a paradox in which Italian archivists take pleasure, we customarily put history among the auxiliary sciences of archival science. In fact, when the archivist uses historical knowledge and methodology for archival purposes, history becomes instrumental to archival science. History and archival science constitute two processes logically different; but in the archival work of

arrangement and description, history accomplishes an auxiliary function of archival science, being the means through which the archivist understands the archival reality. As Margaret Cross Norton recognized long ago, the goal of the archivist is something broader and more varied than merely the preservation of sources for the writing of history.²⁴ The social, political, economic, and cultural uses of archives are varied and multiform, covering all possible expressions of the world which generates archives, and possess as well legal, judicial, and administrative substance vital to a well-ordered society. In Italy, therefore, archivists do not regard themselves as a specialized breed of historian. In Italian legislation they are defined as "scientific researchers," and are placed at the highest level in the hierarchy of state officials. In fact, archivists constitute the only profession in Italy in which post-degree training is required by law.

To understand what "scientific researcher" means in relation to archivists, one must examine the tasks of the Italian archivist. According to archival legislation, they are to arrange, describe, and make available to the public the documents preserved in historical archives; to oversee the life cycle of records in the agencies, appraise them, prepare the transfer to the historical archives of those records selected for permanent preservation, and control the application of the law on reprography; to monitor the archives of interest to private bodies and individuals and acquire those which are offered for deposit, donation, or sale, and those running the risk of destruction or sale; to teach archival, paleographical, diplomatic, and juridical-

²¹R. Scott James, "A Wearisome Issue," *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-84): 303.

²²Jay Atherton, "From Life-Cycle to Continuum: Some Thoughts on the Records Management-Archives Relationship," *Archivaria* 21 (Winter 1985-86): 43-51.

²³Archival science, commonly considered in Italy a juridical-administrative-historical science, is defined as an interdisciplinary science.

²⁴See "The Archives Department as an Administrative Unit in Government," in Thornton W. Mitchell, ed., *Norton on Archives: The Writings of Margaret Cross Norton on Archival and Records Management* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975): 3-12.

administrative-historical subjects in the schools of the state archives; to carry on scientific research in the archival and documentary field and publish the results; and to promote archives among a broader public through various activities, such as preparing permanent and temporary exhibitions of archival material, with related published catalogs, and introducing high school students to archives. The most distinctive aspects of an archivist's research activities are associated with the functions of appraisal, arrangement, and description. In fact, the objects of archival research are the actual documents, their nature and context, the relationships among them, and their potential use. Research results are communicated to anyone interested in archives. For this reason, the archivist needs the special insights gained by having a familiarity with various disciplines and the objectivity and impartiality, afforded by being an apostle of none of them. The Italian system of archival education meets this need, providing the archivist with a solid foundation of archival principles and the skills offered by allied and auxiliary disciplines of archival science. By means of such an education, which is independent, standardized, and le-

gally prescribed for all archivists working in public and semipublic historical archives and in private archives declared to have notable historical interest, the Italian archivist has developed a well-defined identity and role.

The Italian writer Luigi Pirandello has often, but most openly in "*Il fu Mattia Pascal*," shown that no one has an existence outside the network of relationships tying one to the others in one's life. Such relationships are ruled in part by law in all its aspects, and the function of the law is objectified in archival documents. The archivist, therefore, not only creates and produces conditions favorable to the study of society, but through study and practice, contributes fundamentally to the continuity and protection of society. It is important work and its correct accomplishment must be guaranteed by sound professional education, uniformly structured and sanctioned by law or tradition in every society. No aspect of the archival mission is more important than the proper education of its professional practitioners. In North America, as in Italy, the measure of success of the archival mission is largely a question of education.