

## International Scene

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# National Archival Systems and Structures in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

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**Editors' note:** An expanded version of this profile of the national archival systems of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was prepared for the Second European Conference on Archives held in Ann Arbor, Michigan in May of 1989. The theme of the conference was "Divergence and Convergence of Archives: Europe and North America." Delegates to the conference, of whom Župančić was one, were asked to prepare profiles of the archives of their countries including information on the history, the organizational structure and typology, and characteristics of the archival profession such as educational standards, examinations, or other entrance procedures and requirements. Profiles of the archival systems of twenty-one countries, along with the papers presented at the conference and session discussions, are included in the *Proceedings* of the conference published by the National Archives and Records Administration. Copies of the *Proceedings* are available from the International Council on Archives, 60, Rue des Francs-Bourgeois, 75003 Paris, France and the Bentley Historical Library, 1150 Beal, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-2113.

**About the author:** Tonka Župančić graduated in history from the Philosophical Faculty, Zagreb. She followed the course for archivists at the Archives of Serbia. She has been employed in the Archives of Yugoslavia since 1972; her duties include the arrangement and description of archival records groups created by the federal authorities and organizations.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS constitution, Yugoslavia has a decentralized archival system. The basis for the present archival system is the country's administrative division into republics and provinces. The 1974 constitution put the areas of science, culture, and education entirely in the hands of republics and provinces. Accordingly, the legislative and legal regulation of archivists' activities falls under the competence of republics and provinces whereas the archives of the federation are the responsibility of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Assembly. The archival system of Yugoslavia is governed by the Law on the Archives of the Federation as well as by republican and provincial legislation which provide the legal framework on archival matters to meet specific needs.

The records of federal authorities, organizations, and institutions are the responsibility of the Archives of Yugoslavia, while the records of republics and provinces are the responsibility of republican and provincial archives. Regional, intercommunal, and municipal or communal archives are in charge of records of these lesser jurisdictions. Archives are organizationally independent although parts of communal archives are included in the Communal Centre for Culture. Apart from communal archives, there are also special archives within Academies of Sciences and Institutes for the Studies of History of the Workers' Movement, enterprises, and religious communities. Currently, in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia there are 115 archives and archival departments of which eighty-six archives have the status of independent organizations and twenty-nine are part of other socio-legal units. Archival activities are coordinated by the Federation of Archivists' Societies, which acts as the association of all archival societies. At the level of republic and provinces this role is assumed by local communities of archives and republican and provincial archivists' societies.

### Archives Through History

The development of archives in the territory of what is today Yugoslavia has a rich and turbulent history. The first records are associated with the first settlements of Southern Slavs on this soil. The Ottoman invasion of the eastern parts of the country interrupted their development there. The oldest archives are located in coastal towns under the jurisdiction of municipal communities, religious organizations, and other medieval record keepers. The oldest archives in the territory of present Yugoslavia are the Archives of Dubrovnik. The first archives in the territory of today's Slovenia are linked to the endeavors of the Museum Society of Kranjska and Ljubljana which initiated professional care for archives and records and created the archival collection of the museum which later grew into a department in its own right. In the territory of today's Serbia, the first archival institution was established by an 1898 law. That is the State Archives of the Kingdom of Serbia which began its activities in 1900. The creation of a joint state after World War I led to the establishment of archives in the cities of Novi Sad and Skoplje in 1926 and in Maribor in 1933.

A speedier development of the Yugoslav archives services began after World War II. As early as 1945 the Decision on the Preservation and Conservation of Cultural Monuments and Relics was adopted, putting the archives of state institutions under special protection by the state. The year 1948 saw the adoption of the Ordinance on the Temporary Insurance of Archives defining archives and prohibiting any destruction of records. The first General Law on State Archives, adopted in 1950, was valid for the entire territory of Yugoslavia and served as a basis on which each republic adopted its own republican legislation and organized its archives network.

The Archives of Bosnia-Herzegovina was established in 1947 with its headquarters in

Sarajevo. Until that time, archives of various institutions and organizations were kept by the respective institutions and organizations as was the case with archives and collections of personal origin.

The Socialist Republic of Montenegro acquired its first archival institution in 1951 when the Archives of Montenegro was founded in Cetinje. Before it was established, records were kept at the Court of Montenegrin Rulers, in monasteries, churches, and in state institutions. From 1926, some of those records were kept in the State Museum of Cetinje which had its own archive department.

The Archives of Croatia dates back to 1643. In 1870, the archives was named National Archives of the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia. The General Law on State Archives of 1950 renamed it the Archives of Croatia with headquarters in Zagreb.

The archives network in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia was established by the Law on State Archives of Macedonia of 1951. At the time, the State Archives of Skoplje, founded in 1926, became the Archives of Macedonia.

In the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, in 1945, the archive department of the Museum of Slovenia separated from the museum and became an independent archival institution under the name of State Archives of Slovenia with headquarters in Ljubljana.

The State Archives of Serbia became an official republican institution in 1947 with headquarters in Belgrade. In the Socialist Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (part of the Socialist Republic of Serbia), the State Archives in Novi Sad was founded in 1926 and changed its name in 1951 to become the Archives of Vojvodina. The first independent archival institution in the territory of the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo, also within the Socialist Republic of Serbia, was established in 1951.

The archives of republics and auton-

ous provinces deal with records produced by the operation of agencies within those political entities, by organizations of associated labor and other self-management organizations, and with records of socio-political organizations, persons of civic or legal importance, as well as the records of earlier agencies and organizations that existed in the republics and autonomous provinces. Archives produced by the League of Communists of republics and their organs and agencies for internal affairs and national defense are kept by the agencies of origin, which arrange and describe them and decide when they will be transferred to the archives in charge. Supervision, in terms of the application of the law for the preservation of archives, is carried out by the republican administrative bodies responsible for culture. Ultimate responsibility for republican archives is with the republican assemblies.

Yugoslavia has a special type of organization of local archives that relies on the commune as the basic socio-political community. There are also intercommunal archives whose counterparts abroad are archives of the middle administrative level. Archives of republics and autonomous provinces effect expert supervision over the operation of intercommunal and communal archives, provide expert assistance, train the staff and provide documentation and information on archives and records of the territory of the republics and provinces.

### **The Archives of Yugoslavia**

The Archives of Yugoslavia was established by the General Law on State Archives in 1950 as the State Archives of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. The 1964 Law on the Archives of Yugoslavia renamed it the Archives of Yugoslavia. According to the 1986 Law on the Archives of the Federation, the Archives of Yugoslavia is in charge of record keeping, collection, arrangement, description,

security, and information on archives, as well as access to and use of the archives of the federation. It has expert supervision over the archives and records of federal authorities. This authority of the Archives applies to the Assembly, Presidency, the Federal Executive Council, federal administrative agencies, the Constitutional Court of Yugoslavia, the Federal Court, the Federal Republic Prosecutor's Office, socio-political organizations, and citizens' associations at the federal level. Also under the jurisdiction of the Archives of Yugoslavia are the archives and records produced by the operation of central state authorities and institutions, political parties, and associations from the time of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia since the 1918 unification. It also holds archives of personal origin and collections of famous people dating back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In addition to the Archives of Yugoslavia, the following archives operate independently at the federal level: Archives of the Armed Forces; Archives of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia; Archives of Foreign Affairs; Archives of Internal Affairs; and Archives of the Memorial Center "Josip Broz Tito."

The Archives of Yugoslavia is an independent archival institution financed from the federal budget. Other archives at the federal level are not independent archive institutions, but operate within the framework of their agencies as organizational units.

**Director of the Archives of Yugoslavia.** The Director of the Archives of Yugoslavia is appointed by the Federal Executive Council. The director organizes and provides for the efficient execution of tasks related to the preservation of archives and records in the custody of the Archives of Yugoslavia. He is responsible for making provisions for the conservation and selection of archives, the disposal of records without archival value as well as the trans-

fer of records to the Archives of Yugoslavia. In addition, the director also sets uniform standards and a methodology for the description of records and information on records, organizes and monitors the arrangement of records, oversees the creation of informative publications on the archives and the publishing of records, prescribes the general act which governs the terms and ways of using the records in the archives, issues certificates and other documents regarding facts contained in the records, advises the Federal Executive Council on the temporary export of records, organizes and monitors expert assistance extended to federal authorities, warns them against any irregularities in the preservation of records he may have noticed, and discharges other functions under the Law on the Archives of the Federation.

#### **Staffing of the Archives of Yugoslavia.**

The Archives employs eighty-six people, two of whom hold Ph.D.'s and two, M.A.'s. The staff includes twenty-nine university graduates, four with post-secondary education diplomas, three highly qualified workers, forty with secondary education and six with elementary education. Sixty-one are archivists, nine are responsible for the technical preservation of records (conservation and restoration, microfilming, and bookbinding), and fifteen are clerks.

**System of records administration.** In keeping with the Law on the Archives of the Federation, federal authorities and organizations select archives from the records produced on the basis of an appraisal list. The appraisal list is drawn up by the federal authority whose work the records reflect and the appraisal list is approved by the Archives of Yugoslavia. Federal authorities are under an obligation to dispose of records with no ongoing value within one year from the date indicated on the appraisal list. Records that are listed for disposal are reviewed by the Archives of Yugoslavia.

The transfer of records to the Archives

of Yugoslavia must take place within thirty years of creation. This period may be shorter, as agreed upon between federal authorities and the archives. Federal authorities are responsible for the arrangement, selection, and transport of the original records to the archives. The delivery of the records is approved by a commission.

**Arrangement and description.** The arrangement and description of records in the Archives of Yugoslavia follow the principles of provenance and respect for original order. However, archivists are not in favor of rigid application of the principle of original order. Most of them hold the view that the original method of arrangement in registries may be changed while observing the organizational structure of the creator of the records. Therefore, arrangement of records relies on the method and form of arrangement of the creator and the concept of arrangement as determined by the archivist. The archivist shall determine the new pattern of order of a record group if the registry arrangement does not satisfy archival requirements or if a record group is fragmentary. The new pattern must correspond to the objectives of the creator, the internal cohesion of the records, and their purpose.

The problem of the arrangement of records created in the postwar period is very acute, especially in the Archives of Yugoslavia which contains enormous quantities of postwar archives. These archives were created during a period of dynamic development, when federal authorities and organizations were undergoing many changes. Quite naturally, the archival records groups transferred from the registries to the Archives of Yugoslavia were in disarray; trying to return them to an original order, which was difficult to ascertain, seemed irrational.

The registry arrangement will not be respected for the archival groups in which records were not arranged according to the determined system of the records admin-

istration, or when the registry books were not well-kept and preserved to be used as finding aids. The registry arrangement will also not be respected when the archival administration does not correspond to the organizational structure of the creator, e.g., when the records were registered in a central registry book according to the reference numbers without previously determining organizational unit codes. The physical condition and the degree of the integrity of the archives also influence the pattern of the arrangement of records.

Most of the archival groups created in the post-war period are fragmentary. When such archival groups are arranged two principles are usually followed: the principle of the organizational structure of the creator (whenever it could be reconstructed), and the principle of the occupations and functions of the creator of the documents. Subject arrangement is rarely adopted.

The Archives of Yugoslavia produces inventories for every record group that is arranged and described. The principal parts of the inventory of a record group are historical notes and the contents of the records. Historical notes contain data about the author of the record group and the record group itself. The description of contents constitutes the main part of the inventory. The inventory contains the following headings: the reference number of the inventory item (file, box, book), reference number of the item, title and contents of the item, chronological data on the item, the number of pages or the range of numbers in the item, and a note.

**Conservation and preservation of public records.** All the records admitted to the Archives of Yugoslavia are kept in depots of the archives building, which was built in 1937. It has a storage capacity of about 14,000 linear meters of records on standard shelves and 2,000 linear meters of records on mobile shelves. The depots have no built-in ventilation system.

The Archives of Yugoslavia applies clas-



sic manual restoration and machine restoration procedures to conserve and restore conventional paper records. A book-binding unit is responsible for binding and re-binding.

#### **Access to, and use of, public records.**

Access to, and use of, public records are regulated by the Law on the Archives of the Federation of 1986 and the Rules of Procedure on the Methods and Terms of Use of Records in the Custody of the Archives of Yugoslavia of 1987. Public records become available to the public when they are thirty years old and may be used by foreign and Yugoslav researchers equally. The Federal Executive Council may prolong access restrictions on public records up to a maximum of fifty years if their use could be detrimental to the interests of the country. Records in the custody of the Archives of Yugoslavia that have been obtained as a gift, purchase, or deposit may be closed longer than thirty years as determined by the donor contract.

Public records may be used in the reading-room of the Archives of Yugoslavia. In 1988, the records were used for scholarly and other purposes by 304 researchers who made 1,893 visits, used 171 record groups, 20 collections, 6 books of memoirs, 2,303 files, 1,391 items, 2,146 documents, 80 registry books, 120 rolls of microfilm, and 392 library books.

#### **The Archival Profession**

The problem of the lack of regular schooling and vocational training of archivists is treated differently across republics. Professional qualifications are acquired through practical work, through reading of special literature, the passing of specialist exams, or through courses for archivists that are organized by republican archives or archivists' societies. The course for archivists with the longest tradition is the one at the Archives of Serbia which dates back to 1953. Postgraduate studies are organized at

the Philosophical Faculty in Zadar and Ljubljana and at the Centre for Library Studies, Documentation, and Computer Sciences of the University of Zagreb.

Titles in the archival profession are not regulated uniformly at the Yugoslav national level. In most archives there are the following titles: archival technician I and II, archivist, senior archivist, and archival counselor. The titles of employees in the Archives of Yugoslavia correspond to those in the federal administration: *senior counselor* and *expert assistant* for employees with university degrees, *associate* for higher school graduates, and *technical associate I and II* for employees with a secondary education.

#### **Principle Sources**

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