

European Archives in an Era of Change

The Future of European Archival Education

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TODAY'S EUROPE IS A KALEIDOSCOPE of historical regions, modern countries, and international economic and political institutions including the European Communities, the European Association for Free Exchange, the Council of Europe, and the European Conference on Security and Cooperation. The future of European archival education has to be considered within this context of historical, national, and international identities and institutions.

Viewed from the United States, Europe looks fairly homogeneous. However, although a Danish archivist may consider himself a European, Danish politicians (despite being members of the European Association for Free Exchange) do not share the German or Italian drive toward European integration. An Austrian archivist, on the other hand, might very well feel bound by a number of ties to the European Economic Community, even though his coun-

try does not belong to it. He is likely to feel even closer to Central and Eastern Europe because of a shared history with the former Austro-Hungarian empire.

More and more often, we hear people refer to a European history almost as if the more it is discussed, the more of a reality it will become. The implied assumption in these discussions is that each country's unique past can be relegated to a more local or provincial history as it is stirred into the melting pot of a modern Europe which is now a reality; it is at least an economic entity if not more than that.

Some may consider it premature to talk about a European archivist as long as each country retains its professional autonomy, governed by separate traditions, politics, and administration. However, changes in Europe within the last few decades, particularly the overwhelming historical changes of the last few years, go beyond suggesting

to proving that there will be a very different Europe in the future. The training of "European" archivists is a necessary precondition for any such altered future. But what kind of training and for what kind of Europe?

First Steps towards a Common European Training

During the last thirty years, different European countries have considered innovations in their curricula and internships for future archivists. The International Council on Archives has carried out a number of surveys, as have national professional organizations, schools, and archival administrations.¹ The *American Archivist* has also featured current work on this theme.² It should be noted that most of these efforts have been carried out without focusing on a single European educational entity, apart from work in those countries which are still developing their *archivistique*. There is much value in the findings of these studies, and any prospective theory should clearly reflect these sources.

The last few years have also seen a proliferation of symposia and meetings devoted to the theme of a revised archival education throughout Europe. The repetition of these discussions cannot really be regarded as a failure by Europeans to come to grips with the archival issues of Euro-

pean integration, since the Treaty of Rome limited the scope of the European Community to economics. Instead, these ongoing dialogues are evidence of modern society's demand that archivists develop new skills, including administrative and technical abilities.

One example of these discussions is the meeting of European archival educators in Marburg in 1988. West German instructors had decided to solicit the response of their European colleagues to major curricular changes under consideration. The interest in such deliberations was widespread, bringing participants to Marburg from France, Austria, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, East Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Yugoslavia, and elsewhere in West Germany.³ In France, the administration of the Ecole des Chartes undertook a similar initiative in 1991, resulting in a new school to train all French professionals responsible for cultural affairs. A year earlier, the administration of the Archives de France devoted its annual congress for French archivists to considering the integration of professional archivists into the new Europe.⁴ In view of the Treaty of Rome, which initiated a progressive political union and the free circulation of staff, this seemed a wise step.

Following this same theme, the Netherlands invited archivists from all over Europe to a vast forum the general theme of which was "Archives and Europe Without Boundaries."⁵ Several of the sessions at this symposium focused on training.⁶ It is

¹See for example Charles Kecskeméti, *La Formation Professionnelle des Archivistes. Liste des Ecoles et des Cours de Formation Professionnelle d'Archivistes* (Brussels: International Council on Archives, 1966); Michel Le Moel, *Annuaire des Ecoles et des Cours de Formation Professionnelle d'Archivistes* (Paris: International Council on Archives, 1984); "Professional Training of the Archivist," *Archivum* 34 (1988); Bruno Delmas, "Trente Ans d'Enseignement de l'Archivistique en France," *La Gazette des Archives* (2e trimestre 1988): 19-32; and "Scuola d'Archivio, Tradizione e dottrina," *Archivi per la Storia, Rivista dell'associazione nazionale archivistica italiana*, Anno II, no. 2 (Luglio - Dicembre 1989).

²See for example the *American Archivist* 51 (Summer 1988).

³Wilhelm A. Eckhardt, ed., *Wissenschaftliche Archivarsausbildung in Europa* (Marburg: Archivschule und Institut für Archivwissenschaft, 1989).

⁴One of the conference lectures at this 1990 meeting was on "training for Europe." See *Actes du XXXIème Congrès national des Archivistes français*, October 1990 (Paris, 1991).

⁵The symposium "Archives and Europe Without Boundaries" was held in Maastricht, 2-5 October 1991.

⁶Session titles included "The Image of the Archivist, Harmonization of Training, and International

fitting that the Netherlands, which was first to update its training, should host this meeting.

At least six general trends emerge from an analysis of the above-mentioned discussions and initiatives:

1. Each of the member nations of the EC, apart from Greece and Belgium, has a separate archival training program. These differ in terms of the level of training offered.

2. Most of the member nations require candidates for admission to show a good general education. In practice, this usually means a degree or diploma in history, law, or another of the humanities granted after four to seven years at some type of school at the university level.

3. Nearly every member country continues to teach its prospective archivists the traditional auxiliary sciences, but to varying levels.⁷ For example, a knowledge of Latin was considered essential twenty years ago but is no longer obligatory in the Netherlands and France. However, the sense of belonging to a common European background will remain very appealing to many archivists, especially if they have had formal training in traditional European disciplines including paleography, numismatics, and sigillography. For example, the sense of having a common background is reinforced for Belgian, Hungarian, Austrian, and Italian archivists by their ability to read a Latin charter in the archives of Bratislava, Venice, or Budapest.

4. Some countries, in particular Ger-

many, Belgium, and France, require their archivists to have had some experience in historical research even if their archival positions later in life allow them little time to indulge in this. Other countries, including Great Britain, place more emphasis on skills in information science and records management.

5. The emphases in archival training vary, depending upon whether the archivist is perceived as an information scientist, a cultural administrator, or a historian following a divergent career path.

6. Most European countries require a formal degree in archival training for entry into the profession. Employment is most often in the public sector, at either the local or national level of the government.

Archival educators in several European countries anticipate that their future curricula will have to respond to at least three expectations. First, the diversity of tasks assigned any archivist requires both general and specialized training, with increasing emphasis upon technical competence. Second, generalists must have the support of archivists who have specialized in one particular field. Third, archival training, which has always been linked with history and the auxiliary sciences, must now assume a much more prominent role within the information sciences.

A Common Approach to Europe

Each country has its own historic, ethnic, and linguistic personality. These are far too clearly defined to allow a completely uniform archival training throughout Europe, even were that to be desirable. Moreover, transferring responsibility for providing archival training to the European Community is not and never will be an option. The present tendency is instead towards a mutual recognition between European Community nations of legislation and diplomas of all member nations. If, however, a common European denominator for ar-

Mobility"; "What Training and Qualities Does the General Archivist Need?"; "What Training and Qualities Does the Specialist Archivist Need?"; "Accreditation of Education and Certification of Archivists"; "Integrated Training with Other Professions? Archivist, Bridge between Other Professions?"; and "Who Provides What Training and How? Do We Need a European Institute?"

⁷Auxiliary sciences include paleography, philology, and sources of bibliography, among other specializations.

chival training were to emerge, it would have to include a number of disciplines and different teaching methods. Just as an engineer is the "product" of training in the exact sciences of mathematics, physics, chemistry, management, and industrial techniques, so is the archivist trained as an apprentice in the human sciences, management, and information techniques.

I have tried to construct a flexible model for a European core curriculum for archivists. The main teaching blocks are interdependent. Each country must decide for itself which of these are compulsory and which are optional. The introductory courses of this model include basic general disciplines which will be very useful if not essential for archivists of the future. Training in these elements should not be overlooked by any type of teaching establishment. Those basic disciplines should be law and history at the general, national, and administrative levels. Archival educators should consider developing courses in political science also. It is necessary to relate these basic courses to both older and newer cognates, ranging from earlier languages to computer science. Each country will have to tailor these supplementary courses to fit its own traditions in the auxiliary historical sciences. The level at which archival courses start will obviously be dependent upon the beginning students' familiarity with these historical traditions.

The advanced curriculum of this proposed scheme for European archival education consists of disciplines which are strictly professional and which usually will be taught by specialized training schools. The quality of the results will depend upon a successful cooperation between those schools and the public archives, where internships can occur.⁸

The proposed core curriculum for this archival training will follow the sequence of responsibilities in archival administration, including the reconstitution of the fonds, the acquisition and appraisal of documents, the preparation of finding aids, the overseeing of public access, and the preservation of documents. Students should learn about relevant legislation for these archival duties.

The simplest way to approach these themes is probably to distinguish between types of documents. Any course about modern records should explore the patterns of communication within an organization, including systems of document retrieval. Archivists need to know about organizational behavior as well as its practical application in arrangement and classification systems.

Educators must also distinguish between archival responsibilities for modern records and historical documents. Current records administration relates mainly to issues of retention and destruction. By contrast, historical archives are those which have attained the privileged status of being kept for historical research. Beyond the basic distinction between current records and historical archives, the core curriculum will have to include training for particular types of archives. Students should learn about the various kinds of administrative origins as well as ongoing functions and research values of archives relating to religious bodies, businesses, and public offices. In addition, educators should teach about archives of various media, especially those of non-traditional formats.

Until now, the "New World" countries of Canada, the United States, and Australia have had a more highly developed tradition of training in information science. It is likely that this aspect of training will become increasingly important as archivists strive to respond to market demands. Such training will probably be based on the already established model set in these three countries.

⁸Charles Kecskeméti, "Contrastes et Nuances. Réflexions sur la Formation des Archivistes," *Archives et Bibliothèques de Belgique* 27 (1987): 246-247.

Training will also have to take into account the various legal environments and existing professional standards. Few archivists in today's Europe have a sufficient grasp of computer studies, networking, bibliographic sciences, national and international databases, or even the norms for cataloging and indexing. Archival educators throughout Europe have to develop a uniform curriculum to reflect the international standardization of the legal conditions for automated records and systems. Close collaboration with those who educate information specialists and librarians would probably be helpful in this effort.

Preservation and conservation techniques should also play a larger role in European archival education. Specialists are still fairly rare in Europe. Exchanges between them would probably enhance training programs. For example, archival educators throughout Europe could benefit from the German expertise in preserving audio-visual materials, the Dutch mastery of conserving paper documents, and the French success in developing and enforcing high standards for new archival buildings.⁹

The archivist is increasingly concerned with cultural matters, though this varies to some extent from one place to another. Professional historians, students, and genealogists all share an interest in archival sources. It is important for future archivists to learn to analyze more systematically the needs of these various users. They should know how to cope with different groups and with the technical challenges of running a reading room, organizing an exhibition, and coordinating preparations for a seminar.

Following much debate since World War II, archivists seem at last to have reached a consensus about the need to teach general

management and to relate it to other forms and concepts of national heritage. More than ever, archivists must have formal training to understand the domestic and international relationships of archives and to learn skills in effective fundraising, budgeting, and staff supervision.

In all these respects, teaching should combine both theory and practice just as it does already in the case of engineers or technicians. There is always the risk that the teaching environment may create an imbalance between practice and theory. An academic setting may emphasize theory; an archive, even at the national level, may overlook theory. New archivists will show the influence of their training and its relative emphasis upon practice and theory. In some fields including history, law, and political science, the teacher will be considerably more effective if he or she has done original research. The use of visual aids and exercises facilitates teaching both theory and practice, especially in fields like paleography.

It does not really make much difference whether archival educators are university teachers or archivists. Increasingly often, the teaching of administrative and technical matters is left to specialists who have had formal training in other disciplines.

Archivists of the future will need formal training to develop both analytical skills and a certain intuition so that they can tackle a collection of documents successfully. They must learn to choose the right level of analysis in a given context, independent of any future use. Even beyond the classroom setting, novice archivists must learn from their more experienced colleagues through a deliberate mixture of demonstrations and practical exercises in the workplace.

Support for Cooperative Efforts at Archival Education in Europe

It may be assumed that the responsibility for training young archivists, just like other

⁹Danièle Neirinck, "The Role of Technical Service in the Direction des Archives in the Construction of Archival Buildings in France," *American Archivist* 53 (Winter 1990): 140-148.

young professionals, should be taken by the political and economic institutions that transcend boundaries within Europe. However, even with increased cooperation across national boundaries, most people recognize that the rich variety of archival training systems should be left as is, and an attempt should be made to understand how each system works and relates to the others.

Until recently, these various programs were aware of each others' existence but had little practical contact. Contact was mainly through personal relationships established by participation in the International Council on Archives.

As an exception, the Stage Technique International d'Archives in Paris has served since 1951 as a unique forum for international communication among young archivists. For many of these novices, this has been the first opportunity to understand different archival systems in Europe. Many of today's archival educators in Europe are former participants in the course.¹⁰

Increased means are likely to be available in the future to encourage professionals to take part in exchanges within Europe. Right at the heart of the EC, programs such as ERASMUS, LINGUA, and TEMPUS will encourage cooperation between universities by providing scholarships for students.¹¹ Other initiatives such as the European Training Foundation created in 1990 (also under the umbrella of the EC but with a wider mandate) are channelled more towards Central and Eastern Europe. These new financial provisions will facili-

tate the exchange of young archivists, who will be able to cross borders to partake in individual and group training sessions, both specialized and general.

The procedures for recognizing qualifications throughout Europe are still uncertain. As a first step, the Community has outlined a directive for courses of three years or more. It seems quite likely that some of the larger European archival training programs may copy their scientific and business counterparts by sharing curricula, research into technical matters, and other kinds of expertise the archival profession needs.

Over the last few years, the demand for archivists has risen in both the public and private sectors of many European countries. Teachers and educational institutions need to join forces to affirm the worth of the profession. Its value is still barely recognized in some of the member states of the Community.

Conclusion

Throughout most of the world except Europe, there is movement towards a harmonization of curricula and internships for archivists, librarians, and documentalists in compliance with guidelines established by UNESCO.¹² On this Old World continent, however, the weight of archives surviving from an ancient past has constituted something of a barrier to progress.

There is an urgent need for a mechanism to study archival educational issues within Europe which would complement the examination of these same issues elsewhere. The Society of American Archivists has fostered this type of self-examination and comparison in its own national context. Francis Blouin, in analyzing convergent and divergent traditions, has commented that "between North America and Europe, there is, of course, a clear divergence in tradition

¹⁰Paule René-Bazin and Marie-Françoise Tamaro, "Le Stage Technique International d'Archives," *American Archivist* 51 (Summer 1988): 356-362.

¹¹ERASMUS is a program defined as "Aide financière aux programmes interuniversitaires de coopération et bourses de mobilité" (avec 85 million d'ECU pour 1987 - 1989); LINGUA is "Aide aux échanges linguistiques d'étudiants et jeunes travailleurs"; and TEMPUS is "Aide à la coopération avec l'Europe centrale et orientale."

¹²Charles Kecskeméti, "Contrastes et Nuances. Réflexions sur la Formation des Archivistes," 246-247.

and in the origin of historical identity” and that “the process of formation in Europe appears to be traditionally rooted in the text and in the primary functions of interpretation—of explanations and translations which have given the traditional definition to archival work in Europe.”¹³

Further analysis of a European archival education will require the contributions of other specialists, including those known to us as information professionals. These “play a crucial role in enabling professionals to leap over the walls of their institutions.”¹⁴ The

increasingly pervasive new technologies affect the archivist’s workplace in ways that are still difficult to grasp. Archival training should follow in the footsteps of this evolutionary process, even if it has to be transformed by leaps and bounds on some occasions.

New institutions, disregarding former boundaries, now function in Europe. They encourage us to act. The path ahead is clear and pilot projects are already beginning to emerge. Results will be slow at the beginning. We realize that the first success stories will be small and local, just as they were in a much earlier era of European archival history.

¹³Francis X. Blouin, Jr., “Convergences and Divergences in Archival Tradition: A North American Perspective,” in *Second European Conference on Archives Proceedings*, ed. Judy Koucky, (Paris: International Council on Archives, 1989), 22-29.

¹⁴Abdul Aziz Abid, “L’Harmonisation, ses Concepts et ses Limites,” *Harmonisation of Education*

and Training Programmes for Library, Information, and Archival Personnel (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1989), 89.

The Future of European Archival Education

Abstract: Although it may be premature to talk about a “European” archivist, the training of European archivists is a necessary precondition for the future of increasing harmonization within Europe. Some first steps towards a common European training have been instituted during the past thirty years under the auspices of the International Council on Archives and through the efforts of individual national archives services. The author proposes a model curriculum for a common approach to archival education and discusses current cooperative efforts in archival education within Europe.

L’avenir de la formation européenne en archivistique

Résumé: Même s’il s’avère prématuré de parler de l’archiviste “européen,” la formation pour un archiviste “européen” est un pré-requis nécessaire pour une harmonisation croissante de la profession à l’intérieur de l’Europe. Des premières démarches vers une formation européenne commune ont été entreprises sous les auspices du Conseil International des Archives et à travers les efforts de chaque service national d’archives au cours des trente dernières années. L’auteur propose donc un curriculum modèle pour une approche commune de la formation et discute des efforts coopératifs courants de la formation archivistique à l’intérieur de l’Europe.

Die Zukunft der europäischen archivalischen Ausbildung

Abstrakt: Obwohl es vielleicht zu früh ist, von "europäischen" Archivaren zu sprechen, ist die Ausbildung von europäischen Archivaren eine unvermeidliche Voraussetzung für die Zukunft der zunehmenden Harmonisierung innerhalb Europas. Unter der Schirmherrschaft des Internationalen Rates für Archive und mit Hilfe von einzelnen nationalen Archivdiensten wurden während der letzten dreissig Jahre einige erste Schritte zur Einheitsausbildung in Europa unternommen. Der Autor schlägt einen Vorbildslehrplan zur Standardisierung der Archivarausbildung vor und erörtert gegenwärtige kooperative Bemühungen in der archivalischen Ausbildung innerhalb Europas.

El futuro de la educación archivológica europea

Resumen: Aunque puede ser prematuro hablar acerca de un archivero "europeo," el entrenamiento para los archiveros europeos es una condición previa necesaria para el futuro engrandecimiento de la armonización dentro de Europa. Algunos primeros pasos hacia el entrenamiento común europeo, han sido instituidos durante los últimos treinta años bajo los auspicios del Consejo Internacional sobre Archivos y a través de los esfuerzos de los servicios individuales de los archivos nacionales. El autor propone un modelo de curso de estudios para un acercamiento común a la educación archivológica y examina los actuales esfuerzos cooperativos en la educación archivológica dentro de Europa.