

## ARCHIVAL TERMINOLOGY

THE English dictionaries afford a very limited basic terminology for discussing problems in connection with the preservation, administration, and interpretation of governmental and other records and documents. In fact, they have but three words (*a*) archive, (*b*) archival, and (*c*) archivist. Because of the primary and secondary definition of the first of these three words, added to the fact that most of the modern dictionaries state "now only in the plural" or some similar phrase at the end of the definitions of this word, a great deal of confusion arises in the writings of many who refer to these subjects.

The word "archive" with its plural, "archives," is derived from the Greek *archeion* which means a government building. Hence the primary definition of the word is "a place where records and documents are kept." To this definition most modern dictionaries add the secondary meaning of "records or documents."

The dictionaries of the eighteenth century in general give only the first meaning of this word. For example, N. Bailey in 1726 defines archive as "a place where ancient Records, Charters, and Evidences are kept, as in the Office of the Master of Rolls." While Samuel Johnson in 1770 gives only the following: "Archives, *s. without a singular (archiva Lat.)*, the place where records or ancient writings are kept." Even as late as 1838, and again in 1849, Charles Richardson in *A New Dictionary of the English Language* gives only the following: "Archives. Fr. *Archives*; It. *Archivio*; Sp. *Archivo*; Gr. *Archeion*. Where public papers or records are deposited; frequently so used by Josephus." It is not until about the beginning of the nineteenth century that a secondary definition is found, and as late as 1827 the entry is most restrained. In this latter year, Todd's edition of Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* contains the following: "Archives, *n.s. pl. Without a singular*, Dr. Johnson says, which is a great mistake; as my examples will show; (*Archiva, Lat.*). The place where records or ancient writings are kept. It is perhaps some times used for the writings themselves." The *Oxford English Dictionary*, of which the part containing the word "archive" appeared in 1885, has the following definitions:

Archive, mostly in *pl.* . . . 1. A place in which public records or other important historic documents are kept. Now only in *pl.* 2. A historical record or document so preserved. Now chiefly in *pl.* . . .

James A. H. Murray in *A New English Dictionary* (1888) gives these same definitions. In spite of the insistence on "now only in plural" for the first meaning, both these dictionaries, however, show the usage of the word by a quotation from Bishop Lowth, *Letters Warburton*, in 1775, "laid up in the same archive." *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia* (1889) and Funk and Wagnall's *New Standard Dictionary* (1893 ff.) follow the Oxford and Murray. *New International Dictionary* (1909 ff.) gives the following:

Archive, *n.*, pl. archives . . . 1. *pl.* A place in which public records or historic documents are kept. Formerly also in *sing.*: 2. *pl.* Public records or documents preserved as evidence of facts; as, national or family archives. Also in *sing.*

In contrast to the foregoing the *Universal Dictionary of the English Language* edited by Henry Cecil Wyld (London, 1932) gives the following:

Archive (s), (a) place where records and documents are kept; (b) records or historic documents stored in such a place.

It is worthy to note that the qualifying phrase "now only in the plural" does not appear in this work.

Historians during the nineteenth century seem to have used the word "archive," or "archives," very little. An examination of many works does not reveal this word in the indexes. Even general historical writings in the twentieth century fail to show any usage of the word. For example, in Henry Johnson, *Teaching of History*, 1915, the words archive, archives, or records are not found in the index. In the nineteenth century the word was more often used by American historians who had studied in Spain than by any others, and the plural, archives, was employed to translate the singular form in the Spanish which most definitely meant a place where records are kept. For example, Prescott speaks of "the archives of Simancas which have held the secrets of the Spanish monarchy hermetically sealed for ages" and "the ancient archives of Simancas within whose hallowed precincts. . . ." In both these quotations the plural, archives, is used to translate the singular, *archivo*, which means the place where records are kept.

With the turn of the century two events took place which developed two schools of thought on the use of the words "archive" and "archives." In 1899 the American Historical Association set up the Public Archives Commission. At the time this commission was

formed, there did not exist in the United States any place specifically and solely devoted to the keeping of public records or documents. It obviously was very natural that those who were interested in the subject placed before this commission should use the word "archives" in its second acceptance, and perchance they were inclined to limit it to governmental materials only as distinguished from "manuscripts" which were considered to belong to private individuals. It is believed that this distinction was not necessarily justified by the definition of the word. Nevertheless, this seems to be the general usage of a number of learned persons who were interested in the Public Archives Commission. Most of these same persons, however, will be found using the word "archives" in its primary and correctly etymological sense when they wish to speak of more than one place where records are kept. They and many other authorities use the expression "libraries and archives." It should be pointed out that even the American Historical Association itself somewhat later set up a Committee on Obtaining Transcripts from Foreign Archives, where obviously the word "archives" does not refer to the records themselves but to the places from which the copies were secured. It should be further observed that in general this group of authorities when they have to refer to one single institution resort to some sort of a circumlocution such as archives repository, archival center, archive depository, archival establishment, or some other similar form. As high as eight or ten circumlocutions have been noted in a single article of a certain writer.

About this same time the Carnegie Institution of Washington, under the direction of Dr. J. F. Jameson, began the work of preparing the great series of guides to materials in foreign archives relating to the history of the United States. Those whom he chose to undertake the work all found that in most of the countries there was a single generic term for the place where they had to carry on their task of securing information regarding the records and documents relating to the history of the United States. Perhaps that fact had an influence on the usage which was developed by this group of students, to which may be added the group of fellows sent especially to Spain and Mexico by the University of California. These students at that time found a need for a generic term in English to indicate the place where records are kept, and they found that term in the singular form of the word "archive," which is a translation for the corresponding word in Dutch, Spanish, German, Italian, Swedish, Polish, Russian,

and perhaps other languages. This usage has been practiced for more than a quarter of a century by a continually growing number of scholars who have had to do with the archives scattered throughout Europe and the parts of America outside of the United States.

Today because of the establishment of the National Archives at Washington the problems in connection with the preservation, administration, and interpretation of public records and documents have taken on a new importance. Studies are now being made of the activities of other countries in regard to these problems. It is to be noted that when translating materials from numerous European languages a great deal of confusion arises because of the limitations of the basic American terminology. This confusion is well illustrated by the several numbers of *THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST*. Taking the German alone it is noted that the words *archiv*, *archive*, *archivalien*, and *archivalische* are all translated by the one English word "archives." Unless one is very familiar with the matter presented and has a very good idea as to what the author is saying, it becomes very difficult to follow the translation. Also it is found that in a translation in this review the word "archives" is used in three short lines to mean (a) places where records are kept, (b) the records themselves, and (c) used in the place of the adjective "archival." Elsewhere in this same translation the word "archives" is used to mean one place where records are kept. Such indefiniteness of terminology is not conducive to the development of scientific accuracy in dealing with the problems at hand. No doubt there is need for a wider and more exact terminology.

In this matter it is noted that the Germans have made greater progress than other archivists, and consequently they are enabled to make more exact statements regarding the problems considered. Thus we have in the German language *archiv*, a place where records are kept; *archive*, places where records are kept; *archivalien*, the records themselves; *archivar*, archivist; *archivalische*, archival; and *archivwesen*, the science which deals with archives. This seems to represent a minimum number of terms necessary to carry on a proper discussion of the subject.

It appears then that the situation demands a generic term for each of the following ideas: (1) a place where records are kept, (2) two or more places where records and documents are kept, (3) an adjective referring to this place and its records, (4) a name for the director or technical employee of the place where records and docu-

ments are kept, (5) a name for the science which deals with the place where records and documents are kept and its contents, and (6) a name for the mass of records or documents kept in one such place.

It is suggested, therefore, that the basic terminology to be used in connection with the preservation, administration, and interpretation of records and documents include the following terms:

ARCHIVE, n.s. (Ger., *archiv*; Lat., *archivum*; Sp., *archivo*). A place where records and documents are kept.

This is a generic term for one such place and is recommended because of the confusion which arises from using the plural "archives" in this sense and because it avoids the necessity for multitudinous varieties of circumlocutions such as archival repository, archive repository, archives repository, archival establishment, archives depot, archive depository, archival center, and so on *ad infinitum*. This usage has been very general among scholars who have had experience in investigating the historical records and documents found in the numerous European archives. The singular, archive, is used in this sense by such men as Jameson, Leland, J. A. Robertson, Chapman, Hanke, Paltsits, Cole, Chamberlain, Bolton, Bemis, and many others. Such usage is to be found in publications of the Harvard University Press, Library of Congress, Carnegie Institution of Washington, University of Chicago Press, and Duke University Press, as well as those of outstanding commercial publishers.

ARCHIVES, n. pl. (Ger., *archive*; Lat., *archiva*; Sp., *archivos*).

Two or more places where records and documents are kept. This usage follows naturally after the singular usage indicated above. It is practiced by the same authorities which are mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Also at times it is used by those who do not recognize the singular use in this sense and usually use the plural to mean "records or documents." Herein lies perhaps the greatest confusion, because of the use of the plural in two distinct acceptations. A substitute for the secondary meaning of "archives" is suggested below.

ARCHIVAL, adj. (Ger., *archivalische*). Of or pertaining to an archive.

ARCHIVIST, n.s. (Ger., *archivar*; Sp., *archivero*). Keeper of records or documents; director or technical employee of an archive.

ARCHIVOLOGY, n.s. (Ger., *archivwesen*; Sp., *archivología*; It., *archivistica*). The science pertaining to the preservation, ad-

ministration, and interpretation of records and documents in an archive.

This is the suggestion of a generic term to express the science which deals with all subjects connected with an archive, including its contents. It is the adaptation of the Spanish term, *archivología*, which is derived from the two Greek words *archeion* and *logos*. It is believed that this term has very decided advantages over any of the circumlocutions such as archival science, archive science, archives science, science of archives, archival practice, and archival economy which have been at times used to express this idea. It includes both theory and practice. Archivology belongs to the group of words, names of sciences, derived from the Greek *logos* which includes anthropology, geology, biology, sociology, psychology, etc.

ARCHIVALIA, n. pl. (Ger., *archivalien*; Dutch, *archivalia*). Mass of records or documents preserved in an archive.

This is the suggested adoption of a foreign word to express a concrete idea and avoid the confusion which arises from the use of one word in two distinct acceptations. Both the German and the Dutch in the development of their archivology have found the need for a term of this kind. In this period of beginnings of archivology in the United States, it is felt that the use of this word of Latin characteristic, like "data" and "memoranda," will be helpful.

If this word is not acceptable, it is suggested that the word "records" be employed to express this idea. This is the usage of the archivist of the United States in his annual report for 1938 and later years.

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