

Archeion, Volumes 122–124

Poland: The State Archives Head Office (Naczelna Dyrekcja
Archiwów Państwowych), 2021–2023. ISSN 0066–6041.

Archeion, published in Poland since 1927, is the oldest journal dedicated to archival science. The journal's mission, as highlighted on the publisher's website, is to promote the latest scientific thought in the field of archival science and to conduct a scientific discourse with the Polish and international research communities. The annual journal follows the diamond open access model. Its contents are open and free to access on a dedicated website.¹ *Archeion* publishes articles in both Polish and English, which widens the audience considerably and creates new opportunities for research dissemination.

Journal content is divided into several sections. The first presents research related to the leading theme of the volume. The second, called "Studies and Materials," features additional research articles on archival theory and practice. The "Discussions and Reviews" section contains a review of the latest archival literature; the "Scientific Chronicle" contains reports on scholarly events (conferences, symposia, seminars, etc.) that are important to the development of archival science; and the "In Memoriam" section consists of biographical notes on archivists who died in a given year.

In the following review, I highlight a selection of interesting articles from *Archeion*'s most recent three volumes (122–124), which were published in 2021–2023. These volumes are oriented, as emphasized in the foreword of volume 122, toward familiarizing the reader with new trends and research directions in contemporary archival science, both within Poland and internationally.

Volume 122 (2021) focuses on modern data storage technologies for long-term preservation. The latest developments in this area are significant for the international archival community, which is looking for ways to achieve perpetual storage of information. In this context, two articles about long-term archiving attract attention.

An article by Jędrzej Sabliński and Alfredo Trujillo, who represent the Piql company, identifies new opportunities for storage of data on physical media, specifically on "35mm width polyester film coated with a gelatin emulsion containing microscopically small light-sensitive silver halide crystals" (p. 14). As the authors explain, this digital preservation medium is intended to survive one thousand years. Its perpetuity enables it to provide secure access to information for future generations and safeguard archival heritage against natural disasters and harmful human activities. Sabliński and Trujillo describe the technology in detail, including data recording methods and storage conditions for piqlFilm media, and they include a

preservation workflow. They conclude by citing the example of the Arctic World Archive, a specialized archives on the Arctic island of Svalbard where the most valuable data from sixteen countries (e.g., manuscripts from the Vatican Library, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child from UNICEF, and Edvard Munch's *The Scream*) are stored using Piql technology.

In the paper "DNA: An Almost Indestructible Data Carrier with Incomparable Capacity," Adriana Żyła suggests another solution for long-term preservation of archival materials. The author refers to the sequence of nucleic acids (DNA), which she considers to be "the oldest but most durable information carrier" (translation, p. 33). Norbert Wiener and Mikhail Neiman first proposed using DNA as a data medium in 1964–1965. The breakthrough in transcribing data into genetic material, however, did not occur until 2012. More recent scientific developments have opened up new possibilities for using DNA as a storage medium in the future. However, it seems that only time will verify the author's conclusion, which states: "The development of science and ever new and, most importantly, cheaper and faster methods for synthesizing and sequencing DNA means that we are getting closer to solving the problem of storing vast amounts of digital data" (translation, p. 42).

In another article in volume 122, Marcin Wilkowski writes a critical analysis of the Polish country code top-level domain (ccTLD) used from 1996 to 2001. This article forces a careful consideration of the Internet Archive as a historical source because of the quality and limitations of the archived big data. The author precisely analyzes the frequency with which the Internet Archive is capturing and archiving web resources, numerical estimates for the live Web, hostnames and domains, and HTTP status codes to ask very important "questions about the representativeness of the archived Web in relation to the live Web, actually available at a specific time in the past" (p. 44). Despite the reference to the national domain, the text is highly relevant to researchers from other countries, including American researchers. It provides an example of critical evaluations that aim to highlight gaps and inconsistencies in the availability of historical information online, ultimately contributing to the improvement and credibility of digital archives. It also allows comparative research and contrasting of different sources or data sets.

The "Studies and Materials" section in volume 122 includes articles on the Transkribus platform, which applies information technology to recognize handwritten text in archival documents; the nonanthropocentric view of archival science adopted from humanist ideologies; and the development of business archives in the light of the achievements and annual conferences of the International Council on Archives Section on Business Archives. These issues have also been addressed in recent years in US archival research.²

The innovative character of Polish archival studies research is demonstrated in "Emotion, Affect, Archives and Selection: The Exciting Paths of the New

Humanities” by Magdalena Wiśniewska-Drewniak. This article first popularizes academic theories about the emotional aspect of archives. These theories are not well known in Poland, where archival scholars have historically focused on the functioning of traditional social archives and the collection of evidence depicting the everyday life of a predominantly homogeneous society in terms of nationality, religion, and culture. Wiśniewska-Drewniak surveys the Western literature on the subject, explaining how topics like the struggle against institutionalized racism, the reckoning with a colonial past, and the significance of the LGBTQ+ community have acquired particular relevance for archival science. However, the author does not stop there. She also reveals particularly interesting areas for archivists about the impact of affect on archival selection, use, and description. For example, she describes the impact of trauma in the archives, including when archival materials are emotionally difficult for the archivist or researcher to encounter (e.g., dying children in the streets of a ghetto, devastated prisoners of concentration camps). The importance of this issue in the international archival community is evidenced, among other things, by the topics addressed by the International Council on Archives³ and by Society of American Archivists webinars.⁴ Wiśniewska-Drewniak’s article is valuable to an American audience because it shows how archival science and archivists function differently in different social and cultural conditions. By exploring the Polish approach, American scholars and practitioners can gain insights into the methodologies and challenges encountered by archivists in a more uniform society. This understanding can enrich their own practices and foster a deeper appreciation for the global diversity in archival work.

Volume 123 (2022) of *Archeion* begins with the transcript of Luciana Duranti’s lecture, “Why a World Gone Digital Needs Archival Theory More than Ever Before?,” which she gave as part of the State Archives in Poland’s new lecture series entitled “Konarski⁵ Lectures.” In answering that question, Duranti underlines the essential research areas that require new theoretical developments, like cloud storage, artificial intelligence, and blockchain technology, to ensure the trustworthiness of electronic records. She also gives examples of solutions developed by the international, interdisciplinary archival research project InterPARES Trust AI. This interesting endeavor, conducted through the involvement of research institutions and public and private organizations (including archives) from around the world, focuses on exploring the prospects of using artificial intelligence as an important tool for archival work. It poses questions about the technological, ethical, and social limits of AI’s use and the consequences of entrusting cultural heritage to systems-machines based on computational analysis. The InterPARES Trust AI project proves the universality of the problems of modern archival science (e.g., the long-term preservation of all digital documents, on whatever media and from whatever period, in such a way as to guarantee their reliability and authenticity) that specialists representing different countries are working to solve.

The section called “Archives in the Digital World,” which is a reference to volume 123’s main theme, includes two significant articles about web archiving. The first one by Antal Posthumus presents the role of the National Archives in the Netherlands (Het Nationaal Archief) in securing the future of specific government records: archived public Dutch government websites. However, the article does not focus on the mechanisms for creating a collection of these electronic resources. Rather, the mission of the archives, as the author highlights, is to advise on procedures for the creation and archiving of public websites of ministries and their agencies. Archival support offered to the administration included guidelines on archiving websites, issued in 2018. Three years later, the guidelines were incorporated into the requirements for a public European tender to implement a platform obtaining approximately 1,500 public websites of the Dutch Central Government. The Dutch example demonstrates the importance of evolving specific information management requirements and implementing them early in the process of developing system solutions.

Daniel Gomes acquaints *Archeion* readers with Arquivo.pt. This Portuguese governmental service, established in 2007, was initially intended as digital infrastructure to support scientific research. Over time, the scope of the project was expanded to become a publicly accessible (since 2013) web archives that collects and stores information mainly on Portugal. However, Arquivo.pt collections reflect multiple languages, and about half of users come from countries other than Portugal, demonstrating the international interest in the project. Moreover, the project now contains billions of files archived from the web since the 1990s, reflecting the idea of broad access to information, regardless of where it is produced and stored. Gomes also describes how Arquivo.pt can serve as a source of historical documentation for creating online thematic exhibitions on the basis of web pages, identifying and creating published open web data sets, and training users in web preservation. In this way, Gomes draws attention to various methods of exploring the past web. His work is significant to the archival profession because he demonstrates new possibilities for the use, analysis, and presentation of internet resources. The examples of the Dutch and Portuguese approaches to web archiving contribute significantly to the global discourse on the necessity of preserving these transient sources of information. This international conversation underscores the importance of capturing and maintaining digital content that might otherwise be lost over time. In the United States, this discussion is actively pursued within the archival community, notably through publications such as the *American Archivist*⁶ and within the Web Archiving Section of the Society of American Archivists.⁷

The initiatives undertaken by the National Archives in the Netherlands and the Portuguese governmental service Arquivo.pt exemplify innovative strategies in this field. These projects resonate with similar efforts by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in the United States, particularly through their

Congressional Web Harvest repository.⁸ These domestic efforts allow a better understanding of the diverse methodologies employed in web archiving and the critical role it plays in preserving digital heritage.

Archeion volume 124 (2023) opens with the transcript of a lecture by Laura Millar, guest of the second edition of the Konarski Lectures, titled “Managing ‘the Shapeless Mass’ in the Digital Age.” Millar emphasizes the need for capturing and recording the present products of human activity. Her arguments offer an interesting parallel between contemporary archival science and that of almost a hundred years ago, represented by Polish and Canadian archivists. As Millar notes, “The ‘flood’ of physical and textual documentation that Dr. K. Konarski faced a century ago has become a torrent of invisible, omnipresent, elusive electronic records—photographs, audio recordings, databases, AI-generated data, and more—stored in countless computer hard drives, cloud storage systems, and personal digital devices” (p. 10). The digital age, according to Millar, has transformed the nature of archival work. The dynamic growth of new technologies means for archivists a change in working tools, sources of information, the speed of response to the evidence of social life emerging in the virtual space, and methodological approaches based on principles of original order and provenance. Like the International Council on Archives,⁹ the author calls for advocacy to engage with the public and raise awareness of the importance of records as a source of fact and truth. She highlights, among other things, the new responsibilities that the digital age imposes on our profession to help society capture, protect, and make available for use essential sources of documentary proof: “We can no longer think of ourselves as custodians only or custodians first. Sometimes we will need to be advisors. Sometimes we will need to be activists. We need to expand the understanding of what it means to ‘be an archivist’. We must look not at our role in professional isolation but as part of a wider vision to support the recognition of facts and truth and evidence as antidotes to lies and disinformation” (p. 29). The specific challenges (“we need to . . .”) Millar throws at the reader open up a new discussion on archives in the present and the future, which should be taken up by archivists as soon as possible. The “Archival Contexts” section of volume 124 includes three articles that refer to contemporary perceptions of the archives and the archival document. One of the manuscripts, written by Trudy Huskamp Peterson, describes protection of privacy. In addition to an in-depth analysis of international statements and a review of selected scientific papers published in the twenty-first century that reference privacy, Peterson proves that accurate recognition and understanding of the context of information is the first and most important step necessary when determining whether archival materials should be publicly accessible. Archivists deciding on the release of private information must be aware of the existence of two contexts: an external context, which is given by a law or an organization’s policy; and an internal context, in which archivists act as “a surrogate for the person whose information is embodied in the

document" (p. 73). Peterson gives archivists specific tools for privacy assessments and outlines seven contextual elements that can help them manage sensitive materials and avoid the danger of an invasion of privacy. She warns, however, that "the crux of dealing with the information privacy concept is professional cognitive empathy, the ability to momentarily stand in the shoes of another and to decide" (p. 73).

Another article in the "Archival Contexts" section discusses changes in the understanding of archives as the practice of collecting, storing, and providing access to archival collections. Wojciech Piasek puts forward a proposal of anthropologized archival science, based on the sociocultural context appropriate for Europe. According to the author, "In the 19th century, the archive, just like other elements of bureaucracy, came to be understood as free from context, discussion, ideology, or in a broader sense, culture" (p. 255). Analyzing contemporary archival thought, represented by the Polish scientific community, Piasek postulates that twenty-first-century archival science will establish connections between archival practices and culture. This approach may, however, indicate an unobvious perception of the archives, its role and place in European society, in which the existence of archives and their transformations due to political and social changes shaped the archival resources. The Polish perspective offers a useful comparative framework for the United States, where archivists have typically focused on the interplay between archives and the cultures they document. By studying the European approach, American archivists can learn about various methodologies and conceptual models, thereby broadening their comprehension of the global diversity in archival practices. Hadrian Ciechanowski explores a similar topic in his article "McDonaldization of Archives (an Introduction to Discussion)." Describing the various dimensions of McDonaldization—predictability, calculability, efficiency, and control—Ciechanowski concludes that archives have at least partially influenced social and cultural trends. His argument is not entirely convincing, especially if the predictability and efficiency of the Polish archives are analyzed through the application of international standards for archival description. Without rejecting the thesis about the impact of social changes on archives and the validity of his observations, it is nevertheless important to consider whether his examples from Polish archival practice, including the rules for the description of archival materials, support his conclusion. While the application of methodical rules and guidelines for state archives in Poland, as well as the implementation of multilevel description standards, aims to enhance archival practices, it may not be the most effective measure of overall efficiency, as Ciechanowski claims. These structured approaches, although beneficial for ensuring systematic management and accessibility of archival materials, might not fully capture the complexities and challenges faced by archives. Efficiency should also consider factors such as user satisfaction, the adaptability of archives to technological advancements, and the ability to preserve and provide access to historical records in a dynamic environment. Therefore, a more

comprehensive evaluation framework is needed to accurately assess the true efficiency and effectiveness of archival operations. Nevertheless, Ciechanowski's work significantly underscores how social trends affect the functioning of archives, a topic pertinent to both Polish and American archival science. He poses important questions about the rationale for adapting to these changes and the broader implications for the archival profession. This discussion encourages further reflection on balancing traditional archival principles with modern societal influences.

An important section of the journal is the reviews and overviews, which provide an opportunity to recommend publications on archival science that have emerged in recent years and have been significant, both for their scientific value and for their innovative approach to archives and archival science. Unfortunately, the Polish academic archival community, to which the journal is primarily addressed, has not chosen to review archival resources published outside of Poland's borders. One might expect that an interest in the topics covered in international archival science would raise questions and provoke a desire to share one's insights. Of course, differences in social and political context affect how international books are received. Nevertheless, on home ground, looking at archival issues as discussed in international publications, such as the creation of archives of activist organizations, digital archiving practices, and justice, could have interesting and useful applications. These publications can help Polish archivists develop strategies to document social movements and grassroots initiatives more effectively. This can ensure that the voices and activities of these groups are preserved for future generations, providing a richer and more inclusive historical record. Books and articles discussing the role of archives in promoting justice can also inspire Polish archivists to explore how their work can support social justice initiatives. This might involve creating archives that document human rights abuses, supporting transitional justice processes, or ensuring that marginalized communities are represented in the archival record. Moreover, engaging with international conversations about archives, such as those reflected in publications like *Archeion*, could spark new discussions among American archivists. These global perspectives can provide valuable insights and innovative approaches that might enhance the effectiveness and relevance of archival work in the United States. Embracing different international dialogues can foster a more interconnected and progressive archival community, ultimately benefiting the preservation and accessibility of historical records worldwide.

Archeion combines national and global issues of archival science with varying degrees of success. The topics addressed by the journal are certainly rich, current, and important to the archival profession. It is a valuable contribution to the archival literature and should be required reading for archival scholars and practitioners in Poland seeking a more in-depth understanding of contemporary archives. On the other hand, the content presented in *Archeion* may also be of interest to audiences in other countries, such as readers of *American Archivist*. A perspective different

from the American focus, specific to the countries of Europe, may prove inspiring. By sharing knowledge and learning from archivists who confront a history unfamiliar to Americans, draw on archival experience from other sources, work in different social and systemic realities, and experience different contemporary problems, American archivists will certainly benefit from a broader view of archives and people engaged in this profession.

© **Kamila Pawelczyk-Dura**

The State Archives Head Office, Poland

ORCID 0000-0002-3615-8120

NOTES

- ¹ The digital version of *Archeion* (e-ISSN 2658-1264) is published at <https://ejournals.eu/en/journal/archeion>.
- ² See “Transkribus Lite,” *The American Archivist* Reviews Portal, September 1, 2023, <https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2023/09/01/transkribus-lite>, captured at <https://perma.cc/HAM8-94TA>; Sarah Polirer, ed., *Managing Business Archives* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2022).
- ³ ICA/PCOM, “Archivists Encountering Trauma in Archives: Introducing the Vicarious Trauma Template,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NId-mDUXBT0>.
- ⁴ SAA organized a webinar on this topic in 2023, “Understanding the Need for Trauma-Informed Practice in Archives Talk,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N90yAKr0rcA>, as well as hosted a poster presentation at its annual meeting in 2024, Annie Reid, “Implementing a Trauma-Informed Practice Training Module,” https://d1keuthy5s86c8.cloudfront.net/saaar_202408/64e9d40c0dada2d3421988ef37c3deac67f539e1f23e8eca844a07e9c4b307dc_0/P11_Annie_Reid_SAA_2024.pdf, captured at <https://perma.cc/P77A-TKRM>.
- ⁵ Kazimierz Bogdan Konarski was a Polish historian, archivist, and professor at the University of Warsaw and founder of modern Polish archival science and Polish archival theory. His now classic manual, *Modern Polish Archival Science and Its Purpose*, was originally published in 1929 as a supplement to *Archeion*.
- ⁶ Amanda Greenwood, review of “The Past Web: Exploring Web Archives,” ed. Daniel Gomes, Elena Demidova, Jane Winters, and Thomas Risse (Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2021), *American Archivist* 85, no. 2 (2022), 717–20, <https://doi.org/10.17723/2327-9702-85.2.717>; Ed Summers, review essay, “What We Talk about When We Talk about Archiving the Web,” review of Niels Brügger and Ralph Schroeder, eds., *The Web as History: Using Web Archives to Understand the Past and the Present* (London: UCL Press, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781911307563>, *American Archivist* 83, no. 1 (2020), 167–75, <https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081-83.1.167>; Samantha Abrams, Alexis Antracoli, Rachel Appel, Celia Caust-Ellenbogen, Sarah Denison, Sumitra Duncan, and Stefanie Ramsay, “Sowing the Seeds for More Usable Web Archives: A Usability Study of Archive-It,” *American Archivist* 82, no. 2 (2019), 440–69.
- ⁷ “Web Archiving Section,” Society of American Archivists, <https://www2.archivists.org/groups/web-archiving-section>, captured at <https://perma.cc/4KUG-CUAA>.
- ⁸ “Congressional Web Harvest,” National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/legislative/research/web-harvest.html>, captured at <https://perma.cc/YFT4-726S>.
- ⁹ ICA #IAW2024, “Using the Universal Declaration on Archives as an Advocacy Tool,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vL3QguhuThw>.