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1.03 Short Scientific Article

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ARCHIVAL SELECTION AND DISPOSAL

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Abstract:

Today, in an overproduction of documents, it is necessary to be able to differentiate between important and unimportant; it is necessary to be able to properly select archival records and to dispose of current records. The processes of selection and disposal are very important in the system of protection of materials whose final goal is preservation of archival records and their transfer to the Archives. Although there are several measures ensuring the proper creators' procedures implementation, it is a very complex and responsible work for the Archives Advisory Board, because it must remove all the possibilities of an improper creators' disposal. In this article, we will describe the significance and the procedure of selection of archival records and disposal of current records in the records management under the supervision of the Historical Archives Sarajevo with all their advantages and disadvantages.

Key words:

selection, disposal, archival records, current records, Archives Advisory Board

Izvleček:

Pomen odbiranja arhivskega gradiva in uničenja dokumentarnega gradiva

Pri prekomerni produkciji dokumentov je potrebno biti sposoben razlikovati med pomembnim in nepomembnim; potrebno je znati ločiti, odbrati arhivsko gradivo iz dokumentarnega in izločiti slednje. Proces selekcije in izločanja sta v sistemu varovanja dokumentov s ciljem zaštite arhivskega gradiva in njihove predaje pristojnemu arhivu zelo pomembna. Ne glede na to, da obstaja precej ukrepov, ki ščitijo gradivo v nastajanju, je odbiranje zelo kompleksna in odgovorna naloga Arhivskega svetovalnega odbora, ki mora preprečiti morebitno uničevanje gradiva. Avtorica v prispevku opisuje pomen in postopek odbiranja arhivskega in izločanja dokumentarnega gradiva, ki se izvaja pod nadzorstvom Zgodovinskega arhiva Sarajevo.

Ključne besede:

odbiranje, izločanje, arhivsko gradivo, dokumentarno gradivo, Arhivski svetovalni odbor

1. Introduction

Organized care for archival records¹ in Bosnia and Herzegovina began only after the Second World War when the first archival network was established and when the first regulations controlled this sector. Nevertheless, the legal acts issued after the war did not regulate the question of archival records. *"A great number of normative acts issued between 1945 and 1952 are an indicator of their disrespect in practice since in this period massive destruction of archival records materials was noted, especially those of the organs which were canceled, connected or disconnected in reorganization of the public sector."* (Eraković, 2013, 84). Besides destroying archival records because of negligence and lack of knowledge due to a low educational level and the ignorance of their significance, archival records were destroyed because of the lack of space for preserving them. Furthermore, due to a lack of paper, archival records were used as a raw material for the paper industry. Often the destruction of records occurred due to ideological and not only practical reasons.²

Even though great progress has been made in care for archival records, the conscience about its significance has not yet been developed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are still cases of negligence of records and their deliberate or accidental destruction, so the *"irresponsibility, absence of culture and tradition of preserving cultural values – especially of the archives; arrogance, ignorance, and primitivism are all prominent forms of treating historical sources."* (Stanković, Dimić, 1996, 170).

2. Archives advisory board

The connection of the creators to the Archives is vital in preserving archival records and this is why the organized protection of archival records has been developed³. In 1962, Archives of Bosnia-Herzegovina Act⁴ provided for supervision of preserving archival records and records in institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the following years, the majority of archives in Bosnia and Herzegovina founded Supervision Services as a form of organized protection of archival records.

The Archives Advisory Board is a special section working on complex, professional and responsible tasks of supervision of the archival and current records outside the archives. These tasks are measures ensuring the permanent preservation of archival records. The archivists of the Archives Advisory Board care for the materials from the moment of their creation until their transfer to the Archives. Thus, they make sure that the Archives keeps the materials of historical importance. The final goal of all activities of the Board is the transfer of the arranged, classified, listed and technically equipped archival records into the Archives after a certain period of time.⁵

¹ Before the organized care, archival records were being destroyed for centuries on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (see: Bogićević, 1951, 15-20).

² For more details see Dimić, 1994, 301-305; Eraković, 2013, 78.

³ The first contacts of archives and records managements in BiH were achieved in 1957 in which the archives in Sarajevo, Mostar and Tuzla were engaged. They provided a superficial insight into the state of materials in records managements. The action taken in 1961, as a form of a seminar, covered the whole territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and this is when the permanent contact of archives with records managements has been established (Divčić, 1976, 42-43).

⁴ In Article 2 of the Law (Official Gazette of NR BiH, No. 14/62).

⁵ According to the Article 22 of the Act on Archival Activity (Official Gazette CS, No. 50/16), archival records are transferred to the Archives no later than 30 years from their creation (Official Gazette CS, No. 50/16).

Supervision is a complex work, which implies a direct supervision of archival records along with protection measures, selection of records, disposal of current records where retention periods have expired, advisory service while creating the List of categories, collecting the prescribed files, primarily the Archive's book and files, training the creators and owners of archival records, etc. All this is done with the purpose of transferring the arranged archival records to the Archives. Furthermore, it implies knowing the legal regulations for various activities. The difficulty in doing this job in a quality manner is the fact that a number of creators/owners do not give importance to archival records and have a badly arranged office work, which is most often with the creators from the economic sector. A direct consequence of this situation is improper protection of the archives in the process of creation.⁶

3. Selection and disposal

One of the most significant activities of the Archives Advisory Board is supervising the selection and disposal of records. By selection, we mean choosing parts of current records that have the quality of archival records for their permanent preservation. Disposal⁷ of current records is a procedure of separating the materials whose retention periods have expired, for its destruction.

The paper work complexity of the contemporary society resulted in the creation of a great number of documents. All the creators/owners produce records of a different value on a daily basis. A great number of records and their daily increase indicate the importance of selection of archival records. For not all materials that are being created are archival records, but only a part of it. The materials are created and preserved for operational reasons, while their operational, and this means practical value, declines over time. All records created for operational reasons by one creator are potential archival records, until they undergo a selection.

Selection of archival records is a complex process and it is primarily focused on determining which records have a historical value for one organization, institution, establishment, for an individual or for the society as a whole. Records considered a cultural good and necessary for studying the past are being selected. By definition, archival records are original and reproduced current records important for culture, science, education and other needs of society, created in a work of a creator and an owner of the current records. However, to preserve only the materials that by definition match the archival records, it is necessary that a creator/owner meets the obligations as well as the procedures of both the selection of archival records and the disposal of current records, as prescribed by legal acts.⁸ Legal provisions prescribe obligations of a creator to make a selection, the selection procedure, and the disposal procedure, etc. In order to properly select archival records, it is necessary to be acquainted with selection criteria. There are several selection criteria, and in both theory and practice, general selection criteria, accepted throughout the world, are accepted in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. Some of the basic criteria are the time of document creation,

⁶ There are instances where during the supervision (the first examination) it is determined that not even the very creators know where the materials are, because the materials have not been documented or classified.

⁷ Disposal is also known as destruction.

⁸ Article 15 of the Act on Archival Activity (Official Gazette of the Canton Sarajevo, No. 50/16); articles 10-16 of Decree on organization and manner of conduct of the filing (archive-related) tasks in the administrative bodies in the services for administration in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Official Gazette of FBiH, No. 22/03); art. 11-17 of Decree on organization and manner of execution of the filing (archives) tasks in the legal entities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

content, the significance of the fonds creation, the repetition of the information from the content, doublet nature of the materials and the preservation degree of the current records. The criterion of the content is the most complicated, most complex and most important.

Appraisal and selection are done by the creators themselves under the supervision of the archivists of the Advisory Board. The appraisal and the selection of the archival records that will be permanently preserved are the most responsible part of archiving, because this selection determines which materials will remain for the future generations and be available for a research. Appraisal is done in a manner that the content of one document may serve as either a piece of evidence or as a source for research. The selection of materials of a constant value is the first responsibility of the archivists and their role hereby lies in the role of an appraiser. The problem of appraisal becomes more complicated with the development of administrative technology enabling the preservation of archival records on various supports. During the selection of materials, one must rule out the influence of subjective elements.

Besides the criteria aforementioned, used in appraisal of materials, there are some other means of aids. Regulations are protecting materials made in a certain time period and on which separation and destruction are not performed. *“As for the records created before 1878 and those created between 1941 and 1945, as well as those between 1992 and 1995, neither the selection nor destruction has been performed.”*⁹

The list of categories of current records represents a sort of means of aid in appraisal, selection and disposal of the materials. Each creator is obliged to make the list and obtain the written consent of the competent archives. The list shows an organized scheme of the creator, the categories and retention periods of records. Retention periods are suggested by the creator and approved by the Archives. The creation of the list is made complicated by the fact that there are no approximate lists of categories,¹⁰ which would ensure an easier creation of the List for the very creators. Nor there is a Rulebook about appraisal and selection of archival records. Only by the article 58 of the new law, it has been proposed to make this regulation and its production is in progress.

Laws and bylaws for certain sectors do not cover archival records. The exceptions are: the Accounting and Auditing Law in FBiH (Official Gazette BiH, No. 63/09), the Law on Health Data Records (Official Gazette of the FBiH, No. 37/12), Rulebook of form and content of pedagogical documentation and records in primary school (Official Gazette, No. 20/03), Rulebook of form and content of pedagogical documentation and records in high schools (Official Gazette of the Canton Sarajevo, No. 18/98), etc. However, the problem lies in the fact that certain categories of records are being appraised wrongly in

⁹ Article 13, Sub-paragraph 2. Regulations. By these regulations, the materials created during the First World War have not been protected. Neither were they protected by the regulations on records management, selection of records and their transfer to competent archival institution (Official Gazette, SRBiH, No. 35/72; 35/75). From all the regulations who are today in power, the exception are Regulations on preserving archives in The Archives of Bosnia-Herzegovina and preserving current records in institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Official Gazette, No. 10/03), where Article 14 states: “From the records which were created by the end of 1945 and the materials created between 1992 and 1995, during the war in BiH, selection of archival records and the disposal of current records are done only in the Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina.” Furthermore, the Article 12 of the Regulations on selection of archival records from current records (Official Gazette RS, No. 31/00) protects materials created by the end of 1945.

¹⁰ Approximate lists of categories from 1976 are out of date, because by creation of new categories of materials, the earlier lists lose their significance. See: Kancelarijsko poslovanje u svjetlu arhivskih propisa (handbook), Sarajevo, 1976.

accordance with provisions of aforementioned regulations and thus there is a possibility of their destruction.

4. Selection procedure

Having obtained the written consent for the List, the creator selects archival records and disposes of current records where retention periods have expired according to the List of categories. This procedure is conducted only if the materials as a whole have been sorted by years and by their type and listed in the Archive Book, while the transcript is transferred to the Archives.

The list of current records where retention periods have expired, and in accordance with the List of the categories of records with retention periods, needs to contain: the type of records, year of creation, number of record units, classification code from the List, retention period determined by the List, quantity of selected materials expressed in meters and data about the physical condition of the fonds from which the archival records have been selected and the current records disposed.¹¹ The list needs to contain the ordinal number of records from the Archive book suggested for destruction, and not regulated by regulations.

ordinal number	No. of the Archive Book	Classification Code	Type of Materials	Year of creation	Retention period	Quantity
1.	253.	34-2	Decisions on vacation	2014.	2 years	1 folder
2.	279.	34-3	Monthly performance reports	2014.	2 years	1 folder
3.	335.	05-3	Mail Book	2011.	5 years	5 books
4.	336.	05-3	Internal delivery books	2011.	5 years	5 books
5.	557.	14-2	A post orders	2009.	7 years	6 folder

After the archivists of the Advisory Board study the list, and examine the materials in the presence of a commission which made the list, they make the minutes based on which the Archives issues a decision for the destruction of current records. The creator is obliged to permanently keep the entire documentation linked to the procedure of selection and destruction of current records.

Regardless to the legal regulative, some record management offices avoid the selection and disposal of materials. In records management under the supervision of Historical Archives Sarajevo, during the 2015, approximately 2,287 meters were disposed, during 2016 approximately 2,219, and in 2017 around 4,169 meters.

¹¹ Article 13 of Decree on organization and manner of conduct of the filing (archive-related) tasks in the administrative bodies in the services for administration in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Article 14 of Decree on organization and manner of execution of the filing (archives) tasks in the legal entities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

5. Conclusion

In an overproduction of documents, selection and disposal of records have an extraordinary significance. These are processes that enable preserving only archival records of permanent value, while records where retention periods expire are being disposed. These processes are useful, because there is neither practical nor scientific need for preserving all records. Appraisal of archival records is without doubt one of the most important and most sensitive problems that the archival service faces, since the fate of primary sources depends on proper selection. What has been disposed once, cannot be saved, thus wrong disposal would be the same as deliberate archives destruction.

Selection and disposal of materials help in easier processing of archival records in the very archives. A small amount of selected records of permanent value significantly decreases costs of keeping it, for preserving information in physical formats such as paper is very expensive to keep it in an archival institution. Furthermore, records that do not need selection are easier to process in the archives. The selected materials facilitate research for the scientific or civil legal purposes.

POVZETEK

POMEN ODBIRANJA ARHIVSKEGA GRADIVA IN IZLOČANJA DOKUMENTARNEGA GRADIVA

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Pri prekomerni produkciji dokumentov imata odbiranje in izločanje zelo pomembno vlogo. Ta procesa omogočata ohranjanje arhivskega gradiva, ki ima trajno vrednost, in izločanje dokumentacije, ki so ji potekli zakoniti roki hrambe. Ti procesi so uporabni zato, ker ne obstaja niti praktična niti znanstvena potreba po ohranitvi vseh zapisov. Vrednotenje arhivskega gradiva je brez dvoma ena najpomembnejših in najbolj občutljivih nalog, s katerimi se ukvarja arhivska služba, saj je ohranitev primarnih virov odvisna od ustreznega odbiranja. Napačno izločanje dokumentacije bi bilo enako načrtnemu uničevanju arhivskega gradiva.

Odbiranje in izločanje dokumentacije je pomembno tudi pri strokovni obdelavi gradiva v arhivu. Manjša količina arhivskega gradiva močno zmanjša ceno njegove hrambe, saj je ta precej draga, še posebej če hranimo tudi dele dokumentarnega gradiva. Pravilno odbrano arhivsko gradivo omogoča tudi lažje popisovanje ter lažjo uporabo.

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