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The climate of changes in educating archivists

– Electronic Document Laboratory

Introduction

Technical development provokes a reflection over the curriculum of the archive studies. It appears that the range of topics covered by the courses so far does not thoroughly prepare students for their professional life. In recent years in Poland administration and archives have gone through many crucial changes, including computerization, which motivates educational institutions to update their curricula. J. Krochmal's (1997-2007) and A. Sobczak's (June-December 2011) research has shown that academic centers in Poland provide outdated educational offers for future archivists and little attention is being paid to educating in the field of electronic document management and digitalization, not to mention other issues, such as archiving of Internet content and databases collecting important data, not covered by the universities at all.

In the mid-90s two obligatory databases were introduced in the State Archives in Poland. They collect data concerning archival material. Currently, new software is being tested. Its aim is to merge data from the previous databases and facilitate collection of data in the future. The first websites of archives and internet services for archivists can be dated back to the late 90s. Similarly, digitalization became the matter of interest for particular archives in the last decade of the 20th century. Mass and coordinated digitalization came into public discourse only after the National Digital Archives was opened in 2008. It became a competence center for other archives coordinating the digitalization of cultural heritage nationwide. The latest topic most recently discussed by archivists is an electronic document. In 2005 the act on informatization of public administration came into force. In the following years pilot digital archives were created to collect documents issued by electronic administration and to archive the Internet content, storing copies of websites of institutions and public entities important for the country such as the President of the Republic of Poland and governmental departments. Together with creating the National Digital Archives the processes of mass informatization and digitalization of archival heritage have also begun. The

state archives use means for modernization of IT infrastructure and for digitalization projects of chosen archival materials more often. The Head Office of the State Archives also tries to participate in works on regulations concerning electronic document, metadata, data carriers and the office order to comply with the existing archival law.

Challenges

Not only other universities but also the Institute of History and International Relations of the University of Szczecin faces the challenge of adjusting its educational offer to the needs pointed out by archivists (professionals, graduates), public administration employees and representatives of businesses, all dealing with digitalization and tools facilitating IT management of public administration. Such process will enable to educate staff to the level at which they meet the requirements of the labor market. It is worth mentioning that the IT as well as related sectors have recently been through most dynamic changes. This enforces constant changes in the educational process as well as adjustment of obtaining skills, in accordance with the concept of lifelong learning promoted by the European Union.

In 2010 the Archival Education Section of the Association of Polish Archivists¹ developed the model of educating archivists at three levels of higher education, in compliance with the Bologna system (bachelor, master of arts, doctor):

- *“basic, including basic competences in the field of document management and archival science, enabling graduates to undertake job in offices, corporate archives of any kind of institutions and historical archives to perform simple tasks. (...) – bachelor*
- *specialist, including complex (expert, specialized) competences of the manager of documentation and archive personnel of any kind; (...) master of arts*
- *scholar, including qualifications to conduct researches in archival science field and documentation management, (...)”² – doctor.*

At some points of their work the authors have emphasized the issues concerning information management and IT in the broad sense³. According to them, future archivists from the very beginning of the education process will become acquainted with the following issues:

¹ W. Chorążyczewski, W. Kwiatkowska, *Sylwetka i kompetencje absolwenta studiów archiwistyki i zarządzania dokumentacją*, „Problemy archiwistyki” 2/2009, pp. 4-11, http://www.archiwa.gov.pl/images/stories/Wydawnictwa/Problemy2_2.pdf, accessed 22.06.2011.

² Cited before, p. 5.

³ IT includes ICT devices, software and information, but in IT society times it is considered separately due to their essential value.

- modern IT and communicative technologies:
 - administering the information in IT networks
 - construction of websites
 - creation and administration of databases
- document management inside the institution:
 - operating IT systems that automatize the life cycle of documents
 - creation, management and storage of electronic documentation
 - applying standards of metadata of documents
- digitalization of archival materials
- sharing records online

Moreover, the authors have suggested that students will have the possibility to choose from different specializations, enabling them to be educated in the following fields: traditional documentation including the 20th century, information management, education and promotion of archives, collecting policies, description, electronic documentation, IT systems and management of archival institutions⁴. This list can be supplemented by additional specializations, directed more on IT, such as long-term preservation of digital archives. However, here appears a question: is there a point in creating narrow specializations? Perhaps it is better to educate all students in the possibly broadest area of practical and research problems? Although limited curricula only allow to outline them. Therefore students most interested in the topic are left to self-study those problems or to participate in very narrow specialized courses, post-graduate studies or various trainings that are very often offered by many national and foreign institutions or competence centers recently.

As a consequence of the current situation, the new type of archivist, namely a digital archivist is recently promoted in Poland, i.e. by the National Digital Archives. This type will focus on issues such as: electronic databases, Internet, digitalization and electronic document.

Educating archivists in the Institute of History and International Relations of the University of Szczecin

The Institute offers first and second degree courses in international relations and first to third degree courses in history⁵. Specialization in archive studies is introduced only in bachelor history course and involves two years, that is 390 contact hours. Both courses can

⁴ W. Chorążyczewski, W. Kwiatkowska, *Sylwetka...*, pp. 5-11.

⁵ The following degrees are assigned: bachelor, master and doctor.

also be studied extra-mural. In the case of specialization in archive studies a post-graduate course is offered and it involves 270 contact hours⁶, which enables students who already have a degree in other discipline to obtain additional archival qualification.

Previous model of a graduate

During the course students have the possibility to obtain theoretical knowledge and practical skills involving basic classical archival science such as: introduction to archive studies and archival science, office systems in Poland, history of administrative system, Latin paleography, gothic neographics, IT for archivists, management of present-day documentation, archival theory, elements of archive law and archival methodology. Classes are conducted in the form of practice sessions and lectures, together in the amount of 390 contact hours divided into 4 semesters (2nd-3rd year of bachelor studies). Moreover, students are obliged to complete two traineeships in various archives, each lasting four weeks. The knowledge obtained during the course matches perfectly the professional profile of the archivist at the State Archives, who manages the traditionally stored historical records⁷.

New model of a graduate

Due to modernization of the curriculum offer of archive studies presented to students the new model of graduate will be educated. Except for the knowledge of classic archival science and preservation of the historical records, she or he will be able to face the newest challenges concerning informatization of public administration as well as private companies and collecting records, both present-day and historical. During the course students will become acquainted with issues concerning functioning of electronic office of public and business administration as well as digital corporate and historical archives. Those new skills will enable them to undertake work in new fields where electronic document is being used.

Graduates' work places

Traditionally, history graduates, specializing in archive studies undertake work in: state, university or corporate⁸ archives and institutes of remembrance. Some of them find

⁶ The same courses but less contact hours.

⁷ State archives will begin to take over electronic documentation in 2017 according to: *Rozmowa z Wojciechem Woźniakiem zastępcą dyrektora NAC*, w: *Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe. Wizja. Projekt. Ludzie*, Warsaw 2010, pp. 147-151, http://nac.gov.pl/files/NAC_wizja_projekt_ludzie_WWW.pdf, accessed 21.07.2012.

⁸ State enterprises' archives

employment in related institutions such as libraries, museums and public administration. However, IT companies producing solutions for public administration and those dealing with managing, storing and digitalizing documentation recently started to seek such alumni, too.

Description of the project

The aim of the project is to:

- establish an Electronic Document Laboratory
- tighten the cooperation with entities creating newest software managing electronic document (business, public administration, NGOs)
- improve the standards of archival education based on the newest technological solutions in the area of electronic document management
- indicate new research and development areas for ICT industry.

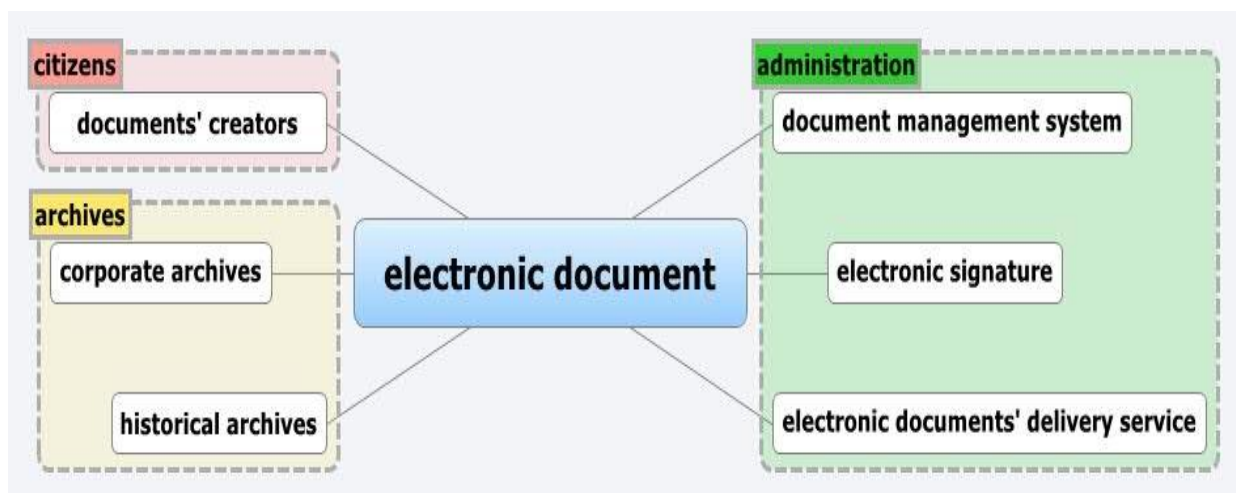


Image 1, Electronic document and its surrounding, author's own work.

The project will consist of two phases: establishment of the Electronic Document Laboratory and then using it for educational purposes, mainly education of modern archives staff.

Phase I - establishment of the Electronic Document Laboratory

The main aim of this phase will be to establish the Electronic Document Laboratory, which will be the simulator of life cycle of an electronic document, covering the following modules:

- electronic documents' delivery service: module receiving electronic application from the client:

- website with electronic application forms to be completed and sent to the office by the client or printed and delivered in a traditional way
- legal status: allows the client to view current status of the case
- possibility of adding new application forms
- acceptance of document which is sent afterwards to DMS (Document Management System)
- issuing the Acceptance of Receipt
- issuing the Acceptance of Return Receipt
- electronic signature: enables to authenticate and verify identity of the creator of the document sent to or from the office:
 - for the educational purpose a non-qualified signature will be assigned to the workplace so that more than one student could use it
- DMS: enables to manage life cycle of an electronic document:
 - case registration on the basis of an electronic or a traditional document (possibility of massive scanning documents to inbox)
 - an electronic signature service
 - creation of an internal and an external document
 - life cycle of the document in modeled processes with the possibility to modify it independently
 - option to observe particular stages of the case in process
 - sending off documents to corporate archives
 - staff management (assignment of authorizations, timesheet and tasks control)
 - possibility to edit the Itemized File List independently
 - communication among employees and citizens with an electronic documents' delivery service
- digital corporate archives: warehouse in which electronic documents will be stored until they are directed to historical ones (it is applied in case of documents with historical value)
 - generating delivery list
 - generating archival package (documents and their metadata, cases' metadata)
 - possibility of repeated qualification of documents by A category (archival material) and B category (disposal material)

- digital historical archives: stores and shares electronic historical archive and has direct contact with corporate ones. The process of providing documentation to technical archives via historical archive: corporate archivist generates a delivery list and sends it to historical archives and, when accepted, the control amount of archival package is being sent first to the technical archives and then the whole package is being delivered. The next stage is quarantine and after this phase archived documents are stored in the archives where they can be accessed at once or only stored without the consent to be accessed according to law regulations:
 - acceptance or rejection of delivery list
 - acceptance of archive package
 - quarantine
 - accessing documents according to the users' authorization rights (reading documents, downloading copies) who are the clients of historical archives: users can create their accounts and after being accepted and verified by the institution the account is activated.

Combination of these modules would enable work in closed environment stimulating the document's life cycle from its creation by the client or the authority's office to its long-term preservation in historical archives.

Costs incurred by the Institute of History and International Relations of the University of Szczecin:

- application for the grant to cover this part of the project, which would be used for educational and commercial purposes and to improve the quality of IT- infrastructure of the IT laboratory
- infrastructure: IT laboratory (new computers, network server, other equipment necessary to carry out the project – scanners, electronic signatures with hardware)
- staff: lecturers, IT specialists, consultants

Value added for the Institute of History and International Relations of the University of Szczecin:

- establishing cooperation with the manufacturer/owner of the software
- obtaining the real picture of educational requirements to meet the economic needs in the field of electronic government

- modernizing the course offer with professional ICT solutions allowing to organize post-graduate studies and other forms of extra-mural education as well as courses and trainings
- creating a unique educational project in the field of archive studies and administration in cooperation with external partners
- obtaining grant for innovative development of IT equipment
- possibility to educate in the field of electronic document management
- opportunity to develop educational offer with new areas and fields such as electronic government and business
- making the educational offer for archivists more attractive
- enabling to conduct research and other projects in new academic areas and fields such as long-term preservation of electronic document

Phase II – the use of the Electronic Document Laboratory

The main aim of this phase will be to make the best use of the purchased equipment by organizing studies, extra-mural and post-graduate studies, courses and trainings, conferences, symposiums, workshops and conducting researches assigned by business or public sector.

Costs incurred by the Institute of History and International Relations of the University of Szczecin:

- substantial and logistical organization of post-graduate studies, conferences, courses
- IT infrastructure
- staff: academic and training personnel

Values added for the Institute of History and International Relations of the University of Szczecin:

- attracting the new groups of students and new employees
- creating innovative environment
- gaining financial profits from fees for commercial educational offer, conferences, symposiums, workshops etc.

Summary

Recently, different strategies (EU, national, regional) as well as professional conferences have emphasized how important it is to build a society on the basis of knowledge and innovations. This statement justifies the need to introduce the latest technologies to the archivists' curriculum, whether as professional specialization obtained during their studies or post-graduate education, and also broadening their knowledge during additional courses. Most important values added are listed below. They will be achieved when the project is completed:

- education of qualified archivists who are qualified in:
 - modern models of offices of administration and business
 - electronic document's life cycle including creation, circulation in the authority/company and storage in corporate and historical archives (this applies only to the national archival records)
 - ergonomics of work, automation of processes and saving costs of the company's/office's functioning due to the use of DMS
 - security and authorization of data generated electronically
 - efficient information transfer in the authority/company and in contacts with clients due to the use of IT technology
 - standardization of services provided by the authority/company
 - connecting life cycle of an electronic document with a paper document (concerns incoming documents into the office)
- new image of archivist as modern records manager
- increase in competitiveness of archive studies offered by the Institute of History and International Relations of the University of Szczecin at the national university market – still nowhere in Poland such simulator of electronic document has been set up for educating students
- the offer of modern studies and other forms of education based on the Electronic Document Laboratory will enable archives' and administration staff to broaden their knowledge and skills.
- education devoted to electronic document will support breaking down psychological barriers connected with wrong conviction of fragility of digital world.

- shaping the cooperation: academy – public administration, academy – business: common projects, research and developing the model of the student in request, etc.⁹
- adjustment of the curriculum to the informatization of the state with the possibility of conducting practical classes in the environment stimulating life cycle of electronic document.
- obtaining the grant from European Union funds will improve not only the image of the University of Szczecin but also other universities in Szczecin, since EU funds are used narrowly here, as it is reported by the city development strategy¹⁰
- the infrastructure of the Electronic Document Laboratory will facilitate research over electronic document, data security, DMS and digital archives.

Well qualified government and archives staff will have positive influence on acceleration of state informatization. Graduates, thanks to basic knowledge, will be able to get used to electronic work environment in everyday work quicker, regardless of where they undertake it.

Students at faculties classified as humanistic, at the beginning of their professional career are in difficult situation because the labor market is not able to absorb them all. It is commonly known that humanists face biggest problems in finding work. In the face of high unemployment it is not easy to retrain and very often they accept jobs below their qualifications, such as those in shops or super markets. That is why it is worth investing in development of educational infrastructure of university in IT field in order to provide future students with additional skills¹¹.

For the time being the project is in the initial evaluation stage involving seeking funds for employing new staff and acquisition of IT solutions. During the summer semester 2011/2012 students have been given the opportunity to take advantage of the classes on public administration and get experience in a real electronic document management system made available by an IT company from Szczecin.

⁹ For the universities which hardly cooperate with public administration and business it is essential, see more: *Szczecin dla Ciebie. Aktualizacja Strategii Rozwoju Szczecina. Diagnoza społeczno-gospodarcza Szczecina, maj 2011*, pp. 103-104, http://www.strategia-szczecin.pl/images/stories/diagnoza%20pdf/Diagnoza_SG_010710.pdf, accessed 03.07.2011.

¹⁰ Cited before, p. 14

¹¹ *Kwartalna informacja o rynku pracy z 25.05.2011*, pp. 9-10, http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/PUBL_pw_kwartalna_inf_o_ryнку_pracy_1k_2011.pdf (22.06.2011).