

## SHARING ARCHIVES

### *A Common Archival Terminology as an Essential Requirement for the Communication from and in the Archives*

**Antonio Monteduro\***

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**Antonio Monteduro:** *Skupna arhivska terminologija kot nujna zahteva za komunikacijo z in med arhivi. Tehnični in vsebinski problemi klasičnega in elektronskega arhiviranja, Zbornik referatov z dopolnilnega izobraževanja, Maribor 8/2009, str. 93–96.*

*Izvirnik v angleščini, izvleček v slovenščini in angleščini, povzetek v slovenščini.*

Avtor v prispevku razmišlja o osrednji in osnovni vlogi pravilnega arhivskega jezika kot nujne predpostavke za izmenjavo informacij in znanj na arhivskem področju tako na strokovnem nivoju kot s končnimi uporabniki. Ta predstavlja tudi steber tehnološke izmenjave med državami, ki imajo različne arhivske tradicije. Prav tako izpostavi vlogo arhivskih srečanj kot enega izmed dejavnikov za vzpostavljanje mednarodnih odnosov.

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**Antonio Monteduro:** *Sharing Archives - A Common Archival Terminology as an Essential Requirement for the Communication from and in the Archives. Technical and Field Related Problems of Traditional and Electronic Archiving. Conference Proceedings, Maribor 8/2009, pp. 93–96.*

*Original in English, abstract in Slovenian and English, summary in Slovenian.*

The author ponders the central and fundamental role of the correctness of the archival language as an essential requirement for sharing information and know-how in the archival field, both at a professional level and with the end users, and as a pillar of the technological exchange between countries having different archival traditions. The role of archival events as a possible driving force for international relations is also discussed.

*Ključne besede: tehnični jezik, slovar, komunikacija, dostop, mednarodni odnosi.*

In the present historical context, and especially in the technical-scientific field of archives and archival science, always developing from both a conceptual and practical point of view, uniformity of language and contents is needed at an international level, to achieve a greater and more profitable preservation of the historical, cultural and juridical heritage. From this point of view, the unambiguous identification of the concepts used during the daily activities is vital, in order to defend this heritage, and obtain a perfect coincidence of meaning in the various languages of the countries currently dealing with these problems, and of those having to deal with it in the near future.

The correctness of communication turns out to be fundamental in order to share experiences, works, results, researches, and suggestions. Where the problems to be discussed are expressed in an unambiguous way from the linguistic point of view, the mutual exchange is made in a profitable and exhaustive way, and the general enrichment is assured.

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In order to ensure a proper management of the archival heritage, and to avoid the risk of dispersal, or, worse than ever, a definitive and irreparable loss, it is very important reaching a standardized language (not by force of circumstances a trivialization) of the technical-scientific language regarding archival science. In such a manner, professionals, private and public archival administrations, and users, will be supplied with instruments of clear communication, in order to establish a common language fostering the best integration and exchange of unequivocal data.

The fundamental requirement to see this process positively out is the existence of a shared and standardized language, a language to link uninterruptedly a linguistic world to another with an immediate cross-reference, i.e. without getting through a third language. Hence, the production at an international level of a set of linguistic tools to let a literal translation of a concept from one language to another; a production which, up to the present day, has been showing however (in my humbly opinion) two fundamental problems.

The first problem is given by the few number of different linguistic worlds in the existing dictionaries of archival terminology: one can find the usual bilingual dictionary, or dictionary translating the archival terminology into five or six languages at most, languages which usually are the most spoken ones in the western world, i.e. English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish (this is the case of the two most recent issues - 1988 and 2007 - of the very helpful Dictionary of Archival Terminology by the International Council on Archives).

Such issues, even though of the highest level from the scientific point of view, cut out from sharing concepts that should be universally standardized linguistic worlds crucially important both from a scientific and a cultural point of view. This limit has been fully highlighted by the recent European historical events that took place at the end of last century; it is only at the present day that many of those countries begin to face the challenge the problems arising in the modern archival science, and the mutual help is more and more troublesome because of the lack of a common language and a common way to express the same scientific concept, and the difficulties are also heightened by the existing juridical and administrative differences

Another trouble seems to be the fact that the linguistic tools are frequently non one-to-one based, which means that in many cases one single entry of a language is not translated into another language by a single word, but by a circumlocution, so that the translation must be done via a third language complicating and misleading the whole process.

From these remarks, the need of supplying the professionals and the users of the archives with a working tool as ductile as possible, standardized, concise but in the meantime likely to a further enrichment, a tool to keep abreast of the times and the changing of the archival terminology according to the developing of the archival technique and science.

The target of an up-to-date conceived dictionary should be first of all linking every single item of a language to a single and only item of another, in order to supply the users with an immediate cross-reference and to identify the concepts with the best accuracy. The problems arising from such a work are obviously very complicated. Moreover, the authors' commitment should also be the addition of all the words and neologisms that should stand up as unambiguous in the field of archival science, so to preserve the characteristics of such a working tool, characteristics of communication and cultural growth.

Such a dictionary of archival terminology should not be, in fact, an unchanging work, but a kind of work-in-progress, a continued improvement and updating on the basis of the linguistic evolution; a working tool in the fields of archival science and digital documentation management always ready to act not only its main technical and scientific function, but also to serve as a meeting and sharing point of cultural cooperation between different geopolitical realities.

At the end, the efforts will really be worth while, not only because of the scientific aspect of the work, even though extremely important since giving the possibility of a very stimulating sharing of ideas and opinions, but because of the contemporary presence of the most different working experiences and ways of thinking.

Moreover, the favorable effects of such a work will not be restricted to the professionals only, but will also benefit the users too; at the very moment in which a linguistic standardization is successful at an international level, the research and the usability of the archival fonds is made easier too, the characteristics of the web sites hosting archival material are commonly used, and in this way the users can manage their researches by themselves. And, above all, the access to data is guaranteed, while on the contrary a linguistic chaos is a further obstacle for getting the information required.

In such an editorial work there is also another aspect of primary importance, which is the one relating to the possibility of capitalizing the mutual acquaintances weaved together during the work into a full-blown international relationship, particularly when this work is a recurring event, serial and repeated in time, and if possible with the same group of participants.

The repetitiveness of such an experience inevitably creates a kind of unusual but nonetheless welcomed by-product: with the passing of time, the participants in the editorial work will stand as a full-blown international archival network, a team of scholars and professionals in the field that will go on interact with themselves.

And this is how the organization and implementation of an international event in the field of archives can turn into a net of international relationships, particularly when these personal relationships on their turn develop themselves into a dialogue and a close cooperation between the institutions represented by these professionals.

It is really to be hoped that, in the historical moment we are living in when globalization is making us all citizens of the whole world that more and more events and projects can sprout and be carried out at the level of a full-blown cooperation resulting from international relationships.

## POVZETEK

### **SKUPNA ARHIVSKA TERMINOLOGIJA KOT NUJNA PREDPOSTAVKA ZA KOMUNIKACIJO Z ARHIVI IN MED NJIMI**

Na tehnično-znanstvenem področju arhivov in arhivistike, ki se vedno razvija tako v konceptualnem kot v praktičnem pogledu, je poenotenost jezika in vsebin na mednarodnem nivoju potrebna za doseganje boljšega ohranjanja zgodovinske, kulturne in pravne dediščine. Pravilnost komunikacije je osnova za izmenjavo izkušenj, dela, rezultatov, raziskav in predlogov.

Zelo pomembno je doseči standardiziran jezik (ne le trivializacije pod pritiskom okoliščin) tehnično-znanstvenega področja arhivistike. Na tak način bi strokovnjaki, zasebni in javni delavci, ki delajo z arhivskih gradivom, in uporabniki imeli sredstvo za jasno komunikacijo.

Razvoj jezikovnih orodij, ki bi omogočala dobeseden prevod pojmov iz enega jezika v drugi na mednarodnem nivoju, je do danes pokazal dve osnovni težavi: prva težava je malo število različnih besed v obstoječih slovarjih arhivske terminologije, druga pa je dejstvo, da jezikovna orodja niso naravnana ena proti ena, kar pomeni, da v mnogih primerih enega pojma ne moremo prevesti v drug jezik samo z eno besedo. Tako obstaja zahteva strokovnjakov in uporabnikov po delovnem orodju, ki bi bil kar se da elastičen, standardiziran in jedrnat in bi ga bilo hkrati tudi mogoče dopolnjevati.

Pozitivni učinki takšnega dela ne bodo omejeni le na strokovnjake, s tem bodo pridobili tudi uporabniki; takoj ko bo jezikovna standardizacija uspešna na mednarodnem nivoju, bo lažje tudi raziskovanje in uporaba arhivskih fondov. Spletne strani arhivov se pogosto uporabljajo in na ta način bi lahko uporabniki sami raziskovali. Prav tako je zagotovljen dostop do podatkov, medtem ko jezikovni nered predstavlja dodatno oviro pri pridobivanju potrebnih informacij.

Pri takšnem uredniškem delu se pojavi še pomemben vidik, ki se nanaša na možnost povečevanja medsebojnih poznanstev, katera se med delom razširijo v obširne mednarodne odnose, še posebej, če se delo ponavlja in vključuje isto skupino sodelujočih. Osebni odnosi se tako razvijejo v dialog in sodelovanje institucij, ki jih ti strokovnjaki predstavljajo.