

UDK (UDC): 930.25:37

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ARCHIVIST: WHICH TRAINING?

Izvleček:

Arhivist: katero izobraževanje?

Katero izobrazbo potrebuje danes arhivist za opravljanje svojega dela? Raznolikost dokumentov - od pergamenta do digitalnih oblik - ter mednarodni standardi zahtevajo od arhivistov ne samo dosledno in dobro strukturirano znanstveno izobraževanje, temveč tudi nenehno izpopolnjevanje. Izobraževanje v Italiji je razdeljeno na dvonivojske univerzitetne študije, magistrske študije, v nekaterih državnih arhivih pa so organizirane tudi šole arhivskih znanosti, paleografije in diplomatike ter krajši izpopolnjevalni tečaji na aktualne teme. Ker so tečaji pogosto dopolnilnega značaja, je včasih med njimi težko izbirati, vendar je za dosego cilja pomembno izbrati pravega.

Ključne besede:

izobraževanje, arhivistika, šole arhivskih znanosti, paleografije in diplomatike.

Abstract:

Archivist: Which Training?

Which training is nowadays needed for archivists? The diversification of documents, from parchment to digital, and the international standard both ask from the archivists not only a rigorous and well structured scientific training but also a never ending updating. The Italian educational training is divided in first and second level university courses, master courses and in some State Archives also the Schools of Archival Sciences, Paleography and Diplomatics and short updating courses on specific and very up-to-date topics. Since these training courses are often more complementary than alternative, it is not always easy orientating between them, but the fundamental thing is making the right choice depending on the goal to be reached.

Key words:

education, archival science, Schools of Archival Sciences, Paleography and Diplomatics.

It is not easy examining and contextualizing the figure and the professionalism of archivists struggling with an archival science that they themselves help evolve and with users becoming increasingly interested in contemporary sources.

Which professionalism do we ask archivists for today, to be able to tackle the continuous new scientific frontiers and challenges posed by the growth of sources and evolving technologies? I would say that if archival science is evolving, and it is indeed, to meet these needs we must remember that the archivist her/himself is the one that makes this evolution.

So, we all know the strict definition of the major representatives of the archival science, they still are proposed for careful consideration to the students of the Schools of Archival Sciences and University courses, but I would rather spend some time looking at the archival science from another perspective. The question is

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old, but still applies: Does archival science have a real self-recognized professional dignity of a great cultural level? Or do we always have to be considered subordinate to other disciplines, such as history or computer science?

Certainly, if the archivists want to cover the central role that they are entitled, they must commit themselves to "studying", to investing in themselves by using time and effort in a continuous training process that is never satisfied with what was accomplished, but keeps them ready to get in the game every day, being ready to ride the wave of what is happening with archival science, to with competence and credibility face the emerging issues in the forefront, with a power somehow of prophecy about the risks that can hide in the new technological developments.

The diversification of documents, from parchment to digital, and the introduction of international standards requires rigorous but most of all nonstop scientific training for archivists.

The Italian educational offer in this field is rich and diversified: first and second level university courses, Master's courses, but also Schools of Archival Sciences, Paleography and Diplomatics, attached to the State Archives, and also short courses to update on issues of particular relevance. However, given that such deals are often more complementary than alternative, to be guided in these different pathways is not always easy, but it is essential to making the right choices according to the goals to be achieved.

Universities and Schools of Archival Sciences in Italy: comparing two training courses

The Schools of Archival Sciences, Paleography and Diplomatics and the University degree courses on cultural heritage conservation, offer very different programs and philosophies, and therefore also the training that follows is significantly different.

Before comparing the two institutions, I think it would be useful to illustrate the organization and training.

1. The **SCHOOLS OF ARCHIVAL SCIENCES, PALEOGRAPHY AND DIPLOMATICS** are training specialist organizations held by some State Archives, within the Italian Ministry of Cultural Assets and Activities.

The Presidential Decree, September 30, 1963, n. 1049 (item 14), established 17 schools, located in Turin, Milan, Mantua, Venice, Bolzano, Trieste, Genoa, Parma, Modena, Bologna, Florence, Perugia, Rome, Naples, Bari, Palermo, Cagliari.

These Schools are somehow unique, since they are at university level, state administrated, free of charge and not reserved only to the personnel from the Administration. The duration of the courses is biennial. Schools can enroll those who are in possession of a high school diploma, but admission to first year is contingent upon passing a test of the Latin language and the first 50 candidates on the list made after the execution of selective testing are admitted to the course.

The teaching materials are archival sciences, paleography and diplomatics and some ancillary disciplines such as metrology, numismatics, and heraldry. Recently diplomatics of the contemporary document and computer science applied to archives were also included. Practical exercises are also organized for each of the disciplines. Attendance is mandatory and those who do not attend at least 5/6 of the hours required for each course can not join the second year. The final examination for the two-year course covers the disciplines mentioned above, and consists of two written tests; the first providing a palaeographic transcription with diplomatic commentary of a late medieval document, and the other a short essay on archival sciences. There is also an oral examination. Exams are held in a single appeal. Participants who pass the final exam are awarded with a diploma in Archival Sciences, Paleography and Diplomatics.

The diploma is equivalent to those issued by the Special School for Archivists and Librarians of the University "La Sapienza" of Rome and the School of Paleography, Diplomatics and Archival Sciences of the Secret Vatican archives. The purchase of textbooks is at the expense of those concerned, while the school directly provides lecture notes, reproductions of documents and other materials.

The curriculum of the School of Trieste provides as follows:

Archival sciences

Subject and distribution of the discipline; definition of *archives*, the archival link, categories of archives, the development of a modern administrative archives, the making of, the evaluation phase, the problem of the disposal, the cultural destination of the archives, the problem of the restoration of original order, the historical method, arrangement operations, the inventory, the tools for archival research, public and private archives and archives of great historical interest, the church archives.

Specialist Archival Sciences

City and church archives.

History of Institutions

The Official Administration offices of Trieste from 15th to 20th century; the Official Administration offices of Gorizia and Gradisca from 16th to 20th century; the Official Administration offices of the Friuli region: Udine and Pordenone from 15th to 20th century.

Archival Legislation

Organization chart of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Assets and Activities; state legislation; regional legislation; church legislation; international relationship.

Archival Technology

Legislation; causes of deterioration: biological agents of physical, chemical, accidental conservation: the prevention, buildings, facilities, equipment and the restoration of security microfilming, storage and use; playback digital audio-visual.

Palaeography

Tools and materials writers, the book in ancient and medieval times, the production of codes in antiquity, medieval and Renaissance periodisation and nomenclature of the history of Latin script, writing in the Roman Latin, the Latin papyri; the records of the graphic national details: insular nationals, Merovingian, Luxeuil type, type of Corbie, new Roman curia, Benevento, Visigoths, and the renewed graphics unit: the lowercase Carolina, writing at the time of the great universities: the origins, development and stylized forms of the gothic *littera de forma*, texture, rotunda, *littera bononiensis*, *littera parisiensis*, *littera oxoniensis*, bastard, writing of the learned, *mercantesca*; *littera antiqua* and modern writings, abbreviation system.

Diplomatics

Defining Diplomatics and contacts with other disciplines; history of diplomatics, the document: definition; device and document evidence and the factors of the document, extrinsic and intrinsic character of the document; internal partition of the document; classification of documents: public and private; the formation of the document: the registry and notaries; stages of making of a public document, the language of the documents, records and cartulary.

Specialist Diplomatics

The notary in Italy during the Middle Ages: origin, development, activities and importance, the Vicedomini of Trieste, in Istria and Friuli, the Registry of the Roman Empire and the types of documents it produces, the registries and documents of Roman-barbarian kingdoms, the Ostrogoths; the Lombards, the Franks, the Registry and the Carolingian document, the Registry and the document of the Holy Roman Empire, the Registry and the papal document, the Registry and the document of the patriarchs of Aquileia, the Venetian private document.

Diplomatics of the Contemporary Documents

The problems of the diplomatics and the structure of the contemporary document.

Chronology

The problem of timing, the day and its subdivisions, the week and its days, month and its days; the year in the Roman calendar, the Julian calendar, the Gregorian reform, the French Republic calendar, the Christian era; styles of the year; reduction of dating to the modern style, the church calendar.

Heraldic

Terminology; the problem of the origins and historical evolution of the blazons; techniques of emblazoning; church heraldic.

Illumination

Definitions: term, geographical and chronological scope; basic features: code and technique; genesis of the illumination: the problems of putting on the page; the image/text ratio, illustrative and decorative elements, the development of the illumination in the different ages: schools, description of the code.

Sphragistics

History of the discipline and terminology, use and type of seals, the seal material and forms: cores and cavities; rules for cataloguing.

Metrology

Definitions; historical overview: the measures at different times, their relativity, the need for certainty and the advent of the decimal system, current developments in the definition of the meter.

Metrology - Numismatics

Definitions; production technique; formal characteristics and types of currencies; historical overview: from Roman times to the advent of paper money, the major ticks in the region, history and types: Venice, Aquileia, Trieste, Gorizia and Palmanova.

Computer science applied to archives

Introduction to databases with a specific attention given to the archival issues.

The *teachers* are all from the Archival Administration.

Goals of the School are to train professionals who will be able to work with expertise in all types of archives and the ability to move safely in areas other than documentaries, from scrolls to the digital.

2. The **DEGREE COURSES IN CULTURAL HERITAGE**, organized by the Faculty of Humanities, provide two levels of training: a three-year base period and a specialist.

About the three-year period

Specific educational objective is to acquire a solid basic education aimed at cultural and scientific knowledge in the areas of archival and library heritage, art-historical and archaeological sites; the methodology critical to identify and interpret the issues relating to various aspects of the archival, archaeological and book heritage, for their conservation, protection, management and valorization, and to secure full control of information technology, electronic media and in the areas of responsibility defined by the individual *curricula*; good written and spoken proficiency in another language of the European Community as well as Italian; the ability to set and promote projects, to manage, protect, preserve and promote archival, book, architectural, artistic, archaeological and landscape heritage.

The entrance requirements are (as per art. 6 DM 509/99): upper-secondary school diploma or other qualification obtained abroad and recognized by law and good knowledge of ancient culture (archaeological *curriculum*), good knowledge of Italian culture; sufficient knowledge of a foreign language. The verification of the possession of these requirements is done through a preliminary interview before the beginning of the courses. Any finding of debits involve additional activities, as specified by the college tutors.

The course consists of three *curricula*: art-historical, archaeological and **archival-book**.

The final exam consists of the presentation and discussion of an essay on a topic agreed by the student with a teacher of one of the specific subjects, as assessed by a committee of at least three members.

The archival-book curriculum includes the following plan of study:

Year 1

Italian Literature

History of Middle Ages

Papyrology

Greek Paleography/Latin Paleography

Archival Science

Romance Languages/Friuli region language and literature

History of Middle Ages art/History of illumination

Geography

Greek Literature/History of Greek language/Greek language institutions

Latin Literature/History of Latin language/Latin language institutions

Methodologies and interdisciplinary techniques for philological, historical and cultural goods sciences

English language /French language /German language

Year 2

Botanic for cultural goods

Modern history/History of the former Italian states/History of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region in the modern and contemporary age/History of the Reform and Counter reform age/History of women and gender in the modern and contemporary age/History of Renaissance

History of contemporary age/History of contemporary Italy/History of Hebrew culture/Social history

Legislation of cultural goods

Topography and cartography

Chemic for environment and cultural goods

Archival science/Specialist archival science/Digital archival science/Book science/Bibliography/History of books and publishing

Greek Paleography/Latin Paleography

Methodologies and interdisciplinary techniques for philological, historical and cultural goods sciences

Byzantine civilization

Middle Ages Latin literature/Humanistic Literature

Year 3

Archival science/Specialist archival science/Digital archival science/Book science/Bibliography/History of books and publishing

Greek Paleography/Latin Paleography

Science and technology of polymeric materials

Anthropology (from Zoology for cultural goods)

Middle Ages Latin literature/Humanistic Literature

Methodologies and interdisciplinary techniques for philological, historical and cultural goods sciences.

As per the specialist level:

Year 1

Choice between the disciplines of the grouping of Philology of Italian literature

History of Middle Ages art/History of illumination

History of Middle Ages/Economic and social history of Middle ages/Middle ages institutions

Modern history/History of the Reform and Counter reform age/History of Renaissance

History of contemporary age/History of Hebrew culture/Social history

Papyrology

Greek paleography

Latin paleography

Diplomatics

Choice between the disciplines of the grouping of cinema, photography and television

Romance Languages/Friuli region language and literature

Italian literature

Computer science

Further languages/Internships

The Second Year has not been activated yet, since the degree of recent establishment.

The University's website states: Career possibilities for graduates of level 1 are carrying out professional tasks: in the central and local cultural heritage administrations: archives, libraries, media centers, superintendents, museums, in local administrations, in cooperatives services and activities relating to the protection and use of cultural and environmental restoration, in businesses, private and public institutions, in the publishing, cataloguing, advertising and dissemination fields, including through acquisition of computer and electronic communication, with teaching duties in schools, museums, parks, archaeological sites and tourist facilities. Specialist graduates will be able to operate, in positions of high responsibility, in archives and libraries, as well as in organizations and units of study, development, management and conservation of manuscripts, documentary, archival and library at agencies and institutions, public and private. On these claims, however, there is much to think about.

Moreover, the University of Trieste is planning to set up a Master's level in *Computer cataloguing of cultural heritage* of a one year duration with the goal to develop the expertise to use computer systems for the acquisition of a design capability that allows you to create a network to access and use of different cultural heritage.

3. It seems useful at this point, comparing the two training realities, that, though appearing similar, are quite different indeed.

The School of Archival science, Paleography and Diplomatics being located in the State Archives, allows a direct contact with the documentation and offers the possibility of "living" the management, valorization and safeguard issues. It addresses traditional archivists of State, but also outsiders. The problem and its boundary are right here, having been born in this state for archivists and still work with the Regulations of 1911. The training offered is suffering from an imbalance of a "medieval setting among the disciplines in favor of paleography in front of an archival world in great ferment and driven by new technologies to innovate radically".

Digital registry, international standards, digital archives, e-mail, metadata, etc.. require a more and more future oriented training, to meet the needs of both public and private operators. Moving slowly and at the right pace with technological change means giving way to computer specialists which, without knowing almost nothing of archival science, throw attractive but dangerous and limited products onto the market.

Therefore, the School is asked to renew itself, maybe even to split into two levels with diverse areas of interest, to respond to the requests from the employment market of professional practice.

The University is however more disconnected with the archival reality and one may graduate without ever *having seen* an archives, that means having really put the hands in it, having measured the real difficulties, go beyond the theory and address the operation and really understand what you are talking about, without stopping the conceptual development that is likely to remain empty. In addition to this, the plethora of substances as provided in the course gives the impression, I think not entirely false, that the professional preparation of graduates is too general and substantially enlarged, and lacks depth on the subjects that should be central.

The meeting and the collaboration that has been set on in Trieste between the School and the Universities is certainly very positive. Each of the two institutions recognize credits to those who have successfully attended the other, and opportunity is also given to university students for internships and work experience in the State Archives, finally, some of the school teachers teach, in a separate agreement with the Faculty of Arts, even in university courses.

A few thoughts on the Master, although it has not been activated in Trieste yet, as in other Italian universities, but I think their paths offer very real opportunity for a further "archival" growth; and depth that will make us feel its positive effects. Those seem very well structured and in particular the University of Padua and Rome.

A few more considerations need to be done on the international training organized with great success by the International Institute of Archival Science of Trieste and Maribor, which has seen in this fourth year a growing interest in the archival world. Every year two themes are identified, that are the subject of study, and the teachers who are involved for individual subjects are the best to offer the scientific community. The teaching staff is chosen at international level from Canada to Russia, but with a strong Italian and Slovene, learners (we have passed to now about 120) come mainly from Central and Eastern Europe, but also from Israel, Malaysia and the Sultanate of Oman.

Furthermore, it should be noted that call for a return to attend future courses and also say they did a sort of "word of mouth" papers with colleagues which show what they have learned. To this must be added that the same magazine "Atlanti" becomes a training tool, in fact, by circulating in the international arena and treating the main topics in an orderly and organic way, it becomes a kind of book in progress. Finally, I also remember the central role of the dictionary of archival terms which is gradually composing thanks to the collaboration of the School and the attending members of the IIAS. Further information at the URL: <http://www.iias-trieste-maribor.eu>.

To conclude, a nod to the various fee-paying courses of varying length and seriousness that individuals organize with the unrealistic claim to prepare archivists and with that, certainly more real and concrete, to deepen some specific topics defined, often technical and practical. Here we are really in a jungle where you can meet everything and can never be too careful! Of course this does not mean to condemn any initiative, but only to point out that when the training providers are not institutional, but private, one needs to pay special attention in order to distinguish what is valuable from what is pure business. But how to make this distinction? I think we should look primarily to the quality of teachers that become personal guarantors of serious training!

A very last remark about lifelong learning. It is a process that, beyond the courses one attends, must be a personal commitment of each of us to stay alert, to pay attention to what happens in the scientific, archival and legal world, to read essays and articles, to attend conferences, websites devoted etc, and never feeling *arrived* and satisfied with what we know, without ever feeling custodians of crystallized knowledge, because archives, in their continuing evolution, do not allow it at all!