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THE PROBLEM OF SELECTING ARCHIVAL MATERIAL AND DISPOSING INVALID DOCUMENTARY MATERIAL IN KOSOVO

Abstract:

In the article, the author introduces the problem of selecting archival material of permanent value and alienating of documentary material for which the preservation deadline has expired and is not considered of having any operational, scientific and historic value. First of all, the legal provisions in Kosovo regarding the selection of archival material and alienation of invalid material are presented, further on the author explains the importance of assessing archival material on paper and in electronic form, assessment criteria of archival material, difficulties appearing in Kosovo related to this matter and the need for training archival personnel for the issue of assessment of archival material that is one of the most important and delicate tasks of archivists. One of the issues brought here is also the documentation of privatized organizations and of international organizations which have operated and still work in Kosovo.

Key words:

selection, alienation, assessment, archive material, archive personnel

Izvleček:

Problematika odbiranja arhivskega gradiva in izločanja dokumentarnega gradiva na Kosovu

Avtor v prispevku obravnava problem odbiranja arhivskega gradiva in izločanja dokumentarnega gradiva, ki so mu že potekli roki hrambe ter nima operativne, znanstvene ali zgodovinske vrednosti. V prispevku so najprej predstavljene zakonske podlage glede odbiranja in izločanja gradiva na Kosovu, nato pa avtor poudari pomembnost vrednotenja arhivskega gradiva tako na papirju kot v elektronski obliki, pojasni kriterije vrednotenja, težave, ki se s tem v zvezi pojavljajo na Kosovu, ter potrebo po izobraževanju arhivskih delavcev na področju vrednotenja arhivskega gradiva kot ene izmed najpomembnejših nalog vsakega arhivista. Prispevek se dotakne tudi dokumentacije privatiziranih in mednarodnih organizacij, ki so delovale ali še vedno delujejo na Kosovu.

Ključne besede:

odbiranje, izločanje, vrednotenje, arhivsko gradivo, arhivski delavci

1 LEGAL REGULATION ON THE PROCEDURE OF SELECTING ARCHIVE MATERIAL AND ALIENATING INVALID DOCUMENTARY MATERIAL

In Kosovo the procedure of selecting archive material and alienating invalid documentary material is regulated in compliance with the Article 29 of the Law on Archive Materials and Archives (Law no. 2003/7), in force since 2003 and signed by the Special Representative of United Nations.

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Article 9, point 2 of this Law determined that the Government of Kosovo approves the Administrative Instruction for the selection procedure of archive material with permanent value and alienation of the material for which the preservation deadline has expired. This Administrative Instruction no. 08/2007 was approved on 25 June 2007.

By this Law and Administrative Instruction the procedure for selection of the archive material and alienation of invalid registered material is regulated.

2 ASSESSMENT OF ARCHIVE MATERIAL

By assessment we understand the entire process of determination and selection of documents, which are a cultural wealth of permanent value, as historic sources and other scientific explorations or they are other means for protection of rights of individuals or states, therefore, in the legal aspect the materials also have an archiving importance.

Taking into account the fact that the contemporary society creates large quantities of written materials, thus it is needed to select for preservation the part which is considered as a cultural good, and what is a source of necessary information for the historical past.

The need for assessment of the documents of creator is permanent, but that is acceptable especially nowadays, taking into account the large quantity of documents, which are created by the contemporary administration, in order to make easier accessible the information from the archive material. Development of the contemporary administration technology and in communication in general has also given a new dimension to this problem. The contemporary technology enables the preservation of archive material by different holders; therefore the assessment problem is becoming more and more complicated.

Assessment of archive material and of documentary material is undoubtedly one of the most important and delicate problems that the archive service faces. The aim of archiving assessment is to gain the maximum amount of information with a minimum quantity of documents.

3 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA OF ARCHIVE MATERIAL

Along with the assessment of archive material, criteria, which are implemented in many European and regional countries, were also enforced. Setting the criteria is done by taking into consideration the archive material protection. Until recently certain measures or criteria for archive material assessment have not existed, so this was a task of archive personnel members.

The archival practice in Kosovo mainly applies archive materials assessment criteria which are accepted by worldwide archives, including: Determination of the role and importance of the creator of archive material; Determination of the time and place where the archive material was created; Determination of the protection level and content of the material; Principle of uniqueness and authenticity of the material, respectively the originality of the archive material; Representation of the material - quantity and diversity of information found in the archive material; documents of artistic value or other cultural-historical values etc.

These criteria are mainly applicable for paper documents. Whereas for electronic documents, supplementary criteria for further assessment need to be given. Among the assessment criteria technical matters are included as well and are related to readability and transfer into reading apparatuses. This is because of obsolescence of technology, and appearance of new computers and software.

Nowadays, it is clear, and it has been accepted the principle that it is not possible to make an assessment from one document to another, but the assessment has to be done on the level of a certain complex, and that has to be determined with a classification sign or by any other sign.

In regard to assessment of created documents in electronic version, in this direction there has not still been brought any instruction. The Kosovo State Agency of Archives is working to regulate the protection of electronic documents with specific legal provisions, respectively to incorporate into the Law for Archive Materials and Archives.

But, it is important to mention how the assessment criteria must take it into account that documents cannot be assessed by people who do not know the importance of the documents, the structure, organization and activity of the creator of the documents.

4 THE PROCEDURE OF ALIENATION AND SELECTION

Alienation is a procedure applied when from a complex case there are separated units deadline of which has expired for preservation. According to the international standard ISO 15489, alienation means the procedure of eliminating or deleting documents, thus their reconstruction is not possible. Whereas selection is done by separating the archive material with historic, scientific and cultural value and alienation of the invalid material, which is not considered to have the quality of archive material.

In the period after the war in Kosovo, when speaking about valorization of the archive material, respectively selection of archive material and alienation of invalid material inherited by the newly formed institutions and the ones continuing to work after them, at a certain period there was not allowed any kind of selection. If any selection has been done, it had to be done under the supervision of archivists from archival institutions in the territory where archives were functional. Later on the Kosovo Archive organized seminars related to the procedure of selection of archive material and alienation of invalid registered material. Regarding this matter the Archive of Kosovo started to draft Orientation Lists of registered material categories with preservation deadlines according to the subject and general lists, which were subsequently distributed to the institutions. Those lists served to the institutions as a help to draft their own lists and to submit them to the competent Archive for giving their consent. The competent Archive would review them and would give comments and suggestions and finally the consent. Based on remarks and suggestions from the Archive, the institution would approve its own list of the registered material with preservation deadlines.

Based on the Lists with preservation deadlines there was done selection of archive material, whereas the invalid documentary material with a committee, consisting of the representative of the competent Archive and with recorded minutes was alienated.

In accordance with legal provisions, the creator of the archive material is obliged to regularly implement alienation of the material to which the preservation deadline has expired, latest 5 years from application of the last procedure. Selection procedure and that of alienation is obligatory to be implemented before submitting the material to archive.

Except selection of archive material and alienation of the invalid archive material, that is also done in archive, in the documents that are received as unclassified. This selection and alienation is also done through a certain procedure.

During the transitional process in Kosovo, not long after the war, there began the process of privatization of social enterprises. The institution established for this purpose - Privatization Agency of Kosovo has put the documents of the organizations into a certain place. Those documents have not been given yet to the competent archive. In compliance with legal provisions such documents are not accepted by the Archives unselected, without alienating the invalid registered material and before registering the documents with permanent value for preservation. This Agency does not accept it easily. The Privatization Agency wants to submit the documents to Archive in a very bad condition, unselected.

International institutions have operated in Kosovo. At the beginning they worked at every institution at central level and they also created documents. After passing the competences to local institutions such documentation remained there or was submitted to the State Archive of Kosovo. The central archive of international institutions which operated in Kosovo, which was named UNMIK, still is not handed over to State Archive of Kosovo. There are going on discussions related to this matter, but till now no result has been reached. As for archive documents' selection, as we have not had access there we do not have information about that.

5 ARCHIVAL PERSONNEL

After the end of the War in Kosovo in June 1999 the establishment and functioning of new government bodies began and some institutions continued their work and functioned as before. As for the archival personnel in those institutions, and especially in workplaces in archives new employees were hired. At that time many institutions were governed or under supervision of UNMIK administrators. These new personnel members were not experienced and did not have the appropriate knowledge for office management, and they were far from knowledge to assess the archive materials.

Noticing this situation, Kosovo Archive and regional archives of Kosovo began immediately to visit institutions by giving them professional advice and instructions related to official management. In this view there were organized courses several weeks in the premises of Kosovo Archive and there were also organized one or two day seminars in order to train the personnel who worked in archives of Kosovo institutions, in central and local level as well.

Facing a situation with a massive increase of written documents, earlier hard copy and now also in electronic version, the archival personnel and the professional staff who create the archive material face lots of problems, and especially when doing their valorization. For such a job is needed personnel, which is professionally prepared. These personnel have to be permanently trained and updated with the newest novelties of contemporary archive job. As for the assessment of the archive material, in the meeting of International Council of Archives for education of

archivists in Ljubljana (1994), there was stressed the need for education of archivists for assessment and selection of archive material. According to the principle “*quieta non movere*”, in the past the archivists were “protectors” of received archive material. Nowadays they face with tasks of high responsibility, especially in assessment of the archive material. With their work, the documents become a source for history and a part of cultural treasure. Therefore, in order to achieve this, except may other issues, they also must have sufficient knowledge for assessment of archive documents.

6 DIFFICULTIES

It is also important to mention that now, but also in the past in Kosovo, unfortunately the creators but also the possessors of the archive materials very pay little attention to selection of archive materials. This is done for many reasons, for example because of their lack of interest, lack of basic knowledge, collection of large quantities of documents, during a certain period etc. All this reflects on the work of archives. In order to preserve this important documentation, many archives in Kosovo because of the created political situation, because of imposing from competent bodies, have been obliged to receive unselected archive material, by filling the stores with invalid material. So, archival employees are obliged to do the work, which was a task of the creator of archive material, to regulate the archive material, and then to deal with basic work of archive: processing, presentation, microfilming, digitalization, publication etc. of archive material.

LITERATURE:

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