

Training archivists in Spain
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ABSTRACT

The existence of archivists is connected to human activity. Their training occurs in various different phases, some of which were highly satisfying and gave great support to our profession. In this presentation, the first training centres in Spain will be discussed: from the school of Diplomatics, the technical archive schools, training courses, the school of documentalists, etc., to university training including the schools of Library Science and Documentation, degrees in documentation and postgraduate courses. I will also be discussing the evolving situation caused by the declaration of Bologna concerning university education within the European framework, reflect on the profession of archivist, the science and the state of training at this moment.

Archival science; archive professionals; training; interdisciplinary programs.

INTRODUCTION

To speak of archivist training in Spain, one must speak of the concept of archive, archival science the condition of the archivist. If we can understand the past of these topics then we can come to a better understanding of their present state.

A few years ago it was said that the training of archivists was a field which still needed development in the Spanish university, and perhaps even among professional archivists themselves. In spite of these problems archivists have been trained and achieved a high degree of quality thanks mainly to their own efforts. We could say that archivists have been and perhaps still are self-educated. This self-education has been facilitated through the efforts of highly skilled professionals over a long period of time. But by the end of the last century and today we can see that this situation is not a good solution: the information sciences are in expansion and

this requires a formal training system within a university setting. The role of archivist connected to a specific institution appeared in Spain in the 14th century in the Archive of the Crown of Aragon and in the 16th century with the General Archive of Simancas. From this moment it was decided that the archivist is the person with custody of documents and knowledge of their worth.

But the great leap forward would come when in all over Europe, including Spain, history came to be considered as a science. It is a science because it is based on documents. Narrative history began to disappear, the chroniclers were displaced by researchers that worked with archived documents and whose hypotheses could be demonstrated through documentation. The archive came to be indispensable in historical research. As Henri-Bautier has said, archives which have been the warehouses of history came to be laboratories.

In the history of Spain there are events that have conditioned the profile of the archivist: history as an intellectual profession with its own scientific method; our national history is looked at from a perspective based in scientific objectiveness and the Spanish archivists, along with those of France and Germany will have an important professionalizing role.

But it would be the Ecclesiastic Confiscation in 1835 that would mark the biggest change in the profession of archivist in Spain. Because of these events, both the secular as well as the cleric archives would be passed over to the authority of the state. It is from this moment that collection of this documentation becomes so important that the state begins to realize the importance of the archivist in the maintaining of documents. The Academy of History in 1852 speaks of the necessity of having a training center for these professionals to work in this process of documentation that had been stored in various geographical locals and often in inadequate buildings. In 1856 the Superior School of Diplomatics was created and in 1858 The Corps of Archivists and Librarians. Naturally, the first archivists came from this school.

The superior School of Diplomatics

It was created on October 7th 1856 with the goal of training specific personnel to organize the large quantity of documents coming that resulted from the ecclesiastic confiscation. It was actually a first attempt in creating and establishing archivist

training at a higher level. The school did not have a uniform evolution as it was subject to the ideological and political changes of the times. And so it would see changes in its study programs and even in the degrees it would award: it began with the degree of Paleography and would finally become Archivist, Librarian and antiquary.

The following courses were offered at the school: Classification and arrangement of archives and libraries, Paleography, Numismatics, Spanish History and Languages (Latin, Galician and Limousin). In 1897 the profession of archivist was awarded its own individual status through the creation of a course entitled “Archiving and practical exercises” in substitution of “Practical exercises for the arrangement and organization of archives”. This school closed its doors in 1900 and some of its courses were included in the School of Philosophy and Arts Study Program. From this moment, Archivist studies would become growingly lost in the various study plans of this degree. So, what could have been a good starting point, unfortunately, did not turn out to be one.

Technical school of archives, Libraries and Museums

This was the first attempt at returning the study of Archival Science to the university after the closing of the school of Diplomats. In reality it was a project. It was created by the Universidad Complutense in 1947 (Decree of the 24th of July of that year). Its purpose was to educate archivists that had passed public service tests convened by what was then the national Ministry of Education. This project actually finds its origins in the General Department of Archives and Libraries, although the General Department of University Studies was not at all in agreement with this initiative.

It could be said that this lack of understanding between these two organizations marks the trajectory of the Archiving in Spain. Archiving needed to evolve and be looked at as a science, and so needed a university frame-work for its development: it should also be pointed out that there was a great social demand for this evolution that to a certain degree supported this project. On the other hand, there was perhaps intermittence in this development and evolution as it was created to train civil servants but testing of them did not take place every year. We can see, for example that there were no civil service exams for archivists between the years 1944 and 1954.

Technical training courses for archivists

are going to have a very different situation from that of the Technical School. There were created in 1952 with a budget awarded by the General Department of Archives and Libraries. Its purpose was to train aspiring civil servants for the exams of 1954, to fill the need for such official preparatory centers.

From this moment, two course levels would be offered: one for preparing the civil service test which at that time was called Corps of Archive, Library and Museum Assistants, and later Corps of Assistants, and the other one for preparing the test for the Facultative Corps.

The duration of these courses differed. The Facultative course lasted two quadrimesters. Those participating in these courses were required to have obtained a university degree. The study program was essentially made up of subjects from the old School of Diplomats but also contained new material related to the field of archiving: Cataloging and classification of historic archives, administration archives, secular and ecclesiastic archives, history of archives, etc. We should point out a change in mentality in accordance with the real necessity: the subjects were focused more in Archival Science as opposed to the study of old documents. Later, the courses would last two years. In the 70's there would be a serious regression because of a lack of interest in Archival Science, in favor of Library Science, and also because of an increasing demand for documentalists which were even sought from the public administration.

School of documentalists

The school of documentalists is in reality a continuation of the courses of the technical training of archivists, of which I have earlier spoken, and so we can say that there has not been an interruption between those courses and the school. Therefore, this school will continue to offer training of archivists using the same profile and in two levels: elementary and superior. But in this school we will see some of the same problems that exist in the present; that is to say, archival science will have a low percent of training directly related to their profession when compared to the over all curriculum.

The plan of studies was modified to exclude the specialties in favor of a single profile which of course had negative consequences for the archival science. Documentation and Libraries gained from these changes and would also see a greater social demand.

In 1977 the Ministry of Culture was created, with two branches that would be related to our profession, one concerned with Libraries and the other one with Artistic Heritage, Archives and Museums. From this point, these two fields would evolve differently. Librarians are going to have midrange university credentials whereas archivists will be struggling to have higher degrees. There also exists a conceptual confusion on the extra-academic level, cornering the actual functions of the librarian, the documentalist and the archivist. The school of documentalists still exists and has changed its name to the Center of Bibliographical and Document Studies, but will function as a high training school since there is now a specific midrange degree in library science. From this moment, a conflict begins between the Center and the Schools of Library Science, which ends up with the closing of the center. Archival science remains at the doors of the university.

Archive Vocational Training centers In 1988 the Ministry of Culture created the Vocational Training Centers for Archivists “as public programs for the employment-training with the purpose of training the unemployed, preferably those under 25 years of age, in and out of work to work in professions related to the recuperation or promotion of artistic, historic, cultural or natural heritage... ”. As far as our field was concerned, the objective was the training of degreed students in the profession of archivist.

It was an initiative of the state Archives Department of the Ministry of Culture.

The big difference it had with all earlier training programs is that these schools were eminently practical in character, even though they had theoretical classes fundamentally centered in archiving and the study of institutions that produce documentation. In the last two years the trainees have begun to do practical work in the archives which provided training schools, and they must know about the functioning of the public administration.

Three schools were tied to three archives: The Historical National Archive, The Archive of the General Administration, and the Archive of the Kingdom of Galicia in A Coruña. These schools have no relationship with the university.

University schools of Library Science and Documentation.

Studies of library science and documentation were not formalized in Spain until 1978 when through a decree from the Ministry of Education and Science they were given formal status in the Spanish university system. In 1981 the guidelines for the programs of studies were published. The first of these programs was implemented at the University College of Library Science and Documentation of the University of Barcelona. The first official school year was 1982-83 and the following year the universities of Granada, Salamanca, Murcia, Zaragoza, Carlos III and Complutense, Leon, Extremadura, San Pablo-CEU, A Coruña, Valencia and Vic were included. These schools awarded undergraduate credentials. A demand for graduate degrees was not seen until 1992 when a graduate credential became available.

The intention of these schools was to offer general training, which is to say, one that could be used by librarians, documentalists and archivists. But its reality would become something quite different. The courses related to training librarians and documentalists are given much greater importance to the detriment of those related to archiving.

The course on archiving appears as compulsory with certain related electives such as courses on documentation legislation, administration archives, etc. This training program was inadequate for even preparing archive assistants, let alone in preparing students to become professional archivists.

A diploma obtained from one of these schools can not be taken as evidence that a person has been trained to be an archivist, even though it is a valid credential to work as an assistant. This is not the manner in which a professional archivist should be trained.

Degree in Documentation.- The Degree in Documentation was not approved until 1992, and became available in the 1994-95 school year at the universities of Alcalá, Carlos III, Granda and Salamanca. In 1996 it began being offered by the Complutense, in 1997 in Extremadura and the Politecnica de Valencia, in 1998 in

Barcelona and Murcia, in 1999 in the Autónoma of Barcelona and Oberta de Cataluña, and in 2003 in A Coruña.

The programs award a B.A (Bachelor of Arts) in all of these universities. They all include a course on archiving. It can be seen that it seems impossible to create a program specifically dedicated to the education of the archivists as it is still only included as a small part of the degree program of Documentation. Documentation continues being the predominant interest since the 1970s. Actually, this degree serves as adequate education for librarians and documentalists, but does little in the preparation of archivists.

The problem is that archiving is not an important part of the study program. If we look at the degree in Documentation offered by the University of A Coruña at its Ferrol campus, which one can enter after completing the first two years of university or having a diploma in Library science and Documentation, we see that it is made up of 45 credits distributed in the following courses:

Documental analyses and languages
Archiving
Bibliography and information resources
Library Science
General documentation
Information Technologies

This means that archiving and courses related to archiving make up less the 20% of the total number of credits, with all but one of the archiving courses being electives. On the other hand, these electives are more focused on administration archives or record management than historic archives, which leave us in a state reminiscent of the very beginnings of our profession, so it seems even today the archivist is required to be self-educated.

Masters and postgraduate courses.- Postgraduate courses including masters and doctoral programs allow for new possibilities in the training of archivists, as these courses are more flexible and adapt themselves better to social changes and the necessities of archives and archivists in adjusting to the employment market.

In postgraduate courses, archiving is treated on a professional intellectual level. These types of courses should be given in schools for archivists.

Various Spanish universities offer masters and other postgraduate courses. The first of these was the University of Carlos III. Other universities that offer masters are the UNED and Oberta de Catalunya.

The University of Carlos III, keeping in mind the Bologna directives, is offering work-study masters that imply a faster training process. This acceleration may also help in attracting a greater number of graduate students to the program, since there has recently been a decrease in the number of students due to demographic factors.

Bologna.

This is an important moment in the university system, in which universities, autonomous communities and ministries are working together to build the European Space of Higher Education, which must be in place by 2010. According to the declaration and pact of Bologna, adhered to by every European university, the degree will come to be called "Information and Documentation". From now on, according to Bologna, this will be exclusively a B.A. degree. This new degree is an attempt to integrate the current study plan that takes the first two years and the second two years of university separately, which in Spain means diploma and degree. These changes will mean that certain courses will disappear and some other new ones will be incorporated.

The criterion of UNESCO on Information Sciences, Library science and Archival Science are that all three have, though in distinctive forms, the same goal: the registration of information.

This proposal of common compulsory subjects requires the creation of a basic education in which those receiving degrees are able to work in all three environments including libraries, archives and documentation centers and are able to manage the contents of any type of organization with full professional competence, which means having full understanding of theoretic fundamentals and "practical knowledge".

It will be the actual study plans of the various universities that will dictate how this will be achieved.

To highlight this current situation allow me to summarize the declaration of the coordinating committee of the Association of Spanish Archivists who said:

In looking at the project for new study programs for the degree in Information and Documentation, we understand that the education of archivists must be done on the postgraduate inter-disciplinary level, independent and unconnected to the sphere of Documentation and Information, oriented towards students and graduates from diverse fields, who are searching for this type of education. Rejecting the inclusion of Archiving in these disciplines, with which it has never been part of.

Nor are they in agreement with including archivists in the professional orientation of said degree, as it has not been developed with the basic requirements needed to educate archivists in mind.

The including of a required course called “Management techniques for archive documents” reduces the presence of Archiving to 10% of the contents. This course can be understood as supplementary material for librarians more than anything else. The coordinating committee concluded their remarks by asking for respect to every professional group to establish their own educational necessities and the ways in which they will be put into practice.

Today

These days, we know that the education of archivists requires the science and the profession of archivist, which is to say the science and profession are the basis of the education.

According to Theo Thomassen, archivists should be seen as professionals because they work in a specific field and because they have a specific discipline: archival science. This field today includes the caretaking, control, custody, preservation, and administration of records and archives. They understand this field because their work is based on the theory and methodology of the science of archiving. It is not just an occupation because archiving has an essential and fundamental academic discipline.

Archival science makes up the basis of its professional action. Archival science must be developed in centers or in independent academies, and should not be willing to accept the status of an auxiliary science.

The archivist's profession must be able to count on autonomy and be recognized as an independent and autonomous profession. This autonomy will give a solid independent character to the profession, distinguishing it for all other jobs.

Being a profession, it needs a code of ethics. The ICA has certain standards for the archivists' code of ethics. "Objectivity and impartiality of archivists is the measure of their professionalism". The ICA has various norms that affect the code of ethics, concerning the protection of the authenticity of documentation, an impartial service for its users, and respect for the pertinent legislation as far as access and privacy of information is concerned.

The independence of archivists implies the existence of positive legislation, even though there is no hierarchical relationship between the code of ethics and the law, since law and ethics are different categories. The law is obligatory, but the moral implications of a code of ethics are voluntary. Laws regulate the relationships between citizens, but a professional code of ethics is only tied to an individual as a professional.

Taking all of this into account, the question must be asked: What is archival science today? Or, how are things going for the archivist today? Some look at it orientated only towards historic archives, separating it for "record management"; others, thanks to the information era, believe that it exclusively answers the needs of society. For a third group, archiving has its own essence, with its own theoretical model: the science of information.

Archiving training, as is the case in all professional training, must be continuous and continuing. At first, an initial training for those wishing to become part of the profession, and then continuing education designed for experienced professionals wanting to be up to date in their knowledge and aware of current demands and challenges.

We need to open our minds and our point of view, and accept a multi-disciplinary orientation. We are going from working with physical documents to virtual digital ones. Archiving as a profession still needs work on the training of archivists in order to address modern changes related to automated and electronic documents.

And so, the viability of our profession will depend on how we adapt ourselves to new forms of documents, since archiving, as a profession, still has not adequately

resolved the challenge of education and training of archivists in the field of electronic documents.

Information Technology (IT) is changing the forms and management methods of documents and archives as well as the theory of archiving. The professional demands are going to change as the market becomes wider and more diversified. The professional concepts of archiving are not only in a state of change but are also being redefined: terms such as archive, source, and document management, etc.

IT is to affect every aspect of training, requiring the introduction of new subjects, or at least adapting existing ones, a situation which will require archiving education to become more flexible and in the long run better.

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