

European Archives in an Era of Change

The History of European Archives and the Development of the Archival Profession in Europe

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AS ANYONE WITH EVEN a superficial notion of European history would easily recognize, to speak of the history of "European" archives and of the "European" archival profession is little more than an illusion and little less than an absurdity. Despite the fact that Europe (or at least a part of it) has often achieved some kind of cultural homogeneity since the Middle Ages, there has never been any political or legal unity, even to the smallest degree, between countries whose language, religion, and other cultural factors have much in common.

For this reason, each European country has followed its own path of archival development, linked narrowly to its governmental and bureaucratic system. Due to recent increases in international cooperation and awareness of basic similarities in archival problems shared by all countries, there has been a tendency at least to har-

monize European archival legislation and practices if not to unify them. Many international symposia, study sessions, and task forces have focused on specific problems including the professional training of archivists and the conditions for public access to archives. Despite these efforts, we are still very far from any kind of archival European Community, even within the EC.

This article will try to shed some light on the genesis and history of the evolution of archival theory and practice in the main European countries. It will also suggest some directions towards a certain degree of harmonization which can be expected (or at least hoped for) in the not too distant future.

The Origins of Archival Practices in Europe

As has occurred in all human civilizations, the practice of archival administra-

tion grew in Europe as a natural, "organic" phenomenon as soon as the practice of writing on perishable materials was invented. Ancient Greece had archival repositories. So did the Roman Empire, which is the starting point for every study of European legal, political, and cultural history.¹ These archives were all destroyed during the Great Invasions of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries A.D., however. Only a vague tradition of records-keeping survived in the more advanced, or less backward, of the new kingdoms born on the ruins of the Empire.

These archives were in turn practically annihilated later, so that only a very few documents prior to 1000 A.D. survive in Europe. Even the Carolingian Empire, which purported to be a Christian revival of the Roman Empire, disappeared without leaving any significant number of archives, due to its economic and political collapse in the tenth century.

European archives began to revive only in the eleventh and twelfth centuries when a new political and religious organization of the continent gradually emerged from the chaos. From that point onward, it is no longer possible to speak of "European" archives except in a purely geographical sense. All the new monarchies (German, French, English, and later Spanish), the great feudal powers, the Church, and the towns organized their own records-keeping independently so that little by little local or national traditions and methods were created, giving birth in modern times to the various archival systems which now exist.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, local and national administrations began to emerge out of feudal practices, and with them archival repositories began to function. The French Trésor des Chartes

had its first archivist, Pierre d'Etampes, in 1307. The archives of the kingdom of Aragon were created in 1346. Nearly all the Italian and Flemish towns organized the conservation and management of their archives within the framework of their municipal institutions. Archival repositories such as these were defined as *loci publici in quibus instrumenta deponuntur*, i.e. "public places where legal documents are kept."² This definition demonstrates that the legal aspect of records-keeping was then prevalent. To give just one example from many, private contracts between citizens in Flanders (such as commercial contracts, marriage deeds, last wills, etc.) were kept in coffers in the town hall. The very fact that they were there gave them legal force. For the same reason, public archival repositories in Hungary were called *loci credibiles*, which could be interpreted as "places which give legal credibility to the documents kept within them."

Such a notion had long-lasting consequences in many European countries. As late as 1937, Hilary Jenkinson stated in his famous *Manual of Archive Administration* that a character of authenticity was inherent to documents kept in the Public Record Office, and for that reason a guarantee of uninterrupted transmission was essential for a document to be recognized as part of a public record office.³ However, such a notion never existed in many other countries, including France, where the fact of its being preserved in a public archival repository does not give a document any guarantee of authenticity.

Since the beginning, the most common kinds of documents in archival repositories were titles of land property and other documents of economic interest. The monas-

¹See for example Ernst Posner, *Archives in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972).

²L. Sandri, "La Storia degli Archivi," *Archivum* 18 (1968): 108.

³Hilary Jenkinson, *Manual of Archive Administration*, 2nd. ed. (London: P. Lund, Humphries, 1937), 12.

teries, which until the sixteenth century were the greatest landowners in Europe, had well-kept *archiva* or *munimenta*, now a first-class source on European medieval economic history. Other well-kept archives were those of royal chanceries, civil or ecclesiastical courts, and municipalities, all of which had a clearly evident character of utility for their owners.

The Creation of the First Great Archival Repositories

A decisive step was taken in the sixteenth century when progress in royal administration led to the concentration of archives in central repositories with specialized archivists and other staff to help. The classic example of this prefiguration of the modern "national archives" was the creation in 1542 of the Archivo de Simancas in Spain, where little by little all of the records of the councils, courts, chanceries, secretaries, treasuries, etc. of the Castilian Crown came together until they were concentrated there by 1567. The 1588 internal regulation of Simancas, "Instrucción para el Gobierno del Archivo de Simancas," is perhaps the first known document of its kind.⁴

Another significant date is 1610, when James I of England appointed Levinus Monk and Thomas Wilson as "Keepers and Registers of Papers and Records," thus creating the famous series of State Papers which is now the core of the Public Record Office. That same year brought the creation of the Vatican Archives in their modern form.

All these creations corresponded to the political phenomenon known as the birth of the "administrative monarchies" in Eu-

rope. As the local and central administrations multiplied and became more specialized, their production of records grew in importance. It became necessary to evolve systems for the conservation, arrangement, description, and general management of those huge, new masses of parchments and papers. Gradually, the profession of the archivist came to be recognized as a distinct activity, requiring a specialized *savoir-faire*.

The Birth of an Archival Science

Despite all these developments, an "archival science" did not emerge until the seventeenth century. In that era an interest in history as a science began to grow out of the Renaissance "science of the diploms." (The *De Re Diplomatica* of the French Benedictine monk Dom Mabillon, first published in 1681, was a famous milestone of that earlier period). After the work of Baldassare Bonifacio, who in 1632 wrote the first known treatise on the management of archives, several treatises and manuals appeared on the subject in Italy, France, Germany, and Spain.⁵ Already conflicting theories existed about the best methods for the arrangement and description of archives. In France, for example, J. Godefroy and J. de Chevrières recommended a chronological order while archivists elsewhere preferred a methodical arrangement of documents either by place names or according to the juridical nature of the documents.⁶

At the end of the eighteenth century, the whole field of archival theory and practice in Europe was being completely renovated. With the exceptions of Great Britain and Russia, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic conquests had provoked a complete upheaval of all governmental,

⁴*Instrucción para el Gobierno del Archivo de Simancas*, ed. José Luis Rodríguez de Diego (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1989). See also R.H. Bautier, "La Phase Cruciale de l'Histoire des Archives: la Constitution des Dépôts d'Archives et la Naissance de l'Archivistique," *Archivum* 18 (1968): 139-151.

⁵B. Bonifacio, *De Archivis Liber Singularis* (Venezia, [n.p.] 1632).

⁶R.H. Bautier, "La Phase Cruciale de l'Histoire des Archives," 147.

administrative, and legal structures throughout Europe. By 1815, archival repositories as well had undergone a radical change, beginning with France in 1789-1790, followed by the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, and Spain.

The French law of 7 Messidor Year II (25 June 1794) was indeed "revolutionary," both in the chronological and institutional meanings of that term, in so much as it proclaimed for the first time the right of citizens to have access to public archives.⁷ Until then, archives had been carefully closed or at most open only to a few privileged researchers whose use was generally for official purposes.⁸ After the French Revolution, the notion that research in archives was a civic right was increasingly recognized, even in such conservative countries as the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia.

The Revolution and the Napoleonic wars had more or less abolished all previously existing administrative structures in the above-named countries. All their archives, therefore, had to come under the control of new forms of government, but at the same time they had lost their practical and immediate relevance since they were associated with defunct institutions. As a result, their historical significance came to predominate, which was a new feature of archival practice. This transition in the role of the archives had important consequences for the future.

With the suppression of most of the monasteries, tribunals, and other places where pre-revolutionary archivists had learned their trade, it became necessary to create special schools in order to train archivists in reading old scripts, interpreting old documents, and understanding old languages and spellings. This was needed all

the more because the knowledge of old administrative and legal practices was rapidly disappearing. The first school to attempt to meet this need was the Scuola del Grande Archivio in Naples, established in 1811. Later came the Archivalische Unterrichtsinstitut in Munich, in 1821, and today's Ecole des Chartes in Paris, started in 1821 and revived in 1829 after a brief hiatus. As the nineteenth century progressed, many other schools or institutes throughout Europe followed these early models, and were either independent or connected to archival institutions or universities.

It would certainly be erroneous to think that this kind of teaching was what we now consider "archival science," or *archivistique*, or "archivology" as we call it in most European languages. It was essentially a discipline in legal and institutional history, paleography, philology, diplomatics, sigillography, and heraldry. Special emphasis was placed upon the Middle Ages. The very name of the Ecole des Chartes reflects the significance of the study of medieval documents, including charters. Many elements of today's *archivistique* were hardly considered in the archival schools of the first part of the nineteenth century, which were not so much schools of archival science as schools of historical science.

The theory of accessioning and selecting new records was nevertheless beginning to take shape. As early as 1731, the *Reali Istruzioni* (Royal Instructions), given in Turin to the archivist of the Royal Archives of Sardinia, stated that "useless papers" were to be destroyed.⁹ Identical practices existed in other archival repositories, sometimes with written rules as their basis. However, these practices did not follow any rational principles. The French Revolution regrettably gave great impetus to the destruction of papers, on the political and ideological

⁷M. Duchein, "Requiem pour Trois Lois Défuntes," *Gazette des Archives* 104 (1979): 12-15.

⁸It is significant that to this day the Vatican Archives are still named "Archivio Segreto Vaticano."

⁹E. Lodolini, *Archivistica: Principi e Problemi* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1984): 234.

grounds that all documents of *servitude* and *fanatisme* (meaning the royalist regime and Christianity) were to be destroyed in order to erase the memory of "barbarism." As a result, many documents of historical interest relating to the royal and feudal administration and to the Catholic Church were burnt between 1794 and 1796, accompanied by the public's rejoicing.¹⁰ This can hardly be considered a first step towards the modern theory and practice of archival appraisal, however.

From "Historical" Archives to Modern Archives

The modern administration of archives in Europe really began when it became clear that archives could no longer be considered only "historical" repositories. It was realized that they also had to receive, more or less regularly, papers originating from functioning institutions. Of course such a practice had always existed in those archival repositories which were linked with administrative bodies. For instance, in 1720 an Instruction issued by Peter the Great had regulated transfers to the Russian Imperial Archives.¹¹ However, after the great revolutionary and post-revolutionary changes in the years 1789-1815, the link between current records and archival repositories had been severed, causing the archives to lose their organic contact with active administration.

Napoleon I recognized the need for archives to continue as a living institution. In 1808 he initiated an important series of regulations on transfers by publishing a circular ordering the regular transfer of the papers of the Public Works Division of the Préfectures to the newly-created Archives départementales. All European countries

gradually developed the practice of transferring papers from administrative offices to their archival repositories, but the methodology of such transfers, and above all the theoretical problems which they raised as to the notion of "closed" and "open" archival series, were slow to emerge.

For a long time, the predominant emphasis in the keeping of archives was a "historicist" one. For some countries, this orientation lasted almost to World War II. For example, in Spain the Archivo Histórico Nacional, created in 1866, was devoted exclusively to documents from defunct institutions; all new transfers were excluded. In England, the Public Record Office did not regularly receive "new" documents until several decades after it was opened in 1838.

However, the increase in the bulk of papers produced by all governmental and administrative offices was such that by the 1850s nearly all the European countries had to face the quadruple problem of the transfer of these papers to archival repositories, of their appraisal, of their arrangement and description, and of their opening to public research. It was then that most of the national archival institutions took their modern form, which in several cases has lasted until the present day.

With the regular transfers of records from functioning institutions, Europe became two cultural zones. There was one zone with a *registratur* system, and one zone without such a system. The *registratur* is a practice in use in Germany and central Europe by which each administrative document is "registered" with a registry number corresponding to a methodical schedule known as the *Aktenplan*. Already at the point of its creation or reception, each document belongs to a file which is prenumbered in a predetermined system. In contrast, in *non-registratur* countries such as France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Great Britain, or Spain, the files produced by administrative offices do not have a predetermined num-

¹⁰L. de Laborde, *Les Archives de la France pendant la Révolution Française* (Paris: J. Claye, 1866).

¹¹R.H. Bautier, "La Phase Cruciale de l'Histoire des Archives," 148.

ber or classification schedule so that archivists have to arrange and classify them after their transfer to the archives.

R.H. Bautier is very clear, if perhaps a trifle overly pessimistic, when he writes that “the archival division of Europe is such that it is nearly impossible for archivists of one zone to really understand the problems of the other.”¹² It is true that it is very difficult for a Frenchman, for instance, to grasp the principles of the *registratur* system. The *non-registratur* system is probably equally difficult for a German. It is fairly easy to guess whether the archival system of any non-European country was created by archivists from the *registratur* or *non-registratur* school.

The Principle of Provenance and the Modern Bases of Archival Science

The main theoretical debate, which was really the basis for archival science as we know it today, arose during the 1850s. Centering on the method of arrangement, this debate is not entirely settled even now. The men of the eighteenth century were fond of “classification systems” in chemistry, zoology, botany, and astronomy. This appealed to the mind of the Enlightenment era when everything had to be clearly defined and ordered in logical schedules. Archivists of that school conceived of the arrangement of archives as distributing the documents into “classes” or “series” corresponding to legal or administrative concepts. The first classification schedule (*cadre de classement*) for the French Archives nationales was conceived in 1808 by Pierre Daunou. It completely dismembered the papers originating from the royal government and religious institutions in order to distribute them into “legislative,” “administrative,” “judicial,” and “historical” sections. The same principle was adopted in many other countries, with the

same deplorable results from the point of view of the integrity of archives. Prussia, Austria, Milan, and others followed this path.

The principle of provenance, or *respect des fonds* as it was originally named in French, was defined for the first time in 1841 by the archivist, diplomatist, and historian Natalis de Wailly. He wrote in an official circular of the Minister of the Interior that “all documents which come from a body, an establishment, a family, or an individual form a *fonds*, and must be kept together The documents which only make reference to an establishment, a body, or a family, must not be confused with the *fonds* of that establishment, body, family. . . .”¹³

This principle was soon recognized as the only sound basis for archival arrangement. Not long after its recognition, there emerged the corollary principle of “respect for original order.” This second principle was identified as *Strukturprinzip* by the German archivists of the Royal Archives of Prussia around 1880.¹⁴ It is indeed possible to say that the modern archival science, such as it is, began with those two basic principles of provenance and respect for original order. Curiously enough, the most important theoretical treatises with explanations and comments about these principles were neither German nor French. Instead they were Dutch, Italian, and English.¹⁵

¹³G. Desjardins, *Le Service des Archives départementales* (Paris: E. Bourloton, 1890): 30.

¹⁴See Ernst Posner’s chapter entitled “Max Lehmann and the Genesis of the Principle of Provenance,” in *Archives and the Public Interest: Selected Essays*, ed. Ken Munden (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1967): 36-44; and M. Duchein, “Theoretical Principles and Practical Problems of Respect des Fonds,” *Archivaria* 16 (1983): 64-82.

¹⁵S. Muller, J.A. Feith, and R. Fruin, *Handleiding voor het Ordenen en Beschrijven van Archieven* (Groningen: Erven B. Van der Kamp, 1898); E. Casanova, *Archivistica* (Siena: Stab. arti grafiche Lazzeri, 1928); and Hilary Jenkinson, *Manual of Archive Administration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922).

¹²*Ibid.*, 146.

It seems by now that *respect des fonds* and respect for original order are universally adopted in the archival world, both in Europe and elsewhere. Whether or not it will always be possible to preserve them is a question for the future, in view of the changing nature of the notions of provenance and internal order. New technologies in automation and reprography have challenged these archival principles.

Shortly after the 1841 definition of *respect des fonds*, certain theoretical bases emerged for archival description. These principles of description were closely linked to arrangement principles. The Italian method called *metodo storico* consists of respecting with the greatest care the original order (*ordine originario*), which alone can reflect the historical evolution of the body generating the documents. It was adopted in Italy as a principle in response to rules formulated in Florence by Francesco Bonaini in 1867.¹⁶

Curiously enough, the methods of archival description are somehow the "poor relation" of archival science in many countries. Rules on that subject were issued by the French Minister of the Interior as early as 1841, and modified and expanded in 1862, 1909, and 1969.¹⁷ However elaborate manuals such as those by Eugenio Casanova, Hilary Jenkinson, and Elio Lodolini are very brief on archival description. For a long time in all countries, there has been a hesitation or ambiguity between summary description ("summary lists," "*inventarios sumarios*," "*répertoires numériques*") and detailed description ("*calendars*," "*registen*," "*inventaires analytiques*"). While international standards exist for the cataloguing of books in libraries, there is nothing in Europe even remotely ap-

proaching a common doctrine for the inventorying of documents in archives. This is one of the fields for which it can indeed be said that there is no such thing as a "European" archival tradition.

However, some basic principles have more or less come to be accepted by all countries, especially the principle which distinguishes between the inventory (as a description of the documents in the order in which they are kept) and the catalogue (as we understand it, a selective description of documents according to certain themes including subjects and place names). No doubt the evolution caused by the growing use of automation in archival description will lead in the future to a harmonization and systematization of the various national practices in that field.¹⁸

The Profession of the Archivist

One of the common features of European archives is that they always have been quite distinct from libraries. Indeed their origin, as part of the legal and administrative system, explains why they took some time to be recognized as "cultural" rather than administrative assets. The first archivists in England, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Spain were not librarians. They were clerks of the chancery, clerks of judicial courts, clerks of municipalities, notaries, and the like. They received some practical training in reading old scripts and understanding old documents, but they were not historians.

By the eighteenth century, archives began to be considered more from a historical point of view than from a practical or legal one. At that time some European countries began to include archives in their libraries.

¹⁶E. Lodolini, *Archivistica: Principi e Problemi*, 129.

¹⁷Association des Archivistes français, *Manuel d'Archivistique* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1970): 243-293.

¹⁸An interesting, recent publication on that theme is volume III (1990) of the Spanish journal entitled *Irargi*, published by the Servicio de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, Vitoria-Gasteiz. It is dedicated to the "Mecanización de fondos de archivos históricos: experiencias, problemas, resultados."

For instance, when the French Revolution created the Archives nationales, many registers of documents (especially from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) were given to the Bibliothèque nationale because they were in the form of bound volumes. The same happened in England, where the term "manuscripts" applies in fact to many archival documents located in libraries despite the fact that they would belong more appropriately in archives.

However, nowhere in Europe were Archives, with a capital A, as an institution, placed under the jurisdiction or authority of Libraries, with a capital L. Archives and libraries have been separate, distinct institutions since the beginning. In fact, the creation of archives preceded that of libraries in most countries, including England, France, Germany, and Spain.

The archival profession as such really began to be recognized as autonomous and specialized in the second part of the nineteenth century, linked with the growing awareness of the basic principles of archival administration and the creation of archival schools in most countries. As early as 1850, the French government decided that only graduates of the Ecole des Chartes should be recruited as archivists for the Archives nationales. In Italy, Germany (specifically Bavaria), and Austria, the special schools of paleography and diplomatics trained archivists quite independently from librarians. Only in Spain did the Cuerpo Facultativo de Archiveros, Bibliotecarios y Anticuarios, created in 1858, group archivists and librarians together.

One of the results of the autonomy of archives in the majority of European countries was that archival science developed independently of librarianship. The Dutch manual of 1898, which was soon translated into French, German, and later English, had a great influence on the establishment of archival principles distinct from, if not adverse to, those of librarianship. From that time on, there have been very few contacts

between archivists and librarians in Europe. The gap, if one can use that expression, is currently widening rather than narrowing.¹⁹

During the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the archives of all European countries gained a certain legal status defined by laws and official regulations. It is not possible here to give even a brief list of all these texts, many of which date from between 1880 and 1910, an era of wide interest in national history everywhere. Throughout all of Europe in the pre-World War I era, the organization of archives was considered as a cultural and administrative matter of the greatest importance.

Public Access to Archives

One point on which the diversity of national traditions was especially noticeable until World War I was that of public access to archives. In France the theory, if not always the practice, was that all the documents in the archives could be consulted by every citizen; in many other countries the very notion that the archives were open to public research did not exist.²⁰ Until 1918, nobody was admitted into the Royal Archives of Prussia without special authorization. In England, the consultation of documents dating later than 1760 was subject to strict control. In Hungary, no document was accessible without permission from the Archivist of the Realm.

Despite the very strong national feelings which characterized the European countries prior to 1914, it was already common to exchange experiences in the field of archives, especially between the great centers of historical research. There existed an abundant literature in Dutch, English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Spanish, and Swedish about the archives of var-

¹⁹B.C. Bloomfield, "Relations between Archives and Libraries," *Archivum* 30 (1984): 28-35.

²⁰Law of 7 Messidor, Year II.

ious countries. Historians, if not always archivists, travelled fairly easily. In particular, several countries commissioned archivists to copy documents concerning their own history from archives in other countries. For instance, English archivists made transcripts of documents in France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain; Belgian and Dutch archivists worked in Spanish archives; and French archivists explored the Vatican Archives for documents touching upon the history of France.

There was even an International Congress of Archivists and Librarians, held in Brussels in 1910. Archivists at this meeting discussed such professional subjects as the construction of archival repositories, the principles of selection and appraisal in archives, and the professional training and status of archivists. The proceedings of the congress were published.²¹ Another congress was scheduled for 1915, but the war came before it could meet.

Gradually, European archivists and governments realized the need to open archives to researchers. The duration for access restrictions was fixed in several countries, with varying lengths of fifty years or more. These restrictions or periods of closure were lessened after World War II, so that by now in nearly all European countries the duration of access restrictions is thirty years.

A Brief Overview of Archival Evolution in Europe Today

This article is essentially historical in its outlook. A detailed description of archival legislation and practice in today's Europe is not part of my efforts here, since this will be found in other articles in this volume. However, it is interesting to see how

much the historical tradition continues to distinguish archival organizations in various European countries, and how much the trends of modern evolution tend to blur those differences.

After World War II, Europe was impoverished and several of the greater archival repositories had been destroyed. European archivists dedicated themselves to the reconstruction of the buildings and systems which had been ruined by the war. Many countries, including Germany, Italy, and of course the Central and Eastern European countries under Russian hegemony, underwent radical constitutional and legal changes which modified the organization of their archives. Simultaneously, the great technological and psychological changes which affected the world of the 1960s and 1970s affected Europe as well.

In describing national archival systems, it is customary to distinguish between "centralized" and "non-centralized" ones. These terms, however, are not quite adequate because there is always some degree of "non-centralization" and some degree of "centralization" in any system (otherwise it would seem anarchical). A more appropriate distinction would be between "centrally regulated" and "non-centrally regulated" systems.

Of the centrally regulated systems in Europe, one could give the Eastern countries of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Rumania, the USSR, and the like as typical examples.²² In these countries, all archives except those of a purely personal character are part of the State Archive Fonds as defined by Lenin in his famous decree of 1 June 1918. All the archival organization in these countries is thereby ruled or controlled by a central directorate, and the same

²¹*Congrès de Bruxelles, Commission permanente des congrès internationaux des archivistes et bibliothécaires* (Brussels: Commission permanente des Archivistes et Bibliothécaires, 1912).

²²The author wishes to acknowledge that this article was written before the changes in the constitutional system of the USSR which occurred during the summer of 1991.

regulations apply throughout each country.²³

At the other end of the spectrum, Switzerland is a model of a non-centrally regulated system. Each canton has its own independent archival organization. There is not even a national law on archives. Neither the rules for arrangement, description, conservation, or access nor the standards for the recruitment of archivists are the same from one canton to another.

The majority of the other European countries have systems somewhere in between these two extremes. In Germany, for instance, while each *Land* has its own autonomous system of archival organization, it enforces a strict compliance with that system for all archives within the *Land*. In Italy, the provincial archives are part of the Archivi di Stato (managed by state archivists appointed by the Director General of State Archives in Rome), while municipal archives are controlled by regional *Sovrintendenti*, who are also appointed by the Director General. In Spain, the “autonomic” Constitution of the State confers much archival responsibility upon regional authorities, while Spanish state archives have their own network of repositories. In England, national and local archives are quite independent of each other. In France, both national and local archives are ruled by the same laws and regulations, but only the Archives nationales are ruled directly by the Director General of French Archives, while local archives are managed by local authorities under the supervision of the Inspectors General of Archives.

The rules for recruitment and professional status of archivists also vary according to whether or not the country has a centrally regulated system. For instance, in France the recruitment is centralized, with

the same standards applying to the whole of the archival network of the country. In contrast, each *Land* in Germany has its own rules of recruitment and professional status. The professional training is centralized in France, in the Netherlands, and in some other countries; but in Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom it is not. There is no specialized archival training at all in several countries including Belgium and Switzerland.

Despite their significance, these differences in administrative and legal organization should not conceal the fact that the professional practice is heading towards a harmonization throughout Europe, especially Western Europe. The main features of that harmonization can be defined as:

- a growing emphasis on the problems of accessioning and appraising of modern records and the organization of transfers. This is in contrast to the former emphasis upon the arrangement and description of “closed” archival fonds which characterized pre-1939 legislation and manuals;

- a growing preoccupation with the problems of physical preservation of archives and their buildings, equipment, restoration, microfilming, etc. This is linked both to progress in scientific knowledge and technology and to the acceleration of the physical deterioration of archives due to environmental pollution and the frequent handling of documents;

- a growing awareness of the impact of modern technologies on the management of archives, especially automated data processing;

- a rapid evolution of the archival profession and, consequently, of the professional training of archivists. Even such old, traditional schools as the *Ecole des Chartes* and the *Archivschule* in Marburg have modified their teaching according to new trends in such a way that the study of current administration now occupies more time in the curriculum of the *Ecole des*

²³See the archival laws of these countries in *Archivum*, volumes 17, 19, and 28.

Chartes than that of medieval institutions. Such a change would have seemed incredible just thirty years ago.

These changes have happened in all European countries, but they occurred, and continue to occur, in a national rather than international context. Not only is there no "European" archival authority or legislation, there is no "European" model for archival training. Each year the Stage Technique International d'Archives of the French Archives nationales is host to some twenty to twenty-five foreign archivists, both European and non-European.²⁴ One program is not enough, however, to create a continent-wide archival community. The great international activities in the form of congresses and round-table conferences organized by UNESCO and the International Council on Archives are world-wide, not Europe-wide.

Nevertheless, bilateral and multilateral cooperation between neighboring countries is increasing considerably. Professional societies of archivists frequently work in common. Archives of regions along international borders regularly organize meet-

ings with their neighboring, foreign colleagues. Practically all archivists within the EC have regular, though often informal, contacts with archivists of other countries. Of course the administrative organization of archives remains a purely national affair, but many problems are identical for all and the awareness of similarities is increasing.

Perhaps the suppression of economic borders within the EC in 1993 will help facilitate professional exchange in the archival field as in other fields. One may hope so. Many obstacles will remain in the way of any really "European" integration. These barriers will continue to include the differences of languages, historical and cultural traditions, the legal status of archives, and the professional training and status of archivists. But many elements of unification do exist, if only through the evolution of technology, that in the not too distant future any national differences will have very little significance in the field of archives. Europe still has her part to play in the evolution of an archival science, though she is no longer the matrix of all traditions and doctrines. Regardless of what lies ahead, two things will not be taken from her: the antiquity of her historical tradition, and the irreplaceable treasure of archival documents from the past nine or ten centuries which is part of the cultural heritage of all mankind.

²⁴For a description of this program, see Paule René-Bazin and Marie-Françoise Tammaro, "Le Stage Technique International d'Archives: An Historical Overview and Future Prospects," *American Archivist* 51 (1988): 356-364.

The History of European Archives and the Development of the Archival Profession in Europe

Abstract: The history of European archives or the development of the European archival profession can only be discussed superficially as single entities. Nevertheless, there is a tendency recently to harmonize European archival legislation and practices, if not to unify them. The author discusses the genesis and history of the evolution of archival theory and practice in the major European countries through the creation of the great archival repositories, the birth of archival science, and the development of modern archives. He ends the article with an overview of current archival evolution in Europe and suggests the areas in which archival harmonization is likely to be most successful.

L'histoire des archives européennes et le développement de la profession d'archiviste en Europe

Résumé: L'histoire des institutions d'archives européennes ainsi que le développement de la profession d'archiviste en Europe ne peuvent être discutés que très superficiellement comme des entités distinctes. Néanmoins, l'Europe tend depuis peu vers l'harmonisation, sinon vers l'unification des législations et des pratiques en matière d'archives européennes. L'auteur dresse un profil de la genèse et de l'histoire de l'évolution de la théorie archivistique et de la pratique dans les principaux pays européens, en s'inspirant de la création des grands dépôts d'archives, de la naissance de la science archivistique et du développement des archives modernes. Il termine son texte en jetant un regard sur la présente évolution archivistique en Europe et émet des suggestions quant aux domaines dans lesquels l'harmonisation archivistique est des plus prometteuses.

Die Geschichte der europäischen Archive und die Entwicklung des Archivarberufs in Europa

Abstrakt: Die Geschichte der europäischen Archive oder die Entwicklung des europäischen Archivarberufs kann hier nur oberflächlich als ein gemeinsames Thema behandelt werden. Nichtsdestoweniger scheint sich in der letzten Zeit eine Neigung zu entwickeln, europäische Archivgesetze und Praxis in Einklang zu bringen, wenn auch nicht zu vereinheitlichen. Der Autor erörtert den Ursprung und die Geschichte des Archivwesens. Er beleuchtet die Entwicklung von archivarischer Theorie und Praxis in wichtigen europäischen Staaten mittels der Gründung von berühmten Archiven, der Geburt der Archivwissenschaft, und der Entwicklung der modernen Archive. Er schliesst seinen Artikel mit einem Überblick über gegenwärtige Archiventwicklungen in Europa und schlägt Bereiche vor, in welchen archivarische Vereinheitlichung die beste Chance haben dürfte.

La historia de los archivos europeos y el desarrollo de la profesión de archivista en Europa

Resumen: La historia de los archivos europeos y el desarrollo de la profesión de archivista en Europa pueden ser solamente examinados superficialmente como entidades separadas. Sin embargo, recientemente hay una tendencia a conciliar la legislación y las prácticas archivológicas europeas, aunque no a unificarlas. El autor examina el origen y la historia de la evolución de la teoría y práctica archivológica en los principales países europeos, mediante la creación de los grandes depósitos de archivos, del nacimiento de la archivología como ciencia y del desarrollo de los archivos modernos. El autor termina el artículo con una visión global de la presente evolución archivológica en Europa y sugiere las áreas en las que la armonización archivológica pueda tener más éxito.