

Erik Norberg

National Archives
P.O. Box 12541
Stockholm
Švedska

ACCESS TO ARCHIVES: DEMOCRACY AND TRANSPARENCY

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Izlaganje sa znanstvenog skupa

Referat, kroz nekoliko tema – međunarodni programi rada, povijest i demokracija, aktivna zaštita kao sredstvo demokracije i povijesnog istraživanja – govori o dostupnosti arhivskog gradiva, demokraciji i transparentnosti.

U demokratskom sustavu svatko ima pravo na vlastitu kulturnu baštinu. U političkoj raspravi koristimo prava različitih vrsta, označena kao civilna ili demokratska prava. Najpoznatiji tekst o pravima je UN-ova Deklaracija o ljudskim pravima. Prvih 21 pravo su u klasičnoj liberalnoj tradiciji – pravo na slobodu, pravo glasa, pravna sigurnost, integritet, sloboda misli i sloboda tiska. Deklaracija sadrži i druga prava, kao što su socijalna sigurnost, pravo na adekvatnu odjeću, obrazovanje, pravo na rad, pravo na uživanje umjetnosti i dostignuća znanosti.

Među pravima koja se odnose na arhive, kao što su pravo na kulturnu baštinu i pravo na obrazovanje, moramo dati prioritet predmetima koji odgovaraju neposredno na osnovno pravo na slobodu iz Deklaracije. To može biti samo dostupnost informacija.

UNESCO je tradicionalni partner arhiva. Od prije pola godine nastojanja su usmjerena na sjedinjenje dva UNESCO-va informacijska programa, Općeg Informativnog programa (PGI) i Međuvladinog informacijskog programa (IIP). Oba se odnose na arhive. Nacrt programa izražava neke osnovne vrijednosti i pretpostavke, koje su povezane s demokratskim aspektima arhiva.

U 1990-ima arhivi su dobili važnog partnera u Vijeću Evrope. Svi poznajemo rad na nacrtu Preporuke Vijeća Evrope o dostupnosti arhivskog gradiva i rezoluciji CITRE iz Edinburgha 1997. godine i Evropskog sastanka arhiva u Bernu 1998, koji izražavaju interes arhivske zajednice za usvajanjem te Preporuke.

Proces Evropske unije pokrenut 1996. godine doveo je do objavljivanja tzv. Zelene knjige o javnom sektoru informiranja u informatičkom društvu. Ona se bavi dostupnošću informacija s operativne točke gledišta. Knjiga posvećuje pažnju pitanju autorskog prava, ali samo sa stajališta ekonomskog interesa. Zelena knjiga također raspravlja o pitanju privatnosti. Zelenu su knjigu kritizirali arhivi na koje se ona odnosila i zbog pridavanja premale pažnje građanskim pravima i slobodi informacija.

Strateški plan i Etički kodeks Međunarodnog arhivskog vijeća, koji su usvojeni 1996. godine, veoma su konkretni

Tijekom povijesti, oni koji su imali moć, učinili su što su mogli kako bi kontrolirali povijest. Najočitiiji je pokušaj iskrivljavanja povijesti iz sebičnih razloga zauzeo svoje mjesto u totalitarnim državama koje su uvijek postojale, a postoje još i danas u različitim dijelovima svijeta. Moć nad informacijama od bitnog je značaja za režime te vrste. Iskrivljavanje povijesti nužna je komponenta strategije opstanka režima.

Nacionalni arhivi igraju različitu i važnu ulogu u društvima novih nezavisnih država, kako po svom sadržaju, tako i kao jasna potvrda važnosti demokratskog socijalnog poretka, s gradivom dostupnim za istraživanje javnosti. Njihova uloga je naročito značajna kada dolazi do pristupa informacijama nakon dugog vremenskog razdoblja, npr. između generacija i kada se izlaže ono što se dogodilo tijekom razdoblja ranije zaodjenutog velom tajnosti. Naročito je važno da ta memorija bude dostupna za sve odnosno da informacije koje se čuvaju u arhivima budu dostupne svakome.

Naša kulturna baština ne može se čuvati u cijelosti, zbog činjenice što neki događaji nisu nikad dokumentirani, pa informacija nestaje sa sjećanjem osoba uključenih u te događaje. Kulturna baština nestaje zbog činjenice da važno gradivo nije namijenjeno za trajno čuvanje, zbog činjenice da se važne informacije pohranjuju na medijima koji nisu odgovarajući za trajno čuvanje ili se čuvaju u lošim klimatskim uvjetima, zbog činjenice da neke informacije ne mogu biti dostupne zbog neodgovarajućih obavijesnih ili praktičnih pomagala, te kao rezultat vrednovanja u arhivima.

Postupak vrednovanja kontroverzno je pitanje. Drugo pitanje proizlazi iz rasprave o privatnosti. Ukoliko se složimo da se kontekstualna vrijednost ne izvodi samo iz načina na koji je gradivo nastalo, već također i iz načina na koji je ono čuvano ili sredeno, moramo znati više o promišljenom uništavanju gradiva. Jedan od aspekata je dostupnost arhivskog gradiva koje je premješteno s njegovog izvornog mjesta. Od ranog 17. stoljeća imamo iskustvo s mirovnim ugovorima u koje su uključene odluke o dijeljenju arhivskoga gradiva koje je premješteno tijekom rata ili na koje

*utječu nove granice između država. Razvijena je sofisticirana teorija kako bi se nači-
nila razlika između provenijencije, pertinencije i funkcionalne vrijednosti.*

*Kulturna baština u velikoj je opasnosti zbog ekonomskih, političkih ili tehničkih
rizika. Ali taj se trend može zaustaviti ukoliko se uloži dodatni napor: zakonodavstvo
mora biti prilagođeno i primijenjeno tako, da ne bude u suprotnosti sa svrhom zaštite;
moramo poticati povijesnu svijest i razumijevanje za korist od zaštite građiva;
moramo razviti metode pohrane građiva, medije i materijale, promovirati standar-
dizaciju kvalitete i vještina; moramo obostrano razmjenjivati iskustva s drugim zem-
ljama dvostranim ugovorima ili još bolje koristeći kredibilitet i ekspertizu Među-
narodnog arhivskog vijeća; trebamo uvidjeti da su arhivi također na programu
važnih međunarodnih partnera kao što su UNESCO, Vijeće Evrope i Evropska uni-
ja; moramo učiniti svakoga svjesnim činjenice, da je dobar arhiv obilježje zdrave
demokracije.*

Sažetak izradila Živana Hedbeli

An International Agenda

At the opening of the Unesco Conference on Diversity of Culture 1998, the gentleman giving the opening address suggested that democracy should not be regarded as a system, but as a culture. To give an understandable picture of archives in the programme, the organizers had at the same time illustrated the seminar of ICA with – a filing cabinet. I would like to remind that archives are certainly not only a system for filing records, archives should also be regarded as a culture.

At this Unesco Conference, I had the pleasure of organising an Agora session on archives on behalf of the International Council on Archives. The session was devoted to the theme Democracy and Cultural Heritage. Six speakers were engaged in the program, our present Secretary General of ICA Mr Joan van Albada and five colleagues from other parts of the world. Together we formulated an introduction to the role of archives, which should fit into the programme of the Congress. We concentrated on three themes: the role of our profession in the democratic system; the right of everyone to a cultural heritage of her or his own; and finally the need to maintain a number of practical measures to achieve this.¹

In several cases it was maintained that cultural politics or programmes had the status of human rights. In the political debate we are used to a number of rights of different kinds, mentioned as civic rights or democratic rights. If we mean anything by this or if we want to avoid any inflation, we must be able to prioritize. Rights are

¹ Summary on Intergovernmental Conference on Cultral policies for Development, Stockholm 30. March – 2. April 1998, UNESCO CLT – 09/Conf. 210/5.

closely linked to freedom. Originally the term developed in the classical antiquity in opposition to the ultimate unfreedom, slavery. The most well known text on rights, the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, was adopted by the UN General Assembly at a meeting in Paris little more than 50 years ago, in 1948. No state voted against.

The 21 first rights are rights in the classic liberal tradition. Among them we note right to freedom, right to a voice in decisions, legal security, integrity, freedom of thought and freedom of press. We recognise the general conception from e.g. the Swedish Freedom of Press Act in 1766, the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the French Declaration of Rights of 1789. This is all about rights of citizens against power, rights which have been called freedom rights or negative rights, as they forbid power or people to infringe on the freedom of others. They also limit the influence of the power. But the UN declaration contains also other rights like social security, good clothing, education, right to work, right to enjoy the arts and benefit from science. These differ from the freedom rights, as they can be respected only if somebody actively provides the citizens with the content and this at the expense of someone or something else.

This duality was actually recognised by the UNESCO committee which prepared the Declaration, when it stated that it worked with two concepts of human rights, one which "started from the premises of inherent individual rights". The aim was to find a declaration which "by some means reconcile the various divergent or opposing formulations now in existence."²

In short this means that among all rights more or less involving archives, like e.g. right to a cultural heritage and right to education, we have to give priority to items which answers directly to the basic freedom rights of the declaration. This can only be access to information.

With this in mind I would like to discuss the position of archives; how the value of archives is reflected in some important current international documents: the proposed new Unesco Information Society Programme, the Council of Europe Draft Recommendation on Access and the European Union Green Paper on Access to Official Information. I would like to go on discussing the role of history or historical research in archives and finally try to define some main threats against an archival system, which is a culture characterised by openness and balance. This short discussion can be seen as an effort to go deeper into the questions raised in the declaration mentioned above.

² Johan Norberg, *Fullständiga rättigheter. Ett försvar för de 21 första artiklarna i FN:s deklaration om de mänskliga rättigheterna* (Stockholm 1999), p 16–20.

The Unesco Information Society Programme

UNESCO is a traditional partner of the Archives. Article 1 of its constitution assigns to the organisation the task of promoting free flow of ideas by word and image. Programme IV, where activities concerning archives and libraries are found, is giving priority to freedom of expression, to communication and information tools to support dialogue between citizens and public authorities, "thereby", according to the programme text, "enhancing democratic government."³

Since half a year efforts have been going on to merge the two information programmes of UNESCO, the General Information Programme (PGI) and the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP). Both cover archives. The Draft Programme, which will be discussed within the organisation and by its board later this year expresses some basic values and assumptions which are related to the democratic aspects of archives:

"Information and knowledge constitutes a global public good. Free and universal access to information is a fundamental human right, as it allows people to freely participate in the cultural life of the global community, to enjoy the arts, and to share scientific advancements. Information preservation, access and processing in the Information Society has a strong ethical dimension and creates global moral responsibilities. Free and universal access to information in belonging to the public domain is essential for advancing education, science and culture as well as for fostering democracy and is instrumental to bridging the gap between the information rich and information poor. The quality, reliability, and trustworthiness of information is essential. Free and universal access to information is indispensable for cultural diversity and the preservation of heritage of nations."⁴

These are general terms, and the draft programme gives more attention to modern information technology and less to paper based records and the traditional heritage role of archives. There is no direct link between access to information and a democratic society. But the programme is still an important framework for the cooperation between UNESCO and the archival community.

The Council of Europe Draft Recommendation on Access to Archives

In the 1990's the Archives have won an important partner in the Council of Europe. We all know about the work on the Council of Europe Draft Recommendation on Access to Archives and the resolutions from the CITRA in Edinburgh 1997 and the European Summit on Archives in Bern 1998, expressing the interest of the archi-

³ UNESCO Draft Programme and Budget 2000–2001; 30 C/5, Paris 1999, p 145.

⁴ Draft Outline of new Information Society Programme, UNESCO PGI/IIP/Joint Bureau/3 1999.

val community in having this recommendation adopted. It seems that we will have two recommendations, one aiming at records already transferred to archives and one concerning archives which still are kept by the records creators. Together they will encompass all our activities.

The Recommendation offers a great support to the idea that understanding history is essential to a democratic state system. It goes in other words further than we normally assume, when we attribute archives the role of being an asset to democracy only in the context of contributing to transparency and control in the current political system. It might be sufficient to quote from Section 1 of the Draft Recommendation some of the considerations which are motives for the need of adopting a legislation of this kind:

"Taking account of the increasing interest of the public for history, the institutional reforms currently underway in the new democracies and the exceptional scale of changes which are taking place in the creation of documents; Considering that a country does not become fully democratic until each one of its inhabitants has the possibility of knowing in an objective manner the elements of their history; Taking account of the complexity of problems concerning access to archives at both national and international level due to the variety of constitutional and legal frameworks and conflicting requirements of transparency and secrecy, and of protection of privacy and access to historical information, all of which are perceived differently by public opinion in each country; Recognising the wish of historians to study and civil society to better understand the complexity of the historical process in general and of that of the twentieth century in particular; conscious that a better understanding of recent European history could contribute to the prevention of conflicts"

It goes without saying that an organisation which was the originator of the European Convention on Human Rights and which has respect for democratic values as a fundamental condition for membership, also pays attention to the role of archives, history and democracy.

The European Union Green Paper on Access to Official Information

In 1996 a process started within the European Union leading to the publication of the so called Green Paper on Public Sector Information in the Information Society. The aim was to show how information within Government Departments and other public bodies could be used to provide benefit for citizens and business in Europe. It was felt necessary to standardise or facilitate access to information held by Governments not only to increase the freedom of information per se, but also to increase the competitiveness of European business in relation to above all the USA.

The Green Paper does not use the term access in a political or ideological context. It does not use words like democracy, history or cultural heritage. It is concer-

ned with access to information from an operational point of view.⁵ The paper is giving attention to the copyright issue, but only from the point of view of economic interest. It mentions two reasons for the public sector to protect its information: it may be a source of income, and the public sector bodies could wish to maintain the integrity of content.⁶

The Green Paper is also discussing the issue of privacy. The reference is the Directive from 1995, Directive on the protection individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data. Like the Directive, the Green Paper tries to achieve a balance between integrity and access but in a way which raises difficulties for those who regard preservation of information from public bodies as a fundamental tool for democracy, or as an issue which e.g. Archives can handle in a professional way within a legislative framework with reasonable limitations to immediate access.⁷

From Archives concerned the Green Paper has also been criticised for giving to little attention to civic rights and freedom of information. This is a position which is shared also by the library sector as represented by the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations.⁸

The ICA Strategic Plan and Code of Ethics

In comparison to the documents mentioned above the ICA Strategic Plan and Code of Ethics, which both were adopted in 1996, are very concrete. They were written for the archival community as a base for professional activities. In this context there was no need to give arguments for the existence of archives.

History and democracy

This brings us to the question of who is entrusted with handling the historic information, the information which, for various reasons, is conserved for the future.⁹ Access to archives is supposed to be a condition for administrative transparency, a help to the administration to function more effectively, to prevent corruption through public control of government and to give the public an opportunity to be part of the democratic society. But access to records is also the most important tool for his-

⁵ European Commission COM/1998/585; Public Sector Information: A Key resource for Europe. Green Paper on Public Sector Information in the Information Society.

⁶ Green Paper III. 6.

⁷ Green Paper III. 7.

⁸ EBLIDA Response to Public Sector Information: a key resource for Europe; The Hague, 10 June 1999.

⁹ A substantial part of this chapter is based on Jarl Torbacke, *The Conservation and Dissemination of Information – A Democratic Issue*; SKB Technical Report 98/18 (ISSN 0284–3757).

torians. It is for most historians in a democratic society evident that everyone has the right to gain access to information in archives freely, that exceptions can only be stipulated in law, and that they always have the right to appeal against a decision which denies access.

There still exists, by tradition, intimate cooperation between the officials of the archives, who are themselves often historians by training, and the historians from the faculties of the country's universities. From the researchers point of view this is a great asset, but because of the ongoing professionalisation within archives this link is getting weaker and weaker. The aim of establishing archival science as an independent discipline of its own or of introducing new specialists in our profession – lawyers, information and computer specialists – is natural and unavoidable but dissolves the traditional integration between historians and archivists. Archival science will not for a long time remain a subsidiary discipline to historical science and the archival profession can not survive without the widening the base for recruitment.

The societal function of the historians is to describe and explain, in cooperation with the archives, the past, to analyse the chains of political, economic, social and cultural events that have shaped the country's history. They examine the past and try to explain why things happened the way they did. The reasons of the past, whether pleasant or unpleasant, should be passed on to posterity. But it is important to emphasize that history is not an instrument for predicting the future. History does not repeat itself, and if it does it is purely by chance. There are no laws governing the pattern of history that make it possible to extrapolate from knowledge of the past and present to predict what will happen in the future. For this very reason it is impossible to say with certainty what portion of a period's records should be saved and what can be safely destroyed as being less important. Nevertheless, the volume of the information requires some prioritization and representative selection.

Over the course of history, those in power have done what they could to control history. There was a time in the past when every self respecting potentate had his own personal historian whose task was to glorify the virtues and accomplishments of the ruler by relating all the good he had done and suppressing all the bad. The same attempt to manipulate the past and thereby control the future has been made countless times in our time as well. An urgent task for the historians is then to expose and foil this attempt to falsify the past in order to gain power over the future.

It goes without saying that the most flagrant attempts to distort history for selfish purposes have taken place in societies where the flow of information has been controlled and restricted, in other words in totalitarian states of the kind that have always existed and still exist today in different parts of the world. Power over information is of fundamental importance to regimes of this kind, while a free flow of information is a natural aspect of every democracy. It is in the totalitarian state that power

over information for manipulative purposes is wielded most systematically, most persistently and most ruthlessly. The distortion of history is a necessary component of the regime's survival strategy.

The price of democracy in this context is that in order to guarantee openness and a free flow of information, we have to learn to deal with information which is both swift, difficult to grasp and variable in quality. A question is at what level in society the problem of information dissemination should be dealt with. The answer must be on all levels, not only for political, administrative, business or academic use. A common hobby in many countries today is genealogical research. It has become popular to search for your roots. Many people have been able, by searching in old archive documents, to trace their forefathers several hundred years back in time and in the bargain to learn a great deal not only about the origins and living circumstances of their relatives, but also about the past in general.

The value of such knowledge lies on many different levels. Getting to know one's own ancestors gives many people a sense of security. It also gives them a special feeling of belonging in geographic space. And above all people in general have got an appreciation of the importance of archives, historical research and a critical attitude to the information which is provided. People who would never before have come up with the idea of visiting an archive have learned that such institutions are also there for them and that they contain information that is of relevance to them as well. It might even be said that genealogical research has in this way brought about a democratisation of historical research. Archives and the information they contain on the past have become everyone's property and can be of interest to everyone, and not just the professional historians at the universities.

George Orwell had some interesting things to say on this subject. In 1949 he published his novel "Nineteen Eighty-Four", a portrayal, set in the future, of the individual's struggle and defeat in a totalitarian society. The main character in the novel works in the archives department at what is called the Ministry of Truth, where his job is to alter and sift through the source material and decide what is to be conserved in accordance with given directives in order to make sure that what posterity learns about the leader and the state ruled autocratically by him is the doctored "truth". The citizens of this country are constantly indoctrinated with a distorted version of world events. The information kept in the archives is always adjusted to suit current policy. People and events that are exalted one day are denounced the next, events and statements associated with them are erased from or altered in the files, while other people and events which were previously condemned and had been expunged from the files can, if deemed appropriate, just as quickly be reinstated in the documents.

Orwell's novel stirred up considerable debate, was sold in several printings in the free world and was made into several film versions. It was published the first time during the early days of the Cold War. In the USA it paradoxically helped pave the way for a campaign of vilification of everything the opponent was considered to stand for. It was a reaction which victimized those who were considered to be "un-American". This led to the blacklisting of individuals regarded as unreliable in the country known as the world's leading democracy.

On the other hand we have learnt that Orwell's interpretation of how the totalitarian state worked came very close to the truth. This is due to the fact that there were parts of Orwell's portrait that did not precisely coincide with reality, and one of these was the archives. It is true for totalitarian states that access to archives was limited, that information had been distorted and history manipulated. But the documents had as a rule not been destroyed. The archives remained in principle and could be used. History could be reconstructed.

A similar problem can be recognized from many European countries, where a battle has raged concerning whether it is a good idea to root around in the past, or whether it is better to allow the memories of different kinds of misdeeds to fade into oblivion, and secondly whether ordinary citizens share in the guilt for the crimes of the government or the state. In both cases the sometimes most sensitive can not be handled without the records preserved in the archives.

The national archives are thus playing a different and pivotal role in the societies of new sovereign countries, both in their own capacity and as concrete evidence of what a democratic social order with records open to public scrutiny means. Their role is of course particularly important when it comes to access to information over long periods of time, for example between generations, and when it comes to exposing what has happened during periods formerly shrouded in secrecy. Fine words about archives as a nation's memory then take on practical significance. Then it is particularly important that this memory be open to all, that the information conserved in the archives be accessible to everyone.

The task of historians is to provide as true and impartial a picture as possible of various events in the past. A sceptical attitude towards the information found in sources is necessary for objective historical analysis; source criticism should be the hallmark of the historian.

Finally, it should be said that in situations of real or imagined danger, infringements occur even in the most democratically governed countries of both basic human rights, such as freedom of speech and freedom of the press, and other civil rights. During the Second World War also the government of neutral Sweden kept a watchful eye on the flow of news in crisis situations. A special government agency was created, the State Information Board, for the purpose of deciding on behalf of

the Government what could and could not be published in the press and broadcast on the radio. The purpose was firstly to avoid upsetting Swedish citizens with too much biased information, and secondly, and above all, not to annoy the Germans – who were occupying Denmark, Norway and Finland at that time – by publishing too strong criticism against its leaders.

The reason is normally that you have to defend democracy actively, sometimes even with the weapons of the opponent. Whether this attitude is defensible or not is the subject of constant discussion, where also archives are deeply involved.

Active preservation as a tool for democracy and historical research

At this stage it can be summed up that one aspect of archives is the democratic one, that one aspect of democracy is the archival one, that one aspect of history is the archival one and another is the democratic one.

But large portions of the cultural heritage which is normally kept in archives is not set aside for long term preservation or kept open for research. Irrespective if this has to do with personal, political, legal, economic or professional reasons, it deeply affects the democratic system. Five theses have been formulated in the following with brief explanations.

1. *Our cultural heritage cannot be preserved intact owing to the fact that some events are never documented, so the information is lost with the memory of those involved.*

The concept of "cultural heritage" does not have to be limited to include information which is preserved for the future in structured form on durable media. It constitutes a "cultural heritage" as long as it is preserved in the simplest and most fleeting type of memory function.

It is often said that this problem of decaying records has become much more acute since telephoning took over from letter-writing. This is certainly true in some respects. But it cannot be denied that telefax, and above all e-mail, has simplified the actual documentation process. Anyone who has participated in discussions on electronic networks is aware of their accessibility, and the chattiness and wide dissemination of information they encourage.

What kind of information is never documented at all, then? The easiest answer would be that such a question can never be answered. Those parts of our record-keeping that are highly formalized in our constitutional law (the Freedom of the Press Act, the Official Secrets Act, the Archives Act, the Accounting Act) work fairly well, in any case. This includes the state and municipal bureaucracy in all its forms, and for this reason we find information density and continuity within the large nati-

onal information systems. Where the principle of public access to official records has never been able to gain a foothold in the same way is in the actual software in the decisionmaking systems – the deliberations, the back rooms, the informal corridors of power.

2. Our cultural heritage is disappearing due to the fact that important records are never set aside for long-term preservation.

Against the background of our western cultural tradition and under the strong influence of the right of public access to official records, the concept of "national cultural heritage" has come to include not only the historical sources, but also the kind of material that is generated daily. As a result, our archivists have devoted a great deal of work to the information systems that are continuously being built up. This works relatively well within the public sector, and we have obtained good coverage within other important areas which express the activities and interests of our citizens.

But there is one sector where record-keeping is poorly provided for: the business community. To be sure, there are a number of company archives that serve as the exceptions that prove the rule. These exceptions are often large family enterprises, not seldom with old historical roots. One reason for the interest has been their own awareness of the fact that they represent a culture-historical tradition. In recent years an attempt has been made to build up an organisations for business archives, but vigorous measures are called for, if we believe that industry and business has played a role in our history, or if we accept that business archives contain information of importance for a broad spectrum of historical disciplines.

Normally large company archives are being preserved relatively well, but most not at all, with the exception of course of companies in receivership. And if we are to write the history of business in a balanced manner, we should not limit ourselves to records kept by public authorities, by labour and employer organizations or by those companies that end up in the liquidator's hands.

3. Our cultural heritage is disappearing due to the fact that important information is being stored on media that are not suitable for long-term preservation or are preserved under poor climatic conditions.

Changes in writing materials and methods have always caused trouble for archivists, librarians and researchers. Several countries have built up a broader base for promoting technical conditions for preservation. On a European level we have the European Council for Preservation and Access with secretariat in the Hague. The majority of electronic archives in those of our institutions which have started accessioning electronic records can be read today, but only the majority. Herein lies

the problem. We must constantly maintain the electronic data carriers and transfer their contents to new media and formats every few years. But we must also not forget the traditional problems with bad climatic conditions and weak resources for preservation.

4. Our cultural heritage is disappearing because of the fact that some information cannot be accessed due to inadequate search aids or practical tools.

No matter how much we talk about the importance of regulations and the influence of developments in information technology on the storage media, accessibility is limited by the availability of research rooms with vacant tables or lending options, and the rapid production of records and suitable search aids.

Ledgers were created to manage the smaller archives, for the large ones card inventories, catalogues and registers were added. But the finding aids couldn't keep up with the growth of the archives. The fact that we are now faced with the risk that researchers may replace the primary material, the sources, with summaries, aggregated data, printed publications or information which happens to be available on Internet, has to do with accessibility. Naturally, the archives must keep up with the world's demands on rationality and speed, if we don't want to exclude qualified researchers.

But the most resource-demanding and complicated work remains to be done. One result of these efforts has been interesting and fruitful collaboration between archives, libraries and museums. In some countries we have a well developed so called ALM cooperation between these institutions. The Council of Europe and the European Union encourage cooperation between the heritage or memory sectors. ICA has developed the Beijing agenda together with the library organisation IFLA to promote cooperation between Archives and libraries, and The Blue Shield offers a platform for cooperation between Archives, libraries and museums.

What we can take from each sector is the archives' feeling for provenance and structure, the libraries' expertise on cataloguing by subject, and the museums' experience with object description. We can also regard the work as one step in a long-term movement towards a common body of information, where the borderlines between the archives' documents, the libraries' books and the museums' objects are gradually being erased, and the borderlines that must be preserved for constitutional reasons have to be defined on the basis of other criteria than appearance, material and informational content.

5. Our cultural heritage is disappearing as a result of appraisal in archives.

Appraisal is a controversial issue. The future availability of information is restricted by deliberate and selective destruction. In the public sector, most of the appraisal is governed by decisions made by the National Archives. In the private sector

there are generally no rules for either preservation or appraisal. Examples of appraisal strategies can be found in several countries. Recently the National Archives of Sweden published after a long period of deliberation, a number of important criteria for evaluating the research value of documents are mentioned. These include:

- uniqueness of the data;
- continuity of the informational content;
- data quality and opportunities for source criticism;
- aggregation level, where unprocessed primary data has priority over compilations;
- options for identifying data, tying them to specific individuals or other units;
- linkability, the ability to relate the data to other information;
- functional relationships of documents with other documents;
- accessibility and surveyability.

Another issue has arisen in the debate concerning privacy. We believe that not only research, but also fundamental democratic values benefit from comprehensive preservation of records.

If the state has ever taken action against a person, it is in his or her interests that the information be preserved. Otherwise there will be no opportunity at all in the future for re-examination, review or rectification. The discussion of the archives from security services have brought new arguments to light. In a report made on behalf of Unesco and ICA Antonio Gonzalez Quintana mentions three different ways of preserving archives of State security institutions in pre-democratic countries: the succession of the German Democratic Republic offers one example, where archives from the security services were kept almost integrally; Chile offers another example, where nobody knows of the existence of the archives of the repressive institutions; Greece offers a third, where the documents were kept for administrative use some time after the dictatorship but later on were destroyed. Here as well, it is the role of the archivists to argue in favour of the most extensive possible preservation of records.¹⁰

A particular aspect of weeding of archives is the deliberate destruction caused by political or ideological reasons. We have examples in history when political leaders issued orders on systematic destruction in order to deprive political or ethnic groups their cultural heritage. A clear case was described by the historian Dmitri Volkogonov some years ago:

"Lenin had begun building the new society within days of the October coup. He signed nearly sixty decrees in order to dispossess the landowners. As if he was afraid everything would one day go into reverse, he wrote to People's Commissar for Justi-

¹⁰ Antonio Gonzalez Quintana, Archives of the security services of the repressive regimes; Janus 1998, p 10–12.

ce D. Kursky: "Is it not time to deal with the question of destroying the title documents of private property: notarized deeds of land-ownership, factories, buildings, and so on and so forth. Prepare for this in secret, without publicity. Seize the property first ... In my view, the documents should be turned into pulp (you should first find out how to do this technically)".

The expeditious Kursky replied at once: "This is an appropriate measure and can be carried out quickly as the notary archives are in our hands. "Lenin was satisfied and settled the matter with another note to Kursky: "So, you'll get on with this without waiting for a special instruction from the Sovnarkom (and you'll arrange a meeting with the Commissariat of the Interior and others. But in secret)."¹¹

If we agree that the contextual value not only is derived from the way the records were created, but also from the way they were preserved or selected for preservation, we need to know more about deliberate destruction of archives. Like Leopold Auer said in his paper on Archival losses: "Being dependent on their sources, historians very often succumb to the danger of assuming that surviving documents are at the same time a representative selection."¹²

In his report "Memory of the World – Report on destroyed and damaged archives" Joan van Albada refers to disasters resulting from actions by the dominating political system. As examples he mentions Liberia, Burundi, Rwanda and former Yugoslavia. Questions of this kind are normally sensitive. When asked to provide information on destruction of archives for reasons of archival or cultural cleansing, some respondents asked for a non-identifiable presentation in the report.¹³

One aspect of this is access to archives which have been transferred from their place of origin. Since the early 17th century we have experience from peace agreements including decisions on the distribution of archives which were transferred during war or was affected by new borders between states. A sophisticated theory has been developed distinguishing between provenance, pertinence and functional value. Irrespective of the solutions, the absolute minimum obligation of the keeper must be to give free access to the archives to all parties concerned.¹⁴

¹¹ Dmitri Volkogonov, *Autopsy for an Empire: the seven leaders who built the Soviet regime* (1998), p 4.

¹² Leopold Auer, *Archival losses*; in *Memory of the World at Risk* (Archivum vol XLII, 1996), p 6.

¹³ Joan van Albada, *Memory of the World – report on destroyed nad damaged archives*; in *Memory of the World* (Archivum vol XVII, 1996), p 11.

¹⁴ *Actes de la dix-septieme Conference internationale de la Table Ronde des Archives*; Cagliari 1977; ICA, (Paris 1980), p 80. Charles Kecskemeti, *Archival claims. Preliminary study on the principles and criteria to be applied in negotiations*, Unesco PGI-77/WS/1, (Paris 1977), p 12. *Archival Interdependence in the Information Age*, Thessaloniki 1994. *Interdependence of Archive CITRA proceedings 1993–1995* (Dordrecht 1998). *The View of the Archival Community in settlingdisputed archival claims. Position paper adopted by the Executive Committee of ICA April 1995*; ICA CE/95 A/10.

We are often discussing the contextual value of records, sometimes the contextual value of archives, but very seldom the contextual value of creating agencies, of National Archives, of nations, of political systems. From a general and historical point of view it would be natural to regard also the nation, the state or the society as the real records creator. We are all products of our own environment and can never reach full understanding of the process of records creation without knowing the general framework. One step in that direction would be more knowledge of the impact of the political system on creation or preservation of records.

6. *An action plan*

Cultural heritage and indispensable sources for our history are always in great danger due to economic, political or technical risks. But the trend can be stopped if we make the effort:

- The technology must be adapted so that it is suitable not only for storage and retrieval, but also for simple routines for preservation. Legislation must be adapted and applied so that it does not counteract its purpose to preserve.

- We must encourage historical awareness and an understanding of the benefits of record preservation. We ought to accept that programs for preserving oral traditions, oral history, are not just something for ethnologists or historians in the Third World.

- We must develop storage methods, media and materials, promote standardization of quality and routines. Naturally, we cannot preserve all original material forever. But we must be able to preserve in original form for the foreseeable future that which ought to be saved in original form due to its symbolic value or particular research interests. For all the other material, the large body of records, no restoration efforts will suffice. Here we must work with other methods for media conversion, microfilming or digitization, which permits the largest possible number of generation copyings in the future.

- We can not limit our efforts to the national scene; we have to make use of the opportunities to exchange experience with other countries by bilateral or even better by using the credibility and expertise of the International Council on Archives; we should recognise that also archives is on the agenda of important international partners as Unesco, the Council of Europe and the European Union.

- Above all we have to make everybody aware of the fact that archives by no means are limited to filing systems, but that good archives is the hallmark of a sound democracy or, why not, a condition for the fulfillment of the UN Declaration of Human Rights.