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## LIFELONG LEARNING: THE ARCHIVAL PROFESSION IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

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Pregledni članak

### **Ključne riječi:**

*permanently education, archival profession, archival education*

*U ovom radu autorica, uvažavajući brze i stalne promjene informatičkih sustava, naglašava važnost permanentnog obrazovanja tijekom cijelog radnog vijeka arhivista.*

*Navodi promjene koje su se desile tijekom njenog staža: format dokumenata i metodologija obrade; arhivska služba je obuhvatila registraturno i privatno gradivo; među arhivistima ima sve više žena i pripadnika etničkih i nacionalnih manjina; povećanje broja arhivskih organizacija, obrazovnih programa i časopisa; pojava međunarodnih normi opisa.*

*Kako bi adekvatno odgovorilo na nastale promjene, temeljno arhivsko obrazovanje treba biti usredotočeno na analizu arhivskih pitanja. Po završetku školovanja, arhivist mora imati priliku pohađanja kratkih, intenzivnih seminara o određenim temama i metodama.*

*Međunarodna arhivska zajednica se prekasno usmjerila na permanentno obrazovanje. Dva su razloga tome: odabir tema i odgovarajući način obuke. Odabir teme je najbolje prepustiti samim arhivistima. Nacionalno udruženje može odrediti temu i organizirati seminar ili slijediti smjernice samita europskih arhivista te odabrati temu koja odgovara pan-europskim potrebama. Obuka se može provoditi na razne načine: u sklopu međunarodnih ili nacionalnih savjetovanja, ljetni tečajevi na*

*sveučilištima, predavanja jednog ili više predavača na razini arhivske institucije, učenje uz pomoć videa, World Wide Weba i sličnih tehnika učenja na daljinu. Svaki način ima svoje prednosti i nedostatke, koji se mogu ukloniti kombiniranjem načina obuke.*

*Bez obzira na način obuke, permanentno obrazovanje zahtijeva aktivno sudjelovanje arhivista koji želi proširiti svoje znanje, arhivske institucije koja podržava kontinuiran profesionalan razvoj zaposlenika te predavača. Niti jedan način ne odgovara svim zahtjevima, a da bi se udovoljilo potrebama arhivista 21. stoljeća, treba ponuditi široku paletu načina i mogućnosti permanentnog obrazovanja.*

Sažetak izradila Živana Hedbeli

In a world of rapidly changing information systems, the archivist must engage in lifelong learning. This does not mean that the archivist's initial archival education will be discarded; rather, it means that it must form a solid foundation to support the integration of additional theories and practices that will arise over the course of a professional lifetime.

As an example, let me look at what has changed in my archival lifetime.

*Formats.* The formats of documents have been reinvented many times. We have gone from paper letters to e-mail, from microfilm to digital storage, from a photograph to multimedia linked by hypertext. And with it the methodologies needed to manage these formats have changed.

*Size.* The size of the archival enterprise has changed. It has grown to include the management of current records. In many countries there is a new or renewed emphasis on the systematic solicitation and acquisition of material from private sources. These lead to ever-larger archival enterprises requiring more management skills by the archival leadership.

*Demographics.* More women, more ethnic and racial backgrounds are found among archivists today.

*Organization of the profession.* The international network of archival organizations, the professional societies with special emphases: these are mostly products of the second half of the twentieth century. Similarly the profession has been enhanced by many additional schools and training programs spanning Europe and North America, Africa and Australia. More journals have appeared, fostering the dissemination of ever more serious discourse. That, in turn, means it is difficult, if not impossible, for a working professional to keep up with the literature of the profession.

*Internationalism.* The advent of the international description standards is a milestone in international archival cooperation. It says that archivists are looking at

the research clientele and trying to make sure that clientele is served, no matter where the researcher is located and where the materials are housed.

Despite all these change, the archival functions are constant: to select, preserve, and make available. But the means by which those functions are performed is dramatically changed.

What does this means for archival education ?

Two things. First, initial education must focus on the process of analysis of archival issues. Second, after initial education, the archivist must have the opportunity to attend additional, short but intense courses that provide in-depth information on a particular problem, method, or technique.

A focus on lifelong learning opportunities is overdue in the international community. There are many reasons why lifelong learning has been difficult to provide. Let us consider only two: choosing topics for continuing educational opportunities and finding appropriate delivery systems.

The choice of topics is best left to the professionals themselves, acting in concert. One obvious method is for a professional archival association to decide on a theme and host an educational program on it. Another is to follow the lead of pan-European bodies, such as the "summit" of European archivists, held in Munich in the spring of 1996, that decided the priorities for Europe for the next two years were the management of electronic records, the training of archives personnel, and preservation of the European archival heritage. Within those guidelines, an archival institution, organization, or educational institution could shape an offering, secure in the knowledge that this is a pan-European need. Whatever the method used to select a topic, those developing the training opportunity must understand that short-term training competes in the marketplace of ideas for scarce time and money. If the training offered does not meet the needs of practitioners, no one will come. The best way to ensure that the training is relevant is to listen carefully to the demands of the professionals.

Delivery systems for intensive short-term training are varied. Let us look at several:

*1. Training in the context of an international or regional archival meeting.* The Society of American Archivists always has training opportunities with its annual convention: CITRA, the International Conference of the Round Table on Archives, often has a pre- or post-conference seminar. These programs have the virtues of bringing international experts in to lecture; the disadvantage is that they are often only two days in length, reflect the priorities of the program committee or the host institution (which may or may not be the priorities of the larger profession) and often do not have sufficient coordination to make a coherent training experience. Because

these are international meetings, the participants must speak one of the major international languages, limiting participation; further, the costs of travel to such training will limit the number of persons who can benefit.

2. *Training offered by a university in a summer or continuing education program.* This may have more coordination because it is part of a regular educational institution's offerings. Because it is academic by definition, it may be more remote from the needs of the working professionals.

3. *Training provided by an individual or team of trainers brought to a local archives.* This has several advantages: it meets the needs of working professionals, because the people who invited the trainers into the country are bringing them because they believe the training is important, the costs for participants are cheaper, the language problem can be surmounted by either inviting in trainers with the language skills or providing local translators. A variations on this plan would be to bring in a team to train persons who, in turn, would provide training in local settings. While theoretically attractive this assumes that trainers can master a new method, technique, or topics in a few days *with sufficient skill to teach it*. That is a very large order.

4. *Distance learning through interactive videos, World Wide Web connections and other techniques.* This allows the learner to work at a comfortable pace, repeating material as needed. Supplementary materials can be provided in a variety of languages. The educators can be international experts, engaged just for the purpose of developing the educational materials, thereby giving the learner the benefit of the very best current thinking. The disadvantages are considerable too: inevitably there is a sense of disconnection between lecturer and learner and there are very limited opportunities to provide real-time question and answer sessions. These tools may actually be better as supplements to a course taught locally than as stand-alone learning experiences.

Variations involving two or more of the above delivery systems seem promising. One would be to convene a week-long workshop, three times per year, with the same participants and the same theme. The sessions would include intensive instruction and group activities; in the four months between sessions the participants would complete formal assignments. Each workshop could be held in a different location thereby cutting travel costs and also allowing institutions to share the costs of hosting a training opportunity. This is the model that was employed in the United States by the Society of American Archivists for its Preservation Management Training Program. A second option is to bring all participants together for two weeks, probably at an educational institution for intensive training then use distance learning techniques for the remainder of a fixed period of time, such as a year. This is the model

adopted by a library training program in Poland, beginning in the fall 1997. Many other variations are possible.

Whatever model is chosen, lifelong learning requires the active participation of three partners: the professional who identifies the need to enhance skills, the employing organization that supports continuous professional development, and the organization and persons providing the educational opportunity. Skills development is a continuum, organizational needs change, and educators must continuously listen to the professionals. No one type of training is appropriate for all topics, all professionals, or all organizations. A menu of educational opportunities, with varied approaches, will be required to meet the continuing needs of archivists in the twenty-first century.