

Theo Thomassen

Arhivska škola  
Hag  
Nizozemska

## A SMALL COUNTRY IN THE WORLD OF ARCHIVAL EDUCATION: THE DUTCH CASE

UDK 378.6:930.25](492)

Pregledni članak

### **Ključne riječi:**

*arhivsko obrazovanje, obrazovni program, profesionalizacija, Nizozemska arhivska škola*

### **Sažetak:**

*Autor razmatra stanje arhivskoga obrazovanja u svijetu, udio obrazovanja u postupku profesionalizacije struke, te navodi primjer Nizozemske arhivske škole.*

*U imeniku Međunarodnog arhivskog vijeća popisano je preko 200 škola i programa za obuku arhivista. Razlike u obrazovnim programima su znatne. Arhivsko obrazovanje uvelike ovisi o organizaciji arhivske djelatnosti, o statusu i usmjerenju arhivske znanosti te o utjecaju struke.*

*Arhivska djelatnost je, ovisno o specifičnim prilikama, definirana i organizirana različito. Arhivistika je, u zemljama gdje se javni arhivski sustav razvio za Francuske revolucije, više okrenuta povijesti, dok je u mlađim zemljama više usmjerena k administraciji. U državama starog svijeta arhivistika je izdanak diplomatike, u Novom svijetu arhivistika u svom početku uopće nije niti priznavana za znanost. U dijelu zemalja struka je čvrsto ukorijenjena u društvu te potrebe struke utječu na obrazovni program, dok je u drugim zemljama rad u arhivu jedini način obuke arhivista. Da bi se shvatio ovaj fenomen, treba proanalizirati koncept profesionalizacije, što je sociološki termin i znači proces u kojem ljudi istog zanimanja,*

*rabeći svoj monopol u određenom području znanja, zajednički nastoje steći i zadržati određenu poziciju moći, kako bi kontrolirali vrijednost svoje struke.*

*U procesu profesionalizacije, glavno sredstvo kojim se održava vrijednost struke je arhivsko obrazovanje. Njime se povećava kompetentnost stručnjaka i jača pozicija struke u cjelini. Dobru povijesnu ilustraciju procesa profesionalizacije pruža arhivsko obrazovanje u Nizozemskoj.*

*U Nizozemskoj je 1802. godine osnovana javna arhivska služba, 1892. utemeljeno je Udruženje nizozemskih arhivista, 1898. tiskan je znameniti priručnik Mullera, Feitha i Fruina, 1918. objavljen je prvi nizozemski arhivski zakon, a 1919. nizozemska vlada utemeljila je arhivsku školu, pa je od tada svatko tko je želio ući u struku morao završiti neki od programa škole i položiti arhivski ispit. Struka je kontrolirala školu čija je najvažnija zadaća bila obuka viših arhivista. Glavni udžbenik bila je knjiga Mullera, Feitha i Fruina, što je uzrokovalo da su nizozemski arhivisti dugo bili poznatiji po svojoj pragmatičnosti i zanatstvu nego akademskim raspravama.*

*Nakon II. svjetskog rata, brz napredak informacijske znanosti i tehnologija komunikacije utjecao je u cijelom svijetu na temelje arhivske struke. Redefiniran je svaki dio profesije, a ujedno i struktura i kontekst arhivskog obrazovanja. Potreba za promjenama je očevidna, no mogućnosti i želje njena zadovoljenja se razlikuju od zemlje do zemlje, ovisno o profesionalnoj fleksibilnosti.*

*Nizozemska arhivska škola je doživjela potpunu metamorfozu. Sustav obrazovanja, utemeljen početkom stoljeća, sve je manje učinkovito zadovoljavao potrebe struke. Stara organizacija struke, oblikovana da predstavlja samo javne arhive, više nema dominantni utjecaj. Usvojen je novi obrazovni program, usmjereniji na teorijska pitanja struke.*

*Prošle je godine škola privatizirana, obrazovni program je u potpunosti izmijenjen, njegov temelj čini arhivistika, a informacijske znanosti, povijest i pomoćne povijesne znanosti su sastavni dio studija. Time je obrazovni program proširen, olakšani su uvjeti rada za studente i profesore te povećana mogućnost zapošljavanja diplomanata.*

Sažetak izradila Živana Heđbeli

## **Differences between types of archival education in the world**

In 1992 ICA's Section on Archival Education published its directory of archive schools and programs for archival education. In its updated form, this directory lists about 200 schools and programs from all over the world with their addresses and with short outlines of their curricula. The differences are remarkable. All schools seem to be different, in terms of educational level, entrance requirements, the contents and

the orientation of the curricula, the organisation and structure of the courses or the relations with the general educational and the public archive system.

Easier than to classify those schools and programs it is to identify the principal factors which are determining the differences. Archival education appears to depend to a large extent on how in specific circumstances archival functions are understood and organized, on what status and orientation archival science has got and how strong and influential the archival profession happens to be.

### **Archival functions and archival science**

In different circumstances archival functions are defined and organized differently. Most differences are related to the orientation, the scope and the level of archival practice. In countries where the public archive system developed in the period of the French revolution, archival work originally had a strong historical orientation, while in the younger countries the orientation tends to be more administrative. Accordingly, archival education will be more historically or more administratively oriented.

In some countries, only the administration of paper archives transferred to public archives services is considered to be the general archivist's work. In others archivists keep and exploit all kinds of archival material in all life cycle stages. Consequently, archival education might be more document oriented or more process and information oriented.

Finally, in some countries archival work is understood and organized as a craft, in other countries archivists exercise their jobs as a profession. Archival education differs accordingly. Craftsmen have to learn how to do the job, have to learn mainly the characteristics of the job itself, professionals have to learn the underlying discipline, which is the reason of existence of the job.

Different definitions and a different organisation of archival functions go along with differences in the status and application of archival science:

Archival science emerged in the Old World as an offspring of diplomatics. Archivists were historians or jurists who had specialized in mediaeval diplomatics. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, however, archival science established itself as one of the auxiliary sciences of history. Archivists became historians or jurists specialized in archival science and other auxiliary sciences of history. Archival education was provided by departments of history, but in some countries – France, The Netherlands, Germany – specialized schools were established to provide archival education as postgraduate programs.

In the New World archival science was in the beginning not recognized as a scientific discipline at all. Archivists were not seen as specialized historians, but as

specialized librarians. Consequently, archival education was not organized as a post-graduate program for historians, but as part of a graduate program in library science.

Under the influence of the developments in information and communication technology, the archival discipline has gradually broadened its scope and developed from an auxiliary science of history into an autonomous discipline in the field of the information sciences. Although archival science is of course still taught as an auxiliary science of history, over and above this type of archival education, separate study tracks in archival science have emerged within the framework of graduate programs for library and information sciences, reflecting the new autonomous status of the discipline.

### **The strength and influence of the archival profession**

The strength and influence of the archival profession is a third major factor determining differences in types of archival education.

In some countries the profession is firmly established and rooted in society; its training demands are decisive for curriculum development. In other countries the profession is small and feeble and the only way for archival community to educate its new archivists is to train them in-service.

In analyzing this phenomenon, the concept of professionalisation should be the central analytical concept. Professionalisation means literally: the process of becoming a profession. As a sociological term, however, it is used in a more specific sense, namely as the process

*in which people with the same occupation  
using their monopoly in a specific field of knowledge  
try together to acquire and defend a position of power  
in order to control the exchange value of their occupation.*

In this process, six steps are distinguished:

1. the integration of related tasks and duties causes an occupation to come into being;
2. the occupation is given a name;
3. people exercising the occupation establish a professional association;
4. they formulate their own professional image and an own value system, preferably sanctioned by law;
5. they establish their own program for professional education so that the professional competence of the members will be beyond doubt;

6. they get control of the entrance to the profession by acquiring public recognition for their diploma's and by reserving professional posts for those who possess these diploma's.

### **Archival education in the process of professionalisation**

In this process of professionalisation, archival education is a key instrument of the archival profession to maintain the profession's exchange value. It is aimed at increasing the professional competence of the archivists by transmitting the discipline of archival science. It is also aimed at strengthening group conscience among archivists by transmitting the professional image and the values of the profession. And finally it is aimed at protecting the profession from intruders by drawing a line between professionals and incompetents.

Like all other steps in the professionalisation process, the educational efforts of the profession have a twofold function. Archival education can be a means of the profession for increasing the competence of the professionals, but at the same time an instrument for strengthening the position of the profession as a whole. It is a means to transmit the own definition of professional reality to the new professionals as well as to impose this definition on the rest of society.

In the early stages of professionalisation the advantages of this twofold function are obvious: professional competence – the scientific discipline monopolized by the profession – can be sold at the highest prize. In the later stages, however, disciplining professionals by tying them to common concepts, to a common language and to common attitudes, can easily stimulate self-sufficiency and conservatism. Every profession tries to extend its power and the level of knowledge at the same time, but if the choice must be made, power will gain priority over knowledge, and the need to speak with one mouth will gain over the intellectual demand to disagree.

A strong profession can produce a system of archival education behaving like a challenging agent of continuous change. It can also produce a system of archival education aimed at simply duplicating the existing professional image.

### **The Dutch Archive School in the process of professionalisation**

My thesis so far has been, that the organisation of an establishment for archival education and the structure and contents of its curricula depend to a high degree from the orientation; the scope and the level of archival practice, the status and application of archival science and the strength and influence of the archival profession. The development of archival education in the Netherlands can provide this thesis with an appropriate historical illustration. I will give you a short description of this development, in which the process of professionalisation will be the focus.

In 1802, a few years after the Dutch bourgeois revolution had caused the separation of current and non-current records, the public archive service had been established, in order to preserve old documents for the benefit of historical research. In the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century this first step in the process of professionalisation was followed by the other five steps. In 1892 the Association of Dutch Archivists was founded, the first association of this kind in the world. In 1898 the manual of Muller, Feith and Fruin was published, codifying the new principles of archival science. And in 1918, the first Dutch archival law was issued.

The establishment of an archives school by the Dutch government in 1919 can be considered to be the crowning glory of the job. From that moment onwards, any person who wanted to enter the profession was obliged to complete one of the programs of the school and to pass the archival examination.

The profession actually controlled the school. Representatives of the archival community decided upon the admission of the students; most of the teachers were working archivists; students attended lectures at the school only one day a week and worked during the rest of the time as trainees in a repository.

The education of senior archivists was the Archive School's central duty and its postgraduate program its most important program. Only those who possessed a degree in law or history and were working in the archives were allowed to enter this one year program and to specialize in archival science – which was understood as an auxiliary science of history. Apart from archival science, codified in the manual, other auxiliary sciences of history were taught, such as diplomatics, paleography, chronology and mediaeval latin, as well as the history of the old Dutch state institutions. Having passed the examination, the new senior archivist was well prepared to analyse mediaeval diploma's and Ancien Regime archives.

The program for educating middle grade archivists was aimed at preventing booksellers and office clerks to fullfill non academic professional posts in archival services. The students of the middle grade level were allowed to study the same subjects as their senior colleagues, except for the subjects they were supposed not to understand, which were the most subjects offered.

The manual of Muller, Feith and Fruin was the most important teaching tool. It codified the by then developed concepts of archival science. This scientific discipline, however, which according to the title of the Manual was identified with the arrangement and description of archives, was still in its first stage of development; scientific debate was not very vigorous yet. The Manual, nicknamed "The hundred rules", became a holy book, a tool to discipline the new members of the profession, rather than a basis for scientific discussion. By consequence, Dutch archivists, for a

long period to come, would be praised for their craftsmanship and pragmatism, rather than for their explorations in archival science.

The pragmatic tendencies in Dutch archival education were further stimulated after World War II by developments in archival practice. Cataloguing modern archives tended to become core business, a business not likely to be the domain of specialists in Latin diplomatics. While the senior archivist continued to analyse and catalogue the older archives, the middle grade archivist, fighting the waste products of modern bureaucracy, became, within a period of thirty years, the key figure in the archival community. In the fifties, the course for middle grade archivists was upgraded almost to the level of the course for the senior archivists. In 1985 all Latin subjects were dropped from the course for senior archivists. Senior archivists had lost their exclusive domain.

### **Reprofessionalisation of the archival world**

In about the same time, the rapid and far-reaching developments in information and communication technology had begun to change the archival profession fundamentally and on a global scale. The archivists became, now as "professionals" who are specialized in process-generated information, engaged in a thrilling process of reprofessionalisation. No feature of the profession could escape redefinition: the duties and the professional image of the archivist, the boundaries between the information professions and the information disciplines, the status and orientation of archival science and last but not least: the structure and contents of archival education.

Archivists from all over the world became engaged in a stormy debate on the adaptation of the existing programs for archival education to the new developments. Everywhere, this debate centred on the same topics: historical study or information science, university environment or on-the-job-apprenticeship, etc.

Everywhere in the world the same questions were raised, but answers varied according to, again, specific circumstances. The need to change was obvious, but the willingness and the ability to change varied according to the differences in professional flexibility. In this context, a strong and influential professional body could be an advantage, but also a disadvantage.

### **Reprofessionalisation in the Netherlands**

For the Dutch Archive School, the transition from the industrial to the information society resulted in a complete metamorphosis.

Ever since 1919, colleagues from all over the world had highly esteemed the Dutch archival education system: the close relations of this Archive School with the archival profession, its pragmatic orientation and organisation, the wide scope of its programs, the relatively short duration. And the same went for the fact that all Dutch archivists, having been educated at the same school, used the same methods and standards, subscribed to the same professional values and shared the same professional attitudes.

The maintenance of this efficacious system of archival education, however, dating back to the beginning of the century, became more and more difficult. The model of the school and the structure of its programs kept their original features, in a time when archival science, archival practice and the demands of the profession changed rapidly. The amount of graduates finding a job in documentation centres and records offices or a temporary and project-related assignment in one of the sectors of information industry increased gradually. Two years ago, only 30% of the graduates found a job inside the public archives system. Apparently, knowledge of archives was not a commodity only to be traded within the old boundaries of the profession anymore. The old professional organisation, designed to represent only the public archives, could hardly legitimate its predominant influence.

The Dutch curricula had to be adapted ever more frequently to the changing requirements of an expanding archival enterprise. The auxiliary sciences of history gradually lost their central position in the curricula. New curricula had to be adopted, covering the whole life-cycle of records and archives and putting more emphasis on modern records developments. And because the staff introduced new subjects without reducing the hours of the existing ones, at a certain moment the one-year programs became overloaded.

Gradually the programs also lost their very pragmatic character. The increasing complexity of the archival functions asked for a stronger theoretical basis of the educational programs. Consequently, an increasing part of the four days in a week which the students traditionally spent as a trainee in a public archives became devoted to schoolwork, to study and to research.

### **The new programs of the Dutch Archives School**

Last year, the organisation of the Archive School as well as the structure of its programs and the scope and the contents of the subjects taught were fundamentally restyled. After the privatization of the school, strategic alliances were established with the University and the School for Higher Vocational Education in Amsterdam in order to make the Archive School part of the general education system. The exclusive authority over programs and examinations as well as the authority to fix



the numbers of students and to have them selected by representatives of the profession were abandoned.

The existing programs of the Archive School were integrated into the programs of the new partners. The existing course for senior archivists was defined as a separate three year differentiation or "study track" of the four years university Masters program in library and information science. The existing course for middle grade archivists has been defined as a separate three year differentiation of the four years programme of the library and information department of the School for Higher Vocational Education, leading to a Bachelor degree.

Both programmes consist of three main components. The core component is archival science as applied to all archival functions, particularly archives and records management. In essence, this component is a conversion of the old programs for senior and middle grade archivists; the subjects involved will be taught by the teachers of the Archives School. The other two components are the other information sciences on the one hand and history and auxiliary sciences on the other.

By reconstructing our programs for archival education in this way, we succeeded in broadening the scope of both programmes, in deepening the curriculum contents, in broadening the labour market perspective of our graduates, as well as in ameliorating the facilities for students and teachers.

## **Conclusion**

Archival education depends to a large extent on how archival functions are understood and organized, on what status and orientation archival science has got and how strong and influential the archival profession happens to be. In this respect global standardization makes no sense: different circumstances ask for different types of archival education.

At the same time, however, it is unmistakable that global developments make archival educators around the world raise the same questions and that similar problems are very likely to lead to similar solutions.

A few observations can be made from the Dutch experience:

(1) In the information age archival education should primarily be aimed at educating specialists in process-generated information provided with a good knowledge of history, rather than at educating historians specialized in archival science.

(2) Curricula of initial archival education should reflect the autonomous status of archival science as a discipline in the field of information sciences.

(3) Due to the growing complexity of archival enterprise and archival science and to the increasing rapidity of change the education of senior archivists should be

university education, allowing archival educators to transmit archival science while developing it.

(4) Archival education, in order to play the role of agent of change, must have a close but not a symbiotic relationship with archival services.

(5) International networking must prevent archival educators from reinventing the wheel, enable them to participate in large scale business without large scale investments and provide them with the best products of their colleagues from all over the world.