STUDIA I MATERIAŁY

McDonaldization of archives (an introduction to discussion)

Hadrian Ciechanowski

Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu / Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (Poland)
hc@umk.pl, ORCID 0000-0002-4913-3600

ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the development of archives through the lens of the McDonaldization created by Georg Ritzer. Since archives, like libraries, are deeply rooted in society, they can be analyzed from the perspective of ongoing social change. Referring to the various dimensions of McDonaldization – predictability, efficiency, calculability, and control – the author points to selected aspects of archival reality that exhibit the characteristics identified by Ritzer. Ritzer also pointed out that rationalized systems generate irrationalities and mention contrary tendencies that go (often intentionally) against the tide of the changes taking place. These two phenomena can also be found in the archival field. The article concludes that archives have undergone at least a partial McDonaldization. Nevertheless, the degree of change that has taken place in archives varies between the analyzed aspects. The article is based on an analysis of Polish and foreign literature, as well as the author's observation of archives (mainly Polish). For this reason, the study uses a comparative, bibliographic, and observational method.

Macdonaldyzacja archiwów (wstęp do dyskusji)

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł stanowi analizę archiwów przez przyzmat stworzonej przez Georga Ritzera teorii makdonaldyzacji. Biorąc pod uwagę, że archiwa, podobnie jak biblioteki, są głęboko zakorzenione w społeczeństwie, można je analizować z perspektywy zachodzących zmian społecznych. Odnosząc się do poszczególnych wymiarów makdonaldyzacji: przewidywalności, efektywności, obliczalności i kontroli, autor wskazuje na wybrane aspekty rzeczywistości archiwalnej, które wykazują cechy wskazane przez Ritzera. Ritzer zauważył również, że zracjonalizowane systemy generują irracjonalności, a także wymieniał tendencje przeciwne, które idą (często intencjonalnie) pod prąd zachodzących zmian. Tych dwóch zjawisk również można się doszukiwać w dziedzinie archiwalnej. Artykuł kończy się konkluzją, że archiwa uległy przynajmniej częściowej makdonaldyzacji. Niemniej jednak stopień zmian, jakie zaszły w archiwach, jest różny w poszczególnych analizowanych aspektach. Artykuł oparto na analizie polskiej i zagranicznej literatury oraz obserwacji przez autora samych archiwów (głównie polskich). Z tego powodu w opracowaniu wykorzystano metodę porównawczą, bibliograficzną i obserwacyjną.

Introduction

This paper looks at archives from the point of view of the sociological theory of McDonaldization. The paper's main hypothesis is that archives are (at least partly) McDonaldized, which provides multiple benefits, but has some negative aspects as well. In the article, the author will examine various fields of archival reality and attempt to demonstrate their relation to the abovementioned theory. The article also invites a discussion about how archives across the globe are McDonaldized; it is not a complete study. It is just a starting point to a broader and deeper look.

The article is based on literature as well as internal and external observation of archives, especially government archives. Although it is mainly based on observations of the Polish State Archives, the author will try to show examples related to archives in other countries.

The study utilizes methods typical for the humanities, including primarily the comparative and bibliographic method, as well as participatory observation. At this point, the author would like to explain his choice of literature. The author is aware that Polish-language sources may not be known to a large majority of readers, as well as difficult to understand. However, international literature, especially English-language sources, rarely tackle the issue of modern Polish archives in a manner useful for this article. Therefore, references to Polish-language sources were necessary. The author nonetheless makes an attempt to explain the examples he uses in detail and to compare them with similar phenomena occurring in other countries, so as to render them as understandable for the reader as possible.

The McDonaldization theory was created by Georg Ritzer and published in 1993 in his book *The McDonaldization of society*[1]. Ritzer defined McDonaldization as: "The process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world"[2]. Though Ritzer's theory focuses on fast-food restaurants, the author himself also applied it to other fields such as healthcare, universities, or shopping centers. Such a broad spectrum allows for its use in research concerning other social institutions.

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[1]   G. Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of society*, Thousand Oaks 1993.
[2]   Idem, *Explorations in social theory. From metatheorizing to rationalization*, London–Thousand Oaks–New Delhi 2001, p. 198.

Ritzer points to bureaucracy as one of the predecessors of McDonaldization[3]. Ritzer is focused mainly on Weber's formal rationalization and its impact on society. In formal rationalized societies, the best way to reach a goal is chosen based on universally agreed-upon rules, regulations, and laws[4]. Weber considered bureaucracy (as well as a capitalist company) to be the most formally rationalized structure. According to Weber, it is the most efficient structure to deal with tasks based on so-called paperwork. Bureaucracy also tries to quantify as many tasks as possible, which allows to better estimate its efficiency. Because of deep-rooted rules, regulations and laws, bureaucracy also functions in a very predictable way. It is also trying to replace the people, judged by the dictate of rules, regulations, and structures[5].

Bureaucracy, which is the foundation of McDonaldization, is also the first area where Ritzer's theory can be applied to archives – particularly to state and local government archives. This stems from the simple fact that, on the one hand, archives are public institutions which operate in a bureaucratized manner, and on the other hand, their methods of handling archival materials are largely determined by principles derived from 19th century bureaucracies and transplanted in the form of e.g. the provenance principle[6].

Ritzer argues that other predecessors of McDonaldization include, among others, scientific management, assembly lines, shopping centers, and – obviously – McDonald's[7]. The aforementioned predecessors have laid the groundwork for the society's acceptance of the dimensions of McDonaldization listed below. They also provided some examples of how institutions and companies can change their operations in order to maximize their income or efficiency. In case of the archives, however, the link between McDonaldization and bureaucracy is fundamental, as they function in a robust bilateral relationship. Michael Lutzker also saw the connection between the Weberian model of bureaucracy and archives. He writes: "This Weberian model has already, in a sense, been incorporated into the professional archivist's consciousness. Does not the archivist, during the initial appraisal of records, seek to understand institutional

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[3]   Idem, *Makdonaldyzacja społeczeństwa*, Warszawa 2009, pp 49–54.

[4]   Idem, *Explorations in social theory...*, p. 181.

[5]   M. Weber, *Gospodarka i społeczeństwo. Zarys socjologii rozumiejącej*, Warszawa 2002, pp. 166–168.

[6]   H. Ciechanowski, *The principle of provenance as the principle of rationalization of archives*, "Archiwa– Kancelarie–Zbiory" 2021, vol. 12(14), pp. 46–65, https://doi.org/10.12775/AKZ.2021.003.

[7]   G. Ritzer, *Makdonaldyzacja społeczeństwa*.

hierarchy and the role of given administrators of agencies in decision-making?"[8]. Of course, Lutzker's statement applies to the area of archival science focused on archives belonging to such bureaucratized institutions as administrative bodies and capitalist enterprises. In the majority of cases, it will not apply to archivists who work with personal and family documentation. However, as demonstrated below, the relationship between McDonaldization and archives extends far beyond bureaucracy, its shared ancestor. Therefore, the following analyses, which are based on the McDonaldization theory, will also apply to the area of archival science dealing with family and personal archives.

Ritzer argues that there are four main aspects of McDonaldization: efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. Efficiency means the optimum method for getting from one point to another. For customers, it means that McDonald's offers the best available way to get from being hungry to being full. Calculability regards quantitative aspects of the products sold (portion size, cost) and service offered (the time it takes to get the product). Ritzer points out that quantity has become equivalent to quality. A lot of something or the quick delivery of it means that it must be good. Predictability is the assurance that their products and services will be the same over time and in all locations. Finally, control means that nonhuman technology (the assembly line, for instance) controls people.

People who eat in fast-food restaurants are controlled, albeit (usually) subtly. Lines, limited menus, few options, and uncomfortable seats all lead diners to do what management wishes them to do: eat quickly and leave. The people who work in such a restaurant are also controlled. They are trained to do a limited number of things in precisely the way they are told to do them. The technologies used and the method the organization is set up reinforce this control[9].

Although McDonaldization offers compelling advantages, it also has a downside. The rational system inevitably spawns irrationalities. It is called the irrationality of rationality, meaning that rational systems are often unreasonable. Ritzer gave some examples of irrationalities in McDonald's. Among other things, he argues that in the most efficient restaurants, people must wait in long queues to place an order; also, cost of the food is much higher than the same thing prepared at home. The rationalized world is also disenchanted and homogenized;

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[8]   M. Lutzker, *Max Weber and the analysis of modern bureaucratic organization. Notes toward a theory of appraisal*, "The American Archivist" 1982, vol. 45, no. 2, p. 124.

[9]   G. Ritzer, *Explorations in social theory…*, p. 198–200.

this is why firms and institutions must figure out how to manage people's emotions and experiences[10]. The next aspect of irrationality is dehumanization. This means that a worker in a McDonaldized organization is not able to utilise his or her inventiveness and abilities. Just like a robot, he or she can only execute predetermined activities and perform them in a specific way. From the worker's point of view, this kind of job is irrational, unsatisfactory, and does not provide a sense of stability, resulting in enormous personnel fluctuation[11].

Finally, Ritzer mentions movements emerging in response to McDonaldization, such as rapidly-growing artisanal businesses, e.g. ice cream manufacturers. Nevertheless, he concludes his analysis by stating that even such entities, upon reaching a certain level of development, enter the path of rationalization for the purpose of maximizing profits and delivering their services to customers more efficiently.

Since the first edition of Ritzer's work was published, a great deal of research concerning the impact of McDonaldization on various areas of public life has been conducted. This research tackled, among other things, the fields of higher education[12], healthcare[13], the police[14], religion[15], family life[16], the recreation

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[10] Idem, *Makdonaldyzacja społeczeństwa*, pp. 226–227.

[11] Ibidem, p. 233.

[12] C. Holmes, D. Lindsay, *"Do you want fries with that?". The McDonaldization of university education – some critical reflections on nursing higher education*, "SAGE Open" 2018 (July–September), pp. 1–10; M. Romanowski, H. Alkhateeb, *The McDonaldization of CAEP accreditation and teacher education programs abroad*, "Teaching and Teacher Education" 2020, vol. 90, pp. 1–9; G. Ritzer, P. Jandrić and S. Hayes, *"The velvet cage of educational con(pro)sumption"*, "Open Review of Educational Research" 2018, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 113–129; J. Halfond, D. Boyd, *The McDonaldization of higher education. A fable*, "International Journal of Value-Based Management" 1997, vol. 10, pp. 207–212; D. Hardey, *The McDonaldization of higher education. Food for thought?*, "Oxford Review of Education" 1995, vol. 21, pp. 409–423.

[13] J. Archer, S. Nunn, S. de Bere, *The McDonaldization of appraisal? Doctors' views of the early impacts of medical revalidation in the United Kingdom*, "Health Policy" 2017, vol. 121, pp. 994–1000; A. Mottram, *"Like a trip to McDonalds". A grounded theory study of patient experiences of day surgery*, "International Journal of Nursing Studies" 2011, vol. 48, pp. 165–174; E. Dorsey, G. Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of medicine*, "JAMA Neurology" 2016, vol. 73, no. 1, pp. 15–16.

[14] R. Heslop, *The British police service. Professionalization or "McDonaidization"?*, "International Journal of Police Science & Management" 2011, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 312–321.

[15] J. Drane, *McDonaldization of the church. Consumer culture and the churches future*, Macon 2002; H. Young-Gi, *Encounter with modernity. The "McDonaldization" and "Charismatization" of Korean mega-churches*, "Internationa Review of Mission" 2009, vol. 92, pp. 239–255.

[16] S. Raley, *McDonaldization and the family,* [in:] *McDonaldization the reader. 3rd edition*, ed. G. Ritzer, Thousand Okas 2010, pp. 138–149.

industry[17], agriculture and environmental protection[18], as well as libraries, e.g. university libraries[19], which is particularly interesting. The research on university libraries is of particular relevance to this paper due to the fact that archives and libraries share many similarities. Studies focused on libraries have demonstrated that their efficiency is affected by tiered reference service, self-check machines, and self-guided tours. "Just-in-time" approaches to collection development – including a greater reliance on interlibrary loan and document delivery services, which fit into a larger trend toward access over ownership – and standardized approaches to information literacy instruction also deliver greater efficiencies. Calculability is represented by focus on quantity, such as inputs (financial resources, number of staff, gate counts, number of volumes, etc) and outputs (circulation stats, online transactions), as a surrogate for quality. McDonaldization is also apparent in the growing predictability of academic libraries' collections, resulting from using approval plans and journal aggregator databases. Most libraries offer the same suite of core services. Finally, in addition to their hierarchical structure and reliance on rules and regulations – typical of bureaucratic systems, and in itself a form of social control – increasing use of technology in libraries serves as a mechanism of rationalization and control. An example of the irrationality of rationality is that McDonaldized libraries are slow to respond, simplistic, and short-sighted because they are unable to engage the heads and hearts of their employees and are out of touch with the real needs of their users[20].

It, therefore, appears that the McDonaldization theory can be applied to research on nearly all aspects of social functioning. The author believes that, as in the case of libraries, the development and operation of archives have been noticeably influenced by the above-mentioned aspects of efficiency, calculability, predictability, control and irrationality of rationality. In following sections, the

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[17]   A. Bryman, *The Disneyization of society,* London 2004; A. Weaver, *The McDonaldization thesis and cruise tourism*, "Annals of Tourism Research" 2005, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 346–366.

[18]   V. Kolinjivadi, J.F. Bissonnette, A. Mendez, J. Dupras, *Would you like some fries with your ecosystem services? McDonaldization and conservation in Prince Edward Island, Canada*, "Geoforum" 2020, vol. 111, pp. 73–82.

[19]   B. Quinn, *The McDonaldization of academic libraries?*, "College and Research Libraries" 2015, vol. 76, no. 3, pp. 339–352, https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.76.3.339.

[20]   K. Nicholson, *The McDonaldization of academic libraries and the values of transformational change*, "College and Research Libraries" 2015, vol. 76, no. 3, p. 328, https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.76.3.328.

author lists those elements of archival practice which he believes to be related to the above aspects. The author also makes an effort to refer to tendencies which oppose the McDonaldization of archives, primarily the slow archives movement and rapidly growing community archives. However, state archives also act in ways which match this trend, as presented below.

Efficiency

The pressure on efficiency has never been as intense in the archives as it is today. Their history, however, contains examples of such pursuit of efficiency. Poland is an example of a country where the pursuit of efficiency has been substantial since the 20th century. The Polish Head of State Archives has been developing methodical rules and guidelines for state archives since the 1950s[21]. Guidelines, issued as acts of local law, served as the basis for archival arrangement and description for many groups of archival fonds, such as banks, courts, and Polish People's Republic administration. The purpose of such guidelines stems directly from the need to increase efficiency of archival work, and they frequently include ready-made arrangement templates and source literature compilations. While it is impossible to strictly adhere to centrally-imposed frameworks, the archivist using these guidelines must limit their individual conceptual and scholarly input. A template-based approach makes it possible to greatly expedite processing of a fond, decreasing its cost (fewer person-hours devoted to a fond lowers the cost of processing). Moreover, adhering to methodological guidelines also increases the predictability of archives, which translates into increased efficiency of searches conducted by users, who in turn gain access to more relevant information.

Attempts at increasing efficiency may also involve implementation of multilevel description. One of the major features of this type of description is the ability to transfer higher-level elements to lower-level element descriptions. In Poland, this solution has been in use since the 1990s, since databases, originally created in MS Access, were based on such standards as the General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G)), which preferred this type of solution. This solution, being the most effective, is also currently used by the Integrated

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[21] M. Tarakanowska, E. Rosowska, *Zbiór przepisów archiwalnych wydanych przez Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych w latach 1952–2000*, Warszawa 2001.

Archival Information System (ZoSIA), which is the primary method of processing and providing access to archival fonds in the state archives. The main advantage of this solution, which could only realize its full potential with the use of computer technology, is that it directly increases the efficiency of archives, as eliminating the necessity to constantly repeat identical descriptions expedites the work of archivists.

However, multilevel descriptions must also be normalized. In order to ensure effective creation process for descriptions that span multiple levels, it is necessary to develop standards of description, providing a framework for the archivist's work. Same framework ensures that the description remains consistent. This framework is set out by International standards, for example ISAD(G) and ISAAR(CPF). While predictability is discussed in detail in one of the subsequent sections of this paper, it should be noted that it, too, leads to increased efficiency. On the one hand, there are efficiency increases within the organization, as archivists are able to retrieve information quicker via queries and their own research explorations, and on the other hand, users can also search for information faster by using similar search systems and their reference tools. Of course, this is not to say that the search language and all systems used across the globe have been completely normalized. Regardless, any common framework for a specific activity will increase working speed, and in this case, the speed of preparing and providing archival information.

As can be deduced from the above statements, increased efficiency of archives is also a result of using modern technologies. First computers, then databases and now integrated systems, have made archival work more efficient[22]. Databases and systems, generally consisting of predefined fields based on standards of description[23] require that the inventiveness of an archivist should be used only to a limited extent while writing a description. Even if we assume that standards

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[22] R. Lytle, *A National Information System for Archives and Manuscript Collections*, "The American Archivist" 1980, vol. 43 (Summer), pp. 423–426; B. Wheaton, *A computer database system to store and display archival data on correspondence of historical significance*, "The American Archivist" 1982, vol. 45 (Fall), pp. 455–466.

[23] N. Sahli, *Interpretation and application of the AMC format*, "The American Archivist" 1986, vol. 49 (Winter), pp. 9–20; J. Dooley, N. Bouché, *Implementing EAD in the Yale University Library*, "The American Archivist" 1997, vol. 60 (Fall), pp. 415–416; A. Laszuk, *Standardy Międzynarodowej Rady Archiwów – od praktyki do teorii?*, [in:] *Teoria archiwalna wczoraj – dziś – jutro*, Toruńskie Konfrontacje Archiwalne, t. 2, ed. W. Chorążyczewski, A. Rosa, Toruń 2011, pp. 227–246.

only provide the frameworks within which the archivists can continue expressing themselves and apply their professional experience, such frameworks still force them to operate within their boundaries. The archivist knows in advance what type of information should be entered in a given element; but how detailed the information is remains at their discretion. Systems used in different countries and periods may be more open or less. However, they will always limit the freedom of the archivist to a varying degree, while at the same time increasing the efficiency of their work. In case of Poland, databases featuring markedly more open fields were introduced in the 1990s. The most important of these was the IZA[24] database for creating archive inventories. Currently used solutions restrict archivists to a much greater degree, as they frequently allow them to only enter information in a specific format or to select from predefined selection fields. Though this solution may be a cause for concern, and even dismay, from the point of view of archivists, it undoubtedly leads to an increase in the efficiency of their work. However, this is primarily because the archivist is no longer working entirely creatively and thus spends less time thinking about filling in the description elements. At the same time, though, this leads to irretrievable loss of information that does not fit into defined fields which are not expandable by the archivist. In the previous system, based on inventory cards and Access databases, the archivist could insert more information they deemed essential in the subsequent fields, even if it did not entirely fit the description standard. This meant that, although inventories were created at a much slower pace, they were nevertheless richer in terms of information content.

Attempts at increasing the efficiency of archival practice, in the sense nearly identical to Ritzer's original meaning of the term, are related to the proposition (or movement) of implementing the More Product, Less Process (MPLP) philosophy in archival science[25]. The movement focuses on limiting the most

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[24] Inwentarze Zespołów Archiwalnych [eng. Inventories of Archival Fonds].

[25] M. Greene, D. Meissner, *More Product, Less Process. Revamping traditional archival processing*, "The American Archivist" 2005, vol. 68 (Fall/Winter), pp. 208–263; M. Greene, *MPLP. It's not just for processing anymore*, ibidem, 2010, vol. 73 (Spring/Summer), pp. 175–203; A. Harling, *MPLP as intentional, not necessarily minimal, processing. The Rudolf W. Becking Collection at Humboldt State Univeristy*, ibidem, 2014, vol. 77, no. 2, pp. 489–498; Ch. Weidman, *Accessioning as processing*, ibidem, 2006, vol. 69, no. 2, pp. 274–283; D. McCrea, *Getting more for less. Testing a new processing model at the University of Montana*, ibidem, 2006, vol. 69, no. 2, pp. 284–290, C. Ness van, *Much ado about paper clips. "More product, less process" ant the modern manuscript repository*, ibidem, 2010, vol. 73, no. 1, pp. 129–145.

time- and labor-intensive actions of archivists related to describing and storing archival materials. The aim of the proposed changes is to decrease, and eventually to completely eliminate, backlogs in these areas, for the purpose of expediting availability of archival materials to users. Greene and Meissner calculated that the focus on series-level processing and description, as well as refraining from removing metal elements and repackaging archival materials, renders it possible to increase the amount of materials processed annually by archivists fourfold [26].

Proposed pruning of archival processes falls in line with the experiences of fast food restaurants as regards the organization of work. A great deal of time was spent on testing kitchen work organization solutions for the purpose of minimizing the number of steps and the time required to deliver a meal, and thus maximizing profits from sales[27]. In the case of fast food restaurants, rigid organization of work also enables maintaining consistent quality of the products offered[28]. It appears that the MPLP movement, with its rejection of such superfluous activities as the removal of metal elements, follows the path set by fast food chains.

While the MPLP movement is not popular or well known in Poland, various local initiatives were undertaken, aiming to limit the number of archival processes for the purpose of increasing efficiency. The increase in efficiency is the reason behind the archives' efforts to ensure that the public institutions deliver their files arranged in an orderly fashion and in a manner that enables granting access to files by using the finding aids provided by them. This is an important part of the activities of Polish archives, which are the main topic of this analysis. While the extent to which this goal is met is determined by the office culture of a given country, its main purpose is to incorporate file creators into the series of actions performed by archives so that they themselves provide a ready-to-use (or nearly ready) product[29]. Imposing proper work standards on file creators helps decrease the workload of archivists involved in storing files, for example. In general, Polish archivists don't have to repackage documents into boxes or acid-free folders, use

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[26] M. Greene, D. Meissner, *More Product, Less Process. Revamping...*, pp. 253–255.

[27] G. Ritzer, P. Jendrić, S. Hayes, *The velvet cage of educational...*, pp. 113–129.

[28] G. Ritzer, *Makdonaldyzacja społeczeństwa*, pp. 69–74.

[29] Rozporządzenie Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego z dnia 20 października 2015 r. w sprawie klasyfikowania i kwalifikowania dokumentacji, przekazywania materiałów archiwalnych do archiwów państwowych i brakowania dokumentacji niearchiwalnej (Dz.U. 2019 poz. 246), http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20190000246/O/D20190246.pdf, accessed 29 November 2021.

new jackets or remove metal elements, as all these actions must be performed by the archive of the client institution. A state archive may reject archival materials unless they are prepared in line with its guidelines. In public archives, there are even separate positions for checking the preparation of materials before they are placed in the archives' storage. In a sense, this is similar to restaurant kiosks via which customers themselves perform the duties of the cashier. In this case, the institution – the client – performs the majority of the work so that it can use the archival service of storing documentation which it does not need. This is also in line with the values of MPLP.

In Polish archives, principles similar to those espoused by Greene and Meissner serve as the foundation of what is known as the simplified processing methods introduced in 2002. The then-General Director of the Polish State Archives (NDAP), in paragraph one of her regulation, stipulated that:

"Powiększający się w szybkim tempie zasób archiwów państwowych, zwłaszcza zaś poszerzająca się luka między zasobem opracowanym, a nieopracowanym powodują konieczność wprowadzenia zmian w metodyce pracy archiwalnej. Celem tej modyfikacji jest usprawnienie i przyspieszenie prac nad opracowaniem zasobu archiwów państwowych, a w konsekwencji zwiększenie liczby zespołów (zbiorów) archiwalnych udostępnianych użytkownikom archiwów państwowych"[30].

These are the same reasons as those mentioned in the original MLPL article. However, Polish regulations provide for solutions slightly different to those proposed by Greene and Meissner. In order to simplify archival work (arrangement and description), these regulations divided fonds into three groups: A1, A2, and A3. Group A1 (central level administration and institutions, files created before the end of 18th century), whose fonds were considered to be of the highest value, was to be processed in the traditional manner (down to the item level), and an archival inventory was to be developed with a complete introduction. A2 fonds (i.e., provincial institutions, towns from the 19th and 20th centuries) underwent simplified processing, i.e., a shortened introduction was created for the inventory, and duplicate files were not discarded. In group A3 (registry offices and other fonds not qualified to groups A1 and A2), virtually no processing or describing

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[30] The rapidly growing holdings stored by state archives, in particular the growing gap between the processed and unprocessed documents, necessitate a change in archival methodology. The purpose of this change is to facilitate and expedite the processing of holdings stored in state archives, which will lead to an increased number of archival fonds (collections) available to users of state archives.

took place. However, this was contingent upon whether the files submitted by the providing institution were in a satisfactory condition and came with proper documentation[31]. In addition, the principle of an unchangeable archival reference number was introduced for all fonds. This means that if the providing institution applied correct archival reference numbers specified by the archive, they were not to be changed by the archivists who process those files. If necessary, archival inventories were to be created using computers for the purpose of limiting unnecessary work and increasing efficiency.

In a sense, the practice of processing archival fonds based on the documentation provided by their creator also applies to new files generated using computer technology from start to finish. This is due to the fact that in modern systems, gathering digital-born archival holdings, their creator supplies the metadata. This makes archival work more efficient because the archivists do not need to create many pieces of information about the holdings which they provide in the traditional system of archival description[32]. Of course, ability to use metadata in archival practice depends on their quality. It does, however, appear that computer systems, which partially automate their generation, require that such data be much more detailed before it can be submitted to an archive. This is not only a result of the requirements of the machines, but the needs of the institution, which, in order to navigate the tangle of data it generates, needs adequate and normalized descriptions.

In the area of modern technologies, the efficiency of archives is also strongly related to artificial intelligence (AI)[33] and optical character recognition (OCR)[34]. OCR technology expedites archival work in at least several areas. First, it enables faster digitization of traditional finding aids. Between 2016 and 2018, a state-wide project was carried out in Poland, involving conversion of analogue finding aids into digital form. Over the course of the project conducted by 33 state

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[31] Decyzja Nr 20 Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych z dnia 10 grudnia 2002 r. w sprawie wprowadzenia wskazówek dotyczących uproszczonego opracowania zasobu archiwalnego przechowywanego w archiwach państwowych, https://www.gov.pl/web/archiwa/rok-20017, accessed 15 September 2023.

[32] R. Spencer, *Binary trees? Automatically identifying the links between born-digital records*, "Archives and manuscripts" 2017, vol. 45, issue 2, pp. 77–99, https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2017.1330158.

[33] G. Rolan, G. Humphries, L. Jeffrey, E. Samaras, T. Antsoupowa, K. Stuart, *More human than human? Artificial intelligence in the archive*, "Archives and Manuscripts" 2019, vol. 47, issue 2, pp. 179–203, https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2018.1502088.

[34] J. Dooley, N. Bouché, *Implementing EAD…*, p. 44.

archives, it was discovered that manual conversion allowed for creation of dozens, sometimes hundreds of descriptions per day, but the use of OCR allowed for thousands. The increase in productivity was astounding, even when accounting for the necessity of proofreading by archivists. Therefore, the technology was implemented by the state archives in a relatively wide range of areas. Faster digitization of finding aids also allowed for significantly faster availability of information to users.

OCR can also be used in the research activities of archives, in particular those involving editing archival sources. Newer sources, created using typewriters or printed from a computer, can be scanned and recognized by a machine with relative ease. This greatly expedites the editing of sources when compared to copying them manually. OCR is also used to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of searching, even if the method sometimes generates results that are of poor quality, or even erroneous. Early printed newspapers are an example of a medium which OCR technology is incapable of processing. As a result, texts processed this way contain many errors, though users believe they are nonetheless able to find the information they need using this method[35]. The use of OCR in archives also involves artificial intelligence. As they learn more about the specificity of sources, computers make fewer mistakes, which eventually allows for more complex text recognition, also including relatively legible handwritten texts.

However, artificial intelligence has much more sophisticated uses than simply improving the quality of scanned texts. Most importantly, it helps navigate large sets of data. Thanks to machine learning, computers can develop neural networks, which in the future will probably expand the applications of this technology to sizeable datasets such as e-mail sets, which are impossible for humans to search through due to data's excessive size. Attempts have already been made to apply AI in the creation of digital editions and presenting finding aids. Examples include related data packages such as London Lives 1690 to 1800[36] and Digital Panopticon[37], which present the life of London convicts in Great Britain and Australia between 1780 and 1925, based on probability formulas used to

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[35] J. Winters, A. Prescott, *Negotiating the born-digital. A problem of search*, "Archives and Manuscripts" 2019, vol. 47, issue 3, pp. 391–403, https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2019.1640753.

[36] London lives 1690 to 1800 – crime, poverty and social policy in the metropolis, https://www.londonlives.org/, accessed 29 November 2021.

[37] Tracing London Convicts in Britain and Australia, 1780–1925, https://www.digitalpanopticon.org/, accessed 29 November 2021.

identify individuals and suggest connections between them. Another example is the Traces through Time project of the British National Archives, which uses AI methods to identify individuals in large sets of online finding aids, providing hints as to where more references to those individuals can be found. European Holocaust Research Infrastructure also used AI technology in its dictionary-based approach to analyzing the emotions of Holocaust survivors based on their accounts of the events. With the use of generative neural networks, the project spawned a large training database of positive and negative memories, giving rise to a highly-accurate network which led to a qualitative and quantitative improvement of the original dictionary model. It bears mentioning that these early experiments were highly successful[38]. It therefore appears that, in the near future, the wide-ranging application of artificial intelligence will offer a great deal of utility for archives striving to provide their users with the most effective methods of acquiring information.

Over the last few years, one of the most important aspects of efficiency was the online availability of archival holdings. Access to archives via the Internet is the fastest and most convenient way to obtain access to holdings. At the same time, users can search in institutions across the globe and use many more items than during a personal visit in the reading room. Furthermore, it is much more inexpensive than the traditional method of doing research.

Increases in efficiency pertain also to archival websites, which are probably the most efficient way to deliver information to the user. The UK National Archives website is an excellent example of increasing efficiency; before a visit in person, users can find all the necessary information on the website, and thus obtain access to archival materials in a most efficient manner[39]. This approach to educating users is very similar, if not identical, to self-guided tours[40] implemented by libraries. In actuality, it is a step forward, considering that future users, in order to visit an archive, would not even need to physically enter it, requiring only Internet access.

Finally, insofar as efficiency is concerned, archives also make use of crowdsourcing, i.e., users themselves perform work which would normally have

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[38]   J. Winters, A. Prescott, *Negotiating the born-digital…*

[39]   H. Ciechanowski, *Warsztaty w archiwach*, [in:] *Zatrzymać przeszłość, dogonić przyszłość. Pamiętnik VI Powszechnego Zjazdu Archiwistów Polskich*, ed. W. Chorążyczewski, K. Stryjkowski, Warszawa 2013, pp. 523–536.

[40]   K. Nicholson, *The McDonaldization of academic…*

to be performed by archivists. This is similar to consumers placing orders using a kiosk, which eliminates the need for a cashier. An archive-related example of this is the creation of archival material indexes by users, or deciphering less legible sources in the form of CAPTCHA. Until recently, the sole responsibility for description and processing of sources was with the archivist, but extensive use of online technologies has made it possible to cede some of the workload to the public. The archivist is only required to proofread the results and apply minor corrections if necessary. This solution is used in Poland in genealogical source sharing and editing, for example[41].

The attempts at increasing efficiency described above do not cover all the solutions which have been used in archives for the purpose of expediting the delivery of their products to users. However, it appears that they do indicate the possibility of finding similar solutions for archives of other countries, including online access to sources and archival information, as well as using multilevel descriptions featuring a degree of normalization, which, even though used in different systems, impose a certain common framework on archival practice.

Calculability

The next dimension of McDonaldization is calculability. Although archives are not considered to be quantified to any significant degree, at a closer look, there are many areas where calculability is essential. Although the approach to calculability may differ between countries, it appears that common elements can still be identified. While they may not be of paramount importance, archives also constitute a part of bureaucracy, for which the ability to describe work using quantitative indicators is important. Therefore, superiors must assess the work of their subordinate archivists based on the number of queries, corporate archives assessments and descriptions in the system. This information is then used by archive network directors to assess the work of individual archive divisions or the archive as a whole. From the perspective of the bureaucracy, the number of actions performed is of greater importance than the quality of the work itself.

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[41] H. Ciechanowski, *Projekt „Źródła genealogiczne mieszkańców województwa kujawsko-pomorskiego" jako przykład upowszechniania dostępu do materiałów archiwalnych przez archiwa państwowe*, "Annales Universitatis Pedagogicae Cracoviensis Studia Sociologica" 2017, vol. 9(1), pp. 115–122.

The latter remark does not always fully apply to the work performed by archives, however, as besides the amount of material processed, quality of the work should also be of importance. The author is also unable to assess and analyze the approaches to calculability of various archival services taken by other countries, especially considering that the solutions applied are beyond doubt frequently imposed on archives as parts of administrations as a whole. However, it appears that, similar to libraries, archives are required to compile statistics on the amount of materials they admit, process and store. These statistics contribute to calculability, especially considering that they include no mentions of the quality of the holdings. Therefore, the author decided to list only a few examples related to calculability.

John M. Dirks draws attention to the issue of the accountability of archives, going as far as to refer to it as one of the central issues that archives must focus on in their work[42]. Jacques Grimard, on the other hand, notes that in order to better fulfil their social and professional responsibilities, archivists must implement evaluation methods to verify the effectiveness of their own programs and activities, and assess the improvement prospects of those programs and the services they offer. This approach may focus on assessing quality, quantity, or a balance of the two[43]. Numerous grant agencies, which expect accountability and formal reporting from the projects they finance, also express demand for such information. A good example of this is the Canadian Council of Archives, which requires an efficiency measuring plan for the National Archival Development Program[44]. Similar requirements are set by institutions which grant EU funding, for which the quantitative metrics achieved as a result of a given project are of great importance.

The demand of archives, and the institutions which finance them, for sufficient statistical results is met by projects such as the Archival Metrics. The project, which involves collecting data from users, constitutes a combined methodological approach which attempts to account for both quantitative and qualitative data. Indicators used in the approach include quality and user satisfaction with various

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[42] J. Dirks, *Accountability, history, and archives. Conflicting priorities or synthesized strands*, "Archiviaria" 2004, vol. 57 (Spring), pp. 29–49.

[43] J. Grimard, *Program evaluation and archives. "Appraising" archival work and achievements*, ibidem, pp. 69–87.

[44] W. Duff, E. Yakel, H. Tibbo, J. Cherry, A. McKay, M. Krause, R. Sheffield, *The development, testing, and evaluation of the Archival Metrics Toolkits*, "The American Archivist" 2010, vol. 73, no. 2 (Fall/Winter), p. 570.

archival services. Such a study was conducted for a number of institutions, including the archives of several US universities[45]. An in-depth discussion of this project is beyond the scope of this paper; its results can be found on the Archival Metrics website[46]. The toolkit developed in the course of the project is based on a study of users, for which both quantitative and qualitative data was collected. This enabled assessment and presentation of the calculability of archival work. This approach, which involved, among other things, assessing customer satisfaction, shares many similarities with solutions used in higher education, where quantitative indicators from student, graduate and staff satisfaction studies are frequently the measure of success[47].

Another example of an approach to assessing calculability of archives was a project carried out in Arizona from 2009–2012, the purpose of which was to assess, quantitatively and qualitatively, the state's archived materials stored in various institutions in order to arrive at a storage model that would ensure better representation of groups and subjects which were underrepresented in archival materials at the time. A poll conducted among archival institutions led to a quantitative assessment of the state's materials (total number of collections and the size of the holdings in linear feet), and allowed for their division into approx. 50 content categories of files stored in individual archives[48].

Polish archives, on the other hand, opted for a completely different approach to calculability, one more similar to that of fast food chains. During the communist period, state archives were considered cultural institutions in Poland. However, in the 1990s, they became part of the public administration. This change, though it had a profound impact on their organization, had relatively little influence on their approach to reporting. Virtually since the end of World War II, quantitative indicators have been the dominant metric used to assess the work of archives and archivists in Poland. The amount of documentation processed annually, in meters, and the number of queries conducted have been the primary metrics. For that purpose, minimal processing indicators were introduced in the People's Republic of Poland, which required archivists to process a certain minimum

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[45]   Ibidem.

[46]   Archival Metrics Toolkits, https://sites.google.com/a/umich.edu/archival-metrics/the-toolkits, accessed 15 September 2023.

[47]   M. Romanowski, H. Alkhateeb, *The McDonaldization of CAEP…*, pp. 1–9.

[48]   L. Coyner, J. Prongle, *Metrics and metrices surveying the past to create a better future*, "The American Archivist" 2014, vol. 77, pp. 459–488.

amount of material every year. This amount differed depending on whether the files had been generated by Polish or foreign administrators. It is important to note that the quality of processing was not assessed. Such an approach was actually commonplace in communist countries. Unfortunately, the processing plans themselves are currently very difficult to access as they served as internal instructions for archivists, to be destroyed after becoming obsolete. However, information about the quantity of archival materials processed under the plans is available in the form of state archival service reports. In 1967, for example, the processing goal was 237,000 units, and the final number of units processed was 250,000, i.e., 105.5%[49]. A similar approach is espoused to this day by Polish state archives, as evidenced by annual reports of the General Directorate of the Polish State Archives[50].

An extreme example of the quantitative approach typical of McDonaldization is the aforementioned finding aids retro-conversion program, carried out by Polish state archives between 2016 and 2018. Its purpose was to eliminate years of digitization backlog by rapidly copying finding aids and uploading them online. The General Director believed that it was more important to quickly copy the finding aids than to preserve their quality, let alone improve it. As a result, the main focus was put on calculability. An archivist was required to create 350 descriptions in Polish or 210 in a foreign language over the span of 7 hours. Archives were monitored for fulfillment of these quantitative requirements, and their employees could receive cash bonuses for exceeding the quotas. Unfortunately, the quality of that work was completely sub-par[51]. While the premise was that the digitized versions of the aids were to be perfectly identical to their analog versions, the focus on quantity did result in a significant amount of information being lost during the conversion process. A common practice was to omit certain fields used in paper finding aids (e.g. comments and physical descriptions) which were considered less important or thought to require more time to copy. The high pace of work also resulted in mistakes stemming from lack of diligence. Omitting information should be considered a significant loss in the long-term, considering

[49]   J. Rusinek, I. Koberdowa, *Sprawozdanie z działalności Naczelnej Dyrekcji Archiwów Państwowych i podległych jej placówek w roku 1967*, „Archeion" 1968, vol. 50, pp. 215–242.

[50]   Until 2000, reports were published in the journal "Archeion". Since 2001, they have been available on the State Archives website, https://www.gov.pl/web/archiwa/sprawozdanie-z-dzialalnosci-archiwow-panstwowych, accessed 28 September 2023.

[51]   Sz. Rożyński, M. Znamirowska, *Doświadczenia Archiwum Państwowego w Zielonej Górze w realizacji retrokonwersji pomocy archiwalnych*, „Archeion" 2018, vol. 119, p. 82.

that those fields frequently contained valuable comments regarding the content of the files, made by archivists during processing. A common practice was to flag certain materials, whose presence in a given unit was not apparent from the title alone, as valuable for exhibition purposes. Yet, this approach did allow for achieving higher quantitative results.

Calculability may not be a strong focus for the archives, as archival work is not calculable. Since every fond is unique, it is impossible to develop exact, common and universal quantitative indicators, or determine beyond all doubt that the more descriptions or scans available online, the better. On the contrary, in case of archives, more is frequently worse, i.e., less accurate, which impacts the user's work quality and speed. Fortunately, archives continue to take quality aspects into account as well. The examples presented here are, of course, not completely representative. Regardless, the archival services of many countries, e.g. the former Eastern Bloc, with their greater degree of centralization, are undoubtedly faced with issues similar to those of their Polish counterparts. On the other hand, less centralized archives or archives operating in different cultures might put more emphasis on aspects other than quantity. A strong emphasis on calculability is also exhibited by university libraries, which strive to collect as much statistical data as possible on nearly all aspects of their operation[52]. A similar situation emerged in the British police force, where it was discovered that many officers, especially those hired at the turn of the 21st century, had only experienced working as part of a system which puts particular emphasis on quantitatively formulated goals[53].

Predictability

The first step on the way to rationalization of archives was probably made in the 19th century, when the two first generally accepted principles to rule the archival arrangement and description were developed. In the years 1838–1841 in the French National Archives, Natalis de Wailly formulated the *principe du respect des fonds*[54]. Even though the principle was relevant mostly for practical management of the holdings, it was also an inspiration for changes in other archives. The next milestone was the *registraturprinzip* introduced in the

[52]   B. Quinn, *The McDonaldization of academic libraries…*
[53]   R. Heslop, *The British police service…*, pp. 312–321.
[54]   B. Ryszewski, *Archiwistyka. Przedmiot, zakres, podział*, Warszawa–Poznań 1972, p. 22.

Kingdom of Prussia in 1881 and 1896[55]. Obviously, these are only a couple of selected points in the history of archives. In some countries such as Denmark, Italy, and Austria, these principles were known even earlier (as early as the 18th century). However, they were not applied universally or for a long time[56]. Finally, the principle of provenance was first given a theoretical justification in a Dutch manual entitled *Handleiding voor het Ordnen en Beschrijven van Archieven*, written by Muller, Feith, and Fruin in 1898[57]. In the European sense, the principle of provenance combines the principles of *respect des fonds* and *respect de l'ordre original*. In 1910, during the International Congress of Archivists and Librarians in Brussels, the principle of provenance was generally accepted by archivists[58]. The principle of provenance, based on the observation of bureaucracy, is strictly rational. The fonds arrangement must be strictly bound with its creator; which is why an archivist should analyze the structure and functions of the institution that produced the record. It also allows for greater efficiency of work because the archivist does not have to perform the complicated, difficult and often frustrating work related to dividing archives into subject groups[59].

Methods based on principles of *respect des fonds* and provenance (or *respect de l'ordre original*) have been used in almost every archive in the world for over 100 years which is why, at the base level, the structure of archives can appear similar, and thus predictable in the McDonaldization sense.

Predictability of the archives became even higher when the archives started using international standards of archival description such as ISAD(G) or ISAAR(CPF). The objective of introduction of international standards of description was uniformization of archival descriptions across the globe. While the reception of those standards may differ due to the strictness with which they are adhered to, it should be noted that they do provide a certain framework within which archivists must operate. Therefore, they contribute to increasing

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[55] A. Brenneke, *Archivkunde. Ein Beitrag zur Theorie und Geschichte des europäischen Archivwesens*, Liepzig 1958, p. 67.

[56] A. Giroux, *A theoretical and historical analysis of pertinence- and provenance-based concepts of classification of archives*, Vancouver 1998, pp. 41–42; A. Brenneke, *Archivkunde. Ein Beitrag…*, p. 66.

[57] T. Schellenberg, *The management of archives*, New York–London 1965, pp. 41–42.

[58] A. Bachulski, *Zastosowanie zasady proweniencji w porządkowaniu nowoczesnych zasobów archiwalnych*, [in:] *Pamiętnik IV Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich w Poznaniu 6–8 Grudnia 1925*, t. 1, *Referaty*, Lwów 1925, p. 1.

[59] T. Schellenberg, *The management of archives*, p. 93.

the predictability of archives as such, as even though their archival information systems may be structured differently, the information layer itself will be similar. This is evident when one examines, among other things, archival information systems made available online by various archives. For this purpose, the author analyzed seventeen selected systems from different parts of the world[60]. It should be noted that beyond the obvious differences stemming from the level of technical sophistication of the sites, the graphics, or the structure of the portals, most sites provide information of similar depth and structure. A good example are portals provided by the archives of the US[61], Poland[62], South Korea[63], Australia[64], and South Africa[65] – archives from different continents, following different archival traditions.

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[60] Analyzed archives sites, accessed 13 May 2020: 1. (Germany) Brandenburgischen Landeshauptarchivs Online Recherche, http://blha-recherche.brandenburg.de/suchinfo.aspx; 2. (England) The National Archives Explore the catalogue, http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/; 3. (USA) The National Archives and Records Administration, https://www.archives.gov/research/catalog; 4. (France) Archives Nationales Salle des inventaires virtuelle, https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/cms/content/display.action?uuid=Accueil1RootUuid&onglet=1; 5. (Hungary) Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, http://adatbazisokonline.hu/; 6. (Australia) National Archives of Australia RecordSearch, https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/SearchScreens/BasicSearch.aspx; 7. (Republica South Africa) National Archives and Record Services of South Africa, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.za/node/737?q=search-the-collections; 8. (South Korea) National Archives of Korea, https://www.archives.go.kr/next/viewMain.do; 9. (Sweden) Riksarkivet, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/; 10. (Estonia) Rahvosarhiv, https://www.ra.ee/vau/index.php/en; 11. (Russia) Архивный фонд Российской Федерации Центральный Фондовый Каталог, http://cfc.rusarchives.ru/CFC-search; 12. (Italy) SIAS Sistema informativo degli Archivi di Stato, https://sias.archivi.beniculturali.it/cgi-bin/pagina.pl; 13. (Spain) PARES Portal de Archivos Españoles, http://pares.culturaydeporte.gob.es/inicio.html; 14. (Canada) Library and Archives Canada, https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/collectionsearch/Pages/collectionsearch.aspx; 15. (Albania) Arkivi Qendror i Shtetit të Republikës së Shqipërisë, https://arkiva.gov.al/ oraz https://katalogu.arkiva.gov.al/; 16. (Portugal) Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo, https://digitarq.arquivos.pt/; 17. (Poland) Szukaj w archiwach, www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl.

[61] The National Archives and Records Administration, https://www.archives.gov/research/catalog, accessed 17 July 2023.

[62] Szukaj w archiwach, www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl, accessed 17 July 2023.

[63] National Archives of Korea, https://www.archives.go.kr/next/viewMain.do, accessed 17 July 2023.

[64] National Archives of Australia Record Search, https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/SearchScreens/BasicSearch.aspx, accessed 17 July 2023.

[65] National Archives and Record Services of South Africa, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.za/node/737?q=search-the-collections, accessed 17 July 2023.

To an extent, this may also give users a sense that they know how to find relevant information even if they do not know, or know only a little, of the local language or history. Technical means, such as automatic translators, which, although imperfect, can overcome certain limitations, also help in this matter. Of course, it is too early to claim that archival information has been normalized across the globe because there are still too many differences between the practices of different archives. It seems, however, that globalization will force further convergence in this direction. Nevertheless, in a more general sense, the purpose of all standards is to uniformize products or services[66], and in this sense, archival standards, too, constitute a step toward predictability.

Poland is an example of a country where the pursuit of predictability is even more pronounced, because of the aforementioned methodic rules and guidelines. In Poland, this also applies – to a certain degree – to personal and family archives, as guidelines have also been developed to facilitate and expedite their processing. These guidelines, which are based on content criteria, allow for certain deviations while providing a predictable core for the processing of personal files not only by state archives, but also university archives and libraries[67].

Predictability is also connected to the access paradigm[68]. Access granted to all users under the same rules, no matter who wants to use the archival holdings or where they want to use them, makes archives predictable. The previous approach of national and archive authorities involved making archives unavailable to various groups, primarily foreigners. In order to access the archival materials of a given country, one had to pass a series of procedures, and communicate with the archive via consuls or central archival authorities. In pre-World War II Poland, even Polish nationals were not guaranteed access to archival materials unless they obtained an appropriate recommendation (from an institution or a prominent researcher) or passed an examination administered by the director of a given archive[69]. Before the fall of communism, being able to obtain permission to peruse archival holdings in Eastern European countries depended on the policy

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66   A. Mottram, *"Like a trip to McDonalds"*…, pp. 165–174.
67   H. Dymnicka-Wołoszyńska, Z. Kolankowski, S. Chankowski, *Wytyczne opracowania spuścizn archiwalnych po uczonych*, Warszawa 1990.
68   A. Menne-Haritz, *Access – The reformulation of an archival paradigm*, "Archival Science" 2001, vol. 1, pp. 57–82.
69   A. Tomczak, *Zarys dziejów archiwów polskich*, Toruń 1982.

and international relations at the time. It was, therefore, impossible to predict if and what type of materials one could access[70].

The gradual shift toward the access paradigm and the implementation of the public principle[71] by archives has resulted in markedly higher predictability. Regardless of the procedures applicable in a given country, users can expect that they will be granted access to archival materials. In addition, they can expect that they will be treated with the respect they deserve regardless of their origin, sexual orientation or religion. In this context, the end of the 20th century as well as the 21st century constitute a significant step forward, though there are of course still exceptions. These include Russian and Belarusian archives, which frequently discriminate against their users and arbitrarily decide what materials they can peruse.

These examples show that archives have made many steps on the way to predictability. Developing common principles of organizing holdings, followed by international standards, and finally the paradigm shift and opening the archives to a wider audience have resulted in archives being perceived as more predictable. Of course, the fact that the solutions discussed in this part have been implemented and applied differently by different countries has no bearing on this, which is why it is too early to claim any degree of normalization. Nevertheless, at the most general level, archives have made steps in that direction thanks to the international exchange of experiences.

Control

Control, the fourth dimension of McDonaldization, is probably not very apparent in archives, however its examples can be found even there. Every, or almost every, archive has regulations for users, determining how they can gain access to the archival materials they are interested in, and their behavior in reading rooms. Those regulations also determine the actions and scope of the assistance provided by archivists working "at the frontline" of archives. Such rules are generally soft, but they provide archives with tools to control users and employees. The user must fill out some documents to obtain access to archival

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[70] R. Techman, *Z pobytu w archiwach moskiewskich*, „Archeion" 1995, vol. 96, pp. 345–349.

[71] W. Chorążyczewski, A. Rosa, *Is the public principle a new paradigm of archival science?*, "Archiwa–Kancelarie–Zbiory" 2014, vol. 5(7), pp. 11–22.

holdings. The archivist must, on the other hand, provide them with necessary information, check whether the user has "fulfilled the formalities" and dispense the materials the user ordered. The choice of form in which users want to use materials is also limited because archives prefer to share digital copies. In a sense, these rules are reminiscent of manuals for fast food restaurant employees, who are required to perform their work according to a strict plan. While archive rules are not as strict regarding the behavior of archivists and users, they do provide a certain framework for their interactions.

Elements of control can also be found in the aspect of accessing archival materials that are of particular importance to certain groups. A perfect example of this are the Traditional Knowledge (TK) Labels, whose purpose is to specify and inform non-community users which materials are of special significance to a given community. This applies in particular to religious/ritual materials, materials which feature gender restrictions, seasonal conditions of use and/or materials specifically designed for outreach purposes[72]. While these restrictions are introduced for cultural and ethical reasons, and often also as a result of painful experiences of the communities in question, their purpose is still to control who can peruse certain materials and how. Of course, these are not hard restrictions. The archives' approach to control is very similar to that of the tourism industry, which also makes use of soft control mechanisms to encourage tourists to behave a certain way. Unlike archives, in addition to general rules of conduct, the tourism industry also capitalizes on the possibilities offered by proper infrastructure planning[73].

Integrated systems which provide tools to control the work of archivists in real-time can also be an element of control in archives. For example, in the Polish ZoSIA[74] system, the head of a department, director, and also the General Director of State Archives have the means to control the work of every single archivist. Management not only sees the number of records created every day, but can also read and even correct them. The standards used in archives as a basis for archival descriptions grant some elements of control as well. Predictable work, bound by technical measures, can be easily controlled by supervisors. The possibilities

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[72]   Traditional Knowledge (TK) Labels, https://localcontexts.org/labels/traditional-knowledge-labels/, accessed 29 November 2021; K. Christen, J. Anderson, *Toward slow archives*, "Archival Science" 2019, vol. 19, pp. 87–116.

[73]   A. Weaver, *The McDonaldization thesis…*, pp. 346–366.

[74]   Zintegrowany System Informacji Archiwalnej [eng. Integrated System of Archival Information].

of controlling an archivist's work offered by the Polish ZoSIA system are very broad. However, it appears that technological progress may also lead to increased possibilities of user control, even though they are already extensive. This also applies to electronic documentation management systems, which, due to the necessity of ensuring authenticity of the documentation they generate, must also offer a high degree of control over the actions of users, so as to minimize the hazard of unauthorized tampering.

Though the approach to controlling archive users and employees may vary in terms of form and scope, it appears that this aspect of archival practice cannot be fully discarded. A certain minimum of control is necessary, if only due to the need to ensure physical integrity of archival materials, as well as protecting such rights as copyright and the right to a good name, which may be violated by improper use of archival materials.

Irrationality of rationality

Over the past 200 years, the abovementioned aspects have brought some advantages for archives. At the same time, users received tools to use archives efficiently and predictably at the time and place of their choice. Unfortunately, they also involve some irrationalities, which are the subject of the penultimate part of the article.

Dehumanization

The above-mentioned methodological guidelines, commonly used in Polish archives, aim to standardize and accelerate archival work, while simultaneously leading to dehumanization of the archivist's work. Although they are not "hard" regulations, since an individual approach to each fond is allowed, the methodological committees approving development of the fonds checked whether they were used during the archival study. This limited the options for archivists to use their skills, knowledge and ideas, imposing a specific work framework on them. Introduction of international standards leads to similar problems, although on a much smaller scale. Also, although the standards make the archivist's work more orderly and lead to greater predictability of what

information we can find, they somehow limit the archivist's inventiveness, which leads, at least partly, to dehumanization of his or her work.

Another example of dehumanization of an archivist's work are the consequences of implementation of integrated systems. The architecture of integrated systems necessitates a more coherent and rigid structure than that of traditional databases. Separate databases allowed for a much greater degree of freedom in terms of entering information, as they did not require mutual compatibility and integrity. This is not the case in the integrated systems. Their modular structure, in order to operate effectively, requires the information to be much more accurate and rigidly structured. Although they are based on international standards which impose a certain framework, even if it is a relatively broad one, the need for internal integrity leads to that framework becoming more strict. This greatly restricts the opportunities for archivists to apply their knowledge and skills, leading to a gradual dehumanization of their work as a result of using a dehumanized technology. This is particularly prominent in case of forms, which are based on predefined multiple-choice fields.

Online access to archives is the next source of irrationality. Technical measures provided to users in order to give them access to archival holdings are dehumanized. They diminish an essential aspect of archival work – contact with other people. Pieces of information obtained by talking with archivists and other users were sometimes as important as finding aids. They were also a part of the so-called "archival life," non-professional, but significant to the research information flow.

Imposition of quantitative norms, common in the bureaucracy, also contributes to dehumanization of archival work. Examples include quantitative norms of processing or digitization. In the end, what counts is not how the work was done but whether the archivist did it at the right time, the expected number of times. In a sense, this reduces the archivist to a role similar to that of an assembly line worker. It doesn't matter what his predispositions are. The only thing that matters is that he has to perform specific actions so as to produce the outcome expressed by the right amount of products (for example, scans or descriptions). In a long time, it can lead to weariness, discouragement, and eventually, to a feeling of pointlessness and leaving work.

Disenchantment

Online access is also "disenchanted". Contact with original archival materials grants users a certain type of "magical experience", coming from the living history embodied in them. Digital copies, while delivered to users faster and in much larger quantities, do not provide the same experience as they do not have that "historical dimension." Although this issue has not been thoroughly researched, the perception described above is based on the author's experiences working with users in a reading room of the archive. Many users, especially those passionate about archives, while they enjoyed easier and quicker access to a much larger volume of files, at the same time regretted losing direct access to archival materials and being able to "feel them." This does not necessarily mean that archives should cease to expand their presence online, especially considering that the above remarks have been made by a specific minority of users. Nonetheless, perhaps it would be a good idea to focus more on the emotional aspect of perusing archival materials when planning archival work.

The irrationality of calculability

The next irrationality is the consequence of calculability. Archives which focus on quantity rather than quality, such as in case of the retroconversion mentioned above, give users incomplete information, and as a result, the searched information becomes less relevant. During the retroconversion, in order to meet the numerical indicators imposed by the NDAP, it was often decided to copy only part of the information contained in paper-finding aids. As a result, while archives send users a message that they can find virtually any information concerning archive resources on the Internet, at the same time the users are often not provided with some very important information that remains available on-site in the reading room of the archive. Thus, such information is often "forgotten" (lost to the user), which results directly from the message sent by the archive[75]. This greatly inconveniences users, who must take more time to search with no guarantee of success.

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[75] H. Ciechanowski, *Archiwum jako miejsce zapomnienia*, [in:] *Nowa archiwistyka – archiwa i archiwistyka w późnonowoczesnym kontekście kulturowym*, Toruńskie Konfrontacje Archiwalne, t. 4, ed. W. Chorążyczewski, P. Piasek, A. Rosa, Toruń 2014, pp. 45–52.

The procedures posited by More Product, Less Process are, or may be, related to this issue. Making the processing more shallow, as a result of forgoing individual descriptions in lieu of describing entire series, may lead to difficulties for users who try to search for information. While in case of on-site searches this issue can be solved with relative ease, by simply contacting an archivist, the same cannot be said for online searches. Less accurate information forces users to hazard a general guess regarding which archival fonds may be of utility, and to continue their search on site. This may prolong the search process and decrease relevance of its results. The need of online users for more accurate descriptions and more points of access is also highlighted by existing research on the topic[76].

There is at least one more problem associated with the problem of the irrationality of calculability. Imposition of standards for archivists in terms of the amount of annual processing of archival materials (mentioned above)[77] often led to a situation in which an archivist could not take action for an extended period, provided he was able to meet the imposed target in a short time. These targets were not high because, despite imposition of quantitative measures, it was assumed that the archivist's work was to be qualitative and not quantitative. At the same time, meeting the target in a short time meant that the study was carried out in a very perfunctory manner, resulting in loss of a lot of information. Ultimately, however, the quality of the work was not checked, only the number of processed or, better to say, inventoried units. This had an impact on the attitude of archivists[78].

Inefficiency

The section on efficiency describes the practice of Polish archives requiring the document creator to submit it to the archive in a condition that would make it ready for sharing. However, this requirement sometimes leads to the files being held back for many months before being transferred to the archive, and consequently,

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[76] E. Benoit, *#MPLP part 1. Comparing domain expert and novice social tags in a minimally processed digital archives*, "The American Archivist" 2017, vol. 80, issue 2, p. 408, https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081-80.2.407.

[77] J. Rusinek, I. Koberdowa, *Sprawozdanie z działalności….*

[78] Although there is no evidence for this phenomenon in the literature, it is quite common knowledge passed on in the archival environment.

no possibility to make them available. The files are no longer physically in the institution archives, nor are they in the state archives. This is because the archivist must check the correctness of their processing before taking over the files, which leads to downtime, given the large number of transferors and a small number of archivists responsible for accepting transfers. At the same time, if the archivist decides that the archival materials have been processed incorrectly, the file creator must make corrections, which also takes time (collecting the files from the state archive, transporting them to the institution, effecting corrections, transporting files back to the archive). After the corrections have been made, the state archivist once again checks the correctness of the processing, which again takes time. Therefore, it may create a vicious circle in which the records remain in a limbo between the archive and the files' originator.

Apart from facilitating access and lowering costs, extensive online sharing can sometimes lead to a slowdown. Such a situation will occur primarily when inappropriate technical measures are used, including poorly designed servers and resulting bandwidth limitations. The waiting time, for the desired information or archival materials, extends drastically in such a situation. This can be compared to standing in a long line to place an order at a fast food restaurant. Both of these issues, when combined, run counter to the reason why archives attempt to expand their presence online. It also leads to increased user frustration, and thus has a negative impact on the image of archival institutions.

Lack of control

One important control problem is the manner in which the information in the archival materials, made available by the archives, is to be used. This problem has existed ever since the archives realized that the information contained therein could be harmful, especially to private individuals (harmfulness to the state is a separate problem). The concern about this has increased with the adoption of the General Data Protection Regulation by the European Parliament and the Council[79], which provides for high penalties for violations of personal data

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[79] Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj, accessed 22 July 2023.

processing. The fear of lack of control over information, and of the potential consequences, has led to a situation where not only some of the archival materials were made inaccessible (or access is granted reluctantly), but even finding aids are made inaccessible, on the assumption that they in themselves may pose a threat. Unfortunately, this often forces the user, including a scholar, to correspond with the archive for a long time and prove that he has special permissions and guarantees security in the processing of any information made available to him. On the other hand, in a situation where the archives give an impression that comprehensive information about the sources is available on the Internet, while at the same time withholding information that they consider "dangerous", they in effect limit users' access to public information. This opens the door to further limitations and makes it impossible for the user to conduct their search effectively. The user is not even aware that there are still more archival materials that could contain information valuable for him. Thus, the archive's fear of the consequences of lack of control leads to unethical and dangerous behaviour.

Trends against McDonaldization

The changes brought by McDonaldization with respect to functioning of community institutions have led to emergence of movements to resist its influence. A prime example is the slow movement, which encourages people to live slower and make more deliberate decisions. Interestingly, the original slow movement emerged in connection with food, being a response to the rapid expansion of fast food restaurants. Of course, now the slow movement is not only limited to food, however its origins are of particular significance to the present analysis[80].

Within the context of archives, the response to McDonaldization is the rapidly developing community archives movement. Such archives do not focus on collecting, or making available, as many files as possible. Their main purpose is to collect files which match the theme of a given archive. As a result, their actions are primarily focused not on the quantitative indicators, but rather the qualitative ones. Their primary goal is to evoke emotions and call upon the

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[80]   The slow movement. Making a connection, https://www.slowmovement.com/, accessed 29 November 2021; Slow movement (culture), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slow_movement_(culture), accessed 29 November 2021.

collective memory. They also allow file originators to select files more deliberately and in a less formalized fashion. This approach is necessary because, as Jeannette Bastian points out, it is impossible to document it accurately without in-depth knowledge of the rituals and events that constitute a community[81].

In a sense, community archives constitute a response to the deficiencies of state archives, which focus on administrative files, and which have gradually ceased to provide an objective picture of reality. They may also be seen as a response to the threat of large organizations, i.e., external recipients who tend to objectify smaller communities instead of perceiving them as active creators of their own histories[82].

To use a food analogy, community archives are similar to artisanal ice cream manufacturers. Mass-produced ice cream, though less expensive and more readily available, is of significantly lower quality. Artisanal ice cream, on the other hand, though less available and generally more expensive, offers a much wider variety of flavors. Its manufacturers can also change flavors more often and improve their recipes to satisfy the tastes of their customers more accurately and diligently. Similarly, community archives, thanks to their lesser degree of formalization, are able to quicker respond to the requirements of their community, both at the micro- and macroscale; they can also be more flexible with regard to how they approach collecting their holdings and granting access to them, while providing users with more exciting and closer contact with history. Community archives also find it easier to adapt to the needs of the community whose memories they keep. This is particularly true if the community has been harmed in some manner over the course of its history. Kimberly Christen and Jane Anderson describe a very interesting example of Passamaquoddy Native American tribe archive, which, by rejecting the baggage of colonization experience, was able to focus on the particular needs of a single community[83]. It appears that the entire community archives movement, aiming to decolonize previous experiences with regard to collecting historical sources, can be referred to by the term slow archives, coined by the two authors, according to whom

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[81] J. Bastian, *The records of memory, the archives of identity. Celebrations, texts and archival sensibilities*, "Archival Science" 2013, vol. 13, pp. 123–124, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-012-9184-3.

[82] L. Coyner, J. Prongle, *Metrics and metrices…, p.* 473.

[83] K. Christen, J. Anderson, *Toward slow archives*, pp. 87–116.

"the slow archive is a commitment and an obligation to undo, redo, and build again structures that embody meaningful and mutual obligations to see, hear, and enact different ways of knowing, being, and relating through multiple temporal sovereignties"[84].

As community archives, or, more broadly, slow archives are not burdened by the drive for calculability, efficiency and predictability, they can also engage in initiatives which lie outside of those trends. A perfect example of this is the initiative of the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre in Canada, which contributes to decolonization by enabling the local community to speak about their perceptions of the history of residential schools. The initiative also included the Remember the Children project, which involved creating and distributing photo albums containing photographs from residential schools. Native communities and various organizations contributed to the project, and a source-collecting drive was organized. At the end of the pilot phase, every community participating in the program received a complete set of albums, to be donated to local archives and libraries so that it would always be available to all members of the local community[85].

Alternative archives, described by Jeanette Bastian, are interesting examples of archival activity that goes against the trends resulting from McDonaldization. The author's examples include archives established by the Jamaica National Trust. Their purpose was to commemorate the trauma caused by slavery as it affected ordinary people. Monuments were placed across the island, displaying data that was culled from archives (frequently in form of transcribed oral testimony concerning slavery in that particular part of the country). The purpose of this was to create virtual archives accessible to those who do not have access to the original archives. The second example comes from South Africa. It involved creation of textiles that commemorate and, at the same time, transform the painful experiences of women. Both initiatives are excellent examples of archival work focused on quality and uniqueness[86].

Nevertheless, even state archives are reacting to their increasing McDonaldization. This reaction takes the form of what has come to be known

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[84]   Ibidem, p. 107.

[85]   K. McCracken, *Community archival practice. Indigenous frassroots collaboration at the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre*, "The American Archivist" 2015, vol. 78, issue 1, pp. 181–191, https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.78.1.181.

[86]   J. Bastian, *The records of memory…*, pp. 127–128.

as the documentation activities of archives. By way of periodical initiatives of collecting documentation focusing on a certain type of documents, most frequently related to current domestic and international events, state archives seem to be able to temporarily halt the McDonaldization process and focus on a qualitative approach to their operations. After all, the goal of collecting sources is not to collect large volumes of them, but primarily to ensure that they depict reality as accurately as possible. Their collection, processing and availability, therefore, does not have to be effective, predictable or calculable in the above sense. Collecting process is also beyond the control of archives, which are almost entirely reliant on their social partners in this matter. At the same time, this type of work requires a greater deal of involvement from the archivist, a person with a wealth of professional and life experience, which is necessary to communicate with stakeholders, understand their experiences (e.g. during the process of recording memories), build lasting relations and provide direction as to the sources they provide. Machines are currently unable to replace humans in this profession, and it is our hope that this never changes.

Examples of documentation activities can be found in Polish archives. They include projects such as the Family Archives of Independent Poland, launched in 2018 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of restoration of Poland's independence, and which involved providing individual counselling on best methods of preserving family archives, as well as collecting valuable archival materials (or at least their digital copies) from private donors if the families were unable to properly care for them[87]. Another example is the pandemic archive project launched in response to the COVID-19 threat, the purpose of which is to create archival collections which document the reality of fighting against the virus[88]. Both of these projects, implemented as side activities along with regular state archive operations, were targeted at the entire society, engaging archivists to work with archival materials taking a distinctly qualitative approach, an approach which even bears similarity to certain aspects of the slow archive movement.

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[87] "Archiwa Rodzinne Niepodległej" (2020), https://archiwarodzinne.gov.pl/o-projekcie/archiwa-rodzinne-niepodleglej, accessed 29 November 2021.

[88] Archiwum Pandemii A.D. 2020 (2020), https://web.archive.org/web/20211026084324/https://www.archiwa.gov.pl/pl/ucategorised/5165, accessed 15 September 2023.

Conclusions

To summarize, there are many areas in the development of archives that connect them with McDonaldization. As noted above, this process has brought multiple benefits to archives. They are more open to society, more efficient and predictable, which gives users around the world more opportunities to use archival holdings. At the same time, the changes, mortly those related to new technologies, make archives partly irrational. As a result of application of modern technologies, including the aforementioned integrated systems, which appear to restrict the freedom of archivists more and more, archival work seems to become increasingly dehumanized. At the same time, wider access to archival materials online may result in some users no longer feeling the sense of "magic" stemming from direct contact with history.

The connection between archives and McDonaldization has primarily been presented using examples from Poland and the United States, representing different archival traditions. Poland is a country with strong centralization tendencies, which also affect state archives. Since the very beginning, i.e., since Poland regained its independence in 1918, the archival services have been organised on a principle of having a strong central institution and weaker regional branches[89]. It appears that this development path might have significantly contributed to Polish archives following in the footsteps of other social institutions, including fast food chains. It is much easier to transplant solutions aimed at increasing the efficiency or predictability of a given institution if they are imposed by a supervisor interested in satisfying the need to control their subordinate institutions.

Distributed archives featuring no central institution, or whose central institution functions in an advisory rather than a control role, will find it easier to resist this trend. In such cases, gradual McDonaldization of any given institution will only be contingent upon its needs and the influences it is exposed to.

Although the issue discussed in this paper is presented using a limited number of examples, it nevertheless appears that it could constitute a promising field of broader research regarding archival services of individual countries, one which may eventually give rise to a complete overview of the McDonaldization of archives. However, this overview will have to include local specificities, differences

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[89] H. Robótka, B. Ryszewski, A. Tomczak, *Archiwistyka*, Warszawa 1989.

in social development and the influence of corporations on functioning of the society. The relatively bold thesis that archives are forced to follow this path, at least in certain areas, also appears valid. This stems from the fact that their users, particularly those from younger generations, have been raised in a world which has already been McDonaldized to a certain degree. Therefore, they seek familiar methods in cultural institutions as well. A good example of this would be the rapid opening of archives in the 1990s, an effect of paradigm shift moving towards accessibility, which required that not only information, but also the files themselves be made available on the Internet, which is currently the fastest communication medium. These changes are also intensified by the archives' hiring of younger employees, who instil the existing tendencies into archives "from within". Same issue has also been identified with regard to condition of higher education[90].

As demonstrated above, gradual McDonaldization of archives is neither a positive nor a negative phenomenon. It has both benefits and drawbacks, as introducing efficiency and predictability-oriented improvements also results in irrationalities which negatively impact their application, which is a common occurrence in rationalized systems. Nevertheless, it appears that, although McDonaldization of archives renders the product "shallower" (like for example in MPLP, as well as in the case of "disenchantment" mentioned above), McDonaldization is ultimately more beneficial than detrimental, at least at this point. It also appears inevitable that archives would follow in this direction, which is why drawing attention to this issue seems to be of particular importance, as it may give rise to more deliberations concerning archives now and in the future. This article is only a quick look at archives from the McDonaldization perspective; however, numerous accounts make it a promising field of research. Even though the archives are not as McDonaldized as fast-food restaurants, being a social institution and a part of the bureaucracy they may be considered from that perspective. That's why, as it was mentioned in the introduction to the article, it is also an invitation to a broader discussion about the changes in archives stemming from societal changes across 20th and 21st centuries.

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90   M. Romanowski, H. Alkhateeb, *The McDonaldization of CAEP…*, pp. 1–9.

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