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## CONTEMPORARY CONDITIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITY OF STATE ARCHIVES – AN ATTEMPT AT DIAGNOSIS

**Keywords:** scientific activity of archives, electronic records management, interdisciplinary research in archive science, digital humanities, digital archive science

### **Abstract**

The scientific activity of the state archives has been visibly regressing for several years and it has been regarded critically by the archival community. The article outlines the current state of scientific activity of the state archives. The most important problem areas requiring in-depth analysis and a discussion within the archival community have been proposed. The author presented the priority research needs of contemporary archivistics, in which scientific research is essential for the further development of archives. These are: contemporary electronic office and methods of shaping the documents accrual (management of large archival data sets, metadata standards, creation of information retrieval models, selection and evaluation of electronic and mixed documentation, issues of permanent storage of documents created in electronic and hybrid documentation systems); institutional development of state archives (IT systems for fonds management), smart buildings systems for archival buildings, modern methods of preventive maintenance and conservation; archival methodology (boundaries and research tools of contemporary archival methodology, taking into account the diversity of forms and types of documentation). Moreover, the need to undertake interdisciplinary research in the field of digital humanities was indicated, as well as to develop a modern dictionary of terminology of archival science and works developing the principles of editing 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century archival sources, taking into account their new digital and Internet forms. Proposals of preferred organizational solutions in the area of scientific activity of archives were discussed, taking into account the new organization of science in Poland resulting from the 2018 reform: establishment of an archival school and a system of academic grants in cooperation with the Association of Polish Archivists.

Scientific activity of state archives has been visibly regressing for several years. It has been the subject of critical, often negative evaluations and comments, formulated by the archives community<sup>1</sup>. This article is a form of contribution to the discussion, intended to outline the current state of scientific activity of state archives. Most important problem areas are proposed, requiring in-depth analysis based on real statistical and qualitative data. Only on this basis will it be possible to adopt appropriate decisions and define an action plan.

The discussion on the prospects and future model of scientific activity of state archives should begin with a question about the purpose of this activity, more specifically how it should support the development of archives, for which directions and tasks it is needed the most. Scientific research has been introduced into archival legislation in order to provide a strong theoretical basis and ensure scientific foundations for the development of the State Archives<sup>2</sup>. In order to guide this development and thus improve the main areas of activity of archives, as institutions established to properly store, preserve, develop and provide access to the resources they contain. Individual academic development of archives' employees, improving their qualifications and obtaining degrees and titles is an important element, however, it cannot be considered an objective in itself. Therefore, the answer to the question posed in the title of the article about the current state of science in archives should be preceded by a more general reflection. What justifies the need for archives to conduct scientific activities today? What do archives need science for? Are employees with doctorate, post-doctorate or professorial degrees needed in archives at all, and if so, what should their role be? Are separate conditions of employment necessary for the elite group of researchers, or should employment in a research position at the archives be combined with a research position at a university?<sup>3</sup>

The turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century is a time of very rapid changes in the environment of archives, changes in the context of their activity. These changes affect all areas of archival activity and are associated with an unprecedented rate of technological progress, which has a very strong impact on the most important areas of archives' operation, in particular the collection of archival materials, including the selection of their creators, the tools for supervising the documents

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<sup>1</sup> See *inter alia* H. Ciechanowski, T. Żuchowski, *Działalność naukowa archiwów państwowych w latach 2011–2016*, [in:] *Archiwa. Źródła, historia. Prace ofiarowane w siedemdziesiąt urodziny Profesora Władysława Stępniaaka*, scientific ed. E. Rosowska, Warszawa 2018, pp. 69–79.

<sup>2</sup> The Act of 14 July 1983 on National Archival Holdings and Archives (Journal of Laws of 1983, no. 38, item 173, as amended, art. 28 par. 6).

<sup>3</sup> An extensive analysis of the scientific activity of the state archives and the situation of their scientific personnel was presented by Janusz Łosowski, *idem*, *Praca naukowa w archiwach i sposoby jej wspierania*, [in:] *Nowe funkcje archiwów*, ed. I. Mamczak-Gadkowska and K. Strykowski, Poznań 2015, pp. 97–115. See also: H. Ciechanowski, *Działalność naukowa archiwów państwowych w koncepcjach Naczelnych Dyrektorów Archiwów Państwowych w XXI wieku (Artykuł dyskusyjny)*, „Archeion”, vol. 119, 2018, pp. 317–329.

accrual, the criteria for evaluation and weeding, but as a result it also affects the storage and preservation of archival materials and, finally, providing access to them. As a result of computerization of modern office environments, the ways of documenting reality are constantly changing. Many new, diverse types and forms of documents have been created in various registries. Contemporary documentation systems have not so much evolved in a specific direction, as rather took the form of document management systems that are changing and diversifying under the influence of technological progress, as a component of larger work management systems, more and more often having a direct impact on the activity of documentation creators. Technological transformations affecting the archival foreground imply the need to reconstruct and modernise the rules adopted to date for the selection and appraisal of documentation, the rules for collecting archival materials in archives and the legal regulations for their long-term preservation, while ensuring the credibility and integrity of documents. From the perspective of shaping the documents accrual, not just the changes resulting from the constant updating of technical solutions or the introduction of new ones are important, but also their very high frequency and intensity. The passage of time, which in the world of traditional archivalistics was the ally of the archivists, has now become their main opponent<sup>4</sup>.

In order to meet the challenges that archives face in this area of their operation, to ensure completeness and representativeness of archival holdings for purposes of future historical research it is essential that the archives (archivists) undertake research work. They must in equal measure seek out their own original solutions and make use of the achievements of others: universities or foreign archives. The subject scope of the research which needs to be undertaken is extremely extensive. It comprises primarily the contemporary chancellery, document management systems, types and properties of electronic documents, methods and criteria for selection and appraisal of modern documentation, its acquisition and long-term accessibility assurance.

Technological changes, although the term “technological revolution in the archival foreground” is more appropriate here, require also organisational changes from archives, in order to align their institutional development with contemporary challenges. There is a particular need for research regarding management of diverse archival resources: electronic documentation and databases, traditional materials and their digital copies. It also includes issues of managing access to archives in such a way as to ensure their integral, complete use, regardless of the media and production techniques. It is no less important

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<sup>4</sup> Regarding the current challenges for archives, see *inter alia*: W. Piasek, „Nowa archiwistyka” – w stronę kulturowej teorii archiwum i archiwaliów, [in:] *Nowa archiwistyka – archiwa i archiwistyka w ponowoczesnym kontekście kulturowym*, Toruńskie Konfrontacje Archiwalne, vol. 4, ed. W. Chorążyczewski, W. Piasek, A. Rosa, pp. 11–24; W. Chorążyczewski, *Uwagi o przedmiocie i problematyce z antropologizowanej archiwistyki*, *ibidem*, pp. 25–37;

to develop scientific foundations for managing archives as network institutions, and to invest in modern methods of document preservation and restoration.

In the past, the most important directions in the development of archival science, constitutive for archives, were determined by the historical and constitutional context of their activities. The first decades after the end of World War II were the times of a huge influx of various types of documentation into the state archives: documentation rescued from war ravages, documentation of German occupying authorities secured after the war, as well as documentation arriving in connection with post-war political changes (such as nationalisation, agricultural reform) and creation of new offices for communist authorities. Similar processes have also occurred after the end of World War I and the rebirth of Polish statehood, when the main task was to secure the archives left by the partitions' administration, and to restore and recover archival collections mainly from Russia, Germany and Austria. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all the attention and almost all the effort of archival work was directed to practical tasks, increased activity in the field of archival methodology and in the area of shaping the archival resources so as to manage the acquisition of large sets of files, their arrangement, preparation for providing access to them and organizing the archival foreground. An increasing number of archivists were needed in the archives to develop practical methods of files processing. Archival methodology was discussed at almost every scientific conference; methodological conferences devoted exclusively to this issue were also organized. Scientific meetings in the archives flourished; during those meetings, issues related to the methods of arranging and processing particular types of files were presented and discussed. The results of work related to processing of the fonds, participation in teams responsible for developing methodological guidelines for a particular type of documentation, or simply the archivists' own reflections from their research were published in "Archeion"<sup>5</sup>.

Since the 1990<sup>s</sup> and in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the involvement and momentum of methodological work of the archivists has clearly stalled. Analysis of the General Director's normative acts concerning archival methodology from the last twenty years illustrates these unfavourable tendencies perfectly. Year after year, less and less time was devoted to scientific processing of the fonds. Introduction of computers to the day-to-day work of archives, the start of development of registry databases and the subsequent transition to ICT systems for managing archival resources has resulted in many archives not only stopping research work related to the scientific approach to arranging the fonds, but also

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<sup>5</sup> In volumes 1 to 100 of the journal (up to 1999), with a total of 4807 items, 286 articles are devoted to terminology, general and detailed problems of archives, with archival theory accounting for 62 articles and general issues of files processing – 112 items. The most numerous articles in "Archeion" were reviews of books and magazines – 2045, see: "Archeion", *Insert to vol. 100*, ed. R. Piechota, Warszawa 2000, pp. 58–77.

abandoning the arrangement itself<sup>6</sup>. The main priority was given to registering the archival material and making it available online as soon as possible. An additional term related to the registration, i.e. ‘resource inventory’, has also crept into the archival dictionary. The work of the archivist was reduced to technical aspects; it was, in a manner of speaking, automated. As a result of these changes, the archivist as such became, above all, an employee responsible for the conformity of the actual state of affairs with the items listed in the register, and archival information and superficially approached popularization of the work of archives and their holdings became the most important forms of activity, easy not only to carry out, but most importantly, easy to measure and report<sup>7</sup>.

This trend is confirmed by a review of the subject matter of scientific assemblies of the archives and the publication output of state archives employees over the last 4–5 years. The archivists’ research interests focus mainly on historical and history-related issues: archival research and source studies<sup>8</sup>. Most of the publications in archival and archival-historical journals fall into this domain. Articles devoted to archival theory written by state archivists are a minority. There are even fewer papers of an interdisciplinary nature, while in the European, American and Canadian archives, they are an ever-increasing field of archival science. Works from the borders of archival science and sociology, cultural studies, cultural anthropology, etc., as well as – outside the humanities – for example, computer science, bibliology, management sciences, are published in Polish archival journals mostly by university scholars, rarely by archive employees<sup>9</sup>. The lack of studies on electronic documents and electronic document management systems in the context of systematization of electronic office and digital archives has been, and still is, felt acutely. Recent years have not abounded in many publications devoted to the study of the needs of contemporary archive users, including users of digital collections, although expenditures on digitisation and IT systems consume a significant part of the state archives’ budget. In the written works of state archives staff there are very few

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<sup>6</sup> Regarding the contemporary crisis of files surveying in the state archives, see: D. Magier, Wyniki ankiety „Opracowanie w archiwach państwowych AD 2018”, <http://archiwozofia.com/sing-le-post/2019/07/17/Wyniki-ankiety-Opracowanie-w-archiwach-pa%C5%84stwowych-AD-2018> [accessed on: 14.11.2019]. See also: idem, *Pracownicy archiwów państwowych w 100-lecie ich istnienia. Próba portretu zbiorowego*, „Archiwa – Kancelarie – Zbiory”, no. 10(12), 2019, pp. 111–122.

<sup>7</sup> A. Górak, D. Magier, *Selekcja archiwalna jako konstruowanie zasobu źródeł historycznych*, „Archiwa – Kancelarie – Zbiory”, no. 2(4), 2011, pp. 131–143.

<sup>8</sup> Hubert Mazur discusses this issue in detail, see: idem, *Archiwoznawstwo w XXI wieku – wyzwania, problemy, kierunki zmian*, „Archiwa – Kancelarie – Zbiory”, no. 9(11), 2018, pp. 125–148.

<sup>9</sup> Hubert Mazur wrote a review of articles devoted to arrangement of archival materials, published in historical-archival magazines, idem, *Metodyka archiwalna w czasopiśmie i seriach wydawniczych archiwów państwowych*, [in:] *Wokół metodyki archiwalnej. Księga dedykowana prof. Wiesławie Kwiatkowskiej w sześćdziesiątą piątą rocznicę urodzin*, ed. W. Chorążyczewski, A. Rosa, M. Zmudzkiński, Toruń 2018, pp. 95–123.

papers addressing areas where archivists should play a key role, such as archival terminology<sup>10</sup>, systems of archival description and bibliographic description of archival materials, editing of archival sources. A somewhat more positive picture is presented by the state of research in the field of archival conservation, which is conducted jointly with libraries and museums.

The changing context of archives' operation means also a very profound evolution of user needs<sup>11</sup>. Adapting the rules and forms of access to new needs is a challenge and an obligation for the archives. This issue has been extensively discussed in the works of Joanna Chojecka and Marlena Jabłońska, in which the authors have identified problem areas requiring solutions developed by scientific methods. In this context, it is worth noting the sometimes overlooked aspect of archives' compliance with the directives on the re-use of documents produced by entities operating within the European Union (re-use of public sector information), including government administration and all beneficiaries of European funds, and therefore also institutions and persons benefiting from research funding<sup>12</sup>. Given these new rules on the use of documentation, it is impossible not to notice that archives in their role as custodians of material that is mainly important for historians can, and probably should, become important centres of knowledge and information enabling development of a network of diverse information services<sup>13</sup>.

Increasing level of computerization of social life necessitates asking the question which of the existing institutions is best suited for the role of organizing the system of storing and sharing this growing data stream. The state archives have already partially answered this question. This year, the Archive of Electronic Documents project will be completed. The first virtual warehouse will be created for the safe acquisition and storage of natural electronic documents. Thus, the archives have become an active participant of technological changes, not a passive recipient of them.

Today, new social needs and expectations with regard to archives, related to social changes, development of knowledge, achievements of information technology and universal computerisation, have confronted them, just as it was after the end of both great conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the need to reformulate the research scope of their scientific activities. They should undertake – as prof.

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<sup>10</sup> See: B. Nowożycki, *Prace nad Polskim słownikiem archiwalnym prowadzone przez NDAP w latach 1974–2008*, "Archeion", vol. 117, 2016, pp. 103–129.

<sup>11</sup> Regarding the evolution of the needs of archive users in the context of the development of the information society, see: A. Rosa, *Funkcja edukacyjna archiwów*, Warszawa 2012, p. 55–72; A. Kulecka, *Użytkownik i jego potrzeby w ewolucji funkcji archiwów*, [in:] *Nowe funkcje archiwów...*, pp. 67–83;

<sup>12</sup> These issues are discussed by Dariusz Grot, idem, *Eksploracja zasobów archiwalnych jako ponowne wykorzystywanie informacji*, "Archeion", vol. 117, 2016, pp. 129–189.

<sup>13</sup> For more on the reuse of research data, see: A. Krzemińska, *Zabezpieczenie i ponowne wykorzystanie dokumentacji badań naukowych (tzw. surowych danych) – teoria i praktyka*, [in:] *Archiwa w nauce. Nauka w archiwach*, ed. D.K. Rembiszewska, K.K. Szamryk, Białystok–Łomża 2016, pp. 11–23.

Halina Robótka put it – ‘grassroots work’ in order to meet the new challenges and effectively manage the holdings – both those already accumulated and those that will soon be transferred to the archives<sup>14</sup>.

A number of research areas most important from the perspective of the current needs of archives can be indicated:

1. Contemporary electronic office and methods of shaping the documents accrual. In this area, the most important research proposals concern the so-called archival foreground: management of large archival data sets, metadata standards, creation of information retrieval models, selection and appraisal of electronic and mixed (electronic and traditional) documentation, the issue of permanent storage of documents created in electronic but also hybrid documentation systems, without losing their informative and contextual value.
2. Institutional development of state archives. In this area, the main recommendation will include research in the field of management of archives and archival holdings, covering such issues as IT systems for holdings management (for all types of contemporary documentation and its carriers), solutions in scope of so-called smart buildings systems in relation to new archival construction, modern methods of preventive and regular conservation (including application of digital reconstruction techniques for documents).
3. The archival methodology, its revival, or rather reconstruction after a few (or even several) years of visible stagnation. Giving a progressive impulse to research on methods of scientific processing of archival holdings requires tackling a number of interdisciplinary issues (mainly computer science and information science). First of all, this requires a discussion on the limits and research tools of contemporary archival methodology, taking into account the great, unprecedented variety of forms and types of documentation<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Professor Halina Robótka ends her deliberations on the present condition of the archives with a conclusion: “[...] archives must keep up with the processing of traditional holdings and prepare for receiving e-materials. That is to say, they should make attempts to develop rules for collecting, storing, developing and providing access to new types of documentation, which will soon knock on the doors of the archives. It seems that this is not the time to divert interest to the archival fringes, not the time to develop secondary activities, although in a sense these trends are understandable: young employees coming to the archives, mostly without solid archival background, want to do something, to establish themselves, and are looking for a field to demonstrate their activity. And since archivistics is not an easy and pleasant field, and to some extent not a fascinating field that brings quick results, they look for less complicated fields which bring quick satisfaction, especially outside the walls of the archives. This is probably the reason for the rush to abandon »grassroots work« and look for replacements”. – see: eadem, *Kilka uwag o funkcjach archiwów*, [in:] *Nowe funkcje archiwów...*, p. 97.

<sup>15</sup> See: *Analiza wskazówek metodycznych wydanych przez Naczelnego Dyrektora Archiwów Państwowych*, ed. M. Andrzej-Mrozek, A. Laszuk, A. Makówka, “Archeion” vol. 114, 2013, pp. 121–147.

4. Development of Polish archival terminology and compilation of a contemporary dictionary of archival terminology are tasks that undoubtedly deserve an important place in planning the scientific activities of archives. This area of research interest should also include the scientific basis for editing archival sources, mainly the sources for recent 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> century history, including their new digital and Internet forms.
5. For the past few years, rapid development of interdisciplinary research could be observed, commonly referred to as digital humanities or digital historiography. Archival science's contribution to this research is almost imperceptible. Research area of digital archivistics should be significantly expanded, as it is currently limited mainly to archival databases and providing online access to digital copies of archival documents.

New organisation of scientific activities of archives is a challenge as important as the research needs of archival science.

The reform of science and higher education in Poland, initiated in 2016 and implemented by the Act of 20 July 2018 on Science and Higher Education, has introduced significant systemic changes to all research disciplines<sup>16</sup>. Scientific activity of the archives has always supported setting directions for the development of the archives and providing theoretical knowledge foundations for practical activities. There is no doubt that the archives have served and will continue to serve the humanities and basic research; expanding knowledge about administration, office management, the political system and the document is an element of learning about the past. However, in the context of the scientific activity of the state archives, the reform of science means not so much the need to redefine the scientific activity of the archives, as rather the need to create a new definition thereof.

The Act on Archives currently in force includes scientific research in the scope of operation of the archives, and the supervision of this work is part of the responsibilities of the General Director; on the other hand, the legislature has not explicitly defined how this activity is to be construed<sup>17</sup>. These provisions, contained in Article 28 par. 1 of the Archival Law, were formulated in a political and legal environment different from the present day and have remained unchanged since its adoption in 1983<sup>18</sup>. Continuing the current perception of the

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<sup>16</sup> The Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668, as amended).

<sup>17</sup> The Act of 14 July 1983 on National Archival Holdings and Archives (Journal of Laws of 1983, no. 38, item 173, as amended, art. 28 par. 1).

<sup>18</sup> Nowadays, the definition of the term “scientific activity” falls within the scope of the law on higher education. The aforementioned Act of 2018, also known as the Constitution for Science, specifies that scientific activity includes research and development works. The former include “1) basic research understood as empirical or theoretical activities aimed primarily at acquiring new knowledge of the foundations of phenomena and observable facts without any direct commercial application; 2) applied research understood as activities aimed at acquiring new knowledge and skills,



role and tasks of science in archives in relation to the current legal basis, which is archaic and no longer closely related to the contemporary reality, additionally burdened with the baggage of experience from the inter-war period or People's Poland until 1989, is not possible. Transformation of archives' operation, which has been taking place since the 1990s, in conditions of political transformation and reorganization of the institutional and legal system of the state, is significant for further reflection. Two areas of these changes have had and are still having a real impact on the discussed problem<sup>19</sup>.

The first one concerns the reform of the civil service model (starting with the Act of 18 December 1998)<sup>20</sup>, as a result of which the former division into administrative and research positions in the archives was practically eliminated. This reform was complemented by the repeal of the Act of 25 July 1985 on Research and Development Units, which was repealed several years later, in 2010. As a result, the employment of researchers in non-administrative positions could not be further regulated by its provisions<sup>21</sup>.

The second area is the reforms of the structure and organisational system of science in Poland, in particular the changes introduced by the Act on Research Institutes of 2010 and, more recently, the Act on Higher Education of 2018<sup>22</sup>. As a result of these reforms, research work carried out by the archives fell outside the scientific activity quality evaluation system. Thus, researchers employed in the state archives were excluded from the system of academic performance evaluation.

An important, albeit unsuccessful, attempt to remedy this state of affairs, introduced even before the most recent changes of 2018, was the amendment to the Act on National Archival Holdings and Archives adopted in 2015<sup>23</sup>.

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aimed at developing new products, processes or services or introducing significant improvements to such". From the perspective of the archives' scientific activity needs, the definition of development works also seems important: "shaping and using existing knowledge and skills, including in the field of IT tools or software, to plan production and to design and create altered, improved or new products, processes or services, excluding activities involving routine and periodic changes thereto, even if such changes are improvements" (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668, as amended, art. 4 par. 1–3).

<sup>19</sup> The transformation of the internal organization of state archives in the post-war period was presented by Elżbieta Galik, eadem, *Dokąd zmierzasz archiwistyko? Rozważania na temat kondycji polskich archiwów państwowych w świetle współczesnych tendencji rozwojowych*, [in:] *Archiwistyka między różnorodnością a standaryzacją*, Toruńskie Konfrontacje Archiwalne, vol. 3, ed. W. Chorążyczewski, A. Rosa, Toruń 2013, pp. 55–103.

<sup>20</sup> The Act of 18 December 1998 on the Civil Service (Journal of Laws of 1999, no. 49, item 483 as amended).

<sup>21</sup> The Act of 25 July 1985 on Research and Development Units (Journal of Laws of 1985, no. 36, item 170 as amended).

<sup>22</sup> See footnote 13.

<sup>23</sup> Article 40 par. 2 of the amendment proposes that certain provisions of the Act of 30 April 2010 on Research Institutes should apply to researchers employed both in the Head Office of the

The most important effect of the amendment was providing the archives with a capability, which then proved to be illusory due to the lack of implementing legislation, to employ personnel in scientific positions (full professor, associate professor, assistant professor and assistant). The second indisputable novelty of those regulations was the definition of the tasks to be performed by archive researchers, admittedly not directly in the archive legislation, but in the form of a reference to the provisions of another act.

The regulations contained in the amendment to the Act on Archives of 2015 concerning researchers have, as mentioned, remained a dead letter. Their introduction would require an amendment to the 2010 Regulation of the Council of Ministers on the principles of remuneration of employees who are not members of the civil service corps employed in government administration offices and employees of other entities. Absence of these changes makes it impossible to hire researchers in archives and thus to build up scientific personnel of archives<sup>24</sup>.

What, then, would be the most appropriate organisational model for the scientific activity of state archives and what criteria would guide its evaluation? A thorough answer to these questions requires, in the first place, clarification of a few general aspects.

The first matter is more universal in nature. It concerns the contemporary specificity of state archives operation as institutions of public and social life. In recent years, archives have been increasingly becoming public administration units with tasks inherent in activities in this particular sphere, as opposed to the role of scientific and research institutions, as was largely the case throughout almost the entire inter-war and communist period (at least until the 1980<sup>s</sup>). The current legislative solutions situate the state archives strictly within the structures of public administration<sup>25</sup>. On one hand, this ensures stability of budgetary financing, and gives the employees the opportunity for promotion in the civil service, but on the other hand, it strongly limits the scope for carrying out non-administrative activities on a larger scale. While such activities as popularisation (organisation of exhibitions, popularisation publications, information campaigns), cooperation with the non-governmental sector, or participation in international projects are, by their very nature, possible to be carried out with no harm to the administrative side, purely scholarly activity is subject to many limitations. They mainly concern formal and legal issues, which have already been mentioned (hiring of employees in researcher positions), but also e.g. lack of access to scientific grants awarded by the Ministry of Science

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State Archives and in the state archives, and as regards remuneration – the provisions of the Act of 16 September 1982 on employees of state institutions.

<sup>24</sup> Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 2 February 2010 on the principles of remunerating employees who are not members of the civil service corps employed in government administration offices and employees of other entities (Journal of Laws of 2010, no. 27, item 134).

<sup>25</sup> The Act of 5 July 1996 on the Civil Service (Journal of Laws of 1996, no. 89, item 402).

and Higher Education<sup>26</sup>, or the so-called *de minimis aid*<sup>27</sup> etc. Placing the state archives strictly within the structure of the public administration meant that they had to adapt to the new reality. Among other things, this forced them to change their internal operating conditions, consisting mainly of expanding their administrative and bureaucratic activities, such as planning the performance budget, reporting on the measures of its execution, or undertaking all activities leading to implementation of objectives and tasks in accordance with the law, in an effective, economical and timely manner, i.e. the so-called management control. Thus, some of the employees who previously carried out substantive tasks related to the archive resources were assigned additional tasks, and some were simply transferred to administrative activities. This naturally weakened the archives' scientific activity.

In the general opinion of the community, incorporating archivists into the ranks of civil servants didn't turn out well. This is primarily because the majority of archival work, such as organizing and arranging archival materials, preparing aids and informational resources, conserving and restoring archival materials, requires archivists to have a broad knowledge of the auxiliary sciences of history, creative thinking, solid scientific and editorial skills, and others. It is in no way connected with administration and civil service. As a result, in archives there is a noticeable shortage of competent personnel that can engage in scientific, educational, popularising and editorial activities.

The second issue – specific and directly stemming from the above mentioned general issue – concerns the very organisation of scientific research under current formal, legal and financial conditions. Will scientific research be granted its rightful place in the activities of the state archives and how, if at all. Public statements made by archivists include demands for the restoration of scientific research, but usually no specific solutions are proposed. They tend to be oriented more towards general suggestions for creating 'conditions' enabling archivists to conduct research and restore the state archives' scientific function. Other suggestions reach back to solutions known from the past (e.g. the proposal to resume the activity of the Archival Research Institute as a unit of the Head Office of State Archives that coordinates and supports research activities in the archives).

Summarizing this part of the reflections, it can be concluded that restoration of the scientific capacity of the state archives from half a century ago, about which Dariusz Magier writes, is not possible under current conditions. Considering the backlog in this field, it seems very difficult at present to quickly revive the high academic level previously represented by the personnel of the state archives.

<sup>26</sup> See the Act of 20 July 2018, Law on Higher Education..., art. 7.1.

<sup>27</sup> *De minimis aid* means public aid granted to entrepreneurs, see the Ordinance of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 9 September 2015 on the conditions and procedure for granting public aid through the National Centre of Science (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1381).

Not only because of the high staff turnover that has affected the state archives in recent years, but above all because scientific activity is subject to completely different conditions than administrative activity. The reconciliation of these two distant domains may well seem unfeasible.

Nevertheless, the above circumstances do not mean that no attempt should be made to rebuild the scientific capacity of the state archives, taking into account, above all, the new research needs of archival science, but also the current legal and formal conditions.

The first step in this direction has already been taken. The most important archival journal in Poland has been placed on the scoring list of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education with 70 points, and the publishing departments of the General Directorate of State Archives and the Central Archive of Historical Records have been authorised to publish peer-reviewed scientific monographs (with 80 points). Placing the journal and the archives on the scoring lists of scientific publishers constitutes a commitment for the whole community to uphold its high scientific value and position in contemporary humanities. The "Archeion" journal in particular will have a large share in this respect. It should become a sort of a codifier of research activities of individual archivists, initiating discussion and scientific studies of the most urgent research priorities of archival science.

The state archives should, for many reasons, hold a high position in contemporary archival science. On one hand, it concerns the identity of the community, in which one important factor in the social and professional identification is the academic value of the archival employees' work. It is also a matter of equal partnership with the university community, ensuring the flow of knowledge and research staff in both directions, the possibility of improving the qualifications of archivists through the pursuit of academic degrees, as well as influencing the programmes of archivists' education at universities, adapting them to the needs and challenges of archival practice. The quality of higher education for archivists should be one of the main concerns of scientific activity in archives. It seems that the inadequacy of the educational content of archival studies (although much has recently changed in this field) for the needs of modern archives is one of the reasons for the superficiality of academic activity in archives<sup>28</sup>.

As regards the prospects for the scientific activity of state archives, one organizational proposal that is reasonable at present is to build a platform or forum for discourse on the directions of research in contemporary archival

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<sup>28</sup> Volume 105 for 2003 of the "Archeion" journal was devoted to the issues of educating archivists at universities. The changes in the field of higher education and science in Poland, following the adoption of the Bologna system and organizational changes at the end of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, require a review of the then prevailing opinions on organization of higher education for archivists in Poland.

science. Among the proposed coordination proposals, the suggestion to reconstruct and expand the scope of competence of the existing traditional forms of organization, such as the Central Methodological Committee and the re-established methodological committees in the state archives, hardly seems promising. This advisory body of the General Director should focus on proposing specific practical solutions and their implementation in the everyday work of the archives, rather than serve as a forum for exchanging ideas in the sense of conducting a scientific discourse.

It also seems unrealistic to propose re-establishing a research unit within the structure of the Head Office of State Archives, as a coordinator and organizer of research in the field of archival methodology. A real and unrestricted scientific debate cannot be conducted within the framework of an office serving an official body of government administration supervising archival activity in the country, which by virtue of its prerogatives (e.g. by means of normative provisions) introduces legal and organisational solutions. It is also worth reminding at this point that since 2013, there has been a Department of Archivistics within the structure of the NDAP, which at least partially performs the tasks of the former Archival Research Institute.

On the other hand, there is an interesting proposal, worth a deeper reflection, to adopt a completely new organizational model, consisting in the establishment of a research centre shared by institutions operating in the field of archival science. It is an institution of science and education at the same time, an archival school. Organisational model can be based on solutions from European Union, such as the Marburg School of Archives, the All-Russian Scientific and Research Institute for Records and Archives Management and from other countries such as the Archive School in New Delhi in India.

The role of coordinator and initiator of scientific research in the field of archival science should be assumed by the Association of Polish Archivists (SAP), which is a recognized organization of archival community. It brings together representatives of a wide range of archives: state, company, civic and private, as well as archival science centres. Thus, the Association is predisposed to undertake integrating activities, also in the understanding of the scientific development of the archival community. Not without significance are the traditions and considerable achievements of SAP in this area. Scientific research activities aimed at developing and promoting activities conducive to the development of archival science and related disciplines is one of the most important statutory objectives of SAP. Specific solutions can be drawn from the experience of American, Canadian and Australian associations of archivists and records managers, such as a developed system of scientific grants and scholarships for both archivists and university researchers, as well as the implementation of independent research projects based on public science funding programmes.

Of course, the research proposals of archival science and the proposed organization of future scientific activity presented above do not exhaust the entirety of the issue raised in the article. The best and most appropriate place for further discussion is the platform provided by the “Archeion” journal. The papers presented in the current volume, devoted to selected detailed aspects of archivistics as a science, may constitute the beginning of a broader discussion about the issues of the contemporary development of Polish archival science and its research needs, as well as organization of scientific activity in archives. Volume 122 of the journal, planned to be published in 2021, will be devoted to these matters.

Development of scientific research in archives is one of the priorities of the General Director of State Archives in the coming years. The conclusions of the community discussion on directions of these activities and their organisational forms, initiated by this article, will support the fulfilment of the general development strategy of the State Archives for the next decade with specific initiatives, ideas and solutions.

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