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RETHINKING APPROACHES TO ARCHIVAL THEORY AND PRACTICE IN UKRAINE IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOCIETY

Abstract

Purpose: Digital transformation of the modern world has led to a radical change not only in the entire life cycle of documents, but also in the perception of archives by the society at the general and individual levels. The widespread use of information technologies in the process of creating documents, transferring, and saving information has made it much more accessible to a wide range of users.

The philosophy of information society and online access to the digital resources of archives have expanded the scope of interaction between archives and users, led to rethinking of both, the technological aspects of the archivists' work as well as the theoretical problems of appraisal and organizing the archival fonds. In this article we consider the development of archival theory and practice in Ukraine from the perspective of digital transformation of the society as well as through the prism of the challenges faced by Ukrainian archivists in the preservation of documentary heritage under the threats of Russia's war against Ukraine.

Method/Approach: The research methodology includes consistent adherence to the principles of interdisciplinarity and integrative scientific knowledge, historicism, continuity, comprehensiveness, as well as civilizational, synergistic, and systemic approaches with applying methods of analysis and synthesis, generalization of experience, expert assessments, social observations, and forecasts.

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The research pays special attention to various concepts, such as digitalization of archives and records management, electronic archives and archival science, information aspects in the development of archival science.

Results: The development of archival affairs in Ukraine is considered through the prism of Eurocentric approaches and value orientations, dominant in the society. It is determined that, despite Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, the digital transformation of archives is actively ongoing, intended to enhance the preservation of archival information resources, as well as to ensure access to them for the protection of democracy and human rights, support of scientific research, development of the state and the civil society.

Conclusions/findings: the author formulated several proposals for further development of theoretical, methodological, and didactic principles of archival science in the digital age, along with the modernization of educational programs for new generations of archivists and records managers.

Keywords: Archival Science; archival practice; archives of Ukraine; digitization; challenges of Russia's war against Ukraine.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past years we have seen substantial changes in the world caused by a global pandemic, climate change, deepening of economic problems and political contradictions. The challenges for Ukraine and the whole world deepened with the beginning of a full-scale Russia's war against Ukraine. All these changes are often beyond our control but affect our life and work, so we have to consider the lasting impact of them to the future of our profession and our activity.

One of the characteristic trends in the development of modern scientific studies is the increased interest in the conceptualization of both natural and humanitarian sciences, including archival science. Over the past decades informational technologies have radically affected the archival sphere in Ukraine. In this article we suggest to look at some key issues of the development of archival theory and practice in Ukraine under these changes, in particular: on the impact of the development of the informational society and digitization processes on Ukrainian archives, on the process of Ukrainian archives integration into the European archival field, as well as on the challenges of war and on the work of the Ukrainian archival community in war conditions, developing theoretical approaches and practices.

The research methodology includes consistent application of the principles of interdisciplinary and integrative scientific knowledge, historicism, continuity, comprehensiveness, civilizational and systemic approaches, the use of methods of analysis and synthesis, comparative studies, generalization of experience, expert assessments, and forecasts.

2. STRATEGIES AND CONSEPTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

First of all, it should be noted that development of the archival field in Ukraine reflects the general transformational processes that are taking place in all spheres of Ukrainian society. One of the key documents that determined the main approaches and trajectories in accelerating the digital transformation of Ukrainian society was the *Conception of the development*

of the digital economy and society of Ukraine for 2018 – 2020 and the plan for its implementation accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in January 2018 (CDDESU, 2018).

The Ukrainian government has determined that the main goal of digitization is to achieve digital transformation of existing and create new sectors of the economy, as well as the transformation of spheres of life into new, more efficient, and modern ones. Such an increase is possible only when ideas, actions, initiatives,x and programs related to digitalization are integrated into national, international, regional, and branch development strategies and programs. It was also emphasized that digital technologies should stimulate the development of an open information society as one of the essential factors in the development of democracy in the country.

Undoubtedly, the process of building an information society began in Ukraine much earlier, but in the last few years it gained significant acceleration, which in turn influenced the development of electronic governance, electronic record management and, accordingly, set new tasks and challenges for the archival institutions and archival science. In 2020, the Strategy for the Development of Archival Affairs of Ukraine was elaborated for the period until 2025 (SDAA, 2020) that prioritized the concept of digitization of Ukrainian archives as a defining segment of the reform of the entire archival field. Thus a new vision, tasks and approaches formulated in the Strategy, have been dictated by the challenges caused by the new generation technologies as well as global economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. They also took into account the appeal of Ukrainian society for the affirmation of its national identity, historical memory and investment in the future, as well as the need for radical changes aimed at improving the quality and competitiveness of the archival field in new economic and socio-cultural conditions, the spread of a positive image of archival institutions, the requirement of openness and accessibility of archives and also the necessity for accelerated integration of Ukraine into the international cultural space. According to the Strategy, the mission of archival development is to constantly preserve information resources and provide equal opportunities and universal access to them to protect democracy and human rights, support the development of the state and civil society. At the same time, the level of access to archival information resources should adequately meet the needs of the development of the "knowledge society" in Ukraine.

New challenges for society arose as a result of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. They certainly affected the archival field as well, as they demanded the renewal of archival management approaches and practices, rethinking of the importance of archives in society, the role of archivists as custodians and creators of public memory, cultural values, and national identity in wartime conditions. The need to understand these challenges and processes led to the consolidation of the archival community representatives – archival managers, scientists, and practitioners.

Therefore, the continuation of the development and functioning of archival institutions of Ukraine in the conditions of war was a significant result of collective and individual efforts. Moreover, archival science in these difficult times for Ukraine continues to develop, as revealed by numerous publications in specialized journals, speeches in international symposia, and the participation of scholars in the elaboration of the Conception of the development of the archival field until 2026.

Among the main *strategic goals of the archival institutions*, the following were highlighted:

- Ensuring of information needs of the society. Equal access to information, knowledge and services that it includes acceleration of digitization of archival documents; online 24/7 access to archival information resources; improvement of the quality and availability of archival services; maintaining a positive image of archival institutions,
- modernization of the archival management system and creation of a new architecture of the network of archival institutions, Security of archives and archival resources,
- development of rules and procedures for the protection of archival information resources in the conditions of military operations, climate changes, and pandemics,

 Completion of the creation of an information and telecommunications system that will ensure centralized reception and transmission of electronic documents for permanent storage in compliance with the requirements of legislation and standards (*The Strategy for the development of Archival Affairs*, 2020).

The implementation of these strategic goals definitely requires scientific support and the development of archival science. In the conditions of a digital society, alongside traditional fields of knowledge or within them, new ones are born, designed to understand innovations of social development, including in the field of archives, where digital (electronic) archives are already functioning, and the array of electronic records is tremendously increasing year by year. It also raises the problems of integrity and a long-term preservation of documents, information security, protection of personal data and many others. The development of information technologies, the elaboration of new methods of creating, storing and transmitting information, lead to the fact that documents created in electronic form ("born-digital records") and digitized traditional documents ("digitized records") acquire the status of primary sources, require scientific analysis and comprehension, organization of storage, processing and usage of retrospective information encoded in them, elaboration of methods of detection and involvement in scientific research.

New fields of knowledge are being formed, in particular Electronic Records Management, Electronic Governance, Digital Humanities and Digital History. We can also observe the conceptualization of electronic archival and documentary studies in the general framework of Archival Science. The scientific rethinking of the essence of archival science, its place, role, and significance in the digital transformation of the society belongs to the extremely relevant problems of archival theory and practice. This relevance is motivated by several factors. First, the challenges of archival practice itself in the conditions of information society. Archives as centers of preservation of retrospective information from all spheres of society belong to the key institutions of states and are one of the significant criteria of their civilization, play an increasingly important role in ensuring the

information needs of society and every citizen. Their activities therefore require new approaches. The reevaluation of the theoretical framework and practices of archival science is also caused by the new scale of integration and prospects of international cooperation of national archival systems, the ever-wider inclusion of their information resources in the world of archival space.

In the implementation of these large-scale tasks, an important role is assigned to archival science, the theory and methodology of archival management, in particular, electronic archival science as a new segment of it, focused on the informatization of the archival field and new information technologies. It is worth to note, that in Ukraine, the studies in the field of archival theory and the elaboration of new approaches to archival practices are carried out by several scientific centres, among them:

- The Ukrainian Institute of Archival Affairs and Documentary Science,
- The Department of Archival Science and Special Branches of History at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv,
- The Institute of Archival Science at the V. Vernadskyi National Library of Ukraine.

Their activity is supported by the State Archival Service of Ukraine and by practitioners who work in the central, regional and branch archives of Ukraine.

We must emphasize that despite the threats of war we stand in the stream and move our professional literature forward. The main publications and discussions in the archival field accumulated in the scientific and practical journal "Archives of Ukraine". Since the full-scale invasion, we have prepared and released 8 issues of the journal, on the pages of which 80 materials were published devoted to the problems of archival theory and practice, as well as reviews of archival holdings and documentary publications of archival sources.

The Ukrainian archival scholars elaborate theoretical framework for the activity of Ukrainian archival institutions in conditions of digital transformation of the society as well as develop new approaches for the work of archivists under the threats of war. The main theoretical research and prac-

tical recommendations were focused on the problems of digital recordkeeping and the electronic records management, archives management in the conditions of electronic government, conceptualization of electronic archival science, theoretical background and prospects of development of the archives brand management, improvement of planning documentation in the context of modernization of archival statistics, digitization of the cultural heritage objects in accordance with the European Union copyright and related rights legislation. Among other important problems that were raised by Ukrainian archival theorists during last years, topics such as digital marketing tools in the promotion of archival information, social media should be noted as an important tool in communication strategy of Ukrainian archives, theoretical framework and modern practices of the archivist's personal management, experience of Ukrainian archives in using and granting access to documents that contain personal data, digitalization of audiovisual heritage, formation of audiovisual archival collections, peculiarities of their description, preservation and integration into the global information space. All this research includes concepts together with their definitions, wide reference to relevant Ukrainian and foreign scholarly literature.

Among the theoretical developments in the field of archival management of electronic documents, new approaches to the theoretical mainstay of archival science in the conditions of information society, electronic records keeping and digitization processes, it is worth noting the articles by the following Ukrainian authors: Yu. Kovtaniuk, Ya. Kalakura, M. Paliienko, L. Didukh, N. Zalietok, T. Yemelianova. In particular, the work of Ya. Kalakura and M. Paliienko (2021) analyzes the development of archival theory in the digital environment and summarized that electronic archival science is a special field of knowledge in the system of archival science, a scientific and educational discipline of an interdisciplinary nature, which studies the history, theory, methodology and practice of electronic archival affairs, its legal foundations, principles, methods and technologies of creating documents on electronic media, their circulation, accounting and storage, use of information resources, activities of electronic archives and divisions,

their information systems, management of electronic document circulation within the competence of the archival service.

The problems of regulatory and methodological support for the functioning, storage and usage of electronic documents are in the focus of research of L. Didukh and N. Zalietok (2019) from the Ukrainian Research Institute of Archival Affairs and Documentary Science. The studies of the director of the Central State Audiovisual and Electronic Archives T. Yemelianova are dedicated to the problems of digitalization of audiovisual heritage, the solution of strategic tasks of creation and development of audiovisual archive collections, their digitization, preservation and integration into the global information space (Yemelianova, 2016). Some modern archival studies in Ukraine analyze digital marketing communication tools, which should be used for promotion of archival information and developing innovative forms of interaction between archives and society, creating and spreading a positive image of archives and profession (Bilushchak, 2020).

Archivists also provide methodological assistance to Ukrainian archives regarding online representation of digitized archival documents and ensuring their placement on European digitized cultural heritage platforms, in particular on the portal "Archives of Europe" (Khromov, 2020). Some authors develop proposals for creating an integrated search system for electronic identification of storage objects in the archives, aimed at strengthening control over the status, transfer and circulation of documents, improving their search in storage by using digital technologies and two-dimensional QR-codes. The mentioned project *«TOPAZ»* (*«Topology of* Archival Storage») consists of three levels of description and highlights the experience of the Central State Scientific and Technical Archives of Ukraine (Balyshev, M., 2020). It is necessary to emphasize that this central archive is located in Kharkiv, a city in the east of Ukraine that is constantly under fire and facing Russian ballistic missiles attacks. But despite war challenges, archivists are actively engaged in their profession. They are not only continuing their work, but also participate in research activities to expand knowledge and contribute to the professional field by implementing innovative approaches.

3. PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF ARCHIVES DIGITIZATION IN WARTIME

In the conditions of war, extremely important areas of activity of Ukrainian archivists are risk management, development and implementation of strategies for the preservation and digitization of documents.

Since risks for archives in wartime conditions are unpredictable, digitization makes it possible, if not to preserve documents, at least to preserve information which is crucial for the preservation of the national memory of the Ukrainians.

The Ukrainian archives systematically implement the *Program of digitization* of archival information resources for the years 2022–2025, which was approved by the order of the State Archival Service of Ukraine on December 29, 2021 No. 165 (PDAIR, 2021) (with changes determined by the orders of the State Archival Service on December 30, 2022 No. 104 and March 30, 2023 No. 46).

Despite Russia's open military aggression against Ukraine, state archives in 2022 showed a high rate of digitization. Thus 97% of the planned indicators for the digitization of storage units were fulfilled, and 115% – for the digitization of finding aides. In total, within the framework of the Program, in 2022, the state archives digitized 271,913 storage units (files) and 31,770 finding aids for documents of the National Archives Fonds (PRHSASU, 2023; ISAA, 2023).

The greatest results were demonstrated by the Central State Audiovisual and Electronic Archive (15,587 units of collections/audiovisual documents), the Central State Archive of Supreme Authorities and Administration of Ukraine (7,856 storage units), the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Kyiv (7,291 storage units) and the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv (5,406 collection units). Among the regional archives, the State Archives of the Poltava Region showed the most impressive rates and volumes of digitization – 136,360 storage units) (PRHSASU, 2023; ISAA, 2023).

The best indicators in terms of the number of digitized documents and collections in the first half of 2023 among the central state archives of Ukraine were shown by the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Kyiv –

7,944 storage units, the Central State Archive of Supreme Authorities and Administration of Ukraine – 3,510 units, and the Central State Audiovisual and Electronic Archive – 10,523 units of audio-visual documents (ISAA, 2023).

The results regarding the implementation of the Program of digitization can be found on archives' websites as well as their social media pages. Consequently, even in wartime, Ukrainian archives continue to be oriented not only towards preservation but also to use of information, and do everything possible to meet the users' needs.

At the same time, it should be noted that the problem lies not only in financing the processes of document digitization, but also in the unification of approaches and processes. The fact is that Ukrainian archives have been digitizing collections for a number of years, using different approaches, different techniques and software. Therefore, the main tasks were to find financial support, attract partners and create an integration resource.

On May 11, 2022, the State Archival Service of Ukraine presented the *Interarchival Search Portal* (ISP, 2022), which provides access through a single window to the digital resources of the archives 24/7. This website combines in single search space electronic resources of archives as well as separate thematic digital collections of documents that work on the ARCHIUM platform developed by the company Archival Information Systems (ARCHIUM, s. d.). The search has flexible settings and is carried out according to the full texts of the finding aids presented on local resources, namely: by the names of fonds, historical references to them, annotations to fonds and descriptions, titles of storage items and documents (if the latter are available), as well as among index positions, which are analogues of traditional archival catalogues.

We must note that the Archival Information Systems is the first and the largest company in Ukraine that works professionally and systematically in the field of mass digitization of archival and library collections, and also implements information technologies in these fields (AIS, s. d.). Currently, fonds of five central and two regional archives of Ukraine as well as the historical collection – the Digital archive of the Western Ukrainian People's

Republic – are presented on the ARCHIUM platform and on the Interarchival Search Portal.

Simultaneously, the rapid pace of digitization became possible with the support of foreign partners. In June 2020, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the State Archival Service of Ukraine and the FamilySearch International Corporation (USA). Its goal was the digitization of documents of the National Archival Fonds of Ukraine, primarily of a genealogical nature, and the creation a digital fond for their usage. After a full-scale invasion, this cooperation took on even greater proportions. Currently, 20 central and regional archives of Ukraine carry out large-scale digitization of documents within the framework of cooperation with FamilySearch International.

At the same time, the new organizational structure and legal basis of the information society, the new awareness by archivists of their responsibility to the public not only for the preservation of retrospective documentary information, but also for ensuring full access to it is ongoing. All this was not only a challenge for the archival community, but also a certain important reference point that opened new horizons for the development of archives, expanded the intellectual framework of the profession.

In 2023, changes were made to the legal framework of the archival sphere, which created an opportunity for citizens to obtain informational documents based on scans or microfilms in the absence of originals (which were damaged, stolen, captured, illegally transferred during the war, etc.).

Director of the State Archives of the Kherson region, Iryna Lopushynska, said at the presentation "War: (not)lost archives" at the Information Agency Ukrinform on August 31, 2023 that 121,000 storage units were stolen from archives during the temporary occupation of Kherson by Russian troops. However, due to the fact that in 2018 the archive began to create a digital fond of usage, key documents from stolen units were digitized. Currently, in this archive about 1–1.5 thousand files are digitized per year (SASU, 2023).

On August 9, 2023, the State Archival Service of Ukraine in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine and the Ministry of Digital Transformation presented the pilot *project "e-Archive"* regarding the introduction of an electronic archive and the creation of appropriate conditions for the permanent storage of electronic documents of the National Archival Fonds and state electronic information resources.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Today, Ukrainian archivists have accumulated a unique experience of working in war and emergency situations. Digitization processes are actively ongoing in Ukrainian archives. The policy of the government, which announced a program for the digital transformation of the society, as well as changes in work in the conditions of a global pandemic, had a significant impact on these processes.

Over the past three years, cooperation with international partners and colleagues abroad has significantly deepened and expanded. Regarding the processes of digitalization and storage of archival information resources, we have had significant support from partners from the USA, Great Britain, Germany, Poland, and a number of other countries.

At the same time, we note that in the conditions of war and the lack of sufficient funding of the archival field, the processes of document digitization and the creation of relevant databases are not covered by the state budget of Ukraine. Therefore, today the issue of both financial (grant, fundraising) and technological assistance to Ukrainian archives is extremely urgent.

But no less important is the in-depth integration of Ukrainian archival science into the European and world space. And in this context cooperation with representatives of the scientific archival community, the International Council on Archives is very important for Ukrainian archivists. We need to continue encompassing and implementing the best European and world achievements and practices in archival field. For this reason, we need to activate participation in scientific grant projects. Professional contacts with the International Institute for Archival Science in Trieste and Maribor

have been extremely valuable for Ukrainian archivists during many years. Deepening of cooperation may involve sharing best practices, standards, or new technologies in archival field and training of archivists.

It is essential to underscore the importance of evolving contemporary educational programs for training archivists that should encompass both the theoretical components of classical archival science and the development of applied skills for working with electronic resources and engaging in digitization activities.

In this context, the cooperation of scientific and educational centers of archival science is quite significant, and among important colleagues and partners, we can single out the Archival Studies departments at Alma Mater Europaea – European Center Maribor and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. And within this framework, we have to support professor Peter Pavel Klasinc, who set up a paradigm that "Archival science is an independent, academic, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary science" (Klasinc, 2019).

We must emphasize that despite the threats of war we stand in the stream, developing archival theory and practice, and are moving our profession forward. Regardless of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, the digital transformation of archives is actively ongoing, intended to enhance the preservation of archival information resources, as well as to ensure access to them for the protection of democracy and human rights, support of scientific research, development of the state and civil society.

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