Moderna arhivistika

THE JOURNEY OF THE MONUMENT ARCHIVES TO THE USER FRIENDLY ARCHIVES

Martina OROSOVÁ, Ph. D.
Archival manager, The Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic – the Monument Archives, Bratislava, Slovakia
martina.orosova@pamiatky.gov.sk

Abstract:

In the article, the author presents one of the Slovak specialized public archives - the Monument Archives or the Archives of the Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic. Fonds and collections of the archives began to be created in 1919 in the Documentation Department, which in 1992 received the status of a specialized archives. At the end of the 1970s, the automation of document descriptions began. The first databases of archival collections were created. It was possible to migrate the structured data into a new archival information system that corresponds to international archival standards. The system is currently being modernized as part of the PAMIS project. The Monument Archives is the best archives in Slovakia, especially in providing services to the public and digitizing archival documents.

Key words:

specialized archives, monuments preservation, archival information system, Slovakia

Izvleček:

Slovaški spomeniški arhiv na poti do uporabnikom prijaznega arhiva

Avtorica v prispevku predstavlja slovaški specializirani javni arhiv – Spomeniški arhiv ali Arhiv spomeniškega odbora Republike Slovaške. Oblikovanje fondov in zbirk arhiva se je začelo v letu 1919 v Oddelku za dokumentacijo, ki je leta 1992 pridobil status specializiranega arhiva. Koncem sedemdesetih let 20. stoletja se je pričelo avtomatiziranje popisovanja. Ustvarjene so bile prve podatkovne zbirke, ki jih je bilo mogoče migrirati v nov arhivski informacijski sistem, skladen z mednarodnim arhivskim standardom. Sistem je trenutno v fazi modernizacije kot del projekta PAMIS. Spomeniški arhiv je najboljši arhiv na Slovaškem, predvsem kar se tiče nudenja storitev javnosti in digitalizacije arhivskih dokumentov.

Ključne besede:

specializirani arhiv, hramba spomenikov, arhivski informacijski sistem, Slovaška

The network of archives in Slovakia, according to the Act on Archives and Registries (Act on Archives and Registries, 2002), consists of state archives of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic; specialized public archives, for example, archives of national cultural institutions, universities, Parliamentary or Diplomatic archives; city archives in Bratislava and Košice; archives of the Catholic, Evangelical and Greek Catholic churches; corporate archives and archives of legal and natural persons. The Monument Archives, or The Archives of the Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic, is a specialized public archives founded in 1992. Its specialization is collecting, protecting and managing documents about monuments, their protection and restoration, processing them, digitizing them, and making them available to the public.

1. The creation of the Monument Archives and its predecessors 1919-1992

The Monument Archives is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2022, but the history of building the archives, or of monument documentation, goes back to 1919 when the first Slovak institution for the protection of monuments was established after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic – the Government Commissariat for the Protection of Monuments in Slovakia (Orosová, 2009). Since its inception, this institution began to produce and collect photographs and slides, drawings and sketches of monuments, plans and projects, postcards, maps, and other pictorial and written records about monuments and monument protection, but also about folk traditions and culture. Documents of the Monument Archives are part of the archival cultural heritage and are a testimony to the monument cultural heritage.

Activities in the collection and storage of records and other documents continued with greater or lesser intensity throughout the 20th century, especially after 1951. During that time, tens of thousands of documents on monuments were accumulated at the Monument Institute. They were concentrated in the Documentation Department. In the 1960s, the collections were enriched with copies of written and pictorial records of Slovak monuments from Budapest, which were created by the activities of the Hungarian Monuments Commission between 1872 and 1918. Similar departments of documentation, of course with a smaller amount of documents, were also located in regional monuments institutions throughout Slovakia.

After the Velvet Revolution[1] in 1989 and the democratization of society, the system of public administration changed and the existence of regional monument institutions was threatened. All 21 regional institutions were therefore incorporated into the organizational structure of the Monuments Institute in Bratislava and under the Ministry of Culture. It was then that the idea of establishing a central specialized archives in which documents on monuments and monument protection for the entire territory of Slovakia would be concentrated was born. Documents and records from all regional monuments institutions were transported to Bratislava. By combining all these collections and fonds, as well as records with archival value, a central archives was created, which in 1992 received the status of a specialized archives from the Ministry of the Interior. Currently, the wealth of the archives consists of 67 archival fonds and collections: 33 fonds of institutions and organizations for the protection of monuments from 1919-2010, 46 personal fonds of important conservators, architects, and restorers, 20 collections of

---

[1] The Velvet Revolution or Gentle Revolution was a non-violent transition of power in Czechoslovakia, occurring from 17 November to 28 November 1989, marking the end of the rule of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Available on: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Velvet_Revolution

visual documents, which form the rarest and most attractive part of the archives for visitors as well. The Monument Archives, therefore, contains complete documentation on the history of monument care in Slovakia since 1872 (Sprievodca po Archíve, 2007).

2.   Archival aids in the past and their automation

What is special about the Monument Archives? It is the creation of finding aids. From the beginning, documents were continuously described and recorded manually on cataloguing cards or in notebooks and lists. Inventory and cataloguing records from the time before the Second World War have not been preserved, but we know that they existed. We have information that the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment in Prague controlled the records of documents as a superior authority in the 1930s (Orosová, 2009). In 1992, these fonds and collections were transferred to the archives as the so-called "old archives". They were re-inventoried, but only in a text editor (Hodas & Hysko, 1992).

The fate of collections created after 1951 is interesting. The basic unit of record in the Documentation Department was the municipality as a geographical unit. It included all collected documents except for negatives and materials exceeding the A4 format. In this way, texts and photographs from field monuments research carried out as part of the preparation of the publication Inventory of Monuments in Slovakia began to be processed. Today, they are part of the Collection of Basic Researches. The collections of plans, negatives and photographs were supposed to be equipped with index cards of places, names, and things, but their production was not completed according to plan. In the end, this system was unsustainable. Since 1960, the new head of the Documentation Department, Dr. Soňa Kovačevičová (1921-2009), was responsible for the introduction of new methodological procedures. She classified documents according to individual types of records into the so-called "documentation fonds" (negatives, photographs, plans, graphics, texts, etc.). Each created inventory unit was assigned an inventory number in chronological-numerical order, marked directly on the material, and entered in the "accession books" along with other information about the content, author, date, quantity, etc. (Kovačevičová, 1966). The inventory number with which the documents were marked is still valid today and is a determining identification element.

The largest is the Collection of negatives (glass and celluloid negatives of various sizes) from 1919-2016, which contains 230,272 pieces. The photographic studio and the photographic laboratory have existed at the historical institutions continuously since 1919. The laboratory ceased to exist in 2016, as only digital photo documentation began to be produced. The studio for photographing movable monuments, especially statues, paintings and altars, has been modernized and is still in operation. Digital photos are automatically archived in the digital storage managed by the Monument Archives. The Collection of Negatives was made available through the photo catalogue. Each photo is pasted on a card with a description, which includes the name of the location, description (mostly the name of the monument), date of photography, author, dimensions and colour of the negative, inventory number. Negatives are considered originals. They are stored in a deposit, in envelopes with a description and inventory number. The negatives in the depository are stored numerically; the photo catalogue is stored alphabetically according to the names of the municipalities. Currently, an electronic database of the Collection of negatives with a standard description is being created in the archival information system.

At the same time, negatives or photographs are digitized and a digital copy with metadata is entered into the archival information system. A reduced preview of the digital copy is also displayed to researchers when searching for archival documents on the archives' website.[2] Currently, there are only about 40,000 records in the database, so researchers still use the photo catalogue.

Since the end of the 1960s, the staff of the Documentation Department have been dealing with the automation of document registration in a study on data processing, the so-called automatic selection in the form of punched cards. In 1977, the government of the Slovak Socialist Republic approved the document "Principles of further development of state monument care". One of the tasks was "*completion of the system of registration and documentation of cultural monuments in accordance with the needs of their social use*". The Information Centre of Scientific-Technical and Economic Information with information management in the field of monument care was established, which was a leader in the scientific-technical revolution in the protection of monuments within the then socialist countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon).[3] The Documentation Department also became part of it (Jankovič & Horský, 1978).

In 1981, the Documentographic Information System was created (Ondreičková & Jankovič, 1979), which used automation means (database) and micrographic means (microfilms and microfiches). Some collections were recorded on microfiche but were not used in practice. Much more important was the database created on SMEP (System of Small Electronic Computers) type computers, invented by Slovak Academy Science engineers in 1978, produced in Slovakia and exported to all communist countries (Schwartz, 1987). They caused a small revolution in their economy. They were relatively cheap and did not use punched tapes, but cassettes, later floppy disks and magnetic tape memories. It sounds incredible because today's Slovakia is not a leader in the field of information technology. After the Velvet Revolution, the production and development of these computers were stopped because they could not compete with American companies. East German Robotron 1715 computers and Osborne microcomputers also appeared in the institute.

3.   Excel as a tool for archival description 1997-2008

It was important, however, that almost 60,000 data from databases of the seven archival fonds were not lost, and for the new computers with the MS-DOS and Windows operating systems, the dBase and FoxPro databases were also used. In 1996, all you had to do was migrate data to Excel. In 1997, the Monument Archives was the first in Slovakia to have electronic registry of archival collections, albeit only in the Excel program. However, this provided amazing possibilities compared to the past, and especially many Slovak archives still do not use any information technology. It is true that Excel only allowed recording collections with a simple structure. This is not suitable for processing archival fonds with a complex structure.

---

[2]   *The Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic, Databases, Online Research. Available on: https://www.pamiatky.sk/Archiv/Badanie.*

[3]   *Comecon – The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance – was an economic organization from 1949 to 1991 under the leadership of the Soviet Union that comprised the countries of the Eastern Bloc along with a number of socialist states elsewhere in the world. Available on: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comecon.*

The archival database was published on the Internet in 2004 for the first time. It was only information about documents from archival collections, but with the possibility of searching by registers of places, names and things. It was unique by Slovak standards. In 2004, we presented this service to the public at the ITAPA IT conference and received an honourable mention as an award.[4] In 2008, the archives started making digitized documents available on the Internet, albeit only in the form of virtual exhibitions.

4.   Czech archival software JANUS 2000

A modern archives needs a modern database program. We have defined what requirements it should meet:

- to process archival fonds and collections as efficiently as possible;
- to describe archival units freely and without restrictions;
- to have the possibility to create a description of the creator of the fonds and all information according to the standard, history of the originator, characteristics and analysis of the fonds;
- to enable effective and unlimited description of documents based on the principle of hierarchization of records within the fonds, i.e. multi-level description respecting the international standard for the description of archival documents ISAD/G; description of different types of documents in one database (files, plans, photos, etc.); creation of any number of registers;
- search with complex filters;
- data export;
- creation of printed outputs of archival aids or their parts as needed;
- attachment of a digital copy with metadata.

These requirements were met by the JANUS 2000 archival program developed by a private company in cooperation with analysts of the National Archives of the Czech Republic (Kalina, 2004). Excel spreadsheets were migrated to the Janus program. Other archival fonds and collections were processed in this program. In addition to the own description of the content of the document, it was possible to create various registers:

- register of things – when describing documents, mainly words are used that more precisely identify the monuments that are related to the document, but it is possible to include any entities that describe the document in more detail, including events, activities, etc.;
- register of persons – all names of persons appearing in the document in various contexts;
- register of corporations – institutions, organizations, offices, companies, legal entities;
- register of geographical names – names of states, regions, cities, addresses, cadastres;
- register of titles – if the document has an exact title, e.g. the name of the research documentation;
- number register – for example file number;

---

[4]   *ITAPA – the leading conference on digitization and new technologies in Slovakia. Available on: https://www.itapa.sk/information-technologies-and-public-administration/.*

- date records – all dates in various formats that apply to the document.
-

The system made it possible to organize archival units into a tree structure at different hierarchical levels and to describe inventory units according to their position in the fonds. It is especially important when organizing fonds with complex tectonics, when it is necessary to express the organizational structure of the originator of the fonds, material groups or special components of the file and attachments. In the JANUS 2000 system, it was possible to describe different kinds and types of documents using a different type of form (files, official books, prints, maps, image documents, etc.). It was possible to enclose a digital copy of the document with metadata. System JANUS 2000 we used until 2013.

5. Archival information system 2013-2022

On the basis of a contract with the IT Company Tempest, which supplies the Monuments Board with software for monument information systems, the archives, acquainted with the history and world development of archiving and dreaming about the future, developed its own archival information system in accordance with international archival standards, which still does not have a name. This system allows:

- description of the originators of archival fonds;
- description of archival fonds and documents with a hierarchical structure;
- search using complex filters;
- creation of registers and code books;
- data export and printing;
- registration of researchers and their personal data;
- registration of requests to study documents in the study room;
- registration of requests for digitization;
- attachment of digital copies of documents with metadata;
- export of data and digital copies to the Internet.

6. Public services and Internet

The new archival software is important not only for the work of archivists, who use it to process fonds and describe documents, but also fundamentally changed the level of service provision to the public, which is the most important for making the archives accessible. People are used to communicating with the archives via email. They ask what documents there are for a specific cultural monument or some research topic. In a few minutes, they are provided with a search containing all registered archival documents. During the Covid-19 pandemic, when the study room was closed, the provision of information was extended to the service of sending digital copies of documents. If they were not digitized, scans were made at their request within a few days. It was often very difficult, because many documents have large formats and scans with a large volume of data are created. In addition, the archives provided these services free of charge, especially for students, science researchers and authors of historical publications. Of course, the credit of the archives increased a lot.

On the website of the Monuments Board – www.pamiatky.sk – there is not only information about the archives, about archival fonds and collections and about the possibility of visiting the study room, but also the Online Archives is accessible. The online research for archival documents is based on data from the new archival information system. It allows people to search for archival documents in the entire database, i.e. in all fonds and collections that are in this system. In addition, the website visitor can download digital copies of documents that are in a reduced format and with a protective watermark. The researcher also has the option of online registration, which contains all the data required by the Act on Archives and Registries (Act on Archives and Registries, 2003). A registered researcher can send a request for study or digitization of documents through the system.

7.   Digitization and storage

A separate big topic is the digitization of archives. When the archives started scanning documents in 2006, there ws a lack of knowledge about digitization. It should be emphasized at this point that the initiative to modernize the archives always came "from below", from the archivists themselves. It was never a request of the leadership of the Monuments Board. Management and other colleagues took our innovations for granted. We learned from our own mistakes, we looked for solutions in the world and especially among our Czech colleagues. We have never been involved in any major projects, not even the Europeana project, although the Monuments Board was the developer of the Digital Monuments Fund project (Sučíková et al., 2015). As part of this project, however, 3-D scans of the monuments themselves were carried out. We followed our own path, perhaps a bit amateurish, but ultimately a successful path of digitization. Many documents, even entire collections, were scanned by external contractors at the request of other organizations or research institutions that needed our documents as resources for their projects. However, we also managed to acquire our own scanning devices, on which we can digitize almost all types of documents, large-scale plans and glass or celluloid negatives.

Today we already know how to digitize and have created almost half a million digital objects with a volume of 5 TB. Of course, this created a new problem – how and where to back up and store digital data. In the beginning, we created backups on CD and DVD media, then we bought external drives and backed up to our server. In 2021, our IT colleagues created a cloud for the needs of the archives. We can use it as a storage, as a virtual workplace and as a place to transfer digital shipments for applicants. In 2020, we used the PIQL company offer as part of the European Horizon 2020 project and backed up part of the digital data to the film strips of the Norwegian PIQL technology, which are stored in the Arctic World Archive in Svalbard.[5] Unfortunately, our documents, or any documents from Slovakia, are not yet backed up in the Arctic World Archive.

---

[5]   *The Arctic World Archive (AWA) was inaugurated in March 2017 by Piql AS, an innovative technology company located in mainland Norway. AWA preserves digital and analogue records of cultural heritage on a special storage medium piqlFilm – which is technology independent, so no matter how much time has passed and how technology has evolved, the data will still be accessible. Available on: https://arcticworldarchive.org/.*

8. Conclusion

Today we see the shortcomings of the archival information system and the presentation of the archives on the Internet. We believe that we will solve these problems within the PAMIS project, which is implemented by the Monuments Board.[6] The result should be the connection of all information systems managed by the Monuments Board, including archival and library systems, into a system providing a modern working environment for workers and valuable content about cultural heritage for the public. My only regret is that in Slovakia we basically do not have many partners with whom we could discuss information technologies in archives. Therefore, we continue to gain knowledge and contacts, especially abroad.

Modern archiving is losing regional specificities; electronic and digital documents are no longer just a national treasure and are becoming part of world heritage. We should more actively and effectively communicate the need to protect, manage and make historical documents and contemporary records available to government and the public, while strengthening the global community of archivists and records custodians. Understanding the past, knowing the previous value system and learning from mistakes is essential to shaping today's strategic decisions with their impact on the future. Human memory is fragile, subjective and mortal. The archives is therefore an indispensable helper. My wish for the future of archives is to be successful, high-quality, harmonious and beneficial for everyone.

9. References

Act on Archives and Registries (2002). N° 395/2002 Z. z. In *Zbierka zákonov (Collection of laws), 158/2002.*

Hodas, K. & Hysko, K. (1992). *Pamiatkové orgány na Slovensku 1919 – 1951. Inventár, zv. 1-4. (Monument authorities in Slovakia 1919 – 1951. Inventory, vol. 1-4).* Bratislava: Archív Pamiatkového ústavu, 1992, 2008 s.

Jankovič, V. & Horský, M. (1978). *Zameranie činnosti IV. odboru SÚPSOP ako Odborového informačného strediska o pamiatkach a pamiatkovej starostlivosti (Focus of activity IV. of the SÚPSOP department as the Departmental Information Center on monuments and monument care).* Bratislava: SÚPSOP, 64 s. Archív PÚ SR, fond SÚPSOP, šk. 47.

Kalina, T. (2004). Informatika a výpočetní technika (Informatics and computer technology). In *Aby na nic a na nikoho nebylo zapomenuto. K Jubileu ústředního archivu českého státu 1954 – 2004*. Praha: Národní archiv, pp. 200–218. Retrieved 9. 5. 2022 from: https://old2.nacr.cz/o-nas/narodni-archiv-v-retrospektive/informacni-systemy/.

Kovačevičová, S. (1966). *Metodika základného dokumentovania materiálov o pamiatkach (Methodology of basic documentation of materials about monuments)*. Bratislava: SÚPSOP, 257 p. Archív PÚ SR, fond SÚPSOP, šk. 48.

Ondreičková, R. & Jankovič, V. (1979). *Zásady jednotného systému dokumentácie kultúrnych pamiatok (Principles of a unified system of documentation of cultural monuments)*. Bratislava: SÚPSOP, 29 s. Archív PÚ SR, fond SÚPSOP, šk. 47.

---

[6] *Project PAMIS – Pamiatkový informačný systém (Monument Information System). The main goal of the PAMIS information system is the introduction of electronic communication at the Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic, the provision of electronic services for citizens, the automated publication of complex datasets and information. Available on: http://www.pamiatky.sk/sk/page/o-projekte-pamis.*

Orosová, M. (2009). Organizácia ochrany pamiatok v medzivojnovom období (Organization of the protection of monuments in the interwar period). In *Pamiatky a múzeá : Revue pre kultúrne dedičstvo*, 58, (4), s. 2-11.

Sprievodca po Archíve (2007). *Sprievodca po Archíve Pamiatkového úradu Slovenskej republiky (Guide to the Archives of the Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic)*. Bratislava: Pamiatkový úrad Slovenskej republiky, 111 s.

Schwartz, L. (1987). *Princípy a prostriedky prenosu dát v zariadeniach výpočtovej techniky SMEP / Principles and Equipments Data Transmission in Computing Techniques SMEP Equipments*. Žilina: Datasystém Žilina, 196 pp. Retrieved 9. 5. 2022 from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340788711_Principy_a_prostriedky_prenosu_dat_v_zariadeniach_vypoctovej_techniky_SMEP_CONTENT_of_Principles_and_Equipments_Data_Transmission_in_Computing_Techniques_SMEP_Equipments_Datasystem_Zilina_1987_196_pp.

Sučíková, A., Kravjanská, I., Haličková, J., Brunčák, P. (2015). Digitálny pamiatkový fond Slovenskej republiky / Digital Monuments Fund of the Slovak Republic. In *Informačné technológie a knižnice*, 4, Retrieved 9. 5. 2022 from: https://itlib.cvtisr.sk/%c4%8cl%c3%a1nky/clanek3064/.

SUMMARY

SLOVAŠKI SPOMENIŠKI ARHIV NA POTI DO UPORABNIKOM PRIJAZNEGA ARHIVA

Dr. Martina Orosova
Arhivska menedžerka, Spomeniški odbor Republike Slovaške – Spomeniški arhiv, Bratislava, Republika Slovaška
martina.orosova@pamiatky.gov.sk

Spomeniški arhiv Republike Slovaške je bil ustanovljen leta 1992 kot javni arhiv, specializiran za hrambo in varovanje dokumentov spomeniškega fonda Slovaške. V svojih skladiščih hrani tisoče arhivskih dokumentov, ki podajajo nazorno sliko bogastva spomeniškega fonda in zgodovinski ter institucijski razvoj na Slovaškem od sredine 19. stoletja do danes. Glavni cilj našega arhiva je omogočiti javnosti in raziskovalcem dostop do omenjenih dokumentov. Spomeniški arhiv igra tudi vodilno vlogo pri digitalizaciji arhivskih dokumentov in zagotavljanju njihove dostopnosti po spletu. Z digitalizacijo smo začeli leta 2005 in danes imamo že dva milijona digitalizatov, ki so dostopni na spletni strani www.pamiatky.sk. Celoten proces smo izvedli s pomočjo arhivskega informacijskega sistema, ki ga uporabljamo za popisovanje dokumentov in digitalizatov. Slednji so bili dolgo shranjeni v oblaku Spomeniškega arhiva Republike Slovaške. Raziskovalci imajo možnost iskanja dokumentov po celotni arhivski zbirki, na spletu se lahko prijavijo in brezplačno snamejo digitalizate.