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*Ivan Fras, prof., Pokrajinski arhiv Maribor, Glavni trg 7, SI-2000 Maribor,
telefon/ Phone: +386 2228 5017; e-pošta/e-mail: ivan.fras@pokarh-mb.si*

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1.04 Strokovni članek

1.04 Professional Article

IMPORTANCE OF ACQUIRING ARRANGED FONDS IN THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION – EXPERIENCES OF THE ARCHIVE OF THE TUZLA CANTON

Omer Zulić, M. Sc.

Archives of the Tuzla Canton, Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina

omer.arhiv@gmail.com

Abstract:

In the transitional period, acquiring of archival material in the Archives of the Tuzla Canton has been intensified. Records of privatized legal subjects, records of companies in liquidation or bankruptcy, obsolete wartime administration, etc. were acquired by the Archives in large quantities. This new intake of fonds was not followed by the strengthening of personnel, which also increased the danger to change the balance between arranged fonds and unarranged ones in favor of the latter. This would directly influence the use of these fonds by users, thus negatively affecting their fulfillment of human, civil and other rights. Therefore, the Archives' Expert's council initiated and introduced many decisions related to increased activities in the field of preparation, arranging, listing and acquiring arranged fonds. In some cases, analytical inventories were made before records were transferred to the Archives, which made their immediate use easier. Therefore, this article aims to point out positive experiences of the Archives of the Tuzla Canton in the field of acquiring and use of archival material in the period from 1991 to 2017.

Key words:

acquisition, transitional period, arrangement of fonds, role of archives and External Service of archives, use of archival material

Izvleček:

Pomen prevzemanja urejenih fondov iz časa tranzicije - izkušnje Arhiva Tuzelskega kantona

V času tranzicije je postalo prevzemanje arhivskega gradiva v Arhivu Tuzelskega kantona bolj intenzivno. Prevzetega gradiva privatiziranih pravnih oseb, družb v likvidaciji ali stečaju, nekdanje vojne uprave itd. je bilo izredno veliko. Temu povečanju količine gradiva in novonastalih fondov pa ni sledilo povečanje števila zaposlenih, kar je ravnotežje med urejenimi in neurejenimi fondi premaknilo na stran slednjih. To bi negativno vplivalo na uporabo arhivskega gradiva v teh fondih in onemogočilo izpolnjevanje zahtev uporabnikov. Zato je Arhivski strokovni svet odločil, da je potrebno intenzivirati aktivnosti na področju priprave, urejanja, popisovanja in prevzemanja urejenih fondov. V nekaterih primerih so bili analitični inventarji ustvarjeni že pred prevzemom fonda v arhiv in tako omogočili njegovo takojšno uporabo. Prispevek podaja pozitivne izkušnje Arhiva Tuzelskega kantona na področju prevzemanja in uporabe arhivskih fondov v obdobju med letoma 1991 in 2017.

Ključne besede:

prevzemanje, tranzicija, urejenost fondov, vloga arhiva in Arhivskega strokovnega sveta, uporaba arhivskega gradiva

1. Introductory remarks

Involvement and mobility of Bosnian archives in the last few decades have been largely increased. It especially came to the fore during the transitional period, when many social, economic, political and other events directly influenced the status and protection of emerging archival material. This involvement of archival institutions included the increased activity on protection and rescuing of endangered archival material, and records of companies engulfed in transitional events. These activities led to the significant increase of acquired archival fonds and collections in all Bosnian archives, especially in the case of the Archives of the Tuzla Canton, which reached enviable results regarding the protection and acquirement of records.

However, increased acquirement of regular and endangered or otherwise important archival material was not followed by the strengthening of personnel/human resources in the archival service of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The same happened in the Archives of the Tuzla Canton. This fact negatively influenced further activities of Bosnian archives, especially regarding the processing of archival material and making it available for use. Since the gap between large acquisitions of fonds and lack of human resources grew, certain solutions had to be found to reduce the effects. Therefore, the Expert's council of the Archives of the Tuzla Canton initiated and introduced several decisions, which resulted in the acquisition of fonds in pre-arranged state, in some cases insisting on additional arrangement and inventories, even analytical ones.

2. Importance of acquiring prepared fonds

Archival material represents an invaluable movable cultural and historical heritage of a country and a part of the world's cultural heritage. However, to ensure that archives complete their ultimate purpose of providing access and use of archival material, that material must be properly arranged, in accordance with archival standards, and thus available to a wider professional, scientific, cultural and general public. Only then, the archives can fulfill their ultimate purpose, either in the domain of scientific or legal needs. In this way, institutional protection of archival material, one conducted by archives, is needed, and it includes a complex sequence of professional activities, from the protection of records while in custody of creators, then in archives and finally use of records.

All mentioned processes of managing archival material are interconnected and depend on each other. Namely, in order for the archives to acquire certain archival material it has to be, for decades, a subject of continued, systematic following and protection by the competent archives. On the other hand, transferring this archival material to archives does not only have their physical or technical and technological protection in goal, but also archival processing, so it could be put to use. This is the ultimate goal of every archives. Therefore, it is necessary to go through many phases: from the protection of archival material to its functioning use. These processes can last for several decades. Therefore, it is unacceptable that, after much professional investment, in the end archives do not fulfill their task and goal, which is putting archival material in front of users.

Namely, in time of the increased activity of acquiring archival fonds and inadequate human resources, especially in the sector of processing archival material, we could have a contra effect; this archival material would not be available to users.¹ In the earlier days of archival service's development, when the number of fonds was much lower, archival processing of fonds could be done in higher level.

More intensity in activities related to acquiring archival material in the last three decades is clearly visible if we compare and analyze available data. To completely see and observe differences and scale regarding fonds acquisition, we compared the data from the period between 1991 and 2017. Year 1991 was taken as a starting point because it presents the start of transitional changes. These changes influenced the higher engagement of archival institutions in protecting archival material, thus increasing the number of acquisitions. In 1991, the Archives acquired almost 88 archival fonds with 414 meters of archival material (Jerić, 1991). Acquisition of archival material continued even in the hardest period of aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, in 1994, the Archives acquired 97 archival fonds and 22 collections, with around 1.000 meters (Kožar, 1994).

However, in the following period, and in accordance with plans of the Archives of the Tuzla Canton, acquiring of records gained new momentum. This is especially the case after the year 2000. The Law on Archives was passed that same year. (Službene novine TK, 15/00) As a result, in 2015, the Archives of the Tuzla Canton had 421 fonds with almost 12.000 meters (Šabotić, Hodžić, Ilić, 2012). During 2017, the number of acquired fonds increased by 51 or by 1.144,5 meters. Therefore, at the end of 2017, there were 13.144,5 meters of archival material in the Archives of the Tuzla Canton.² If we take into consideration the number of fonds, we can claim that this number increased by 536 %, an imposing figure, and the total size of records increased thirty times.

The increased number of acquired fonds in the Archives was only partially followed by the increased number of employees. The number of archivists, working on processing archival material, increased from three (Jerić, 1991) to five³, which is a significant percentile increase, but still an insufficient one, compared to the dynamic of archival material's acquisition. According to the Standards and Norms for archival profession from 1991, one archivists should be assigned to no more than 300 meters of archival material. This would mean that the Archives of the Tuzla Canton needs almost ten time more personnel.

Taking into consideration the fact that the ultimate goal of an archives is putting archival material in use (making it available to users) and presenting it to the public, the real problem of not being able to present unarranged fonds came to our attention. Therefore, new professional solutions had to be found to ensure the possibility of using this archival material.

¹ According to regulations, unarranged archival material can not be available to users.

² Data taken from the yearly reports of the Archives of the Tuzla Canton for 2016 and 2017. The total number of fonds by the end of 2017 amounts to 472 fonds and the total number of archival material is 13.144,5 meters.

³ The Archives of the Tuzla Canton has 5 archivists working on processing and arranging records, but two of them are employed on additional professional, scientific, cultural and other projects during the whole year. Therefore, the number of archivists constantly (most of days) working on arranging archival material is still three. Taking this into consideration, the number remained the same.

Therefore, extremely increased amount of work regarding the acquisition of archival material was not followed by the increase of personnel.⁴ On the other hand, the need for accessing this archival material could not be ignored. The Expert's council of the Archives therefore initiated numerous discussions that aimed at presenting measures and actions to overcome this issue. This resulted in several decisions, which mainly addressed the increased activity of the Archives' employees on professional tracking, protection and acquirement of exclusively prepared archival fonds. This required additional work, time and effort of archivists in constant and more frequent visits to creators and giving them guidelines and instructions. Decisions related to improvements of professional activities in preparing and acquiring of fonds especially made sense in the case of wartime records created in the Tuzla Canton, privatized companies/entities, entities going through bankruptcy and liquidation, etc.

Acquiring archival material from wartime administration (1992–1995) in the Tuzla Canton was especially challenging. Namely, archival material created during the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina is extremely important and has political, military, social, economic, cultural, educational and other value. At the same time, it is obvious that this archival material is incomplete. That was an additional motive for finding a solution to transfer these records to the Archives. Therefore, the Expert's council of the Archives of the Tuzla Canton made the decision to acquire this archival material with detailed inventories. In this way, the archival material would not only be available for use, but would in fact be fully prepared for archival processing right from the start.⁵

As for creators in the process of bankruptcy, several decisions were made with the aim to acquire arranged fonds to the Archives of the Tuzla Canton. If we take into consideration that Tuzla's industrial basin was the most developed one in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with numerous companies (legal entities), it is obvious that we faced a large number of fonds to acquire, in large quantities, as these companies employed thousands of workers.

Therefore, the Expert's council of the Archives of the Tuzla Canton introduced several decisions: to transfer only prepared archival material to the Archives, to make alphabetical lists of employee's dossiers (where applicable) to make locating the records easier, to ensure that the company's management provides archival equipment necessary for storage of their archival material. Because of these decisions, the Archives of the Tuzla Canton acquired arranged fonds in the last period. There were few exceptions in cases of fonds where moving them to the Archives meant ensuring their survival and certainty; these fonds were arranged and processed at the Archives (Zulić, 2017).

If archives did not have a systematically arranged supervision over records and a plan of acquiring them with priorities, categorization, etc., the acquisition of archival material would not be a result of a long-term strategy, but a matter of case-to-case basis and exceptions. In that case, we could not expect decent results regarding the state of acquired records. Thanks to the maximal effort and involvement of the Archives of the Tuzla Canton's employees, adequate professional actions were taken in the field with the aim to ensure the protection of archival material and its transfer to the Archives in

⁴ *An identical situation can be observed in the entire archival service of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has 59 archivists working on processing fonds. In accordance with archival standards, they could cover around 18.000 meters of archival material. In comparison, only the Archives of the Tuzla Canton had around 13.000 meters at the end of 2017.*

⁵ *For more details about specifics regarding wartime records see: Zulić (2016a).*

arranged state. The result of such approach can be seen in the acquisition of mostly arranged, pre-arranged archival material, as is shown in the following table⁶ (Table 1):

Table 1: Relation between the number of fonds and state of arrangement

Year	No. of fonds	Amount of archival material	Arranged/ processed archival fonds		Prepared/pre-arranged fonds		Unarranged fonds	
			number	%	number	%	number	%
1991	88	414	68	77,27	-	-	20	22,72
2013	350	12.000	117	32,56	226	64,57	12	3,42
2017 ⁷	472	13.144,5	123	26,05	339	71,82	10	2,11

According to the table, the increase of acquired archival fonds is clearly evident. As the number of fonds grew, the number of arranged fonds fell. Positive is the fact that the percentage of pre-arranged, prepared fonds done before transferring to the Archives is growing, and the percentage of unarranged fonds is reduced when compared to 2013.⁸ Therefore, it is important to state that the Archives of the Tuzla Canton systematically worked on acquiring new fonds, as is shown by the high percentage of pre-arranged, prepared records. In this way, the Archives fulfilled its basic mission – the protection of archival material. On the other hand, through acquiring prepared fonds the Archives fulfilled its ultimate mission – providing records to users.

In what measure the Archives managed to realize its goals is visible in the use of archival material, especially through observing a number of successfully and negatively resolved requests. Namely, the increase in fonds increased the interest of the general public for certain information, as is shown in the following table. At the same time, the percentage of successfully resolved requests is increasing for each year, thus supporting the claim that all mentioned measures gave results.⁹

⁶ For information about the number of fonds and arrangement of fonds and collections see more: Šabotić I, Hodžić N. & Isić S. (2015). *Vodič kroz arhivske fondove i zbirke Arhiva Tuzlanskog kantona, Drugo dopunjeno, elektronsko, izdanje*. Last viewed 5.2.2018. at: <http://www.arhivtk.ba/VODIC/vodic1.pdf>.

⁷ Data regarding the fonds is taken from yearly reports of the Archives of the Tuzla Canton.

⁸ Analysis of data presented in the publication „Vodič kroz arhivske fondove i zbirke Arhiva Tuzlanskog kantona“ (2015.) and yearly reports of the Archives gives a conclusion that existing non-arranged fonds were mostly acquired in the earlier periods, and are not related to companies who went through bankruptcy and liquidation. From mentioned 10 fonds, the fonds „Vakufsko – mearijsko povjerenstvo“ is in the process of arrangement, so the number of non-processed fonds is nine.

⁹ Data obtained from yearly reports of the Archives of the Tuzla Canton.

Table 2: Analysis of requests, positive and negative outcomes¹⁰

Received requests per year	1991.		2003.		2008.		2013.		2017.	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Successfully resolved	-	-	157	59,02	316	71,65	352	74,73	450	74,01
Unresolved	-	-	109	40,97	125	28,34	119	25,26	158	25,98
Together ¹¹	12 ¹²	-	266	100	441	100	471	100	608 ¹³	100

Analysis of data from the table tells us that the number of demands is growing each year. The percentage of submitted requests also increased. At the same time, the number of employees in the service, working with users remained the same, one employee during this whole period.

Taking this into consideration, as well as the percentage of positively resolved requests that keeps rising, and in the last few years reaches around 75 %, we can conclude that the percentage of positively resolved requests is extremely high.

These analyses show that systematic measures the Archives took in planning, acquiring and providing the use of records for end users, gave positive results. This must also be attributed to human factor, with responsible, dedicated and professional work of all employees included in the process. It is especially impressive that one employee working with users managed to adequately reply to all demands, which constantly grew since 1991. This shows that systematic approach and good organization along with devoted and responsible work can result in relevant results even in hardest circumstances and conditions.

¹⁰ The analysis only included requests by citizens and legal entities for evidence about facts from archival material with the goal of establishing human, civil, workers and other legal rights and processes. The analysis does not include researchers who use archival material for scientific and related projects, nor users of the Archives' library. Inclusion of those would make numbers significantly higher. Also, the table includes data from 2003, 2008 and 2013 for easier reference and simple insight that there is a constant increase in number of requests, but also increase in percentage of successfully resolved demands.

¹¹ The analysis did not consider wrongly addressed requests; while not resolved successfully, they can neither be considered as unresolved.

¹² The author did not manage to obtain data related to resolved/unresolved requests for 1991.

¹³ In 2017, two requests received by December 31, 2017 were still in processing; therefore the total number of received requests is actually 610.

POVZETEK

POMEN PREVZEMANJA UREJENIH FONDOV IZ ČASA TRANZICIJE - IZKUŠNJE ARHIVA TUZELSKEGA KANTONA

mag. Omer Zulić

Arhiv Tuzelskega kantona, Tuzla, Bosna in Hercegovina

omer.arhiv@gmail.com

Mnogi tranzicijski vplivi v družbenem okolju so pustili pomemben pečat v arhivski službi Bosne in Hercegovine. To se je pokazalo prav v Tuzelskem kantonu, ki je glede na velikost pristojnega območja, gostoto poseljenosti itd. največji kanton v Federaciji Bosne in Hercegovine. Arhiv Tuzelskega kantona se je tako soočal z mnogimi strokovnimi izzivi v zvezi z ustreznim in pravočasnim varstvom in prevzemom arhivskega gradiva, še posebej na področju gospodarstva in uprave.

Povečanju števila in obsega prevzemov arhivskih fondov in arhivskega gradiva pa ni sledilo povečanje delovne sile v arhivu, ki bi bila potrebna predvsem pri strokovni obdelavi arhivskega gradiva. Arhiv Tuzelskega kantona je kljub temu, kot strokovna, družbena in odgovorna institucija, skrbel za nemoteno uporabo arhivskega gradiva. To je vključevalo tudi iskanje strokovnih rešitev, ki so zagotavljale, da so ustvarjalci predajali urejeno gradivo. S tem je arhivu uspelo združiti dve ključni funkciji – povečan pritok novih, urejenih fondov in njihovo nemoteno uporabo. Arhiv Tuzelskega kantona pa je šel še korak dlje, saj je prevzel arhivsko gradivo medvojne provenience z izdelanimi inventarji. To je verjetno edini tak primer na ozemlju Bosne in Hercegovine. Tako lahko Arhiv Tuzelskega kantona služi kot pozitiven primer dobre prakse za druge arhivske ustanove, ki se soočajo s podobnimi ali istimi težavami pri varstvu, prevzemanju in uporabi arhivskega gradiva.

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