



# Moderna arhivistika

Časopis arhivske teorije in prakse  
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1.04 Strokovni članek

1.04 Professional Article

## PRESERVATION OF ARCHIVAL RECORDS AT THE STATE ARCHIVES OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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### **Abstract:**

*In this article, the author compares the manner and conditions for storing and preserving archival records in depositories of the current and the former building of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia respectively, and discusses the standards that should be applied in the construction of depositories intended for housing, storing and preserving archival records. The State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia applies traditional and electronic archiving with internal computer software. The depository maintains electronic registries of the inventory of entries, registry of fonds, accession records from the holders, receipts from the arrangement and processing.*

### **Key words:**

depository, archival records, storage, preservation, archiving

### **Izvleček:**

### **Materialno varovanje arhivskega gradiva v Državnem arhivu Republike Makedonije**

Avtorica v prispevku primerja način in pogoje hrambe in varovanja arhivskega gradiva v skladiščih trenutne in nekdanje stavbe Državnega arhiva Republike Makedonije glede na standarde, ki jih je potrebno upoštevati pri izgradnji skladišč, namenjenih za hrambo arhivskega gradiva. Državni arhiv Republike Makedonije izvaja klasično in elektronsko arhiviranje s pomočjo interne programske opreme, ki vzdržuje elektronske registre vnosov, fondov ter prevzemne dokumentacije.

### **Ključne besede:**

skladišče, arhivsko gradivo, hramba, varovanje, arhiviranje

## 1. Short History of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia

The evolutional development of the archives as a place of permanent storage of administrative and other archival records invaluable to the state, the science and the culture, has started long ago.

As far as the Republic of Macedonia is concerned, it should be emphasized that during the medieval period, until the fall under the Ottoman reign, archival records were kept in monasteries and churches. The literary sources provide accounts about the abundance of written monuments in the archives of the Archbishopric of Ohrid. After the

fall of Macedonia under the Ottoman reign, the role of the archives was transferred to mosques and other Islamic institutions.

The lack of an appropriate institution resulted in dissemination and plunder of archival records, with most of them often being taken out of the country as bounty.

The State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia was established on April 1, 1951, and it functions as an independent body of the state administration with a Central Department and nine branch departments, which fully cover the territory of the Republic of Macedonia in terms of archival practice.

The State Archives of the Republic Of Macedonia and its nine departments keep approximately 7,769 fonds, 382 collections in 113,087 archival boxes, 68,369 books or an approximate length of 13,428 running meters, and 11,208,450 microimages of archival records.

The archival and documented records housed and preserved by the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia start with the oldest 12<sup>th</sup> century document, which is a fragment of the Gospel according to Luca, a parchment written in the Old Greek alphabet, continuing with approximately 250 rare Old Slavic manuscripts and books from the 12<sup>th</sup> until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These are followed by documents from the Ottoman reign in the Republic of Macedonia, more specifically: provincial district administrations (kaymakamlıks); collection of sicils (protocols) of the Qadi of Bitola in continuity from 1607 until 1912 (preserved only in our country out of the whole Ottoman Empire); Turkish books of deeds; collection of firmans, berats, buyuruldus, waqfnamas, etc.

The State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia houses archival records created between the two World Wars and the post-war period, which were created by the administrative and governmental bodies, the judiciary bodies, the educational, cultural, scientific and health institutions. It also keeps the economy and banking fonds; documents about the liquidated legal subjects; personal and family fonds of renowned revolutionaries, and of the cultural, educational, and political activists, the prominent trading families, etc.

There are plans for acquiring archival records from priority holders, liquidated legal entities, by the way of a reciprocal exchange with the foreign archival institutions, and by the way of bequest and purchase.

Special attention shall be paid to intensifying the research and acquisition of archival records by the way of purchase or bequest from private holders, especially the carriers of social and political functions during the existence of former SFRY, and the individuals who were repressed by the government because of their opposed opinions and political views.

Efforts shall be made for contacting some of the Macedonians living in the diasporas, in order to acquire particular archival and memorial records, which could shed additional light on the lives and activities of our political and economic immigrants throughout the world.

A special activity performed in cooperation with the remaining departs shall be the appraisal of the complete archival records in compliance with the Act on Declaring Cultural Heritage with a Special Importance to the Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>.

For that purpose, a selection of archival fonds and collections proposed for digitization as cultural heritage with special importance has been initiated. More

<sup>1</sup> *Act on Preservation of the Cultural Heritage (2004). Official Journal of the Republic of Macedonia, No. 20/2004).*

specifically: several rare Old Slavic manuscripts, fonds and collections from the Ottoman period, which are fully scanned, the collection "Revolutionary Past of the Macedonian People", the fonds "ASNOM, Council of the Republic of Macedonia", and many other fonds and collections (although it must be emphasized that they are available only for internal browsing).

## 2. Archival depositories



**Photo 1 - The State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia - former building**

After 1969, the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia - Central Department, was housed in its own, purposefully designed building - constructed according to all global norms and standards (ISO 11799:2003)<sup>2</sup> with a specialized depository, which is located in a separate building detached from the administrative part of the building and arranged on five floors with a total area of 2,200 m<sup>2</sup>. (Perović-Ivović, Ivović, 2015) A total of 1,387 fonds, 28 collections, 35,555 archival boxes, 10,771 books, 11,745 folders with an approximate length of 4,360 running meters are stored and preserved therein.

<sup>2</sup> Challenges in designing the archival building, engineers, archivists and conservationist on the joint task aimed at appropriate preservation of archival records.



**Photo 2: Interior depository chamber**

With the Government of the Republic of Macedonia Decision<sup>3</sup> for terminating and granting a right to exploitation of real estate, the right previously granted to the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia was terminated and this building was transferred to permanent use by the District Public Prosecution - organized crime and corruption.

After the relocation into the new building on the Quay Dimitar Vlahov street No. 19 in Skopje, the depository was moved to the sixth floor, becoming open along its full length. Plumbing and sewerage installations pass through the depository chamber, posing a grave hazard for the archival records. The depository lacks windows and ventilation, which prevents the natural aeration of archival records as a basic precondition for their preservation.

In addition, no microclimatic conditions for preservation of documents have been ensured, and there are also no fire escapes for their evacuation in case of natural disasters, war or emergencies.

<sup>3</sup> *Odluka na Vlada na Republika Makedonija, br. 41- 847/1 od 21.02.2012 godina ("Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija br. 32/2012) / Government of the Republic of Macedonia Decision No. 41-847/1 of from 21.02.2012 (Official Journal of the Republic of Macedonia No. 32/2012).*



**Photo 3: The State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia - current building**



**Photo 4: Depository in the current building**



***Photo 5: Depository in the current building***

The depository should meet all conditions required for the protection of archival records from the hazardous effects of humidity and temperature fluctuations, as well as from exposure to light, dust, insects, fire, etc.

Some of the most notorious enemies of archival records are the humidity and temperature fluctuations. The paper is susceptible to air humidity and temperature fluctuations in the storage rooms. Low air humidity in the depository has a harmful effect on paper as it becomes inelastic and rigid, while the high air humidity contributes to the development of microorganisms hazardous for the archival records.

The depository located in the former building has all the conditions required for a depository intended for the storage and preservation of archival records. It is located in a separate building, detached from the administrative part, with a separate entrance/exit and external power source, which is independent of the administrative part of the building.

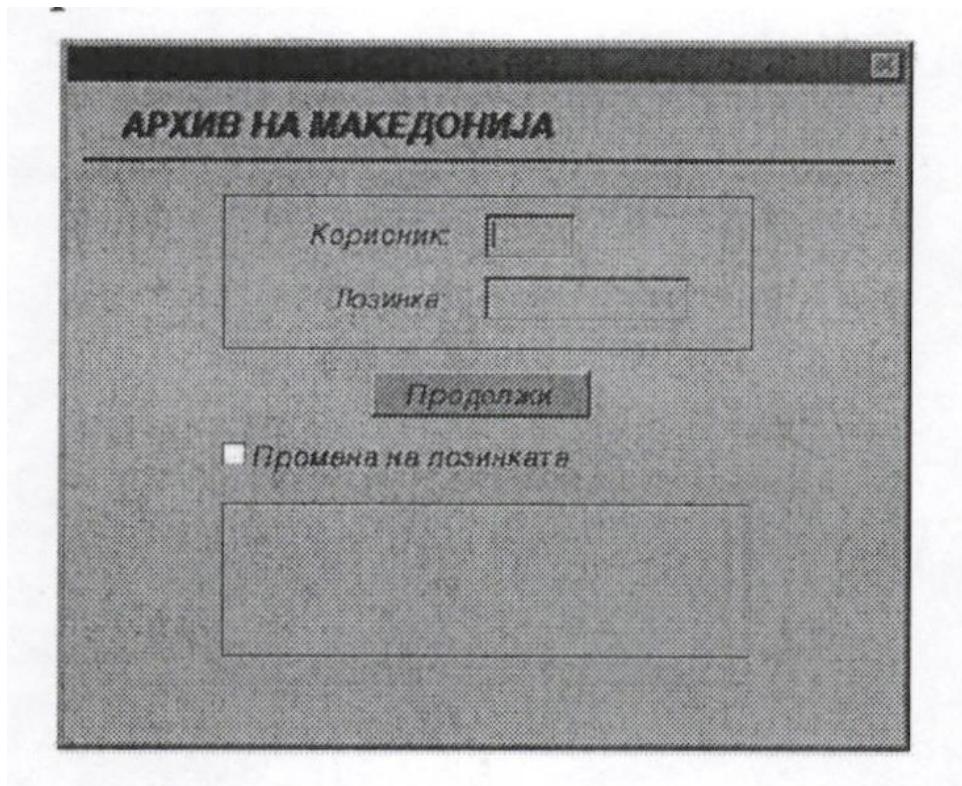
The depository has laterally positioned windows, which prevent the direct exposure of archival records to light, and allowed opening and closing on a daily basis, depending on air temperature and humidity within the depository. It is also equipped with a firefighting system, which immediately alarms about any possible fire hazard, thus allowing the appropriate measures for its prevention to be taken. Each of the depository's floors is separated from the other by metal doors, with an additional independent emergency exit for evacuation of archival records in the event of natural disasters, war or in an emergency, and a direct access for a freight vehicle in the depository basement.

Unlike the depository of the former building of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia, which fulfilled all the aforementioned conditions, the new building depository is a complete opposite to all archival norms foreseen for a depository.

### 3. Registration of archival records

Preservation of archival records is one of the basic tasks of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia, and it is based on a consolidated expert methodology of practices with appropriately prepared normative acts<sup>4</sup> on the practice.

In that respect, the first and foremost protection of archival records is their registration in compliance with the previously referred Instruction, in a traditional and electronic manner. Since 1999 the State Archives uses an internal computer software<sup>5</sup> (subsystem: depository) for making electronic entries, using a login application for entering the user number and password. They are customized for each of the employees individually and serve as a safety mechanism, preventing the use of the subsystem by unauthorized personnel, even by the employees of other sectors. The subsystem is accessed by clicking the Continue button.



- Computer application: Inventory of entries

This function allows an overview of the inventory of entries.

<sup>4</sup> Internal instructions of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia on Uniform and Compulsory Registration of Archival Records (1981).

<sup>5</sup> Windows system software with Windows NT operating system. SQL\_Server database programmed with a software development tool Visual FoxPro v3.0.

Редни број / Дата на приемка	Срок на депозит.	Име на фондот
28 17.12.1955	01086000	Повиднички документи
29 26.12.1955	01088304	Повиднички документи
30 25.01.1956	01007300	Повиднички документи
31 24.01.1956	01007400	Повиднички документи
32 24.01.1956	01007500	Повиднички документи
33 24.01.1956	01007701	Повиднички документи
34 16.02.1956	01012400	Повиднички документи на турски јазик - Бариле
35 28.02.1956	01016700	Формулари
36 28.02.1956	01016701	Повиднички документи
37 24.02.1956	01007200	Министерство за финансии - Скопје

**Fields:**

**List** - the list displays the total inventory of entries with an accession No., number and date of the accession record, and the name of the fonds.

Manner of accessioning, source of the fonds, the collection.

**Contents** - clicking this button activates an application used for reading the type and quantity of archival records in the selected record.

**Annotation** - clicking this button activates an application used for reading the annotation in the selected accession record.

## 4. Registry of fonds

This application consists of two segments. The first one regards the registration and update of fonds, while the second one consists of accession records.

**Fields:**

**Fonds signature** - the first field is filled out automatically and it represents a code of the corresponding organization (archives). The second field is the number used for entering the fonds in the registry of fonds.

Name of the fonds, name of the fonds creator, contents of the fonds, historic annotation - textual fields for entering the appropriate data.

## 5. Accession records of holders

The first part of the application contains the following fields: name of the holder, borderline years, date of accession, state of accession, name, address, contents, conditions.

The second segment of the application contains the following fields: quantity of transferred archival records, length in meters, contents, records.

## 6. Damage of archival records resulting from inappropriate storage conditions

The applicable standards<sup>6</sup> for constructing an archival depository stipulate among other that these buildings must not be constructed next to water flows and catchment areas and that no plumbing or sewerage installation should pass through the depository chambers. Depositories should be equipped with an autonomous power supply system with a switch-off function used at the end of the office hours for security reasons; a firefighting system; controlled air temperature and humidity for the purpose of protecting the archival records and an emergency exit for prompt evacuation of archival records.

The current depository of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia is a complete opposite to the aforementioned archival norms, and this contributes to the damage of archival records resulting from inappropriate air temperature, lack of natural light and aeration as preconditions for their protection from micro-organisms.

<sup>6</sup> ISO 11799: 2003.

## 7. Conservation and restoration of archival records

The preservation of archival records is generally based on preventing different types of damages of the constituent documents. The conditions for their storage and preservation are determined depending on the basis of the nature of those records. For that purpose, the laboratory for conservation and restoration, which is at the disposal of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia, performs all the required chemical tests for determining the causes of damage of archival records.

The methodology of work in preserving the archival records by their conservation should be strictly observed, and this is done in two phases.

- the first phase covers the processes of determining the degree of damage, chemical tests, determining the manner of mending the archival records, surface cleaning, separating the stuck sheets, bathing, bleaching, degreasing and neutralization;
- the second phase of protecting damaged archival records involves the process of restoration, which is aimed at restoring the original appearance and features of damaged archival records.

The restoration can be performed manually or by a machine. Machine restoration is performed with a laminator.

Manual restoration is performed on a specialized restoration desk equipped with a special glass. Material used for manual restoration is Japanese tissue and quality starch-based glues or different types of synthetic glues. The applied glues should be neutral, and their pH value should be in the range of 6 to 8.6. Manual restoration also utilizes a flattening press.

The best manner of protecting damaged archival records is machine restoration, i.e. restoration with a laminator.

This type of preservation of archival records by its conservation and restoration was performed immaculately at the premises of the former building of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia. However, with the move into the new building and the lack of appropriate working conditions (the laboratory is located on the eight floor and the installed ventilation lacks the capacity for fully disposing the harmful chemical vapors), the preservation of archival records is performed in deteriorated conditions and with a diminished intensity. Machine restoration has been suspended because there were no possibilities for moving the laminator and installing it in the laboratory on the eight floor of the new building.

The modern world is inconceivable without archival institutions and archival records. The archivists of today bear a great responsibility for documenting events, the exchange of information, and the constant application of information technologies, especially in electronic processing and digitization of archival records.

Public archival records belong to all of the citizens, they are the basis for understanding the historic and cultural identity of the society.

This is why the director of the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Kiril Petrov, is making intensive efforts for restoring the State Archives to the purposefully designed former building (the first one of that type in the former SFRY), in order to ensure normal working conditions for the archivists and appropriate conditions for the storage and preservation of archival records in the custody of the Republic of Macedonia.

## POVZETEK

### MATERIALNO VARSTVO ARHIVSKEGA GRADIVA V DRŽAVNEM ARHIVU MAKEDONIJE

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*Modernega sveta si ne moremo predstavljati brez arhivskih institucij in arhivskega gradiva. Današnji arhivisti nosijo veliko odgovornost za dokumentiranje dogodkov, izmenjavo informacij, hrambo in zaščito arhivskega gradiva ter stalno spremljanje informacijskih tehnologij, še posebej pri elektronski obdelavi in digitalizaciji arhivskega gradiva.*

*Posebno pozornost je potrebno nameniti gradnji arhivskih stavb, zlasti konstrukciji arhivskih skladišč, pri kateri je potrebno upoštevati vse tozadevne standarde. Arhivska skladišča morajo biti zgrajena skladno z vsemi zahtevami, ki so potrebne za zaščito arhivskega gradiva pred nevarnimi vplivi temperature, vlažnosti, svetlobe, prahu, insektov in ognja. Med najbolj nevarnimi so nihanja temperature in vlage.*

*Državni arhiv Republike Makedonije – centralni oddelek ima za hrambo arhivskega gradiva na voljo dve skladišči: eno v stavbi, v kateri je arhiv gostoval do pred kratkim, in drugo v šestem nadstropju stavbe, v kateri se arhiv trenutno nahaja. Skladišče v nekdanji stavbi je bilo zgrajeno namensko za potrebe hrambe arhivskega gradiva po vseh standardih, skladišče v novi stavbi pa predstavlja pravo nasproteje vsem aktualnim standardom. Arhiv je v šestem, sedmem in osmem nadstropju stavbe, ki si jo deli še z dvema drugima ustanovama – Arheološkim muzejem in Ustavnim sodiščem. Skladišče leži v nestandardnih prostorih brez osnovnih mikroklimatskih pogojev ali oken. Skozi skladišče vodijo vodovodne in kanalizacijske napeljave, ni požarnih stopnic ali dostopa za tovorna vozila, kar pomeni, da bi evakuacija arhivskega gradiva v primeru naravne katastrofe, vojn ali kakšne druge nevarnosti bila otežena.*

*Varstvo arhivskega gradiva je ena osnovnih nalog Državnega arhiva Republike Makedonije in obsega tudi registracijo, ki poteka v skladu z Navodili za enotno in obvezno registracijo arhivskega gradiva na klasičen in elektronski način s pomočjo programske opreme za vnos podatkov, slednje pa vključuje tudi podsistem: skladišče. Podsistem omogoča pregledne gradiva in vsebuje aplikacijo za pregled vnosov, aplikacijo za register fondov, prevzemno dokumentacijo itd.*

*Še eno pomembno naloži pri varstvu arhivskega gradiva predstavlja digitalizacija, s katero preprečujemo nove poškodbe gradiva pri uporabi ter njegovo večjo dostopnost. Državni arhiv Republike Makedonije pa žal nima na voljo primerne programske opreme, s katero bi uporabnikom omogočal dostop do digitaliziranega gradiva.*

*Arhiv prav tako posveča veliko pozornosti preprečevanju različnih tipov poškodb na arhivskem gradivu. V ta namen opravlja laboratorij za konzervacijo in restavracijo vse nujne kemične teste, s katerimi ugotavlja vzroke poškodb in le-te tudi popravi. Konzervacija se opravlja v dveh fazah; v prvi se določi obseg poškodb, temu sledijo kemični testi, mehanično čiščenje, ločevanje zlepiljenih listov, beljenje, razmaščevanje in nevtralizacija. V drugi fazi se začne proces restavracije, ki se opravlja ročno ali s stroji.*

*Trenutno laboratorij za konzervacijo in restavracijo v Državnem arhivu Republike Makedonije dela v slabših pogojih in v zmanjšanem obsegu. Strojna restavracija je bila ukinjena, saj aparata za laminacijo ni bilo možno dostaviti v osmo nadstropje, v katerem je laboratorij.*

*Zaradi vseh naštetih težav, s katerimi se ubada Državni arhiv Republike Makedonije tako v upravnem delu zgradbe kot v skladišču, ter z namenom, da bi lahko učinkoviteje izvajal svoje dejavnosti, so v teku intenzivni pogовори za selitev arhivskih prosotov nazaj v namensko zgrajeno stavbo, ki je bila prva takšnih v Jugoslaviji. Tako bi bili izpolnjeni pogoji za normalno delo zaposlenih kakor tudi za ustrezeno zaščito arhivskega gradiva.*

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