

## Situation of archives and archivists in Argentina\*

Anna Szlejcher

Thank you for inviting me to speak at this course, on the subject of "Situation of archives and archivists in Argentina." The purpose of this paper is to reflect about the situation in Argentina with the impact of modern technology on the identity of the archivist, on his role in the preservation of memory, and therefore on the organization and selection of the curricular contents of his professional education. In this presentation I intend to clarify the historical development of Archives and Records Management Education in Argentina's universities and especially in Córdoba. This is to develop an approach to the learning strategies about archival principles and practices that will support the transition from traditional to digital recordkeeping environments.

Following a brief discussion about the identity of the archivist in Argentina, this presentation is divided into four main topics. Firstly I will explore just a few aspects of the role of the archivist in the preservation of the heritage, in one word, "the memory". I will examine how the organization and selection of the curricular contents of the professional education can help for an integrated training. When training in the transition from traditional to digital records, it is essential that the experience and cultural backgrounds of the participants are recognized and included into the programs. Secondly I will examine the evolution of the archival knowledge in Argentina because the cultural perspective will always influence the delivery and outcome of any learning environment.

The third topic makes clear the competency frameworks also called competency standards or statements of capabilities, skills and knowledge. They help link the content in the curriculum to the more detailed knowledge, skills and behaviour of archivists in different contexts during the "life cycle" of the records. They help educators work out what archivists have to understand and do in their respective roles. There are many different competency frameworks for archives and records for formal education or roles in the workplace. The key message about the competency standards and capabilities is that they vary in purpose

and structure, but can be used and adapted to different organizational and cultural contexts. There are competency frameworks that are directly relevant to identifying knowledge and skills needed in organizations to manage the interaction between the archivists and the records management. These can help the design of learning strategies and help identify priorities for attention. To successfully design learning strategies for archivists, educators need:

- an understanding of archival theory,
- the knowledge on which to base the content of learning strategies,
- recognition that cultural perspective will influence all learning,
- a set of learning design principles to guide relevant and engaging strategies,
- practical activities that are connected to the experience of the students and
- a willingness by educators and students to evaluate, reflect upon and share experiences.

In particular, I will focus on proposals to achieve new educational methods for an integrated archival education. I am convinced that archival education should not be divided into programs for archivists working with ancient records and programs for archivists who work with contemporary records. In fourth place, I will talk about the reality of two business enterprises of Córdoba city and its archival executive. One of these enterprises is "Darsie y Cía. S.A." (Limited Company) and the other one is "Núcleo Encendido SRL" (Limited Liability Company).

I will be discussing the *archival teaching*. Firstly I will talk about the identity of archivists. Secondly I will talk about the integrated training of the learners in acquiring new knowledge and skills. The third topic will address the importance of understanding the influence of the concept of "life cycle". Furthermore, researches are a critical component of a graduate level program and for the development of the Archival Science, explore new dimensions in our countries to improve our knowledge about the Records Management and the impact of Digital Records and Archives.

Cultural perspectives will always influence the delivery and outcome of learning. Culture is never neutral. It pervades the teaching-learning environment, brought there by both, learners and educators. Our archival studies are mainly influenced by European and North American models.

Our purpose is to reflect about the impact of modern technology on the identity of the archivist, on his role in the preservation of memory, and therefore on the organization and selection of the curricular contents of his professional education. As Theo Thomassen states: "The archival profession is changing and so is the way it educates new professionals."<sup>1</sup> We are living today in a true revolutionary stage of mankind history. As it usually happens, those who participate in an important event don't realize, don't become aware of what is happening around them and that they are being the main character of something special.

But nowadays, three different kinds of societies seem to have a historic meeting: one of knowledge, one of information and one of communication. It is expected that the Society of Information will be constituted by 2015 and carry out its objective to reach out as many people as it is possible wherever they will be and deliver its knowledge to them. So that the treatment could be equal between the inhabitants of two or more countries or between the social levels of a nation, all people should have access that implicates to safeguard a huge technological growth. – Said in different words, these are revolutionary times, in which the global schemes of human relationship, international relationship, international trade and the structure of the productive sector have changed in a drastic way.

It is necessary to face the challenge represented by the increasing volume of information and by the characteristics of the technology used for its production, organization, dissemination, and use. In light of the facts that we are the guardians of valuable sources of information in digital form and that we should be well prepared for such task, a new conceptual framework must be outlined. In this matter, Luciana Duranti states that: "It is absolutely vital that archival education continues to focus on theory as the primary point of reference for understanding and controlling new and increasingly complex records, but such theory is developing

rapidly as a result of research ..."<sup>2</sup> We absolutely agree with Luciana Duranti, and besides that traditional education is not enough in these fast-changing times, so, students must be well prepared to do their job. The learning and training should be delivered during the training course to deal with the present and possibly with the future.

The relationship between the scientific research and the university presupposes that the universities are the natural and specific field for the systematic and continuous training of human resources highly specialized, needed to develop and strengthen the national scientific-technological system.

During the last few years, in Argentina, archival theory has experienced a radical transformation by adopting the concept of the records "life cycle", which was first applied in France, the United States and Canada, thereby extending the aim and scope of its body of knowledge. The same has not happened in all South American countries, because some of them still regard the archivist as the preserver of the records, according to the traditional paradigms.

The concepts of the archivist-historian and the archivist-erudite have been predominant in most European countries even after the Second World War. However, at the beginning of 1940, the sheer amount of documentary material produced as a result of the war efforts forced archivists to become involved in the function of records management and to put aside their old identity of assistants of historic investigation. – Several decades later, we should ask ourselves whether we are adequately fulfilling the purpose that made us change our role: Are we keeping up with the evolution and changes that the new technologies involved have brought about? Are we adapting and developing archival science in a way that meets the needs of society? Are we able to guarantee the authenticity of the records preserved in electronic systems?

Although the Latin American countries have reached an uneven level in many fields, they still have, as in no other place in the world, many elements and common problems and they face the same challenges; being the Archives one of them.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, our Archives are facing up to great problems, not taking into account the difficulties produced by low budgets, unstable politics, etc. In the same way, other issues that refer to them

(Archives) are the fast technological changes that force us to check the programs and goals, to be qualified to understand this new world, if we want the archives to serve properly in a society in this information era, taking into account our mission to keep for future generations the memories, the heritage that the Archives keep in themselves under our responsibility. But, in order to protect the documental richness kept in the Archives, the effort of one country alone is not possible; it will be, instead, the result of the cooperation of all the South American countries and the countries around the world.

However, the Archives in South America need to be better known and appreciated because the professional archivist is merely recognized and has very little support as to the evolution of the archives. We need to develop awareness in the government and private levels and also among common people.

Though archives and archivists are not common in every day life, it seems that the archives are better known than the person that organizes, takes care of them and preserves them. This fact can be modified by the archivists themselves and above all, by the strategies applied to the training on the future archivists. In both cases, the goal must be an understanding achievement between the archives and the society.

Today in Argentina, archival education is the subject of a debate between supporters of two types of degrees, on the one hand, a specialized and independent course of archival education, represented by the Archival School of the National University of Córdoba, and, on the other hand, an integrated archival and library program, represented by the Bachelor's degree at the University of the North East. A third scenario is offered by the National University of Buenos Aires, which considers a professional level degree as a Librarian a pre-requisite for any archival training.

De facto, the Córdoba School, which for almost 30 years has been the only one providing academic training in Argentina, has become the centre for education in archival studies in Latin America, with support of the Organization of American States (OAS) provided 15 Inter American Courses of Archival training – from 1974 to 1988. It edited 14 issues of Inter American Annual of Archives.

That School founded in 1959 as part of the Library School academically independent since 1961, it also was the only one to provide a university training in this field in our country, since it wasn't until 1989 that the Archival Course was created at the National University of the North East (in Argentina), and in 1998 achieved the academic degree when incorporated, with the librarian training, to the Bachelor degree in "Information Science". By the year of 1987 the Archival Course was created as a non-university one, and in 2002 it is incorporated to the archival Bachelor's degree and which headquarters are in the Autonomous University of Entre Ríos in Paraná, Argentina. As to the rest of the country, there are Archival Schools, but they don't have a university level, as for example, the one in Santa Fe, and the other in La Plata (Buenos Aires province) in which the training is semi-presence. In General Pico (La Pampa province) the course has a specific duration time. Nevertheless the vast geography of Argentina, integrated by 24 provinces, the university archival training is extremely scarce, because it is delivered only in six of our provinces.

But, at the beginning in Latin America where the existence of Archival Training Centres was rare, prevailed for a long time the idea of an especially historic training for the archivists as a reflection of what was happening in the Old World. Now, we understand that there are at least two different levels for the archivist training, one is a Professional Technician and the other is the Academic Professional, the first one corresponds to an archivist training and the second one to a Bachelor degree with a possibility to a Mastery. This means that there is an option to a continuous and permanent education – as proposed by UNESCO – the organization that makes possible the growth of the archival research. And this is so in our present curriculum, since the year 2000 at the Archival School in Córdoba, where the Bachelor degree exists.

It is also necessary to look for common solutions to the problems we face in the Latin American region in the field of archival training to join efforts in order to achieve a better training of human resources in agreement with the new trends of the present-day society of information.

Considering the archivist's responsibility to deepen the investigation of the new types of records generated by digital technologies in order to be able

to control them throughout their life-cycle and to ensure their long-term authentic preservation, it is increasingly necessary to develop additional programs of graduate archival education that involve dedicated research aimed at the development of new theories and methods.

We should have in mind what Eric Ketelaar expressed in relation to our domain as archival educators: that we have a specific responsibility that is shared with our students, because the education is two-way traffic. We are the orientation guide inside the learning-teaching process and our goal is to develop and strengthen the skills and knowledge of our students.<sup>4</sup>

Córdoba has its own style, a country like way of being, and almost a million and a half inhabitants. The Argentinean university tradition goes back to 1614 when the University of Córdoba was founded. In the 19th century, the University of Córdoba was already well known inside the country and in the region, but it was in 1918 that it acquired a leading character that had a wide effect. In close connection with the events that were taking place in our country and in the world, in June 1918 the students of the University began a movement called *Reforma Universitaria* (that means: University Reform), and it had the support of many countries of the continent, in order to democratize the education and a greater social commitment of the university institutions.

### **School of Archival Science of the National University of Córdoba**

In this University, it is the School of Archive, which has been founded in 1959. Since 1961, this School became a main centre of Archival studies in Argentina and later on in Latin America. Due to its development, the Organization of American States (OAS) chooses the School of Archival Science as the Inter-American Centre of Archival Training (CIFA) in 1972. Later, in 1977 an agreement was signed between the Argentinean Government and the General Secretariat of the OAS to change its name to “Centro Interamericano de Desarrollo de Archivos” (CIDA), that means: “Inter American Centre of Archival Development”. So it was that the professors began the training, from 1974 to 1988 inclusive, and accomplished 15 Inter American courses for Archival training, and many of

those students perform their duties in their own countries today.

Finally, I must emphasize that the CIDA edited the *Inter American Archives Journal*, changing its name to “*Inter American Yearbook of Archives*”, sharing this publication with OAS and the National University of Córdoba. The CIDA had its seat in our school till 1993 and after that it dissolved.

As Elio Lodolini well says “the attributes of the school for Archival education are different as to the standard and so the nature of the training.”<sup>5</sup>

At the School of Archival Science of the National University of Córdoba, the present curriculum established in 2000, is the achievement of improvement in the course, taking into account that the social and educational realities are in constant change and complement mutually. This curriculum points to the possibility to get a university degree, and the Bachelor after the Archivist degree to offer equal opportunities to future graduates, so that they can fulfil the necessary demands to go on with post grade studies, scholarships, incentive programs for training and investigation, etc.

To finish, I wish to emphasize that one of the objectives of the curriculum for Bachelor in Archives of the National University of Córdoba, is precisely to correspond the requests of the region, especially in the setting of the Mercosud.<sup>6</sup>

### **The technological changes cause an increasing preoccupation**

Most of the people know that in our days a great amount of the information in the world is produced digitally and it risks being lost. In like manner, the possibility to retrieve a big amount of digital valuable information can only be possible at a very high cost. It is appropriate at this point, to remember that the technological changes cause an increasing preoccupation around the world, as for example the threat that implies the quick evolution and in consequence the obsolete hardware and software, the fragility of digital methods of storing and the easy handling of the digital information. The technological innovations provoke concern around the world about the preservation of the cultural inheritance which is stored by digital technologies. That is why the UNESCO has developed a strategy to promote the digital preservation. The General

Conference in its 31st meeting encouraged the government organizations, non government ones and the international institutions, national and private, to guarantee the priority of the digital inheritance within national politics.

The efforts accomplished by InterPARES through the CLAUD-project (Caribbean Latin American InterPARES Dissemination) are ended. But, the CLAUD-project was fundamental in the dissemination of the theoretical and methodological knowledge for the permanent preservation of the authentic archival documents created and/or kept electronically, and based on this knowledge, to make out models of policies, strategies and rules capable to assure this preservation, in view of this fact gives resources for the dissemination of the findings of this international investigation project in the Caribbean and Latin America, in Spanish.

### **Background of the National University of Córdoba**

Our first contact with the concepts and methods of diplomatic applied to the contemporary archival documents of all kind and on all kind of support was during the course given in 1995 by Luciana Duranti at the Archival School of the National University of Córdoba.

Through the lectures Luciana Duranti showed us that the diplomatic was born as a discipline and as a science with a purpose: to verify the authenticity of the archival documents with a controversial origin. She said that it was reasonable to think that the professionals of the archival documents that participate in the formulation of its requirements of creation and management, especially in the archival electronic documents, will find an accurate conceptual language that would allow a systematic comprehension of the material for its creation and management. She also added that it was more difficult to demonstrate how from this point a person could achieve to construct a system of creation and conservation of archival documents capable of handling hybrid systems at the contemporary agencies without carrying out a very important investigation.

For that purpose, Luciana Duranti and Terry Eastwood developed in 1994-97 an investigation

project called: "The Preservation of the integrity of the electronic archival documents" (also called "The UBC Project") which achievement was the identification and conceptual definition of the nature of a document from an electronic archive and the necessary conditions to assure its integrity while it was kept by its producer in a standard stage or semi-standard stage. Duranti's teachings were repeated for the second time, during her visit to Córdoba in 2003, at the Educators Meeting ICA/SAE – RIBEAU<sup>7</sup>. In that opportunity she gave a lecture that strengthened our knowledge: "The Interaction of Research and Teaching: Speaking from the InterPARES Experience." The results of the UBC project have been used by a few organizations for their own systems of creation and conservation of archival documents; because from a theoretical point of view, this project incorporated diplomatic and archival concepts.

In fact, when she established the components of an archival document, she added the context and the relationship with the environment, the pattern, the act, the people, and the content; and when counted the necessary people for the existence of an archival document, she included the creator. From a methodological point of view, the project generated rules for creation and management for the archival documents which are alike to the concepts and diplomatic and archival principles. The importance of these rules is demonstrated by the fact that they were included in the procedures of the Department of Defence (DoD) in the USA. It is to regret, then, that L. Duranti's and T. Eastwood's theory and methodological advances were disseminated only in the academic field, with no projection in the institutional structures within the legal department.

### **InterPARES project finding**

In this particular matter, it should be taken into account that the conceptual setting of InterPARES introduces a completely new idea into the archival science, capable to respond in an innovator way, but strict, as to the real circumstances, that the genuineness of an electronic archival document (record) may be kept for the preservation producing authentic copies is the only way to assure its

preservation. This fact derives from the own nature of the electronic archival documents. It is not possible to preserve an electronic archival document, only the competence to reproduce it.

### National Background

In Argentina, slower than in other countries, dispositions are being promulgated as to the digital holder, which absence troubled the development of the computer science area.

As to our subject, it should be mentioned the digital signature law (N° 25 506/2001) and the law of Protection of Personal Particular (N° 25 326) which regulates the right of Habeas Data (art. 43 of the National Constitution). The standard background in Argentina, is as to the Digital Signature, begun with a piece of work in 1997 at the Secretary of Public Function, which reflects in many dispositions and structures that have been created afterwards. The Resolution of Secretary of Public Function N° 45/97 established the technical guidelines to elaborate a norm about a digital signature. In 1998 the Decree N° 427/98 was issued, and it established the bases for the creation of a substructure of Digital Signature for the national public sector, as well as procedure handbooks and standards about digital signature technology for the national public administration. A standard regime for the public Sector extends to the private sector by the same decree in 2001.

We share the objectives that inspire these measures, but, once more, we can say that these issues cannot be achieved by only a desire; it must be understood that the legislation is part of a strategic planning that makes possible to reach, as an aim, the preservation of the cultural heritage material. There are no concrete facts referred to the preservation of electronic documents. So, in our country, the basic problem is a lack of an Archival Law which would establish the general standards for the organization, the operation and administration of the National Archival System.

### Business archives

As I mentioned before I will talk about the reality of Archives and Archivists in one of them, this is

“Darsie y Cia S. A.”. In this matter I interviewed Luis Darsie the manager of the company. It was founded by Juan Darsie in June 1st 1948, and later, in 1951 were included all of his five nephews to the company. And one of them is the accountant Luis Darsie I interviewed. They sell construction products, also sanitary articles. Its objective: The members of his family covered all the stages of the company throughout the years. Since June 1st 1961 it became Darsie y Cia S. A. (Limited Company) and the staff increases. In fact, they invoice a 1 000 bills a day. This movement enlarges the volume of archives. This company has 140 employees, keeps its own archives in the main business house that is located in Alvear 785 in Córdoba city.

The other company is “Nucleo Encendido SRL” (Limited Liability Company). It was founded in November 1978 in Córdoba city as an exclusive dealer of Bosch products, not only in Córdoba, but also in other ten provinces of Argentina, so it has broad holdings within these provinces. Núcleo Encendido SRL (Limited Liability Company) was founded mainly to distribute important trade brands as Bosch. They distribute car parts. Since the beginning, as an exclusive distributor of Bosch trade mark, they reached first places in selling. It also sells other brands. The company keeps a staff of 40 people, 14 are sellers, 11 are inside staff for the selling and the other 15 are distributed between the management of the diverse areas. It also has a network department which enables the expansion of the systems at the main business house and at the branch houses. The systems are centralized by a Novell web which allows to obtain information in real time and carries out the accounting automatically.

The supporting documents of the last two years and those of the current year are kept at the company. The supporting documents of eight years old or more are kept out of the company itself. Besides that, the company also has an Historical Archive, since the beginning of the company, strategically situated with a restricted access (only for members of the company) This information includes:

- the social contract of the company and its modification,
- a transactions book,
- an inventory and balance book,

- a diary,
  - original annual balances of the company.
- Archive back ups are made twice a day:
- a CD with all the information is recorded weekly,
  - the company also has a server outside it that receives all the information by Internet.

Neither of them have a graduated Archivist in their staff. – Finally, I think it is suitable, in this atmosphere of international multidisciplinary meeting and being loyal to my condition of archivist, to remember Michel Duchein's words when says: "It's been too much time, that the archivists have been working in a strictly national setting, tied to the historic, administrative and cultural traditions proper to each country. Now, each one can profit from many experiences of other countries, to re-think its own methods, ask themselves about its own ways, sometimes to point towards new initiatives ... But one thing is certain: no matter which way, the memory will always be necessary, for the societies and men, and the preservation of this memory will always be a fundamental social function, be that paper, film or computer disk. Tomorrow's archivists will be without doubt, very different as they are today, but, don't worry, there always will be archivists and they will continue wondering about their future, as they do now." (In: The profession of the archivist between the past and the future). Thank you very much for your attention.

Anschrift: Prof. Anna Szlejcher, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Pabellon España, 1er Piso, Ciudad Universitaria, 5000 Córdoba, Argentina, E-Mail: [anna\\_szlejcher@hotmail.com](mailto:anna_szlejcher@hotmail.com)

#### Anmerkungen

\* Vortrag, gehalten im Rahmen des 63. VdW-Lehrgangs „Archivierung elektronischer Unterlagen“ am 4. Juni 2008 im TechnologiePark ConferenceCenter Heidelberg.

- 1 *Theo Thomassen*, Archival education in the age of transnational data communications. <http://www.icasae.org/paper03.html> (18/03/2006).
- 2 *Luciana Duranti*, The Interaction of Research and Teaching: Speaking from the InterPARES Experience, in: Encuentro de Educadores, organizing by ICA/SAE y RIBEAU. Huerta Grande, Provincia de Córdoba, Argentina, 2003 (Edition in CD-ROM).
- 3 Acta de la Asamblea General Ordinaria de ALA del 21 de mayo de 1999.
- 4 *Eric Ketelaar*, Let us live. Key issues in contemporary archival education, in: ECAET 3: One Archival Europe, Amsterdam 30-31 August 2005.
- 5 *Elio Lodolini*, Archivística. Principios y problemas. Colección Manuales. Asociación Española de Archiveros, Bibliotecarios, Museólogos y Documentalistas, Madrid 1993.
- 6 Bezeichnung für den Gemeinsamen Markt Südamerikas, Binnenmarkt für mehr als 12,5 Mio. Menschen (2006) auf Grundlage des Vertrags von Asunción vom 26. März 1991, der einen wirtschaftlichen und politischen Integriationsprozess anstrebt (Ergänzung: Peter Blum).
- 7 RIBEAU, Red Iberoamericana de Enseñanza Archivística Universitaria: Iberoamerikanisches Netzwerk der universitären Archivausbildung (Ergänzung: Peter Blum).