Diplomatics

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Abstract
This entry presents the science of diplomatics, briefly describing its history, its theoretical content, and its
methodology. Comparing classic diplomatics with modern diplomatics, it discusses the concepts of
authenticity, originality, and record. Then, it outlines the building blocks of the diplomatic body of
knowledge, that is, the context, the act, the persons, the procedure, the documentary form, and the archival
bond; and comments on the process of diplomatic criticism and on the usefulness of diplomatics as a
discipline.

INTRODUCTION

Diplomatics is a science that was developed in France in
the seventeenth century for the purpose of ascertaining
the provenance and authenticity of records that attested
to patrimonial rights, and later grew into a legal, histori-
cal, and philological discipline, as it came to be used by
lawyers to resolve disputes, by historians to interpret
records, and by editors to publish medieval deeds and
charters. Its name comes from the Latin term *diploma*—
derived from the Greek words $\delta\iota\pi\lambda o\omega$, meaning I fold,
and $\delta\iota\pi\lambda\omega\mu\alpha$, meaning doubled or folded—which was
used in ancient Rome to refer to documents written on
two tablets attached with a hinge, and later to any
recorded deed, and it means "about records." However,
over the centuries, its focus has expanded from its original
concern with medieval deeds to an all encompassing
study of any document produced in the usual and ordinary
course of activity as a means for it and a residue of it.

This entry briefly outlines the history of diplomatics;
presents its purpose, object, and fundamental tenets, includ-
ing the concepts of record, authenticity, and originality;
describes the concepts that constitute the building blocks
of diplomatic analysis, including those of person, proce-
dure, and form; and discusses diplomatic methodology and
its usefulness. In the process, classic and modern diplo-
matics will be constantly compared to show their relation-
ship and interplay.

THE HISTORY OF DIPLOMATICS

The history of diplomatics is directly linked to the so-
called "diplomatic wars" (*bella diplomatica*), judicial
controversies over political or religious claims based on
records of disputed origin, which, in the seventeenth
century, especially in Germany and France, assumed a

doctrinal character and prepared the ground for a scien-
tific debate between the Benedictines of the Congregation
of Saint-Maur in France and the Jesuits organized by Jean
Bolland in a scientific society in Antwerp (Bollandists). In
1675, the second volume of the *Acta Sanctorum*, an anal-
ysis of the lives of saints published in several tomes
by the Bollandists, was released, with an introduction
by Daniel Van Papenbroeck which outlined the general
principles and methods for assessing the authenticity of
medieval records. In the text, the author, applying his
analysis to the records of Frankish kings, declared a di-
ploma issued by Dagobert I to be a forgery, thereby dis-
crediting all Merovingian diplomas, on which most
patrimonial rights of the French Benedictines rested.

The Benedictines answered Van Papenbroeck 6 year
later, in 1681, with a treatise in six parts written by Dom
Jean Mabillon and called *De Re Diplomatica Libri VI* [1,
p. 37]. The treatise analyzed about 200 documents by
comparing the material support, seals, ink, script, punctu-
ation, abbreviations, formulas, discourse, types of sub-
scriptions, etc. and, on the basis of this study, established
a method of criticism of records whose validity was
recognized throughout Europe. Several works followed
Mabillon's and contributed to a further development of
the discipline. Among them, the most notable are the
Nouveau traité de diplomatique by René Prosper Tassin
and Charles Toustain, published in Paris between 1750
and 1765, which, by comparing records of different geo-
graphical origin, on the one hand, demonstrated the
validity of diplomatics across contexts, and on the other
hand, gave origin to the idea of a special diplomatics for
records of the same provenance; and Beitrage zur Diplo-
matik I-VIII, by Theodor von Sickel, in *Sitzungsberichte
der Raiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, published
in Vienna between 1861 and 1882, which linked the assess-
ment of the authenticity of records to the analysis of their
procedure of creation. Although mostly regarded as an

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auxiliary science of history since the middle of the nine-theenth century, diplomatics was included in the body of knowledge required for archivists since the first half of that century in all European archival programs of education, and later on in all programs influenced by the European tradition in other continents. As a consequence, diplomatics concepts and methodology became in most parts of the world an integral part of archival science and of the intellectual armor of the archival profession [2, pp. 3–5].

THE OBJECT OF DIPLOMATICS

When discussing diplomatics, it is useful to distinguish "classic diplomatics" from "modern diplomatics," the reason being that these two branches of the discipline do not represent a natural evolution of the latter from the former, but exist in parallel and focus on different objects of study. Classic diplomatics uses the concepts and methodologies developed by diplomatists living between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries, and studies medieval charters, instruments, and deeds; modern diplomatics has adapted, elaborated, and developed the core concepts and methodology of classic diplomatics in order to study modern and contemporary records of all types. Among the key distinctions between the two branches of the discipline are the concept of record and that of diplomatics. According to classic diplomatics, a record is a document (i.e., information affixed to a medium) that constitutes "the written evidence of a fact having a juridical nature, compiled in compliance with determined forms, which are meant to provide it with full faith and credit" [3, p. 18]. Therefore, classic diplomatics only studies documents that are meant to have legal consequences and therefore requires specific documentary forms, and is defined as the knowledge of the formal rules that apply to legal records [4, p. 1; 5, p. 32; 6, p. 4]. According to modern diplomatics, a record is a document created (i.e., made or received and set aside for action or reference) in the course of activity as an instrument and by-product of it [7, p. 604; 8, p. 667]. Therefore, modern diplomatics is concerned with all documents that are created in the course of affairs of any kind, and is defined as "the discipline which studies the genesis, forms, and transmission" of records, and "their relationship with the facts represented in them and with their creator, in order to identify, evaluate, and communicate their true nature" [1, p. 45; 9, p. 28].

THE APPROACH AND PURPOSE OF DIPLOMATICS

Although the primary focus of both classic and modern diplomatics is to assess the trustworthiness of records, the former establishes it retrospectively, looking at records issued several centuries ago, while the latter is not only concerned with establishing the trustworthiness of existing records, but also with ensuring the trustworthiness of records that have yet to be created, thereby taking a prospective approach as well as a retrospective one. Additionally, classic diplomatics identifies trustworthiness with authenticity, while modern diplomatics distinguishes several aspects of trustworthiness. To classic diplomatists, trustworthy records are authentic records, that is, documents "written according to the practice of the time and place indicated in the text, and signed with the name(s) of the person(s) competent to create them" [1, p. 46]. This is far too simplistic a concept for the variety of records that modern diplomatics aims to evaluate and the time-span of their creation (from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century), especially in consideration of the fact that its concern is the entire life cycle of records, from creation to permanent preservation. Thus, modern diplomatics defines and assesses four aspects of trustworthiness: reliability, authenticity, accuracy, and authentication.

Reliability

Reliability is the trustworthiness of a record content and is defined as the trustworthiness of a record as a statement of fact. It is assessed on the basis of the *completeness* of the record, that is, the presence of all the formal elements required by the administrative–legal system for that specific record to be capable of achieving the purposes for which it was generated, and of the *controls exercised on the process of creation* of the record, among which are included those exercised on the author of the record, who must be the person competent, that is, having the authority and the capacity, to issue it. The reliability of a record is the exclusive responsibility of its creator, that is, of the person or organization which made or received it and maintained it with its other records.

Authenticity

Authenticity is the trustworthiness of a record as a record and is defined as the fact that a record has not been tampered with or corrupted, either accidentally or maliciously. An authentic record is one that preserves the same *identity* it had when first generated and can be presumed or proven to have maintained its *integrity* over time. The identity of a record is constituted of those characteristics that distinguish it from any other record (e.g., the names of its author and its addressee, the date of its compilation, its title, its classification code, or its register number), and is assessed on the basis of the formal elements on the face of the record, and/or its attributes, as expressed, for example, in a register entry or as metadata. The integrity of a record is linked to its ability to convey the message it was intended to communicate when generated. Thus, it does not matter if the ink is

fading, the medium (i.e., the material support) is falling apart, or the bit stream is not the same as in the first manifestation of the record, as long as the content is readable and is the same as it was originally intended, the medium does not have missing parts, or the manifestation we see on the computer screen is the same as it was the first time the record was saved. The integrity of a record is inferred not only from its appearance, which might be deceiving in the case of good forgeries, but also from the circumstances of its maintenance and preservation: An unbroken chain of responsible and legitimate custody is considered an insurance of integrity till proof to the contrary. The authenticity of a record is a movable responsibility, as it shifts from the creator, who needs to guarantee it for as long as the record is in its custody, to the preserver, who guarantees it for as long as the record exists.

Accuracy

Accuracy is the trustworthiness of the data (i.e., the smallest meaningful indivisible piece of information) within a record, and is defined as their truthfulness, exactness, precision, or completeness, and usually presumed for reliable records as well as for authentic records. However, in the digital environment, it is necessary to consider and assess accuracy as a separate quality of a record because of the easiness with which data can be corrupted during transmission across space (between persons and/or systems) and time (when digital systems are upgraded or records are migrated to a new system). Consequently, accuracy also is a shifting responsibility that moves over time from the creator to the preserver.

Authentication

Traditionally, the most trustworthy records are those which are declared to be so by a person who is given such responsibility in a formal way. Authentication is defined as a declaration of authenticity made by a competent officer, and consists of a statement or an element, such as a seal, a stamp or a symbol, added to the record after its completion. It is not to be identified with authenticity—which is a quality of the record that accompanies it for as long as it exists—in that it only guarantees that a record is authentic at one specific moment in time, when the declaration is made or the element is affixed.

Status of Transmission

Although it is a general assumption that an original record is a trustworthy record, simply because it presents all the possible elements that allow for an assessment of trustworthiness, it is obvious to all diplomatists, classic and modern, that originality has no relationship with trustworthiness. Rather, it is one of three possible statuses of transmission of a record, that is, it relates to the degree of perfection of a record. An *original record* is the first record generated in a complete form that is capable of reaching the consequences wanted by its author. Thus, an original has the qualities of *primitiveness*, *completeness*, and *effectiveness*. With records that are meant for transmission across space, the original is the document received by the addressee, while with records that are only intended to be transmitted through time (i.e., internal records) the original is the document kept by the author. In the digital environment, the original is the first manifestation of either the received record or the saved record, depending on whether we have an external or an internal record. We have multiple originals when the same record is issued at the same time to multiple recipients, such as a contract (e.g., indenture), a treaty, an invitation, or a directive.

The other two possible statuses of transmission are the *draft* and the *copy*. A draft is a document prepared for purposes of correction and is meant to be provisional, temporary. A draft may have various levels of completion, but it is never an effective or a legal document and, if kept, it is intended to stay with the author, thus it may be transmitted through time but not across space. If a draft is electronically circulated, the document received by each recipient is an original as to "status of transmission"—having been communicated to an addressee in the intended status of completion and having been the first capable of reaching its purpose of being examined by the person receiving it—and it is a draft only as to content, therefore as type of document (e.g., an ISO draft standard circulated for comments to the ISO members). A copy is a reproduction of another document, which may be an original, a draft or another copy. Classic diplomatists study the sequence of copies over time to assess the probability of trustworthiness of a text that has been transmitted through the centuries by copying it. The most trustworthy copy is the copy in the form of original, which is identical to the original in all respects, including holographic signatures, if required, but is issued after the original. Equally trustworthy is the authentic copy, which is declared to conform to the original by an official entrusted with such responsibility. Imitative copies (e.g., photocopies) reproduce both the form and the content of the record; simple copies only transcribe the record content; and inserts (also called *vidimus* or *inspeximus*) are original records containing a copy of another record or a part of it. The study of copies, their process of creation, and their trustworthiness is becoming increasingly relevant in the digital environment as we will no longer have originals on which to assess the authority of records [10].

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF DIPLOMATICS

Diplomatics saw the documentary world as a system and built a system to understand and explain it. Early

diplomatists rationalised, formalised and universalised document-creation by identifying within it the relevant elements, extending their relevance in time and space, eliminating their particularities, and relating the elements to each other and to their ultimate purpose. . . .These elements are building blocks which have an inherent order: in fact they can be analysed in sequence from the general to the specific, following a natural method of inquiry [1, p. 107].

The building blocks used by classic diplomatists were the *juridical system*, which is the context of records creation; the *act*, which is the reason for records creation; the *persons*, which are the agents; the *procedures*, which guide the actions and determine their documentary residue, the *documentary form*, which reflects the act and allows it to reach its purpose, and the *archival bond*, which reveals the relationship of a record with all the other records in the same aggregation.

The Context of Records Creation

As a consequence of its definition of record, classic diplomatics identified the *juridical system* as the only relevant context of records creation, and defined it as a social group organized according to shared principles and values that allow it to establish and recognize a body of rules and to give institutions the power to enforce them. Thus, a juridical system is constituted of a community, its institutions, and its legal system. The legal system comprises positive law and all the other conceptions of binding law (e.g., natural law, ethics, custom) that are held by a community.

Modern diplomatics, having extended the concept of record, has redefined the context of records creation as the framework of action in which the record participates, and has identified five relevant contexts, proceeding from the general to the specific. They are: 1) the juridical–administrative context, that is, the legal and organizational system in which the record creating body belongs, as indicated by laws, regulations, etc.; 2) the provenancial context, that is, the record creating body, its mandate, structure, and functions, as indicated in organizational charts, annual reports, the classification scheme, etc.; 3) the procedural context, that is, the business procedure in the course of which the record is created, which, in the modern environment, is often integrated with documentary procedures, as indicated by workflow rules, codes of administrative procedure, classification schemes, etc.; 4) the documentary context, that is, the archival fonds to which the record belongs and its internal structure, as indicated by classification schemes, record inventories, indexes, registers, etc.; and 5) the technological context, that is, the characteristics of the technical components of the record system in which the record is created [11, p. 18].

ACTS

An act is defined as an exercise of will that aims to produce determined effects. Acts are distinguished in mere acts and transaction. Whereas a mere act is an act whose purpose is the accomplishment of the act itself, a transaction is an act that aims to create, modify, maintain, or extinguish relationships between two or more physical or corporate persons. Some acts, especially transactions, occur in writing, thereby resulting in records. Classic diplomatics categorizes those records according to their relationship with the acts that caused their creation. It calls *notitia* a record that was meant to provide evidence of an act that came into existence and was complete before being manifested in writing, while it calls *charta* a record that was meant to put the act into being and was therefore the essence and substance of the act. In modern English we call the former *probative* records and the latter *dispositive* records. Examples of probative records are certificates, registrations, transcripts, and receipts. Examples of dispositive records are contracts, grants, applications, and money orders. These types of records have all in common the fact that their existence and written form are required by the juridical–administrative system within which they are created, and therefore they are all legal records. They do encompass all the types of documents that classic diplomatics defines as records.

However, modern diplomatics has a much broader focus and its object of inquiry—what it calls records—is constituted not only of documents whose written form is required, but also of documents whose existence is not required by the juridical–administrative system and the written form of which is discretionary. These nonlegal records can be distinguished in two categories: *supporting* records, whose function is to support the activity in which they take part; and *narrative* records, whose function is one of free-form communication of information. While both categories of records participate in some kind of act, neither is able to provide evidence of such act by itself or to carry it out. Examples of supporting documents are teaching notes and maps, and examples of narrative documents are informal correspondence, discretionary reports, and accounts of events. In the digital environment, two additional categories of records have been identified, *instructive* records and *enabling* records. The former indicate the form in which external data are to be presented (e.g., regulations, manuals of procedure, instructions for filling out forms), and the latter enable performance of artworks (e.g., software patches), execution of business transactions (e.g., interacting business applications), conduct of experiments (e.g., workflows generated and used to carry out the experiment of which it is, instrument, by-product, and residue), or analysis of observational data (e.g., interpreting software). The salient characteristic of these two categories of digital records is that the record as

it is stored differs from the record as it is manifested on the computer screen [10, pp. 49–52].

Persons

In diplomatics, as well as in law, persons are the subjects of rights and duties, that is, they are entities recognized by the juridical system as capable of acting. This means not only that a person in a given juridical systems may not be considered a person in another one, but also that the same entity in the same juridical system may be a person with respect to a type of act and not a person with respect to another (e.g., in the past, women have been persons in regard to being paid for a job, but nonpersons in regard to owning real estate). Persons can be *physical*, that is, individual human beings, or *juridical*, that is, collections of human beings (e.g., an organization, a committee) or successions of human beings (e.g., a position, a title).

Classic diplomatics posits that, for a record to come into existence, three persons are necessary: the author, the writer, and the addressee. The *author* is the person having the competence (i.e., the authority and the capacity) of issuing a record, which is made by it, in its name, or by its order (e.g., the testator in a last will, the university in a letter of appointment of a professor, the king in a proclamation). The *writer* is the person competent for the articulation of the discourse in the record. It might be the same as the author or may not, as is the case when the author is an abstract entity, such as a corporation. The *addressee* is the person for whom the record is intended in its documentary form. It may coincide with the recipient of the record and may not, as is the case when a second original of a letter of appointment whose addressee is the appointed person is sent to the financial office responsible for paying the salary, which is therefore the recipient.

Modern diplomatics, which tends to focus on aggregations of records, rather than on individual items, identifies a fourth person necessary to the existence of a record, the *creator*, that is, the person in whose fonds or archives a record exists as an item, or as part of a file and/or a series. In the digital environment, it is important to identify a fifth person, the *originator*, that is, the person responsible for the electronic account or space in which the record is generated or from which the record is sent [12, pp. 51–52]. Persons are the primary diplomatic criterion for determining the public or private nature of a record. Thus, a record is *public* if issued by a public person, that is, a physical or juridical person who, by performing functions considered to be public by the juridical system in which the person acts, is invested with the exercise of some form of sovereignty. A record is *private* when its author is a person "deprived" of public function. In situations in which the wills of a public person and a private person meet in the same record (e.g., a contract between a government and a contractor, or an income tax return), the record acquires the nature of the person who dictates the form and the procedure of creation of the record.

Procedure

A procedure is the formal sequence of steps or phases whereby a transaction is carried out. It is different from a process, which is the series of motions by which a person prepares to carry out the acts involved in a procedure. In relation to each record, classic diplomatics identifies two distinct types of procedures: the procedure governing the act and the procedure governing its documentation. The first type is further distinguished in two categories: the procedures that are the initiative of the persons who carry them out, and the procedures that result from an external initiative. The procedures included in the former category consist only of the decisional moment, the *iussio*, while those included in the latter begin with the *petition* to the authority, or request to accomplish some action; and proceed with the *intercession*, or recommendation of persons close to the authority; the *intervention*, or permission of the persons who are affected by the consequences of the requested action; and the *iussio*, or command to create the record enacting the act or providing evidence of it. After the procedure controlling the action is concluded, the procedure controlling the production of the related documentation begins. Its phases are the *compilation of the draft*; the *preparation of the fair copy*; the unabridged or abridged *registration*; the *validation* through signatures or affixing of stamps, seals, etc.; the *computation of the taxes* for the issuing of the record; and the *delivery* of the record.

Modern diplomatics, having moved the focus of study from medieval to modern and contemporary records, has observed an increasing integration of the procedures for acting and the procedures for creating the record, as over time the acts have begun to be carried out by writing records, and indeed several records for each procedures, not just one, as it used to be. Thus, modern diplomatists have identified for each procedure six typical integrated phases. They are the *initiative*, constituted by the acts that initiate a procedure, and producing records such as applications and claims; the *inquiry*, consisting of the collection of the information necessary to evaluate the situation, and producing records such as surveys and estimates; the *consultation*, consisting of the collection of opinion and advice based on the information accumulated, and producing records such as minutes and discussion papers; the *deliberation*, or final decision-making, resulting in records such as appointments or contracts; the *deliberation control*, exercised by a person different from the author of the record embodying the transaction on the substance and form of the deliberation and the form of the record resulting from it; and the *execution*, constituted by all the actions that give formal character to the

transaction, and resulting in the final record of the transaction, plus letters of transmissions, registrations, etc. [1, pp. 115–119; 9, pp. 47–63]. In the digital environment the same fundamental structure has to date proven to be valid and easy to embed in a workflow.

Documentary Form

Form is the whole of the rules of representation by which an act is documented or a message is conveyed in writing. It comprises all those characteristics of a record that can be separated from the determination of the particular subjects, persons, or places the record is about. The fundamental idea of the early diplomatists was that all records are similar enough that it is possible to conceive of one typical ideal documentary form, a template, which encompasses all the possible characteristics of a record, and which can be used to analyze existing records for the purpose of determining their nature, provenance, and trustworthiness. Thus, they built this ideal documentary form as follows. First they distinguished the formal characteristics that determine the appearance of the record and make it effective from those that represent the articulation of the discourse and make the record complete. They called the former extrinsic elements, and the latter intrinsic elements. Classic diplomatics has continued over the past three centuries in this tradition, and modern diplomatics has only introduced a few new elements, therefore the formal elements of the record are presented here in their logical sequence, with some reflection on their variations over time as appropriate.

Extrinsic elements of form

The extrinsic elements of form are the medium, the script, the language, the special signs, the seals and the annotations. The *medium* is the physical carrier of the record, of which diplomatists study the material, the way it is prepared, the watermark, the shape and size, the edging, rulings, etc. With modern records and the increasing standardization of supporting media, this element has lost importance as it is no longer itself imbued with meaning and a key factor in the assessment of the authority and authenticity of the record. Furthermore, in the digital environment, the medium is no longer to be considered part of the record, although it is still necessary to its existence, as a record that is not affixed to a medium does not exist.

The *script* is not analyzed paleographically, but in terms of layout, paragraphing, punctuation, abbreviations, or initialisms. The *language* is studied in terms of style, formulas, and tenor of the discourse. *Special signs* are symbols identifying the persons involved with the record, like logos, heraldic images, mottos, stamps, or drawings, and are key to the identification of the record provenance. *Seals* are examined as to their material, size, shape, typology, legend, and the method of affixing or

appending them, and they are also indicators of the origin of the record and of its authority.

Annotations are additions made to the record after its completion. They can be distinguished in three types: the annotations that are added to the record at the conclusion of the procedure generating the record itself; those added to the record in the course of the procedure in which it participates after its creation; and those added to the record in the course of recordkeeping activities. The annotations of the first type, added during the execution phase of the integrated business and documentary procedure, include the mention of the registration of the record in a register or book, with identification of the latter and of the relevant page and date; and the authentication of the record, of signatures on the record, of the identity of persons participating in the issuing of the record, or of the act referred to in the record, such as an oath of office. The annotations of the second type, added in the course of handling the matter in which the record participates, include mention of the decision made or further actions to be carried out, dates of hearings or readings, and locutions such as "urgent" or "bring forward." The annotations of the third type, added in the course of managing the record, include a registry number, a classification code, and the endorsement of docket style folded records. In the digital environment, the latter also include the record profile, that is, the metadata schema that is attached to the record for the purposes of declaring and maintaining its identity and protecting its integrity.

Intrinsic elements of form

The study of a large number of records of different times and provenance has shown that the intrinsic elements of form, those that are meant to convey the action or message and its context, do not appear in a simple sequence, even if an ordered one, but tend to gather in groups, to be in some relation of subordination to each other, thereby forming sections, each of which comprises several of them [6, p. 527]. Thus, it is fair to say that all records present an ideal structure and an ideal substructure, which is constituted of three sections, each of which has a clear purpose. The first section is called *protocol*, and contains the administrative context of the action, that is, the place, date, and subject of the record, and the persons who have participated in its creation; the second section is called *text*, and contains the action or message, including its motivation, circumstances, or conditions; and the third section is called *eschatocol*, and contains the validation of the record, including the mention of the means used to validate it, the signature of the author, and those of witnesses and countersigners.

The elements that follow will be identified by the English version of their name, except for the few that only exist in medieval records and have retained their Latin name. Classic diplomatists, however, tend to use

exclusively the Latin name of the formal elements of records. Thus, for the elements that existed in medieval records, the English name will be accompanied in brackets by its Latin version, as given by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [13].

The intrinsic elements that usually appear in the protocol of a record are: the *entitling*, or letterhead, comprising the name, title, capacity, and address of the physical or juridical person issuing the record or of which the author of the document is an agent; the *title* of the record; the *topical date*, that is, the place where the record was issued; the *chronological date* (*actum*, for the date of the act, and *datum*, for the date of the record); the *invocation* (*invocatio*), that is, the mention of the entity in whose name the act is made (e.g., God, the Republic, the People, the Law); the *superscription* (*intitulatio*), that is, the name of the author of the record and/or the act; the *inscription* (*inscriptio*), that is, the name of the addressee of the record and/or the act; the *salutation* (*salutatio*), which is usually a formula of greeting; the *subject*, that is, a statement signifying what the record is about; the *formula perpetuitatis*, which is a sentence declaring that the rights given by the record are valid forever (*in perpetuum, ad perpetuam rei memoriam, pp.*), and the *apprecatio*, that is, a prayer for the realization of the content of the record (*feliciter, amen*).

The intrinsic elements that usually appear in the text are: the *preamble* (*arenga*), which expresses the ideal motivation of the act or the principles inspiring the message; the *notification* (*promulgatio*), a formula stating that the record is communicated to all those concerned, who therefore must be aware of it; the *exposition* (*narratio*), which explains the concrete circumstances and motivation for the creation of the record; the *disposition* (*dispositio*), that is, the act or message that the record is intended to carry out or convey; various *clauses* expressing the obligation of those concerned to respect the will of the author (*of injunction*), the prohibition to violate the act or oppose it (*of prohibition*), the obligation to respect the act notwithstanding other orders or decisions contrary to it (of derogation), situations or conditions that constitute exceptions (*of exception*), the obligation to respect the act for one's heirs or successors (*of obligation*), the consent to give up a right or a claim (*of renunciation*), a threat of punishment should the act be violated (*of warning* or *sanctio*), or the promise of a prize (*promissory*). Sometimes the *apprecatio* concludes the text, or begins the eschatocol.

The intrinsic elements that usually appear in the eschatocol are: the *corroboration* (*corroboratio*), a clause that states the means used to validate the record (e.g., "signed and sealed," or "I have hereunto set my Hand and Seal of Office"), normally followed by the topical and chronological date; the *complimentary clause*, which is a brief formula expressing respect (e.g., "Yours Truly"); the *attestation* (*subscriptio*), that is, the subscription of those who took part in the issuing of the record (author, writer, countersigner) or of witnesses to the enactment or to the subscription; the *qualification of signature*, that is, the mention of the title and capacity of each signer; and the *secretarial notes*, such as initials of the secretary, indication of enclosures, or indication of additional recipients of the record.

Archival Bond

The concept of archival bond is unknown to classic diplomatics because of its focus on medieval records, the main characteristic of which was the fact that each incorporated the entire act as carried out through the acting procedure and the subsequent documentary procedure. The focus of modern diplomatics on modern records meant that one of its main concerns had to be the interrelationship that each modern record has with the previous and subsequent records that participate in the same act and/or integrated business and documentary procedure. This interrelationship, following archival theory, was by modern diplomatists called the archival bond, and was configured as an incremental network of relationships that links all the records of the same file and/or the same series, and the same archival fonds. The archival bond is *originary*, that is, it exists from the moment a record is created; *necessary*, that is, there is no record without it; and *determined*, that is, is uniquely defined by the function of the record in the business activity in which it participates. Besides determining the whole structure of the archival fonds, the archival bond is the primary identifier of each modern record and is usually made explicit by a classification code. While in a traditional paper environment the archival bond is implicit in the physical location of the record in the aggregation in which it belongs, in the digital environment it must be made explicit and expressed among the metadata, otherwise, according to the archival postulate that a record is made up of a document and the whole of its relationship, we are unable not only to identify the record, but to have a record altogether [12, pp. 53–54].

DIPLOMATIC CRITICISM

The structure of diplomatic analysis, or criticism, as it is called by classic diplomatists, is rigorous and systematic, and may proceed from the general to the specific or vice versa, depending on the available information. The early diplomatists first separated the record from the world and then put them into relation trying to understand the world through the record. Thus, they began analyzing the formal elements of the records and, from the results of such analysis, they reached conclusions about procedures, persons, acts, and contexts. They firmly believed in the possibility of discovering a consistent, underlying truth about the nature of a record and of the act producing it through the use of a scientific method for analyzing its various components.

The diplomatic analysis of the elements of a record is a process of abstraction and systematization, the aim of which is to identify the essential attributes of a record and make them transportable to different historical and documentary contexts. By decontextualizing and generalizing the essential attributes of a record, the original diplomatists were able to recognize and evaluate records created over several centuries and across different juridical systems. The overarching thesis of contemporary archival diplomatics is that it will enable archivists to recognize and identify electronic records created in a variety of administrative contexts and in different hardware and software environments [14, p. 209].

Indeed, modern diplomatics has gone much further than that: Using its century-old understanding of the nature of records and of their necessary characteristics, it has attempted to design record making and recordkeeping systems and to determine at the outset the documentary form of the records resulting from specific acts. This proactive stance is still experimental and it has mostly been developed in the course of two research endeavors called "The UBC Project" and InterPARES [14, p. 199]. However, irrespective of its success as a designing instrument, diplomatics remains a fundamental component of the intellectual armor of every record professional.

Diplomatics has long been recognized as a formative discipline, which develops analytical ability by making explicit the set of principles by which a record is created and its form is shaped, by defining its elements by their meaning and function, their order, and their consequences, and by naming them in a consistent and meaningful way. In addition, it enables record professionals to work with a heuristic device, a diagnostic tool for establishing the meaning of the phenomenon under investigation, thereby making possible the understanding of unprecedented manifestations of records, the assessment of the trustworthiness of records that come to us at the end of several reproduction processes, and the identification of what needs to be protected and how to ensure that a trace of our actions will be carried into the future. Finally, the capacity of diplomatic analysis to uncover the interrelationships of records focusing on context over content and on purpose over use makes of it the most useful instrument for carrying out all archival functions, from appraisal to arrangement and description, and from preservation to communication.

CONCLUSION

This entry has outlined the origin, purpose, object, and content of a three-century-old science, diplomatics, which has been used by several disciplines—such as, jurisprudence, philology, history, and archival science—primarily, as an instrument of inquiry, a tool for analysis, but which has a substantial body of knowledge of its own, especially

in its conceptualization of the record, and should be studied on its own merit by all those who either manage records or use them as sources.

The discussion of the concepts has been carried out comparing the perspective of classic and modern diplomatics. The reason is that modern diplomatics does not replace classic diplomatics but adapts and elaborates the same body of core knowledge to make it applicable to modern records. Thus, we have two branches of one science that coexist and are equally important. While classic diplomatists, being persons of our times, need to gain an understanding of contemporary records by accepting modern diplomatics, modern diplomatists could never grasp the depth of diplomatic concepts without learning first classic diplomatics. The profound understanding of the nature of records that both classic and modern diplomatics provide is a vital component of the intellectual armor of every record professional and, like in Europe, it should be an integral part the curricula of graduate education for all records, archives, and information specialists.

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