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Starting from scratch: ethics questions & strategies on an unorganized university archive

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Abstract: In Greece, interest in university archives began in the 1990s and, despite efforts that have taken place since then, only a few universities have collected archives classified by date. The University of West Attica was founded in March 2018 by the National Law 4521. The foundation of the newly established University came from the merging process of the former Technological Educational Institute of Athens (founded 1970) and Piraeus University of Applied Sciences (founded 1983). In 2019, the National School of Public Health (founded 1929) joined the newly established university. It is, therefore, a historically important academic institution with several unique features. At this stage, in the context of the administrative changes and the establishment of the new institution, it is crucial to pay more attention to its archival material and its history. The various administrative changes, the changes in the premises and the relocation of departments and administrative services, but also the emerging framework of the organization in relation to the archives in a single framework provide an opportunity to substantiate new possibilities and proposals that will improve the administrative function of the University and will utilize its cultural heritage and memory. The history of archive management in public administration in Greece has demonstrated that such administrative changes have led to the loss or destruction of archival material that is important for scientific, historical, and administrative reasons. Our research project focuses on the development of a strategic plan for the systematic preservation and classification of historical archival material, and the appropriate management of records at the University of West Attica (UNIWA). This paper will discuss the problems and the questions to be addressed during the elaboration of a strategy on ethics questions in relation to the collection and the access to the archival material.

Keywords: university archives, archives management, case studies, ethics & strategies on archives, University of West Attica

In the 1980s, great and impressively rapid changes transformed Greece into an educated society. Among others, these changes include the creation of new Universities, the maximization of technological education and the gradual mass enrolment in tertiary education institutions. The systematic engagement with the archives of academic institutions is a phenomenon emerging in the scientific community of Greece in the 1990s.

Initially, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens - the oldest academic institution in the country founded in 1837 - in 1991, created its Historical Archive which operates as a research and administrative centre of the University. Later, the Historical Archive of the University of Athens contributed with specific initiatives to the mobilization of other University Institutions, in order to create a central archival institution in Greece, dealing with the Archives of the Universities.

As part of these initiatives, it organized two working and informative meetings of the Heads of the Archives of all Universities in the country. The first meeting was held on December 2, 2004, in the building of the Historical Archive. The second one was held on February 2, 2007, in the Propylaea Building of the University of Athens.

Despite the efforts, the creation of a relevant institution has not been successful. In 1996 the Agricultural University of Athens put forward the preservation of the historical archives and the creation of an Historical Archive, which is now located in the Documentation Centre - Agricultural Museum within the University.

In 1998, the effort to create an historical archive of the University of Piraeus in collaboration with the Hellenic Archive Society began, and in the beginnings of 2000 these two bodies organized and implemented a vocational training program on the "Specialization of students, graduates of universities and library / archive staff on the organization and operation of the University archives and the use of new computer packages".

In addition, university anniversaries often serve as an incentive to plan and develop historical archives. In 2002, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the University, the Historical Archive of the University of Crete (H.A.U.C) began to organize and collect material, and is now part of the University library, while this year it announced a new enrichment and modernization effort.

In 2014, in the context of its forty years of operation, the University of Patras published a digital platform with data on its activities, and last year, the University of Thessaly, too, announced the creation of an historical archive in the context of anniversary activities with regard to its thirty-year of operation.

In 2018-2019, an important reform took place in Greece that reshaped the map of higher education. The University of West Attica is a result of the merger of the Athens Higher Technological Educational Institute based in Egaleo (founded in 1983 - operating as a Centre for Higher Technical Education (known as KATE) in Athens since 1970), of the Higher Education Institute of Piraeus -Technological Sector- based in Agios Ioannis Rentis-Piraeus (founded in 1983) and of the National School of Public Health (founded in 1929). It is, therefore, a historical academic institution with several unique features.

The newly established Institution was created in 2018 and in 2019 the Hellenic National School of Public Health (NSPH) joined it. The University of West Attica includes twenty-seven (27) departments, which operate under the academic umbrella of six (6) faculties, covering a wide range of scientific fields, such as social, administrative and economic sciences, engineering, health and welfare sciences, food sciences but also art studies.

At this stage, in the context of the above changes and the creation of the new Institution, the need for systematic engagement with the historical archival material is considered critical. The various administrative changes, the changes in the premises and the relocation of departments and administrative services, but also the developing framework of the organization in relation to the files in a single framework is an opportunity to document new possibilities and proposals that will improve the administrative operation of the University and will use its cultural heritage and memory.

The history of archive management in public administration in Greece has shown that such administrative changes lead to the loss or destruction of archival material that is important for scientific, historical, and administrative purposes. However, what is the theoretical and practical challenge for the development of this kind of scientific research? The emergence of the University of West Attica (UNIWA) as a successor Institution of the Technological Institutes of Athens and Piraeus, as well as of the National School of Public

Health, is a special case in terms of archival material management. According to the science of archiving, we can deal with the archive of the UNIWA (overlooking the fact that it is a newly established legal entity) as a case in which an entity is required to exercise the responsibilities of one or more abolished ones.

In these cases, the inactive records of the abolished entity or entities constitute separate closed archival sets (they do not accept new items, since their producer has ceased its activity). The records of the abolished entity or entities used administratively by the new entity that henceforth exercises these responsibilities, belong to its archival body. But if we look at the issue from the point of view of a new organization created to exercise the responsibilities of three abolished ones and taking into consideration that there is an indisputable continuity of responsibilities between the abolished and the successor body, then the archive remains open - still accepts items from a producer that continues its activity- taking the name of the new body.

Of course, there is the problem of the succession of three bodies. Undoubtedly, we are facing a special case of merging and transforming of two bodies into a new one with essentially the same (however expanded) responsibilities, which now acquires a different status. However, delimiting archival sets is only part of the solution. Regardless of the decision that will reflect the image and the structure of the archive, it is necessary, during the archival description, to note the administrative history of the producer body and the changes in use and ownership of the records. All the above issues do not concern exclusively the UNIWA, as we are in a phase of total restructuring of the public higher education and in the context of the academic mergers, all University are affected.

It is obvious that there is no possibility at any level of open access for research or other reasons to the Historical Archive of the University of West Attica, while, also, there is no systematic strategic management. And at this point a key issue regarding access to archival material emerges.

In Greece, none of the university archives includes in its operation framework any regulation on relevant issues of code of ethics. The practice and activity of archival bodies are mainly determined by the relevant case law.

The basic laws concerning archives in Greece are mainly related to the operation of the General State Archives (G.S.A) and are the following:

- Law 4610 / 2019 "Synergies of Universities and TEI, access to tertiary education, Experimental schools, Official Records of the state and other regulations", which is the new legal framework governing the operation of the G.S.A [p. 117 -136]
- Law 380 / 1914 "Establishment of the Greek State Archiving Service", founding Law concerning the Central Service of the G.S.A
- Law 2027/1939 "Reorganization of the General State Archives", concerns the establishment of Regional Services under the names "Permanent Local Archives" and "Local Historical Archives", while the Service includes the operating Archives of the Ionian Islands, Crete and Samos.
- Law 1946 / 1991 "General State Archives and other provisions", the legal framework under which the G.S.A operated until the passing of the new Law (see Law 4610/2019).
- Law 2909 / 2001 article 6 par. 14 which replaces subparagraphs a' and b' of par. 1 and par. 3 of article 20 of L. 1946/1991 and concerns the Director of the G.S.A
- Law 3467 / 2006 , article 17 which replaces par. 14 of article 6 of Law 2909 / 2001 regarding the Director of the G.S.A
- Law 2846 / 2000 – Law 3391 / 2005, article 11, by which the hitherto independent public service " Prime Minister, Deputy Ministers, and General Secretariats' of the Ministerial Council Archives" (founding Law 2846 / 2000) is subject to the Central Service of the G.S.A

In fact, all the above laws form the framework of activity of all archival bodies. In May 1998, in the context of the operation and activity of the Hellenic Archive Society, the Code of Ethics of Archivists of the International Council on Archives was published in Greek. The Code was approved by the General Assembly of the Board of Directors at the 13th International Congress on Archives, held in Beijing, on September 6, 1996. The Greek translation is just a reference text and not an official one. As in other professions, here too, the archivist is bound by a code of ethics, which is not a code of legal nature, but which regulates the obligations that the archivist undertakes towards the user of the archives but also, in a more broad sense, towards the profession itself.

In the context of the implementation of the research action entitled “Development of strategic planning for the management and utilization of the archive of the University of West Attica”, the research team faced multiple ethical issues that had to be included in the strategic planning. The project concerns the research for the preparation of a strategic plan aiming at the systematic rescue and classification of the historical archival material and the proper management of the active archival sets of the University of West Attica.

As to the methodology, the research covers three thematic areas: a) archive policies b) strategic plan for the development and management of archive-collections and c) technical rules and administrative procedures.

The results of the research program do not only concern the UNIWA but they are intended to bring back to the scientific dialogue the issue of academic archive management which is a relatively neglected field in bibliographic production and which might promote standard possibilities of applicable management policies in academic bodies.

More specifically, we addressed the following issues related to today's presentation:

1. The lack of a permanent structure / service that deals with the historical archive of the University is a condition that does not ensure the preservation of the archival material in order to continue to be a reliable testimony of the past. We are talking about a Body in which, after the merger of the Universities, archival material from the 1930s is identified, and in addition it is the basis of University-Technological education in Greece.
2. To a large extent, archives are not cleared in accordance with current legislation.
3. There is no access to archival material for research and access to operational needs is often difficult.
4. The archival material includes information related to personal data.
5. There is no concern for reflecting different educational and research aspects of both student life and groups operating within the university community.

In addition, as part of the recent legal changes, the police will have access to the facilities and the daily operation of the Higher Education Institutes of the country, access not permitted in the past due to the benefit of "academic asylum". I refer to this as an example in

order to present a new aspect that arises in relation to ethical issues in the management of the archives of the Universities.

For example: What should an employee do if asked to disclose secretarial files to the police? If he / she reveals information that is considered confidential, will he /she have done the right thing? But how can he /she deny doing so since he /she is not bound and covered by a moral rule? Dilemmas like this are important that and require immediate discussion and answer.

In the context of the project, the systematic implementation of a holistic archival program for the archive of the University of West Attica is proposed, which can have multiple benefits for the University. More specifically:

1. Better, faster, more economical management of the bureaucracy and the administrative operation of the University
2. Conditions for the rescue, long-term preservation and access to the archival material of the University for educational, research and administrative purposes
3. Publication of a code of operation and ethics on the management and use of the University archives,
4. Use of archival material to attract new research funding,
5. Use of archival material with the aim of forming a unified academic culture,
6. Inclusion of all groups active within the university,
7. Strengthening the identity (branding) of the University and its wider influence in Greece and abroad.

At the same time, until such a program is implemented, it is proposed to adopt, in the broader code of ethics and good practice of the University, elements of the code of conduct of archivists, especially since there is not an organized management structure of its archival stock (historical and active). In addition, it is deemed necessary to train the employees of the University as a whole in matters of archive management. Eventually, in this context, the role of academic libraries -as they play an important role in the collection and preservation of university archives- should be strengthened. Of course, to the above problematics, issues and challenges regarding the modern management of personal data, are added, as University archives, by their nature include and are formed around such information.

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