

On the Issues of Modern Polish Archival Science

Kazimierz Konarski

Translated and Edited by Bartosz Nowożycki

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

When I became editor of *The American Archivist* six years ago, I expressed an interest in publishing translations of key articles that originally appeared in another language. My continuing belief is that English-speaking archivists have much to learn from the professional literature of other nations.

It has taken longer than I expected to begin publishing articles in the series Archives in Translation. Translating and editing an article is a time-consuming task. Bartosz Nowożycki undertook this important professional activity to acquaint readers of *The American Archivist* with Kazimierz Konarski, one of the leaders of the archival profession in Poland. This 1927 article provides insights into the development of archival science in Poland and the relationship of Polish archivists to the rest of the international community. In particular, it explores provenance and original order of collections affected by war and changing national boundaries—a very contemporary topic. The introduction by the translator provides additional context for the article.

I would like to continue this series by publishing other translated articles. Please feel free to contact me with ideas or suggestions.

Gregory S. Hunter
Editor

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Kazimierz Konarski was one of Poland's most important and influential archivists. This article was published in 1927 under the title "Program prac wewnętrznych w archiwach nowożytnych" in *Archeion* (volume 1, pages 106–24).

Modern Polish archival thought is primarily based upon Konarski's theoretical studies. His vast experience in the practical aspects of archival field work

allowed him to create the theoretical background of Polish archival science. His research in archival science influenced the majority of Polish archivists, such as Stanisław Przelaskowski and Gustaw Kaleński.¹

Kazimierz Konarski (1886–1972) was a historian and an archivist. In 1918, when Poland began regaining her statehood at the end of World War I, he was appointed general secretary in the Ministry of Religion and Public Education. With the position came responsibility for reclaiming archives from the former Polish territories, which the Kingdom of Prussia had acquired during the partitions of Poland in the late eighteenth century. In 1921, Konarski became director of the Archives of Historical Records, a position he held for eighteen years. Despite serving as director, Konarski continued to arrange and describe the holdings of the archives. This enabled him to connect the theoretical principles of archival science with everyday practice. As a result, he was able to publish many articles that combined theory and practice. In addition, he was active in Polish professional archives and historical societies. After World War II and until his retirement in 1961, Konarski worked as the vice director of the Central Archives of Historical Records and later as a head of the nineteenth-century records department.²

In his research, Konarski dealt with the organization and processing of archives, including the creation of archival finding aids, as well as methodological guidelines for arranging and describing different types of records. In Konarski's opinion, arrangement and description were the most important functions of archives. He briefly discussed archival selection and weeding, and providing access to records. In his opinion, the functions of an archival institution were the boundaries of archival science. At first, he focused on the principle of provenance; then he directed his attention to the idea of an archival *fond* and a record.

Kazimierz Konarski consistently called for the creation of Polish archival science. In 1929, he wrote the first Polish archival manual, titled *Polish Modern Archival Science and Its Tasks*. It was the first textbook about archives administration written in a Slavic language. He thought that, apart from the universal notion, archival science should have a local character. In his opinion, Polish archival science should focus on the record and registry along with precise and deep archival description. The role he played in the development of archival science in Poland is similar to the one Waldo Gifford Leland played in the United States.

The following is a translation of an article printed in *Archeion* in Warsaw in 1927. It includes all of Konarski's remarks in the endnotes. Additional endnotes and remarks by the translator are identified by my initials [BN]. I would like to thank Thaddeus V. Gromada, Ph.D., professor emeritus of European History, New Jersey City University, for his assistance with the translation and editing.

Bartosz Nowożycki

Modern Polish archival science is in a fluid state. It lacks specified methodology, definitions, unified terminology, so that the same kind of item in different archives has the same name, or vice versa, the same name is given to different items. Finally, there is no established uniform archival practice, allowing individual archives to apply different procedures in their sometimes simplest, scientific or administrative functions.

There are no theoretical approaches to modern archival science. Polish scientific literature does not have in its bibliography even one study on this topic. Skorochoła Majewski's paper on archives, published in the *Eighth Annual Bulletin of the Friends of Science Society*, cannot be counted.³ Apart from the fact that this paper is a hundred years old, it contains virtually no description of the methods of archival work; it presents the characteristics of archives in Poland and in neighboring countries, and some details of the history of Polish archives.

Although this topic was introduced in the *Encyclopedia of the Auxiliary Sciences of History and Literature* by Ptaszycki and in the *Historyka* by Handelsman, both of these publications do it in a very compendious way. In both works, this issue is only a small part of a much larger whole.⁴

Foreign models remain. However, they can serve only insofar as an archival science of one country can be implemented in another national archival system. In practice, it all comes down to a number of fundamental problems, which can be solved and validated by examples having local-Polish character. These models continuously use concepts and institutions quite alien to Poland's history and its legal system; hence the divergence in terms of subject matter and the pressing need to develop one's own new archival topics and issues. Even these general assumptions cannot always be easily transferred from foreign textbooks to Polish archival science. For instance, how can one base an alphabetical index of Polish names on pronunciation, as the Dutch recommend in Muller, Feith, and Fruin's well-known manual of archival science, but not on spelling?⁵ Foreign literature finally puts the emphasis on records from the Middle Ages, but among strictly modern literature, not a single book matches the importance of the Dutch manual.

Establishing the forms of archival science under these conditions is not an easy task. From the shapeless mass, one must forge the new forms and new content of archival activities, through his own analysis of the archival concepts or through the adaptation of foreign principles, and what is more important and more difficult, impose them into the daily practice of Polish archives.

The outline of tasks in this field can be divided into theoretical and practical. This division is not exactly precise, because on the one hand, all theoretical issues carry practical consequences, and vice versa, practical tasks are hard to detach from their theoretical background. Despite this, the difference can be drawn.



FIGURE 1. This photo of Kazimierz Konarski appeared in his book, *Dalekie a bliskie. Wspomnienia szczęśliwego człowieka* (Warsaw: Ossolineum, 1965).

Theoretical issues are mainly the analysis of the most important definitions from archival terminology, organizing and prioritizing the entire archival methodology to create a unified and prearranged whole. The practical tasks are a series of separate and specific issues, such as the merging of archives [after the Partitions of Poland—BN], training of archivists, records disposition, and so on.

Let's start with the theoretical issues. They can be summarized by a single word, the "registry principle"⁶ (principle of provenance). This principle is a summary, a synthesis, the cornerstone of modern archival science; once we fully grasp its characteristics, the more specific issues will simply be its explication and consequence.

The registry principle is a very complicated concept, thus its description must have a complex character. First of all, it must be preceded by an analysis of the archival *fond*⁷ concept.

If we are dealing with the archive⁸ or registry⁹ of an office, whether it will be the secretary of state of the Polish Kingdom¹⁰ or a small office that fights against usury in the Ministry of Provisioning,¹¹ it is not difficult to realize that all the records of this archive or registry are closely fused with each other. This is because all of these records are the creation of the same office. They concern the same territory and are developed by the same people. Records of any case pass through all departments of the office. They cross paths many times, and merge and fuse with each other. If we take into consideration that hundreds or thousands of case files pass through the office day after day, and year after year, it is not unusual to notice that these threads, crossing in all directions, create a closed, consistent organic whole. This whole we will call an archival *fond*.¹²

An archival *fond* may be incomplete, partially destroyed, or lost. However, at the moment it is rebuilt and completed within the limits of possibility, it becomes a closed whole, which cannot be enriched, even by a single file. A *fond* is a whole constructed according to a single logical plan, and the violation of that plan would immediately infringe all its organization and the cohesion of its content.

An archival *fond* is a unit constituting an organic whole and consisting of the whole registry of an office.

From the last definition of the *fond* result its two essential features, or rather the twofold approach to the topic. The *fond* can be treated either as an outcome of the official activities and transactions of an office, or as an archival object. The first approach puts the *fond* closer to the registry, the second to an archive; the first shows its administrative characteristics, the second—its archival ones.

Let us start with the first approach. An archival *fond* is a product of the official activities and transactions of an office over a closed period of time and within a defined territory. One cannot envision a *fond* that would cover several

centuries of an office's activities because in general, and especially in Poland, it is difficult to depict an office that would exist for a couple of centuries. Second, even if such a fact were true, one cannot assume that the history of an office would not be divided into several clearly distinguishable periods. The *fond* will then be a product of the official activities of an office within such a closed period in the office's history.

It should be stated that the boundaries of these periods do not always correspond with the dates of important historical events. The boundary between one period and the other, between one *fond* and the other, is not marked by political cataclysm, but by the moments when the administrative system of the country changes.

The example of the archives of the Administrative Council¹³ of the Congress Kingdom of Poland¹⁴ should suffice. The *fond* outlasted, along with the council, a number of turning points in the kingdom's history: the November Uprising,¹⁵ the years 1846 and 1848,¹⁶ the Crimean War,¹⁷ and the January Uprising,¹⁸ and was finally closed by the general administrative reform carried out in the Congress Kingdom around the year 1867. Obviously, the important historical events are not without an effect on the administrative system; the uprising of the year 1863, if it was not the sole cause of the reform in the year 1867, significantly accelerated it. However, historical events do not divide archives into *fonds*, administrative reforms do.

The most important property of the *fond* is its direct relation to the office from which it derives. It is understandable and requires no comment, thus it results from the definition of the *fond* as a product of office activities. Each change in the development and functioning of an office must therefore be reflected as closely as possible in the records; the registry is not only an office's echo and memory but also its backbone, a formal center of all its activities and transactions. As a legacy of a living organism, the archival *fond* retains its structure and becomes a kind of living organism that grows and expands, or, on the contrary, shrinks and weakens at the same moment when an important change happens in an office's organization. One can say that the archival *fond* shares the fate of an office until it ceases to exist, if not for the fact that it chronologically begins its proper archival "life" at the moment of the "death" or liquidation of an office.

The *fond* shares the fate of an office explicitly once the office ends its existence. If we deal with a liquidation of an office we must take succession¹⁹ into account. This succession is expressed by the purview of the rights and responsibilities, which were the essence of the activities of a liquidated office, and the registry, which, after the liquidation of an office, we will call the archival *fond*.

It is clear and understandable that whoever takes over the rights and responsibilities of a liquidated office must also inherit its archive. It is not only a logical conclusion for the receiver, moreover it is a *sine qua non* condition

for the proper administrative functioning of the successor. As a new owner of an estate requires old account, business, lessee, and commercial books and the like for organization of the estate administration, all the more the successor authority needs inherited records to further function properly. When, in 1819, the Government Committee of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment²⁰ conducted a partial liquidation of the convents, the succession in favor of the commission included not only rights, but also land property, duties, foundations, donations, and archives without which the administration of demesne with its financial burden would be unthinkable.

Liquidation of an office and succession of archives associated with this process may take various forms. These forms can be presented in the following collation:

1. Liquidation of an office without the establishment of a successor. This instance occurs quite often, especially at private institutions. First of all, this includes sudden liquidations, such as that of the Friends of Science Society, or the bankruptcy of large trading or industrial companies. Liquidation without a notion of disaster will be, for example, termination of the diplomatic mission without personnel. Records of that mission will return to the authority to which it was subjected, that is, the relevant Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But the fact that the records of the Friends of Science Society can be found in the Archives of Historical Records²¹ and not in the Archives of Public Education,²² or even in a private collection, is almost entirely a matter of coincidence.
2. Liquidation of an office along with a succession of rights and functions in favor of a newly, ad hoc, created office. One can distinguish two separate cases:
 - a) Renaming of an office. Sometimes the liquidation of an office takes place along with a succession, so that this process happens almost without a trace, and actually is just granting the old office a different name. In 1834, the so-called Temporary Committee of Inquiry, subjected to the viceroy, created to conduct the investigation into Zaliwski's expedition in the year 1833,²³ ceased to exist. Parallel to its liquidation, in the same building, with the same personnel and office, the Permanent Committee of Inquiry²⁴ was established to conduct all of the political investigations in the Congress Kingdom of Poland. In this case, we deal with the continuation of the activities of the same office but in a different form.
 - b) The transformation of an office. Quite the opposite is the case when the name of the office remains the same, but some minor or major changes in its organization occur. A successor after the Senate of the Duchy of Warsaw was the Senate of the Congress Kingdom of Poland, a new institution, however based on the

organization model and personnel of the former senate. It is not only the changing of the name but a new institution that emerges, leaving a time gap after its predecessor. Nevertheless, the succession is unmitigated, so that the books of minutes of the Senate of the Duchy of Warsaw are continued long after 1815.

The succession, through renaming or transforming of an office, inclines the transfer of all the archives of the predecessor to the successor, or even—as we observed in the senate case—the partial or complete merger of both registries.

3. Liquidation by incorporation of the abolished office into another existing one. As an example, one can mention the higher agricultural school in Dublany near Lviv, which existed before the [First World—BN] war as an autonomous educational organization, but after the war lost its independent status and was transformed into the Department of Agriculture of the Lviv Technical University. The *fond* consisting of records of the Dublany school, if it survived the war, should be entirely incorporated into the registry of the Lviv Technical University.
4. Liquidation of several offices with a succession in favor of an existing or newly created one. In the period between 1869 and 1885, Administration of the Public Domain of the Congress Kingdom of Poland was divided among ten provincial Tax Chambers. In 1885, when the Regional Administration of the Public Domain Boards was created, the provincial bureaus were liquidated and incorporated into larger administrative units. In this way, for example, for four provinces of Radom, Kielce, Lublin, and Siedlce, a joint Regional Administration of the Public Domain Board was established in Radom.²⁵ Sometimes the issue is complicated by the fact that whole administrative units are not abolished, but rather their parts are. This was the case in the establishment of the Voivodeship of Białystok.²⁶ The voivodeship included the three former provinces of Łomża, Suwałki, and Grodno, thus the succession affected not the entirety of the provincial governments, but only their parts—the provincial boards.

In the fourth case, as in the previous three, full succession of the liquidated office in favor of the new administration follows all liquidation models. In all these cases, the integrity of the transferred archives is maintained, or at least should be. The archive of the Senate of the Duchy of Warsaw is incorporated as a whole into the archive of the Senate of the Congress Kingdom of Poland. The intact archive of the Siedlce Administration of the Public Domain Board can be incorporated into the archive of the Regional Administration of the Public Domain Board in Radom.

Often, the opposite occurs, when division becomes inevitable, when an abolished office is distributed among several successors, or when one or more offices is separated from an existing one.

Let us go back to the last example. The legacy of offices and archives of the particular territories constituting today's Voivodeship of Białystok were brought together, or at least should be brought together, at the expense of dividing closed administrative units, which were once the provincial governments, and are now their archives.

Translocations associated with the possible partition of the succession may occur twofold.

1. Liquidation along with the succession in favor of several existing or newly established offices. District Bukowski in Wielkopolska was divided after the [First World—BN] war into the two districts, Grodziski and Nowotomyski. Administration of the district in Buk was abolished. Its registry was dispersed among the successors.
2. The division of the new independent office or offices from the existing one. Examples can be drawn from the division of large administrative units, such as the reform of 1867, when the Congress Kingdom of Poland, due to purely political reasons, was divided into ten provinces instead of the usual five. The Łomża Province was separated from the Augustów Province; from the Warsaw Province, the Piotrków and Kalisz provinces were separated, and so on, establishing the new provincial authorities in Łomża, Piotrków, Kalisz, and Siedlce.

In such cases, not the liquidation, but rather—if one can say so—the birth of the new office causes the need for the division of the originating agency. To perform administrative functions for the assigned territory, the province government in Kielce had to recover the relevant records from Radom. In both cases, the succession could lead to the partition of the archives.

The partition of the archives is an issue almost as old as the archives themselves. It is the long-term phenomenon, the clash of the two currents, one of which guards the indivisibility and integrity of the archival *fond*. The second, assuming that the archives reflects the administration, demands the division of the archives along with the division of the administration.

Theoretically it was always possible to deal with this matter using this rule: "Archives are all kept by one of the successors (the main one), the others are provided with the right to access them," but this often remains a dead letter.²⁷ Once it did not have any meaning, each successor sought an opportunity to seize the records as fast as possible, knowing that gaining control is based on the principle that "the archives serves the one who owns it and keeps it." It was a certain solution, better than gaining a guarantee of access to the records stored elsewhere by the neighbor, who tomorrow may be a rival or simply an enemy.

The seemingly neutral issues, such as means of transportation, did not remain without influence [on the archives—BN]. One, who for the purpose of retrieving necessary records had to undergo a long, exhausting, and costly journey, learned to appreciate the value of the archives, hold onto them, and seize them eagerly from others.

This issue does not look better when it comes to international relations. The archives of all of the partitioned and despoiled territories were divided after each of the partitions of Poland. The Treaty of Riga in 1921 gave us back many of the records, but left some to the Russians. While the treaty includes the law guaranteeing that each side retains full access to the records, the trip to Moscow or Petersburg is still a great endeavor; and, second, just a slight tension between the two states can reduce the right to access the Polish archives in Moscow to zero. What our delegation in Moscow was not able to gather and bring back to the Polish archives, despite all treaties, will remain forever *in partibus infidelium* [in the regions of the infidels—BN].

While in the field of international relations, the partition of archives is, and probably will remain, the only way out of this situation, much in the field of internal state administrative relations in this matter has changed, compared to the past. State authorities do not act hostile toward each other as the feudal lords in the Middle Ages did. On the other hand, present-day means of transportation allow overcoming more than one obstacle, which would have been considered insurmountable a hundred years ago.

Both create conditions that make possible in a single country something that was once impossible in international relations; that is, for example, the implementation of the rule allowing access to archives without needing to divide them. “The archives are kept entirely by one of the successors, the others are provided with access to them.”

The establishment of this rule guarantees the indivisibility of the archival *fond*; at the same time, it satisfies the needs of the administration, which nowadays should not require so explicit a division of archives in relation to the division of offices.

The principle of indivisibility of the archival *fond*, that—if one can state this—the instinct of self-preservation of the archives, existing independently of all the transactions made with archives, relieves largely the consequences arising from the division of archives by the liquidation or the succession.

Not only do the divisions of the archival *fond* confuse the organization of archives. The very fact of successors inheriting the archives could become catastrophic, if one would draw from this fact consequences too far-reaching. Although the legacy of Emperor Charles V spread across half of the known old and new world, it did not occur to anybody to disturb the particular archival system of one of the subjected states and gather together all the Belgian,

Spanish, and Austrian archival *fonds* in one of the capitals of the monarchy on which the sun never set.

If the governments establishing authority over various Polish territories after the partition of the Polish Republic wanted to apply this principle to the full extent, it would lead to an absurdity. All of the archives from the Russian occupied territory would be found in Petersburg; from the Austrian occupied territory, in Vienna; from the Prussian occupied territory, in Berlin. The archives from the Russian occupied territory wandered however along the Neva [to Petersburg—BN], so that half of them would soon return [to Poland—BN], but the archives from Galicia and the Grand Duchy of Poznan did not leave their territories.

The reasons for this are clear. Each succession of a liquidated entity, whether it be the state system, or a small office, is, as mentioned above, a succession of rights and functions of this entity. While the rights are transferred to the main successor, functions are usually transferred to a local authority thereof.

After the fall of the uprising of 1830–1831, the independence of the Congress Kingdom of Poland was abolished. The constitutional rights were transferred to the central authorities in Petersburg, but the functions of the former central authorities of the kingdom, and so the whole administration of the country, fell to the local government, for example to the Administrative Council with the viceroy as a head, and the subjected offices.

This local government would not be able to carry out its duties without the archives, because they were needed to establish and perform the administrative functions acquired in the process of the succession.

Archives found outside the territory of origin with which they are organically connected lose their *raison d'être*, becoming an exotic creation, sometimes quite “dead.” This appeared during the evacuation [of the Polish archives—BN] from Russia, carried out by the Polish Delegation according to the Treaty of Riga.

An important new factor comes into play regarding the organization of archival life, namely, the relationship of the archives to the territory in which they were created and to which they relate.

The impact of this factor on the organization of the archives is inconsistent, both preservative and destructive. When dividing the archives is not an option, this geographical relationship acts rather preservative. It acts in two directions: in width and depth. In width, it acts in the strictly geographic sense ensuring that the Belgian, Austrian, or Spanish archives from the Charles V period remain in the right place, or—reducing the scale—records, let's say, from the magistrate of the city of Łowicz would not be found in Lublin. In depth, it acts to prevent the mixing of archives from regional authorities with the ones from central authorities.

The moment the division of records comes into play, the role of this territorial relationship is reversed. From preservative, it becomes destructive. From the moment in which the Bukowski District is divided into two new districts, Grodziski and Nowotomyski, both of these new administrative territories draw the archives to themselves with force that may be effective enough to divide the old archival *fond* [from the Bukowski District—BN].

From of all the above-mentioned characteristics of an archival *fond*, as a result of the administrative activities of an office, as we see, three most important features of the *fond* stand out:

- The office²⁸ relationship between the individual parts of the *fond*;
- The organic relationship with the office from which the *fond* derives;
- The geographical relationship with the territory to which the office relates.

These features are strictly intertwined with the concept of the archival *fond*; they result from its most essential content. Innate, internal, and thus permanent features, once subconscious, nowadays are extracted and analyzed by archival science. Features, let us say, are not always coherent. We observed how the relationship between an office and a *fond* opposes the registry principle; similar issues can occur with territorial pertinence.²⁹

The consolidation of all three features—determining the contradictions among them so they complement and serve each other rather than exclude and preventing the possible extremes of each system—is the cornerstone of the entire archival science.

With the resolution of the International Congress of Archivists and Librarians held in Brussels in 1910, Western archival science came up with the solution for this problem in a simple and expressive formula: “Each record in the archive should be put into the *fond*, and in that *fond* in a place, which it occupied when the *fond* was a registry of the living office.”

It is the so-called principle of provenance—*principe de provenance*.³⁰

It satisfies all three of the postulates mentioned above. The *fond* remains the indivisible heritage of the registry, by which it preserves the relationship between the office and the territory on which the office acted. If one can accuse the formula of anything, it is probably just that its simplicity makes it too absolute and stringent, so that it does not reveal any contradictions within its assumptions or any compromises by which these contradictions can be overcome. It presents the whole issue as a simple and plain thing, when in fact it is filled with serious difficulties at times.

Its name is also being questioned.³¹ The word “provenance,” from the Latin *provenire*, and French *provenir* and *provenance*, means origin. Therefore, the principle of provenance would be synonymous to the principle of origin. This may lead to a faulty understanding of the issue. The official letter sent from an office

to a private person originates, both a rough and final draft, from the office of the sender. On the other hand, according to the principle of provenance, the rough draft of that letter belongs to the sender, but the final draft to the recipient.

Let us move toward the private sphere. The letter of Mr. A sent to Mr. B originates from the office of Mr. A, but the final draft does not belong to the office of Mr. A, but to the office of Mr. B. The terms “origin” and “provenance” are not therefore synonymous. The first one determines the source from which the record originates, the second one the affiliation of the record to a certain office or registry. To avoid the confusion that emerges from identifying the meanings of the words “origin” and “provenance,” the phrase “the principle of provenance” should be replaced with the phrase “the registry principle” in Polish archival terminology.

The *fond* defined not as a product of office activities, but as an archival object gives an apparently different characteristic. There it was about the organization, the competence and the territorial limits of an office’s activities; here it is more about the precise purview of the office, about internal organization of the registry. This is therefore the history of the official activities, the registry, of an office, not the history of the office itself, as a whole.

While in medieval diplomatics the history of the office played a major role, in modern history and modern archival science the office is usually omitted; that is, wrongly omitted. This seemingly insubstantial and monotonous issue, in fact, is neither. It gives to the historian a key to understanding the substantial organization of the authorities, and to the archivist an opportunity to assess the records and resolve a whole series of riddles. Modern archival science cannot do without the creation of modern diplomatics.

The characteristics of the *fond*, as a product of the official activities and transactions of an office, led us to identify and establish the fundamental principles of archival science. Likewise, the characteristics of the *fond* as an archival object and therefore the analysis of its components of a record and evolution of its forms, of such issues as description of classification, inventorying and indexing should lead us to establish specific archival concepts and terms. There are more terms than principles; thus this task is incomparably complex, beyond this study, but important and urgent because in everyday practice, every archives creates different terminology, and with time these differences would be difficult to abolish. The differentiation of archival terminology will complicate setting down the working methods and principles even more.

Most of the practical problems pertain to archival science as a whole, not only in its modern aspect. Issues like replevin of the archives, accessibility of private archives for research, or documentary editing lie in the interest of the medievalists, as well as the researchers of the nineteenth century. One issue

connected directly with modern archival science, however, demands slightly wider comment. This issue is—the future of the archives, preparing the archives for a new role that awaits them in the near future.

Poland was in an exceptional situation. War and reestablishment of the Polish state created a chasm between the offices of the former occupation authorities and today's Polish state authorities so deep, that besides the spheres of property rights and long-term permissions, any communication between the old and the new authorities, at least in the Russian and Prussian partitions, cannot be established. One of the consequences of the revolution was the fact that, in the year 1918, the prewar and wartime registries were to be found in the state archives, in other words, records that in normal circumstances should wait for transfer to the archives for another several or several dozen years. Similarly, the sudden archiving of the registries happened in all of the countries that grew from the ruins of war, though not to the same degree as in Poland. The Czech Republic for example has undoubtedly to this day in its registries a significant number of prewar records. The war caused a radical upheaval in the central government, but not in the administration, which remained mostly unchanged in a general sense.

The consequence of this state of affairs is that nowadays relatively young registries do not have nor will have for a long time records that are ready to transfer to the archives. After receiving vast amounts of records from the prewar registries, archives are now capable of accepting accruals for the next dozen years. One can easily forget that this state is temporary and that the mass [of records created by the administration—BN] incomparably more powerful and dangerous than in the nineteenth and since the beginning of the twentieth century, will soon overwhelm the archives.

Twentieth-century archival science is in peril. Modern bureaucracy has rapidly undergone qualitative and quantitative changes. Gone will be the manuscripts along with their meaning when machine prints replace them. Much of the semi-official business will be absorbed by the phone. Extreme growth of state machinery and the ease in copying written text—typewriter or mimeograph machine—cause a flood of paper by enabling the multiplication rather than the duplication of an endless number of prints, each stored in a different registry needlessly increasing its volume; hence resulting in veritable “geological layers” of paper that will flood the archives with its shapeless mass. Jenkinson³² calculates that the records produced in England during the Great War surpass in terms of the overall volume all of the prewar archives. The tragic deliverance from this flood would be perhaps the fact that current records will disintegrate into ash long before they will reach the archives.

One must take the flood of records from the registries into account to be able to control this process, before it is too late. To control it qualitatively is now

very difficult, because the organization of current registries takes only the present into consideration, at best tomorrow, not caring about the future. One can, however, control it at least quantitatively by selecting seeds from the countless amount of chaff that registries usually contain. When, in 1921, the registry of the former Ministry of Provisioning was brought to the Archives of Historical Records, along with the proper records were boxes filled with unused ration cards and receipt books and so on.

Of course, controlling accruals does not reduce future accessions. The crucial point is, after all, increasing storage space in archives by building new storage facilities, or by weeding³³ the records stored in the archives.

Weeding of the records stored in the archives is a significant issue omitted by all methodological research. Although the International Congress of Archivists and Librarians held in Brussels in 1910 marked this issue as one to be solved during the proceedings, not a single paper was presented on this subject. Weeding, if it takes place at all in our archives, is done completely at random and arbitrarily. One more example taken from practice: the office of the head of the police in Warsaw had at the time a special department to deal with emigration agents marauding in the Congress Kingdom of Poland. Not many records of this department remained, but among them a large collection can be found, comprising several boxes of so-called American correspondence. These are letters from the emigrants to their families from the Congress Kingdom of Poland retained by the [Polish–BN] post. When the records of the head of the police in Warsaw were to be weeded, the management of the Archives of Historical Records leaned toward the destruction of this correspondence, forming a shapeless mass without any direct relation to the proper records. This decision was revoked at the last minute due to an outside suggestion that these letters could be used to write a monograph describing the life of our emigrants across the ocean.

Five years have passed since the decision was made, but despite some efforts from management to encourage research based on those letters, no one has undertaken it. Whether someone eventually will, no one knows. The massive correspondence, of course, will not be destroyed.

NOTES

¹ Papers by Stanisław Przelaskowski, "Schedule of Internal Work in Modern Archives," *Staff Information Circular No. 10* (Washington, D.C.: 1940) and Gustaw Kaleński, "Record Selection," *The American Archivist* 39, no. 1 (1976), translated into English.

² See also *Słownik Biograficzny Archiwistów Polskich*, vol. 1 (Warszawa–Łódź: 1988), 104–7.

³ [BN] See Walenty Skorochód Majewski, "Rzecz o archiwach," *Rocznik Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk*, vol. 8 (1813).

⁴ [BN] See Marcei Handelman, *Historyka* (Warsaw: 1928) and Stanisław Ptaszycki, *Encyklopedia nauk pomocniczych historii i literatury polskiej* (Lublin: 1922).

- ⁵ Muller, Feith, et Fruin, *Manuel Pour le Classement et la Description des Archives* (Haga: 1910), translation from Dutch.
- ⁶ [BN] The principle of maintaining the original order of records given by the office (registry) of the records creator. See *Polski słownik archiwalny*, ed. Wanda Maciejewska (Warsaw: 1974), 89.
- ⁷ [BN] Organically interrelated records, archived as a whole, created and accumulated by an organization, family, or individual. See *Polski słownik archiwalny*, ed. Maciejewska.
- ⁸ [BN] “Archive” has several meanings, 1. the institution/organization established for preserving, collecting, processing, storing and making records available, 2. the division within an organization/institution responsible for gathering, preserving, processing and maintaining the archival records, 3. building or premises housing archival *fonds* and collections, 4. *fond*, group of *fonds*, or collection created or received by a person, family, or organization in the conduct of their affairs. See *Polski słownik archiwalny*, ed. Maciejewska, 19.
- ⁹ [BN] “Registry” has several meanings, 1. the records of the creator necessary for conducting current business, 2. a division within an organization responsible for the recording, control, and maintenance of records, 3. a place where records are stored, 4. all of the records created as a result of creators activities. See *Polski słownik archiwalny*, ed. Maciejewska, 70.
- ¹⁰ [BN] The secretary of state of the Polish Kingdom (1815–1866) mediated between the central authorities in Poland and the Russian tsar.
- ¹¹ [BN] The Ministry of Provisioning was created in 1918 to provide supplies for the civilian population and the military, and also to regulate the relations between production, consumption, and trade of goods.
- ¹² I consider the term archival “holdings” used in the current nomenclature as inadequate. [In modern Polish archival science, the term “holdings” is understood as a sum of all the *fonds* and collections gathered in an archive—BN.] It simultaneously pertains to two different French terms, *fonds* and *collection*, thus blurring the difference between them. This difference is of great importance, and it is quite distinct from the point of view of archival science. Thus, I propose a division of this term, in the sense of using the word “holdings” for the term “collection” and the adaptation of the word “fonds” for a group of records. With reference to the above-mentioned characteristics of the term “archival *fond*,” the term “holdings” (collection) will then be used to describe records not deriving from the same registry/office but aggregated into a single entity due to their character (e.g., a collection of manuscripts), content (e.g., a collection of maps), or the manner in which they were created or made. Parts of a collection do not share any common internal characteristic except a certain analogy in each group. An archival collection has no fixed boundaries, one can separate some of its components or incorporate new ones in it. In this case, the value of the collection will differ, but the nature of its character will remain the same. A collection is finally an aggregation of records, which, like books in a library, can be rearranged according to various classification systems. In favor of this terminology are logical and linguistic considerations. Internal cohesion of the term “archival *fond*” corresponds to the linguistic meaning of this term, in contrast to the archival collection, which represents an aggregation of things.
- ¹³ [BN] The Administrative Council (1815–1867) was an advisory body of the viceroy, at the same time executive authority and a part of the State Council.
- ¹⁴ [BN] The Congress Kingdom of Poland was created in 1815 during the Congress of Vienna as a sovereign state consisting of the Russian partition of Poland, connected with the Russian Empire by personal union.
- ¹⁵ [BN] The November Uprising (1830–1831) was the Polish armed rebellion against the Russian Empire.
- ¹⁶ [BN] During the so-called Spring of Nations (1846–1848), several uprisings and rebellions occurred in partitioned Poland.
- ¹⁷ [BN] The military conflict (1853–1856) between Russia, Great Britain, France, and the Ottoman Empire.
- ¹⁸ [BN] The January Uprising (1863) was the Polish armed rebellion against the Russian Empire.
- ¹⁹ [BN] The acquisition of the records in the aftermath of assuming the position, role, or functions of a predecessor.

- ²⁰ [BN] The Government Committee of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment was established in 1815 as the education authority in the Congress Kingdom of Poland.
- ²¹ [BN] The Archives of Historical Records was established in 1867 in Warsaw to gather the records of the liquidated offices of the central authorities of the Duchy of Warsaw and Congress Kingdom of Poland.
- ²² [BN] The Archives of Public Education was established in 1915 in Warsaw to maintain the records of the former Russian Warsaw Education District.
- ²³ [BN] In March 1833, Colonel Józef Zaliwski unsuccessfully tried to initiate an uprising against the Russian authorities in the Congress Kingdom of Poland.
- ²⁴ [BN] The Permanent Committee of Inquiry of the Congress Kingdom of Poland (1833–1865) was a central investigative body for political affairs.
- ²⁵ [BN] The Regional Administration of the Public Domain Board was established in 1885 as one of three boards of this type in the Congress Kingdom of Poland. It was the second instance of the state agriculture and forestry authority.
- ²⁶ The Voivodeship of Białystok, an administrative unit of interwar Poland, was established in 1919, with a regional capital in Białystok. It was located in the mid-northern part of the Polish Republic. It incorporated counties from the former provinces of Łomża, Suwałki (both established in 1867) of the Congress Kingdom of Poland and from the Grodno province of the Russian Empire (established in 1796).
- ²⁷ [BN] A dead letter in the sense of a law or agreement that is no longer effective.
- ²⁸ [BN] The office means the organizational unit in the institution involved in receiving, registration, and distribution of incoming letters and sending outgoing letters, as well as storing the records of the institution. See *Polski słownik archiwalny*, ed. Maciejewska, 40.
- ²⁹ [BN] Territorial pertinence defines the need to retain the relationship between records and the territory from which they originate. See *Polski słownik archiwalny*, ed. Maciejewska, 89.
- ³⁰ Congrès de Bruxelles 1910, Actes publiés par J. Cuvelier et L. Stainers (Bruxelles: 1912), 633.
- ³¹ The paragraph starting with the words “The word provenance” is quoted to the end of the chapter almost verbatim from the paper of the former head of the Polish State Archives [Joseph] Paczkowski, PhD, titled “The Principle of Archival Provenance” presented at the IV Congress of Historians and Librarians in Poznań.
- ³² Hillary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration including the Problems of War Archives and Archive-meaning* (Oxford: 1922). This monograph is known to me only from the review published in the second volume of the “Archiwnoe Dielo” (1925), 176.
- ³³ [BN] Identifying, removing, and disposing of the records that do not have enduring value. See *Polski słownik archiwalny*, ed. Maciejewska, 23.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR AND EDITOR



Bartosz Nowożycki received an MA in history from the University of Warsaw in 2007 and a PhD in archival science from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun in 2016. He is senior specialist in the department of archival sciences at the state archives in Warsaw, Poland. Nowożycki was visiting archivist at the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America (2010–2011) and the Jozef Pilsudski Institute of America (2011–2016), both in New York. Nowożycki is author or co-author of eight books and over thirty articles. His research interests focus on modern history and archival theory and practice.