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1.) Universitäre Ausbildung für ArchivarInnen *Formation universitaire pour archivistes*

Archival Education vs. Archival Practice: will the Twain ever meet?

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val Education and Research



Introduction

The archival profession has gone through important changes during the last decades. Several developments have had a profound influence on archival work, archival orientation and archival theory. Now, if archival work itself is changing, this should directly influence archival education.

In this paper I will look at the way changes in the archival profession have brought about changes in archival education in the Netherlands.

Dutch archival education has a long tradition. The Dutch Archives School was founded in 1919 and has since then delivered new academic archivists to the profession year after year.

This paper will definitely not be a 'History of Dutch Archival Education'. It will focus on three important years in its most recent history – important because in those years arrangements were made which profoundly changed the outlook of archival education.

In discussing these moments, I will focus on three elements, which are important whenever professional education is at issue:

1. *developments within the profession and the development of the profession within the larger society*
2. *the educational program and the way it sets out to prepare future colleagues for the job*
3. *the mixture of formal teaching and archival practice within this program.*

N.B.: To prevent confusion I will focus on the archivist educated at university level.

I. 1968

In 1968 all seemed quiet on the archival front. Most archivists worked in public archives, devoted their time preferably to arrangement and description and to assisting qualified historians in their research.

Appraisal was considered a problem but everybody agreed that it had to take place before the records entered the public archives, so archivist's activities were limited to supervision.

In that year – following the new Archives Law – the arrangements on archival education were codified in a Royal Decision on Archives.

The most important aspects were:

1. Independence

In 1968 the school was made an independent institution within the Ministry of Culture under its own director. From then on, it was to be clear that the school was responsible for the preparation of all archivists in the public sector.

For the examination to get the archival diploma, an independent State Examination Committee was made responsible, functioning independently from the archives as well as from the school.

2. Regulation of theory and practice

The relative amount of theory and practice was arranged through the State examination. To be admitted to the examination the candidates had to have:

- a university degree in History or Law
- a statement from the director of an archival institution, that the candidate had been working in his archives for at least a full year
- a 'masterpiece', which was almost always an inventory

To get the diploma, the candidates went through an oral examination of several disciplines: archivistics, diplomatics, palaeography, institutional history, church history etc.

3. Formalisation of a teaching plan

Within these arrangements the Archives School was primarily responsible for preparing the students for their examination. So, during the practical year, students came to the Archives School approximately one day of the week. Lectures were given on the disciplines that were to be part of the examination. The minimum amount of lectures on the relevant disciplines was set in the Royal Decision.

II. 1995

In the eighties and early nineties of the twentieth century, these arrangements were increasingly considered to be outdated.

The aspects most relevant to the central questions are:

1. Changes in the archival profession

The most important influence on the archival profession in the last decades has been the revolution in information technology. At first, this impact was only felt in the institutions where the records were created, the *Registratur*, but it was gradually recognised as something that would greatly alter archival practice in general. A lot of the traditional ideas and definitions had to undergo serious rethinking. Archivists began to realise that the challenges to records management were essentially *archival* challenges, and that archivists and records managers had to solve them together.

2. The educational program

The teaching program of 1968 did not offer enough possibilities to adapt itself to this new situation. The program only had to meet the demands of the Examination Committee and, therefore, remained very strongly focussed on public archives in general and on the archives of the Ancien Régime in particular.

There was another serious flaw in the program: there was too little archivistics in it. The lectures were on all the disciplines of the examination program, so archivistics covered only one-third of the program. This system produced archivists who were prepared for traditional circumstances and a preference for practical problems and solutions. Archival theory was in very low esteem – and interest in archival theory was needed to face the challenges of the IT-revolution.

3. Theory and practice within the educational program

The 1968 arrangements may look like a happy mixture of theory and practice, but, at least formally, there is a link between education and examination (learning the disciplines) and another link between practi-

cal work and examination (acquiring the prerequisites). And if there developed a link between education and practice over the years, it were the archival institutions who dictated this relation. They decided what work the students had to do over the year.

In fact, what became clear was, that most of the archival institutions wanted to make the students familiar with the existing practice, and preferably local practice, whereas over the years the need for a change in archival practice became more and more apparent.

This all led to revolutionary change in 1995, which fundamentally altered Dutch archival education. What were the main aspects?

1. Complete independence

The Archives School was made a private foundation, only related to the Culture Department through subsidies and agreements on output. Even more important: the school was made responsible for the whole of the educational process: the Examination Committee was abolished, including all its demands and regulations (the disciplines to be examined, the inventory, the practical year).

2. Cooperation

This independence was possible because the Archives School 'entered' the university. It signed an agreement of cooperation with the University of Amsterdam, in

which the Archives School was to be responsible for the quality of the archival courses. The rest of the educational process was to be the university's responsibility. Furthermore, it was agreed that archival science was to become a specialisation within the study of Information science.

3. Learning plan: theory and practice

Because of this cooperation with the university, the Archives School had to adapt its traditional program to Dutch university regulations and practice. To name a few:

- Dutch university education is not supposed to prepare students for a specific oc-

Publireportage

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Nous sommes donc tout à fait sérieux lorsque nous déclarons que nos aménagements de bibliothèques reposent sur des connaissances aux assises solides.

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cupation, but for a professional field. The school opted for the Australian model of the 'records continuum', and claimed to prepare students for an occupation in the whole field of what we came to call 'process-bound' information.

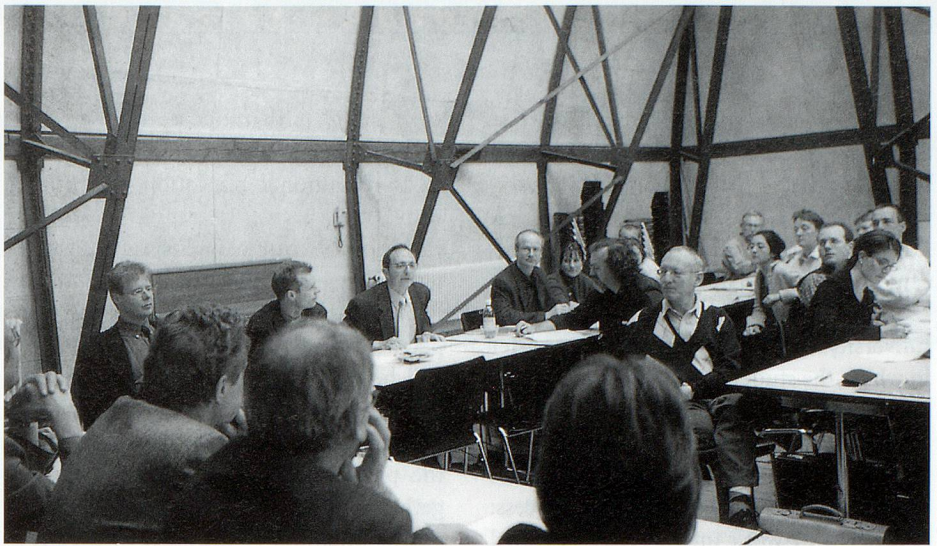
- Most Dutch universities have a distrust in practical work. Therefore, there was to be no practical experience whatsoever in the educational program.
- University education keeps up with modern educational developments. Modern education has made a shift from teacher-oriented to student-oriented learning. Dutch archival educators had to learn to formulate learning goals – instead of teaching goals. They learned how to reckon in hours that the student was occupied with the study for the module – instead of the number they themselves were teaching.

So, to sum up the main results of this revolution:

- Archival education ceased to be a one-year, post-university training; it entered the university as an autonomous discipline.
- It was to work closely together with information science; information science was to provide the larger context in which archival science had to develop.
- Its archival scope was broadened to include the whole life cycle of archives.
- It was cut loose from archival practice, manifesting the need for academic reflection.
- It manifested its educational function in adapting itself to modern didactics.

III. 2002

In the years following these arrangements the Archives School came to realize the payoffs as well as the pitfalls of the revolution of 1995.



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Foto: zvg

1. The profession

Although there is in the field increasing cooperation between professionals within the 'records continuum', many archivists are still holding to tradition, focussing on their own role within the life-cycle and, therefore, complaining about the insufficient archival education of their younger colleagues. Even for more 'modern' colleagues the cooperation with information studies was sometimes considered a bridge too far.

2. The link between education and practice

The fact, that there was no link at all between education and practice, made for some criticism as well. Public archives as well as the students themselves were complaining from time to time about the too theoretical approach.

3. Educational practice

The new educational setting proved to be a healthy development: the quality of archival education improved greatly, compared to the 'old' system. However, there was an important setback, and that was integration.

One of the main strategic goals for signing the agreement of cooperation was

the integration between archival and information science. This proved to be a process that needs more time than we had thought: both disciplines have a long tradition, because of which the integration of these disciplines will not be realized over night.

The Archives School has tried to overcome these setbacks in 2001/2002.

The occasion arose when the Ministers of the European Union agreed to implement the same structure of higher education in all the participating countries: the bachelor-master-structure.



The Archives School has used this departmental dictate to realize its own goals.

These were:

1. Give an impetus to the integration process

The need to increase the number of students at bachelor level has led to the creation of a bachelor in documentary information science in which archival science is fully integrated. Since 2000, a team of information scientists and archival scientists has been working closely together to develop the modules of the bachelor program.

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2. Re-establish a link with archival practice

Following this bachelor, we have obtained a master program in archival science. In developing this master, we took 'dualism' as a leading concept. After a first semester in which the functioning of record keeping processes is studied at the university, there will be a second semester in which the students will work in a record keeping institution (archives or archives-creating institutions or companies).

During this semester, however, the master program controls the learning process: students will work on three well-defined projects, will be coached by the archival educator and will regularly have workshops at the university.

The third semester will be devoted to evaluation and reflection of the first year and to the preparation of a thesis.

3. Develop a really student-oriented learning program

The implementation of the bachelor-master-structure has been used to make a transition from education based on disciplines, on 'Fächer', to education based on competencies. This is a very important shift.

Traditionally, an educational program is created by abstracting from the professional work those disciplines that are felt most useful to the professional; in our case: arrangement and description, archival management, archival law, archival history, auxiliary sciences, history of institutions etc.etc. At school these disciplines are taught as thoroughly as possible.

Competency-based education breaches with this tradition and goes back to the roots: what makes an archival professional a competent archival professional? Generally, this is the case when the professional is able to fulfil the tasks within his job efficiently and effectively.

So, in this new approach the focus is on the main professional problems/tasks instead of on disciplines. The disciplines are regarded as part of the resources needed to solve the problem. The most important thing students should learn is to analyse the problem and recognize what resources they should use and master to solve the problem.

It is evident that this approach will fundamentally change the role of the teacher:

In traditional education as outlined above, the teacher is responsible for the whole of the educational process: the content of the educational unit (the module), the teaching and the assessment. In a competency-based environment, the teacher will be cooperating in a learning process having his own specific responsibility:

The teacher will take part in preparing the professional problem (preferably together with 'real' practitioners) especially paying attention to the place of the problem in the learning process.

The teacher will coach the student in solving the problem (looking after – and watching over – the intellectual level to be achieved, offering suggestions to solutions, providing the way to the necessary content information etc.)

The teacher will take part in the assessment (assessing not only how 'good' the student has solved the problem, but also how the student has managed the input of resources and how the student communicates his/her solution to the contractor).

Interestingly, this development constitutes another way of 'bringing practice back into archival education'.

Conclusion

The process that Dutch archival education has gone through in recent decades allows for the following concluding remarks:

1. The profession

The transition from an industrial society to an information society is fundamentally changing the position and function of the archivist. The archivist will become a sub-professional within the larger body of information professionals, being responsible for information of a specific and very valuable nature. This is a broader context that almost none of us is acquainted with, but, as educators, we will have to pay attention to it. It goes well beyond teaching students the tricks and techniques of Information technology.

2. The link between education and professional practice

In this situation, the part of practice in education is ambivalent: will it help or hin-

der the confrontation with a changing profession? In Dutch archival education we started with a practice-controlled education – which did not work – and changed it into an university-controlled system with no practice whatsoever. Professional education at this level has to pay attention to practice, but not as such; it has to be: education-controlled practice. Practice should not be regarded as 'the place where you learn how to do it', but as a field of research, a confrontation with theories or a possibility for comparative analysis.

3. Learning program and didactics

In developing an educational program for archivists, one has the heavy responsibility not to create an archivist in one's own image and liking but to create the archivist of a future society.

Modern didactical developments fortunately make this task a little easier. The shift from learning goals to competencies, from discipline-oriented to problem-oriented education, from teaching to coaching will in the end produce a professional who undoubtedly knows a lot less than we, colleagues from an earlier generation in the field, do.

However, these new colleagues will have some advantages:

- They are very much aware that they do not know everything, which means: they are aware of the necessity of permanent education.
- They are used to approach problems, to analyse them, to find out what knowledge or abilities they need to solve these problems.
- They are looking at archival science not as an auxiliary science of history, but as a science in its own right within the larger field of information sciences. ■

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