REVIEW

from

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Regarding: the public defense of a dissertation work for the acquisition of the scientific and educational degree "doctor" in a professional direction 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Book studies, library studies and bibliography - Digitization of cultural heritage) on the topic: "Electronic archiving - challenges facing the archive system in Bulgaria" with author Orlin Lybenov Iliev

Applicant data

Orlin Iliev has a BA in History (2001-2005) and a MA in "Archives and Museums. Preservation of cultural heritage in the information society" (2013-2014) at the Southwest University "Neofit Rilski". He also graduated from the Law specialty at the Southwest University "Neofit Rilski" (2008-2012).

Orlin Iliev's work experience in the system of the Bulgarian archives began in 2006 in the Sofia State Archives, initially as a junior specialist, then as a senior expert and chief expert in three of the archive's departments, thus gaining experience and qualifications in all basic archival processes and activities. Since 2012, he has been the chief expert in the Digitization Department of the Archives State Agency, and from 2014 to the present, he is the head of this department.

He received an additional qualification for archives in modern society at the International Institute of Archival Studies in Trieste and Maribor (2011). In 2020, he completed a course "Recordkeeping Toolkit for Good Governance" at the International Council of Archives (PARBICA).

Description of the candidate's scientific works

For the purposes of this competition, candidate Orlin Iliev submitted 7 articles published in the period from 2012 to 2024 (one is in print, and the earliest is co-authored). All articles are related to the topic of the dissertation and concern the issues of electronic archiving in the

Bulgarian archival system. They trace the application of new technologies in archives in a historical aspect and outline future trends. The transition from machine-readable to electronic documents is especially highlighted.

Evaluation of the candidate's scientific results and contributions

The dissertation is dedicated to the current and unexplored topic of electronic archiving in the Bulgarian archives. The topic is important not only for the state archives, but also for the overall state management (in administration, business). The topic is current and is at the center of research interests and of foreign archival institutions.

The subject of the dissertation research is the Archives State Agency and its experience in building a model for electronic archiving in the country. The subject of research is reduced to the construction of information systems, digital archive and electronic archiving for the management of electronic documents. The main goal of Orlin Iliev's dissertation is to present a model for electronic archiving of valuable electronic documents in the Bulgarian archives.

For the realization of the main goal, eight tasks have been formulated, which in summary come down to a study of the bibliography; tracking the introduction of automation and the construction of information resources in the archive system; multifaceted presentation of electronic archiving and digitization based on Bulgarian and foreign experience, with the help of surveys and online research.

The main text of the dissertation (183 standard pages) is structured in an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. Additionally, a list of sources used and seven appendices are included.

The first chapter is entitled "History and contemporary development of archives in Bulgaria". The relatively short and introductory historical part in it is based mainly on the Methodical Code of 2013 and on the documents from the archive fund of the Central Directorate of Archives. The fact that other historiographic studies on the history of archives were not attracted is probably due to the introductory nature of the chapter and the short format that Orlin Iliev focused on.

In the modern development of the Bulgarian archives, three important highlights are highlighted, which are separated into three separate paragraphs: Automation of archival processes; Information system of the state archives and Digital archive.

The merit of the work is the follow-up of the more than 40-year long process of introducing the automated systems in the Bulgarian archives. The information products created for the archives - Information System of the Archives, Automated Information System of the Archives, Information System of the State Archives and National Electronic Register of Archives - were subjected to a critical analysis. The digitization activity and the construction of the Digital Archive of the Archives State Agency were also analyzed. Based on the published reports on the activity of the Bulgarian archives, user interests and the effectiveness of the implemented information systems were established and analyzed.

In the second chapter, Orlin Iliev presents in historical terms the normative provision of electronic management and the related electronic archiving. Or in other words, if the first chapter traces the automation in the Bulgarian archives, here it is logically searched for its connection with the central administration.

The review begins with the earliest regulations of the 1970s, with which the state initiated the identification of natural persons and the recording of their data on technical media so that they could be processed by computing machines. In the 1990s, the Information Society as a qualitatively new structure, organization and public relations, with global access and use of information and communication networks and services without national, geographical or other restrictions on information exchange, was already a fact. The change related to the legal validity of electronic documents and the adoption of the Electronic Document and Electronic Signature Law of 2001 and the Law on Administrative Services of Individuals and Legal Entities and the Government Program for the Development and Implementation of Information Technologies until 2005 are noted.

The steps to build the unified model of document circulation and the mandatory acceptance of electronically signed documents in 2004, as well as the subsequent whole series of regulations for electronic management, have been followed.

A place is also devoted to modern strategies for electronic governance in the country until 2015; for the period 2014-2020 and a sectoral strategy for electronic governance in the field of electronic archiving and electronic archiving of documents 2024-2030 and the national program "Digital Bulgaria 2025".

Based on the analysis, Orlin Iliev assesses e-governance as operational, without being effective mainly due to the lack of an electronic archiving model.

The third chapter occupies a central place in the dissertation and examines electronic archiving as a natural result of the development of the archival work and the needs of the central administration in Bulgaria.

At the beginning, a comparative analysis of the electronic documents was carried out. Considering that electronic documents are still under-researched in Bulgarian document studies, the author's thesis of Orlin Iliev can be accepted as another merit of the dissertation work.

The strategic documents of the Archives State Agency, incl. and the still unapproved draft of the Ordinance on the order of organization, processing, expertise, storage and use of documents in the institutional archives of state and municipal institutions (2023). The conclusion of the doctoral student is that the lack of a comprehensive strategy for all processes of organizing the long-term storage and transfer of electronic documents to the state archives puts electronic archiving at serious risk. The absence of a legal definition of an electronic archive and electronic archiving of documents is identified as the most significant gap in the current regulations.

A special place in the dissertation is occupied by the Electronic Archiving System of the Archives State Agency, through which from 2023 access to the Digital Archive of the DAA (digitized audiovisual documents) will be provided. In the future, it will also provide access to electronic documents from state and municipal institutions, as it provides for the transfer by the institutions of valuable and subject to preservation electronic documents.

Orlin Iliev conducts a comparative analysis of electronic documents and documents that do not have a paper counterpart based on a survey that was sent to the EU countries and to the public administration in Bulgaria. In Bulgarian conditions, unlike foreign archives, no data storage center has been built, but only the original array is kept, which does not even have an insurance copy. The practices of foreign archives stipulate that, along with the originals, working arrays and reserve arrays are kept. Another conclusion is related to the 20-year storage period for all electronically created documents, which, in addition to making it difficult to store them institutionally, is not in line with archival requirements.

The doctoral student's research seeks an answer to the complex question of long-term storage and preservation of information in electronic format. Orlin Iliev's well-founded thesis is that for electronic documents, the tasks of archivists begin from the moment of their creation. Expertise and selection must be integrated into the document creation process itself. The value of the information must be determined before the creation of the information objects. According to him, the Bulgarian archivists would be successful only if there is coordination of efforts and interaction with a number of other institutions and especially with the Ministry of Electronic Government, the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, etc.

Another important emphasis in the dissertation is related to the changes that occur in the profession of the archivist under the pressure of technological changes. As one of the contemporary tasks of archivists, the doctoral student successfully defines their function to assist users with knowledge of searching and retrieving archival information.

The last chapter is dedicated to the electronic services offered by the Bulgarian archives. Here, the professional competence of the doctoral student, who has been working for years in the "Digitization" department of the Bulgarian archives, is even more evident. The initial electronic services were introduced in 2012, followed by the introduction Information System of the State Archives in 2013, which sharply reduced the number of visits to the reading rooms and the number of copies of archival documents. Over time, the use of digital objects has progressively increased to reach nearly 60,000 views in 2023.

Orlin Iliev pays special attention to the "Archives Speak" platform, which includes topical topics or personalities of greatest interest to users - "People's Court", "Minutes of meetings and Decisions of the Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist Party for the period 1944-1989." "Konstantin Stoilov (1853-1901)" etc. The "Photo archive" site from the platform with more than 40,000 photo documents from archives in the country, which for the first time offers free access and online ordering of digital copies by users, has not been left out.

The conclusion of the dissertation summarizes the main conclusions reached by the author in the course of the research. A good impression is also made by the doctoral student's self-assessment of the contributions that the dissertation contains.

In its entirety, the dissertation work has achieved the goals and tasks it set for itself. The text is factually dense and testifies to the good and thorough research and knowledge of the researched topic by the doctoral student. The sources used are 173 and with a scope that covers

the researched issues. However, a significant part of the references to the published sources do not refer to the author's theses, and through them Orlin Iliev rather registers the cited author's research interest in the relevant issue. Another recommendation I would make is related to the applications, which undoubtedly increase the informativeness of the work, but the lack of comment on them isolates and in a certain sense marginalizes them. I could not miss the relatively few technical errors in the design of the dissertation work, including the wrong names of authors - Ashot Matinyan, Klavdia Rudelson, Vladimira Tsankova, etc. References to Wikipedia are allowed even for clarifications related to the International Standard Archival Description (ISAD - G). (pp. 36, 38, 43).

The mentioned recommendations do not belittle the merits and contributions of Orlin Iliev's dissertation.

The abstract correctly reflects the structure, main conclusions and contributions of the dissertation.

Conclusion

The dissertation has all the qualities of a serious and in-depth scientific study and meets the minimum requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the relevant regulations of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". In Orlin Iliev's dissertation, there are original scientific and applied contributions and no plagiarism is noticed. The work is evidence that Orlin Iliev possesses in-depth knowledge and professional skills in professional direction 3.5. Public communications and information sciences (Book studies, library studies, bibliography - Digitization of cultural heritage). For the current competition, Orlin Iliev has fulfilled the minimum national requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

All of the above gives me reason to express my positive assessment of the scientific research conducted in the dissertation "Electronic Archiving - Challenges to the Archive System in Bulgaria". I propose that the respected scientific jury award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Orlin Lybenov Iliev.

April 3, 2024

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariyana Piskova