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DOCUMENT PRESERVATION POLICY IN RUSSIAN IMPERIAL UNIVERSITIES

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DOCUMENT PRESERVATION POLICY IN RUSSIAN IMPERIAL UNIVERSITIES²

This article is a reconstruction of archival policies pursued by Russian universities in the nineteenth century and their effects. By comparing ‘old’ and ‘new’ archive inventories, archivists’ records and ministerial instructions, Elena Vishlenkova detects sets of documents that were destroyed in the ministerial and university archives. Furthermore, the author explains the logic of keeping certain types of documents and assigning them specific addresses within the archives. The study explains the contradictions that exist in the source evidence as well as in researchers’ conclusions, and presents hitherto unknown aspects of the university culture in the Russian Empire.

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An impressive amount of administration documents is deposited in Russia's university archives. The Kazan University Archive, for instance, contains more than 110,000 files from 1802-1917, each of them being a collection of thematically related texts³. The archive fonds of Moscow University for the period between 1796 and 1917 consists of 211,904 files⁴. As a researcher of the university culture of the first half of the nineteenth century, I focus primarily on finding out what documents from the universities of Moscow, Kazan and Kharkov for the period between 1804 and 1863 are extant and where they are kept.

As a rule, historians regard university archives as standardized, non-discursive deposits of testimonies of the past, with documents stored in the archives of individual universities being identical in terms of form, character and information value. Researchers surmise that information related to the universities' past is distributed as follows: evidence of the government's educational intentions, traces of law-making efforts, reports and inquiries of universities are believed to be kept in the archive of the Ministry of Public Education, while in regional university archives a researcher expects to find projects and results of routine educational or research work and traces of standard university management practices.

The reality, however, is much more complicated. To begin with, the universities of the Russian Empire had different life trajectories, leaving different gaps in their record keeping. For example, as a result of the fire of 1812, the Moscow University archive holds very few documents from the years between 1796 and 1812. Kazan University lost part of its documents of the 1830's in a fire in 1842⁵. The archive of the Imperial University of Kharkov was destroyed almost completely during the Second World War.

Second, university archives differ from each other as to their organization and structure. For example, documents of the Kazan University Censorship Committee are stored among other university papers at the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books of the Research Library of Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University. In Moscow, the documents of the university censorship committee merged into the archive of Moscow Press Committee under the Ministry of the Interior (CIAM Fonds 31). In the archives of the University of Kazan, documents of the Construction Committee are kept in a separate fonds, while in Moscow no such fonds exist.

Third, university archives contain records of diverse nature and volume, including even contradictory evidence. For example, reports of Moscow University from the 1840-1850's that are stored in the archives of the Ministry of Public Education indicate a progress of research

³ NA RT. File of fonds № 977. Fol. 33.

⁴ Vakarinčeva A. Predislovie k fondu 418 «Moskovskij universitet» v TSIAM (manuscript).

⁵ NA RT. Fonds 977. Inv. Pravlénie. File 5091. Fol. 2.

activity, professionalization and specialization processes, whereas reports of Kazan and Kharkov universities from the same years bear evidence of stagnating scientific activity, lack of research interests and erosion of professional standards.

Fourth, the archive of the Ministry of Public Education would fall short of the hopes of a researcher expecting to find there reports that reflect *all* sides of university life. For example, neither doctoral theses nor papers concerning graduations are stored in this archive, although all universities did send such documents to St. Petersburg⁶.

Most researchers have relied on evidence from one archive (that of a certain university) or two archives (university and Ministry of Public Education). Thus they barely had a chance to notice contradictory evidence in the sources from various universities and explain the conflicting versions of the past that exist in historiography. Furthermore, historians of Russian universities who focused on local sources were unable to tackle issues similar to those raised by historians of Western universities, such as the rituals of the doctoral thesis defense or the changing criteria and modalities of scientific expert assessment⁷. Researchers simply did not think that Russian university archives contained relevant documents such as examination sheets with questions, answers and comments of examiners, petitions concerning research themes and intentions to go up for a degree, opponents' reviews of doctoral theses, manuscripts and abstracts of dissertations, and minutes of their discussion⁸.

These problems and the historiographic drawbacks they cause result, on the one hand, from the formation history of Russian university archives, on the other hand, from researchers' ignorance about the nineteenth century document preservation policy.

The purpose of this paper is to reconstruct the main lines of the archival policy – or, rather, archival policies – that determined what sets of documents would survive. For this end, the following archives were surveyed: (1) the Fonds of Moscow University in the Central Historical Archive of Moscow (TSIAM), (2) the Department of Written Sources of the State Historical Museum, in which personal archives of Moscow professors are kept, (3) the Fonds of the Department of Education in the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), (4) the Fonds of the University of Kazan in the National Archives of the Republic of Tatarstan (NA RT), and (5) the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, Research Library of the Kazan (Volga region) Federal University (ORRK NB KFU), which holds part of the Kazan University archive and

⁶ Cirkuljarnoe predlozhenie otnositel'no prisylki dissertacii na uchenye stepeni, 17 marta 1836 g. // Sbornik rasporyzhenij po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshhenija. T. 2 (1835-1849). SPb., 1866. Stb. 111.

⁷ Cf. Sanders T. *The Third Opponent: Dissertation Defenses and the Public Profile of Academic History in Late Imperial Russia* // *Historiography of Imperial Russia: The Profession and Writing of History in a Multinational State* /Ed. By T. Sanders. Armonk, 1999. P.69-97; Examen, Titel, Promotionen: akademisches und staatliches Qualifikationswesen vom 13. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert. / Hb. Schwingers R.C. Basel, 2007.

⁸ Ivanov A.E. *Uchjonye stepeni v Rossijskoj imperii. HVIII v. – 1917 g. M.: IRI RAN, 1994; Alevras N.N., Grishina N.V. Dissertacionnaja kul'tura rossijskich istorikov XIX – nachala XX vv.: zamysel i istochniki issledovatel'skogo proekta* // *Mir istorika. Istoriograficeskij sbornik* / pod red. V.P. Korzun, A.V. Jakuba. Vyp.6. Omsk: izd-vo Om. Gos. Un-ta, 2010. S. 17.

private archives of Kazan professors. An analysis of these archival collections demonstrates the different effects that resulted from the archival policies pursued by the government and by individual university employees in Moscow and Kazan.

Collecting and organizing documents

The obligation to keep archives was imposed on Russian universities by the government together with the statute of 1804⁹. By then, Moscow University had existed for fifty years already and its staff was experienced in paperwork and document storage. They followed the collegia rules. Every secretary of the university conference (later on, the council) knew that proceedings should be entered in the minutes and result in log records, or that prescriptions received from the ministry should be kept as well as copies of answers to them. Professors who had been sent to Kazan University, however, found it difficult to make sure that such documents were properly written, circulated and stored. The university had no building of its own and no experience of paperwork. Up until the ‘full opening’ of the University of Kazan in 1814, all the paperwork of its council was carried out together with that of the local secondary school and, therefore, it is now stored in fonds of the latter.

According to the statute, it was one of the university’s full professors acting as the council secretary who, assisted by an archivist, was in charge of setting up and maintaining the archive. This professor was to select documents for storage, that is, to read and sign the completed files in the Council and Board Office, to make an inventory of their contents, and then pass the bunch of documents to the archivist. The inventory was set up not for the documents to be directed at proper addresses but for the authorities to know what was there in the archive. That is why the inventories remained in the office and only few of them have survived. The archivist took the twine-tied stacks of papers to the archive room where he kept then them protected against mice and fire.

Within the first ten years of the university's operation, large paper heaps emerged in its archive, with huge bunches of single sheets, accountant’s books and bound books, correspondence books, and minute registration books lying there intermingled. Searching for a document was rarely successful but increased the confusion ever more. When answering letters from the Ministry of Public Education, university council members often proved to know neither where certain documents of past years were stored nor whether they were stored at all. This caused officials’ irritation.

⁹ Ustavy Imperatorskih Moskovskogo, Har'kovskogo, Kazanskogo universitetov, 5 nojabrja 1804 // Sbornik postanovlenij po ministerstvu narodnoj prosveshhenija. T. 1. Tsarstvovanie imperatora Aleksandra I. 1802-1825. SPb, 1864. №. 47. Stb. 279.

It seems that in the first two decades of the nineteenth century it was the curators of educational districts who were most of all interested in setting up university archives. Managing their districts without leaving St. Petersburg, documents were their only way to learn anything about the object of their management. However, the curators' interest in the university archives was an extremely utilitarian one. M. Magnitsky, for example, was convinced that the professorial council's papers should be sorted out, keeping only the documents that bore evidence of the renewed Kazan University's 'flourishing'. The archive of the curator's office, by contrast, should be as complete as possible and systematic so that any (especially negative) evidence could be found in it at any moment. Later on, this administrative tactics played Old Harry with Magnitsky himself, as government auditors' charges against him were based on the documents from his office¹⁰.

Such a primitive archiving system existed in universities until the end of the 1820's, when an archive reform began in the Russian Empire, stimulated by the investigation process against the Decembrists. Faced with the impossibility to get the necessary information due to the lack of a document storage and file addressing system in the departmental archives, the emperor ordered to "sort out papers"¹¹.

This resulted in decrees on the establishing of new state archives, which included the Archive of the Caucasian Regional Government Bodies (Administration, Regional Department of Finance and Chancery)¹², the General Control Archive¹³, and the Archive of the former Lithuanian Tribunal¹⁴. A series of decrees dealt with the archives of abolished agencies¹⁵. At the same time, a systematization of documents and a storage system reform were initiated in the archives of the Admiralty¹⁶, in the State Archive and the Senate Archive¹⁷.

In the Ministry of Public Education, the reform started with the archive of the Department of People's Education. Stacks were installed in the archive rooms and cardboard folders were bought. Head of the archive V.P. Petrov spent several years filling these folders

¹⁰ NA RT. Fonds 92. Inv. 1. File 2393. Fol. 13-14.

¹¹ Vysochajshe utverzhdennoe predvaritel'noe obrazovanie Dezhurstva Morskago Ministerstva, 26 janvarja 1827 // Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii [Sobranie Vtoroe]. T. 2. SPb, 1830. № 839. S. 45-54; Vysochajshe utverzhdennyj Ustav Kabineta Ego Imperatorskago Velichestva, 27 sentjabrja 1827 // Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii [Sobranie Vtoroe]. T. 2. SPb, 1830. № 1408. S. 827.

¹² Vysochajshe utverzhdennoe uchrezhdenie dlja upravlenija Kavkazskoj oblasti, 6 fevralja 1827 // Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii [Sobranie Vtoroe]. T. 2. SPb, 1830. № 878. S. 113, 114, 130-131.

¹³ Ob ustrojstve obshhago kontrol'nago Arhiva, 22 sentjabrja 1828 // Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii [Sobranie Vtoroe]. T. 3. SPb, 1830. № 2299. S. 841-842.

¹⁴ Ob opredelenii bezsmennogo arhivariusa k hraneniju aktov byvshago Litovskogo Tribunala, 26 fevralja 1827 // Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii [Sobranie Vtoroe]. T. 2. SPb, 1830. № 924. S. 201-202.

¹⁵ O zakrytii Komiteta, uchrezhdennago dlja izsledovanija zloupotreblenij v postavke lesov dlja korablestroenija, 23 aprilja 1828 // Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii [Sobranie Vtoroe]. T. 3. SPb, 1830. № 1984. S. 491; O uprazhdenii Departamenta Kamer-kollegii i Arhiva onago, 28 sentjabrja 1828 // Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii [Sobranie Vtoroe]. T. 3. SPb, 1830. № 2307. S. 847.

¹⁶ Uchrezhdenie Komissii dlja privedenija v porjadok del Admiraltejskago arhiva, 3 aprilja 1827. Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii [Sobranie Vtoroe]. T. 2. SPb, 1830. № 1011. S. 337.

¹⁷ Ob uchrezhdenii Vremennoj Komissii dlja razbora del Gosudarstvennogo i Senatskogo Arhivov, 21 marta 1830 // Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii [Sobranie Vtoroe]. T. 5. SPb, 1831. № 3550. S. 231.

with documents sorted by themes, titling them and placing them on shelves in accordance with the current structure of the Ministry, its departments and educational districts¹⁸. After that, inventories were set up, in which each file's number and location were specified. Years later, Petrov claimed that thanks to his system the ministry began to rely on archival inquiries and to include historical arguments in its decisions.

After Sergei Uvarov took office as minister of public education, he ordered to marshal papers in university archives. In Kazan, it was archivist A.S. Dobrosmyslov who did this job¹⁹. He served in this position for fifty years and regarded the archive as his own 'offspring'²⁰. However, he was not the first to sort out the university's papers. Prior to him, a commission of professors had been working on it by the curator's order²¹, trying to make old documents available for use. As a result of their efforts, the Kazan university archive in the 1830's was organized in accordance with the institutional structure of the university itself which consisted of the Council, the Board, the Construction Committee, the School Committee, the Censorship Committee, the Rector's office, the Faculties, and the Student Inspector. The archives of former curators, which until then had been part of the ministerial archives, were now merged with the university archive. Within each collection, documents were kept in folders in accordance with the bureaucratic principle of each file having to do with a certain event or person. According to the report of 1849, the archive's structure had become more complex: it consisted now of 21 fonds and included 37,198 files²².

The Moscow University archive was less fortunate. Archivists were coming and going frequently and did not seem to be interested in creating a convenient document storage and retrieval system. But then again, the amount of documents Moscow University had to manage during the first two decades after the fire of 1812 was not much bigger than at the newer universities in Kazan and Kharkov. All documents were divided into three fonds: the Administration, the School Committee and the Accounting. The Administration fonds was the largest. It contained completed files from four departments: 'Board 1', that was in charge of all issues concerning the students; 'Board 2', in charge of household issues; 'Board 3', in charge of the printing shop, the anatomical study, the hospital and the pharmacy; 'Board 4', whose function was to collect information about the schools of Moscow educational district²³. According to the report of 1834, the archive of Moscow University was keeping 35,460 files

¹⁸ RGIA. Fonds 745. Inv. 1. File 107. Fol. 1-1 v.

¹⁹ NA RT. Fonds 92. Inv. 1. File 2539. Fol. 1-18 v.

²⁰ Vishlenkova E., Ilina K. University Archivists as a Corporate Memory Agents in Nineteen-Century Russia// "Humanities" (WP BRP 12/Hum/2012) National Research University Higher School of Economics. 2012. 14 p. URL: <http://www.hse.ru/data/2012/12/21/1303559860/12HUM2012.pdf> (last accessed: 11.05.2013).

²¹ NA RT. Fonds 92. Inv. 1. File 3412.

²² RGIA. Fonds 733. Inv. 95. File 592. Fol. 210 v-214.

²³ TSIAM. Fonds 418. Inv. 2. File 234. Fol. 8 v.

which, as the professors stated, were "kept orderly, board by board and year by year. There are inventories and alphabet registers which help to find files. Each file is tied, the sheets are numbered, and the folders are signed by the secretary of the board."²⁴

During the ten years of Uvarov's service, the Moscow University archive grew by 20,000 files, i.e. by 30%, to reach 54,578 files²⁵. The archivists divided it into departments containing the files of individual bodies such as the Curator's office, the Rector's office, the Council, the Board, the Faculty of Medicine, the Inspector's office, the Accountant's office, the School Committee, the Committee for the Prevention of Cholera (1830), the Committee for the Construction of the secondary schools No. 1 and 2, the Committee for the Construction of the Noble Youth Institute, the Committee for the Construction of the University Building, and the Faculty Clinic. In 1845, following the accession of Moscow Medical-Surgical Academy, the archive's collection grew by another 16,000 files to reach 71,158²⁶, which, of course, made the archivist's life harder and overwhelmed the archive room. The following year, the number of files reached 73,284 – that is, the archive doubled in 12 years²⁷.

The rapid growth of universities' document collections and the increasing complexity of their structure were the result of an intensive growth of the universities and their individual departments as well as increasing complexity of their record keeping. In the 1830-1840's, all procedures in university life were accompanied by an unprecedentedly extensive production of fact sheets, certification documents and reports²⁸.

Optimization of archival collections

The administration reform of the early 1850's affected the university archives, too. Actually, it was professors themselves who had suggested that this was necessary. Universities complained to ministry functionaries taking office that 'draft copies' and duplicates of documents were filling up the university and school chanceries and archive rooms²⁹. Moscow university professors proposed to cut all educational institutions' archives, dividing the papers in them into the 'needed' and the 'unneeded' ones and taking stock of the 'needed' documents only. Of course, the 'unneeded' documents were to be destroyed.

The Moscow initiative was supported by Kharkov university. In December 1855, the curator of Kharkov educational district General S.A. Kokoshkin applied to the Ministry of Public Education for permission to establish a commission to sort out the archive files. He pointed out

²⁴ RGIA. Fonds 733. Inv. 95. File 194. Fol. 27.

²⁵ Ibid. File 216. Fol. 35 v.

²⁶ Ibid. File 217. Fol. 37 v.

²⁷ Ibid. File 219. Fol. 36.

²⁸ Vishlenkova E.A., Il'ina K.A. Universitetskoe deloproizvodstvo kak praktika upravlenija (Rossija, pervaja polovina XIX veka)

// Voprosy obrazovanija. 2013, №1. S. 232-255.

²⁹ TSIAM. Fonds 459. Inv. 2. File 1741. Fol. 38.

that local professors believed the university archive contained “a large number of files and papers which nowadays have no documental and historical value whatsoever, and it would be very useful to destroy them completely.”³⁰ According to the commission’s decision, ‘unneeded’ papers included school budget statements; correspondence concerning the admission and graduation of students, and documents concerning employment and dismissal of employees. The information they contained could be found in the minutes of meetings.

The selection principle proposed by the professors reflected the ongoing professionalization of the education industry which made it impossible to continue archiving *all* texts produced by a university. In 1856, Minister A.S. Norov instructed the curators to hold a meeting in Moscow University in order to decide on the destruction of ‘unneeded’ archival documents and come up with ‘rules’ for the selection of papers to be archived in future³¹. For us it is important to understand what sorts of documents were to keep or to destroy according to the meeting’s resolution.

The ‘unneeded and to be destroyed’ category encompassed large parts of the archive, including all the paperwork of such bodies as the School Committee, the Faculty of Medicine, the Medical-Surgical Academy and the Construction Committees, the academic affairs of the Council (except for files concerning graduations and the issuance of certificates), documents concerning donations and personnel issues, officials’ service records, household records, correspondence between board members and outsiders, and the entire archive of the printing shop. At this meeting, the curator made a statement of immense historical significance, saying that he would not allow any documents from the Curator’s office archive to be destroyed³².

The task of carrying out the document destruction campaign was assigned to Board and Council secretaries and archivists. They had to separate authentic documents from copies and destroy all of the latter. The council decided that in the future, annually in January, it would examine the inventories of current files and dispose of unneeded papers older than ten years.

Having received a similar inquiry from the minister, Kazan curator V.P. Molostvov held no group discussions. The only person to whom he showed the letter was the university rector I.M. Simonov. The latter suggested that all documents should be split into three parts: those to be kept perpetually, those to be kept temporarily, and those to be destroyed immediately. In his view, the university archive should only keep documents that reflected the authorities’ educational efforts and their results. Members of the liquidation commission in Kazan were clearly no historians.

³⁰ RGIA. Fonds 733. Inv. 50. File 982. Fol. 1-1 v.

³¹ TSIAM. Fonds 459. Inv.2. File 2115. Fol. 1-1 v.

³² Ibid. Fol. 54-54 v.

In Kazan, all the documents of Alexander I's time that were sentenced to destruction survived, although their liquidation was recorded in the papers. In 1875, historian N.N. Bulich discovered them in boxes hidden in the attic of the university building. It turned out that the old Kazan archivist had saved them in the 1850's. On the eve of his death, the 75-year-old man told Bulich about that and showed him the treasure. The historian took the boxes to his apartment and then he spent twenty years writing stories based on these documents about the university culture in Kazan in the first two decades of the nineteenth century³³. Later on, the official historiographer of the University N.P. Zagoskin took the boxes to his study in the library. That is why a large part of the archive of the Imperial University of Kazan is to be found today in the University Library's Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books³⁴.

A large-scale 'purge' of the ministerial archive was carried out in 1864. Minister A. Golovnin had prepared it in advance. In October 1861, he published the rules for storage and disposal of files in his department. The head of the archive was required to split the collection into three parts: a) files to be destroyed as unneeded, b) files to be stored temporarily, and c) files to be kept in perpetuity. Files that were "unimportant in operational, administrative and historical respect" had to be destroyed. The importance of each file had to be decided upon by the archivist and retired officials of the Department assigned to help him. Documents that were to be kept temporarily included financial records and registers of incoming and outgoing documents. Laws, regulations, the paperwork of the ministry itself, documents concerning the opening and closing of schools, acquisitions and sales of real estate, employees' service records, reports of educational institutions, and financial records were to be kept in perpetuity.

The extant management records of the archive allow us to see how this resolution was implemented. The archivist and his assistants had to find the sets of documents designated for destruction using the inventory, then unbind the files, remove the 'unneeded' papers and bind the files again. By that time, the archive of the Ministry had 130,000 files accumulated between 1802 and 1860.

Fonds 733 of the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA) contains 'old' (i.e. pre-reform) inventories which the liquidators used to sort documents. These sources allow us to trace the commission's work. They show scratch-outs and hand-written notes with the numbers of destroyed files signed by the head of the archive, and notes containing decisions concerning individual files, with document numbers specified³⁵.

³³ Bulich N.N. Iz pervykh let Kazanskogo universiteta (1805–1819) // *Izv. i uchen. zap. Kazan. un-ta*. 1875. № 1. S. 3-48; № 2. S. 241-288; № 3. S. 439-488; *Izv. i uchen. zap. Kazan. un-ta*. 1880. Janv.–fevr. S. 1-112; *Uchen. zap. Kazan. un-ta po ist.-fil. fak.* 1886. S. 1-387; *Uchen. zap. Kazan. un-ta*. 1890. Kn. 1. S. 1-144; Kn. 2. S. 145-276; Kn. 3. S. 127-244; Kn. 5. S. 133-208; Kn. 6. S. 122-214; 1891. Kn. 1. S. 179-276; Kn. 2. S. 141-269.

³⁴ *Opisanie rukopisej Nauchnoj biblioteki im. Lobachevskogo. Vyp. VII: Materialy cenzurnogo komiteta pri Kazanskom universitete*. 1812-1827. Kazan', 1961.

³⁵ Cf., e.g., RGIA. Fonds 733. Inv. 40. File 441. Fol. 211.

Two examples may help the reader to assess the extent of the reduction. Until 1864, 2,146 files pertaining to Kazan educational district were listed in the 'old' inventory. Of these, 1,465 files were to be destroyed and 193 to be merged with other collections. As a result, 461 files (i.e. about 20%) remained on the list³⁶. In the 'old' inventory of Moscow educational district for the time between 1802 and 1820, 1623 files had been listed prior to the purge. After 959 files were destroyed and 173 merged, 475 items (i.e. about 28%) remained³⁷.

Documents selected for destruction were looked through again by the archivist to check their historical value. He made a separate inventory for texts he considered valuable. This inventory was structured not chronologically but by document types such as fact sheets, certificates, regulations, reports, projects, accounts, etc. These files still bear titles like "documents extracted from the files of ... district." 256 documents from the destroyed files of Moscow educational district were saved³⁸.

During this campaign, a decision was taken to archive only those decrees and regulations that were not included in the "Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire" and in the "Collection of Orders and Regulations of the Department of Education". For this end, commission members had to check every single document of this kind, and, judging by the modern inventory of the RGIA, the work was not done thoroughly. While the published collections of laws do not contain all the government regulations that are kept in the archive, the archive collection of laws today includes both published and unique texts.

In 1864, the Ministry of Public Education decided to dispose of master's and doctoral dissertation manuscripts because they occupied too much space. Only the resolutions concerning graduations (734 items) were to be kept. They were stored in the fonds of the Academic Committee, together with draft statutes of scientific societies and reports of educational districts.

The government's decision left a wide room for archivists' initiative. "Since it is impossible to specify all the sorts of files to be disposed of, - wrote the head of the department - the chief archivist is allowed under his responsibility to destroy files which contain no special orders of the ministry and the contents of which are so unimportant that keeping them could not bring any benefit in operational, administrative or historical respect."³⁹ What papers would now be regarded as historically and politically (un)important evidence depended on the chief archivist's free will and intellectual priorities.

The chief archivist referred to future historians 'fact sheet drafters'. To facilitate their work, he linked documents from different departments together to form thematic collections.

³⁶ RGIA. Fonds 733. Inv. 40. File 441. Fol. 38.

³⁷ Ibid. Inv. 28. File 385. Fol. 132 v.

³⁸ Ibid. Inv. 95. File 1145.

³⁹ RGIA. Fonds 745. Inv. 1. File 29. Fol. 19 v.

"This sort of file linkage will be very useful for fact sheet drafters in future, - he explained to his superior in 1867, - but it takes time and effort to achieve this goal."⁴⁰

The chief archivist substituted the old departmental organization principle of the archive with a new document-type-oriented one. The collection was now divided into eleven sections: (1) Miscellanea; (2) Employment and dismissal; (3) On vacations; (4) On graduations; (5) On awards; (6) On cash benefits; (7) On pensions; (8) On benefits to pensioners; (9) On admission of children to schools; (10) On private schools and educational institutions; (11) On textbooks⁴¹.

Reports submitted by universities and schools were listed in the inventory No. 95⁴². However, reports for the years between 1817 and 1833 were not registered in it. They were stored among the documents of the district. It is difficult to say why the archivist failed to implement the merger in full. Whatever the reason, this situation gave rise to erroneous judgments in historiography. Thus, after studying the inventory No. 95, L.A. Bulgakova concluded that universities filed no reports at all between 1817 and 1833⁴³, and her conjecture became a common place in the literature⁴⁴.

Golovnin required destruction of documents that concerned the payment of salaries, per diems, travel expenses reimbursement, apartment rental allowances, documents certifying the conferment of degrees, texts of public lectures and speeches, descriptions of royal visits to universities, documents concerning cases of fire, theft, or funerals. Same-type papers from different educational districts were required to be kept together. The minister reserved the right to determine which department and, accordingly, which section of the archive should keep employees' service records that were scattered over all inventories. In 1864, it was decided that the ministry archive was to keep only the service records of ministry officials, while the files of university employees should be destroyed. Based on the paperwork rules of the time, Golovnin assumed that duplicates of such records for all years were archived in the universities⁴⁵.

By December 1865, the commission had checked 50,645 files, i.e. less than half of the total 120,000. 21,397 of them (42%) were destroyed, 6,643 (13%) were stored again and 23,605 were waiting for their destruction⁴⁶. By March 1867, another 64,344 files were done. Of these, 30,742 (47%) were destroyed⁴⁷. The dramatic cut was necessary because some of the archive's premises were reassigned, resulting in its capacity reduced by half⁴⁸.

⁴⁰ RGIA. Fonds 745. Inv. 1. File 29. Fol. 38.

⁴¹ Ibid. Fol. 39 v.

⁴² RGIA. Fonds 733. Inv. 95. File 1155.

⁴³ Bulgakova L.A. *Otchety popechitelej po uchebnym okrugam i universitetam kak istoricheskij istochnik // Vspomogatel'nye istoricheskie discipliny*. T. 10. Leningrad: Nauka, 1978. S. 246.

⁴⁴ Petrov F.A. *Formirovanie sistemy universitetskogo obrazovanija v Rossii*. T.1. Moskva 2002. S. 30.

⁴⁵ RGIA. Fonds 745. Inv. 1. File 29. Fol. 21.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Fol. 23.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Fol. 40.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Fol. 35.

Files ‘sentenced’ to destruction were given by the ministry to resellers who sold them to a paper mill. In the Russian State Historical Archive, a file is kept with the remarkable title "On the sold files from the Department archive." It contains evidence that in September 1854 the ministry sold about 1536 kg of archival documents, and in 1864, about 3712 kg⁴⁹. The money was supposed to be spent on construction and repairs of archive shelves and renovation of the archive rooms. Documents containing secrets were to be burnt.

Compensation for losses

Apparently, historians writing about Russian universities fail to detect deliberation behind the formation of archives for two reasons. One reason is their confining the research to individual local archives. The second reason is that they now have the possibility to compensate for some gaps in university archives using evidence from archives of professors, ministry officials and scientific societies. As a result of reading these sources one gets an illusion that all aspects of university life are reflected by the archives, or, conversely, that the state archives cover all aspects of university life. Moreover, when assessing the evidence, historians attribute a higher status to official papers than to ego-documents. The latter are assigned a secondary and illustrative role as against laws and records, and their value as alternative or compensatory sources is seldom recognized.

In the nineteenth century, professors could not give their letters or manuscripts to a university archive for keeping, nor could owners of private archives donate these to it. Departments of written sources at museums and departments of manuscripts and rare books at university and public libraries came into being in the twentieth century – indeed, in the 1930's, when former professors or their heirs were seeking to save evidence of the past life in universities⁵⁰.

Created almost spontaneously, ‘identity archives’ cannot be regarded today as representative of institutions’ life. They contain pieces of non-state academic discourses that university and ministry archives were cleared from as early as the nineteenth century. Thanks to these collections, the researchers can study group solidarity, culture, identities and loyalties among the faculty, and compose collective biographies of universities⁵¹. However, ‘identity

⁴⁹ RGIA. Fonds 745. Inv.1. File 92. Fol. 6.

⁵⁰ ORRK NBL KFU. № 10256. S. 2.

⁵¹ Cf: Universitet dlja Rossii: Vzgljad na istoriju kul'tury XVIII stoletija [T.1] / red. V.V. Ponomareva i L.B. Horoshilova. M., 1997; Universitet dlja Rossii. T.2: Moskovskij universitet v Aleksandrovsuju jepohu/ red. V.V. Ponomareva i L.B. Horoshilova. M., 2001; Vishlenkova E.A. Kazanskij universitet Aleksandrovskoj jepohi: al'bom iz neskol'kih portretov. Kazan', 2003; Kulakova I.P. Universitetskoe prostranstvo i ego obitateli: Moskovskij universitet v istoriko-kul'turnoj srede XVIII veka. M., 2006; Vishlenkova E.A., Malysheva S.Ju., Sal'nikova A.A. Terra Universitatis: dva veka universitetskoj kul'tury v Kazani. Kazan', 2005; Kostina T.V. Mir professora Kazanskogo universiteta v pervoj polovine XIX veka: Diss... kand. ist. nauk. Kazan', 2007; Sazonova L.A. Povsednevnaja zhizn' professora Kazani: 1863-1917. Kazan', 2012; Petrov F.A., Ponomareva V.V., Horoshilova L.B. Universitet dlja Rossii. T.4: Moskovskij universitet v Nikolaevskuju jepohu. M., 2012.

archives' have painted out the archival policy that was pursued with regard to universities in the nineteenth century. Since pieces of evidence found in the two kinds of archives are often in conflict with each other, researchers tend to make a selective use of personal texts as supplements or illustrations to 'more objective' sources such as legislation texts and official documents. It is unlikely that this is the right research strategy.

Summing up, the study of Russian university archival policy shows that beside the supreme authority and the Ministry of Public Education, university employees, too, were shaping it. University archives and especially the ministerial archive in the nineteenth century were not just places of evidence accumulation. They were also places of a narrative ordering of evidence. The archivists Petrov and Dobrosmyslov were the first in the profession to take over the mission of giving new meanings to documents. It was they who first united scattered texts in themed document collections referred to as 'files'. Apparently, the uniqueness of the Kazan University archive was a consequence of provincial university members resisting to initiatives coming from the capital. After the archives had been systematized in the 1830's, it became possible to purposefully destroy certain types of evidence in the 1850's and 1860's as archives underwent compaction. In order to reconstruct them today, researchers need either to study archives that have preserved the polydiscursive character of the university paperwork and especially that of the university life, or to fill the gaps in university and ministry archives with evidence taken from private archives of professors. This, however, should only be done with due regard to the discursive nature of evidence contained in them.

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