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Introduction

Private archives constitute an essential vital portion of our social memory. That's why we have to commit to giving the same consideration to the appraisal of these materials as we do the appraisal of our public records.

We define private archives as all non-government archives. For example archives of private corporate bodies, personal archives, organizations and archives of houses and families. These archives can include anything from handwritten letters to oral history on audiotapes, pictures, moving images and minutes from board meetings.

These records add context to collective memory because public archives don't tell the whole story. We have been thinking about how private archives can fill the gaps in the official record to complete the story.

In our group work we have been wondering what would happen if someone tried to write a 10 year anniversary reflection about this first Archidis Summer School.

Daniela and Elisabeth have been discussing the traces that would be left in the public archives. Me and Natasja have been looking at private archives and in what way they can contribute to filling the gaps. Annette and Malene have been discussing ways to make sure that these records or archives survived to fill the gaps.

We have chosen some quotations for our PowerPoint presentation to give you an idea of the theory behind our discussions.

Now we would like to give you a glimpse of these discussions.

Daniela and Elisabeth

Why won't public records be enough?

If we think about the types of records that will definitely be kept after the ARCHIDIS summer school for at least some time, mainly administrative documents come into mind, especially those that contain budgetary information.

Since the summer school receives its funding from the ERASMUS programme, it is obliged to hand in all documents concerning money issues like accommodation expenses, transportation costs and organisational expenses.

In addition, there will be records holding data about teachers and students covering names, addresses, bank contacts, and the institutions they study or teach at, but the documents will also contain information about the different roles assigned to the participants of the ARCHIDIS summer school like project coordinator, lecturer, group leader, student and link between ERASMUS and ARCHIDIS.

Furthermore, we will encounter the programme's timetable, evaluation forms of the summer school filled by the participating students, the mandatory sheets of attendance and moreover the Moodle environment which needs to be preserved for ten years according to ERASMUS requirements.

The vast majority of the administrative records just mentioned will be stored in the archives of Oslo university since the Norwegian ERASMUS office filed an application for grants for the ARCHIDIS summer school, on behalf of all involved countries and their institutions. Some documents will probably be kept at the EU archives in Brussels, some at the Archives School in Marburg as the location where the summer school took place.

In regard to the participating universities one has to say that it is not quite that obvious if records about the summer school are public or private since not every university is public, but some are also private. That is why the handling of records concerning ARCHIDIS will probably be quite different.

Overall one needs to admit that the representation of this year's ARCHIDIS will be one-sided and leave gaps since the public records are kept mainly as budgetary evidence.

Philippa and Natasja

To write a representative history of this summer school, you would need to know about our experience as students. What did we learn? Did we mix with other students and make international contacts? Did we enjoy the course?

And what about the tutors and the businesses involved – their points of view are also important if we are going to get a complete picture.

What private records might there be that could give a researcher this information? What would they add to an understanding of ARCHIDIS?

There might be business archives that would give context to the public records about the summer school.

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Maybe there would still be traces of us in the records of the ECB? What would they add? Their PowerPoints and the notes for their presentations would show what we were told about.

What about the article in *Das Marburger* – that would surely be kept in an archive somewhere? That would show that the summer school made an impact on the local society and the photographs would show what we looked like and some of the places we went to.

And the Diakonie? Perhaps there might be records there that would show which rooms we stayed in? That would give more information about what the whole experience was like for us. If they have a record of two students from different countries sharing a room that might suggest to a researcher that we made international contacts. There might also be traces of us at the tour companies, the butchers, the pizzeria and so on, but none of this would tell us what went on in our lectures and seminars and groups sessions.

Most of them won't be there anyway because business companies usually do not see themselves as part of the collective memory. If they keep records they do it either because of fiscal legislation or for their own benefit. So traces of ARCHIDIS will only be there if they found it useful to promote themselves in some way.

What about university archives? In some countries, like the Netherlands these are private archives too and they might have some of our papers and portfolios, or some of the records created to apply for extra funds and evaluate our participation.

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But to really understand the summer school a researcher would need to look at our personal records: at our diaries and photographs. So many of us are emailing home or keeping in touch with people via facebook or twitter.

Do you realize you can't download tweets from twitter and who is appraising the internet? Where might we find our facebook entries.

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And our tutors' personal records too. The researcher might even need to talk to some of us to create oral histories and fill the gaps left by the records we didn't preserve or even create in the first place.

The public records might give the programme outline, the topics we discussed every day and perhaps even the PowerPoint slides from each presentation, but to understand what we actually took in you might need to look at our lecture notes.

Letters and postcards home might highlight the things we have found most interesting. If we trust the people we are writing to, they might tell a different story to that given by our evaluation forms. Did we find any sessions boring? How did we really feel on Monday morning?

But do really think people will keep our letters and postcards in the long term.

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If any of us make scrapbooks they might preserve pictures, postcards and receipts and other records that might otherwise be considered ephemera, as well as captions and comments. These, as well as any diary entries would give an even more personal insight into what we thought was important and interesting about the programme from our own points of view, with none of the external pressures involved in writing to another person.

Malene, Annette

What action must archivists take to make sure these records are there to collect?

- How do we capture private records?
- We know that it is not possible to regulate on private archives.

For private archives the task is not to appraise by way of deciding what to keep and what not to keep. But the task is one of trying to collect a representative selection of records from different areas and concerning value. There are two parts in this process;

- concerning the representatively of history.
- concerning the value.

It is important to seek out contacts to establish relationships with individuals and non-governmental groups to open up the possibility of preserving and making new collections available.

You have to convey the importance of private records, you have to make the public aware that handing in their private records, is one way of leaving your mark in the history.

One strategy for reaching out can be for the archive to play an active role in society and to work with other cultural actors, e.g. museums and libraries in making exhibition.

Another way to reach out could be presenting courses for formal and informal user groups of the archives.

- e.g.: you can try to illustrate the gaps to the users by way of letting them try to piece together the documentation of the Archidis summer school of 2011. Soon they will discover the gaps for themselves and experience the “awareness”.

After the general conclusion we will show you one way of making you aware of your place in the history of ARCHIDIS.

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Conclusion

What we learned about looking at the case of ARCHIDIS is that private records have an important role to play. They contribute to our collective memory.

If we as a group of archivists can't even ensure that a complete picture will survive of this Summer School, how can we expect that the general public will leave traces behind.

What we found is that in an area that we might expect to be well documented we can foresee gaps in the historical record.

To prevent these gaps from emerging we as archivists, creators and users need to work together across international and professional borders. This is basically what Helen Samuels recommends in her documentation strategy:

*“The key elements of documentation strategies are an analysis of the universe to be documented,
(as we did with our case study of ARCHIDIS)
an understanding of inherent documentary problems,
(just a one-sided representation will be preserved in Oslo)
and the formulation of a plan to ensure the adequate documentation of an ongoing issues or activity...
(as we hoped to do when planning this presentation.)*

All of us : So do not burn your letters!!!

Now we're going to hand out cards. Half could represent the public records of the summer school the blanks should represent the personal records/traces of the summer school.

These blank cards represent the gaps in the in the collective memory of this summer school. As private individuals it is up to us to fill these gaps. But we have another role. As archivists and information professionals we are also responsible for filling gaps in the collective memory of our nations and our world as a whole. To take no action to preserve private records and make them accessible is to make an appraisal decision. Every action we take, or fail to take, will have a consequence for the collective memory of our ancestors.