

CHAPTER V

Access, reference services and automation

RESEARCH SERVICES

Reference services

Probably the shortest description which would catch the very essence of the Open Society Archives' (OSA) reference services is this: its staff is trying to carry on the good and somewhat contradictory work of making a private archives as public as possible. Due to the uniqueness of its aims and the diversity of its holdings, OSA is a multifaceted institution: it is an archives, an exhibition organizer, a research institution, and a library. It is the complexity of the Archives' role and holdings – and the diversity of its users – that makes OSA reference services likewise complex.

Broadly conceived, reference services at OSA are the activities by which its archivists bring users and records together in order to meet the users' needs. Since OSA users have a wide variety of research needs, reference services at the Archives encompass a wide range of activities and call for intellectual, administrative and interpersonal skills. OSA is an open-access facility committed to making materials available to users on equal terms of access. Reference services are provided in the Research Room by telephone, by fax, through the Internet, and by e-mail or regular mail.

The Open Society Archives' reference services provide:

- Information about the holdings
- Information from the holdings



The Research Room of the Open Society Archives with the Library of the Central European University in the background.

Photo by András Révész. Fonds 206 Records of the Open Society Archives.

- Information about the creators of records
- Referrals to other repositories or resources
- Instructions of how to use archives and how to conduct the research process
- Physical access to holdings
- Copies of archival materials
- Information about copyright, privacy, confidentiality, and other relevant laws
- Loans from holdings
- Services through public programs

Research room

The OSA's Research Room shares space with the Central European University (CEU) Library. The OSA Research Room can be reached through the main entrance of the Library. OSA is an open-access facility committed to making materials available to users on equal terms of access. Reference services are provided in the Research Room, until 4:30 p.m.

The full capacity of the Research Room is 18 people. The room contains 10 research desks with electrical outlets; one non-restricted station for viewing or listening to audio-visual materials, which comfortably accommodates up to three people; two limited-access computer terminals; two microfilm/microfiche readers with printers; a set of shelves containing finding aids and reference books; and a microfilm cabinet containing selected microfilm copies of daily newspapers, predominantly from former communist countries.

Archives staff are available in the Research Room to assist researchers in finding and using relevant materials. Researchers who wish to visit OSA are encouraged to contact the Archives in advance to help ensure that each research visit be as productive as possible. To arrange a visit, please contact OSA at:

Open Society Archives	Telephone: (36 1) 327-3250
Október 6. utca 12.	Fax: (36 1) 327-3260
H – 1051 Budapest	E-mail: archives@ceu.hu
Hungary	Website: http://www.osa.ceu.hu

Mailing Address: H – 1396 Budapest 62. P.O. Box 458, Hungary

On-site research

The Open Society Archives is an open-access facility. Research status is available to anyone at least 16 years old, while individuals under 16 may apply for special permission

to use OSA records under the direct supervision and responsibility of an adult researcher. If a researcher intends to use records that may be restricted, advance notice is necessary so that the classification status of the records could be determined. The researcher will be notified if the records have not been declassified or processed. Contacting OSA in advance may also save the researcher needless frustration if the Archives does not hold any records related to the topic of interest.

The holdings of the Archives are located in its main building and in an affiliated repository at the CEU Residence and Conference Center. Although OSA does not have a fixed retrieval schedule, researchers should note that 3:30 p.m. is the latest retrieval time. When ordering materials from the repository (predominantly newspapers and publications) arrangements must be made at least one day in advance.

When visiting OSA for the first time, researchers should plan the visit for as early as possible in the day. A late afternoon visit may not allow enough time for records to be identified and retrieved during the same day.

Before using archival records, every researcher must obtain a researcher identification card at the OSA Reception Desk which is valid for two years and must be presented to the Research Room Attendant each time they visit the OSA Research Room.

Researchers then meet with the Reference Archivist to discuss their research needs. The orientation content varies on a case-by-case basis. Variables include the nature of the research inquiry, whether the researcher has previously conducted any archival research, the amount of time available to conduct research etc.

The orientation conducted by a Reference Archivist may include the following points:

- Identification of researchers' reference needs
- Introduction to the holdings of OSA
- Research strategy suggestions
- Initial orientation to the use of specific fonds and finding aids in the Research Room
- The roles of Research Room and reference services staff
- Proper handling of archival materials
- Notification of restrictions that pertain to certain records
- Copying procedures
- Building orientation (including directions to lockers, Research Room, Reception/Cashier Desk)
- Follow-up guidance after research has commenced
- Consultation service to researchers in order to rectify complaints.

Research Room rules

Concerns for the preservation and security of archival materials have resulted in distinct reference procedures. Bearing this in mind, certain rules must be followed when handling archival records in the Research Room. Researchers are not permitted to bring briefcases, boxes, suitcases or other large containers into the Research Room. A cloakroom is provided at no charge in CEU's main hall.

Researchers who wish to bring personal typewriters, tape recorders, cameras, computers and other equipment into the Research Room must get approval from a Reference Services Archivist, who will inspect the equipment before allowing it to be brought into the room.

Researchers are expected to exercise care when using records and to follow proper handling techniques such as maintaining the original order in which records are filed and using only one folder of records at a time. Documents may not be leaned upon, written on, traced, altered, or handled in any way that can do harm. The Research Room Attendant or other staff members can assist researchers in determining the best way to handle records. The use of pens is prohibited, and no smoking, drinking or chewing gum is permitted in the Research Room.

Finding aids

A number of printed and electronic finding aids describe the holdings of the Open Society Archives in detail. Inventories are prepared for many, but not all fonds. Other finding aids include catalogs of OSA microfilm publications, newspaper holdings, and audio-visual materials as well as a series of *Insert Leaflets* and *Reference Information*



Microfilm cabinets in the Research Room. Photo by András Révész. Fonds 206 Records of the Open Society Archives.

Papers on selected topics (see Appendix). Finding aids and other OSA information materials are available in the Research Room and can be also accessed through the OSA web-site at: <<http://www.osa.ceu.hu>>.

Copying

The Open Society Archives provides copying services in the following formats: electrostatic reproductions, videotape and audiotape, and photographs. The copying is done by the Archives' staff only; no self-service copiers are available. For small quantities (up to 50 copies), copies are usually delivered 24 hours after being ordered. The delivery time for larger quantities of electrostatic reproductions – as well as for videotapes, audiotapes and photographs – is subject to agreement between OSA and the researcher requesting the copies. Current fees (as of September 1999) are 15 HUF (approximately 7 US cents) per A4-format copy and 20 HUF (approximately 9 US cents) per A3-format copy. Other reproduction prices vary. Payment for reproductions ordered on-site is done upon delivery of the copies at the Open Society Archives Reception/Cashier Desk.

Off-site research services (World Wide Web)

In order to provide information and reference services to its off-site researchers, the Open Society Archives has established its World Wide Web site at: <<http://www.osa.ceu.hu>>. This site is designed to provide basic description of OSA reference services available online, the open hours and location of Open Society Archives facilities, information and forms regarding off-site ordering of OSA holdings, and other information of interest to off-site researchers (including the OSA Restriction Statement, Reference Information Papers, citation recommendations etc.).

General reference or research questions may be sent via e-mail, regular mail, fax or phone (see information above). Please note that, in the case of off-site research, OSA staff does not perform research on behalf of researchers. However, they do offer a range of information about OSA holdings which includes:

- confirmation of the existence of fonds relevant to the inquirer's research interest;
- determining the quantity of the requested material;
- estimates of the required time, cost and feasibility of providing copies of selected materials in accordance with copyright laws. Researchers may request that copies be delivered by express mail or regular mail, or in some cases by fax, or be picked up at the Archives by special arrangement.

In order to properly respond to researchers' questions, OSA asks that they include the following information in the body of all messages: first and last name, telephone and fax numbers (including necessary codes), mailing address and e-mail address.

Note: Because of rapid changes in online communications, the information discussed above is subject to change. The most current version will always be posted on the OSA website at: <<http://www.osa.ccu.hu>>.

GRANTS

The Open Society Archives (OSA) offers a variety of grants to encourage innovative, outstanding and groundbreaking research. These grants are offered to scholars, archivists, journalists, artists and others exploring the field of communist and post-communist studies in the region covered by OSA's holdings. Grant applications are accepted from all over the world.

In 1998, for example, grant applications arrived from such diverse countries as Armenia, Georgia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine, The United States, and The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In all, some 28 research grants and sundry other grants were awarded to outstanding scholars and artists in 1998. Two of OSA's grantees were awarded prizes for books written utilizing OSA resources. Paul Josephson was awarded the Marshall Shulman Book Prize for his study *New Atlantis Revisited – Akedemgorodok: the Siberian City of Science* (Princeton University Press), and Padraic Kenny was awarded the AAASS/Orbis Polish Book Prize for his work *Rebuilding Poland – Workers and Communists, 1945–1950* (Cornell University Press).

Research Grants

The Open Society Archives offers research grants on a competitive basis to support scholars who wish to pursue research in its holdings (see list of research grants in the Appendix). These grants, which are designed to provide access to the Archives for scholars and journalists who live outside Budapest, provide travel to and from Budapest, a modest stipend, and accommodation in Budapest for a maximum research period of two months.

There is no application form for the grant program. Applicants may be researchers, students carrying out post-graduate research, or journalists, academics, artists or others who have already embarked upon their careers. Applicants are asked to submit a C.V., a research description plan of 500 words (or more) indicating the period of time the applicant needs to carry out research in Budapest, and two confidential professional or academic letters of

recommendation. The research proposal should indicate the relationship of OSA holdings to the project, and should state the preferred dates of residence. In their research description applicants are expected to indicate how they plan to utilize the research they do at the Archives. Undergraduate applications are not accepted. Preference is given to persons from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Nonetheless, outstanding researchers from any part of the world are encouraged to apply.

The application, C.V., and letters of recommendation should be sent to the Research Grant Selection Committee, Open Society Archives, H-1396 Budapest 62 P.O. Box 458, Hungary.

There are no deadlines in the grant program. Applications are considered as they are received by the Selection Committee. The Committee normally meets four times a year in March, June, September and December.

Other Grants

The Open Society Archives regularly offeres other grants to scholars, artists or journalists who wish to carry out projects related to topics covered by the Archives' programs, and exhibitions to be hosted by Galeria Centralis. For more information regarding such grants, please consult the Archives' web-page and look under Public Programs, Galeria Centralis, or the Institute of Records.

Applicants whose grant are considered to be of worth, but which cannot be supported by OSA, may be referred to other programs within the Soros Foundations Network. Such reference, however, should not be taken as a guarantee that a grant will eventually be awarded.

THE AUTOMATION SYSTEM

The long-term impact of quickly developing and widely used computer technologies was a key incentive for the Open Society Archives (OSA) to employ automation. Computers have already become an essential part of almost every activity and they could be used to greater advantage by archival staff and researchers alike. For OSA, however, automation is more than just a tool which helps to improve work efficiency and increase access to information. The Archives does not see automation as a single action, but instead views its long-term automation strategy as a continuous process consisting of the study and intelligent use of technology with the aim of improving core archival functions and facilitating the exchange of information about archival holdings and institutions.

OSA's computer network is part of the larger distributed data network of Central European University (CEU) and the Open Society Institute, Budapest, which integrates

approximately 1000 personal computers and 30 servers. The qualified staff of the Information Technology Support Unit ensure effective operation and data exchange among several organizational departments, including OSA. All staff members at the Archives have computers with access to the World Wide Web and electronic mail. Shared access to generic office applications, databases, information and hardware provides powerful communication and collaboration capabilities for organizing effective teamwork within and among all departments.

This environment was the foundation for the development and operation of the the Archives' automation system (AS), which addresses the needs of both the professional archival and general administrative areas, and includes several databases for OSA's holdings and Library, and intranet⁴⁰ and internet websites.

Automating core archival functions

The core modules of the AS were designed to help archivists in their daily work on accessioning, arrangement, description and promotion of the documents in the Archives.

The *Accessioning Module* serves the function of taking initial control over records being transferred to the Archives repository. Creation of an accession record in the database is the act through which the establishment of both physical and intellectual control begins. The records' bulk, date, title, donor, access restrictions etc. are recorded, and the new records are assigned to appropriate fonds. Physical control over archival items is governed through the *Master Location Register*, which stores the most detailed information about each item from OSA holdings, including its unique reference number, its container type, its physical location in the depository, its relation to series within fonds and subfonds, and appropriate units of description.

The *System of Arrangement Module* is based on interrelated fonds, subfonds and series, and allows the Archives to maintain the records' context and original order. By September 1999, there were 132 fonds registered in the AS.

The *Description Module* supports various levels of description, starting with basic information about the individual archival item (box, folder or document). A separate *Unit Description Module* supports ISAD(G)⁴¹ and ISAAR(CPF)⁴² compliant descriptions of fonds, subfonds and series and related authorities.

The *Reporting Subsystem* supports various forms of output: lists of accessions, fonds,

40. A network based on internet standards and protocols belonging to an organization accessible only by the organization's members, employees or others with authorization.

41. General International Standard Archival Description

42. International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families.

subfonds, and series; detailed reports on items within series and storage modules; several types of labels etc. Like any database, the AS is an efficient tool for preparing extensive information on a particular subject, compiling lists of different types of related items, and producing other general or subject excerpts to be used as clear directional signs guiding researchers through the Archives.

The main focus of the existing AS is to streamline routine archival functions into a single automated process: from registering an accession to arrangement and description and producing container labels and finding aids.

Going online

The *Web Connectivity Interface* is an essential part of the AS. Utilizing this interface, lists of series within fonds and subfonds, and detailed finding aids on record groups and related series can be automatically converted into web-page format and published on the website.

OSA's website currently includes about 900 pages. Several areas play essential roles in promoting the holdings and activities of the Archives to a wider audience. Traditional finding aids are complemented by *Research Information Papers* prepared by OSA archivists to guide researchers to records relating to specific topics.

In addition to announcing public exhibitions and other OSA events, the website has become a permanent „gallery“ for online exhibitions which provide visitors with an opportunity to become familiar with sample records preserved in the Archives.

Another important part of the website contains information and links to other Internet resources prepared especially for archivists from Central and Eastern Europe: archival education, legal matters, publications, standards and other topics.

Staying up-to-date

The AS has become an efficient tool used by archivists for the acquisition and retention of records. However, the development of technology has affected existing methods in many ways. For instance, in case of some digital records, certain agencies may maintain physical records while the Archives will provide access through its automated system of intellectual control. In practice, this demands direct integration of records-management and archival tasks.

Influenced, if not driven, by the Internet and World Wide Web technology, archival description in the 1990s has focused on standardization of language and information, authority control, and ways of presenting information through unified formats such as

EAD (Encoded Archival Description).⁴² This sets a new goal for the Archives – by means of SGML technology, OSA plans to make its finding aids interchangeable with those of other archives and fully accessible to researchers around the world.

A variety of usage statistics produced by the AS will serve as the basis not only for reports and publicity – these data should be continuously evaluated and used to improve overall performance, to plan future development and to refine existing practices.

A modern computerized system for an archives means an independent and fully integrated system: it integrates the use of all types of media (text, pictures, video, audio, software); it provides a gateway to distributed electronic sources of information from internal computing networks to the Internet; and it provides independent access to basic functional modules – appraisal, acquisition, accession, arrangement, description, preservation and public access – through an interactive system using a common database and common access procedures.

42. The EAD Document Type Definition (DTD) is a standard for encoding archival finding aids using the Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML).