

SPP Congress: Statutes of Parliamentary and Political Archives Rome (Italy), 13. - 15. February, 2002

The rules of the Archive of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation (ACDP) in Germany

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The archives of the political Foundations in Germany are archives of political parties. In this function they are **private** archives and not submitted to legal requirements like the state archives. These archives work on their own responsibility.

Acquisition

The Archives for Christian Democratic Politics (ACDP) keep the records of the Christian-Democratic Union (CDU) and its bodies as well as personal papers of the most important Christian-democratic politicians. As a private organisation the ACDP has to make its own efforts to acquire documents, in contrast to the State institutions which can claim a regular legal responsibility to transfer. It has to ask systematically the bodies of the party and former important politicians for their materials and arrange visits for conversations in order to value and to transfer/transport the records.

In addition, the transfer is safeguarded by contractual rules with the offices of the party or private persons leaving the documents. These contracts are made following the rules of the German State Archives (Bundesarchiv). There are two types of contracts:

- the contract of transference (ownership of the archives) and
- the contract of deposit.

The contracts are including:

- regulation of the property (transfer of deposit),
- access regulation,
- regulations concerning regular transfers (files of the party).

Access regulations

The archives have their own access regulations concerning the application form for readers, the reference service, the reading room, the treatment of the documents etc. (text in <http://www.kas.de/archiv/benutzungsordnung.html>). The most important chapter of the access regulations are the restricted accesses. Thanks to its private character, the ACDP is quite flexible and liberal in according the access to the files. If there are no given restrictions, the archives follow the legislation of the state archives (Bundesarchivgesetz). That means: Records are available after 30 years, personal files after 50 years.

However, the party offices or politicians can decide independently on the access to their files. It happens that records are available without any access date and that some documents are not available at all or after a certain period of time. In our contract with the European People Party and its parliamentary group in the European Parliament, for example, it was decided that the European records are available after 15 years. In some cases the archives are committed to ask chairmen, secretaries or politicians (or their heirs) in the name of a reader for approval to read the files they gave us.

Appraisal of documents

It is a central problem for all archives how to cope with the flood of information in the age of the information society and how to make it purposefully useable. Shortage of money, lack of room capacity and especially the lack of specialist staff are becoming a problem nearly insoluble for the archives.

In a meeting of experts in January 2000 the archives of the political foundations in Germany tried to lay down the criteria for archival appraisal. Differently to the state sector, there are no regulations or instructions for appraisal of documents in the non-state sector.

In a catalogue of appraisal the ACDP drew up the records to be disposed. Following that, we put a recommendation at the offices of the party, a disposal which records should be acquired by the archives and which not. The destruction of the materials which are not of archival value is carried out in two steps: In principle, we distinguish between the “pre-destruction” (before putting the documents in the stacks) and the “fine-destruction” (during the description). Only “real” archives - that means non-published documents like correspondence, notes, manuscripts – are transferred in the Historical Archives. We select:

1. magazines, books and brochures for the Library,
2. newspaper cuttings for the Press-Dokumentation,
3. posters and photos for the Picture Library,
4. tapes and films for the archives of the audiovisual materials.

Destructed are materials such as printed papers, collections of materials, order forms, claims for travelling expenses, transport documents etc.

The appraisal and destruction of party documents is less problematic than that of the personal papers. It requires biographical knowledge of the person and an analysis of the party and parliamentary documents from the sphere of the politician. The work of a politician should be documented in its totality.

The appraisal of information is a central responsibility of the archivist. Without that, no useful description and making archives available for access is possible. There is a great need for action just in the non-state sector whose archives has been neglected in the classic archival science by now.