THE UNIVERSITY OF PALERMO
HISTORICAL ARCHIVES

records, services, memories
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Archives form a unique and irreplaceable heritage passed from one generation to another. [...] Open access to archives enriches our knowledge of human society, promotes democracy, protects citizens’ rights and enhances the quality of life

(ICA – International Council on Archives, Universal Declaration on Archives, 2010)

Access to libraries and public archives for reading, study and research purposes is free

(Legislative Decree 42/2004, Codice dei Beni culturali e del paesaggio, [The Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code], Art. 103 – Access to institutes and places of culture, c. 2)
Introduction

Archives arise spontaneously to meet the needs of a person or an entity (in our case the university) which, in the course of its existence and in exercise of its functions, creates and acquires documents of various kinds.

Archival documents are linked to each other by an archival bond determined by skills, activities and history of the organisation that created them.

The University of Palermo Historical Archives
Today, we can associate several concepts with the term archive:

- a **structured set of documents** produced or acquired by an institution, individual or family;
- a **physical space** in which the producing entity keeps its archive;
- an **intangible place** in a distant location (e.g. remote databases), a multiform and diachronic information structure;
- an **institute housing archives of various origins** and having as its institutional purpose the permanent preservation of the documents entrusted to it and intended for public consultation.

In the Classical Age the archive – physical space of preservation – was seen as mirroring the authoritative nature of the **documents kept in it** which, in turn, represented and legitimised the constituted power: a document itself had the value of legal proof to the extent that it was preserved in a specific **locus** (the archivium).

Documents were perceived as **publicae carthae** necessary for ascertaining prerogatives, titles, and faculties of the **public**. An authentic document was, and is, able to **guarantee the rights of the people** concerned as written evidence of a legal fact. An authentic document, compiled according to certain norms and standardised procedures that ensures its authority, is able to:

- **represent reality**, or the facts that happened;
- **represent and describe the period** to which the source itself belongs and the **context** that produced it.
Yesterday as today, the archive with its records is:

▲ an instrument of government;
▲ memory, expression of an organised world that may no longer exist;
▲ a cultural asset (Legislative Decree 42/2004, Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio [The Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code], art. 10, c. 2).

Thus the document, initially intended as a written representation of an act or a legally relevant fact, is no longer just a paper document. Today archivists tend to include under the term document all the materials produced through any medium and making up an archive (paper, magnetic tapes, discs, film, X-ray plates, negatives, various objects, etc.) in which information has been recorded.

The life of an archive, through its documents, is divided into three phases:

❖ active archive: space-place responsible for the production and acquisition of all the documentation necessary for the producer in the performance of its activities (e.g. offices);

❖ deposit archive: waypoint for the storage of documents relating to completed affairs, no longer required for the processing of current affairs, but not yet intended for permanent storage and free consultation by the public;

❖ historical archive: a place for the preservation of documents relating to activities completed at least thirty years prior and intended by law for permanent conservation and consultation by the public for various purposes, both academic and otherwise (private interests, administrative and/or legal needs, etc.).
Like all private and public institutions, the University of Palermo – as a producer – generates and acquires large quantities of documents in the performance of its many activities. The University is also a conservative subject and, in fact, has the task of preserving its documents, implementing suitable procedures and following directives to guarantee their reliability and maintenance through time, in order to ensure that the legal purposes they represent can be verified in terms of authenticity over time.
Archives and University
What are the University Historical Archives?

The Historical Archives are places dedicated to the recovery, preservation and valorisation of the University’s memory: there are responsible only for documents related to affairs that have been concluded at least thirty years ago, and their documentation bear witness to the academic and scientific history of the University since its founding in 1806. In September 1978, by decree of the Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage, it was declared a very important historical archive, and it is now part of the University Library System and Historical Archives, operating under the supervision of the Soprintendenza archivistica della Sicilia – Archivio di Stato di Palermo [Archival Superintendence of Sicily – State Archives of Palermo]. The historical documentation of the University, still not entirely inventoried, has followed a tortuous path which, unfortunately, has yet to be concluded, and it is still preserved in various locations within the University premises.

In 2005 a project of describing and inventorying all the archival documentation up to that time started, following an agreement between the Archival Superintendence and the University of Palermo. The filing work of entrusted to free-lance archivists in absence of specifically trained internal staff and of a suitable software, is being undertaken in paper form. Only later the archivists begin to enter the data into computers, first using a software called Sesamo and then another called Archimista, both of which are suitable for the reorganisation and computerization of the inventory of historical archives.
On 16 June 2021, the new headquarters of the Historical Archives were inaugurated: after a long period of neglect and abandonment – a common fate to many Italian archives – the idea of a new place to preserve and valorise the University’s records underlines the growing awareness of the importance of archives as cultural expression and historical memory of institutions.

Why the University Historical Archives?

The first thing that comes to mind when we say the word ‘archive’, or simply think about its concept, is a set of documents preserved without any apparent reason.

Archives and, in our case, the University Historical Archives, exist because documents – as vectors of personal and collective data – have multiple and transversal uses and may be used by many people.

Our University Historical Archives are useful to:

- the University itself and its staff: students, professors, technical-administrative and library staff, thanks to documents can indeed define the identity of the institution;
- scholars and users who, through the stories of those have studied, taught and worked at the University, can research the history of the Athenaeum;
the City and our territory: the Archives are both a source for historical reconstruction and a witness to territorial identity.

Over the years, in order to investigate and write its history, our University, with the approval of the Archival Superintendence, has set up a project for inventorying and reorganising the Historical Archives and, when necessary, implement interventions for maintenance and restoration. The University Historical Archives offer to their users – also remotely – document consultation and reproduction services.

To be alive and active within the university community, our Archives plan and organise cultural events, also in collaboration with other institutions, to divulgate, through its documents the history of the University and the historical, intellectual and social context in which it has grown and operated over the course of time.

The objective is to reach – through the diffusion of knowledge and the valorisation of archival documents – not only experts and scholars, but also the city’s population, students and, more generally, all those who are interested in rediscovering and safeguarding historical memory.
Archival assets
RIPARTIZIONE DEGLI STUDI

PER

l'anno scolastico 1868-69.

ORARIO

La durata di ciascuna lezione è di un'ora, tranne le cliniche e le altre scuole pratiche.
Tra l'una e l'altra lezione vi è un quarto d'intervallo.
Le ore successive delle lezioni sono le seguenti:

1.ª Ora 8 a. m.
2.ª » 9 ¼ »
3.ª » 10 ¼ »
4.ª » 11 ¾ »
5.ª » 1 p. m.
6.ª » 2 ¼ »

Le cliniche incominciano alle ore 7 a. m.; pari- le esercizi pratici di botanica negli ul- sor saranno ad ore anteriori alle 8 a. m.
potranno prolungarsi al di là della
zioni corsi liberi si fari...
What they include

The archival assets at the University of Palermo comprise documents dating from 1646 to the second half of the XX century, including those directly related to the University, established in 1806 as well as documents produced by its predecessor, the Regia Accademia degli Studi di Palermo [The Royal Academy of Palermo]. The collections also contain a valuable set of documents belonging to the Regia Accademia di San Ferdinando [The Royal Academy of San Ferdinando] – which in turn succeeded the Collegio dei Gesuiti [Jesuit College] – with papers dating back to the first half of the XVII century.

The fund, which is constantly being expanded, is made up of two main sections called “Administration” (from 1646) and “Education” (from 1813): the first includes a series of documents concerning the administrative and financial management of the University, while the second tells the story of the Departments, Schools and Courses established in Palermo.
Students, teachers and employees personal records

Being particularly interesting and varied, these records provide a lot of information about the lives of those who studied, taught and worked at our University, offering an insight Sicilian society from the end of the XIX century onwards. The files on students curricula are particularly rich: they include birth certificates, diplomas and school licences with subjects and grades, enrolment booklets (sometimes accompanied by photographs in passport format, both black-and-white or in colour) with details on examinations, grades, teachers’ signatures and graduation certificates, to which we can add, from the end of the XIX century, graduation theses, often signed by supervisors. Some of the students and lecturers who passed through our University became famous, not only locally but also nationally and internationally (e.g. Giuseppe Piazzi, Augusto Righi, Stanislao Cannizzaro, Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, Giovanni Battista Filippo Basile, Margherita Piazzolla Beloch). The records in the teachers’ series contain handwritten registers of examinations, notes, correspondence, and certificates of various kinds: thanks to them we can reconstruct the teaching methods of their time and see how history has modified, compromised, interrupted or glorified the careers of some of them. The employees’ files contain all the documents relating to their working life: grading, legal positions occupied in relation to career development, assignments to the various administrative buildings, decrees and provisions, seniority level useful for pension purposes, etc.
The in-depth study of the records, registers and minutes brings to light – through the heterogeneous, unpublished and authentic documents found – aspects of university life and history that until now could only be retrieved in the Academic Yearbooks, and also clarifies the organisation of the University and its Departments, which sometimes differed from today. For example, by means of the ‘simple’ folders that enclose and protect the students’ documents, divided by Department (that for a while also differ in colour) we can understand that for a long time Engineering and Architecture courses were taught as a single unit in the same Department, while the Literature and Philosophy Department included a course for becoming an elementary school supervisor, and much more. Today, continuing the work undertaken in the 2000s by freelance archivists, our staff is processing and studying students records and, after careful analysis, entering the data into the Archimista software.

The Cautele of the Regia Libraria

The Cautele series consists of 115 volumes containing documentation of various kind from 1646 to 1856, including àpoche, i.e. receipts that constitute proof of payment for the debtor; elections; chirographs; sureties; letters; table lots; warrants; royal orders; fees; notes of payment; notes of expenses; declarations of debt; accounts of receipts and disbursements; school fees; payments of wages; salaries; memorials; bills of payment; reports of work carried out with estimates; emphyteutic concessions and powers of attorney.
Administrative registers, inventories and documents

Among the many registers, we would like to point out the one called Sovereign Resolutions, included in the series called Decreti reali e risoluzioni sovrane [Royal Decrees and Sovereign Resolutions], which is a collection of royal and ministerial decrees between 1805 and 1866 that contains information on the Library of the Jesuit College (today the headquarters of the Region of Sicily Central Library).

Among the documents of the Administration section, there are some of particular value and historical interest, such as: the Paintings and prints inventory (1822-1823), the Antiquities inventories (1822-1855), the Plan of the University Medal Collection presented to the government (1824), the Marble Room inventory (1836), the Library inventories (1836-1847), the Numismatic Cabinet of the Royal University inventory (1846), the Academy of Nudes inventories since 1863 onwards and the Honours (1912).
Academic Yearbooks

These precious volumes provide a support for historical research, with information on the courses taught and their teachers, programmes, scientific publications, news about the staff of the University Cabinets and Institutes, the work carried out in the University’s museums, lists of all the administrative staff and, most importantly, lists of enrolled and graduated students divided by Department and grade. It is enough to leaf through these texts to discover classrooms organisation, lessons and timetables, and even the private addresses of teachers and staff. The section dedicated to Laws and Regulations is very important. The Obituaries section is also very customary. The section on fees and student payments is more of a practical nature.

As a useful source of information on University history and organisation, they also contain inaugural speeches, notes on departing Rectors and Rectors pro tempore, budget notes, sharing of relevant legislation, information on the Academic Council and other University bodies.

Particularly interesting is the section dedicated to legislations, added to several Academic Yearbooks. In the 1882-83 volume, in the section Official collection of laws and decrees of the Kingdom we find a paragraph on the Modifications to the General University Regulations approved by Royal Decree no. 3434 of 8 October 1876, which provides information on the degree examination:
dispute over a thesis written freely by the candidate on a subject chosen among other compulsory subjects. These dissertations had to be submitted to the approval of the Examining Committee first.

It also seems that, in 1889-90 Academic Year, the students of Medicine asked, without success, to be exempted from the obligation of presenting their thesis before the Teachers Commission. These few lines are therefore essential to understand from which year onward we will be able to find theses, as we intend them today, within the files.

Other archival assets: the Department of Architecture Scientific Collections

Since the second half of the XX century, our Athenaeum has received archival assets from private donors that have chosen not to disperse their holdings by donating them to the University. The Department of Architecture Scientific Collections, thus named since 2012, with their significant historical and documentary value, are housed in two buildings (8 and 14) in the University campus of Viale delle Scienze. Over the years the Department, through a Scientific Committee, has collected and inventoried the documentation, putting in place the appropriate measures for the preservation of this heritage consisting of papers, books, photographs, studies, sketches, collections of drawings, design drawings, models and teaching tables. Since 2014 the Department of Architecture has also acquired the Basile Endowment (consisting of the Drawings Archive, the Photographic Archive, the Documents Collection and the Library), the Ducrot Company Archive and Library (belonging to the University since 1970), and the collection of Teaching Tables, consisting of large panels on frames designed for the Technical Architecture Course held by Giovan Battista Filippo Basile at the Regia Scuola d’Applicazione per Ingegneri e Architetti [The Royal School of Application for Engineers and Architects] of the University of Palermo.
Our University, with its Department of Architecture *Scientific Collections* has been a Full Member and Founder of the National Association of Contemporary Architecture Archives since its establishments in 1999.

Digitisation
As part of a more widespread dissemination, we begun to digitise some documents, which can be found online on the archive’s website: it is possible to consult, among others, two volumes of the *Cautele* and a register from the series *Royal Decrees and Sovereign Resolutions*, and also the *University Academic Yearbooks* (from 1864-65 to 1958-59, although there are some gaps). The digitisation activity also includes preparation and distribution of copies of documents (primarily personal files of students and teachers) to users who request them.
Locations
Just a few steps away from the Central Station, the University Historical Archives new headquarters (Saint Antonino complex) consist in open spaces for research and cultural exchange. The new Study Room, whose large windows overlook the nearby library dedicated to the judge Francesca Laura Morvillo (1945-1992), is a welcoming and protected location, suitable for concentration and study, but also for meetings and exchanging ideas. There are four study stations: separated by wooden panels, these are equipped with a central lighting system, table lamps and a personal locker where users can store their personal belongings.

The regulations on access to the venue and to consulting documents - as well as the relevant laws to be observed - are available at the following web address: https://www.unipa.it/amministrazione/direzionegenerale/sba/u.o.archiviostoricodiateneo/
Users
Who we serve

The University Historical Archives aimed and welcome both institutional users (students, trainees, undergraduates, teachers, researchers, PhD students and its own employees) and external users, e.g. school students, scholars and all citizens.

Anyone, upon reservation – request must be sent by e-mail to archiviostorico@unipa.it – will be able to access to the Historical Archives; users with special needs will find easy access to the premises, which are located on the ground floor of the Saint Antonino complex.

Users: rights and obligations

Users are required to comply with the Regole deontologiche per il trattamento a fini di archiviazione nel pubblico interesse o per scopi di ricerca storica pubblicate ai sensi del D.lgs. 101/2018 [Ethical processing rules for archival purposes in the public interest or for historical research purposes published pursuant to Legislative Decree 101/2018] which:

▼ indicate «guiding principles of behaviour for subjects who process personal data stored in public archives and private ar-
archives declared to be of considerable historical interest for historical purposes»;

identify «precautions for the collection, use and dissemination of the data contained in the documents». The archivist will inform users «about documents temporarily extracted from a file because they are excluded from consultation» for confidentiality reasons (art. 5).

Users must also comply with the Legislative Decree 281/1999, Disposizioni in materia di trattamento dei dati personali per finalità storiche, statistiche e di ricerca scientifica [Regarding the processing of personal data for historical, statistical and scientific research purpose].

Users who wish to photograph or film the documentation examined must obtain express authorisation from the archive staff.

Documents in a precarious state of preservation may be excluded from consultation. Users are required to promptly inform the staff if an archival piece (register, folder, file) received shows conservation problems.
Services
U.O. Archivio Storico di Ateneo

Si comunica agli utenti che dal 9 aprile l'archivio storico sarà aperto al pubblico previo appuntamento dai lunedì ai mercoledì dalle 9:30 alla 13 e dalle 15:30 alla 17:30, il giovedì e il venerdì dalle 9:30 alla 13.

La visita, necessaria per l'individuazione della documentazione e per la preparazione del progetto, avrà luogo a seguito di una visita guidata.

Gli interessati possono presentarsi alla sezione dell'archivio storico entro l'orario di apertura e richiedere la visita guidata.

Cerca nell'inventario
What we offer

The University Historical Archives staff:

- offers information on how to access the documentary heritage;
- assists the user in searching, also by consulting the inventory;
- is responsible for the on-site consultation and reproduction by scanner of documents also those requested through correspondence;
- supervises the reproduction of documents, carried out independently by users with personal tools, expecting the material consulted to be correctly treated and used for non-profit cultural activities, in accordance with the regulations in force (Law 124/2017);
- on behalf of users, carries out research limited to the material listed and described in the inventory (and kept both in
the repositories adjacent to the Archive offices and in the University’s central and peripheral offices). The Historical Archives hold only documents relating to proceedings concluded at least thirty years ago; the remaining documentation is kept in the “active” and “deposit” sections of the General Archives;

- helps users through qualified assistance and historical-archival advice:
  - orientation service for document searches;
  - provides guidance regarding normative references on archival matters;
  - indicates if there are archival assets in external bodies;
  - communicates bibliographical references concerning University of Palermo’s history and archival disciplines.

How to search

Inventory is the main research tool: it describes all the archival items of the ordered harvest in an analytical or summary manner.

Although still partial and in constant implementation, the inventory allows you to find people and subjects. Users can search it on their
own or be guided by the Archives’ staff who, according to the internal regulations, carry out remote investigations compatibly with other work activities. Methods and times required to execute services vary according to the complexity of the search and to locate the documentation. Researches carried out for users in remote mode – which involves reading, interpreting and transcribing various historical documents held in the Saint Antonino Archives or other locations of the University – must be agreed upon in advance with the staff.

The application forms to request documents’ consultation and reproduction are available at the web address:

https://www.unipa.it/amministrazione/direzionegenerale/sba/u.o.archiviostoricodiateneo/servizi/modulistica/.

What is not contained in the University Historical Archives

The Historical Archives do not preserve published or unpublished works resulting from research carried out at the University: these are managed by the libraries and offices of the research groups.

The Historical Archives do not preserve doctoral theses, which are consigned to and stored in the National Central Libraries of Rome and Florence, nor preserve documents related to ongoing affairs: the right of access to these is regulated by Law 241/1990 and subsequent amendments and additions.
Legislation and rights
Legislation

Documents are governed by different laws and regulations, depending on their type and age:

◆ for the active and deposit archives, Law 241/1990 Nuove norme in materia di procedimento amministrativo e di diritto di accesso ai documenti amministrativi, Capo V, Accesso ai documenti amministrativi [New rules on administrative procedure and right of access to administrative documents, Chapter V, Access to administrative documents];

◆ for the historical archives, Legislative Decree 42/2004 Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio [The Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code].

Right of access and data protection

Both rights are ensured by our legal system through:

◆ Legislative Decree 281/1999, Disposizioni in materia di trattamento dei dati personali per finalità storiche, statistiche e di ricerca scientifica [Provisions regarding the processing of personal data for historical, statistical and scientific research purposes];

◆ Legislative Decree 196/2003, known as the Privacy Code: from May 2018, partially repealed and replaced by EU Regulation
679/2016, the so-called GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) for most of its articles;

- Legislative Decree 42/2004, Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio [The Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code];

- Carta dei diritti fondamentali dell’Unione Europea (2000/C364/01) [The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union].

According to current legislation, documents held in the University Historical Archives may be freely consulted, except for:

- those of a confidential nature relating to the internal and foreign policy of the State, which become available for consultation fifty years after their date;

- those containing particular categories of personal data (so-called sensitive or special data, i.e. «personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, religious, philosophical or other beliefs, political opinions, membership of political parties or trade unions», which can be consulted forty years after their date, as well as highly sensitive data, i.e. «data revealing health or sex life or confidential family relationships», for which the term is seventy years, pursuant to articles 122-123 of Legislative Decree 42/2004).

Before the expiration of the time limit, documents remain accessible pursuant to the law on access to administrative documents: the request for access is examined by the Administration that held the document before it was deposited (ex art. 122, c. 2, Legislative Decree 42/2004).
Graduation theses and the Italian Copyright Act

A special case is represented by the final papers produced by our students, which can be requested using a special form, available in our website, which should be sent to: archivio.storico@unipa.it.

It should be noted that:

❖ reproduction of the dissertation, in any format, is permitted only with the written authorization of the author or his/her descendants, in absence of which no further action may be taken;

❖ authorization is personal, and the holder may not delegate others to process the data;

❖ the theses, in addition to being administrative documents, are the result of the intellectual work of the author/student and are protected by the Italian Copyright Act:

* **Law 633/1941**, Protezione del diritto d’autore e di altri diritti connessi al suo esercizio [Protection of copyright and other rights related to its exercise];

* **Law 248/2000** Nuove norme di tutela del diritto d’autore [New rules for the protection of copyright];
