
From private to public - and back. Circulating documents & data at Budapest City Archives

Agnes Telek*¹

¹Budapest City Archives – Hongrie

Résumé

The fundamental structure and perspective of archives is on a turning track recently. As the demand and the accessibility of the official documents have raised, the number of inquiries raised simultaneously. The borders between the public and private collections appear the same way, one of the most illustrative examples for this is the department of the visual documents: the architectural plans and photographs. According to provenience, those contain public as well as private documents.

Among the accidental and unpredictable private donations, the number of these types of visual documents is the highest. A great question of our age is whether we can or should make a difference between public and private records when the question comes to serving the citizens with information and data either way. Architectural documentation of a private family house is a private and public document at the same time. On our platform for the online database, Budapest Time Machine we publish archival datasets and documents in an easily accessible way, marking the origin of the collection itself, but could anyone as an inhabitant of the certain building doubt the publicity of blueprints of the house?

When archives are desperate to work on a good relationship with stakeholders, they might become document/archivalia producers later on. In the beginning, Budapest City Archives was a primary content provider for the civil event, celebrating the hundred years old houses of the Capital, called Budapest100. Through the years as the volunteers keep on mapping the stories and histories of the buildings and their inhabitants, they created databases and datasheets of the buildings, conveying them in return for the archival documents they get from us to help their research and presentation.

Another great example of stakeholders' collaboration is the 3D models, created by architectural students. At the Ybl Miklos Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering at the Óbuda University, students learn the building modelling based upon archive architectural plans, (re)creating houses and blocks of the city of Budapest. Due to the agreement between the two institutions, we deliver them the archive plans and they give the 3D models in return. This case raises a question of the status of this collection: the initial material is part of the public collection obviously, but what category should fit for the products made from it?

Ágnes Telek

Budapest City Archives

*Intervenant

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