

Padua Municipal Archives from the 13th to the 20th Centuries: A Case of a Record-keeping System in Italy

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RÉSUMÉ L'auteure décrit dans cet article le système de gestion des documents de l'administration municipale de Padoue entre le 13^e et le 20^e siècle, par la commune libre, la seigneurie des Carraresi, les fonctionnaires de la république de Venise, puis l'administration locale avant et après l'unification nationale (1861, mais 1866 pour Venise et Padoue). Elle analyse principalement la chancellerie médiévale et moderne, alors que les archives étaient conservées et gardées par des institutions chargées de l'administration publique, puis le travail bureaucratique et historiographique exécuté aux 19^e et 20^e siècles. À cette époque, de nouvelles méthodes de gestion, adoptées par les états créés par Napoléon et s'appliquant aux archives courantes, ont également influencé la conservation des archives historiques. Cet article montre comment une ville italienne a conservé sa mémoire administrative et a créé une institution spécifique afin de préserver et d'étudier ses documents historiques.

ABSTRACT This research describes the record-keeping systems of Padua's municipal administration from the 13th to the 20th centuries, i.e., by free commune, Carraresis' seignior, public servants of the Republic of Venice, and local administration in the context of the State before and after the national unification (1861, but for Veneto and Padua 1866). The focus is on the analysis of the medieval and modern chancellery, while archives were preserved and kept by corporate bodies charged with public administration, and afterwards bureaucratic and historiographical work carried out in the 19th and the 20th centuries. At this time new management methods, adopted by States created by Napoleon¹ and devoted to current archives, influenced historical

¹ The States, started in North Italy after the Italian campaign, were, at the beginning, the "Municipalità" in different towns and, later, the Repubblica Cisalpina (1797–1799), the Repubblica Italiana (1802–1805), and the Regno d'Italia (1805–1814). There were some periods of direct French domination, interrupted by Austrian dominations, concomitant with the war events. A general overview of the period is offered in Carlo Zaghi, "L'Italia di Napoleone dalla Cisalpina al Regno," in *Storia d'Italia diretta da Giuseppe Galasso: XVIII/1* (Torino, 1986). On the Padua events see Giulio Monteleone, "Padova dal trattato di Campoformido alla caduta del regime napoleonico (1797–1814)," *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova LXXV* (1986), pp. 115–33. In those States public administrators utilized an archival management system, based on the concomitant use of three tools: the "registro di protocollo" (i.e., register of incoming and outgoing mail), the "titolario di classificazione" (i.e., classification system or plan), and the "repertorio dei fascicoli" (i.e., file list). On this subject see Paola Carucci *Il documento contemporaneo. Diplomatica e criteri di edizione* (Roma, 1987), p. 32 and Paul Delsalle, *Une histoire de l'archivistique* (Quebec, 1998), pp. 166–69.

archives preservation too. This article shows how one Italian city has preserved administrative memory and has created a specific institution to preserve and study historical records.

Introduction

In this article I will illustrate the record-keeping systems of Padua's municipal administration from the 13th to the 20th centuries, especially the writing, the preservation, the ordering, the finding aids arrangement, and the consultation – both internal and external – of records.² Padua's case is significant, because it is representative of the Italian situation and it is documented uninterruptedly from the 13th to the 20th centuries.

Historical and Institutional Context

Padua is a town situated in North-East Italy; it was founded by the “Paleoveveti,” conquered by the ancient Romans and became a “municipium” (municipality). At the end of the Western Roman Empire, Padua was dominated by the Longobards (until 774) and later by the French and the Holy Roman Empire. In the 12th century Padua became a free commune, like most towns in North and Central Italy: it had independent rules called *statuti* (statutes), institutions and administrative organization, progressively more specialized. The offices were held in turns and public servants were answerable, when their mandate ended. The free commune was governed by municipal *élites* formed by different social groups according to economical and political trends. The 13th century was very important: after the domination of Ezzelino da Romano (1237–1256), a dramatic period, owing to the repression of municipal liberties and of political adversaries, the free commune institutions were restored and the rules began to be written. In the first *statutorum corpus* dated about 1260 there were, together with other rules concerning municipal life and institutions, specific rules on archival management, that are the only historical sources on this subject before 1420.

2 This research has been developed from a series of books and articles written in the last five years: G. Bonfiglio-Dosio, *La politica archivistica del Comune di Padova dal XIII al XIX secolo con l'inventario analitico del fondo “Costituzione e ordinamento dell'archivio,” con un saggio di Andrea Desolei* (Roma, 2002); A. Desolei, *Archivio storico del Comune di Padova. Inventario analitico della serie “Atti amministrativi per categorie” (anni 1885–1889) e riflessioni sulla storia e sull'organizzazione archivistica comunale postunitaria ottocentesca* (Ph.D. Thesis, 1999–2000); A. Desolei, “Le vicende archivistiche del Comune di Padova tra Otto e Novecento: un'identità perduta e (forse) ritrovata,” *Archivio veneto* CXXXII 192 (1990), pp. 155–70. Other previous studies: A. Gloria, *Dello archivio civico antico in Padova. Memoria storica* (Padova, 1855); Letterio Briguglio, “L'archivio civico antico di Padova e l'opera dei suoi ordinatori (1420–1948),” *Bollettino del Museo civico di Padova* 45 (1956), pp. 183–218.

In fact in 1420 a violent fire almost destroyed Padua's archives created during the period of the free commune and the Carraresis' domination (1328, 1337–1405).³ The information on those periods is consequently only indirect and based on prescriptive sources.⁴ The almost total destruction of municipal records dated before 1420 prevents any research on the actual application of rules; but the analysis of municipal constitutions allows scholars to know the record-keeping practices. The Padua rules are very similar to those of other towns that own and preserve their records. Usually, public medieval archives did not maintain their original organization, as a consequence of institutional changes. The research on medieval record-keeping methods must then be carried out only by prescriptive sources; this will also be the case with research on integral preservation.

Record-keeping in Padua: 1263–1420

The case of Padua is representative of the archival sensibility widespread in most Italian free communes.⁵ The first rules on preservation of the *statuti* (statutes or medieval municipal constitutions or laws) date back to 1263. Four copies of the text of the municipal constitutions had to be written and each copy was kept in four different offices: the first for the *podestà*, the second for the *procuratore*, the third, which was intended for public consultation, was kept in the church *in palacio comunis* (i.e., municipal palace/city hall), and the fourth was arranged into the archives *ubi stabunt libri comunis*. Some additional copies of records, considered vital, were kept in four monasteries in the town: S. Benedetto, S. Giovanni da Verdara, S. Maria in Vanzo, S. Maria di Porciglia.⁶

3 Marco Maffei, "I. Il trasferimento in piazza dei Signori della sede del Consiglio maggiore dopo l'annessione di Padova alla Repubblica di Venezia (1405–1420)," *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova* LXXXII (1993), p. 295, note 38; Roberto Cessi, "Le prime sedi comunali padovane," *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova* LIII (1964), pp. 57–80 (now in R. Cessi, *Padova medioevale. Studi e documenti raccolti e riediti* [Donato Gallo, ed.] [Padova: 1985], pp. 103–121, see especially p. 112; A. Gloria, *Dello archivio civico antico in Padova*, pp. 8–9; Oliviero Ronchi, "Il servizio municipale degli incendi a Padova fino all'anno 1829," *Bollettino del Museo civico di Padova* LVI (1967), pp. 379–424, see especially pp. 389–92 (previously published as *Padova* III [1929/5], pp. 247–66.

4 In Padua there were three different writings of the municipal constitution: the first, dated 1276; the second, dated 1362; and the third, dated 1420. The surviving copies are illustrated by Marielle Magliani, "I tre manoscritti degli statuti comunali di Padova (sec. XII–XV) conservati nella Biblioteca del Museo Civico: note storiche e codicologiche," *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova* 78 (1989), pp. 155–64.

5 This situation is confirmed by the still current researches carried out by Stefano Moscadelli and Andrea Giorgi especially on Tuscany. See also Giuliano Catoni, "Per Clio e per la patria. Esperienze archivistiche senesi dal Caleffo vecchio alla Guida generale," in Diana Toccafondi, ed., *Gli strumenti della ricerca* (Firenze, 1997), pp. 69–78.

6 Andrea Gloria, ed., *Statuti del comune di Padova dal secolo XII all'anno 1285* (Padova, 1873), p. 1178.

A new paragraph of the municipal constitutions, written in 1265, orders that the records must be arranged into a strongwardrobe, provided with two locks and two different keys, held by the *podestà* and the *anziani* (§ 1133).⁷ The strongwardrobe was put into the sacristy of St. Antonio Friars. An archival list was available in two copies for public servants. The purpose of this kind of preservation was more to maintain records and their authenticity than to exclude the archives from consultation: in fact, public administrators were aware of the legal importance of records. Moreover, the rules on records writing are detailed and numerous; these specify how chancellery notaries were to write documents and books and establish severe punishments for the defaulters, apart from the nullification of the documents (“*sint cassa, vana et nullius valoris*”). In the first period of the free communes, legal validity was guaranteed by the work of notaries in the municipal institutions. In the legal arrangements of medieval Italy the concept that the form of a document is a substantial condition for its existence and its probative capacity was affirmed.

From 1275 the *Officium conservatorum iurium comunis* worked to safeguard municipal archives and, as a consequence, collective rights: a staff of five citizens chosen among the judges and notaries was devoted to archives preservation and management. The *conservatorum* task is described by *statutes*.⁸ The rules involved the concentration of the books, accounting records, property instruments, and judicial documents in the same place and their ordering in distinct series, physically separated too, and arranged into wooden wardrobes (sections 266–279).

The ordering system was connected with the physical placing of the records. The series were formed by putting together the records with identical diplomatic features. The record managers bound the smaller books (called *libri* or *quaterni*) in the same book (called in contemporary sources *volume*). This operation, called by contemporary sources *avvolumare*, was also adopted by other chancelleries during the *ancien régime* period: for example, in the chancelleries of Venice’s governors on the submitted properties both in earth and sea possessions (*Dominio da terra* and *Dominio da mar*). From the time documents were created some aggregation was maintained by the chancellors and the archivists in order to better preserve the records. The kinds of aggregation are very different from those maintained in the 17th and 18th centuries.⁹

7 A rule like this is present in statutes of towns in the same area.

8 The statutes read as follows: “Item scire quoque debeant ipsi conservatores ita colligere, registrare, disponere et salvare et invenire predicta omnia et scripta et in promptu habere, ut nullam negligencie culpam neque fraudem committant in predictis et infrascriptis et qualibet ipsorum. Quod, si fraudem in aliqua comiserint vel dolum, ad voluntatem potestatis et ancianorum condennentur et ab officio removeantur. Si vero negligenciam comiserint, secundum qualitatem negocii penam paciantur ad voluntatem potestatis et ancianorum.”

9 The specific rule is: “Sed ubi plura invenientur volumina unius tenoris sufficiat eis unum colligere,” section 268.

The 13th century rules show that there was awareness of the archives as an important tool for municipal administrative life: the archives' order and integrity were protected by rules and professional procedures. The municipal constitutions also required that finding aids be compiled to make records more easily available. There were some precise rules to guarantee the authenticity of records. Municipal rules list the information that had to be recorded for each document type. Municipal constitutions also determined the documentary typologies that were required for the work of the municipality and the defence of citizens' rights.¹⁰ In particular, municipal constitutions established the procedures that citizens had to follow for consulting the records and those that the chancellery had to follow for giving documents to citizens.¹¹ The preparation of additional copies was a common practice prescribed by municipal constitution and copies were kept in different places. Access to such copies was given to public servants working in the municipal administration, as well as to citizens who needed the records in order to safeguard their rights.

While the Padua free commune during the 13th century – like other towns in North and Central Italy – promulgated numerous detailed rules for archives management, in the following century municipal constitutions did not include any regulations on archives: the Carraresis' seignory maintained the municipal institutions, but placed next to those a new chancellery, the diplomatic aspects of which have been the subject of recent study.

Record-keeping in Padua: 1420–1649

New rules for archives management were established in 1420: did they represent a significant change in comparison with the 13th-century regulations? In a way, they kept traditional rules, but on the other side they innovated, because, after the end of the Carraresis' seignory and the beginning of Venice's domination (1405) the municipal organization became more complex and articulate due to the fact that Padua lost her autonomy. This situation increased the number of documents and archival organization became all the more necessary.

10 The document types identified in the municipal constitutions were: "libri, rationes, iura, protestationes, acta et legationes et relationes ambaxatorum, litterae missivae et responsivae, refformationes statutorum, memoriale omnium rerum mobilium."

11 The procedures are described as follows: "Item quociens autem potestas vel anciani aut sindici vel advocati comunis vel rationatores rationum comunis alicuius rationis vel iuris, instrumenti vel scripti comunis Padue opus habuerint pro comuni, teneantur incontinenti ea die qua requisiti fuerint scriptum illud hostendere et, si oportuerit in publicam formam exemplatum dare. Si non fecerint, potestas Padue de banno libras decem possit eis auferre et ab inde inferius sicut ei placuerit, secundum qualitatem scripti requisiti et negotii pro quo petitur. Et nichilominus sequenti die illud scriptum hostendere teneantur sub eadem pena. Et deinceps pro quolibet die ad voluntatem potestatis, ut dictum est, si non attenderint, cadant in penam," section 276.

The rules for chancellery and archives organization date back to 1420, when the municipal constitution was reformed.¹² This reform was required not only by institutional changes, but also by archival collapse caused by the 1420 fire. The civic Council decided to elect a chancellor and some notaries in charge of municipal archives preservation and record writing. The chancellor, who was chosen from among the College's notaries, had to be *intelligens, praticus ac bone conditionis fame*. He remained in office until his death and was responsible for the writing and preservation of municipal records. The chancellor's office was frequently assigned to famous professors or graduates of the Padua's *Studium* (i.e., University) or to the best intellectuals of the city. The first chancellor after 1420, for example, was Sicco Polenton, notary and humanist,¹³ an exemplary, though not unusual, case of a highly-cultured notary of that time. Padua's case is one of many examples: many humanistic intellectuals were involved in civil administration both in the Republics and in the courts: for example Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni in Florence or Cicco Simonetta in Milan. But in the 15th century the examples are various and new cases are always emerging: there were numerous humanistic chancellors in Venice (Francesco Barbaro, Ludovico Bevazzano, Bartolomeo Fasolo, Sebastiano Borsa, and Michele Selvatico).¹⁴ Another example was Damiano de Goes (1502–1574), humanist, friend of Erasmo da Rotterdam, *guardamor* of the Royal archives in Lisbona from 1548.¹⁵

On 6 August 1476 the civic Council confirmed that the heirs of dead notaries were compelled to consign to the municipal chancellery the *instrumenti e imbreviature* left by their relatives.¹⁶ Consequently the documents written by the notaries, which are extraordinary historical sources on the daily life of people, have been preserved until today and are now available for research in the Archivio di Stato (i.e., the Public Record Office). The care of municipal administrators was continuous and attentive, in order to avoid any records dispersal. The Padua community always paid some employees charged with notarial archives preservation and organization. Municipal archives, thus, were institutions that also preserved archives created by other institutions.

The management of municipal archives, however, left something to be desired. On 21 June 1583 the civic Council, realizing the great disorder in the

12 Padova, Archivio di Stato, Archivio civico antico, Atti del Consiglio, reg. 40, *Tabularum*, c. 93v.

13 Guiseppe Vedova, *Biografia degli scrittori padovani*. II (Padova, 1832, reprinted Bologna, 1967), pp. 119–22; Arnaldo Segarizzi, *La Catinia, le Orazioni e le Epistole di Sicco Polenton, umanista trentino del secolo XV* (Bergamo, 1899).

14 Elisabetta Barile, *Littera antiqua e scrittura alla greca. Notai e cancellieri copisti a Venezia nei primi decenni del Quattrocento* (Ph.D. dissertation, 1974).

15 Paul Delsalle, *Une histoire de l'archivistique*, p. 114.

16 G. Bonfiglio-Dosio, *La politica archivistica*, p. 18, where there is also the bibliography on notaries archives preservation in Italian towns.

community archives, decided to elect among the most skilled notaries in the chancellery a *massaro*, charged with municipal archives management. The sources on this disorder are scarce and reticent: there is only a report written by Annibale Saviolo, *deputato ad utilia*, who denounces the untidy state of the archives. The *massaro* stayed in charge for three years.¹⁷ Then every year the civic Council had to choose two members charged with watching over the work of the *massaro*. The *massaro* concentrated the documents created by different municipal offices and by dead notaries in the same place: but these two archives had to be kept separate. Notarial archives had to be packed in bundles, each of which was provided with a speaking tally (i.e., cartouches indicating the content) or *dorsi parlanti* (spines with index of contents), placed into wardrobes, locked, and chronologically ordered in the chancellery below. The different series of municipal archives (municipal constitution, licences, orders, resolutions [i.e., *parti*], letters, extraordinary acts, trials, and cases) had to be preserved separately. Every series was chronologically placed into the chancellery wardrobes and closed with double locks. Two keys were separately put under the care of the *massaro* and the chancellor. This cautionary approach to archives preservation was due not to a desire for secrecy, but to the need to guarantee the authenticity of records. Both municipal archives and notaries archives were inventoried: the *notarella*, i.e., the list, had to be written on a parchment book, covered by wooden planks and tied up to the wardrobes by a chain, like the books in a library.

The *massaro* preserved the archives, oversaw their consultation, and took responsibility for returning the archives after the consultation. He was subject to the authority of the chancellor, who was therefore responsible for the entire municipal records-keeping system. The *massaro* instead cared mainly for historical archives and for giving paid copies of documents required by particular people for administrative needs. Finally the civic Council authorized an extraordinary intervention for municipal archives that were in a state of disorder. So the *massaro* was devoted to the care of already formed archives, while the chancellor was charged with records writing and chancellery organization.

The 1420 and 1583 rules were and remained for a long time the basic nucleus for archival management: they were confirmed in 1633, when the civic Council authorized a staff increase in order to get better archival service because the archives and work load were enormous.

Record-keeping in Padua: 1649–1797

In the Republic of Venice the legal system, which accorded the same weight to preventive abstract rules and decisions taken to deal with specific situations,

¹⁷ G. Bonfiglio-Dosio, *La politica archivistica*, p. 19.

presupposed the ready availability of a large quantity of records. Therefore the municipal administration needed analytic finding aids (i.e., aids that provided a summary of every record). This kind of finding aid examined the contents of each record, whereas the previous finding aids had simply listed the files. Moreover in the mid-17th century the age of important archival interventions started. In 1684 Pietro Saviolo, municipal archivist, completed a *catastico*, that is a subject index of individual terms (for example *barcaioli* [boat men]) that referred to records.¹⁸ The ordering system according to series was suitable especially for books, but not for loose documents or files. So it became necessary to bind together loose documents or smaller books and form volumes. As a result all the documents on the same subject (for example, those on the *barcaioli*) were gathered together, also physically. The adoption of subject ordering caused the formation of some artificial conditioning unities (files and above all volumes), which did not reflect the original stratification of the records, thereby disturbing the archival bond.

In conjunction with the archivists' fervent activity the interest of public administrators for archives management began to decrease: public interventions concerned claims relating to the archives of dead notaries, the building and repair of places of preservation, the purchase of wardrobes, and the engagement of employers.

Saviolo's methodological choices were continued by the following archivists: Giuseppe Revese *coadiutore della cancelleria* and Francesco Santagnese, deputy chancellor (from 1772) and then chancellor (from 1792). They are documented only by the sources created during the period of their activity in the chancellery: their backgrounds are unknown. Almost certainly they, as notaries, shared a refined education with their colleagues: in Padua, thanks to numerous cultural institutions (university, seminary, academies), one could approach the erudite world. Unfortunately, however, Saviolo's order was modified: the volumes artificially created were untied and new volumes were tied with different records.¹⁹ Consequently the finding aids, created previously, became useless, because Saviolo's cross-references concerned *tomii* (i.e., volumes) already destroyed. As for the archives of dead notaries the civic Council required a summary list and an analytic list of names in order to ensure the administrative consultation by particular people too. Thanks to the name list of notaries it was possible to locate the needed document.

In the second half of the 18th century in Padua, as in in other towns, the first

18 G. Bonfiglio-Dosio, *La politica archivistica*, pp. 21, 78–79. On age of the “catasticatori” see F. Cavazzana Romanelli, “‘Distribuire le scritture e metterle a suo nicchio.’ Controversie archivistiche ed erudizione ecclesiastica a Treviso nel secolo XVIII,” in Paolo Pecorari, ed., *Amicitiae causa. Scritti in memoria di mons. Luigi Pesce*. (Treviso, 2001), pp. 257–84.

19 G. Bonfiglio-Dosio, *La politica archivistica*, p. 23 passim.

historiographical consultations took place (for example by Pietro Vanzi in 1776), according to the well-known phenomenon of historical research on archives sources, supported by Ludovico Antonio Muratori.²⁰ More or less everywhere historical researchers looked for archival documents and began to analyze public and private sources, found especially in family and ecclesiastical archives. Firstly in Padua a group of historians carried out some significant erudite studies that influenced the archivists' sensibility and their work.

Record-keeping in Padua: 1797–1884

Another significant turning point of Padua's archival history – as elsewhere in Italy – dates back to the end of the 18th century. The fall of the Republic of Venice caused the scattering and – sometimes – the loss of the archives created during the Venetian age.²¹ In this period a new method of current archives management was introduced: the registration and classification of the documents as they are created.

Padua's municipality adopted registration in 1805 and devised a classification plan divided into 29 *titoli* (i.e., divisions) in 1807.²² In addition to Francesco Santagnese – who worked until 1805 and arranged some analytic indexes and summaries during this period of institutional change – in municipal archives there was also Antonio Checchini, author of some analytic finding aids and erudite *repertori* (indexes).²³ A report by Checchini, dated 5 August 1822, illustrates the municipal archives, where archives created by the Venetian administration were also accepted, after they were recovered some-

20 Arnoldo D'Addario, "Lineamenti di storia dell'archivistica (secc. XVI-XIX)," *Archivio storico italiano* CXLVIII (1990), pp. 3–35, especially see pp. 15–19; Elio Lodolini, *Lineamenti di storia dell'archivistica italiana. Dalle origini alla metà del secolo XX* (Roma, 1991) (Beni culturali, 13), see pp. 64–65; E. Lodolini, *Storia dell'archivistica italiana. Dal mondo antico alla metà del secolo XX* (Milano, 2001), see pp. 112–14; but above all Robert Henri Bautier, "La phase cruciale de l'histoire des archives: la constitution des dépôts d'archives et la naissance de l'archivistique (XVIe-début du XIXe siècle)," *Archivum* XVIII (1968), pp. 139–49.

21 On the political and institutional vicissitudes of Padua from 1797 to 1813 see Giulio Monteleone, "Padova dal trattato di Campoformido alla caduta del regime napoleonico (1797–1814)," *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova* LXXV (1986), pp. 115–33; Yole Toffanin, *Il dominio austriaco in Padova dal 20 gennaio 1798 al 16 gennaio 1801* (Padova, 1901); Giulio Monteleone, "L'occupazione francese di Padova nel 1801 (16 gennaio-6 aprile)," *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova* LI (1963), I, pp. 137–74; II, pp. 57–102.

22 Giorgetta Bonfiglio-Dosio, "La struttura dell'archivio comunale di Padova prima dell'adozione del titolario Astengo: un caso nel panorama veneto," in Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, *Labirinti di carta. L'archivio comunale: organizzazione e gestione della documentazione a 100 anni dalla circolare Astengo. Atti del convegno nazionale (Modena, 28–30 gennaio 1998)* (Roma, 2001) (Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato. Saggi, 67), pp. 207–55; Andrea Desolei, "L'archivio del Comune di Padova tra cultura e amministrazione," in G. Bonfiglio-Dosio, *La politica archivistica*, pp. 37–40.

times on grocers' stalls. The first archival work for Antonio Checchini was to recover the archives of previous institutions, which were missing and scattered. Thanks to his diligence, we can today read the ancient documents of the Republic of Venice in Padua. In fact, Padua's situation was very different, if compared, for example, to that of Venice, where a State institution charged with archival preservation was established early (1816)²⁴; in Padua a State institution charged with archival preservation was created only in 1948. Padua's municipal administration took the responsibility and burden of the safety of archives created by ancient governments. It worked actively, motivated by the desire to recover public memory, according to the general trend in other little towns in Italy. From 1798 to the first half of the 19th century, the archival concentration work was in the hands of municipal archivists (the civic Museum, which was at the same time Museum, Archives and Library, was founded in 1825, but it did not accept scattered archives from the town and the country until 1845²⁵). Checchini devised a plan for ordering archives: influenced by the classification plan system, he decided that ancient records had to be arranged in thirteen divisions called *riparti* and some analytic indexes had to be created. Later, he suggested that the volumes be untied and new volumes tied according to different criteria compared with those chosen by former archivists. However, after calculating the intervention expenses, he suggested that tied volumes should be kept while only loose documents should be tied in new volumes. Fortunately, this plan for a new destructive arrangement was not carried out: but the question on the ancient documents organization remained unresolved.

The discussion on archives systematization continued after Checchini's death. Giuseppe Roncati wrote a new report on 27 December 1824; Arrigo Arrigoni, archivist from 1828 to 1836, drafted a list of some printed books, preserved at that time into the archives and now into the civic Library, and made a classification plan arranged in four hierarchical levels, in order to organize historical archives by copying the current archives keeping system. Arrigoni made up his mind to use registration books, subsequently compiled, as finding aids. His plan was carried out by his collaborator, Giacomo Tomat.

On 10 September 1839 the abbot Vesentini made a new classification plan, arranged in twenty-two *titoli* and intended for historical archives; examples of *titoli* included in the plan are:

24 The last overview on the Venice Public Record Office history is by Maria Francesca Tiepolo, "Introduzione," *Archivio di Stato di Venezia*, into Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali – UCBA. *Guida generale degli Archivi di Stato italiani*, IV (Roma, 1994), pp. 869–81. Francesca Cavazzana Romanelli, "Gli archivi della Serenissima. Concentrazioni e ordinamenti," in Gino Benzoni and Gaetano Cozzi, eds., *Venezia e l'Austria. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi storici* (Venezia, 28–31 ottobre 1997) (Venezia, 1999), pp. 291–308.

25 See Andrea Moschetti, *Il Museo civico di Padova. Cenni storici e illustrativi* (Padova, 1938).

1. estimi e discendenti imposte
 - 1.1. estimi
 - 1.1.1. polizze d'estimo
 - 1.1.2. fonti regolative
 - 1.1.3. operazioni conseguenti
 - 1.2. imposte
 - 1.2.1. *intendenze*
 - 1.2.2. imposte pel principe
 - 1.2.3. imposte per la città
 - 1.2.4. atti conseguenti.²⁶

But he did not compile any finding aids because he died before he could start this work. In 1843 Luigi Ignazio Grotto, who died in 1844, illustrated Padua's archives vicissitudes from the 17th to 19th centuries and also described the ordering and inventorying work of archives produced by different institutions, in addition to municipal administration. He praised particularly Checchini's work concerning the safety of precious ancient documents.²⁷

After Grotto's death, Andrea Gloria, professor at Padua University, eminent scholar of palaeography and local history was elected archivist. Three interventions of his are particularly significant, because they profoundly marked Padua's municipal archives.²⁸

Firstly, he rearranged the historical archives, which were distributed in fifty-two classes: this operation represented the definitive triumph of arrangement according to subject and of the retrospective application of the classification plan to historical archives, as well as those produced by institutions different from the commune. Examples of the classes included in Gloria's plan are:

1. statuti e atti del consiglio maggiore (1430–1806);
2. atti del consiglio dei sedici (1594–1805) or 11. atti fiscali (1423–1715);
12. processi criminali or 16. instrumenti notarili (1200–1600) or 29. registri mortuari della città (1598–1810).²⁹

26 1. Estimates and descending taxes; 1.1. Estimates; 1.1.1. Insurance estimates; 1.1.2. Regulatory sources; 1.1.3. Consequential operations; 1.2. Taxes; 1.2.1. Superintendencies; 1.2.2. Taxes for the Prince; 1.2.3. Taxes for the city; 1.2.4. Consequential acts (translation by Prisca Giordani).

27 G. Bonfiglio-Dosio, *La politica archivistica*, pp. 35–36.

28 Andreo Desolei, *L'archivio del Comune di Padova tra cultura e amministrazione*, pp. 40–45.

29 1. Statutes and acts of the major council (1430–1806); 2. Acts of the sixteens' council (1594–1805) or 11. Fiscal acts (1423–1715); 12. Criminal processes or 16. Notarial instruments (1200–1600) or 29. Mortuary registries of the city (1598–1810) (translation by Prisca Giordani).

Secondly, Gloria organized the recently founded institution of the Museum–Archives–Library, which was planned and carried out according to the current conceptions on undivided preservation of all town memories.³⁰ These activities that took place in Padua were part of a widespread trend, which was influenced by the *Risorgimento* requests for the re-evaluation of Italian history with its local peculiarities in order to strengthen national awareness. These ideas were also confirmed by a National Meeting on Statistics, in Florence in 1867. The interest of the historians for archival sources became more intense and research was understood to be a civil mission aimed at restoring national identity.

Gloria's third intervention was to separate, both physically and institutionally, the historical and current archives. The physical separation was carried out in 1871 when the new Museum seat was built into some rooms of the Minori's convent, called "il Santo." During the following years (and until 1884) almost all documents were brought together in the Museum. Only current documents were left in the municipal offices.

Record-keeping in Padua: The 20th century

The institutional break involved a clear-cut separation between the historical archivists' career and the records managers' career. The museum director's post was always given, after a strict competitive examination, to graduate people with a wide knowledge of this subject, who preserved Gloria's systematization. In current archives, on the contrary, there was a progressive loss of qualification of the staff: the consequences for the archives management were disastrous.³¹

The lack of qualified staff resulted in some improvised solutions, among them the distorted use of the classification plan. Particularly, Luigi Dalla Lasta, archivist-records manager (i.e., "protocollista") from 1934 to 1948, introduced a third divisional level, ambiguously called *file* in the national rules too, and a progressive numbering system of the files, independent from the ranging in category and class; for example: cat. 2 beneficenza, opere pie, assistenza: classe 1. beneficenza ed opere pie; fasc. 101: Circolari; fasc. 102: statuti e regolamenti degli istituti locali di beneficenza; fasc. 103: deliberazioni, bilanci, conti; fasc. 104: Congregazione di carità.³²

30 On civic museums in Veneto see Gian Maria Varanini, "Tradizione municipale e metodo storico. Le riviste dei musei civici veneti tra Otto e Novecento," in Mariella Magliani, Marilena Varotte, and Girolamo Zampieri, eds., *Centenario del Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova: 1898–1998: Atti della giornata di studi* (Padova, 2000) (Quaderni del Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova, 1), pp. 11–31.

31 A. Desolei, *L'archivio del Comune di Padova tra cultura e amministrazione*, pp. 45–50.

32 cat. 2 Charity, religious charities, assistance: class 1. . . . and religious charities; file 101: Circulars; file 102: Statutes and regulations of the local institutions for charity; file 103: Deliberations, balances, accounts; file 104: Congregation of charity (translation by Prisca Giordani).

This system prevented the archival management of the files: in fact, files were not conceived as concrete archival pieces, each relative to a business action, but as the third level of the classification plan. In about 1934 the municipal administration went further: all the previous documents since 1885 were reclassified and the original order was reversed. Owing to the archival incompetence of the Padua's *protocollisti* some bad practices were introduced into the municipal offices charged with records keeping. The archives structure and the characteristics of finding aids have partly conditioned historians' approach to the records: analytical searches for a specific piece of information have been more frequent than synthetic and complex searches.

In 1948, when the Archivio di Stato (i.e., Public Record Office) of Padua was founded, it received the documents created before 1884. The records created after 1885 were left in the various offices of the municipal administration that had produced them.

Record-keeping in Padua: Today

At the end of the 20th century the municipal administration became aware of the situation and formed a work team, to which I belong, that planned and started some interventions directed at reconstructing an efficient archival management system. To date, the following has been accomplished:

1. An inventory of all the municipal archives was made in order to identify the main problems and to suggest some solutions.³³ The inventory revealed the actual extent of the municipal archives and the conditions of their physical preservation (damp warehouses, excessive load, fire danger, etc.).
2. A new seat for archives was built, where the documents were re-housed. Today this building is already insufficient and Padua's public administrators are planning to enlarge it.
3. The archival service was completely reorganized. With a public competitive examination Padua's municipal administration chose an archives director with a degree and specialization in the field.
4. The archival staff was increased and existing managers were retrained. The courses lasted one year and were reserved for about 200 employees from all administration offices.

The Padua archival staff and municipal administration stimulated reflection on classification and the development of a new classification plan. In 2002,

33 G. Bonfiglio-Dosio, *Relazione sul censimento del patrimonio archivistico del Comune di Padova. Proposte operative per la concentrazione del materiale nella nuova sede e per la realizzazione di un servizio archivistico comunale, presentata alla giunta comunale il 12 ottobre 1998*. Manuscript.

the *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali* (Department for Cultural Heritage and Activities), the Italian institution charged with State archives management and oversight of public and private archives, created a national working group explicitly charged with proposing some models for the municipal archives management. Archives staff of the Padua municipal administration are participants in this group; one of the proposals of this group is the new classification plan for current archives.³⁴

Conclusion

I was able to study the development of Padua's municipal archives thanks to the availability of specific sources over a long period of time. During the years when I was studying this matter, I came to understand that archives history is very important in order to authentically know how some critical situations originated and developed, what solutions were carried out and what methods proved most suitable.

The Padua case is not the only one, but it is extremely significant, because it demonstrates many kinds of archival problems, solutions, methodological mistakes, that may be found in other towns and institutions. In Padua the archival management choices were often incorrect, compared to other situations. But the concomitant presence of negative factors provided an excellent learning experience in finding new solutions and developing more effective methods and policies.

34 Giorgetta Bonfiglio-Dosio, "L'attività del Gruppo di lavoro sugli archivi comunali: riflessioni e commenti," *Archivi per la storia* XVI/2 (2003), pp. 239–63. See the classification plan at <www.anci.it/archivi>; <www.anci.org>, <www.storia.unipd.it> and <www.archivi.beniculturali.it/amministrazionearchivistica/direzione generale/servizio/progetti>