

## **Dissertation Evaluation**

FOR A DISSERTATION THESIS FOR THE AWARDING OF  
THE EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC DEGREE “DOCTOR”

Author of the review: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ralitsa Simeonova Todorova

Field of higher education: 2. Humanities

Professional direction: 2.2. History and Archaeology

Doctoral program: “Documentation, Archival Science, Paleography” – Archival Science

Topic of the dissertation thesis: “Formation and Preservation of the Documentary Resource of  
Sofia University ‘St. Kliment Ohridski’”

Author of the dissertation thesis: Ilonka Stoyanova Petrova

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Anna Kostadinova Kochankova

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### **GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE AUTHOR OF THE DISSERTATION**

The dissertation thesis is authored by Ilonka Stoyanova Petrova - a doctoral candidate in independent preparation in the Department of “Archival Science and Methodology of History Education” at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. Ilonka Petrova is a recognizable figure among the archival community in Bulgaria, as a long-term employee and head of the University Archive of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, where she has worked since its establishment in 1998 until present. Her qualification and expertise are conditioned by her interest in archives, dating back to her student years. In 1998, she graduated with a Master’s degree in “History” with a specialization in “Archival Science” from the Faculty of History at Sofia University, and in 2014 she successfully completed the Master’s program in “Documentary and Archival Management” at the same university. In addition to purely archival activities, Ilonka Petrova has extensive experience in supporting researchers and readers, as well as in preparing specialized exhibitions. It is worth noting the active participation of the doctoral candidate in

scientific forums organized by the Department of Archival Science and Methodology of History Education.

The dissertation is the result of Ilonka Petrova's years of work and research, with the author noting that she used her time outside of her official duties to write it. The author shares that the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent reduction in daily workload gave her the opportunity to systematize the information accumulated over the years. During the research process, she consulted numerous foreign sources and publications, especially from university archives in the USA and Western Europe. Ilonka Petrova has studied the activities of the Section for University and Research Institution Archives at the International Council on Archives and the Section for College and University Archives at the Society of American Archivists. She has also researched archival legislation in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc.

Ilonka Petrova is the author of numerous publications related to university archives, including articles about the archive of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". These research works and publications mark the emergence of the idea and initial steps toward the present dissertation. According to the author, the topic of university archives in Bulgaria is current and insufficiently studied, which makes her dissertation thesis even more valuable and contributory.

The dissertation thesis is titled "Formation and Preservation of the Documentary Resource of Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski'". The abstract presents the structure of the dissertation thesis, which includes:

- General characteristics
- First chapter: University archives - models and practices
- Second chapter: The documentary heritage of Sofia University until the creation of a centralized archival network in the country
- Third chapter: Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" - a source for supplementing the State Archival Fund
- Fourth chapter: University Archive of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", current state and concept for its development

- Conclusion
- Main contributions of the dissertation thesis
- List of publications on the topic of the dissertation thesis

The dissertation is based on years of work and research conducted by the author. Throughout the exposition, several key documents are published in their entirety. For the purposes of the research, normative documents and scientific literature on archival science and documentation were used. The author notes that in some cases, assumptions were made or memories were relied upon when sufficient written information was lacking.

## **RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC**

The topic of university archives in Bulgaria is undoubtedly relevant and still insufficiently researched. The dissertation examines the formation and preservation of the documentary resource of the oldest higher education institution in Bulgaria - Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The study has the potential to be useful and applicable in the practice of other universities in Bulgaria, presenting models for organizing work with documents in the higher education system, as well as models for archival and documentary management.

## **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION THESIS**

Ilonka Petrova's dissertation thesis is dedicated to the formation and preservation of the documentary heritage of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The work examines university archives, considering their role in preserving historical memory and supporting academic activities. The topic is relevant due to the lack of comprehensive studies on the formation of the archival resource of specific institutions with a long history in Bulgaria, especially those that have passed through different systems for document management and preservation.

The dissertation is structured in four main chapters that trace the evolution of university archives and their importance for the preservation of documentary heritage, with a focus on the history of the University Archive of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The first chapter examines the state of research on the topic, emphasizing that the topic of the formation and preservation of the documentary resource of Sofia University is completely

unexplored. Despite the rich academic tradition of reconstructing the history of the university, there is a lack of specific studies on the chancellery tradition and clerical practice. The first chapter, entitled “University Archives - Models and Practices”, offers an in-depth comparative analysis of models and practices in university archives in Europe and the USA. It traces the historical development of archives in leading universities, providing a comprehensive review of their working methods through the study of university websites, documentation of the International Council on Archives, and the Society of American Archivists. The research shows that most university archives have a long history of documentary preservation, extending back in time for decades and even centuries. Particular attention is paid to collections of ancient books and manuscripts, oral history collection programs, and video recordings of university events, emphasizing the active role of archivists as chroniclers of university life.

The second chapter is dedicated to the structure of the university chancellery with a view to preserving the documents of Sofia University until the creation of a centralized archival network in Bulgaria. It examines in detail the issues surrounding the emergence of the idea of forming the university chancellery, the tasks and functions of the secretary and archivist, as well as the regulations and specific activities for preserving, using, or destroying documents, as well as attempts to acquire and preserve documents of personal origin. The chapter analyzes university regulations and instructions governing the activities of the chancellery, as well as efforts to acquire documents of personal origin. The specifics of the archival organization are also presented, including the division between “current” and “completed” archives, as well as the methodology for arranging documents.

The third chapter of the dissertation thesis, entitled “Sofia University ‘Kl. Ohridski’ - a source for supplementing the State Archival Fund”, traces the historical development of archival affairs in Bulgaria, emphasizing the creation of a centralized archival system in the country and the transformation of Sofia University into a fund creator for SGODA. The chapter examines the role of Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski” as a source for supplementing the State Archival Fund. It follows the discussions in the Academic Council from 1958 and the subsequent campaign of the state archives to accept archival funds. The chapter presents a critical analysis of the state of documents at the university and measures for their preservation.

The fourth chapter emphasizes the transformation of the archive into an independent structure from 1998 and describes the main activities of acquisition, processing, and evaluation of documents. It examines Sofia University as a source for supplementing the State Archival Fund (SAF). The doctoral candidate traces how the collection and preservation of documents at the university have been carried out over the years. Ilonka Petrova focuses on the regulatory framework and organization of work with documents at the university and examines the functions of the archivist. This part of the dissertation also describes how the digitization of the documentary resource stored in the University Archive has been prepared and is currently proceeding. Problems related to the protection of personal data in the archive are also analyzed. The author aptly quotes César Gutiérrez Muñoz, who states that “The University Archive ensures the activity of the university by guaranteeing the chronicle of its history”. The chapter emphasizes the importance of interaction with specialists in document processing and the role of the archive in promoting university heritage. In conclusion, it is noted that the archive of Sofia University has developed as a full-fledged university archive, corresponding to European and American standards in this field.

The conclusion of the dissertation highlights the trends in the development of the topic arising from the text and identifies main problems, while also proposing some solutions.

Ilonka Petrova also uses numerous foreign sources, including the websites of leading universities. The author notes that the lack of traditions for preserving our documentary wealth has had a negative impact on the research of the topic.

It is important to note that Ilonka Petrova has included numerous key documents, primary sources, in her dissertation, which, if paraphrased, would have lost much of the information they carry.

The dissertation also traces various aspects of the work of university archives, including:

- Document acquisition processes
- Scientific and technical processing
- Destruction of documents with expired retention periods
- Restoration and conservation

- Provision of administrative services
- Provision of information and consultations to researchers
- Promotion of archival resources
- Digitization of archival collections
- Storage of electronic documents
- Compilation of personal funds of teachers
- Work with the nomenclature of files

## **CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION THESIS**

The dissertation thesis has a contributory character, as it:

- Presents a comprehensive analysis of the formation and preservation of the documentary resource of Sofia University.
- Examines the development of archival affairs at the university from its establishment to the present day.
- Analyzes the role of university archives as part of the national archival system.
- Addresses the challenges facing university archives in the modern digital era.
- Proposes models for organizing work with documents in the higher education system.
- Emphasizes the importance of university archives for preserving cultural and historical heritage.
- Explores various aspects of the work of university archives, including their role in providing administrative services, promoting archival resources, and supporting scientific research.
- Presents the state of the University Archive of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, as well as the efforts of management and archivists for its development.

## **PUBLICATIONS ON THE TOPIC**

The doctoral candidate presents a list of publications on the topic of the dissertation thesis, which includes articles and reports published in scientific journals and collections. The number and themes fully meet the requirements for obtaining a doctoral degree.

## **EVALUATION OF THE ABSTRACT**

The abstract correctly reproduces in a synthesized form the content of the dissertation thesis. It presents the main goals, tasks, structure, and contributions of the dissertation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The dissertation thesis of Ilonka Stoyanova Petrova meets the requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”. The work has a contributory character and demonstrates in-depth knowledge on the topic, ability for analysis and generalizations, as well as well-founded conclusions. The author demonstrates skills in using rich source material, including archival documents and scientific literature.

My only recommendation is in the direction of improving communication with colleagues from state archives (especially with the State Archive-Sofia), which would be beneficial for all interested parties and for the archival guild as a whole.

The dissertation offers valuable solutions and guidelines for the organization and work of university archives in Bulgaria. It is a significant contribution to the development of archival science and documentation in the country.

All of the above gives me reason to **vote FOR** awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology to Ilonka Stoyanova Petrova for her dissertation thesis on “Formation and Preservation of the Documentary Resource of Sofia University ‘St. Kliment Ohridski’”.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ralitsa Simeonova Todorova

February 24, 2025

Sofia