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From the History of the State Council of the Russian Empire: 1810–2021

Abstract

The article is to highlight the history of the Archive of the State Council. In its composition and content of its materials, this archive was one of the most important in the system of departmental archives of the Russian Empire. At present, the archival fonds of the State Council are a valuable part of the Archival Fond of the Russian Federation. The history of the Archive of

the State Council has not been sufficiently studied. Until now, it has not been the subject of special research. The article is to showcase the history of archival theory and archiving in pre-revolutionary Russia in a case-study of the history of the Archive of the State Council and to trace the fate of one of the most important documents collections on the history of the Russian Empire. The article is based on unpublished archival documents, as well as on available research on the history of archiving in Russia and on the history of the formation of the State Council's reference apparatus. The Archive of the State Council was created simultaneously with the State Council itself as a structural part of the State Chancellery. The archive received current documents on the activities of the State Council, its structural parts, as well as its various temporary committees, commissions, and meetings. The archive also stored documents of higher institutions — predecessors of the State Council. Despite the State Council's eminence in the system of institutions of the Russian Empire, its archival staff remained insufficient, state of reference apparatus unsatisfactory. The latter was due to the peculiarities of the State Chancellery office work. However (in contrast to other departmental archives), the files that entered the archive were, as a rule, preserved. The second half of the 19th century saw an improvement in the archive's reference apparatus. The archive proceeded from alphabetical indexes in the form of books to alphabetical index cards. The card index of the State Council Archive became one of the largest and most efficient. It was a prototype of the future archival catalogues. In 1908–14, there were published 17 volumes of the State Council Archive's series. The archive was available to historians. On June 1, 1918, the archive became a part of the Unified State Archival Fond of the RSFSR. It was preserved from destruction and inappropriate re-systematization.

Keywords

Archives, State Council, State Chancellery, reference apparatus, archival series, alphabets, card index, documents publication.

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