

also to provide popular, educative information.

In 1947, the Archives Office, which had existed already before the Second World War, was re-established together with the Austrian State Archives. Seven years later it was separated from the Archives and put under the direct control of the Federal Chancellery. Since then, the Office which is primarily responsible for the protection of written monuments, has been headed by the Director General of the Austrian State Archives, who is assisted by a specially appointed staff.

### Need for a new building

In the first decade of the Archives' existence, plans for the construction of a central building for the State Archives were briefly considered. The building was to be co-financed by the Americans. The withdrawal from Austria of the allied powers in 1955, put an end to this idea.

At the time of their amalgamation, there was no need to stress the importance of the Austrian state archives; it had always been accepted, both at home and abroad, that the material kept there was of great value. The close links between the history of Austria and that of Europe and also of overseas countries illustrate the status of this institution in the field of international research. Soon after the liberalisation of the postal and travel services, the number of queries submitted to the Archives rose and it has never decreased since. The records produced in the Republic since 1918, are just as valuable for researchers as the "old" records. From 1945 onwards the period of restricted access was gradually reduced to 30 years, calculated from the time of the query.

In 1980, when the Austrian Republic commemorated the years 1945 and 1955 (the end of the war and the restitution of Austria's sovereignty after 10 years of occupation by the allied powers after the Second World War), the growing demands on all the departments of the Austrian State Archives prompted the Federal Government to launch the construction of a central building, which would "house the evi-

dence of our long history and facilitate access to such evidence", as Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky (1911–1990) put it at the time. The architectural planning of a central building for the State Archives and for a new department called *Archiv der Republik* (Archive of the Republic) started immediately afterwards.

The *Archiv der Republik* became operational in 1983. The records produced since 1918, which had been kept by the existing departments, were transferred to the *Archiv der Republik*. The *Verkehrsarchiv* was dissolved and the archival material divided between the *Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv* (up to 1918) and the *Archiv der Republik*.

The new central building, constructed between 1982 and 1986 in Nottendorfer Gasse in the third district of Vienna, was inaugurated on April 28, 1988. By 1993, the *Archiv der Republik*, which had been housed in a former factory since its foundation, the *Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv* and the *Kriegsarchiv* had been moved into the new building. The *Haus-, Hof- und Hofkammerarchiv* as well as the *Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv* remained in their original locations; only the Directorate General moved from the former building to Nottendorfer Gasse. The new archive has a capacity of 269,000 linear metres for archival material.

The new building also included a specialised library with a planned capacity of 24,000 linear metres, which was primarily designed as an archive library, but is also accessible as a public library. In addition, the central building was fitted with a well-equipped restoration workroom and a repro centre. One of the principal tasks of the restoration workroom is to preserve the files and records which were seriously damaged during the fire at the Palace of Justice and are still awaiting complete restoration. In addition, the workroom which is attached to the Directorate General provides initial and further training for restorers from Austria and abroad. Many an innovation in the field of restoring archival material was developed at the Austrian State Archives.

The main search room offers optimum working conditions for researchers; a smaller special search room is available in the library; a lecture hall

which can be divided into smaller units can accommodate larger events; and an exhibition room is tailored to the requirements of events addressed to a broader public. This exhibition room has housed exhibitions on "Austria during National Socialism. Documents on economic life 1938–1945" (1989), "Architecture between Art and Bureaucracy. 125 Years *Wiener Ringstrasse*" (1991), and "files – facts – pictures galore. Archives as a mirror of human diversity" (1995).

Moreover, the central building of the Austrian State Archives provides maximum protection for the archival material, since the depot is separated from the part of the archive that is open to the general public, and is accessible to authorized persons only.

The international importance of the Austrian State Archives has steadily increased since their foundation, and has, since the end of the sixties, been enhanced by numerous contacts with foreign countries. International bodies have attended meetings in Vienna in order to benefit from experience gained in Austria. Representatives of the Austrian State Archives are to be found in the International Council on Archives as members of the commissions for south-eastern Europe or for business archives. When cooperating bilaterally in the diverse fields of the science of history, the Archives are invariably able to contribute profound knowledge in a wide variety of subjects (such as Belgium, the Austrian forelands, the Ottoman Empire).

The Austrian State Archives were and still are the place to contact when seeking solutions to archival problems in (the former) eastern states, by no means a one-way process. There are always problems on both sides which can only be solved with mutual assistance. Knowledge and experience must be shared, and there is a not inconsiderable backlog of neglected areas in archival systems.

The fact that the Austrian State Archives currently house more than 1,200,000 archival units (fascicles, boxes, portfolios, files, maps and plans, etc.) as well as a specialised library with approximately 500,000 volumes, indicates the enormous historical responsibility this institution has to bear. The written cultural heritage of the Republic



of Austria and of the large empire which preceded it, puts a burden of special responsibility on all those working at the Archives.

On May 31, 1995, as a tribute to the outstanding work of the Austrian State Archives, representatives from archives in 15 European countries, from the International Council on Archives and the Historical Archives of the European Commission gathered in the baroque hall of the Austrian Academy of Sciences to meet representatives of the Austrian state and its academic and cultural communities. On this occasion, Federal Chancellor Franz Vranitzky underlined the significance of this 50th anniversary for the entire Republic and called upon the staff of the Austrian State Archives to keep an open mind with respect to innovations. The supreme head of the Austrian State Archives went on to say:

*"The keepers of the written heritage of a nation, the intellectual treasure houses as archives ought to be called, are treated with special attention and care in all countries in the world. This was not always so, since, throughout history, archives were frequently used to manipulate the past and the present, and those working in archives permitted themselves to be manipulated to a considerable degree.*

*The foundation of the Austrian State Archives fifty years ago is telling evidence of the fact that the Republic of Austria which rose from the ruins, was, from the beginning, fully aware of the only purpose the scientific institution 'archive' must serve: this is to provide research with the truth, even if it is not always palatable. If, for reasons of data protection or other security considerations, unrestricted access to records and files is not always possible, the restrictions ought not to be interpreted as secretiveness or as the wish to keep information from the public. In this context a warning must be sounded against generating vague theories because of the lack of accessible records. The thirty-year period of restricted access in Austria, can be reduced to twenty years in justifiable cases, and is less stringent than in other countries, even in the West. For those working in the Austrian State Archives it is not always easy to meet the variety of requests submitted to them, but they always do their very best.*



Work in the restoration room of the State Archives: records damaged by fire are being cleaned by hand, a seal is being removed from a document.



*The tasks of archives are by no means limited to 'satisfying clients' wishes'. All the archives in this country are first and foremost academic institutions, equally committed to research and to the arranging and processing of archival material. The close link between archives and the science of history is reflected in the courses offered at the universities of this country, and the wealth of publications issued especially by the Austrian State Archives*

*has consolidated the reputation of this institution beyond the borders of Austria."*

The motto of the International Congress on Archives held in Bonn in 1984 was "The Challenge to Archives – Growing Responsibilities and Limited Resources" – which still holds true for archives throughout the world. Meeting this challenge is one of the major tasks of Austrian archivists, in particular

those in the Austrian State Archives. The efforts made with this purpose in mind must not be allowed to curtail the varied activities of the archivists or to harm historical research in general.

The road leading the Austrian State Archives into the next fifty years of its existence and into the third millennium will certainly not be smooth, but, in view of the tasks to be coped with, it will be all the more interesting.







Ceremony in the main hall of the Academy of Sciences on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv on May 31, 1995. Federal Chancellor Vranitzky giving a speech.



# The Family-, Court- and State Archives

Leopold Kammerhofer

## The history of a "department"

The history of the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* as a "department" of an administrative body dates back to the middle of the 18th century; the archival material itself (documents, manuscripts, departmental records and files, correspondence of various origins, maps and plans, autographs of "celebrities" of the past) which is kept in the archives at No. 1 Minoritenplatz naturally dates back much further. Specially trained staff are in charge of approximately 250,000 archival items, of which approximately 80,000 are (parchment) documents or international instruments and about 3,000 are manuscripts. The oldest "piece of history", a parchment diploma of Emperor Louis the Pious (778–840), is dated 816 and forms part of a chronologically arranged "Allgemeine Urkundenreihe" (collection of treaties, diplomas and deeds). Like the record series this covers a period up to the end of 1918, that is to say up to the end of the Danube monarchy.

A decisive factor in the history of the archives and their current holdings was the double function of the Habsburgs as rulers of Austria (from 1804 emperors of Austria) and heads of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (until 1806). The archives contain the records of the supreme authorities of the Habsburg state, of the supreme bodies of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation and of the authorities in charge of the administration of the imperial court, together with the records and papers relating to Habsburg family matters, hence providing a virtually "unlimited" variety of information to the scholar. The individual archival series document significant areas of Austria's constitutional, administrative, cultural and economic history. The diplomatic correspondence in the *Staatenabteilungen* (foreign country series) as well as the records of the State Chancellery and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs illustrate the position of the Habsburg state within the system of international relations from the early 16th century to 1918/20.

Thus the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* is a rich source of material on diplomatic and state history and also contains a variety of information on non-European history. "Private messages" in bequests or in the family archives of the ruling house permit intimate glimpses of both everyday occurrences deemed unworthy of historiographic attention and of epochal decision-making. The shortlived or changing competence of authorities can be traced through the archival material as can the development of the high-level politics of the social elite. Researchers into both social and cultural history will find a wealth of source material, for example in the aulic and demesne archives and the court records of the *Reichshofrat*.

The worldwide historical interest in these archival treasures collected over a period of 1,100 years, which have been repeatedly presented in exhibitions to a broader public, is illustrated by the fact that the search room is visited every year by a total of 1,000 people from all parts of the world. Compared with the thirties, when the daily number of researchers was 34 and thus equalled the number of foreigners frequenting the average small spa of the time, there has been little change. As in the past, about half of the researchers come from abroad with the objective of extracting certain secrets from the archives by reading and processing personal papers and of seeking a way into history by painstakingly working through handwritten material in different languages. Scholars come to the archives seeking answers to questions which usually concern the present. This relevance of historical research to our times generates a lively dialogue between the past and the present, which from time to time awakens the archives - seen here as a repository of information and a community of staff members - from their slumber in a dust-covered past which seemingly has little or nothing to do with the present.

It is a fact that all the academic disciplines dealing with historical processes have to address the question of how to hand down and to preserve written

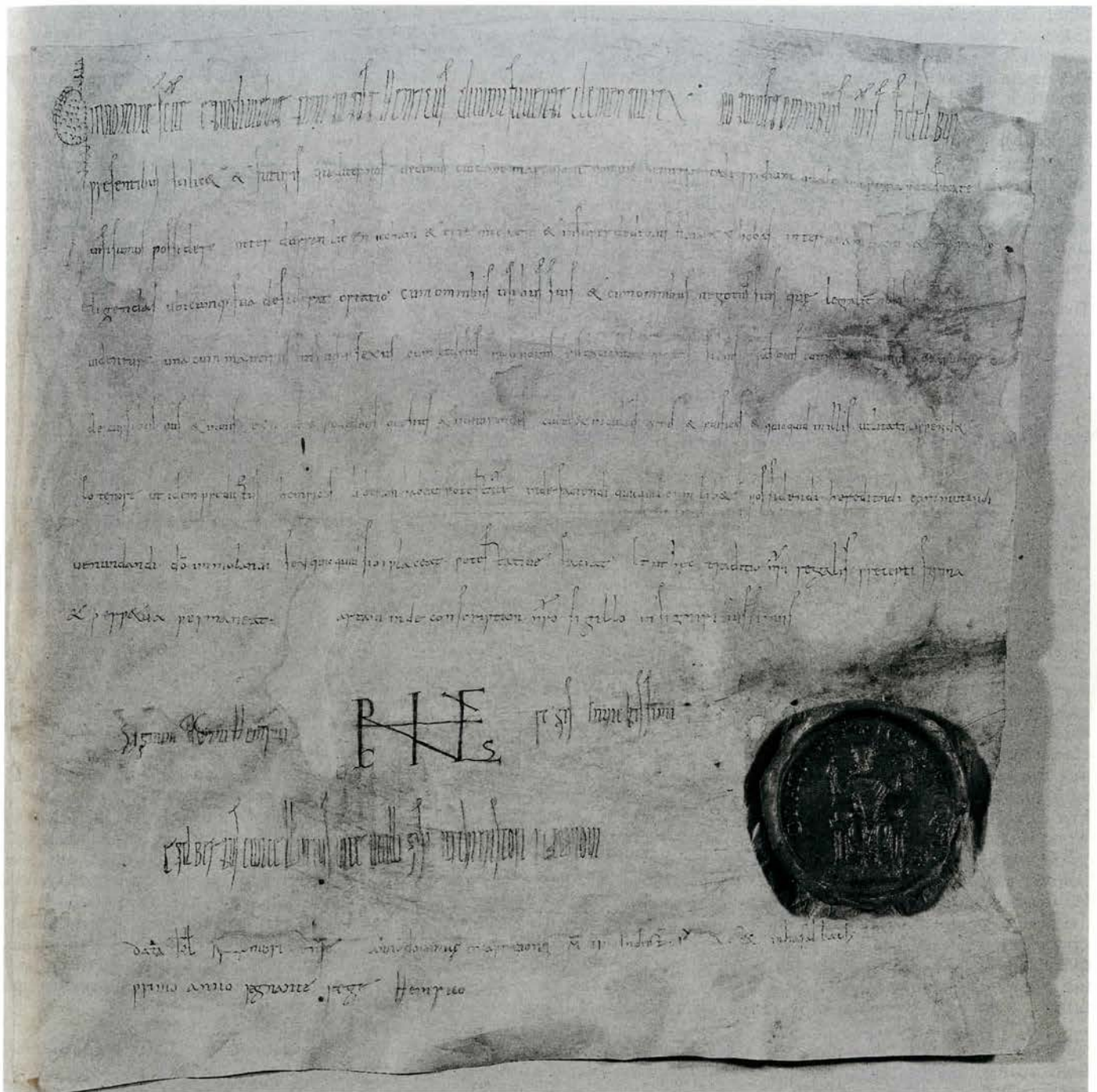
sources but, although their work is inexorably bound to these sources, they are constantly faced with the additional question of, "What may have been lost, what must have existed, while watching out for every clue indicating a distortion and rearrangement of reality through the manner in which it was handed down, and developing criteria designed to rectify matters" (Arnold Esch).

## An archive "zur Verteidigung Unserer Erfolgsgerechtigkeiten" (for the defence of Our vested rights)

In the course of the state and administrative reforms carried out under Maria Theresia, the *Geheime Hausarchiv* (Secret Family Archive) was set up in the autumn of 1749 in Vienna as the repository for family and state documents. The name *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*, still in use today, was coined in the 19th century. In the 18th century, the task was begun of sifting through the "archives" of previous Habsburg residences (Prague, Graz and Innsbruck) for muniments pertinent to the "defence of Our vested rights" and relevant to the Austrian state as a whole, and of putting these together in one collection. It was no coincidence that this took place at the time of the so-called "Austrian War of Succession" and of Maria Theresia's conflict with Bavaria and Prussia over the inheritance she received from her father, a political and military conflict over the legitimacy of the rule of the "House of Habsburg". The current *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* was set up in 1749 by order of Maria Theresia as an administrative unit forming part of the central state administration, for the purpose of combining old "archives" and newly produced departmental records.

The nucleus of the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* is formed by the archives of the Dukes of Austria. The earliest records, dating from 1137, mention an archive of the Babenbergs at the Abbey of Klosterneuburg (Lower Austria), and records from 1299 mention the monastery of Lilienfeld (Lower Austria) as





depositories of the Habsburg muniments. At the seat of the ruling dynasty in Vienna, a "state archive" (also "Secret Family Archive") was set up, whose fate can be traced through the various agreements on the division of power made by the Habsburgs in the 14th and 15th centuries, in which the archive is mentioned as part of the family treasure. The regulations for the ducal house-

ould adopted on November 18, 1364, stipulated that the archive was not to be divided, but at the latest by 1411 it was divided into regional units in accordance with the division of rule and power and kept in the individual residences. Subsequently each archival section was augmented with the records produced in the individual spheres of power under Habsburg rule.

One of the oldest documents in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv: King Heinrich II invests Margrave Heinrich von Österreich with the domains between the rivers Liesing and Triesting and between the rivers Kamp and March, in what is now Lower Austria.



When Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519) acceded to the throne, archival material was stored in the forelands, in Vienna and Wiener Neustadt, Graz and Innsbruck. The comprehensive plans of Maximilian I for the centralisation of the archival material and the creation of a single archive of the “*Erzhaus*” (House of Austria) in Innsbruck failed to progress beyond the preparatory stage, but received new momentum and were partly implemented under Ferdinand I (1503–1564).

### The Vienna Treasure Vault in the Imperial Palace

The early 16th century, the beginning of modern times, when the prevailing trends were towards territorialisation and bureaucratisation of the administration, marked a turning point in the history of the *Schatzgewölbe* archives. After the conclusion of the Treaty of Brussels (1522), division of power between Charles V and Ferdinand I, and subsequent to the battle of Mohács (1526, upon the death of the Hungarian king, the Habsburgs succeeded to his territory, most of which was occupied by the Ottomans) re-organisation was necessary. Hence Wilhelm Putsch – the nephew of a certain Johann Spiessheimer better known as a humanist by the name of Cuspinian (1437–1529) – was commissioned to make an inventory of the “imperial” and the “Austrian” archival material kept at the residences in Vienna and Innsbruck. The result of his work, carried out between 1527 and 1547, was, on the one hand, a multi-volume inventory of the old stock of Habsburg records, which is now kept in the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*, and, on the other hand, the amalgamation of the documents kept in Innsbruck and in the *Wiener Schatzgewölbe* at the Hofburg.

The *Wiener Schatzgewölbe* does not hold a uniform body of archives, but contains, together with the above-mentioned archives and records of different provenance, records of ruling families (Counts of Gorizia/Tyrol, Lords of Wallsee) whose sovereign rights had passed to the Habsburgs. Apart from certain changes caused after 1564 by a further partitioning of the territories ruled by the “Casa de Austria”, the archive remained unchanged until the middle of the 18th century. This is to say that the *Wiener Schatzgewölbe* remained a

document archive of (late)-medieval character, while the documents and contracts produced by newly created authorities were transferred together with the pertinent files to separate registries.

In addition to the *Wiener Schatzgewölbe* and the “current” departmental registries, document collections on matters concerning the *Erzhaus* were accumulated by the administrative aulic units from the 16th century onwards. In the mid-eighteenth century, these collections were kept in the treasury, the repository for the crown jewels, under the supervision of the lord high steward, the head of the royal household. Under Emperor Ferdinand II (1578–1637), the records of the administration of Maximilian I were transferred from Innsbruck to Vienna, so that even at that time historical imperial archives were kept at the Vienna Imperial Palace together with the so-called “treasure archives”, the records of the royal household (from the registries of the individual offices and services of the aulic administration) and the departmental registries of the empire.

These formed the basis of the individual document archives and departmental registries in existence at the time of the foundation of the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*. Occasional attempts at re-organising the historical archive early in the 17th century and again under Emperor Charles VI (1685–1740) never went beyond ineffectual decrees and short-lived endeavours by assiduous civil servants. It was the urgent need to furnish historical-legal proof of the right to rule the hereditary domains which lent enough weight to the “*Decretum instructivum*” of Maria Theresia (1717–1780), issued on September 13, 1749, to bring about the establishment of a permanent institution. We simply lack, writes Maria Theresia, the “family records and other secret papers and documents, left behind in the former residences of our ancestors in their domains, with which to defend our vested rights vis-à-vis the various pretenders ...”.

### Establishment of an effective archival structure

The archivist of the Bohemian Court Chancellery, Theodor Anton Taulow von Rosenthal (1702–1779) conceived

a plan and – upon approval of his “*Ohnmaassgebigen Reflexiones*” (humble reflections) – was put in charge of screening and shelving the existing stock of documents and records. The importance attributed to his work is illustrated by the appointment of Johann Christoph von Bartenstein (1690–1767) as Director of the Secret Family Archive (1753). He was the man to whom Maria Theresia, as she herself put it, owed not only the existence of “her” monarchy but also her personal (private) happiness. Upon Bartenstein’s resignation, the empress decreed in 1762 that the Secret Family Archive and the State Chancellery be subordinated to the administrative-political central office for matters of state (foreign affairs) and matters concerning the imperial house, an office which had been set up in 1740. This tradition of assigning the archives to the body responsible for foreign affairs and for the imperial family was retained also after the revolution in 1848. Until 1918, the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* formed part of the Imperial and Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The outcome of Taulow von Rosenthal’s efforts to create an “armory for the defence of the legal titles of the *Erzhaus*” by combining partial holdings of the *Wiener Schatzgewölbe*, the Vienna treasury, the archives in Prague, Innsbruck and Graz, was not an amalgamation of closed archival bodies, but a collection of medieval documents to substantiate sovereign rights, selected in accordance with more or less arbitrary principles of reference. When it was being established around the middle of the 18th century, the “Secret Family Archive” contained approximately 13,000 diplomas, treaties and deeds, 82 fascicles and 30 manuscript volumes.

Apart from the material transferred from the Lorraine family archive added after the death of Francis I Stephen (1708–1765) and from the archives of the monasteries which were dissolved under the rule of Emperor Josef II (1780–1790), no major additions were made until the early 19th century, when records were transferred from the then central and regional authorities of the Habsburg state and from the supreme authorities of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (imperial chancellery, *Reichshofrat*).











claim to all archival material in the possession of the state (*Staat* – State).

The archives of the monasteries dissolved under Joseph II (1741–1790), the records of the Spanish Council and of the central agencies in Vienna in charge of the Italian possessions of the Habsburgs were transferred to the *Centralinstitut* in Vienna together with the remaining records of the central authorities of the Austrian lands, the treasure vault archive in Graz, the imperial archives (imperial chancellery, *Reichshofrat*), the archive of the arch chancellor of Mainz (1852) and major holdings of the state chancellery.

#### From the *Centralinstitut* to the department of the Austrian State Archives

The second half of the 19th century, saw the acquisition of the archive of the state council and that of the imperial diet 1848/49 as well as parts of the court archives. This happened after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, which put an end to the reform plans pursued in the forties and fifties of the 19th century. Plans for the establishment of general state archives (1848) subordinate to the Academy of Sciences as well as the project proposed in connection with the expansion of the city of Vienna (1857) of amalgamating all state archives in one imperial archive attached to the Ministry of the Interior, came to nothing. In 1858 the following statement was made: “As regards the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* increased centralisation (...) would be called for. (...) However this complex question which requires extensive preparatory effort is currently not up for discussion.”

The events of 1859 and 1866/67 (defeats suffered by the imperial armies at Solferino and Königgrätz, loss of Lombardy and Venetia by the Habsburg monarchy) abruptly ended these reform plans and led to the hasty removal of archival material to temporary shelters and subsequently to the handing over of material (Venetia). These moves were badly organised as was the handing over of archives to regional institutes (archives of the regions) and to Belgium. Partly guided by selection principles tinged with personal interests, and all too often dominated by “opportunistic, unclear notions”, holdings which constituted integral units



In a diploma of July 28, 1298, the Electors notify Pope Bonifatius VIII of the election of Duke Albrecht I of Austria as Roman King.

were fragmented, given away or kept back. “As so often in the management of archives it appears advisable to limit activities to the theoretical identification of connections and to refrain from moving archival material on a large scale, because such transactions frequently fail to be completed and may end in even greater confusion”, commented Ludwig Bittner (1877–1945). What had become obvious after 1867, however, was that the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* remained the archive of one central authority, namely the ministry of the imperial house and of foreign affairs.

Between 1902 and 1904, the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* moved into the new archive building on Minoritenplatz. For more than a century, it had been housed in the wing of the imperial chancellery in the imperial palace and, owing to the growing volume of its holdings, especially in the second half of the 19th century (cabinet archive, court archives), it had run out of space and been forced to store part of its valuable holdings in unsuitable branch repositories. To this day, the archive has been housed in this listed building, which, when constructed, met all the requirements of a state-of-the art archive. Be-