



ARCHIVES: THE IDENTITY, STARTING POINT FOR INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT. (1)

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Identity, today is a widely debated concept and of concern to many in all fields. The identity, in itself, is not incompatible with the new, with innovation, with integration, with a dialogue, but is incompatible with invention and with ambiguity. It goes beyond tradition. Identity is compatible with the interdisciplinary, with permanent revision and actualisation, which today does not allow for rest.

This problem is not new to us. Our French colleague Jean Favier, in the first national Congress for Archivists, which took place in Grenoble in 1983, told the audience: “Make sure they know you, make sure they are aware of that you exist, make sure they do not confuse you”. Aim at that they will not confuse you!

In 1992, in the Spanish archival environment, a new voice was discovered: “identification”, which from this moment onwards is officially placed in our professional vocabulary and which is connected to identity. With this, a function is distinguished, which allows to recognise those functions and activities of the Organisations in order to establish documental categories and so it is made possible to work in depth on the documents in order to evaluate, organise, describe and transmit these later. This is a primary need among the archival functions. If the identification, as has been said, affects and transcends the whole archival context, in order to transmit this, terms are required which represent the most genuine concepts. This is why the meaning of the words is so important, which name these concepts.

For its side, integration – an open and not exclusive concept-, which is the sum of and determines the multiplication of the results, demands the integral elements to have a

sharp knowledge of each one of them in order to, apart from what they suppose and mean, reach the maximum profitability in the course of any integrative process. A good example is the SPIGA Project. The confusion, ambiguity, the discretion, enemies of the identity is also incompatible with integration. The parts have to be recognisable for which we have to go back to language.

A good example of archival integration, as we shall see, can be taken from Records Management.

This development, which at the same time is progressive evolution and activation and implies the simplification and the economy, sees in the integration its guarantee to success, and the Archives do not remain at the margin.

Identity, integration with perspectives for development is the coordinate from which it has to part at the time of the introduction of an electronic administration, which, as an archivist, I will analyse from its archival dimension.

It is difficult to speak of identity when, speaking in terms of seamen, we loose the orientation. We loose the orientation in our profession when we are incapable to transmit essential concepts and this we manage to do frequently starting from the distortion of language. And without doubt, the distortion occurs, today, due to a desire for the new and for invention, which leads unavoidably to being wrong.

With regard to this, we can recall one statement recently made by Miguel de Delibes, on his eighty-sixth birthday on which he said:” Each day a new word is invented. But everything can be said and written in a simpler way”.

It happens that we look for changes in rigid terms, and what is worse, their forgery. The substitution of the new one has such an impact, that by generalising the use of the new

term we stray away from the essential contents. This is happening in the case of documents for the administrative archive, forged as administrative documentation, since documentation is a term in its own, essential to documentalists, and used by the archivists instead of the archival document, is inadequate, if not incoherent. And yet we have arrived today, by law, at identifying documentation as archive documents. We insist in this because we think it important for its transcendence, not only for reasons of methodology but as a responsibility on the professional level.

Lázaro Carreter commented not long ago, that bad use of language could pervert the vocabulary. And it occurs to me, the perversion can even reach the profession, reaching into a discipline, if we strip it of its identity.

Language, the scientific vocabulary, plays an undeniable role in transmitting the identity. However, the archival language as any other has to try to prevent the generalised contamination of the loss of the value of words, justified by the acceleration, which impedes reflection and agrees with “does it really matter in the end?” Contemplation and the recognition of the multiplication of language and of vocabulary is not spared when in the process of integration, and needs to be applied in an obligatory sense in all the current activities in society.

The presence of these specific languages does not have to imply change, nor distortion, nor forgery for neither of them. In our case, the archival terminology has to coexist in an integrated manner with the vocabulary of the Quality Management Systems, with the language of the information technology, with the Glossary for Documentation, with the vocabulary of the Systems’ general theory, with the administrative argot.

Having made this brief introduction, we will situate the archival identity in the context of an electronic administration.

The lap from the analogical space to the digital space does not cause the destruction of concepts; rather, it clarifies and even simplifies them. The archive, the archival document will remain the same essentially, but stripped of elements, which were not substantial even though in the analogical world we would attribute these to them. Of the three meanings, which we gave to the word “archive”, the third, which was identifying it with the locality, with the building, will be eliminated since today the substitution of a building with a server seems a common case. Of the same stew, this occurs with the archival document, which we rid of its physical unit, but being electronic the archival document does not cease to be testimony and test to administrative behaviours and to obligatory actions, and therefore it will remain necessary not to confuse it with other documents. It is not the electronic support, which determines the nature of the document of the electronic archive.

The records management and the administration of archives also transcend in as much as their digital space however we cannot do without the administrative management, of which these form part.

All the recognised functions to the archives and those attributed to the archivists, who have lately been called “archive function”, remain in place. In fact, what will occur is a change of place at the time of its succession in time. Nearly all of these, it is anticipated, will grow in potential as well as be simplified from their point of regularisation onwards.

The succession of office archives, central ones, intermediate and historical ones, which we estimated as part of the different ages of the documents, will also be simplified, reduced to only one virtual archive, saving costs.

From the recognition of the archives’ identity onwards, and the concepts and terms related to these, a well designed and managed electronic administration will not allow



for documental rubbish, which we today are tired of and harms us, as useless documents will not be stored, since these will not be produced. We will not get worked up with the elaboration of the pictures' classification, which have been a battlefield for many archivists, because its regularisation will precede and proceed from the recognition of functions of an administration and from the design and catalogue of the administrative procedures through which these are manifested.

The identification of the series from this approach onwards will be given automatically and due to its denominations this will not allow for arbitration, or for ambiguity. The transfers, reduced, automatic and in its place, without delays, without complaints; the foreseen and automatic eliminations, and the immediate access, with the exception of the legal restrictions of which the users can attain knowledge of in each case, will avoid protests and complaints.

I suppose you will not deny the type of video clip which I have offered you, which represents the utopian world of the archivists.

In order for this to occur, without doubt, many investments have to be made, as much on the economic level which will have to be considerable, as well as in design, from the recognition and respect for the identities onwards which affect all the factors which help to integrate this new managements' method. An Identity which cannot remain in theory but has to be applied in a practical manner. At the time of electronic administrations, the archivist identity has to be regarded as an indispensable element.

I have given an outline of the setting in which I will situate myself, and therefore we will go back to go deeper into the fundamental concepts to which I have already referred, not before I make an observation.

The identity, by this I am referring to the archival one, sometimes clashes with some legal texts, which may cause its disfiguration. Still, the identification of the archive remains a touchy subject. It tends to be identified with containing documentary material, with a documentary base, despite being integrated as archival documents. They do not cease to be realities which are prone to synonymy. The identity is also confronted with literal translations, which do not transmit the realities, which the original concepts really mean. We will see this when we talk about records management. It also clashes with a tradition which is often misunderstood, with accumulated vices, which the archival theory, or the archivists have not been able to get rid of. At these heights, we continue to talk about “feasible collections”, a redundant expression, when the artificiality is inherent in the collection, as the “feasible series” which make the conjugations difficult of series in a collection. Another case being the series: “parchments” or “variety volumes”.

So we embark upon the fundamental concepts. In this way, the term “archive” can be defined in many ways and at this moment demands precision together with actualisation. The identity of “Archive”, when we refer to the institution, does not mean to save, to store, nor to preserve, nor the three things at the same time.

The DRAE, at the moment of defining the word “Archive”, says that is the place where public or individual documents are stored, matters, and the collection of these documents. This is to say, continent and content. During a lot of time, this double meaning was emphasized, however, if we look at the most recent definitions, an important evolution can be recognised, in the sense that, one side of the “archive” is regarded as institution, taking weight from the place, which is not seen as fundamental, and on the other hand, the “archive” of documentary content with an organic attribution.

However, the double aspect documentary institution/content generally recognised has not been interpreted in the same way, the second meaning has been defined in many



texts- like we said before- as a documentary base when the “archive”, as documentary content, may not always have to coincide with a documentary base.

Even though the archive is still defined by “cultural institution”, perhaps due to the fact of being related, in more than one case, the competences of the same to the organs or in the fields of culture, the archive in the first place, is seen as an institution or a management unit within the organisations. The statement seems favourable again, at this stage, “archives belong to management before they are classified to culture”. Therefore it seems convenient that the competences on the archives and their content are transferred to organisms with horizontal or transversal functions. Fortunately, nowadays this is more often the case.

Until now, the archives, as institutions, form part of the Archive Systems integrated into sub-systems and networks, to which different concepts have been applied. But progress continues to be made. In a future which can be called the present, the electronic administration with the standardization, and the regularisation of the administrative procedures and a unique production of the records, will limit the documentary output to the necessary and essential one only by electronic means and will reduce the archive number of any net to one electronic archive of the institution in question only, without its concept, task and functions have to vary in a substantial way.

At present, the evolution of the concept “archive” is leading to definitions of a systems’ perspective with the meaning of institution. For this we have the definition made by the Project of the Law for Archives, from the Ministry for Culture, which states: “Corporative management system which contributes in an effective manner through a methodology to the definition of the *processes of administrative output* guaranteeing the correct *creation* of the documents, their processing, conservation, access and communication”. In this, the integration is present. This means defining it depending on the functionality of the archive and we are talking about a methodology which cannot be but

multidisciplinary. Obviously, a difference exists between this definition and those which we regard as traditional; however no contradictions exist between them. We shall see.

Facing the importance which during time the archivists gave to the continent when defining the term “archive”, lately- as I already mentioned- the institution tended to be emphasized from its functionality onwards, going back to a list, which without doubt does not refer to any other but the one we have recognised as “archive function” of which the records management is a copy. In fact, in the majority of cases when we defined the Archive as institution, we have drawn upon the functions and archival interventions of the documents’ lifetime. Archival functions which until very recently were carried out by the archivist indoors in the archive, and were limited to the known ones for the documents’ processing. Today the archive functions are helped since they are carried out in advance; they are integrated with others, and in more than one case, in collaboration with other professionals. Therefore, the term “corporative management system” should not be off-putting, which comes into being to stress the fact that an integration unit or responsible organ of record management exists, as one of the manifestations of the administrative management shows, for which the interdisciplinary accounts for.

Some observations regarding the definition. Using only and exclusively the definition, which refers to the administrative production processes, omit the private archives. On the other hand, by prioritising the functionality of the institution, the documentary content is left without meaning. When are we referring to creation and are not referring to its production? Is creation immediately identified with production?

If today the definitions of the archive are applied to their functionality, we have to concentrate on what we consider the “archive function” and its evolution.

If we take a look at the archival bibliography, we see that we have distinguished between on one side the archive functions (collect, preserve and establish for a purpose) and, on the other side, those which we have included in the documentaries' processing which are those related to its classification, ordination, description and, if to a lesser extent, its installation. The diffusion was included in the description. When we talk about records management in the present, as an integrating and dynamic process, by accepting the recognition of the documents' age to which we have possibly added a quarter of a year - coinciding with the permanent conservation-, by incorporating it as a term and concept on its own through its identification, by defining the term more, we give more consistence to the evaluation process. All the archive functions- all the recognised ones for the archive, the ones ascribed to the archivists for the documentary processing, and some new ones, like the creation of documents, and others not so new ones, like the identification and the evaluation, will successively happen and be integrated into record management, and will reach beyond the own archives.

There are many who claim changes of the archive functions and without doubt some of them are and the remaining ones have been renewed. New ones exist for sure, because they did already exist without the denominations used today, like the identification and the evaluation and, new ones, like those applied to the creation of the documents. In the case of this last one, we cannot ignore the fact that this is only an archival function like other ones, since this demands an interdisciplinary and co-responsibility which exceeds the exclusive competition and archive methodology. The creation, in Archive administration, as I understand it, is not product of the documents even though these are confused when they are identified. In this respect I have to comment something which I am concerned about, and which threatens the identity which is applied to us. The translation of the ISO 15489 does not but offers us a continuous substitution of creation for production and as a consequence does not stop to talk about organisations/creative entities of documents and not producers. And it



occurs that the archival documents are seen as, in comparison to books, productions and not creations, referring to the producer.

For sure, the majority of functions are from times before and it is good to recognise these as such. What is new to the whole of them is the integration, the change of position for some of these in relation to the rest, the implementation of all of them and their regularisation. Not only the description will be affected by the regularisation.

The identification which is about getting closer to the production context of the documents in order to recognise these and their grouping for the functions which give them their own name, is related to the creation of documents, is necessary and prior to the hour of classification, by describing these and evaluating these.

The preservation is not the primary, main and emblematic function anymore. It has given room to functions favouring the evaluation and service. Funnily enough, preservation and elimination are going hand in hand reaching a future together where the elimination and the permanent conservation will be an automatic process. The preoccupation for the preservation, of concern to the historical archives for a long time, and recently forwarded to the central archives, today has to be initiated, even before the creation of documents. In order to achieve this, our contribution- at the hour of creating the documents- to prevent the unnecessary document production and therefore avoid the abusive and expensive storage of useless documents. The preservation, however, takes on new objectives before the electronic documents for which it has to look for the permanence and inalterability of the information. The preservation of the authenticity and the integrity will demand more precautions and also higher costs.

The evaluation, which is closely related to conservation, has taken on a new importance since it has helped to solve the problem of the gathering of immense

volumes of useless documents, and depends from it. This will result a small problem once the electronic administrations have been set into place, which will control the document production, which will set an automatic elimination into process. It could appear that the evaluation will exist as given. The evaluation will be brought forward and with it, the analysis of the values of the documents will be advanced up to the point to when the documents still do not exist.

Few archival functions will in this way benefit from these interdisciplinary and novel qualifiers. The evaluation is related to the document production, and requires the identification and determines the selection to elaborate the evaluation tables which establish the conservation limits and transference calendar. The change is that great, that it has in fact affected its terminology. The word “to expurgate” only identified with the elimination process, has been replaced by others such as evaluation and selection as successive stages of a process, which concludes in two options, that of elimination or conservation in which administrative transactions and interventions can be recognised which are of purely archivist nature. Its significance is that great, that it has determined the need for the creation of specific multidisciplinary organs within the respective Systems for Archives. We are referring to the qualifying commissions whose position and competences will suffer changes at the moment of an electronic administration.

In relation to the evaluation process, in Spain like in other countries, two measures of conduct are being proposed, related to prevention or restoration, depending on how we look at the documents which are to be created or at the documents which have already been produced. The first measure prevents the unnecessary storage of useless documents, rationalising its production, commencing from their creation, the second measure concerns the produced and recently accumulated documents, which have not been subject to an evaluation process. These are two ways of conduct facing the same problem, difficult to be avoided, but which allow us to check on an evolution and its changes but which do not interfere with the essence of the evaluation. The

administrative dimension of this process and the advantages which are derived for the institutions will have inspired the administration to take on a more efficient compromise related to participating in the evaluation, because the concern for this subject, despite all the legislation and regulation, still remains more archival than administrative. Fortunately, the co-responsibility manifests itself more efficiently and positively in an electronic administration.

The so-called “archive function” also forms part of the functions related to the documentary processing, which have also progressed and developed, without changing their identity.

Among the archivists a term used to exist, meaning “classification”, which used to be applied to the organisation of the archive documents. This term and not the function seems to have been substituted from 1992 onwards for that of identification. We already referred to its appearance. Now again we have recovered the term “classification”, because it forms part of the identity of the archival methodology, without rejecting the identification, which, terminologically did not exist then but yes as a prior period for classification and necessary for the description.

The recovery of the term classification has come accompanied by the application of international rules for archival description which require the archive documents precision of its hierarchical categories in order to obtain an adequate representation, - the multilevel description- from those onwards which are to be called description levels- which have no other function but to represent the organisation levels, once again demonstrating the close relationship between the description and classification. A relationship which also forms part of the archival identity. There is an important evolution in the term classification. The organic classification multiplied the classification of the documentary bases during a large period, given the diversity of institutions structures and which is worse, due to their constant changes. We have

been substituting the organic classification for a functional one during some time, looking for stable models for the bases of the institutions with similar functions and administrative procedures which are alike. Many application models are on offer. Today the projects of electronic administrations that are enlarging the base dimension start from the identification of family functions and the regularisation of their procedures, making this functional classification easier from the beginning.

If the identification from the context onwards is to recognise, the description is to represent that which we have recognised in order to transmit it. The newness of the description which continues to maintain a close connection to the classification which is no other than its representation, is without doubt being in the path of standardization from the international norm onwards ISAD(G) and from its complementary the ISAAR (cpf) and waiting for adoption by Spain, the NEDA. The representation of the records, as a usual demonstration of the combined documentary unities, from the recognised essential elements in norm, also may be foreseen at the time of the document creation.

In this succession of functions we have not been referring to another traditional recognised general fact of the archive institutions: that of recollecting, which, to mention briefly, by giving the term a shade of pity – perhaps this is why the Canadians have opted for calling it “acquisition”. We speak about transfers and out-goings. The novel thing for her is not found in the term but in the method, in its regulation from the recognition onwards of the different modalities from the incoming documents- not from the bases - nor from documents-, together with the out-goings. Facing the future transfers, as the most usual way of the incomings, will reduce their number and will be automatized.

All these functions and their changes which have not supposed a loss of identity, have promoted the archive service, beyond the limitation which during many years, was



prioritizing other users. A service which today has to be submitted to mediation of its quality from analysis onwards and verification of indicators.

Leaving behind the “archive function”, not without briefly mentioning an expression which has to do with it: “organisation and processing” – which refers to the documents which make us doubt if the organisation actually forms part of the archival processing. And now, we will look at the archival document.

There is a close relationship between the archives and archival documents, which does not seem this way when inserting the terms, since there are no archives without documents, but yes archive documents without archives.

The identity of the archival document requires as much attention and delimitation as the archive does and since many definitions exist for this one, the need for precision is greater and more obligatory than before.

During a lot of time when the archivists used the term document, they did not have the need to define it since its opposite was the book, and they were difficult to confuse. Document is a common term which, situated in the environment of the so-called documentary sciences, is convenient to all, but does not specify any of the three. The need for a word which determines it more, like archival document, is very convenient when nowadays the administrative archival document tends to be confused or substituted with “informative or administrative documentation”. It is not a trivial question, the difference is a question of methodology, the ends and the responsibility, which differ greatly when you talk about one or the other.

The term documentation with its different meanings (scientific, technological and administrative ones) is a term in its own right and as such legitimate for the documentalists. As we all know, documentation is nothing else but information as an

elaborated product, may they be books or archival documents. From these, what matters is the informative value, not the probative one, nor its link to the original one. The documentation is not produced in a natural manner, inevitably, like the archival documents. Contrary to this the archivist does not elaborate information but transmits this in the most trustworthy manner as possible, making possible its access and its knowledge.

The archival documents have to do with management and administrative procedures and demand an integrated records management that until today started with the document production and which has today been moved forward to the creation of these. The administrative documentation is the result of the use of the administrative archival documents with a methodology for capturing information, unique to the documentalists who are not in charge of creating, nor producing the archival documents.

It has to be acknowledged, from my point of view, which is not shared by some of my colleagues, and further more clashes openly with some legal texts which prefer documentation to archival documents and in some, inclusively, documentation is defined as archival documents. As an archivist, I appeal for their distinction.

The archival document, a valid expression in Spain, for the administrative document and for that of permanent conservation, without doubt would have to be redefined, from saving it of losing its physical unity, without harming its essence, so it can continue to be regarded without prejudice of its recognition of its three-fold-service. It occurs that many of the definitions remain in the generalities of the documents, and not of the archival document. When establishing the origin of human kinds' activities, any document gives occasion to the inclusion of this definition. Others speak of functions and activities when the document is testimony and evidence to acts, even though these are a reflection of these ones and give rise to the series. A new definition which is

required and determined by evolution cannot remain in the apparently modern use of a language that does not help but to define it more. This is the case of the incorporated definition in the decree 263/1996 of February the 16th on the use of information technology and telematic techniques by the General State Administration, which talks in their article 3 of “identified structure and entity which contains text, graphics, sounds, images and any other class of information which may be stored, edited, extracted or swapped between information processing systems or users as a differentiated unit”. A definition for the archival document that is acceptable for a book, for a newspaper or for a scientific document, but is of no use for us.

The term “expression” has been criticised, in many of the legal texts, at the moment of defining the archival document, but I do not know until what point “entity” would be an appropriate substitute, when according to the DRAE, all what is, is and has entity.

If what matters is the need for precision of concepts of “archive” and of archive document, no less important is that of records management, essential to an electronic administration. The models are many, outside and within our country, therefore the selection needs to be clear.

Records management is an imported expression but has vices, not in its origin “records management”, but from its transmitted translation onwards by the Canadian Archivists, which cannot be said to be a literal translation. “Records management” does not offer doubts when “records” is the same as administrative documents, meaning: management of administrative documents, whereas the expression “management of records” or “records management” does not restrict the concept of documents/records to the administration – at least in our case, as we have been able to witness, in more than one occasion, at explaining or applying this one is opting for its limitation, which remains incoherent.

The management of administrative documents, from their creation onwards, carried out by so called record managers from the approaches of economy and efficiency in a context where the archives do not exist until after the decision for its permanent conservation of the documents, which necessarily had to clash with the our archivist reality. In Spain, we did not count with, nor count today with the person of document manager, without prejudice of recognising in the archivist an evolution from conserver to manager. We have always seen the archivist as responsible for the administrative documents, whose documentation process proceeds from, from the documentation production in the offices onwards, through the archives from a network (of management or from the office, central, intermediate and historic).

The immediate acceptance of the term which the reality did not manifest, was followed by a period of assimilation during which it was not clear if we were to distinguish between a process of attention to the administrative documents at the margin of those of the historic documents, checking in numbering and recognising the functions which integrated the documental management. The adequacy, after the checking, has taken us, more in practice than in theory, to an integrated document management which has favoured the disappearance of the barriers between the administrative and historic archives, adapted to our archivist reality which is having her most adequate application at the time of the implementation of some electronic administrations. With all of these, plural definitions exist for these expressions which go beyond the existent erroneous ones between archive as an institution and archive as documental content, and between archival documents and documentation. It has been said of her, that it is function, process, group processes, system and activity. It has been identified with archival processing and without doubt- records management is more than this. It appears surprising that in a recent bibliography on this Topic, the Spanish archivists are ignored, perhaps without wanting to. In a recent archival law one uses discretely, undistinguished and with arbitrariness: “management of archives” “documentation management”, “records management” without them missing in other texts other expressions such as “total management” and “records management and archive” Are



we talking about the same? According to the last one of the expressions, doubt is understandable if “archive” is referring to the documental content or to the archive as an institution, even though we are inclined for the second option in the way that it does not make sense that it refers to the first, and being this the case, according to this expression, does a relationship exist between the archive and the documentation management if the used conjunction tends to separate these and distinguish between them? Does a unit or organ exist independently of the archive for the coordination of records management? A final expression that also circulates: “records management and archival processing” that can explain that the processing does not form part of the records management. This ambiguity and with it the insecurity have transcended to the bibliography and some regulated text.

I will limit myself, not to go on too much, to two definitions, apart in time. The first is which the Dictionary for archivist terminology of 1995 offers us, by the Ministry for Culture, that by including “record management” refers to a “processing of administrative documents” that defines as “a whole of procedures and technical operations those, based on the study and analysis of the production, the processing, utilisation and information container in the documents, has as a result the establishment of regulations over the transfers, the elimination and/or permanent conservation and accessibility of the documental series”. A scarce and plain definition, justified due to the date in which it was written.

We cannot take from it the creation or documents and it does not refer to the organisation or description. It chooses to refer to the access of the documental series and not to the documents. It does not put into context, the rationalisation, nor the efficiency and with it the profitability. On the other hand, its adscription of records management to the administrative documents remains clear.



The second one is included in the paper produced at the work shop by the Ministry for Culture presented in the DLM Forum of Barcelona, in 2004, who defined the management of electronic documents like this: “a system, which includes the creation of documents, allows for the archivistic control from the beginning right through until the end, processing and documents service under permanent value for the historical and operative investigation and also to offer information to the citizens”. Here, the processing is included. The expressive reference to documents of permanent value is misunderstood, and on the other side, the enumeration of the service should be probably reversed. Further on in this paper, we find a simple annotation with respect to records management is made: “effective archival control from the electronic documents from their *creation* onwards, guaranteeing their preservation and access *through time*. It is evident that the measure of time, -beginning and end-of the records management differs to the one before from 1995, and in the last one.

For the elaboration of a future book, I have had occasion to analyse, with certain detention, the definitions for records management in the Spanish bibliography and in the legal texts, Spanish ones, and it made me conclude that there is no unique position, nor for estimating the beginning or the end of it, nor to recognise the functions/operations/processes which integrate them, neither to recognise who are the people in charge, which determines diversity in the approaches. With respect to the beginning, one talks with certain discretion of creation and production of documents and I understand that there is a difference of nuance between creation and birth/production. These are two different moments in time and in space. With all of this, in the referred work, finishing in past September, I have dared to conclude the following: Records management looks for and has to find, from a creative and planned epoch, the rationalisation and control of document production adequate with its design, avoiding the unnecessary documents and as a consequence the reduction of storage, the conservation of these which represent the societies’ memory and above all the

efficiency of its use and service of the documents. But apart from this it will have to achieve the following:

- Anticipate its classification from its recognition onwards of the family functions
- Identify the series from the design onwards from the administrative procedure
- Foresee the indispensable elements for the identification of documents and their posterior representation
- Foresee the physical conservation from the necessary migration onwards of documents, looking at their authenticity and integrity
- Make the administrative proceedings more easy
- Generalise and achieve a return on the use and utility of the documents
- Guarantee the legal safety, the transparency of the administration and the citizens' rights.

I understand and I defend, and with it I do this because I am referring to previous experience, that records management – which is but a copy of the “archive function” – is only one for the archive documents and not for the administrative documents and others for the permanent conservation. It should be a continual process for all of them, based in the unity of the concept “archival document” and, in certain measure, in the beginning of the documentary age, it cannot stop with the elimination of the majority of them, nor begin by the collection of useless documents.

The planning of electronic records management corresponds to the holders of the documents through the competent organs of the archival system with the indispensable collaboration of the archivists, the archives being the responsible units for their execution. The records management is not synonymous to the archival process, however this forms part of it. If this one did not have more control than that of the archivist and his realisation would not surpass the physical space of the archive, the



records management - and many of the archival functions can be foreseen and been done in advance. I insist in that the records management is not the exclusive responsibility of the archivists and further more does not respond solely to criteria, functions, processes and archivist techniques, although these are priorities. It demands an institutional backup and determines the integration within the administrative management, with epochs where administrative criteria predominate and others that can be recognised as purely archival ones, without these missing which summon criteria and positions. Among the first ones the design of the procedures and the administrative procedure, among the second ones, without doubt the description, among the third ones, the transfers and the other incomings and outgoings of documents and their evaluation. This requires-abundant-integration of archivist and administrative functions, incorporation of the principles of management of companies, supported by the information technologies and the communications and also co-responsibility among archivists, administrative managers, lawyers, process engineers and information technologists.

In this records management, all the recognised acts are integrated in the “archive function”, meaning, not only the traditional ones for recollection, preservation and use but those which affect the documental process and all the new ones or over-sized ones, to which we have already referred. For sure, always interrelated and in the frame of rationalisation with economic ends and efficiency in better and larger service areas. The first one of these, without doubt, without still being generalised, that of creation, and not of production which is distinct to the one before, of which the archivists cannot be further away.

In the same way, within a general administration, there is an economic management, an urban management, a sanitary management and there is also a records management and, like in the first ones, units have to exist managed by the same one, with specific dependencies, with enough resources being assigned, with delimitation

and planning of the interventions, with regulated procedures and recognised processes, with ends and objectives, with control of functioning and quality measure.

I will allow myself to mention the quality measure to which the archives can be beyond control, neither the archivists, as regards the quality being connected to the administrative management and as a consequence to the records management and the archival management and has to be a manifestation of its development in the general administration environment and therefore also for the documental environment.

This quality measure has to be recognisable, that is to say perfectly identifiable in order to apply the statistical techniques which facilitate coherent results. However, still a lot needs to be regulated in this field. The majority of the quality cards which have been published, and there are many of them, are a remedy of the records management. On the other hand, the indicators which until today are usually extracted from the annual memory of the archives, sometimes they surprise for their denominations, for their adjectives and for their measure units. It happens, that not even the transfers, nor the loans, so common among us, are defined in the same way in different regulated texts and less so their process results familiar. What are searches for consultation? Or deliveries by consultation when the consultation always imply a search and demands a devotion from the soliciting person? On the other hand it may seem unnecessary the diversity of consultation typology in reason to their result: “resolved”, “derivative”, “without information”, when all of them, it occurs to me are resolved, positively or negatively, when all of them have been adequately attended and answered. Of the same nature, the diversity of loans which also belong to an unnecessary typology, like; “attended loans”, “resolved”, “offered within a deadline”. It seems that the mixed and discretionary use of the terminology can go beyond the conceptual confusion and the distancing to identity. We hardly do a favour, in this case concerning the archives, when from the descretionarity we cannot obtain quantifiable data which allow us to make a rigorous scientific analysis from the statistical techniques.

In this point, like in others, the table of archives of the local administration is actually looking for models and works in the delimitation of these indicators and in the regularisation of their denominations and their measures.

Last May, the 7th European Archives Conference, celebrated in Warsaw with the suggesting title: “Archivist, a future profession”, treating related aspects to professional training, within the framework of new technologies, it was betted for the clear delimitation of our competencies and for the necessity of accreditation of the professionals. More recently our colleague Joan Boadas in a paper commented: “Archives: plan, manage, act” made a reference to the new reality with new problems “to which-according to him- we have to come to agree on with the desire of giving answers to the new settings”.

I understand that the delimitation, the accreditation and the answers cannot start but from a clear notion of identity. If we do not know who we are, how will we know what we want? We will contribute with a weak favour transmitting ambiguity from erroneous expressions onwards and with the discretionary use of these. Allow me to insist, but it is a daily case, so close, and for this not the less important – at least it seems to me- of the synonym applied to “management of documents” to “archive management” to what can be called as a third “records management and archive”, that it can be said, I believe, it is but a competent translation of the represented content by NARA (National Archives and Records Administration). In the three definitions the fundamental concepts flow together which directly affect the archival identity. When do we say “archival function and records management” what are we talking about? Of one or two? I would say of neither of them, because the records management, from my point of view, is not but the evolution and development of the archival function.



I am going to finish here. Identity cannot be invented, nor can it be lost. The identity has a price, to obtain it from here without which we cannot go on, but have to strengthen it, delimit it and progress with her together.

Seville, September the 22nd of 2006

* This text refers to the content of my next book, waiting to be published: What is an archive?