

INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY IN CATALONIA AND THE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OF ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT

It is quite common to find a series of papers at the end of the year assessing the state of a sector or project. In this case, we have reviewed different reports presented this month of June which we would like to compare and contrast. The first is [*The Technology Sector in Catalonia*](#), produced by the Technological Circle of Catalonia (CTecno); the second report is [*Una estratègia industrial per a Catalunya*](#) [An Industrial Strategy for Catalonia], issued by the Ministry for Business and Labour of the Government of Catalonia; and the third, [*La Catalunya industrial, un objectiu compartit*](#) [Industrial Catalonia, a Shared Objective], is also issued by the Government of Catalonia. All three documents contain points that connect our professional sector with the transformation of raw material, such as information on new manufactured products and services for citizens and businesses. Our main asset is no longer restricted to the documents themselves, but rather to information and to the extent to which it is turned into a quantifiable and quality element, as is the case with data. It is in this regard that we must find significant elements within these reports. If not, our reading of the reports will most likely leave us perplexed or not understanding anything. The connection between the industrial sector and our profession is thus a necessity which we must reclaim and promote. This is how ICA sees the situation in the forthcoming Girona Conference, albeit with a biased view which tends to focus the potential of archives on the 'cultural' industry. This is clearly a conception based on the traditional function of archives as serving a final purpose, and not in the sense of strengthening the industry they emanate from or helping to improve records management, for example. This perspective will most certainly be debated in some detail during the conference. In order to get the debate started, we would like to highlight some reflections based on our reading of the aforementioned reports.

Applying our added value to industries based on experience. In this sector, experience is something fostered and not necessarily something one has learned. Having said that, this type of industry includes cultural, tourism and sports industries, which are based on communication and functional creativity. According to the report *La Catalunya industrial*, 9.6% of Catalan GDP is generated by this industry and currently employs 14% of the active population. Key critical elements of this industry include: the potential excess in supply in view of a situation in which citizens consume but do not purchase; the incredible effort required to digitalise contents and services, but with a digital transition that is leaving some people behind; the trivialisation of 'culture' and, therefore, a lack of stabilisation and continuity in cultural products. At the same time, among these new trends we also find the unquestionable revitalisation that digital potential offers, the ability to provide clients with experiences and sensations, while also impregnating them with new knowledge or updated knowledge. Data

can be updated and rethought, information becomes more accessible, and documents—which are the source of this raw material—are revalued: not simply merely in order to evoke such material, but rather in terms of being able to interact with it.

Promoting the role of our professional sector in so-called ‘industrial systems’. These systems are focused on developing the efficiency of production systems. Needless to say how many times we have discussed specific ISO standards and the potential role that records management can play in improving business performance: often in an abstract way, but with examples that demonstrate their viability. In this sense, industrial systems are well aware that improvements will come from innovations in engineering and software products. Participating in their development and improving services is a clear way of revitalising businesses and also labour opportunities. As a critical point, we also observe the progressive alienation between technologies, their production, and the experiential knowledge we can offer. This alienation, which may be insurmountable, means that there is a considerable disconnection with industrial systems and real efforts need to be made to ensure that they are as effective as possible. On the positive side, we would argue that it is a sector that makes a very positive contribution to the value chain of a business and that requires its workers to be well-trained, as a result of the demands for greater business efficiency brought about by the economic crisis. Focusing our training on providing industrial systems with efficient services is both possible and necessary.

Fortifying innovation clusters with regard to records management and archive custodianship. It goes without saying that working in networks and creating a collective force to be able to face business and social challenges with greater strength, leads us to use a word which is particularly popular nowadays. And this is demonstrated in the different reports cited here, in which the concept is referred to time after time. The document that uses it the most, ***Una estratègia industrial per a Catalunya***, goes as far as to create the brand *Catalonia Clusters*. On the one hand, this emphasises the concentration of productive force, and on the other, the capacity of the Catalan industrial sector to export and promote itself internationally. Among the clusters presented, none of them include external data storage businesses, the destruction of analogue media, and records management services designed for the analogical world and also for digital formats, for example. Are we equipped to meet these sorts of challenges?

Fortifying production clusters in terms of disseminating and elaborating products emanating from data and background information. In the same way, the collecting together of all small and medium-sized businesses who currently offer applications for mobile devices, editorial production, exploitation

of historical data for new educational and cultural products, audiovisual and photographic editing, digital genealogy with searches and preservation of people's digital memory, and any others that may occur to us, to promote networking. There is a market out there, and little by little small but significant initiatives are emerging. These will most certainly be the ones to enjoy the most success at the Girona Conference, and we can assure you that they are making a significant contribution. At the same time, and as we have already noted, these initiatives also tend to promote consumption and interaction which is often one-off and short-lived. This means that, in many cases, products tend to be ephemeral. Could we stimulate a cluster that would enable all these businesses and small entrepreneurs to participate in order to promote added value for the cluster? The answer is clearly yes, whether this be by concentrating geographically, or by the virtual concentration of the collective. Once again we find that in *Una estratègia industrial per a Catalunya* no such cluster is mentioned.

We will conclude this edition with reference to the first report, *The Technology Sector in Catalonia*. One of the most significant hindrances facing the technological sector (in which the cluster businesses we have referred to participate or should participate) is the lack of demand for innovative purchases by public administrations. This lack has been pointed out by 41% of companies in this sector. The lack of scalability in the market, which is to say the lack of intermediary products that increase the quality of the end service, the weak structure of the business fabric and the prolonged lack of financing, are estimated to be significant hindrances by 35-40% of companies in the sector, which make it extremely difficult for business activity to move forward.

Fortifying two clusters with the involvement of businesses from the sector. Monetising the products offered by these companies. Breathing new life into the products of cultural and creative companies to avoid excess and lack of continuity. Fostering close links with the technological sector and continuing the digital transition with no holds barred. Encouraging public administrations to allow us to go ahead with this fortification and to insist that they back it and do not create disconnection. Believing that this move forward is possible and that it has to be carried out by businesses, but also by our own professionals. Participating actively in promotional programmes developed by Catalan industry. Identifying the current situation with solid indicators and also the way in which we intend to move forward. Being creative and innovative in all the aspects made possible by our archive information and the reconstruction of contexts that we carry out on a daily basis. Think and do. Imagine.