

DLM-FORUM 2002 Barcelona (7-8 May 2002)

This year DLM-Forum 2002 will be held for the third time in Barcelona. It is the first time the meeting has moved from Brussels or, in other words, left the administrative centre of the European Union. Why Barcelona? Spain will preside the European Union in the first half of 2002 and Barcelona is to host the Spring European Council (15-16 March 2002). There are other reasons such as the fact that 17% of the working population of Spain work for the authorities and are employed in a sector that has significant requirements on e-documentation, document management and e-government. Lastly, one important reason, which is perhaps not so easily objectified but nonetheless true, is that it is an acknowledgement of the work and effort done by Catalan professionals in standardising archives and in managing documentation in the last twenty-five years.

The DLM-Forum, as we all know, is a European multidisciplinary meeting that brings together archivists, administrative experts, archive service managers, researchers, IT specialists and representatives from the industry to highlight problems, analyse, share experiences and seek practical solutions in the processing, management, conservation and recovery of electronic documents.

It should be remembered that the DLM-Forum arose from a recommendation by the European Council (June 1994) that echoed a report written by a group of experts¹ on the situation of European archives and the need to create a framework for action to preserve collective memory within the Information Society. This memory is severely threatened by the sudden appearance of new technologies, which on one hand represent great progress from a functional and instrumental perspective, but also endanger the conservation of information in the short and long term, given the capacity to reuse digital formats and the fast obsolescence of products, which threatens the legibility of information.

The DLM-Forum'96 focused on managing electronic documentation and on producing computer programs that can be used from the outset of a document's life cycle. It also saw insistence on the need to agree upon standards that allow for the secure migration of information and ensure that the legibility of the formats that contain the information is preserved.

DLM-Forum'99 focused on the development of a benchmark computer program to manage electronic documents, the production of a training program and the start-up of an action plan (1999-2004) to ensure public access to documentation. Most of all, it appealed to the new technologies industry, in the knowledge that progress in drawing up open standards for exchange among programs would be difficult without the direct involvement of the sector.²

¹ *Les archives dans l'Union européenne. Rapport du groupe d'experts sur les problèmes de coordination en matière d'archives*. Bruxelles-Luxembourg: OPOCE, 1994.

² For more complete, detailed and accurate information on the contents and the conclusions of the two DLM - Forums, see the article by Jordi Serra. *Informe sobre el segon DLM - Forum on electronic records*.

Each of the meetings reached a series of conclusions that are also lines of action in which work needs to be done and results presented. This continuity is guaranteed by a body, the DLM-Monitoring Committee, which was set up in April 1997 and channels all the work and results arising from the recommendations of each Forum.

What measures materialised from DLM'96 to DLM'02?

- A study of the relations between the public authorities and the archive services on electronic documents and data management. This is the result of the survey made by Kevin Schürer, from the University of Essex (*Better access to electronic information for the citizen: the relationship and archives services concerning electronic documents and records management. INSAR, 2001. Supplement 5*).
- *Best practices for using electronic information* was published (appendices to the INSAR publication) in an attempt to compile all the regulations on electronic document management.
- Work is being performed on a training programme for electronic document management, E-TERM, European Training Programme in Electronic Documents and Records Management.³ This programme is based on the experience of the Dutch Archives School in Amsterdam that was directed by Thijs Laeven. This is the basis for the curricular and professional profile of expert electronic document managers.
- Work is also being done on the development of a benchmark program for electronic document management in public authorities. This involves archivists, who consider the requirements that must be met by the program, and work in close collaboration with the industry, which must meet these needs.

The DLM-Forum 2002 was entitled: *Accés i conservació de la informació electrònica: bones pràctiques i solucions* (Access and Preservation of Electronic Information: Best Practices and Solutions). At the forum, the AAC presented a paper for which a working group (November 2001) made up of Lluís-Esteve Casellas, Lluís Cermeno, Betlem Martínez, Remei Perpinyà and Ferran Agelet had been set up to write. The paper was intended to provide an idea of how electronic document management in Catalonia stands, or in other words, who manages electronic documents, what methodology is followed and how we the archivists are involved in implementing the systems that make it possible. In order to develop these points, it analysed the political, legal and social framework in which the experiences undertaken to date should be set.

Biblioteconomia i Documentació. No. 4 (June 2000). <<http://www.ub.es/biblio/bid/04serra.htm>> [consultation 14 Nov 2001]. See also the website <http://europa.eu.int/ISPO/dlm/documents> [consultation 18 Feb 2002]. For *Le message DLM à l'industrie* and the *Réponse de l'industrie des technologies d'information et de communication (TIC) au message du Forum concernant la gestion des documents et des archives électroniques*, see http://europa.eu.int/ISPO/dlm/dlm99/industry_fr.htm [consultation 18 Feb 2002]

³ See abstract at <http://europa.eu.int/ISPO/program/abst_tl_en.html> [consultation 25 Feb 2002]

On a parallel basis, work to prepare a preliminary conference that will be held on 6 May is also being done. It will be organised by the Subdirector General of Archives of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Archive Service of the Government of Catalonia and the AAC and will have three core areas:

- a) a general framework of reflection that will consider the impact of ICTs on the archivist's profession. Are ICTs changing the principles and methods of managing documents and archives? Does the impact of new technologies go beyond the mere introduction of electronic documents in our areas of work? Do they mean a change in work methods and in the public authority organisation?
- b) electronic documents in Spanish archives: the current situation. This will detail projects that have been set into operation in different Autonomous Communities on experiences of e-government and the application of new technologies in archives, in other words, on the conservation and diffusion of archive documents.
- c) legal framework for electronic documentation in Spain and in Europe.

Each area will include details of relevant experiences in the public and private sectors.

Lastly, it is interesting to consider the future structure of the DLM - Forum 2002. It is extremely useful to create a stable platform that provides coverage for and ensures continuity and guarantees that the projects arising from each Forum are followed up. A sketch has thus been made for the creation of the European DLM-Network of Excellence on Electronic Archives, a scientific network for co-ordinating and providing support to initiatives and projects for the management and conservation of electronic documents. Its immediate aims will be to boost and promote projects, to stimulate the communication and exchange of information among different initiatives and to channel economic subsidies.