

THE CHALLENGE OF E-ADMINISTRATION

For some time we haven't stopped hearing about an enormous number of new concepts that have a common denominator: *new technologies*. Words such as *electronic administration*, *electronic government* and *information society* have become familiar, but are we really moving towards a more modern, transparent and open administration?

To shed some light on this subject and to look at how it affects us as archivists, the AAC organised a conference on 24 May with the title "E-Administració-@rxivers". However, after hearing speakers on: interoperativeness or interoperability, electronic processing, digital identification and certificates, web and intranet design, e-learning; as archivists we have begun to think that all of this is in an early stage of maturation. Technology is advancing at a much greater speed than legislation, training, and definitively, to the adaptations that are being made in Administration.

In 1992, Law 30/1992, regulating public administration and common administrative procedures, already opened the door to the use of telematics and electronic media, as long as their authenticity and integrity is guaranteed.

Subsequently, the amendment of this regulation by Law 4/1999, established that it was not obligatory to submit documents that the Administration already had in its possession - the beginning of interoperativeness/interoperability. This was the signal for our public institutions to begin looking for solutions to organise their records and to plan the adoption of administrative record management systems. The adoption of international standards such as MoReq or ISO 15489 has aided in this recognition, at the same time attracting the interest of the private sector.

On the other hand, it is also certain that the process of implementation of the electronic national identity document, begun last March in Burgos, will have to facilitate acceptance by the public and give momentum to the certainly definitive arrival of e-administration.

From now on, the citizen will be able to address the Administration with a document that identifies them and is permitted to sign records electronically. At the same time, the citizen has the right to ask for a response in this same format. The right of the citizen to operate electronically is already knocking on the door of the Administration, which, in many cases, is not aware of the transcendence of all these developments.

For this reason, it's time for our institutions to get moving, to begin to act on their obligations, quickly and with a decided commitment to the comprehensive development of a policy of adequate scope to cover all the issues raised by archivists.

Archivists collectively, very demanding in the majority of cases, also have to move and make a clear commitment to the development of this new policy. We have to be the guarantors of the conservation of electronic records, but also of

their management and access, without forgetting the questions relative to their integrity and authenticity. We have to work for the regulation of the availability of records and to strengthen the policies for migration between formats and data. All the requirements that we have always demanded of paper records, we must demand of the new records. This is the great challenge for our profession, and here professionals in historical archives must also be involved.

It is true that there are many projects and pilot schemes around the world, but one gets the impression of a certain disorder and scarcity of programmed planning. The fact that experiments are being carried out inside the European Union that are not compatible with each other (for example, the case of the incompatibility of some electronic national identity documents such as the Italian and Spanish ones) doesn't help to ratify the introduction of these Information Society policies.

The lack of standard policies at a European or world level, that would have to be led by the Secretariat General of the European Union, as well as by the Information Society Directorate General, contribute to give an image of lack of planning and make the citizen mistrust the use of telematics in relation to the administration.

Without a doubt, the recognition of the digital signature is one of the key turning points for the introduction of these types of policies. Just as the adoption of 128 bit security systems in web pages that sell products and services has strengthened their use by the public, the arrival of the digital signature has to contribute to the diffusion of e-Administration.

The other key will be the common management of the records of public administrations. The creation of databases combined with online records and the trust of the Administration in records management are an historic challenge.

Today we have all the technical and legal guarantees to move forward with a true Electronic Administration. There is a lot of work in planning ahead, but there is no turning back if the Administration really wants to its work added value, achieving a more efficient and transparent Administration. One of the first steps must be the implementation of a Telematic Document Register, a step towards definitively putting electronic records on the same level as paper ones. The public demands this, and archivists must make our contribution with the introduction of record management systems, guaranteeing the quality of our work and profession.

The Sub-Directorate General for Archives is working for the prestige of archivists and for the introduction of the concept of records management to the horizontal structures in the Administration. However, as archivists are we prepared for all that is ahead of us? As professionals, both in historical records and in administrative ones, we have to work together, sharing experience and information, with the aim of electronically serving our users, both internally and externally.

In any case, the AAC believe that without a true measure of the records, it will be difficult to introduce this policy with a level of efficiency that corresponds to an open and transparent Administration.