

Archive security policies. Do we have any answers?

Well, yes, having heard all the guest speakers and the professionals who took part in the round table at VIII Symposium of Study and Debate entitled *Arxius segurs. Com protegim els documents?* (Secure archives: how should documents be protected?), it is clear that there are now some answers to the questions raised in the last editorial.

It is also the case that the other matters on archive security measures and how to protect documents have created a need for some significant work to systemise and structure the information received.

We have also seen how professionals from other fields, from their perspective, are also concerned about one of the main responsibilities of archivists: security and the recovery of documents.

First, on a European scale, in order to minimise thefts, work is being done to develop a good practice guide on archives. This is based on three core areas: risk analysis, which involves identification of both internal and external problems that occur in archive centres; second, taking stock of and training all archive personnel in awareness of internal regulations so that they know how to apply and explain these to external users and are aware of the security measures applicable in their centre; third, establishing access controls to the archive in the building, in the consultation room and in the deposits.

These are goals that we also wish to establish in our country. This became clear during the VIII Symposium of Study and Debate. Archive centres already have internal regulations that, to a greater or lesser extent, establish a series of security policies against theft, hijack and misuse of documents and, together with certain control strategies with regard to documents, succeed in dissuading criminal activities.

Individual records and registration with details of both researcher/user and of the documentation consulted is very important as a subsequent control mechanism; identification of essential documents and the creation of replacement copies, constant presence of archive personnel in the consultation room, verification of documentation once it has been consulted to check that bundles are whole, and full-scale promotion of reproduction systems for digitalisation or microfilming, are just some of the prevention policies of our archive centres.

Documents do, however, disappear. There is always a moment at which the supervisor relaxes, too much trust is placed in users, or the room has a blind spot that is not covered by the surveillance camera, etc.

When criminal acts do occur, they should be reported. We now know that we should report them to the Mossos d'Esquadra or the Guàrdia Civil police forces, both of which have groups that specialise in crimes against heritage. For a year now, Barcelona has had a prosecutor's office for heritage crimes, which has legal jurisdiction in this area. This prosecutor's office channels these irregularities, analyses evidence, investigates and brings charges, if, after valuation of the document, the act is considered to be a crime or an offence. It is also clear that valuation is a difficult task as the value of some stolen or damaged documents is incalculable due to their intrinsic nature as part of our cultural heritage. It is also the prosecutor's office that brings charges of criminal liability, and of civil liability if the culprit must pay for the damage done to the cultural asset.

In addition to formally reporting the case, it is also recommended that other centres be informed of the crime in order to prevent such acts, and that the archive authority of the respective country should also be informed.

In another respect, in the context of the information society and new document formats, security and protection controls should also be established in digital repositories of archives with original contents in electronic format that need to be preserved. This is because the security of information systems should also be maintained in order to guarantee the future validity of the heritage. We are already aware of how to keep documents on paper properly, and now need to do the same with electronic documents. Environments must be secure to prevent loss of trust by personnel and by the public in light of imitation of public web pages, mass information leakage, high e-mail fraud rates and Internet crime. These attacks do not only occur in the public authorities, but there are also cases of crime against civil society.

Risk analysis of digital repositories and the establishment of formal methodology are therefore recommended. We archivists should therefore train to take active part in this process within our institution/workplace, given that it is our responsibility to evaluate electronic documents.

In conclusion, although it seems there will always be thefts and crimes against heritage, we should nonetheless try to minimise the risk as much as possible. This is done by obtaining the maximum information on cases reported and on the perpetrators of the crimes, by implementing prevention measures, by increasing collaboration with the forces of law and order, and by improving communication among archive centre professionals in order to prevent the disappearance of documents and to increase the chance of recovering those that have disappeared.

On another note, before finishing, we at the Archivists Association of Catalonia are awaiting the publication of the [European Guide to Good Practice in Archiving](#), which will be presented to the Council of Ministers for Culture of the European Union in November, for adaptation to the specific nature and needs of the archive model of Catalonia.