

## **Innovation, the second transformation?**

The next Seminar of Catalan Archivists, the eleventh of these seminars, is just around the corner. From this year onwards we are changing the name, as can already be seen in the publicity material: this session will be known as the Congress of Catalan Archivists. In the last session, in 2005, we celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. We have therefore built up a breadth of experience in the organisation of these two-yearly meetings that is not to be underestimated. These gatherings are intended to provide a forum for the presentation, discussion, debate or simply the description of subjects that affect us as professionals in the fields of archiving and records management. It seemed to us that the term "congress" was more fitting for these periodic meetings and that it reflected the idea of the presentation of good practices and the debate concerning different ideas very well.

The theme of the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of Catalan Archivists, "Innovation and Professional Development", emerged from the discussion of the conclusion of the 7th European Conference on Archives, which was based on the theme "Archivist: Profession of the Future in Europe".

In Warsaw, delegates spoke of the need to define the model of competences for the development of the archiving profession in Europe, a Europe that is constantly expanding and that is intensively incorporating the use of technologies. The higher-level education of archivists was also a subject for discussion, together with the possibilities of reducing the differences between the various systems and making the programmes suitable for the European Higher Education Area. Lastly, there was discussion of the need to establish and share standards of content management and communication.

It seems highly appropriate to us, the members of the scientific committee, to take up these ideas and make the most of this time to reconsider our approach to the central question of the competences of professionals in the field of archiving and records management; we are already definitively in the era of the knowledge society and we recognise that this will lead to changes in the way we exercise our profession. This is why we would like to reinitiate the debate on the evolution of our professional competences within this congress.

The debate on the function and the competences of the archiving profession began in the early 1990s, accompanied by the brilliant and deservedly famous article by Miquel Casademont, *Unde veniunt ac quo vadunt archiva* (1991). At this time, it could be said that our profession was undergoing a first and deep-seated transformation. The profession has its origins in a tradition that is strongly based on historical practices involving intervention in the organisation of documents when they were no longer of legal-administrative value and had begun to acquire historical value. From this point, we moved on to the very rapid incorporation of the methodology of records management, which, to summarise, involves the intervention of the archivist throughout the whole life cycle of a document, from its creation to the point of its destruction or permanent conservation. This methodological change, spurred on by the incorporation of new archiving trends, but also in response to the demand from society for effectiveness and transparency within organisations, involved a significant change in the model of competences and led to the very radical evolution of the archiving profession.

Fifteen years after this first transformation, we are now returning to the old question of the

model of competences of professionals in the fields of archiving and records management, but this time within the perspective of innovation.

Over the last ten years there have been major changes in the social and economic model. Firstly, we have made the transition from an industrial society to the digital or knowledge society, a model that has emerged from the confluence of various technologies: IT, telecommunications and content management technology. The digital society fosters new forms of relationships and new possibilities: electronic administration, electronic commerce, electronic training.

Secondly, public administrations and organisations drive policies of modernisation and innovation that are intended to guarantee administrative effectiveness, good governance and the highest possible quality of their services.

Thirdly and lastly, citizens demand effectiveness, transparency, quality of service and new forms of participation which are as direct and as unmediated as possible, made easier particularly by the use of the Internet.

Within this new environment, which is characterised by the intensive use of technology, by the demand for effectiveness and for maximum quality of service, it seems that it is imperative to rethink the role of the archivist and the records management professional. We will discuss competences, training, quality management and standards, so that we can obtain an idea of how we can position ourselves within this new digital model, how we can provide a satisfactory response to it and what new elements we can contribute to it within a perspective of innovation.

In terms of the competences of professionals in records management and archiving, we have a series of doubts that we are sure will be shared: do new technologies result in new competences? What must we know how to do? Should we be designing records management systems in an electronic environment? In which processes within an organisation is our participation helpful, and in which is it obligatory? What processes should we be leading? There are no easy answers to these questions. However, we have what is clearly a very valuable tool, ISO 15489:2001, which can provide us with guidelines for drawing up a framework of competences.

Similar questions also emerge in the case of historical archives: how archiving centres should prepare to respond to the challenge of digital documentation. The document for permanent conservation in this new environment is not a tangible document, it is a document defined by certain metadata and that is only real in a digital environment. Who should manage the custody of documents for permanent conservation, and how should they do this?

Ultimately, our aim is to observe the evolution of the competences of the archivist in terms of both administrative and historical archives.

With respect to training, it is clear that if the model of competences changes, then the knowledge of the archivist will also have to adapt to the new situation and therefore training that is appropriate to these new requirements will be necessary and our knowledge will have to be updated in order to develop new skills and meet new challenges. But in addition to this, it must be possible for the training process to take place in a virtual environment, particularly in the case of continual training. Do we have the virtual educational tools required for the promotion of on-line training? Finally, we must consider the future of higher education, the way academic training is expected to develop within the framework of European convergence and how programmes and content are to be approved between countries.

Our aim, based on this theme, is to learn about the evolution of the training model and to find out about the initiatives put in place to make the existence of specific training possible within the European framework.

Linked to professionalisation is the demand for quality that all of us as citizens require from public administrations and private companies. We want to obtain products and above all services of the highest possible quality. Public authorities and private companies put policies and innovation plans into operation that ensure their leadership in administrative modernisation, quality of service, customer service and citizen service. Innovation is not considered only in terms of technology, but also in terms of the improvement of processes and organisation. Innovation within organisation. It is in this sphere, very probably, that professionals in records management and archivists can make interesting contributions. From this point of view, we aim to learn about experiences in strategic planning, the application of international records management standards and quality management standards.

We do not want to leave aside those initiatives that emerge from the heart of society and that are subjects for strong concern, such as the recovery of historical memory. The idea of archives as repositories of memory must form part of these initiatives and we must see what they require of our profession and collaborate with them. We will present two experiences of collaboration of this type, in the full understanding that this subject requires more in-depth consideration.

We hope that this Congress will be of interest to all archivists and we would like to encourage their participation.