



NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION'S ARCHIVES AND ARCHIVISTS.

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The future interests me because it's the place where I'm going to spend the rest of my life.

(Woody Allen)

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on analyzing the value that archives and archivists of the local administration in Spain can provide to the development and implantation of documentary management systems and electronic administration and on the new challenges that the technological change we're going through creates for these archives and archivists. I don't pretend to give a complete view at documentary management. My intention is to, on one hand, contribute to bringing the local administration's archivist closer to the regulations regarding documentary management and electronic administration and, on the other hand, share the local archives' point of view with other professionals. I have the feeling, based on conversations with fellow archivists, that much of the literature that exists on this subject is interesting but very theoretical. We all end up asking the same question: But, how do I apply all of this in my town council? That's why there won't be theoretical contributions or paradigms in this paper. I'll simply try to x-ray the situation of archives in Spain's local administration in relation to documentary management and electronic administration and provide some suggestions about how archives can help their organizations in meeting documentation requirements and in being more transparent and efficient while preserving the documentary patrimony.



Archives in Spain's local administrations have a peculiar and very interesting trajectory and characteristics that we're not going to analyze here since other fellow archivists with much more knowledge have already done so. I do, however, want to emphasize some of the values provided by the local administration's archives. First of all, they are a horizontal service that works with all of the administration and possesses a great knowledge of the administrative processes and proceedings. They are, all at once, historic, intermediate, and administrative archives, possessing a global vision of the life cycle of documents, as well as a historic vision of the organization and its evolution. In reality they have been managing documents for centuries. Besides, the archive works on guaranteeing the preservation, access, and security of all documents kept, which is one of the great problems faced by any documentary management system, especially when dealing with an electronic environment. The local administration's archivists are usually persons with good training who are always ready and eager to learn, as proved by their participation in professional events, work groups, forums, etc. That training includes ample knowledge of administrative practices and of management systems.

Within the archive world, local administration archives are particularly active. In this regard it's sufficient to cite the Work Committee of the Local Administration's Archives, which has been meeting since 1988 and who has dedicated several sessions to electronic documents with very interesting contributions¹, or the activity of archivists from the different municipalities of the Community of Madrid which have been meeting for years and organizing workshops², or initiatives such as the ones from Priego of Córdoba, where the VII Electronic Files Workshop³ has just been held.

Right now we have to especially take into account the new law which, foreseeably, will be approved within the upcoming months. The Electronic Administration Draft Bill⁴, whose first draft was presented by the Minister of Public Administrations on October 27th, acknowledges the citizens' right to interact with Public Administrations by electronic means, which logically implies the administrations' duty to provide their services this way, "guaranteeing availability,



access, integrity, authenticity, confidentiality, and the preservation of data, information, and services (article 2). This way we pass from recommendation to obligation.

The following are acknowledged among citizens' rights:

- The right to the preservation of electronic documents that make up a file by Public Administrations (the first draft talks about “acts” instead of “documents”).
- The right to the guarantee of the safety and confidentiality of personal information.

The law dedicates the fourth chapter to electronic documents and files, including the issuance of administrative documents with electronic signatures by electronic means, electronic copies (of electronic documents as well as of documents in paper format), paper copies of electronic documents, and the destruction of originals in paper format for massive series of documents. Article 31 also talks about the “Electronic file” and admits the possibility that one single document be part of different electronic files, etc... Regarding the electronic archive (article 30) establishes the general principles: First of all, that all documents used in actions by the Administration can be stored by electronic means; second of all, it allows the change of format as long as “the identity and integrity of the information” are guaranteed; and third of all, it establishes that the way in which documents are stored must rely on measures guaranteeing the “integrity, authenticity, quality, protection, and preservation of documents stored”.

The statement of purposes states: “The consecration of this right of citizens to communicate electronically with the Administration raises the question of which way to use and file these communications, and this refers to both the creation of the file or the office archive – the one linked to the management of files – as well as to the filing of already-processed files”. The new law does not forget the filing of electronic documents, although it doesn't regulate it



completely. It does, however, establish the obligation of guaranteeing the authenticity, integrity, and preservation of documents.

Another matter taken on by the new law, which will have repercussions on the different Public Administrations' work, is the systems' interoperability and the use of documents submitted to Public Administrations without the necessity, on the citizen's part, of re-submitting them, while guaranteeing the specialty principle, which prohibits one administration from diving into another administration's electronic files.

Regarding the application dates, although the first draft established the obligation to make these rights effective, later drafts have changed, and the latest (third) draft states that the rights acknowledged in this law "may be exercised in relation to the totality of proceedings and actions after December 31st, 2009", in the case of Local Administration bodies. In comparison to the first draft, the terms have been softened by substituting "must" by "may".

The approval of this law will mean a spectacular acceleration in the generation of electronic documents (and, above all, files) and in documentary management within the different administrations, as well as declaring the implantation of electronic administration a priority in our country. The consequences for archives will be immediate.

In relation to archives from the Local Administration we must take into account the consequences for the internal organization of municipalities, especially those of large cities, of the new *Law of the local government's modernization measures*⁵, although these consequences are still to be seen. The evolution towards a parliamentary form of government, the design of a complex organization, especially in higher offices, that approaches the self-governing and central administration regime, the importance of citizen participation, the development of organic regulations...⁶ are matters that will have an effect on the organization of our municipalities and delegations.

2 TOOLS

Which tools are available to a Local Administration's archive to guarantee the management and preservation of documents and the access to new documents in electronic format within its organization? We're going to list them without entering into a detailed analysis since there is already excellent, professional literature concerning these tools and their importance.

2.1 The archive's position within the organization.

If the archive is still considered an exclusively cultural service, dedicated to research and history, it will be very difficult for it to influence and participate in documentary management and electronic administration. Its position within horizontal services seems the most suitable to work this way and the most natural due to its characteristics and functions.

The data regarding changes in the position of the local administration's archives in recent years is incomplete, and it would be interesting to confirm if the tendency seen a few years ago⁷ (its progressive inclusion in horizontal or general services) has been carried out.

Although it's undoubtedly possible to advance in regards to new challenges from a position within a culture department, it's clear that a more general position and control over all of the organization can be of great help.

2.2 Regulation

One of the basic tools used to develop the archive's functions is the regulation. The promulgation of a standard, whether an archive regulation or another type of general regulation, will provide the rules of the game and the way to proceed, will limit responsibilities, and will establish obligations. It's essential, for the archivist's work, to have some form of regulation from the respective town council or delegation, specifying the scope of action, the control and responsibilities of the organization's documents, whichever their format and life cycle stage.



Consequently, the content of these rules and regulations, until now usually fitted to the archive's documents, should be extended to consider the archive and documentary management jointly, include all of the document's life cycle, and treat electronic documents the same as none-electronic documents.

As to the specific responsibility of the archive over documentary management and the role it must play out, we'll analyze this matter later on.

2.3 Documentary control from the beginning: Relation to registration and follow-up.

An adequate relationship with the register is essential to achieve the same codification in the classification of files and documents throughout in such a way that they are controlled throughout all of their life cycle. Classification will not only allow us to locate documentation in the future or facilitate the Archive's tasks, but it's also an essential information that must accompany the document throughout its life cycle and which automatically links it to the decisions that the organization has taken over it: series to which it belongs, preservation terms, access conditions, etc. Equally, the information poured into the register's computer system must end up accompanying the documentation through its transfers to the central archive. In my opinion, the register and the archive should, ideally, be located in the same department.

2.4 Classification frame

One of the traditional work instruments within archives is now seen as an essential tool within the new electronic administration. The classification of documents in a functional, codified frame will be of vital importance to the control of the entire life cycle. To carry out this classification, we need to previously identify all of our town council's or delegation's work processes, and this identification must always come from an analysis of the organization, its regulations, functions, and structure. Rule ISO 15489 (4.2.2.9) repeatedly insists on the necessity of this classification, which has been carried out, one way or another, since long ago within archives. Undoubtedly, the identification of documentary series that are produced



in a hierarchical structure and their identification will be of great use to the management of documents, from the classification itself to the evaluation, selection, access, and preservation.

2.5 Archival description:

The improvement of our description systems, the application of regulations regarding form as well as content of the description and adaptation of electronic documents will facilitate the implantation of documentary management systems, and, vice versa, the functioning of these systems and the application of metadata to electronic documents will make part of the description task automatic.

2.6 Evaluation and selection: Evaluation calendars.

The delimitation of the value of produced documents, and, therefore, of their preservation terms is one of the most requested decisions by technical services, especially computer technicians who design and manage documentary systems. The experience accumulated by municipal archives and delegations is very valuable. However, there's still a lot of work to do: First of all, to be effective, evaluation systems must be based on a regulation and approved by a government body, which is not always easy to achieve. Initiatives have proliferated in recent years, however, and there are already many local administrations that have an evaluation system by their own doing, through qualifying commissions, or through their respective self-governing communities.

2.7 Integral management system

During many years all efforts related to the computerization of our archives have been aimed mainly at the description of documentary funds, but, for a long time, many centres have been facing the necessity of implanting a system that integrates all processes: Evaluation, transfers, classification, loans, consultations, control of deposits, etc... and which allows the exchange of information, whether with other archives or within the organization itself (processing offices, register).



2.8 Access

Access includes not only the preservation of documents for a possible and future consultation, but also the guarantee that those documents (authentic, trustworthy, and integral) can be used easily and quickly by those who are authorized and under the conditions stipulated. This is very important; the simple act of preserving data in security tapes kept in a vault does not guarantee the right of access. In reality we're dealing with the same problem that we've always had: Before, when a user wanted to see a document, the problems were that it wasn't inventoried, or that it was located in a far away deposit requiring a long wait to consult it, or that its preservation state didn't allow it; now, in the context of electronic files, the problems when trying to consult or access a document are that "it has to be transferred on to the hard drive", that "the person who works with that program is not there", etc... Making sure that these things don't happen is the archive's responsibility just as it's the organization's responsibility to make these documents accessible under the conditions it has stipulated, always guaranteeing the citizen's right of access to information.

2.9 Web dissemination and citizen services

Dissemination does not only include solving problems related to the consultation of and access to documents, but also encouraging the use of archive documents by the use of new technologies. The clearest example is Internet: A new and great opportunity to improve access to information and documents, to open up archives to citizens, and to offer a quality consultation although not in person. There have been many initiatives in recent years regarding this subject⁸, but, although many of them offer general services, few allow the direct consultation of documents via internet, fundamentally due to the necessary previous process of organization and digitalization and to budgetary problems.

2.10 Preservation and security

This is, perhaps, the most problematic from the archives' point of view since it submerges into a technical scope in which we feel like fish out of water. The archivist, however, does not



have to know all the systems, formats, or preservation programs, nor all the documentary migration techniques. His or her function is to point out the necessity of this preservation, which documents must be preserved, for how long, and who should have access to them.

2.11 Training

The municipal archivist is, generally, a person capable of adapting to circumstances, of working on different things at once, and trained by daily work. There is a great debate going on right now regarding the training of the local administration's archivist and the training, in general, of professionals within this field in Spain⁹. We don't know much, however, about the specific training that our municipal and delegation archivists receive regarding electronic administration, documentary management, Rule ISO 15489, or the preservation of documents in electronic format. We only know that it's a weapon and an indispensable tool. The local administration's archivists have been characterized as being (or at least thinking we are) "orchestra" men and women, in the sense that we usually have to take care of very diverse matters and (at least in my personal experience) have to recycle ourselves many times throughout our professional lives and learn completely new things. Will we be able to recycle ourselves in these areas of knowledge?

It's important that this recycling not just be directed at the archive's personnel, but that it's offered simultaneously to multidisciplinary groups: computer technicians, archivists, administrators... so that each of them can provide their personal view of the problem.

2.12 Quality

The management of quality, although very costly in time, effort, and money, is, in the end, a deep reflection of our own work, its purpose, its routines, and its management. It can be of great help to us when thinking about these new challenges and to see our strengths and weaknesses in these issues that we must face.



One of the principal pillars of quality programs is the system's documentation, and that's why the relation between the archive and documentary management can be easily understood. Quality systems include the archive's role, the importance of documenting actions, of maintaining evidence of all activity, etc... Besides, the work is based on the analysis of processes, just as with documentary management: The first step is analyzing the organization's functions and, therefore, its activities, which are recorded throughout the documentation. All of these things in common can help us to not see quality processes as an obstacle in our jobs. If these quality programs are driven from high-up within our town council or delegation, they can help us see the importance of documentary control and connect the archive to other realities of our own administration¹⁰.

There aren't many archives that have completed the task of implanting a quality management system (including the respective certification), but many have, at least, worked on the creation of service charts.

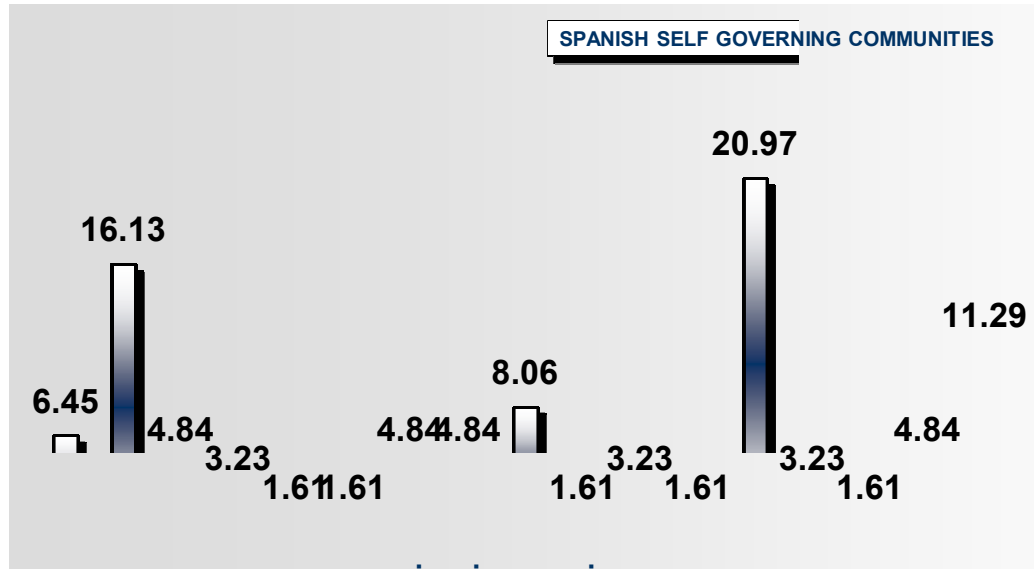
3. SITUATION OF LOCAL ARCHIVES (POLL)

I sent a poll to 189 archives from town councils, chapters, and delegations (see annex 1), with the objective of knowing the real situation of Spain's Local Administration archives in relation to documentary management and electronic administration. I realize that this poll doesn't have any statistical value, but I think that it can give us a fairly approximate idea of the actual situation. From the start, the intention was to obtain the greatest number of answers, that's why we opted for a simple and quick questionnaire even if some data was lost and therefore certain depth in the analysis, and we even rejected including questions regarding some of the tools, as is the case with quality.

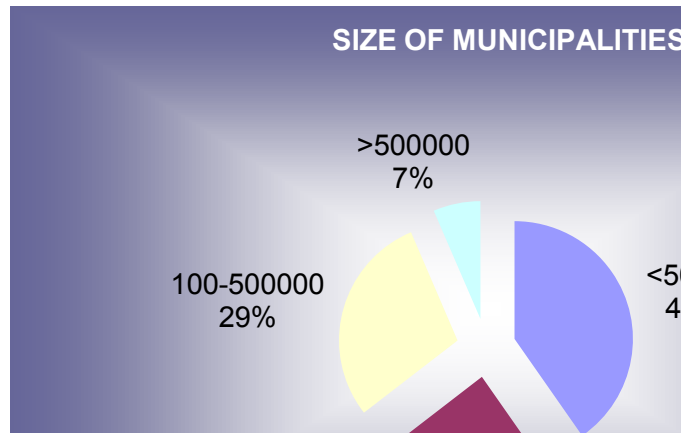
40.21% of archivists answered, that is 62 municipalities and 14 delegations. I'd like to thank all of my colleagues who took the time to answer this poll. Their participation shows the interest in this subject among archivists of the Local Administration.

First of all, some general data.

Regarding the 76 answers, the division by Self Governing Communities is the following:



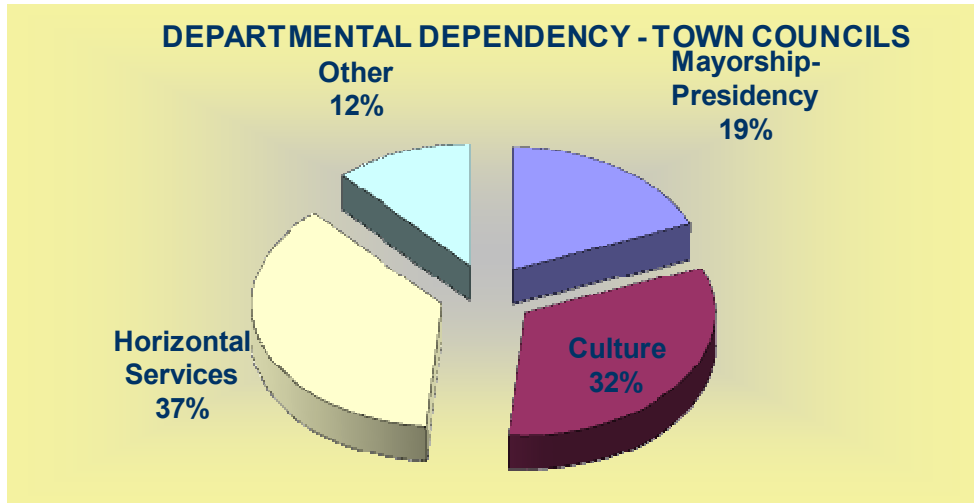
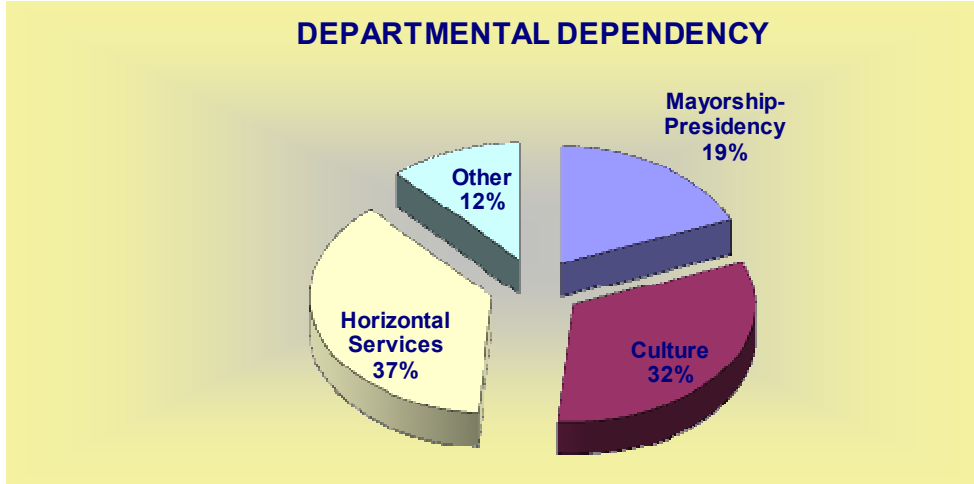
As to city size, 40.32% is below 50,000 habitants, 24.19% is between 50,000 and 100,000, 29.03% is between 100,000 and one half million, and 6.45% is above 500,000 habitants. 33.7% of municipal archives who answered the poll belong to province capitals.

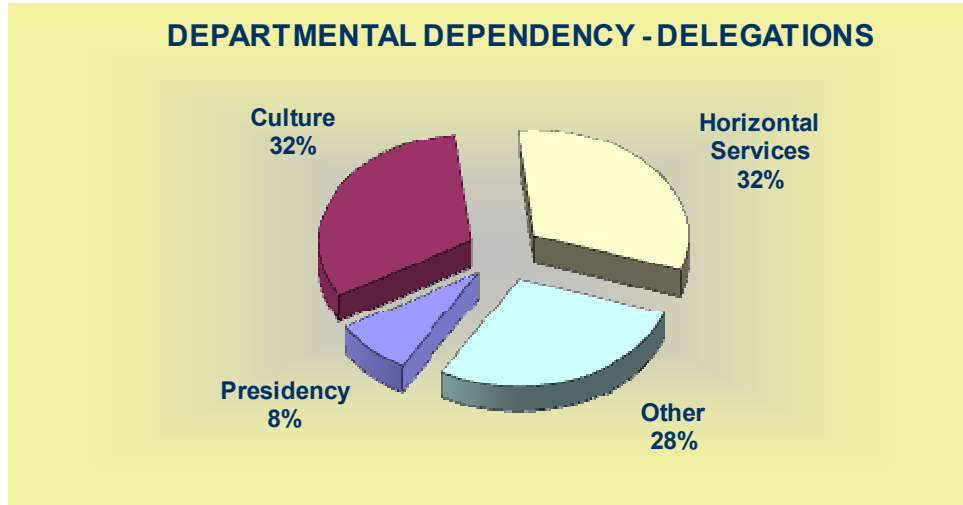


To analyze the poll results we're going to follow the same scheme that we used to talk about the different tools.

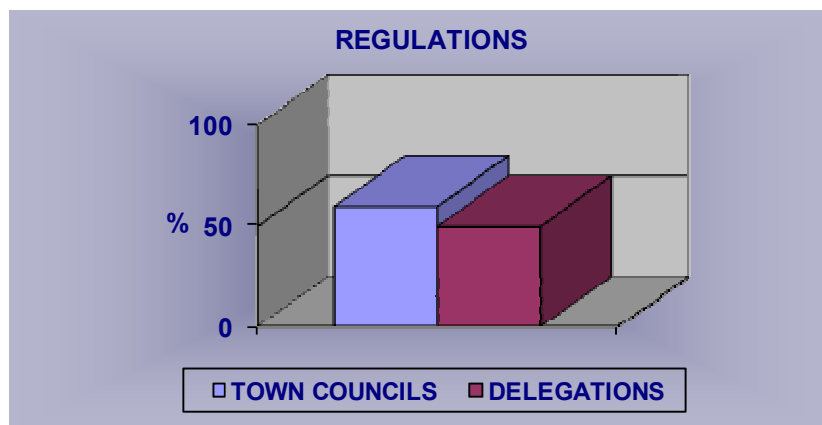
The first question talks about the department responsible for the archive within the administration.

It's interesting to note that in delegations as well as in town councils a total of 31.16% of archives belong to the Culture Department¹¹; while in town councils of smaller size many archives belong to the Mayorship-Presidency, 38.33% of town councils have placed their archives under horizontal services, such as Internal Regime, Organization, or General Services. This direct dependency on government bodies or horizontal services greatly facilitates the archive's perception as a unit that serves all of the organization, as well as the relation to other horizontal services. It equally contributes to eliminating the unconscious assimilation of the archive as the custodian of historic documents and powers its value as manager of probative documents. Still, many archives are placed under culture departments.

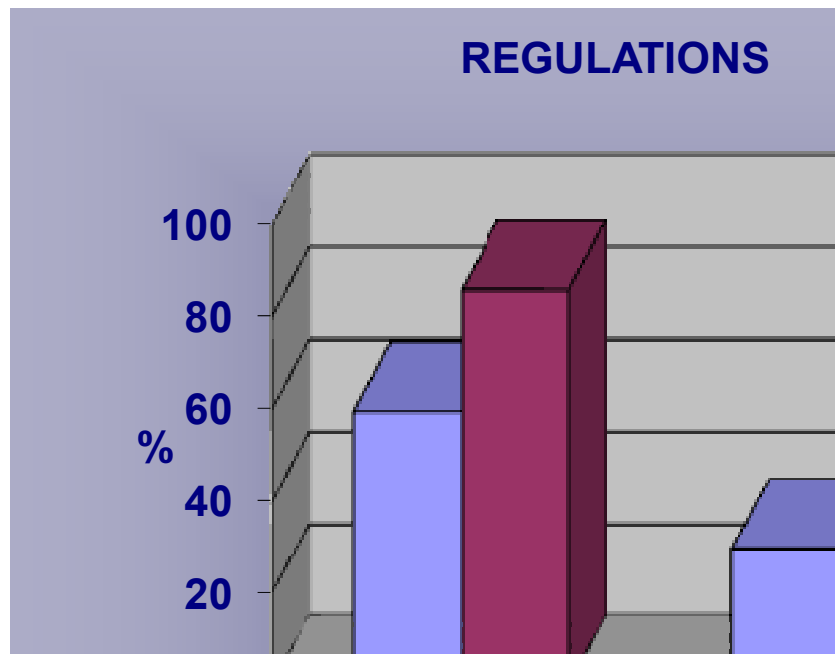




This was another poll question: *Are there Archive regulations or rulings? If so, do they contemplate electronic documents? Do they contemplate documentary management?* We should carefully study this matter, especially regarding what *documentary management* means. The answers, however, are interesting: 59.68% of town councils and 50% of delegations have their own regulations (very high percentages taking into account the high number of town councils with populations lower than 50,000 who answered the poll).

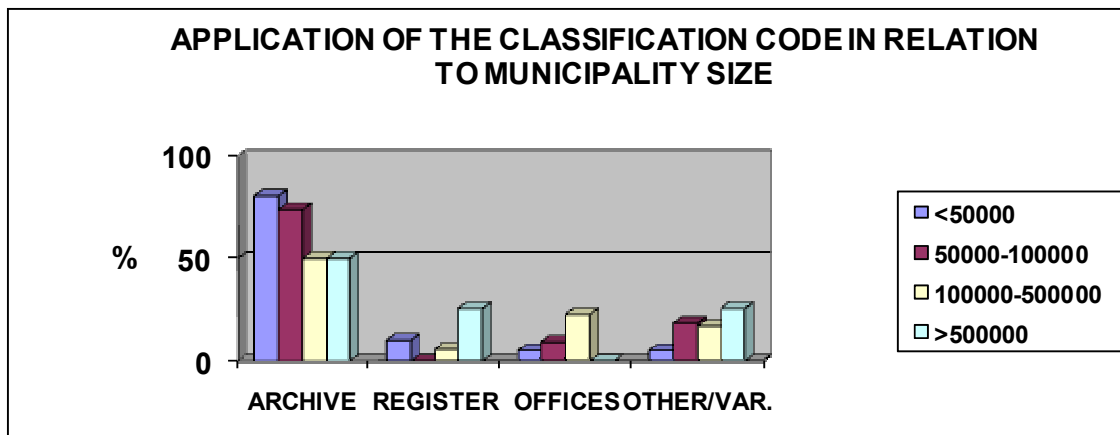


Of those archives having their own regulations, a very high percentage contemplates documentary management (85.7% in delegations, 59.4% in town councils), still having to define what “documentary management” means. However, only 29.7% of municipalities have their own regulations and 42.5% of delegations specifically include electronic documents in their regulations. We suspect that one of the reasons for this is that many of these regulations are very old. We can also assume that documentary management can be understood to mean many things, not just what Rule ISO 15489 conceives it to be – integral for all of the organization regarding the control of documents from the time they are created.

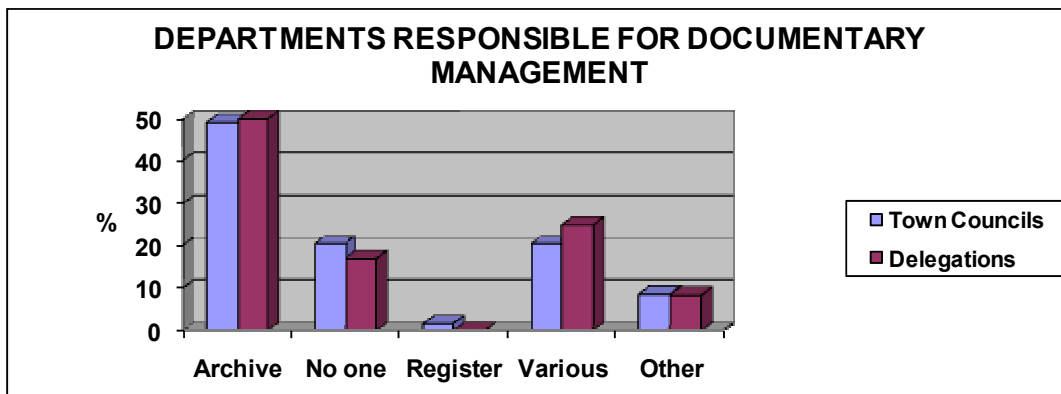


In general, the fact that more than half of the archives polled have their own regulations is very encouraging, although the same cannot be said for the very low percentage of those specifically taking into account electronic documents.

Another poll question refers to the existence of a classification frame. Almost 95% of the archives have answered affirmatively, but here we must ask ourselves another question: What does classification frame mean? Are we talking about a hierarchical structure applicable to the documentation produced by the administration or about an organization frame of the archive's documentary funds? This is a concept that we should clear up. Personally, I think that the majority of classification frames are really organization frames and would not be directly applicable to the management of documents from their creation. As proof of this, if we ask from what moment in the document's life the respective codification is applied, we find that in more than 65% of cases it's done in the archive, followed far behind by offices (30.77% in delegations and 9.68% in town councils). Only in 6.45% of municipalities (none in the case of delegations) is the classification code applied in the register. I think this matter and its importance are worthy of some consideration. The fact that practically all archives, from the smallest to those serving the largest populations, have a classification frame is very positive, but we must still win the battle of its implantation throughout the system from the time of registration, which would be extremely important to the control of the entire life cycle, as well as so that all units involved can recognize documentary series in the same way.



In this sense, and also in relation to documentary control from the start, the answer to the following question is interesting: Who's in charge of documentary management? Here, once again, we run into the vagueness of the term "documentary management" that, in my opinion, as is logical within the archives context, has been interpreted by many of those polled as already processed and concluded archive documents. Almost 50% of those polled answered that the archive is the one that is exclusively in charge of documentary management within their organizations while 20.34% of town councils and 16.67% of delegations answered that no one takes care of documentary management. A better framed question would have, undoubtedly, given us a more precise answer, but, in any case, it's clear that besides the archive, there isn't any other department or area that has been assigned this task. Our town councils, chapters, and delegations don't have departments that have been specifically assigned the task of documentary management, standardization, and control. There's a void here that must be filled one way or another.

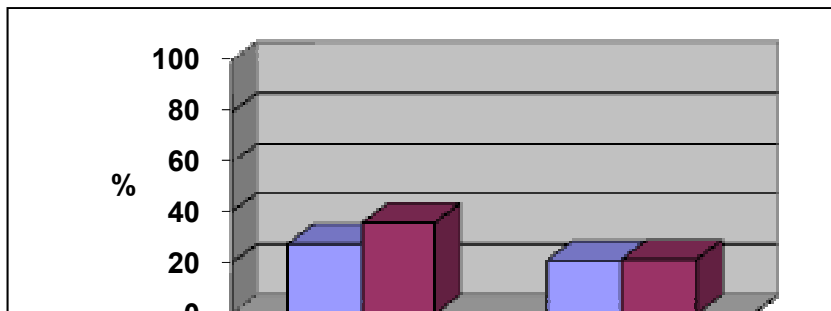


The following poll questions refer to evaluation and selection: Is there a defined system of evaluation and selection? If so, are there evaluation calendars? As we have already said, this is, strategically, a very important tool since it's fundamental in any documentary

management system, especially when dealing with electronic documents and, in many cases, not contemplated by computer technicians who demand the definition of preservation terms from the organization.

Only 27.42% of town councils and 35.71% of delegations have a defined system of evaluation and selection. It's obvious that this is a pending subject, although there have been many advancements in recent years. But without an evaluation system it will be difficult to define preservation terms for new electronic documents, and, therefore, the necessity to maintain, use, and access them.

We should also emphasize that not all town councils and delegations that have a defined system of evaluation and selection have evaluation calendars (13 out of 17 town councils and 3 out of 5 delegations). I take this to mean that although there's an evaluation and selection system in place, we haven't yet reached the point of carrying out typology studies and reaching specific agreements regarding documentary series.

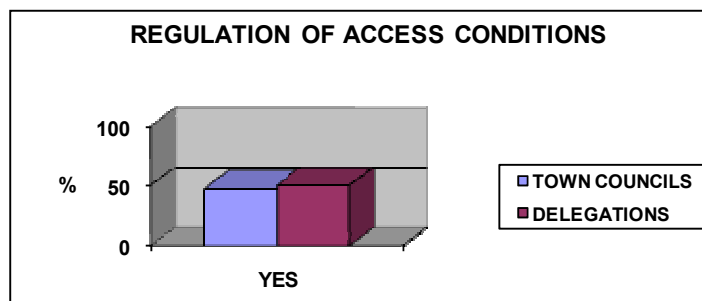


Another poll question is related to the use of integrated systems for the archive's own management.

69.35% of polled archives have this type of system, although it would be interesting to find out what the real degree of implantation of all of its functionalities is. Having an integral

system that contemplates the relation among all producing units and which includes ways to evaluate and select will contribute to the incorporation of the archive into the organization's documentary management system.

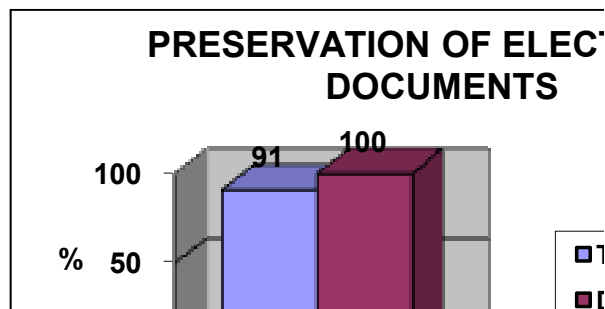
The situation regarding the control of rights to access the documentation is not as hopeful. In the poll, we specifically asked: Is there a system in place to determine access to each documentary series? (Who has the right to consult and reproduce, and what are the terms and conditions?). We don't ask if access to the archive's documents is regulated in a general manner, but whether the system specifies the terms and conditions for consultation as well as reproduction of each documentary series. 46.77% of town councils and 50% of delegations have answered affirmatively. The necessities of a documentary management system regarding this matter, especially if these are electronic documents, are many: It's necessary to know exactly what access permits must be granted, to complete files as well as to partial information, restriction terms, and reproduction conditions.



There's still a long road ahead of us regarding the definition of access conditions, but we must keep in mind that just as when dealing with selection, these terms and conditions are

set as a result of a previous evaluation, which can be jointly carried out by several archives of similar characteristics (at least regarding identification, study, and proposal work) or by the superior commissions of self-governing communities. What we mean is that it's not necessary for each archive to face the evaluation task alone (with the respective selection, transfer, and access decisions); there is a lot of knowledge and experience to take advantage of and share, which is why we expect the advancement in this field to be progressively faster.

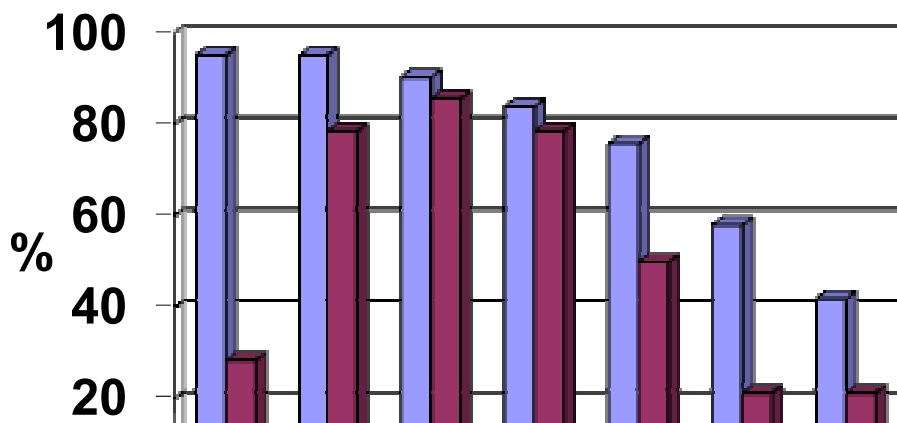
Where the landscape really turns grey, however, is when dealing with the preservation and safety of electronic documents. We asked the question: Are there protocols in place for the long-term preservations of electronic documents? 100% of delegations and more than 91% of town councils answered negatively. This means that, although no one doubts the archives' capacity to preserve documents in paper format, until now, the problem of preserving electronic documents has not been solved. It would be interesting to study the reasons for this void, but we suspect that it's partly due to the lack of definitions regarding who is responsible for electronic documents and to the technical insecurity of archivists regarding these matters. It's also probably due to the fact that, until now, the majority of electronic documents also exist in paper format, which will radically change in upcoming years, accelerated by the new electronic administration law.



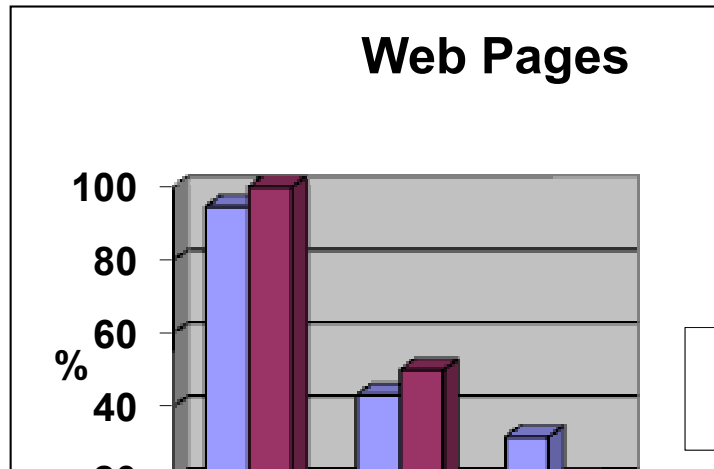


Another poll question was related to great corporate applications and databases. When asked if there are applications, within their town councils, to manage the census, the tributary process, the general register, the intervention and treasury documentation, the geographical information, and the control of personnel, the answers are overwhelming: More than 90% of polled municipalities have applications to manage the census, the tributary process, and the register; 83.87% for intervention and/or treasury; 75.81% for personnel, and 58.06% when we deal with the territory. This shows us the great quantity of information that is actually managed by applications and databases within our town councils and its homogeneousness: We all work with population and territory, we all collect taxes, we all keep track of our accounting according to regulations, and we all manage personnel. This is a field in which we could work together, at least in the definition of the preservation necessities for future exploitation and access of data, many of them stipulated by law, even if the technological solutions are different. It's always complicated to confront the great data compilations that "restructure" the document, but we must not forget that, in many places, accounting books don't exist as such, or that the census from the 20th century has disappeared and today is carried out through the continuous census.

CORPORATE APPLICATION



Another part of the poll is dedicated to dissemination tasks by the use of new technologies. The first question (does your archive have a web page?) was answered affirmatively by 59.68% of town councils and 71.43% of delegations. An interesting issue is that, in this regard, there isn't a significant difference between archives of smaller and larger populations: In municipalities of less than 100,000 habitants, 45% don't have a web page while the percentage drops to 31.82% in municipalities of more than 100,000 habitants. Practically all archives that have a web page offer general information, but the percentage descends to levels near 50% when we talk about whether these pages offer access to the archives' description instruments and even lower to 29.7% in the case of archives whose web pages offer digitalized images of documents.



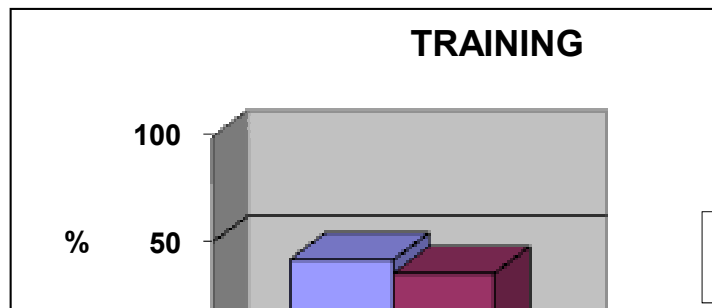
If we perform these calculations over all of the archives polled, the number of archives that have web pages with access to inventories or databases doesn't reach 28.2% and only a bit more than 19%, have digitalized images of their documentary funds.

In this regard, one of the poll questions refers to whether a planned digitalization of documents is carried out, an essential step to web dissemination. Almost 50% of those polled answered affirmatively, which indicates that many projects of massive conversion to digital formats are being carried out with practically historical documentation for its later dissemination, possibly driven by the decrease in costs and the technological simplification of recent years. There also aren't any differences, in this regard, between large municipalities and those with less than 100,000 habitants.

Another matter greatly related to dissemination is the existence or lack of authority control within our archives. Only 30.65% of municipal archives and 42.86% of delegations carry out authority control. In any case, it seems clear that this is another pending subject in our centres and probably in all Spanish archives.

Staying in line with the list of necessary tools for the implantation of a documentary management system within an organization and the adaptation of archives to the new technological environment, we asked those polled if they have received or expect to receive training related to electronic documents, electronic administration, documentary management systems, or web dissemination.

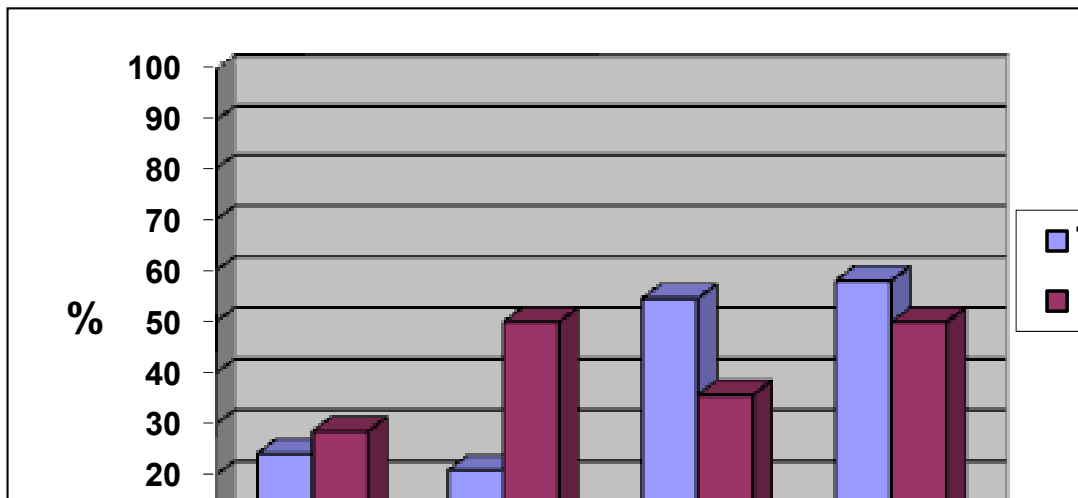
41.94% of municipal archives and 35.71% of delegations confirm having received some type of training, usually through courses organized by professional organizations and, in many cases, through university courses (basically post-graduate courses). It's curious that in only 2 cases there has been mention of internal training provided by the organization itself. The majority of archivists have had to find their own way to self-recycle and have not received training from their town councils, chapters, or delegations.



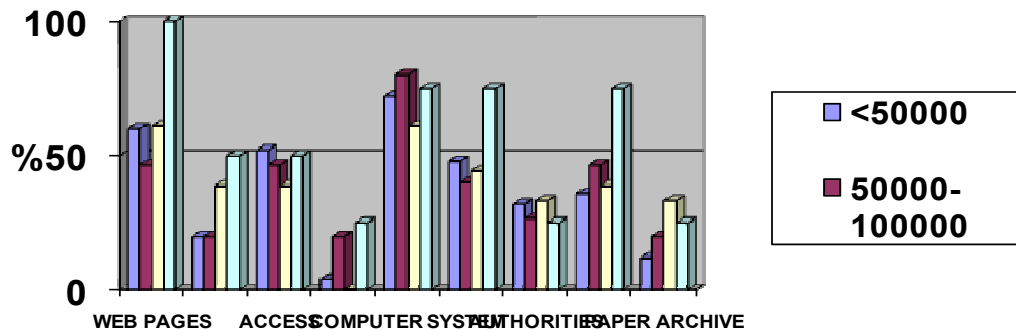
The poll contains a series of questions regarding the situation of town councils, chapters, and delegations in relation to electronic administration and documentary management: The questions refer to the existence of an inventory of proceedings, to the electronic signature, to wholly-computerized processes, and to internet proceedings. We should consider these answers with prudence because archivists don't always know everything that happens in their organizations¹². It's curious to note that more than 50% say that, within their organizations,

there are wholly-computerized processes and internet proceedings when, in reality, according to those polled, electronic signatures are only used in 21% of town councils and 50% of delegations.

Also, the fact that only 24.19% of town councils and 2.57% of delegations have an inventory of proceedings gives us something to think about; especially when we consider that the poll doesn't determine the degree of updates or the depth of the inventory.



MUNICIPALITIES BY SIZE



When asked about the main problems detected regarding the management of electronic documents, there are many matters that worry the local administration's archivists, but they mainly emphasize the following:

- The level of training, or better yet, the lack of specific training. There's a certain fear of not measuring up and not having the necessary knowledge to face the world of electronic documents and integral documentary management.
- Many archive professionals complaint about a lack of coordination and standardization, as well as that it's not clear who should be in charge of documentary management and the implantation of electronic administration or how it should be carried out.
- The lack of support from directives and the scarce interest shown by politicians.
- All matters related to the preservation of support systems, their obsolescence, and to migration are considered by many archivists as a problem.



- Of course, in many cases, the answer is the lack of personnel to carry out this type of projects; there are other priorities and urgencies at this time.
- The most mentioned problem which raises many comments (bitter in some cases) is the relationships with computer technicians and directives. In many cases the archivist perceives them as a threat or complains that they make decisions without taking into account the Archive. “There’s the wrong belief that the computerization process will standardize and organize what hasn’t been standardized nor organized previously”.

I believe that one of the most important questions from the poll is the following: *Regarding the design, implantation, and supervision of management systems of electronic documents, does the Archive participate in any way in the decision-making process?* Notice that the question has been consciously restricted to electronic documents and not to more general terms such as electronic administration or documentary management. The results are tremendously discouraging: Only 21% of town councils and 7.14% of delegations take into account the archive when creating electronic documents, which means that nobody considers matters such as preservation, access, or the long-term integrity or reliability of documents, or, if they do, they do so without consulting with the experts in these matters. Archives that take part in the decision-making process do so through multidisciplinary work groups and commissions or through meetings to which they are summoned as one of the interested parties. No one admits being the promoter or coordinator of these groups or leading these processes, so we can infer that when there is participation it’s a result of an invitation to be part of a work team organized by another area or administrative service.

When asked the question about which should be the archive’s role within electronic administration and documentary management, the great majority of archivists think that the role of archives is conceptually clear: It’s the same that it has always been, being the



guardian of the documentation generated, and assuring its adequate preservation, maintenance, and access. The principal change is the moment of intervention: All colleagues agree that the Archive must participate from the definition of requirements, that is, from the beginning of the entire process. But, which must be the Archive's role? How should it intervene in this process? There are opinions clearly in favour of the Archive exercising the leadership in this matter, while many others talk about participation and coordination. In some cases, there are even opinions clearly against the directive role of the Archive, based on personal experience: "I'm convinced that believing that we (archivists) can lead modernization processes regarding documentary management and circuit improvements has led us (those who have tried it) to a dead-end".

4. ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES

First of all, there are three fundamental documents, three powerful weapons that we must make ours: Rule ISO 15489, the CIA's archivist's manual, and the preservation recommendations of the Superior Computer Science Council. These are the "mandatory" readings which we must carefully study¹³.

As Rule ISO 15489-2 says, it's not necessary to undertake all possible actions at once or in the order in which they're listed. We must be conscious of which is our town council's or delegation's situation and act accordingly. Sometimes it's easier to work in more restricted fields without being too ambitious in order to show what the archive is capable of contributing and, above all, the importance of these actions. Working on specific actions that we can control leads us to the success we're looking for. Some of these **specific actions** are:

- Dissemination of files and documents by taking advantage of new technologies: Citizens increasingly demand web sites that allow them to locate the information they're looking for in a quick and, above all, reliable way. The evolution of the internet requires the specialization as well as the concentration of information. In this sense,



we're experiencing, first hand, the birth of a greatly important initiative, centred on the archives of Spanish local administration: The Local Administration's Archives Portal¹⁴. This Portal, which will be operative in a few months and which will be presented the following month of December, is an ambitious project from the FEMP, sponsored by Red.es, which will provide users with a great amount of information about the documents and archives of Town Councils, Chapters, and Delegations throughout Spain, including access to digitalized documentary funds. This is a tangible demonstration of the strength that, nowadays, our local administration archives possess and of their organization and unity to face common challenges to the citizens' benefit. It will unite the efforts of many professionals that, despite technical difficulties, have come to understand the importance of telematic dissemination of the local documentary patrimony. The project includes the following:

- **Archivist's Portal:** It's a module specifically aimed at archive professionals and directives that will make available the utilities necessary for the management and edition of content of interest to the profession.
- **Local Archives Network:** An essential module to the Portal with a global search and recovery system which will make the documentary patrimony of cities and provinces available to users.
- Likewise, and considering small town councils, the Portal will make available an application containing all of the proper utilities of an archive management program, which will facilitate these centres' web visibility.
- **Authorities:** After the publication of Rule ISAAE (CPF), the sense among many archivists was that it would be difficult to apply without a specific rule of content that will help regulate the way in which data is introduced and the exchange of information. Right now there are several initiatives to develop this rule, among which the following



are included: The Ministry of Culture and the Authorities of Aragón's Workgroup. It's absolutely necessary to have a common tool to share authorities, especially concerning users.

- Inventory of proceedings and formats: We must find out if anyone within our organization keeps an inventory of proceedings (for example, if quality policies that compel the documentation of all processes are being applied) and work jointly with them.
- Acquisition of integral archive management systems that contemplate the MoReq15.
- E-mail: It can be a good "hook" for our organization. The chaos that is being generated by e-mail messages is a preoccupation for computer services, and a good classification and filing system for these e-mails can be of great use to our town council or delegation and a good way to prove the necessity of defining which documentation must be preserved and under what conditions of maintenance and access.
- Corporate applications and databases: These are the computer applications on whose data many essential town council series are based: Fiscal censuses, accounting books, municipal censuses, incoming and outgoing registration books, personal files, municipal cartography. As we have seen, they exist in the majority of municipalities and delegations. In many local administrations documentary series are no longer done as they previously were because the data is gathered in the applications: It's the case of registration books, the census, or the city's street-plans¹⁶. The Archive's duty is to know how to maintain these series or how they will be reconstructed in the future, and obtaining the data necessary to administrative management or research. Establishing specific preservation protocols is essential with these applications that contain great part of the municipal information. The

decisions taken must be based on the specific situation and circumstances of each application¹⁷, but the archive's job is to guarantee that agreements are made and met in the future regarding this matter. The solutions are varied, depending on the type of application, its maintenance, and diverse technical questions, but they will generally be one of the following¹⁸:

- One of the options is to keep the application functioning with all the data from previous years (valid for documentation of annual renewal such as accounting or registration books). In this case we must make sure that the necessary data can be obtained and exploited at any time. This would also be the case of the continuous census, which must gather each citizen's "historical" information.
- Another option is to create the documentary series through the use of applications and preserve them in electronic format (such as PDF). We must specify how often this is to be done. This is how accounting or registration books or annual censuses are "created".
- Last of all, we can contemplate the possibility of extracting the information into a widely known exchange format (like XLM) so that it can be worked with at any future time. In this case we should take into account the difficulty that working with these formats could suppose each time a consultation is needed.
- It's also convenient to contemplate the possibility of using various options for the same documentation in such a way that we can guarantee consultation by one and another is left for preservation. What this means is that we can keep data online but also save it in a standardized format to assure its preservation and use despite of technological changes or disasters.



On the other hand, we must not forget the possibilities that these applications offer us from a dissemination point of view. That's the case of geographical information systems: One of them, a very interesting one, is uniting the existing town planning information of the archive, especially work licenses (although it can also be any type of intervention regarding the territory such as public works, parks and gardens, etc.) with geographical information systems. The advantage to the archive is the localization of archived information through geographic location, which prevents mistakes regarding street names, industrial districts, numbering changes, etc. In reference to town planning it means the quick localization of historical records as well as the possibility of adding another layer of information to the system. To citizens, it just means a better service.

- Classification frame: Identify the documentary series that are actually produced in our town council or delegation and maintain a functional classification frame. Fighting for its application from the start of proceedings and registration. It's an essential step.
- Ascertain if, within our organization, there are documents that are only generated in electronic format or that are digitally reproduced to later be discarded, and establish which will be the future of these documents, who will be able to consult them, and how...
- Perhaps one of the best advices that we can give ourselves is to keep working on our classification frames, on evaluation, on selection, on identification, on the standardization of transfers and descriptions... All that we can advance within our traditional archive field will be essential to any documentary management or electronic administration implantation process. The archive must be prepared to provide the value of interest to the organization.



That's why, besides continuing to elaborate the above mentioned tools, it's essential that the archive fight to participate in the decision-making process regarding electronic documents and watch over its adequate preservation as well as guarantee future access to documents. Perhaps the least important is the role that the archive must play out in this process, depending on many factors this role can be that of a leader, of a participant, of a collaborator... each local administration will decide how it wants to carry out the implantation of electronic administration and of documentary management, but, in any case, the archive must be there to make sure that our town council or delegation does not forget matters that are our responsibility while going down this path; we must warn our organization of the risks of not duly attending to preservation (with all integrity, reliability, authenticity, and access control conditions), and of the judicial, administrative, and cultural consequences of bad management of the documentary patrimony, specially for the citizen but also for the administration itself.

The **strategies** to achieve it can be:

- The promotion of training courses for computer technicians, management, secretaries, and internet personnel.
- The promotion of meetings with the computer department to inform them of the archive's preoccupation regarding preservation, transfers, destruction, and long-term access.
- Through our politicians, explaining to them the risks and their responsibility to prevent them.
- Through the regulations: The approval of rules that contemplate these issues will give the archive a regulative support for its actions.
- Analyzing which are the most important documents and which are in most danger within our organization (they can be e-mails, databases, documents that are only



generated in electronic formats, scanned documentation that's later destroyed without consulting with the archive, etc). Once located, we must centre our efforts on acting upon them because they'll help us solve urgencies, but they'll also show the archive's capacity to act and its scope of action within the electronic documents ambit.

5. CONCLUSIONS:

In my opinion, there are going to be two **key moments** in the near future: The approval of the Electronic Administration Law and the instituted use of the digital signature. The Law sets a very specific term for the local administration, but it will also give public organizations the definitive thrust so that they feel obligated to face the challenges of the system's implantation, to dedicate their resources to this task, to search, within their own organization, for the necessary people and services (we can guess that they'll end up at the archive), and to establish it as an objective and a priority of upcoming years. On the other hand, at the same time that the directives of administrative units, town councils, or delegations make use of the electronic signature, with all that it technologically and procedurally carries with it, exclusively electronic documents, mixed files, and telematic channels for citizen communication will begin to be created.

It's been long, however, since those responsible for carrying out electronic processing systems, corporate databases management, registration, etc..., have realized that it's necessary to think about the future of all of this information: Who decides what's preserved? Who has a right to consult? Which data is important and which can be disregarded? Who's going to be in charge of all of this information in the future? And that's where archives come in.

Just as each day we're immersed in a more global and intercultural world, work within organizations tends to be more multidisciplinary. No town council or delegation will successfully implant a documentary management system or electronic administration if it can't count on the joint efforts of computer technicians, processors, administrative personnel,



quality experts, archivists... But we must not forget that a distribution of responsibilities is necessary.

Preservation of documents doesn't just mean that the archive must physically gather the documentation; it's a matter of responsibility and of service to citizens. In an electronic file management system we must establish, just like in paper format, who is **responsible** for the custody of the documentation through each step of the process, and, therefore, access, preservation, data migration, destruction or deletion of documents...The physical location of the servers or of the preservation supports will be the least important, but the organization must know at all times which department is responsible through each management and processing stage as well as through office files or general archive stages. That is exactly what happens with documentation in paper format, whose responsibility is assigned to different departments or areas according to its life cycle: The processor through its transaction, the office archive in later stages, and the general archive after its transfer. That's why everything related to permits and the system's administration must be designed in accordance to this responsibility and why it's important that these issues be defined from the start.

The archive must show that it has a lot of knowledge to contribute regarding its own organization and that it's capable of offering solutions to the problems presented by the implantation of electronic administration, but it must do so from the start of the process. The relatively manageable structure of our organizations allows it. This same disadvantage that we see, that the organizations are so autonomous, without general criteria and, in many cases, without the financial capacity to carry out large projects or be pioneers in their fields, can be viewed as an advantage if we realize that these structures are easier to change and manage....

Archivists from the local administration have a lot of work to do, the same work as always but with different conditions, with a global view involving the whole organization. We must



continue classifying, evaluating, and defining access conditions...On the other hand, our challenge now is enlarging our horizons, collaborating with computer technicians, with the register, with documentation producers, going down this path which, in many cases, has already been taken on. To achieve this we can count on our knowledge of the organization, of people, of functions, and of documents produced within our organization.

The impression most people have of archives from town councils and delegations is that they are services that look to the past, but our job is to watch over the future of our organization.

In Alfonso Díaz's own words: *"Without abandoning the archive's own management and administration tasks that are and have been performed, and taking advantage of the global vision of the organization that we now have due to the administration of the whole group of documents it produces, we (those from the archives) are in optimal conditions to participate in the new challenges that organizations are demanding"*. (DIAZ RODRÍGUEZ , 2005)

Is the municipal archive ready for the challenges ahead? Undoubtedly, yes. It must be clear that its mission is still the same, and the archivist is the only one capable of helping his or her organization in knowing which documents to produce and how, where, and for how long to preserve these documents, etc. To achieve this, it must rely on the cooperation of other professionals, on a specific recycling training, and on the adequate tools.

This doesn't mean attacking all fronts at once, but taking advantage of our strengths, which will be different in each case and depend on size, situation within the organization, contacts, relation to decision-making bodies, to the technical department, etc. We certainly know that the first condition to the implantation of a system that affects all of the organization (whether related to documentary management, quality, or any other matter), and this is what the regulation tells us, is the directives' support and thrust. Movement, however, is shown by walking, and, many times, the necessity is perceived when a solution is deemed possible:



Showing the decision-making bodies that we must and, above all, that we can is one of our most important tasks.

We haven't been able to take on a very important question in this paper, which is the role of supra-municipal bodies, especially in reference to smaller municipalities: The self-governing communities, the provincial delegations, the regions, the associations, they have a lot of work ahead regarding archives¹⁹. It's true that a lot of work has been done, especially by delegations that, traditionally, have been taking care of municipal archives, but the task of coordinating must be pushed to the limit in this new stage. These institutions must offer city councils training, coordination, work models, regulations, easier evaluation, selection, classification, and many other procedures that are difficult to take on alone by small municipalities, even if they're lucky enough to have an archivist.

The arrival of electronic administration, especially if done in a regulated manner, will simply show and highlight the absolute necessity that documents generated by the administration be always controlled, well-preserved, and accessible. It's, therefore, an opportunity for archives, not a threat. It will mean a step forward to identify the Archive with documentary management, with control of administrative actions, with a better service to citizens...

Why will a documentary management system fail if it doesn't take into account the Archive? Because the Archive is capable of identifying the organization's essential documents, those having probative value, those that account for its activity, etc...Because it will provide answers to vital questions such as what documentation must be preserved, who will have the right to access it in the future, and what legal restrictions will be applied; because it will provide directions to organize the documentation in such a way that it can be easily located now and in the future; because it possesses a great amount of information regarding the documents, the proceedings, the processes, it knows the administration and what documents each department produces; because it has long-term vision, both regarding the past and the future.



Why will the implantation of electronic administration fail if it doesn't take into account from the beginning the necessity to preserve and access in the future? Because we won't know which electronic documents to keep and which to discard; because the information won't be located in the future; because we run the risk of losing the context in which the documents were created and a lot of related information; because the metadata will be incomplete; because integrity, authenticity, and reliability won't be guaranteed; because the unity of the electronic file can be lost; because, just like documents in paper format, electronic documents require organization; because the obsolescence of supports, formats, etc., compels the creation of protocols that guarantee future use; because the administrations' obligation to maintain and preserve the documentary patrimony won't be met nor will there be any evidence of the organization's decisions.

We must never forget our final objective: Getting our administrations to make documents that prove their activity accessible and guarantee that citizens can enforce their right to access documents.

We must take this train because the future of archives and, what's more important, the future of our organizations depends on it. Our town councils and delegations must make sure that they control their documents and that they preserve them in an adequate manner for the future. As we have said from the beginning, archives can help the administration in meeting the requirements regarding its documentation and in being more transparent and efficient, while preserving the documentary patrimony.



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ANNEX 1: POLL

Population of your city or province:

- City:
 Province

What department is responsible for the Archive within your Town Council or Delegation?

- Culture
 Horizontal services (Internal regime, Organization, General Services)
 Mayoralty/Presidency
 Other:

Do you have a classification frame?

- Yes
 No
 If so, the classification code is applied from:
 The general register
 The offices
 The Archive

Are there Archive regulations or rulings?

- No
 Yes
 If so, do they contemplate electronic documents?
 No
 Yes

Do they contemplate documentary management?

- No
 Yes

○ Who's in charge of documentary management?

- The Archive
- The Register
- Nobody
- Other:

○ Does the Archive have a web page?

- No
 - Yes
- If so, can you access any of the following? (Mark one or several)
- General information
 - Documentary description instruments
 - Digitalized images

○ Is there a defined system of evaluation and selection?

- No
 - Yes
- If so, are there evaluation calendars?
- Yes
 - No

○ Is there a system in place to determine access to documents?

- Yes
- No

○ Are there protocols in place for the long-term preservation of documents?

- Yes
- No

○ Does your Archive have a computerized system for file management?

- Yes

	<input type="checkbox"/> No
○	Is a planned digitalization of documents carried out?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
○	Is there authority control?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
○	Is there an inventory of proceedings in your Town Council or Legislation?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
○	Are there electronic signatures?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
○	Are there wholly-computerized processes?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
○	Is it possible to carry out procedures via internet?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
○	Does your Town Council or Delegation have databases or corporate applications for the following?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Census <input type="checkbox"/> Tributary management <input type="checkbox"/> General register <input type="checkbox"/> Intervention and treasury

<input type="checkbox"/> Territory (geographic information) <input type="checkbox"/> Personal <input type="checkbox"/> Other
--

○ Are there any documents that are created and/or preserved in electronic format only?

<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes

○ Regarding the design, implantation, and supervision of management systems of electronic documents, does the Archive participate in any way in the decision-making process?

<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If so, how?
--

○ In general, how do you see the role of the Archive in electronic administration and regarding electronic documents? Which are the main problems you detect in your case?

Empty response box

NOTES

¹ <http://www.ssreyes.org/archivo/mesa/>

² Until now, 16 Workshops of Madrid's Municipal Archives have been carried out, the latest in Alcobendas in May, 2006.

³ <http://www.ugr.es/~vjarchiv/>



⁴ At this time, a draft bill exists (not yet available through the Ministry of Public Administrations' web page: <http://www.map.es>) called "Anteproyecto de Ley para el acceso electrónico de los ciudadanos a las administraciones públicas, V2.0", which is the one I consulted.

⁵ Ley 57/2003 de 16 de diciembre de medidas para la modernización del gobierno local (BOE 17 de diciembre de 2003).

⁶ Regarding the changes introduced by the rule: Salanova Alcalde, Ramón. "La Ley 57/2003, de 16 de diciembre, de medidas para la modernización del gobierno local: un comentario crítico". *Revista aragonesa de Administración Pública*, 24 (2004), p. 233-273.

⁷ See Alberch, Ramón. "El archivero y sus funciones en el organigrama y en la realidad de los municipios". *XIII Jornadas de Archivos Municipales*. Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid, 2000, p. 77-82. And Corominas, Mariona. "Resultats de l'enquesta sobre la situació professional del arxiviers a Catalunya." *Lligall: Revista Catalana d'Arxivística*, 10 (1995).

⁸ Cerdá Díaz, Julio. "Archivos en la web. Sistemas de descripción, búsqueda y recuperación del documento electrónicos". *El acceso a los documentos municipales: XVI Jornadas de Archivos Municipales*. Madrid, Grupo de Archiveros Municipales de Madrid, D.L. 2002.

⁹ The latest contribution can be seen in: Fernández Gil, Paloma. "Recursos humanos: nuevos perfiles profesionales" [cd-rom]. Congreso: *Los Archivos Municipales en la España democrática, Zaragoza, 20-22 de octubre de 2005*. Madrid, Ministerio de Cultura, D.L. 2005.

¹⁰ Regarding the management of quality, it's necessary to emphasize the work of the Municipal Archive of Logroño and the Archive of the Delegation of Alicante, two indispensable references in this field.

¹¹ In 1995, and according to the study published in Lligall, 35.7 % of Archivists from the local administration in Cataluña belonged to the ambit of Culture (COROMINAS, 1995).

¹² In this regard, see: <http://www.csi.map.es/csi/pdf/Pres.%20resul.%20propuesta%20DEFINITIVA.pdf>
http://observatorio.red.es/indicadores/areas/eadministracion/administracion/porcentaje_servicios.html

¹³ For an introduction into Rule ISO 15489 see: Cermeno Martorell, Lluís and Sarda Font, Jaume. "La Norma ISO 15489:2001 Información y documentación - Gestión de documentos: aproximación general a su entorno normativo". *Boletín de la Asociación Asturiana de Bibliotecarios, Archiveros, Documentalistas y Museólogos*. Año XVI, número 2/2 (Julio-diciembre 2005).

¹⁴ Available shortly at:

Local Archives' Portal: <http://www.archivosenred.es>

Archivist's Portal: <http://www.archiveros.archivosenred.es>

Project's Web Page (with online questionnaire): <http://www.info.archivosenred.es>

¹⁵ Unión Europea (UE). Programa IDA: *Moreq. Modelo de requisitos funcionales para la gestión de documentos electrónicos de archivo*. Available at <http://www.mcu.es/archivos/oa/pdf/moreq.pdf> [consulted on 11/14/2006].



¹⁶ Regarding this subject: Herrero Montero, Ana María. "Documentación electrónica en la administración municipal española". *Precongreso DLM-Forum 2002: Documentos electrónicos, Administración y Archivos. Barcelona, 6 de mayo de 2002*. Mesa de Trabajo de Archivos de la Administración Local. "Incidencia de la tecnología de la información en la producción, autenticidad y conservación documental". *VIII Jornadas sobre tecnologías de la información para la modernización de las administraciones Públicas: Tecnimap' 04 : Murcia 28 de septiembre-1 de octubre*. Available at: <http://www.ssreyes.org/archivo/mesa/documentos/tecnimap2004.pdf> [consulted on 11/14/2006].

¹⁷ A questionnaire proposal at:
http://cmisapp.ayto-zaragoza.es/cont/paginas/usic/pdf/modelo_nuevo_bases_datos.pdf

¹⁸ Consejo Internacional de Archivos. *Documentos electrónicos. Manual para archiveros*. Madrid, Ministerio de cultura, 2006. Available at http://www.mcu.es/archivos/pdf/documentos_electronicos.pdf [consulted on 11/14/2006] and Ministerio de Administraciones Públicas (España). Consejo Superior de Informática y para el impulso de la Administración Electrónica: *Aplicaciones utilizadas para el ejercicio de potestades: criterios de conservación*. Available at: <http://www.csi.map.es/csi/pg5c10.htm>

¹⁹ See Carlos Alcalde's interesting work regarding this subject: "El servicio de archivo en los pequeños municipios españoles: una panorámica". *Los archivos municipales en una sociedad abierta: [actas del] Congreso Internacional de Archivos Municipales, Valladolid, del 10 al 14 de marzo de 2003*. Available at: <http://www.ava.es/modules.php?name=Archivo&op=5> [consulted on 11/14/2006].