



ARCHIVE SERVICES OF ADDED VALUE UNDER THE PRISM OF QUALITY

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“Many leaders feel threatened because they haven’t come up with this idea... and they believe it’ll look bad if they accept it. - So they terminate the idea as soon as it’s born.

- And then, they terminate the person who had the idea”.

Conversation between Vice-President Al Gore and Public Service’s General Surveyor Paul Young.

Creating a Public Administration that functions better and costs less.

National Performance Report Review. Vice-President Al Gore

INTRODUCTION

It’s always essential to start a paper thanking our hosts for their kind invitation, even though they have imposed on us a title: “Archive services of added value under the prism of quality”, enunciating that not even when we resort to our best secrets are we capable of agreeing on its full meaning. Understand that it’s a subject difficult for us to develop due to the difficulty of delimiting the term “quality” as well as due to our unconformity in assuming that its implantation can lead to “services of added value”.

We must foremost advise you that quality, whichever its meaning, doesn’t mean the obtainment of new services or of those different to those traditionally acknowledged within archives. On the contrary, the philosophy of quality is founded on the concept of improving that which, in greater of lesser degree, we carry out routinely in our jobs, and we only allow ourselves to drastically change that which, without a doubt, represents a loss of time to our organization.

As you have probably guessed after reading these brief paragraphs, it’s easier to enumerate the instruments and objectives related to the implantation of quality techniques than defining the term quality. If quality is characterized by anything, it’s by

its flexibility in adapting to all types of situations. Even if it results exaggerated, the definition of quality will be different depending on the type of organization and the intrinsic qualities of each. It can't be the same for a private company and a public administration, but even within each company or administration it will vary depending on the type of product or service carried out and the user, client, or citizen to which it's offered.

They also won't be the same to the managers of the different public administrations. Even though they all offer services aimed at citizens, their internal characteristics, administrative structure, scope, and closeness to users makes them different. In any case they can be similar and even complementary, but, even so, we must flee from reaching generic solutions to different realities.

Quality is just improving what we already have to satisfy whoever uses it. In our case, we will try, through a series of instruments, resources, ideology, and leadership, that our users obtain a service that is adequate to their purpose. Even simpler, quality is, above all, the art of solving problems instead of posing them.

Therefore, since it's easier to define what isn't quality, public organizations have preferred to reincorporate the term modernization to the actual administrative glossary, since it's a word that is increasingly being used in detriment to the widespread term of quality. The definition of modernization can also lead to certain confusion if by modernizing we understand merely applying new technologies to reach old objectives. It seems to come from the "Modernizing Plan" elaborated by the Ministry of Public Administrations¹, which centres the majority of its innovating drive on the configuration of the new electronic administration, the electronic DNI, or the 060 Network, or candidly thinks that the great evils of the Administration will be solved by the new Public Function Statute.

Being absolutely convinced of the goodness of the implantation of electronic administration, we doubt, however, that only the technology can be capable of transforming the mentalities of the administrations and their users. Technology is a tool that will allow us to be more efficient, agile, and responsible; it's one of the means to

obtain certain objectives, but always with the “handicap” of the obsolete structures of our administrations and with the existence of too many stereotypes deeply rooted in our bureaucratic mentality.

On the contrary, one of the greatest risk lies in an excess of confidence motivated by the false impression of a limited efficacy of new technologies, without considering the human resources available and the ones that are truly necessary, the existent labour environment among our government employees, the economic means available to us, and the social, demographic, and geographic situation within our scope of action. If the failure of projects endorsed by supra-territorial organizations can be characterized by anything, it’s by their stubbornness in implanting a “coffee for all” philosophy without considering the special idiosyncrasies of the different territories that they cover.

And this is so because we have advanced and progressed in the possession of numerous tools, but we have forgotten the importance of possessing the ideology to develop them. Of course, we don’t think about the particularities of a specific political party, but about rejecting the existence of a society founded on mere technocratic values. From an ideological point of view, quality is a compromise with people that goes beyond the implantation of specific services or the development of competitive technologies. In this sense, the basic objective is avoiding the discrimination of persons and collectives regarding knowledge and the obtainment of any public service. Let it be an example that technology is an essential tool in the future interrelation of the administration and citizens, but other channels that allow a more individualized attention to persons with a lower cultural level or financial resources must exist. Equally, the excessive bureaucratization in the requirements of documents that must be submitted in order to obtain a public service can mean that those organizations, collectives, and individuals with better means and social relations posses, from the start, advantages in their relations with the administration. Even if all strategies seem the same, the important thing is not the degree of compromise that we want to reach in the fulfilment of the objectives, but to reflect what type of organization we want, how we’re going to transform it, and why we want to change it.



That's why we insist on leadership as the motor for change. We're not just referring to the technician that, of course, has and occupies a preferential position, but to the politician as well. Without the leaders' drive, their involvement at the different levels of the organization, and their conviction of the necessity for change and permanent evolution of the structures, resources, and objectives, our purposes will fail or be hardly sustained. Unfortunately, the change of public authorities, the proprietorship and personalization of decisions, and people's continuous changes affect the existence of policies that remain coherent throughout time. Sometimes, fate and the precarious junctures of governments can be our best allies as well as our worst nightmares.

To implant quality criteria we can never ignore all that was done previously. Acknowledging the past means assuming the existence of previous policies but always with a specific plan of action in place. One of the biggest errors that an organization can make consists in not studying the past to keep from making the same mistakes, or, what's worse, belittling the work carried out and trying to "start from zero". This negative aspect of other people's work has unnecessary repercussions on our evaluation of the present and unfavourably affects our future purposes².

A future which must be centred on the fulfilment of our users' necessities and their satisfaction with the services we provide. Users can be internal, our own public employees, as well as external, citizens, or both at the same time, as would be the case of our public archives. Since we act within a monopolistic scheme and we don't compete with any other organization in the provision of services, we run the risk of incurring in indolence, self-compliance, or discrimination. We don't search for clients. They come to us voluntarily. They can't refuse them either, because they can't obtain them elsewhere, nor do they have enough resources to challenge us since claims, judgments, and financial liabilities are not indicative of change.

Leaders who fear losing an election can give in to a policy of demagogy and excessive spending, but this isn't more than an opportunistic improvement. Government employees are practically unmovable, not just because of the statutory character of

permanent employees, but because of the increasing difficulty of finding persons who are duly trained and committed to the projects in exchange for a precarious pay³.

This is the reason for the difficulty of implanting the quality criteria in a public administration whose results can't be measured by volume, resolved files, degree of executed budget, nor Euros obtained⁴. Pressure is more internal than external and that demands our immersion in projects whose results will only be seen medium and long-term. They will be programs that will require a superior effort depending on our level of implication and will force us to self-criticism and to the evaluation of others.

One of the tangible results of the real application of quality is the assumption of transparency as "leiv motiv" of our work, but being transparent leads to the risk of assuming our errors or our incapacity to resolve our deficiencies. That's why before we take on a "Hercules's job" we should diagnose our actual situation, and, above all, know what archive management we don't want in order to clean out the stables.

MANAGEMENT OF UNWANTED ARCHIVES

Diagnosing is not as simple as it seems. Not just because the circumstances of archives vary from a complete system to an institution, but because that means, among other things, not evading difficulties, abandoning rooted customs and mentalities, rethinking functions and behaviours that are scarcely profitable but convenient in their execution, avoiding auto-satisfaction or institutional propaganda, and, the most difficult, being an implacable critic with oneself and with our organization. Since the diagnosis itself does not pose any benefit but the exposition of our strengths and weaknesses and of our possibilities to improve or worsen with time, we will find inevitable clashes of a professional and political nature, such as the indifference of sceptics, the verbal violence of those feeling threatened, or the critique of discontented parties. In any case, we will also receive the help of unexpected persons, of those convinced, or of those desiring a change.



The first stages of the diagnostic process are basic to the future development of the project. It will mean searching for managers' support, since without their presence, carrying out this project will be practically impossible. It will also mean the integration of external (users want this to be useful) as well as internal (will improve our position within the organization) partners or allies, a large dose of imagination, and, above all, a large capacity for resistance to avoid obstacles or to overcome exhausting discussions.

The method we use will vary in relation to the previous parting position and to the specific or special circumstances of our administration. In general, we should adopt the formula of being the ones to diagnose or to prefer the support of external consulting firms. We must keep in mind that field work shall always be our responsibility since the closer we come to the problem the easier it is to fix it. Knowing what happens and the point of view of those who manage is as indispensable as the contributions of technicians and users that are directly or indirectly involved in the service of archives.

In a macro-administration, of course, it's impossible to consult everyone on everything, so we must choose certain sectors and select the subjects that we consider should be consulted and debated. There are multiple means: Brainstorming meetings; DAFO's; comparisons; auto-evaluation systems such as the EFQM, the CAF, or the EVAM⁵; field research – personal or by specific polling; using other research by the administration indirectly related to archives; informative sessions or debates – sectorial or of a general character, etc. We can't explain all the existing possibilities and we can't explain all the existent possibilities and available tools which have been conveniently included in an existing profuse bibliography about quality⁶, unless we turn this paper into a book, which surely has or will be done shortly. What really interests us is explaining some of the deficiencies that can generally be observed in all Spanish public administrations and which unfavourably affect the attempts of improvement of any public service.

One of the major problems of public administration, and, of course, within the archives field, is the unlimited trust deposited on the kindness of legal rules and the pleasure of bureaucratizing all procedures and recording, in writing, each technical activity.

Bureaucracy and excessive regulations, in the worst sense, are a consequence of our lack of trust in institutions and in citizens. Our functional minds propel us to create judicial boards, previous controls, and abundant procedures, thinking that they guarantee us protection against frauds, irregularities, or the systematic infringement of what we consider good practices.

An erroneous premise regarding the goodness of laws, regulations, and specific archive rules exists among Spanish archivists. It's not strange to hear indignant outcries about the lack of rules and the unhappiness, consequence of their unfortunate inexistence⁷. However, complaints about the continuous infringement of laws due to a lack of more abundant development or to the scarce archival kindness of promulgated legal texts are even more numerous.

This immense faith in completely regulated proceedings and in the existence of a set of rules that can act as a professional umbrella has turned into a continuous routine as if its mere existence meant the end of all our problems. We don't doubt the necessity of having a judicial substratum that allows us to execute our mission as managers of information or custodians of the patrimony, but laws, by themselves, will never solve the problems we have accumulated throughout time.

We should be conscious that there isn't anything less efficient than legislation that doesn't take into account the reality of the administrative world in which it must act. In these cases, rules are not complied with or are simply ignored. This so extended practice of promulgating texts that nobody understands (authentic archival manuals which even cover how to organize documentation) is incompatible with administrative cultures that consider archives to be equal to dust and scholarship, or just want us to solve certain problems without complicating them⁸.

We must understand that a rule always represents an enormous personal and collective cost since multiple sectors of the executive administration and of the legislative body must intervene in its confection. That's why any text must keep the equilibrium between all factors that establish the functioning of our organization. Increasing bureaucracy, establishing inflexible proceedings, imposing unintelligible guidelines, or

stipulating more complicated tasks or tasks that mean an overload of daily work is not an error; it's simply professional suicide.

Even more prejudicial is the concept of hierarchical structuring that is implanted in the public administration every time with worse and worse results. Nobody opposes the existence of heads of any formal or professional groups, people who, in short, have to decide on the priorities, activities and objectives that have to be fulfilled and, at the same time, have to find necessary resources and political impulses to carry them out. It is not about questioning the existence of a pyramidal structure in the organizations, but to criticize how the authoritarian positions determined by "order and control" are being extended more and more, the increasing penalization of those necessary decisions taken by the public employees without previous consent or the reprisals caused by the fear and resentment against prestigious good jobs of specialists to the detriment of politicians.

The hierarchical structuring might adopt very diverse forms from the appropriating the work of all to the use of "mobbing" as a coercive mean. However, in general, the concept of badly understood authority moves between classic parameters of the inaccessibility of the head, the selected distribution of information, the transfer of pressure from top to bottom, the distrust or rejection to make decisions proposed by subordinates and the imposition, without any explications, of their own proposals.

Although in the daily life one person is much more comfortable, neither it is easy to undertake a journey toward quality with a non-existent or apathetic leadership, with headquarters whose only objective is to prevent any transformation that might suppose a problem or a risk. It is just complicated as a leader that wants stubbornly to change completely the organization, his team even the whole institution, although, at his own expense. We treat with a typical "illuminated person", at the beginning, generally very attractive, able to assume danger for an idea he previously had and at an unnecessary cost.

Of course, all these characters represent stereotyped figures, almost absurd, but the insecure, apathetic or idealistic leader can cause unpredictable damages by taking or not



taking appropriate decisions. In all three cases we'll always find fear as the central axis of their leadership. The first one will stand out by surrounding himself with a close team, abundant and numerous, lacking decision-making capacity, in detriment of those places where the functions are really carried out,

never assuming the possibility of committing an error, nor risking to commit it, or modifying the layout of a preconceived line of work. The second one will still risk less, will emphasize avoiding any struggles with other units and he will be satisfied with obtaining the minimum for his organization, reducing the cash and the resources. The last one will reach limits with such thing as providing results that most of the organization ignores or it does not wish, he will risk their obtaining without considering the possible damages, his system of work will be based on the common responsibility and he will confront excessively all those that do not share his ideas or will consider them having betrayed them.

In any case, these types of leadership always propose the lack of responsibility of the head and the culpability of superiors or subordinates. One of the common errors of our administrations' directives is giving credibility to the cliché of the bad government employee. From calling them idlers, with little commitment and little confidence, to accusing them of corporativism, having spurious interests opposed to decisions of the ballot boxes or, even, to reproach them their supposed immovability and presence at work. During each legislature we encounter with heads whose professional inferiority, incapacity to manage teams and their own fear, end up in generating verbal and psychological violence on people more and more intimidated, as well as useless mix-ups with less and less motivated government employees.

The solution is not found within employee bylaws that reward good employees with money and raises and punish bad ones with mobility and transfers. Human beings might be imperfect, vain, envious, and greedy, but they work more and better in environments where participation, flexibility and the exchange of information are encouraged, and less and worse in those places where a courtesan or mercenary condition is favoured⁹. All those organizations whose components prefer professional



initiation over the fear of being penalized for deviating from established procedures or for understanding that taking decisions means a scarce award – or objective reward – in case of success, and a sure punishment due to a failure, are condemned to slowly deteriorate or, in the best circumstances, to stagnate in their level of efficiency.

Since administrations have transformed from subsidized structures into service providers they themselves have confirmed the weight of stark criticism against making erroneous decisions or causing situations of manifest negligence¹⁰. In many cases, to avoid collateral damage, the “ostrich tactic” is adopted: What’s important is not that a program doesn’t work well, but that a scandal is not provoked¹¹.

Government employees distraught by the fear of erring prefer avoiding mistakes to satisfying user demands or reaching better results. One of the most common examples within the archive world is found in the complex extensions, delays, and perverse arguments to prevent citizen access to a document, not so much to protect fundamental interests of third parties as to avoid any future problem, real or imaginary¹².

The fear of innovation is not a specific characteristic of a collective but of the people involved and the environment in which they work. Any time that making a decision requires deviation from a previously established script, there is a risk of repercussions that can be difficult to calculate. Since government employees deal with less direct information from superiors, they prefer to reject any modification that means disrupting a status, perhaps uncomfortable but, at least, known¹³. Equally, they will renounce making any transformation that can cause an inordinate reaction of distrust by their superiors¹⁴.

It would be unjust to pretend that the inexistence of alternative proposals is only due to the incompetence of superiors. On the contrary, many times immobilization is the patrimony of many government employees that think that all that they have known, learned, and lived in the past is an absolute truth¹⁵. This conservative thinking survives among the professional groups with much more easiness than vague personal attempts to modify profession. In the associations of archivists “culture versus administrative management” or “an archive as set of documents instead of a building or an institution”



dichotomies are not even the objects of an authentic debate. They are ignored, put sideways or scorned¹⁶. We could say the same about the little professional enthusiasm to modify and adapt supposedly unchanging principles and archiving models to the actual reality. Even, although keeping these principles at any cost supposes unacceptable economic cost. In fact, there are some cases, sometimes solved thanks to appearing of reasoning that, due to swaying decisions and faced and confronted positions, can be only understood as a true nonsense¹⁷.

This mixture of individualism, lack of motivation, fear, and conservatism can be of use to daily management, but is absolutely inefficient in times of crisis. It's easy to resort to victim-like regret or to the natural evolution of the generations that are coming to an end and disappearing. Since the permanent struggle has never been productive and collectivism has long been dislocated by individual ideologies and interests, professionals tend to escape from intolerable situations or adapt to and be discouraged by the current ones¹⁸.

The distancing of all sectors involved ends up causing a progressive deterioration of the work involved and the dissatisfaction of users regarding the service, of archivists regarding their capacity to influence the administration, and of superiors regarding the results obtained. The reality is much more prosaic due to the fact that since there isn't a committed leadership, a coherent plan, clear objectives, acceptable indicators, and valid resources, there isn't any capacity to establish a global program. In the end, emergency solutions are taken that due to their precipitation tend to increase the existing gaps.

Building something is complicated; much more than destroying it. Since administrations offer services as a monopoly, their functioning is only a consequence of internal pressures, or, at most, a consequence of citizen dissatisfaction or harassment by the media. In the case of archives, the last two are circumstantial and tend to only serve as reinforcement to internal decisions. This is why organizations incapable of renewing themselves tend to adopt measures that try to hide a very advanced structural crisis.

This way, human and budgetary resources are increased or are redistributed as if this was a grand solution. Resources that tend to feed "star projects" that attract media

interest or feed central services with the idea that it's the only way to correct mistakes and control the tasks of the other units. That's how programs related to new technologies are publicized and disseminated¹⁹, the construction of great infrastructures are announced, or programs of assistance to other public or private entities are established, without taking into account that daily service and the foundation of the existence of archivists rests on the correct management of information and an adequate conservation of the documentary patrimony.

If we don't reform our archives, starting with knowing what we really want to do with them, our decrees, international rules, boards, expert commissions, international programs and new professional profiles won't be of any use. There isn't any point to making strategic plans, directives, or service menus if we don't specify concrete measures and correction systems, or if what's intrinsic to an organization is mixed with deadlines that are inordinate or do not coincide between similar units²⁰. Searching for quality solutions to archive management requires a compromise beyond mere declarations of intentions.

SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS TO ACHIEVE A QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF ARCHIVES

Once our situation is known and we can find our weak points and what can be used, we will have to create, renovate, or modify our archive system creating a strategic plan²¹. We must, of course, be conscious of the existence of multiple factors that prevent the configuration of one unique model, valid and useful to any organization. We're not referring to the existence of larger or better resources to initiate our project, but to external and internal factors that will establish substantial differences in the final results.

The planning for large administrations can't be the same as for specific bodies nor for all city councils; it will not be the same for an administration with a high ideological component as for a more pragmatic one; nor can the same goals be fulfilled with a collective tied to rigid precepts nor when a considerable deficit of well-trained archivists

exists. This is the reason why we will limit ourselves to concentrate on general aspects that can be extrapolated to all types of institutions. Even so, logically, many of the circumstances we will cite are included in our own experiences.

A first step will be the establishment of interrelation and functioning guidelines with our professionals. We will try to change previous mindsets, implant common objectives, implicate them in the project and exchange information among them. It will be a set of internal and external proposals that, as we will see, encompass multiple factors, some of which belong to the world of personal relations and sensibilities.

Training archivists means, in some cases, un-training them; changing their previous concept of the profession as well as of their role within the administrative structure. It's true that it's complicated to dismantle clichés inherent to the education and experience acquired by professionals throughout their academic and labour life, since archive orthodoxy, the set of inalterable principles and axioms, insists on our role of scientists and re-elaborators of the administrative reality. Finding the equilibrium between knowledge, tasks, and functions that we must take on is as important as constructing an archive model. That's why the training of archivists involved in our project will be aimed at fulfilling the project's objectives and not at improving the archivists' personal work or knowledge²².

The chosen model must, of course, guarantee three aspects inherent to our profession: the management of information, the accessibility to it, and the conservation of the documentary patrimony, which does not mean that the tools and the solutions can be the same. Efficacy and efficiency are beautiful words void of content unless we can check our internal controls and obtain our users' satisfaction. This is our reason for insisting on the renunciation to the application and explanation of standard rules in this lecture and insisting in common sense and rationality as our main weapons. Rules, whether they be administrative, archival, or technological, will always be useful as long as we don't think of their functioning as sacred or think of them as a result in itself²³.

Decentralization of personnel policy seems a grandiose term, yet its explanation is less tedious than we think, regardless of the numerous conditions, risks, and factors that can



influence it²⁴. In the case of archives, its application seems obvious since archivists must carry out their tasks where they are really needed and where they are more useful, that is, next to documents. This premise can seem obvious, but the place remains unclear. If we ask the heads of historic, administrative, central directive, municipal, and provincial historic archives, their answers would surely agree only on the generic aspects and would differ significantly on the priorities. But, even among persons with similar tasks within institutions, the answers would differ according to the training and mentality of their superiors and their organization.

One of the first functions of quality will be to balance the different aspects that act within our archive system, keeping in mind that they all intercommunicate and complement each other, and that they are all necessary. Now, the fact that they're all useful does not mean that they should all receive the same care, interest, or budgetary injections. Without higher management there aren't any results, but an excess of bureaucracy only leads to inefficiency. Our job is carried out through different archive periods, but the sooner our intervention, the better our organization and documentary description will be. Technology is a positive factor as long as its application doesn't make the conservation or exchange of information difficult.

One of our main complaints is the lack of personnel in our units and, since resources are limited, we must consider if the ones we have are correctly placed, at the right time, and with the necessary means to carry out their purpose²⁵. Mobility to distribute the personnel is a key element in the development of an archive system, but a mere distribution will never be sufficient if we don't break the rigid hierarchical relations involved in the decision making process. Logically, whoever is close to the problem is who has all the keys to decide which is the best solution or to discard the worst; instead, our archivist must count on the support of his or her superiors and account to them according to the responsibility degree of each²⁶.

The only formula to guarantee the success of this plan is the permanent existence of a flowing channel of vertical and horizontal information going both ways, making the entire collective a participant in this information process. This way, results can be



analyzed from the perspective of all people involved and take corrective measures when deemed necessary. Only information prevents disinterest, lack of participation, or lack of confidence. Secrecy, on the contrary, leads to distrust, withdrawal, and resentment. Nonetheless, meetings can fail depending on the mood of the participants, the results obtained through time, or the lack of participation.

Knowledge is indispensable to rationalize the costs of our archive project. Rationalizing does not mean decreasing but coherently distributing. An integrated archive system will allow us to share work and costs with other units, invest in one common computer application, or eliminate or redistribute unnecessary spaces. One of the advantages of being a horizontal service is that we get the support of other equally horizontal services with which we must interrelate²⁷. We must, however, remember that rationalizing costs also means prioritizing and this means that a budgetary line can't be opened for each problem that we might face.

The archive management services are keys to execute archive policies, distribute tasks and existing resources, or evaluate results. There is no doubt that exercising professional leadership is necessary to make quality the means to an end, but always keeping in mind which functions are our priority. Central bodies have a tendency to grow inordinately to give priority to that which is only peripheral to the profession of the archivist such as diffusion, subsidy, or publication. Proximity to managers and the pressure created by them favour the configuration of enormous and excessively bureaucratized central offices which are incapable of inspecting and evaluating their archives' results²⁸.

Inspection does not mean punishment, penalization, or control; on the contrary, it must become an element of support and consultation for our archivists. To be able to inspect something we will have to previously establish a strategic program covering several years and an annual plan with a set of objectives and measures. Measures which, as the name states, yield results that can be measured and evaluated and, of course, accepted by all. They must also be correctible and act as correctors themselves.

Evaluation doesn't just mean finding errors. Controlling the results presupposes having the necessary and indispensable knowledge to value our service, boost right choices, reward improvements, and correct deviations. We must keep in mind that evaluation does not simply refer to adding or subtracting numbers; it does not deal with how many consultations we respond to or which units use our services more. Above all, we should not mistake quality in our results with our volume of work. What's important is not what we do, but how we do it. Self-evaluation is only important if it allows us to act as a team and consolidate the establishment of everyday participation guidelines.

The self-criticism of our leadership²⁹, our projects, or our results demands that we forget hierarchy and bureaucracy as solutions. In reality, self-evaluation methods such as the EFQM, the CAF, or the EVAM only try to institutionalize the exchange of information and opinions within a previously defined set of rules that prevent confrontations, authoritarianism, or disinterest. The greatest danger to the consolidation of an archive system lies in people's lack of confidence rather than in their knowledge; in their lack of internal information rather than in the inexistence of adequate means; and in the rejection of criticism from our peers or the acknowledgement of our errors rather than in the livid objections coming from the outside.

In an environment in which internal correction tools fail, our only possibility for change lies in our clients' satisfaction regarding the services offered. Will our users be capable of transforming us?

SATISFIED CITIZENS

In a private company, client satisfaction or dissatisfaction is easy to detect by whether they use our services and whether they buy our products³⁰. It's important to know with certainty the reasons for their acceptance or rejection of our offer, but within Public Service, user dissatisfaction can only be perceived medium and long-term, or, what's worse, be invisible, even to ourselves.

There are various factors that affect the difficulty of assessing an administrative service's level of satisfaction. First of all, because the Administration tends to act as a monopoly and barely has any competitors³¹. Second of all, because citizens are not clients or users with immediate capacity to choose or reject a specific brand or product, but receive a public service because they have a right to it even if there isn't another alternative³². Third of all, because citizens' satisfaction or dissatisfaction is affected by factors such as personal ideology, interest, empathy, or rejection of political decisions that have nothing to do with the service requested or the influence of the media³³. Finally, because they don't have the immediate capacity to change the situation, except by administrative appeal, the use of the media, or the electoral vote³⁴.

In the case of archives we must add two variables that complicate user relations. One is their preconceived ideas about an archive, generally related to historic scholarship; another is the logical ignorance of users regarding archive use since it's an internal service of the administration³⁵.

These two variables allow us to introduce ourselves in the characteristics of an archive's users, who present different connotations than the ones presented by users of other administrative services. Depending of the documentation we control, our clients can be internal, government employees, citizens and institutions in general, and citizens with specialized needs, which we generically denominate investigators. Logically, the first group will preferably use administrative documentation and tend to make individualized petitions; the second group request more varied documents from different time periods, although they tend to use the administration in an indirect way through the respective offices; finally, investigators prefer historic documentation and their petitions tend to be thematic. Also, the petitions are drafted differently and are submitted in different ways. Offices prefer that the original be sent to them as an administrative loan, and investigators like consulting the originals so they try to shorten their stay at the archive by the acquisition of copies.

This diversity gives rise to different proceedings specific to the scope of archives whose complexity tends to be increased by the wordy requirements which archivists like so



much to impose “*urbi et orbi*”. Instead of decreasing bureaucratic hindrances and establishing easier processes, our way of relating to users is as delightful as the “minotaur’s labyrinth”, and it can be seen in the insistency on triplicate document transfer records, inquisitorial administrative loan forms, endless elimination proceedings, unnecessary investigator cards, or temporary authorizations, etc.³⁶

Instead of so many bland regulations and proceedings, it would be better to establish clear, concise, and realistic compromises to facilitate the use of our archives. For that, there is nothing better than a List of services with stipulated objectives, measurable indicators and automatic complaints and claims correction systems. However, the list is not an informative leaflet - for that there are classic leaflets and guides - but the real contract between citizens and administration to improve our services. The publication of the list and its distribution are only the final results of series of previous studies on how to apply quality standards in our unit and how to establish tools to evaluate and measure it. From all of that, one or several commitments will born that go beyond the mere declarations to fulfil series of tasks, since we will have to establish terms, deadlines, quality standards and compensations³⁷.

The List of services can not be self-agreements or gracious donations of public powers.

Its obligatory nature should have to be a consequence of the existence of a real Catalogue of Citizenship Rights with legal status, and its publication in bulletins and official newspapers should be habitual. Unfortunately, the concept of the List of rights is not very extended in the public administrations; even less having the legal status³⁸, although the worse is their little impact due to real lack of content³⁹.

In Castilla-La Mancha, the structure of the Archiving Department is a consequence of a right, recognized in the List, not to have to present documents that are in possession of any organ of the Administration Council, although the have been issued by another Administration Office, with the only exception for documents included in the contracting files, and a right not to have to present documents that have to be issued by organs of the Administration Council⁴⁰. The List of services of the Archiving Department of Castilla-La Mancha simply establishes the right to obtain immediately all

documents and their duplicates that are in possession of the Council or to locate them in 48 hours in case they belong to another administration office ⁴¹.

Since we have initiated our long-winded speech with the finalist commitments, we will continue in descending direction and we will try to explain the importance of having clear objectives and precise indicators.

When we talk about clear objectives we're not referring to general declarations of intentions that archiving departments have toward their relations with citizens, but to priorities or priority that we assume when managing our department. One of the great problems we are dealing with is the mistaken policy of giving preference to mere budgetary actions to the detriment of the quality of services provided ⁴². The management is necessary in archiving department but it cannot compete with our less shining activity: documentary management.

Inform, manage the information, control it, find it, and submit it.

It's as easy as understanding our purpose within our organization. We do not doubt the validity of interests focused on cultural diffusion or marketing and sponsorship, but exhibitions, visits or courses are not addressed to our users, not even to potential or future clients, but to passive people tasting all types of cultural side dishes.

And as we manage information, we will have to implement series of valid indicators to be able to show our results. The indicators itself are not more than numbers linked to certain archiving operations. Isolated, these indicators barely represent something more than a mere statistic, but related among each other and compared to those from previous years, semesters, months or weeks, reflect a complete representation of our archiving system, as well as its evolution throughout the time.

Therefore, each indicator will represent an archive operation inherent to our own existence as documentation agents. This way, the system's functioning will have to be represented by the number of transfers carried out, digital registers within our description databases, operative deposits, installed units, and consultations made as well as they types of consultations, the time and difficulty involved in solving them, and the ones that were unanswered, including the reasons.

It's necessary to insist on that the importance of an indicator is not that it increases each evaluation period, it's not even convenient that there's too much of a difference, even if positive, between our expectations and the final results, but that the causes of the increase, decrease, or stagnation are analyzed. Once done, we will have to take the necessary measures to correct the detected anomalies⁴³.

Finally, we will reflect all these results in structured form of a report or reports and we will send them to all parties that might be concerned and interested⁴⁴. By this way, we come back to the basic question of previous dissertation: What do users want us to do? Perhaps, the answer seems simple, but when we observe thoroughly services we provide in our archives, are we are so sure that our products are those that our users need? Or are they only those that we, archivists, want? And if they were those our directives wanted?

Let's pause for a moment on whether what we understand by diffusion is what is happening in the reality. The exhibitions, publications and activities of some public institutions are, without any doubt, nice, edifying and educational, but we have certain doubts whether they represent the basic interests of the organization. We believe they don't represent the interests of government employees. It seems to us that they are much more interested in finding files needed for their department than in being instructed about the origin of rights of perpetual ownership. Our citizens surely prefer us to solve their matters and find files they are interested in, on which, perhaps, some economic or personal transcripts might depend, or they can continue with interesting investigations of their distant or near past.



We will neither be so foolish to deny the validity of recovery and diffusion of documental patrimony⁴⁵. Those axioms should be fundamental for any policy executed by departments competent in cultural matters. But our archives, as institutions managing information, cannot compete with products of the cultural managers, artists, cooperators, dancers and others from theatre world. The words of an important person in charge of cultural matters serve as a good example. She affirmed that perhaps they had not been able to spread what they have been doing because of carrying out "a very tight agenda". This is the difficulty: to combine documents and archives with cultural policy⁴⁶. Sincerely, we think there are certain contradictions between our wishes to become a reference for our cultural directives and our desire to manage information. We, the archivists, have turned throughout these last years from erudite investigators into cultural managers. This change has not been our decision but we have been forced by circumstances: firstly, the university professors have taken our place, now we are being replaced by cultural specialists. Now, what? Which is our future? To be replaced by content managers?

If we want to keep improving, it's not enough to know what our users want from us and how we control and evaluate our services. Also, we could complete our analysis by comparing ourselves to the best by emulating them by archive services of similar administrations or evaluating the performance of private companies involved in document management and custody⁴⁷. The problem is not to find the best ones, but to find reliably data of what others do. Unfortunately, we not only lack trustworthy and comparable statistics in Spain, we do not have any organisation or common institution that would study common public polices⁴⁸.

In the scope of the public management the comparisons usually are not trustworthy due to several factors. First, the public administrations do not compete directly with each other. Neither the state administrations, nor the self-governing communities, nor the city councils provide archive services complementary in their scope of competencies; at the most, we could find distinctions or similarities in the resources, tools and procedures used to manage the information, but it would be difficult to evaluate the final results according to the time, costs or number of realized archive operations.

This is thus due to the differences more than appreciable aspects between the different administrations. We are not equal, neither in volumes of documentation, type of archives that we manage, existing infrastructures, types of users or organisms, on which we depend, and we have not found similar solutions nor in archiving model, competential and territorial scope and socioeconomic conditions. It is impossible to compare the state administration with its innumerable historical deposits with one-province communities, or last mentioned with the more-province communities, old communities and young ones with nationalistic ideology, or large-size municipalities with small-size ones, etc. And thus we could continue setting numerous combinations and variations "ad infinitum".

Secondly, although it is apparently contradictory with the previous paragraph, there exists the natural tendency of our administration to imitate structures of others, although their contents and situations are very different. In the case of Spanish archivists, the state model has been an example to the majority of Self-Governing Communities and City Councils. This fact was logical, because there were no antecedents, nor professionals trained in other environment different from state archives. Besides that, twenty five years ago nobody supposed such expansion of decentralization of the Spanish public administration and the scope of competencies that would arrive to assume. Even, the fact to become a part of the European Union had its importance in the world of archives. It has given credit to some earlier unthinkable infrastructures. The imitation "per se" of an archive system consolidated during a dictatorship, in the frame of a deep administrative centralization, as well as the use of the provincial circumscription as a basic reference, do not respond to the present criteria of distribution of competences, decentralization and autonomy of the public administration. These circumstances distort the objectives and results of archives due to the difficulty of linking them to what we really need. Since our administrations are similar but very different, "coffee for all" prevents us from establishing comparisons of certain guarantees.



Neither is simple to compare ourselves with the archive services provided by private companies, although in this case, we should talk about the existence of a direct competition with the public services. This is not a place to debate about a need to privatize or, better said, outsource the archive services of the public administration ⁴⁹, the interesting thing is to find out which are the reasons that make possible the existence of these companies. In spite of easy professional critics, signing a contract with a private company for organization, custody and provision of documents of public organizations are not consequence of a rash decision taken by some madcap leaders, nor is the patrimony of an administration governed by a few neo-liberals. Either, it doesn't have anything to do with an alleged ignorance of our public employees of the existence of specialized professionals called archivists.

The factors are of different nature, but all, somehow, are linked among each other. We must keep in mind that outsourcing of services is always caused by a situation of extreme need that includes disorganization of documents, loss of files and, finally, absence of physical space. In these circumstances any public organization has only three possible options to resolve this problem: to ask for help of the specialized organism in charge of their archives, to pay for an own archive system or to contract an external company ⁵⁰.

The first solution should be the correct one and, at the same time, the most inexpensive. Our archive service would take care of the problem, or, at least, guarantee the technical consulting and basic means to resolve it. The first obstacle is usually the idiosyncrasy of the most of immersed services of the departments of Culture, with a mentality distant to the administrative documentation, and the existing compartmentalization in the Public Administration whose units are usually not very willing to transfer their own resources to solve problems of others. In addition, generally these specialized services do not dispose of infrastructure and means to solve, not even, their problem with the space.

The second possibility, the creation of an archive system, is even more onerous and complicated. We are demanding, not the creation of permanent posts for archivists and the hiring of temporary personnel, but the construction or rent of offices that allow us to

guard documents with guarantee of permanence and conservation. From the public management point of view it seems strident to spend so much budgeted money on situation that is a fruit of idleness and the improvisation.

The third choice is the simplest to achieve. The externalization of the archive service has some short and long term advantages. It's, first of all, less expensive than the last one, since it does not demand the construction of deposits, nor hiring permanent archivists, who will be employed by the company. In addition, it solves the situation in a short time, by employing in the organization Stakhanovite business approaches and archiving of documents and adjustment of the results to the requirements of the offices. Without entering into Byzantine discussion on the presumed legality or illegality of these services, nor their quality, the outsourcing ends up causing the public administration depends on a private company and, in a long term, it supposes an extreme cost.

Citizen satisfaction is only obtained if we're capable to make our services accessible and we allow participation in their development. Establishing a communication plan to project our labour is not the same as creating programs of cultural diffusion. To communicate our services supposes that our users know us and know where to go. In the case of the archives, the mechanisms are not as wide as we would like them to be, since we have limitations in our internal information service or the direct consequences of the cultural consumption. After all, conferences, publications, articles or Internet references can only have impact in the reduced professional scopes.

The different formulas that allow citizen participation in the improvement of administrative services are much more interesting. Of course, it's not about to approach to an ideal of the communitarian democracy like in an improbable Rousseauian social contract, we rather talk about the possibility of assuming some tasks as consultations, suggestions, claims and surveys. First two ones are not results of our will but they are a consequence of a position adopted specifically by users; on the contrary, the surveys correspond to a conscious action taken by our unit.

One of the basic principles guiding consultations or claims which seems obvious, is the obligation of providing an official answer by the person in charge of the unit. It's not enough to give oral answers or answers written by the Archive Director⁵¹. In any case, it is about to find out any possible efficiencies in the archive operations. This facilitates the implantation of corrective measures if there has been a real harm produced to any affected person. Also, reception of initiative or suggestion establishes positive relation between both parts, because it motivates a citizen, who sees recognized his contribution, as well as a public employee that identifies the person as a real subject that appreciates and knows his work⁵².

Surveys help us know our users global perception of our services. Logically, a survey must guarantee anonymity, be concise, and prevent biased questions or questions that predispose to a specific answer. The evaluation of the results must be directly linked to the data obtained by our indicators⁵³.

QUALITY AND TECHNOLOGY WITHIN ARCHIVES

At the beginning of this paper, we commented on the progressive substitution of the term “quality” with the term “modernization”. We also insisted that the latter was more closely related to electronic administration than to the practices we have detailed in previous pages. However, understanding the administration’s actual situation without the possibilities of technology is complicated. Besides, from a quality point of view, a platform of these characteristics should always mean an indispensable support as an instrument to achieve our objectives.

In reality, since our hosts have relied on an excellent group of specialists on these subjects, we’ll silence the Communities’ Committee’s Electronic Administration Program (project CESAR) and its impact on the documentary management of its archives. We’ll try to concentrate on how these projects condition our archive services and how they could affect the quality plans.

When archivists or archive professors debate over electronic administration, except for some honourable exceptions, their direct knowledge about electronic documents and archives is limited to theory or to a mixture of ideas related to digitalization, ISO rules, computer software, record management, or content administration. The explanation is relatively simple: Our position within the organization doesn’t favour our participation, just like the training and experience we possess doesn’t help us much⁵⁴.

We could sum up various factors that influence the scarce presence of archives. In a generic way, we’ll cite our habitual link to the cultural scope, the administration’s mindset which considers us autonomous to the administrative circuits, the existence of computer software exclusive to archives, and the inexistence of the problem of electronic documents’ management of information and space⁵⁵.

To all these factors we should add the excessive departmentalization of our administrations which hinders reaching solutions common to all, including a single position on electronic document management or on the acquisition of a technological tool. The inexistence of an integrated archive service and the isolation of Culture

departments from the places where the plans for the implantation of electronic administration are created, are elements that impede the participation of archivists beyond recommending theoretical criteria regarding preservation and conservation of electronic documents⁵⁶.

To sum up, our inexperience in the treatment of electronic documents, our position within the documentation's administrative circuit, and the presumed disappearance of the problems derived from the accumulation of documents in paper form in offices, don't induce us to optimism.

The existence of a computer application that allows us to manage archives is a useful tool to improve the quality of our services. We insist, however, that technology can never be the end in itself; to make ourselves clear, quality can exist in a service without using a technological platform and provide a deficient service relying on it. Nevertheless, as we manage a larger volume of documentation, computer science becomes one of our best allies.

As we were commenting a few paragraphs above, one of the more generalized problems within computer applications expressly constituted for archive use is their adaptation, logically, to the reality of the majority of Spanish archives: A "means to an end" scope in the control of documentation, an important influence from historicism and culture, and a certain isolation from the rest of archives. This is why many archivists' suggestions are incorporated on to these platforms without analyzing their real value of these elements and added functions.

From a quality point of view, an application has direct repercussions on the improvement of archive service from the moment that, to recover documentation, it forces us to make an effort to standardize and improve our description of and accessibility to information. The wider our intervention capacity within the management of documents and the more integrated our system, the better our services and the better user satisfaction.

The new draft bill regarding electronic administration might grant us some opportunities. Let us, however, doubt its goodness. The reading of sections related to electronic archives shows us a marginal concept of our position since these sections insist on the context of preventing data obsolescence within the scope of historical archives, as well as on the guarantee of preserving the integrity of the same⁵⁷.

We couldn't finalize these brief commentaries without a reflection about the importance of the development of shared archive resources linked to the new technologies and its impact in the improvement of quality. Too frequently we hear that our archives are "information islands" incapable of distributing or sharing their information with others. It's true that we don't compete with the rest of Public Service, but since a considerable volume of information has been accumulating over all these years, perhaps it would be the moment to consider a formula to exchange information of certain description levels, and, this way, avoid the reiterated effort of numerous archivists repeating the same work, which, we can assure, it's not precisely quality.

CONCLUSION

The persistent defenders of quality insist that it can be summed up as the rule of the five E: Economy, Efficiency, Efficacy, Ethics, and Excellence. To simplify, we could represent it as an administration with the minimum necessary personnel, a balanced and frugal budget, and employees capable of carrying out all the different job functions within the parameters of public administration, whose service we must appreciate as an added value. Transferring these five E to the field of archives and archivists could, perhaps, help us to better understand what quality can mean.

If we ask an archivist whether his or her organization is small, he or she will undoubtedly answer that it's not, except in the case of archives whose personnel will always consider it insufficient. The problem lies in that insufficient does not always mean scarce or small. In many cases, it only means a bad distribution or a deficient archive model. The tendency to cover management positions with highly specialized

professionals, the personnel growth of central bodies, or the bad planning of the same, preferring facultative instead of technical or auxiliary scales are, among others, some of the reasons we could present against our archivist's assertion.

In the first case, the tendency to place archivists in administrative management positions, it is about trying deliberately to increase the number of professional staff in decision centres, at the cost of losing effectiveness of proceedings. We find ourselves, therefore, before a connection of interests that are corporate in part (more jobs), partly the usefulness of directives (the central services staff is increasing). Still clearer is the casuistry to renounce the creation of positions at inferior levels to the detriment of the optional ones. In general, it hides prestigious interests of highly qualified group, increment of outsourcing of certain services and it connects with some services from academic sectors.

Moreover, the archive system has to give a priority to the final institutions to the detriment of the office processes demanding the existence of an abundant manpower to organize what has been disorganized and deteriorated and, consequently, to provide the system with restorers, microfilm makers, digitizers, reprographers, auxiliary staff etc. which, due to a complexity of the situation inherited, are never in sufficient numbers.

We could also add the existence of archival programs, more closely related to the conservation of the historical patrimony or to the institutional propaganda that force us to permanently divert our human resources from their primary functions.

From a quality point of view we observe a clear process of non-existence of economy approach in provided services. On the one hand, the archivists are selected through the Civil Service Examinations, competitions or interviews demanding them a qualification for functions very different from those merely managerial, on the other hand, the distribution of the personnel is, at least, deficient.

If we continue asking our archivist if his or her organization spends its money the best way possible and if it's sufficient, bet what he or she would say: No! Archives are always the "ugly ducklings" of the administration, abandoned, almost kicked out,

practically living in indigence, and being the last ones in the budget. Nevertheless, the reality is not as simple as we want to describe, because the public cost produced in the scope of archive activities can seem little to a professional and enormous to a manager.

In a world in which we always try to find an equilibrium between offer and demand, cost and benefit, it's complicated for an organization to take on the maintenance cost of units whose results are only observed long-term and with an incidence over minor sectors. We're referring, of course, to the classic archive world strictly linked to the administrative culture or tradition of storing outdated documents conserved by legal obligation.

Let's briefly study two interesting examples that demonstrate the clash of professional interests and the existence of a project requiring an important economic injection. Firstly, we will circumscribe it to the scope of administrative archives, being the first serious attempt, from 1969, to approach the complex situation of the General State Administration archives. Secondly we find it in the culture world that gives rise to a flood of ink about the subject. In both cases we will avoid expressing moral or subjective judgments on its opportunity or the impact of the politics or ideology on its configuration.

The CADA (Storage Centre of Administrative Documents) was born out of a very original purpose: to obtain economic profitability of archive services and, at the same time, to resolve the slovenly situation of the stored, dispersed and disorganized documentation of the State⁵⁸. Therefore, this project was born within the parameters of struggle for quality and economy of means, what is, of course, immersed in the current ideology.

Built on lands close to Madrid, by the public company SEGIPSA, sponsored by the Asset Management General Department of the Ministry of Treasury, the building, in spite of its costs, is considered highly profitable because its construction allows releasing numerous buildings owned or rented by the administration to store documents, or expiration of burdensome contracts with private companies. In addition, to finance its operation it is planned to charge fees all public organizations requiring its services.

Curiously, the project was criminalized by part of the profession in editorials, articles, and manifests⁵⁹. The biggest critiques centred on the absence of the Ministry of Culture in this project as the department of competence in archive matters and on the inexistence of regulation. The authentic reality is much more prosaic and hides a series of individual and collective interests which we have defined as “stakeholders”. The only real fact is that this project is languishing and, on the contrary, nobody has contributed with a different solution of the situation of the General Administration archives.

The case of the Centre for Documentation of the Historical Memory in Salamanca is very well-known and, therefore, we will avoid its political and media repercussion⁶⁰. For the purpose of this presentation the most important fact is the foundation of a new center, based on the Civil War Archive, that will demand numerous investments in the acquisition of a building, the purchase of articles related to the subject, the costs of digitalization works and, of course, in personnel. And if we asked any archivist about necessity of this project, from the strictly professional point of view, he would not doubt in answering that there are other much more important priorities, among others the construction of a new National Historical Archive Headquarters: a place to store the enormous volume of documentation generated by this organization.

From the quality point of view, we have two clear situations what is not considered to be an effective archive management. Since, in spite of great inversions carried out, the real problem of document management and document conservation has not been solved.

An organization’s efficiency is measured by the capacity of its employees to carry out their assigned tasks and to adapt to the new needs of the organization and its users. Therefore, the success of a unit will be linked to the knowledge level of its employees, staff selection and its continuous training. In the area we are interested in, the implementation of such efficiency doesn’t seem to be as easy as we would like it to be, not because of the capacity of people but due to the lack of suitability between a knowledge and work. Although we must simplify excessively, the previous knowledge that a person receives to obtain a professional level of archivist are, at least, something contradictory. Without recognizable degree, a university swamps us with a number of

subjects that differ according to the faculty where they are studied. In this way we can say that in Madrid, Barcelona, Salamanca, Sevilla, Ferrol or Granada are given similar but different subjects.

The abyss between the given knowledge and requirements for the majority of civil service exams is even worse. It's not about to criticize any of these two circumstances, but to reflect about the cause of the failure of the most of archive management students in the selection process, or the low number of persons coming from other specializations like Documentation or Humanities.

We have a very clear example of what happened in the last civil service exams announced by the Ministry of Culture, since the set of topics have been modified in last ten years with certain regularity.

Without expressing any positive or negative judgment, during this time it has been preferred to select archivists through civil service exams with a strong emphasis on erudition and historicism not only in the set of topics, but also in the election of the members of the board of examiners. We have to suppose that the needs of general archives require that type of specialization. But recently a new change in the set of topics has taken place. More subjects of archive management and documentation have been included to the detriment of those of history of institutions and sources. Since we don't think these oscillations are fruits of the whim of a directive on duty we interpose a pair of questions: Have needs of state archives changed from one year to another? Or, on the contrary, did applicants lack necessary preparation in previous years and for that reason required knowledge has been modified?

It also isn't easy to explain the real meaning of official training within the scope of archives. Although it's never good to generalize, we think that courses, instead of being aimed at improving the quality of the services offered by a unit, are aimed, in a general sense, at improving the possibilities of promotion of government employees and, in a strict sense, at increasing or consolidating knowledge whose relation to the archivist's job is somewhat diffused. It is not possible to understand that the Council of Culture of the Board of Independent Regions programs its courses on digitalization of

photographic documents, codified description EAD or document restoration, when there are no digitalization cameras in the Provincial Historical Archives, neither restoration workshops, computer applications nor unique descriptive programming, etc. Therefore, it seems that the E of efficiency is somehow twisted in the world of archives. Concretely, to claim that the archivists can adapt to the new wickers with so obsolete equipment represents almost an act of faith.

The fourth paragraph talks about Ethics. In the context of the quality, the professional ethics has evolved from performing an indefinite correct or non-censurable behaviour in providing services to public, to the obligation to accept a set of measures written and known for actions of all directives and public employees in their relations with citizens. The elaboration of ethical codes, good practices or managerial evaluation is born in a context in which the Public Administration elaborates guidelines to guarantee that services will be provided within the frame of equality, transparency and participation.

In the scope of archives we also find interest for the professional ethics codes; in Spain the Association of Archivists of Catalonia has even approved one in 2002⁶¹. Also we remembered the controversy rose in France by the attitude of two archivists who, by virtue of their ideology and personal position, allowed the access to a series of documents classified as confidential⁶².

We don't consider the codes to be bad, although in many cases the regulations are included in legislation currently in force. We doubt their effectiveness beyond their exhibition to the public, since it is a set of recommendations with little possibilities of presumed deviations being corrected. For us, the most interesting is the debate about the attitude of directives and public employees in public management and the little transparency of their activities.

In the case of archivists, since their decisions have a little external impact, the most of their actions are usually according to the law. Perhaps, the non-existence of performance indicators and their monitoring, for some institutions that are hardly pressed by their clients, might be criticized; what indeed doesn't contribute to the work spirit. Maybe, we could argue about the excess of courses and conferences which

directives attend, what produces their continual absence from office, but these are accidental and little representative cases.

We neither consider small corruptions excessively serious e.g. to help researchers and diverse users with trifles like obtaining the photocopy or privileged information. Not even the actions closer to what we understand as a breach of code, e.g. obstacles put to obstruct the access to certain documents, usually go beyond the harm of certain historical investigations and they, in fact, only hide a hazy fear to make mistake.

Another question is the lack of professional ethics when we talk about the qualifications and skills of certain archivists to occupy some positions. It can be affirmed that, at heart, these critics usually hide only personal circumstances, but have double importance: one that affects the profession and second, much more important, that harms directly a human being. Sometimes we're not conscious that a disproportionate or barely meditated reaction, fruit of anger, fright, resentment, or frustration, can have awful consequences on the life of our peers. By this form, any accusation, any insult or declaration in certain circles or in mass media can hurt our dignity, our honour and our image forever.

But in this presentation we would like to focus on the seriousness of the unjustified attacks on the profession, that have their sights set on discretion of the archive knowledge of certain persons or whole groups. Several facts can serve us as a proof that certain sets of attitudes ends up having a boomerang effect on the group. When certain people, recently appointed to a senior directive posts, are accused from not being professional, signing shady contracts, not knowing the reality or even their post of archivists is denied, the immediate effect is the generalized belief that the most of the people in charge are incompetent, protégés or not able to manage an institution. At the same time our knowledge is underrated and our professional attitude diminishes.

Also, when for strictly ideological reasons, people being not in agreement are attacked, through the discredit campaigns in all types of professional media or through any other sorts, the scientific principles of our profession end up transforming themselves into a pure "peripatetic" discussion without any base. When we elevated our principles, like



the ones of language, geography or identity, to the quality of science, we turn archive management into a plump lady dressed in ruffles and frills. When we insist on an importance of copies and their advantages to originals we don't act as archivist but we sing "tragalá" with a high-pitched voice.

The consequences of this and similar absurdities end up having a direct repercussion on the archivists as a group and their role in the information society. On the one hand, the abrupt dismissal of archivists will have mid-term and long-term consequence. The hiring of professionals in information management of different types, greater influence of the politics on the expert decision making or, simply, the moral deterioration of a form to understand the comradeship in a group. It does not surprise us that before the failure of unionism the foundation of yellow unions will begin as a form of self-protection.

The last E, the one for Excellence is the one that gives this paper its title: the possibility that services of added value can be provided within archives. In these long paragraphs we have tried to explain that we, archivists, would be content with simply carrying out our tasks in order to achieve these services. That is, as long as we rethink our position within the organization, the place where we must be, and how we must satisfy our users' requests. We have tried to explain what we must not do, the necessity of establishing measurable compromises and objectives and assuming our obligations. Finally, we have tried to show that we are a consequence of our right and wrong choices.

The great problem of applying quality is not the philosophy, the doctrine, nor the ideology on which it feeds. The biggest inconveniences reside in the units that have the obligation of diffusing it or implementing it. Quality services have the great difficulty that their actions are not easy to measure, since they can't be measured in terms of number of settled files or requests submitted. The results are also difficult to extrapolate, since they are only visible medium and long term within the organization.

For these and other reasons, if there's anything that quality needs is the existence of the Administration's historic memory. The continuous change of managers and superiors

doesn't favour the implantation of measures, plans, and projects that tend to be forgotten over the years. In the end, nobody is conscious that part of the success of certain public services is consequence of the priceless work of a series of Quijotes and of many other Sanchos.



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http://www.map.es/prensa/actualidad/noticias/2006/10/2006_10_23/parrafo/0/document_es/Conferencia_Funcionarios_-_Bib.pdf (10-29-2006).

4 One of the failed intents within Public Administrations can be found in the indicators of objectives set by programs within the budget. Fully executing a budgetary program doesn't mean good management, nor does increasing personnel or financial resources, in itself, solve deficient activity.

5 Weaknesses, Threats, Strengths, and Opportunities; European Framework Quality Management; Common Assessment Framework; Evaluation, Learning, and Improvement Model.

6 Publications regarding quality applications can be found at:
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7 An example can be found in literature about the inexistancy of public archives regulation and the perverse relations between the Ministry of Culture and the Self-Governing Communities, in GÓMEZLLERA GARCÍA-NAVA, Eduardo: “Esbozo de reglamento de la ley de patrimonio (archivos)” in “El Libro, las Bibliotecas y los Archivos en España a comienzos del Tercer Milenio” [co-ordinator Luis A. Ribot García] Madrid 2002 pp. 269-ss.

8 For example, the academic orientation of the Regulation of Archives of Andalucía in FERNÁNDEZ RAMOS, Severiano: “Archive Law of Andalucía. An experience”, in the Newsletter of ANABAD nº 4 (2001) pages 15. But significant cases of the regulatory impulse may be observed in most of the legal texts of the Autonomies.

9 An example of the problems resulting from the inexistancy of contacts between the town and the surrounding areas can be observed in the Manifest of Defence of the Spanish Archivist Association in the Public Sector. This is an example of how a Ministry is capable of destroying its own external credit in less than two years. The same can be applied to the last Manifests of ANABAD or of ACAL about the case of Salamanca. Nevertheless, if we consult the archivists close to the Assistant Department and thus, duly informed thereabout, we could realize that their opinion about the policy that has been implemented up to now is quite more positive. People tend to be highly critical when their ideal does not coincide with the actions carried out by the leader. Nevertheless, factors may be highly different because, besides, the personal approach – based on the ideological positions, the relations of affection and disaffection, frustrations or uncertainty- may also influence.

10 The overlapping of the political situation over the technical aspect in the case of the “Archive of Salamanca” is a clear example of how a right, wrong or deficiently thought decision not only does not represent a definite solution but also, the situation goes even worse when other decisions are being taken in order to partially solve the initial situation.



11 Though being a mere anecdote, what happened some years ago in an archive – the name of which I do not want to remember - may also be useful as an example. In that case, an engraving – requested by an institution in order to be exhibited – did not appear. As it had been recently restored and there were photographs and a detailed description of it, a copy of the original was preferred to be done before denouncing its disappearance and establishing criteria in order to prevent this type of facts from taking place again. Only the fear for the ordinary situation of killing the messenger may explain such nonsense.

12 Access denials are quite frequent due to false reasons, generally unimportant. Some time ago, a person was complaining because a town hall in Castilla-La Mancha denied him the right to investigate the municipal records of the forties and the fifties on the basis that the petition had generic and not individualized nature and that it involved people's personal life. The hidden reason of this refusal – with no legal basis – was a strange fear of what it might be discovered. Another example, quite more prosaic, was the reply given by an employee enjoying an important position in a CCAA due to the complaints some people made before mass media due to the denial of having access to some files. His reply – with anthology nature – was that they were in his office and those who were interested in consulting them, should only have to go to his office and ask for them. Nevertheless, he added that people had to understand that if he was not in his office, it would be impossible for him to provide them. On the other hand, a spokesman of the Board of Communities announced to the mass media that consultation of the so-discussed Seseña project was at the disposal of any person who applies for it in the Archive of Castilla-La Mancha.

13 An example can be found in the recently modification of the topics to be studied for the public examination of the Facultative Body. What was, by itself, a necessary decision, has turned to be a supposed grievance due to the way it was carried out. As the topics implemented confuse a public examination with an academic syllabus, and as it has been done without any type of consensus or previous information, a group of persons felt offended because the studies requested for the previous period of time were not taken into account and those who attended the public examination were angry as they considered that some specific students were being favoured. It was the same case as it happened in the year 1985, when Latin and palaeography were not considered.

14 Who has ever heard the case of meetings, symposiums or publications suggested by experts and that were rejected or modified, in the last minute, by politicians due to opportunity reasons? In an environment of distrust and poor information, all the previous efforts made are not only disregarded but, besides, they produce misunderstandings, unnecessary work and sometimes confrontation as well. The logical consequences: they have to organize them by themselves!

15 Known –within the legal field - as “stakeholders”.

16 In the State, archivists insist on the power enjoyed by Culture to supervise administrative archives and to establish the technical patterns for their organization. This is only for traditional documents because electronic ones are within the scope of Public Administrations. But even the historical ones are considered as not included within the scope of the Ministry; we tend to think of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Public Works, Housing, Justice or the General Departments of Public Debs or the Spanish Civil Guard, among some others. If we're all conscious that the model doesn't work, wouldn't it be better to solve once and for ever all the existing urging problems involving access, preservation and storage?

17 The most incomprehensible case for those who are not experts in archives is the one of the Provincial Historical Archives. Being state-owned institutions though managed by the Autonomies, they gather the documents of the State and now the Autonomic ones, with some protests from the sector of the State archives as they consider trivial the concept of saving in order to avoid duplication of infrastructures. Such a position may lead us to nonsense when the Provincial Historical Archive is in the same building as the General Archive of the Autonomy and having two rooms for consultation. On the other hand, when the Provincial Historical Archives are saturated, professionals prefer to suggest the renting of rooms instead of having possible spaces in other centres of the same Administration. Finally, one of the most



evident examples of interference of the State with the territorial field of Autonomies, i.e. the Royal Decree 937/2003 passed on the 18th. of July about Modernization of Judicial Archives, is unnoticed. Without studying thoroughly the transfer of competences between the Ministries of Culture, the Judicial Power, the Ministry of Justice and the Communities, has anybody stopped thinking, at least for one minute, how complicated it is to overload the collapsed Provincial Historical Archives? Why does anybody want to know about the real situation?

18 Though we may find examples in several institutions, one of the most dramatic facts in any organization is the uninterrupted loss of important human resources due to reasons different from work. We all know about the existence of “personalized” situations that have caused the departure or disappearance of excellent professionals who have been presumably pursued due to different reasons. One of the most dangerous is the continuous contempt towards professional work, considered as useless, inexistent or always performed wrongly. If it is bad to face these situations, it is even worse to subordinate and accept them. As there are neither mutual supporting mechanisms nor professional good fellow-ship, the only solution is to flee.

The problem is that those who remain are, sooner or latter, petrified by “Medusa”.

19 The project of Archives in the Network is a valid example of how a Ministry with serious problems spends an important amount of money in something interesting, but which does not solve the internal problems of its centres without having the proper objectives and planning or without having solved the problems regarding elimination or transfers (vide, GONZÁLEZ GARCÍA, Pedro: “Spanish Archives in the Network?”, Newsletter of ANABAD No. 3 (2003) pages 11-36). At the same time, it is also censurable to spend more than one has in projects for the digitalization of nice documents when archives are not assigned the necessary budget.

20 This means just the contrary of the Service Letters of the General Archives

http://www.mcu.es/jsp/plantilla_wai.jsp?id=82&area=atencion (3.09.2006). I suggest an analysis of the services offered and of the terms in each centre.

21 For purists, “master plan”.

22 It is a mistake to consider courses on archives as an individualized training, complementary to the one acquired previously. In a quality project, training is addressed to obtain better results in the use of the tools available and which are directly related with our work. To be clearer, we are not going to finance a course about the ISAD-G Standard if our priority is to describe and manage the information about our organization for its administrative use, and we are not going to offer a course on electronic documents if the real purpose is to manage only hard copies.

23 Two examples would be enough to understand the incompatibility of quality and the poorly- calibrated standard. ISAD-G is an “invention” that will require a book to explain who and why it is locally de-contextualised ten years after its beginning with universal intentions, and of its reception as the archivist panacea. The ISO 15489 is just the contrary, an attempt made by companies, consulting firms and the academic sector, to introduce an English standard the translation into Spanish of which is so literal that it is nearly difficult to be understood by a professional. In any case, both of them summarize the failure of the implementation of something that, basically, nobody understands if it is really useful or if the effort it implies will be profitable.

24 For the sake of linguistic health, in Spanish we renounce to any Anglicism such as “empowering”.

25 One of the strengths of the government of the Autonomous Communities of Castilla-La Mancha is the possibility to transfer the staff of archives to that place where their action is necessary in local Departments, Delegations, the Archive of Castilla-La Mancha, etc.

26 One of the biggest errors of an organization will consist on controlling, from the centre, any decision – though being insignificant - and hiding the basic keys of great projects as if they were secrets of the State.

One responsible person cannot limit the size of the boxes, the colour of the stickers, the distribution of the shelves or a descriptive parameter; he/she may express an opinion or act in the hypothetical case of disagreements or due to urgent needs of rectification, but he/she must obtain resources in order the experts have boxes, shelves or a computer. On the contrary, he/she may have difficulties for implementing a great Project if it is unknown for those who must develop it.

27 For the lovers of the English language: “strategic partnership”. In the case of the Archives of Castilla-La Mancha, the co-operation with the General Inspection of Services, with the General Management for the Information Society and Telecommunications and with the General Technical Secretaries is essential.

28 The technical personnel of the central bodies or the Archive of Castilla-La Mancha represents 4.5% of the available human resources, the one dedicated to archives for the Book Service, Archives and Libraries of the Culture Department, 10% of the total number and in the General Management of State Archives, about 12%.

29 For English language lovers, it refers to “modelling”.

30 Though we may indistinctly used client (but not customer), user or citizen, it must be clearly specified that the last two options are the ones preferred from an ideological point of view. In the English speaking countries, especially in the USA, the citizen is considered a client because he/she indirectly pays the public services by means of contributions and taxes. For us, the citizen is a user as he/she receives a public service because he/she is entitled to it, either paying for it or not.

31 Even privatization of an administrative service is the consequence of the public manager’s will and its granting combines two ideological, even political, factors of highly different nature.

32 Choosing between public or private health services – or education – is a possibility that, generally, is enjoyed by people according to their own interests. Nevertheless, both education as well as health services, are constitutional rights enjoyed by citizens and the government must guarantee them both by means of a direct public service or a State-subsidized service, according to his/her possibilities. The election of an alternative private service turns the citizen to be a client and his/her demands will go directly towards a private institution. He can never claim against Public Administration – though it is possible to denounce – for the possible deficiencies.

33 Bad management is only perceived immediately by those who it directly affects. For example, education by parents and teachers, health services by chronically ill patients or those on waiting lists, agricultural benefits by agriculturists, etc. In general, only a shocking circumstance or a general feeling of bad management accumulated through the years is capable of drastically changing a government team.

34 Or the exercise of undue influence (as we are talking about personal interests). This is the reason why initiatives referring to the transparency of choosing the school or the activity centre for young people are the object of severe critics by some sectors.

35 As an example of humility, we must consider an inquiry carried out by the Board of Communities about the level of knowledge of the Citizens’ services and their evaluation. Administrative Archives are in the last place, behind the Official Gazette, the Web page, the Information Telephone 012 or the Information and Registration Offices.

36 It is evident that, by heart, it will be difficult for them to find an Administration that has regulated an efficient access procedure to documents, but it will surely be easier for them to find provisions and references about researcher’s cards and temporary authorizations.

37 To understand it better, we cannot establish a so vague compromise such as that the archives will provide copies of their documents within a reasonable or undetermined period of time, or specifying

excessive periods as, for example, four months. Or not establishing compensations because aims have not been fulfilled: submission of apologizes, explanation of the causes of the delay, free copies, etc.

38 In Castilla-La Mancha: the Catalogue of the Citizen's Rights, passed by the 30/1999 Decree, on the 30th of March. In Extremadura, it has been approved by the 149/2004 Decree passed on the 14th of October. Other Communities, such as Madrid, La Rioja and Valencia, have a Decalogue (the first two Communities) and a Citizen's Catalogue (the last one). They are a mere list of intentions of the Administration but with no legal value and having no corrective measures that may be applied in case of default.

39 Recently, it is highly commented the existence of second generation catalogues of services. These are documents of compromise which include similar services of different public administrations. Nevertheless, we consider that within the group of the first generation catalogues, there are several levels. The basic level would refer to the Catalogues of purposes or intensions with no corrective measures. A second level would refer to the organic service Catalogues which include services assigned to a unit but they have vertical nature and in which there are compromises, indicators and corrective systems. The third level would include the Catalogue by Sectors which influence on services of transverse nature. In Castilla-La Mancha, we only have eleven Catalogues but they are all of the type of Sector Catalogue; they include compromises, indicators and corrective systems. La Rioja would be in the second level with the so-called Compromise Catalogue, as well as some of the General State Administration. Communities such as Andalucía, Cantabria, Extremadura, Madrid, Castilla y León, Valencia and Canarias are in the lowest level.

40 Sections 29 and 30 of the Catalogue of the Citizenship Rights
<http://www.jccm.es/admpub/servicios/derechos/derechos.htm> (14.09.2006).

41 "Immediate localization of any document and, if it is possible, to consult it or to lend it. The granting of copies and certificates of any document will be immediately done but only if the number of requests required and their preservation condition so allow them. Communication of information for historical, scientific or cultural reasons will be carried out within a term of 48 hours.
 Localization of any document which is filed in other archive under the control of the Board of Communities of Castilla-La Mancha will be carried out within a maximum term of 48 hours.
<http://www.jccm.es/admpub/servicios/derechos/index.htm> (14.09.2006).

42 It must not be suggested, from a technical point of view, that it is preferable to deal with grants or to sign agreements with institutions instead of guaranteeing access to the organization documents. To be clearer, a wrong performance of administrative dealings cannot be fiercely criticized and then, importance is not given to the possibility of losing our documents.

43 There are many different causes why some enquiries may be unsuccessful, but we do not consider them, we tend to consider people as guilty. As we have already observed in previous paragraphs, fear towards mistake is endemic and this is the reason why we prefer to accuse another person for being responsible for it. Thus, in the case of archives, we do not lose documents; it is the offices' fault, and vice versa. With indicators, responsibility is not the important factor. The essential point is to know if the fault derives from a wrong description, from professional lack of knowledge, from a terrible installation, from not having been transferred or because it has been lost before or after the archive has been organized. Once the reason has been found, all the parties are informed about the specific cause and then, the way of avoiding that such circumstance may happen again is studied.

44 Every year, the Archive of Castilla-La Mancha prepares a general Report about its activities for the provincial Department of Public Administrations, as well as some partial reports of each central archive which are sent to the Secretaries General. In such reports, the causes of the deviations and dysfunctions found are explained, as well as the recommendations to solve them.



45 This is a circumstance any person with some knowledge may carry out. It is not necessary to have an archivist. Then, results will have to be deposited in the relevant institution, which it is not necessary to be an archive

46 In the appearance of the Minister of Culture before the Culture Committee of the Congress on the 24.05.2004, she announced the possibility of building a new headquarter for the National Historical Archive, the co-operation within the framework of the Latin American Archivist Tradition and the participation in the electronic administration. Finally, the present circumstances oblige that the great projects may only be the Documentation Centre of Historical Memories – or any other name it may be given – in Salamanca, the new Portal of Spanish Archives (PARES) or a possible commemoration of 150 years of the facultative Body which, at first sight, seems to be terrifying. You are going to give us your opinion one day but more than related with archives –without taking into account politics -, it seems to be related with the recovery and diffusion of heritage.

47 For those who love quality jargon, it refers to “benchmarking”.

48 Fear towards comparison prevents consolidation of instruments such as quality observatories or the delay of having the Agency for Quality Evaluation in operation. Anyway, negative data are generally made more attractive or considered unimportant.

49 The articles included in ANABAD Newsletter No. 1 (January - March) 2001, FERNÁNDEZ RAMOS, Severiano: “Privatization of public archive management: legal considerations”, pages 49-70 and TORREBLANCA LÓPEZ, Agustín: “Externalization and privatization in the archives of the General State Administration”, pages 71-121.

50 There is a fourth one: to destroy documents but we know it is an offence and it is very difficult to do it in secret.

51 In the first case, the Board established, in its Web page, the possibility of making consultations by means of Internet using a very simple form that can be used easily. Under the name of “Questions for the Administration”, the interested parties must send said form and on the same moment they send it, they receive a personal consultation number which allows them to make a follow-up of said question. Questions are directly resent to the corresponding Autonomic Department which, on its turn, will send it to the competent administrative unit. The latter has a term of fifteen days to reply and to include it in the Web page of the Board. In the second case, claims are ruled according to the provisions of the Order passed by the Public Administration Department on the 21st. of September, 2000, that specifies the obligation to reply within a term of fifteen days and the reply must compulsorily be signed by the Technical Secretary General, the Director General or the competent Provincial Representative. It does not mean that they have to be responsible for replying but to be conscientious of the operation of the services and to avoid the situation of hiding basic information about the relations between this body and the citizens.

52 Japanese people say that a complaint is a treasure but in Spain, we have added this comment: “except for its receiver”.

53 The Archive of Castilla-La Mancha carries out a periodical enquiry among public workers. It is interesting to point out that complaints about the service generally coincide with the mistakes expressed in the indicators. More information in MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA, Luis: “Quality practices in the Archive of Castilla-La Mancha: the organization project of the central archives of the Board of the Communities” in “The management of quality in public archives”, Toledo: Board of the Communities of Castilla-La Mancha, 2004, pages 107-128.

54 Only for these reasons it can be understood the recent publication of the International Council of Archives, translated by the Ministry of Culture, under the title: “Electronic Documents: A handbook for Archivists”, http://www.mcu.es/archivos/pdf/documentos_electronicos.pdf (25.09.2006). Its pages are full

of recommendations about how important it is for the archivist the fact of being able to influence on its organization and the strategies that may be adopted.

55 About this poor presence, refer to the draft bill of the Law on Electronic Administration in: http://documentos.060.es/participacion_ciudadana/informacion_publica/common/26_Anteproyecto_LAE_v1_0.pdf (29.10.2006).

56 Though MOREQ specifications - “Model of Requirements for Electronic Document Management”, 2001 <http://www.mcu.es/archivos/oa/pdf/moreq.pdf> (25.09.2006) - go beyond the mere preservation of the electronic document, the relation with other publications of the Ministry of Public Administrations tend to show a des-contextualized archivist framework and which is concentrated on preservation, “Construction of pan-European services of electronic Administration: situation of the integration into the pan-European services of electronic Administration and action of the Administration”, 2005, <http://www.csi.map.es/csi/pg3315.htm#511> (25.09.2006), “Criteria about safety, standardization and preservation of applications used for the exercise of powers”, 2004 <http://www.csi.map.es/csi/criterios/pdf/criterios.pdf> (25.09.2006).

57 http://documentos.060.es/participacion_ciudadana/informacion_publica/common/25_Esquema_Ley_de_Administracion_Electronica.pdf (11.10.2006).

58 For more information: TORREBLANCA LÓPEZ, Agustín: “CADA: Storage Centre of Administrative Documents”, in *New Patterns for the Treatment and Management of Public Archives: System, Technologies and Electronic Administration*, Toledo: Board of Communities of Castilla-La Mancha, pages 93-137.

59 For example, in Sheet No. 1 of the Association of Archivists of the Community of Madrid: <http://www.anabad.org/hojainformativa/docdow.php?id=9> (25.09.2006), or in the Manifest of the Association of Archivists in the Public Administration. <http://www.archiverosefp.blogspot.com/> (25.09.2006).

60 A vision from an archivist point of view: TRAVESI DE DIEGO, Carlos. “Symbol, testimony and representation: another consideration about the Central Archive of the Spanish Civil War”, in *ARCHIVAMOS*, ACAL Newsletter No. 55-56 (2005), pages 13-20.

61 About these topics: GONZÁLEZ QUINTANA, Antonio: “Behaviour Standards for Archivists”, in *ANABAD* Newsletter No. 4 LIII (2003), pages 189-199.

62 CARNICER ARRIBAS, M^a Dolores: “The Einaudi matter and the access to documents in archives: Two archivists undergoing trial proceedings”, in *Archivamos* No. 32 (first quarter 1999). In our opinion, they were fairly found guilty for breaking the laws, due to moral reasons. In a democratic country, if a rule is not fair, it must be denounced and modification is tried to be carried out, but breaking that law is not allowed.