

The role of archives in the COVID 19 crisis: a perspective from the protection of human rights

The Working Group on Archives and Human Rights of the Latin American Archives Association (ALA) and the Archives and Human Rights Section of the International Council on Archives (ICA), express their support for the UNESCO Declaration "Turning the threat of COVID-19 into an opportunity for greater support to documentary heritage" published a few days ago. We spread this declaration in which documentary heritage is addressed as an important resource to offer a historical perspective on how governments, their citizens and the international community have faced pandemics in the past and, therefore, the importance of preserving records regarding this pandemic for future research.

More recently, ICA and the International Conference of Information Commissioners, supported by ARMA International, CODATA, Digital Preservation Coalition, Research Data Alliance, UNESCO Memory of the World and World Data System, have developed the statement "COVID-19: The duty to document does not cease in a crisis, it becomes more essential", that we also want to share. This document makes an approach to information and records management from the perspective of the present times. As the Universal Declaration of Archives (UNESCO, 2011) points out, "archives keep decisions, actions and memory" and "they are reliable sources of information that guarantee the security and transparency of administrative actions."

For all these reasons, we affirm:

- * Archives are responsible for the preservation and maintenance of records, an essential service during this pandemic.
- * The information must be properly managed and solid electronic administration infrastructures must be built to guarantee good management and the rights of citizens.
- * Access to quality information is key to combat fake news in times of such uncertainty.
- * Transparency facilitates the control of government acts by society, including its responsibility in the protection of individual liberties and the exercise of social rights in the context of the fight against the virus.
- * Likewise, working towards greater transparency contributes to enhancing the confidence of citizens in institutions.

Perhaps at this time, as never before, we recognize Records Management and Archives as public goods and as key elements for the fulfillment of SDG 2030 in relation to access to information.

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