



**THE ROLE OF ARCHIVES IN THE  
DIGITAL WORLD  
CHALLENGES AND CHANGES FOR THE  
ARCHIVES**

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- The **important role played by archives in society**
- They are **key in organising documents and keeping them for subsequent retrieval.**
- Archives are **changing** at a rapid pace.
- Challenges and changes : **three elements** that come together in the archives.

Points of view

1. **Professionals**

2. **Media** existing in the archives

3. **Types of users**

- As these three elements are changing, **the services offered by the archives until now are being affected,** adapting to the new challenges.



# PROFESSIONALS



# PROFESSIONALS

- There are a **number of standards** related to professional ethics, as well as **documents that outline the characteristics** required of a good archives professional.
- In most countries with an archive system, notes have been published on the characteristics that an Archivist must have. (SPAIN Code of Ethics published by SEDIC Spanish Association of Documentation and Information (April 2013).
- The guidelines of the Swiss Archivists Association VSA-AAS or the AIAF: International Association of French-Language Archives.



# PROFESSIONALS

The attitudes/aptitudes that a good archives professional must possess might include:

- Remaining **neutral and impartial in the work they do**
- Providing **free** and equal **access** by all members of the public to information and documentation
- Offering **up-to-date, reliable** information, and acting with transparency
- Contributing to the **dignity and progress of our profession**
- **High level** of professional **competency / honesty**
- Commitment to staying **current on knowledge, skills and aptitudes.**



# PROFESSIONALS

- Updating the knowledge of archive professionals is essential and arises from the evolution of the archivist profession tied to the impact of **new technology**, whether with the appearance of new types of documents (audio-visual, electronic), or because the working conditions of the archive services are changing.
- Professionals must be comfortable using **technology tools** (e-mail, word processors, databases, spreadsheets or browsers, knowledge of metadata), and know how to organise information and make it retrievable on digital media.



# PROFESSIONALS

It is important to keep in mind that professionals must focus not only on themselves, but also on their loyalty to the institutions for which they work. This is grounded in a series of points:

- Respecting **confidential information** / not damaging the organisation's **social image**
- Exercising **responsibility** in selecting, organising, preserving and disseminating the idea of improving the functioning of the organisations, preserving memory, contributing to research and properly spreading culture.
- **Collaborating with professionals**, exchanging information with them (collaboration in conventions, publications, professional associations, etc.)



SUPPORT MEDIA 7 Y EN LA 8 LA FOTO  
DE DIARIOS SESIONES Y PENDRIVE





# SUPPORT MEDIA

- There are obvious **changes** taking place in the area of **support media**.
- Although there is a wide variety of media found in the archives, and considering that there are specialised archives that generally work with a specific medium, such as the case of a photographic archive, for example, the greatest change has come with the **gradual disappearance of paper alongside the increase of electronic documents**.
- These are the two formats of media that currently co-exist in general in most archives.



# SUPPORT MEDIA

Specific characteristics related to aspects such as **preservation, restoration, migration and others.**

- It is very important to establish the **necessary channels** so that electronic documents are viewed by the entire institution as forming part of the Archive. **Their transference** is essential.
- Sometimes the institutions cannot conceive of the transference of those new electronic documents as they did when it was clearly evident with printed documents. They cannot conceive of it in most cases because, initially, when it is received by an institution's Electronic Registry, **the electronic document appears to be controllable and identifiable by the person who receives it.**
- How to **organise and describe** those documents in order to retrieve them later is the job of **an archives professional**, and that the documents must follow their life cycle in the same way as was done with printed documents, and that, as a result, the transference of the same so that they can be managed by the Archive is essential at this time in which the digital world is completely changing the information society.
- Also related to the media, there must be **collaboration between the document creators and the archive.**



# SUPPORT MEDIA

It is important to mention that electronic documents could be classified in general into two types: on the one hand, those that, **having originated in another medium**, are converted to electronic documents (the most common case being that of digitisation) and, on the hand, **documents that were created originally as electronic documents**.

It is essential to understand certain characteristics that are provided by electronic documents:

- They facilitate and resolve problems. But they also raise other significant ones.
- No medium / change occurs automatically. There is coexistence over a period of time.
- There is always a transitional phase in reaching the adaptation phase, and it is necessary to be receptive to those changes.
- A key aspect is long-term preservation of the documents and the policies that must be considered to ensure that digital documents endure.



USERS 1 FOTO 2039



# USERS

The third element affected by the changes occurring in the archives are their **users**.

These changes, as they affect the users, can be analysed from different points of view:

- **Changes are being made to document access.** Access is being influenced by Digitisation and by the measures applied on web pages in a move toward a proactive attitude: queries or requests by other means. It is generally by e-mail.
- **The process is changing.** Previously, the archivist came between the user and the document; the information professional who acted as an intermediary between the user and the document. Now the **online communication channels** are between the user and the document. In other words, the number of physical visits to the archive has dropped due to the large amount of information that the users can access through the website of the institution in which the archive is located, thanks to the digitised documents that have been uploaded to the network, as well as the information of interest to the users who can access it without having to go physically to a research facility.



# USERS

As a result of the above, **requests** must be of good quality and be clear, meaningful and complete.

The communication channel is constantly changing. It is necessary to offer all possible resources through an accessible website and to inform the user of all possible tools for locating the information quickly and efficiently.

As long as the archives enable their collections to be distributed by physical user access, they remain relevant, although, as we have mentioned, they have decreased because of the new access in the online environment.



# USERS

In the case of the parliamentary archives, we could mention:

- Researchers
- Institutions
- Members of Parliament

Now, with the changes in our society, changes in the archives and new access to the documents, researchers are still important users.

They are changing the way they work and there is a growing number of professionals of all types who search for the information they need for their day-to-day work (attorneys, military, etc.), as well as public interest, with a wide variety of interests, from creating a biography because we have information on a family member, people interested in going further in depth in a subject, the need to consult documents for university work, etc.

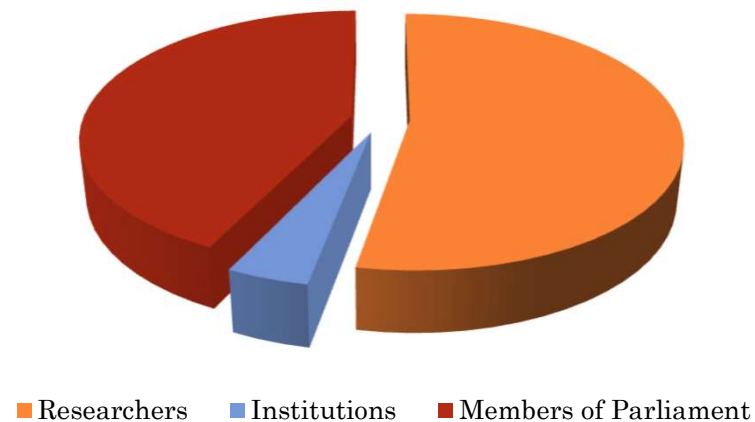


# ARCHIVE OF THE CONGRESS OF DEPUTIES. 2014

## REQUEST.

- **Requests**
- **Users:** Researchers (346) Institutions (27)  
Members of Parliament (280)

**REQUEST (PETICIONES)  
2014**





IDEAS FOR ADAPTING TO THE CHANGES  
TAKING PLACE IN THE ARCHIVES



# IDEAS FOR ADAPTING TO THE CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN THE ARCHIVES

- Constant improvement in our work is fundamental.
- Offering quality services in professional development.
- Knowing how to adapt as professionals and knowing how to adapt the resources available to us to the digital environment.

How do we achieve that quality in document distribution?

- Keeping ahead of information needs. Being **proactive**.
- **Accuracy** in the material. The information that we offer must be appropriate and accessible.
- It is necessary to dedicate **time and effort** to the services offered.
- **And always keep a positive attitude** with regard to adapting to the changes that are taking place.
- With regard to the quality in the requests, it is necessary to have a **Record of them as an efficient means of control** and to determine what users are requesting most in order to work in that direction.



# IDEAS FOR ADAPTING TO THE CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN THE ARCHIVES

## Examples from the Archive of the Congress of Deputies of Spain

- Proactive participation in the Congress website with material from the ACD blog *200 Years Ago*. This blog provides users with the parliamentary history of the Cortes of Cádiz, Spanish Constitutions, all of the constitutions held by the Archive of the Congress of Deputies have been digitised and commented, or *Papers for History*, open on the website of the Congress of Deputies of Spain since December 2014, which includes the constitutional history of Spain through the documents in the archive.
- It is very important to continue with the constant dissemination of the collections: Archives Day Exhibition, Guided Tours for institutional personnel and for the staff of other institutions, participation in Publications, etc. All of these examples of dissemination are benefited by the opportunities offered by the digital world, as it is possible to reach a greater number of users, social networks are facilitating knowledge of these activities, and it is possible to access the activities online.



# REGULATIONS ON TRANSPARENCY



# REGULATIONS ON TRANSPARENCY

A fundamental aspect that is intimately related to these opportunities and changes of the digital environment in the archives, and that is being undertaken in a number of countries, are the standards related to transparency and document access. Transparency is framed within the three profiles already seen: professionals, users and support media.

In the case of Spain, we have TRANSPARENCY ACT 19/2013, of 9 December, transparency, access to public information and good governance.

According to article 2, it affects the institution in which the Archive of the Congress of Deputies is located, *Transparency of Public Activity. Art 2. Subjective scope of application, 2f) Congress of Deputies, Senate, etc.*



# REGULATIONS ON TRANSPARENCY

Art 4. *Obligation to Provide Information*: individuals and legal entities providing public services, etc. are obliged to provide the Administration, bodies or entities 2.1, when required, all information necessary to comply with the obligations.

Art 5. *Active Publicity*: periodic/updated information to guarantee transparency in the activity related to the functioning and control of public action.

Art 5. 4 Transparency obligations: web pages (clear, structured and understandable) and preferably in reusable formats.

In Chapter III. The right of access to public information refers to the rights, limitations, personal data protection, as well as partial access that consists of prior omission of the information affected by the limitation, except when that results in information that is distorted or that does not make sense. That omission must be indicated.



# REGULATIONS ON TRANSPARENCY

With respect to the request and rejection of access to documents

- The request must include the following details: identification of the requester, the information requested and a contact address (preferable electronic) and preferred access method.
- **IMPORTANT:** It is no longer necessary to justify the query. **This is one of the most significant changes that the transparency standards are adopting:** the user is no longer required to justify the query being made.



# REGULATIONS ON TRANSPARENCY

## Reasons for rejecting requests

- Requests will be rejected when they refer to information that is *currently being drafted or prepared for general publication*.
- *Support documentation, drafts, summaries, internal reports*.
- Related to information that requires re-drafting prior to dissemination.
- Addressed to a *body that does not possess the information* when the competent authority is unknown.
- When they are clearly *repetitive or abusive in nature*, not justified within the purpose of transparency of the law.





# REGULATIONS ON TRANSPARENCY

In concluding, it is important to indicate that there are many aspects related to opportunities and changes offered to us by the digital environment in the archives. These changes affect not only the archives themselves as an institution, rather they include changes from the point of view of professionals, changes in media and changes in the users.

There are many benefits provided by technology. We need to understand and use all of those resources to improve the quality of the services that are offered in the archives, to be able to reach citizens in a closer, more effective and transparent way. That is what society today is demanding and that is part of the objective towards which the archives need to advance.



THE END

