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**Grupo de Trabajo de Expertos en Documentos Electrónicos**



**Title**

CARMEN Group: Control Archivístico de la Memoria ElectróNica (Archive Control of Electronic Memory) Creation, objectives and projects.

**Authors**

Grupo de Trabajo de Expertos en Documentos Electrónicos (Working Group of Experts on Electronic Records), coordinated by the Subdirección General de los Archivos Estatales.

**Theme**

Electronic Administration

**Summary**

The determined impulse, technological and political, received by Electronic Administration over the last few years has revealed the need to create a party of experts to study the Spanish situation and to try to develop an electronic records processing model adapted to the historic, administrative and archivist tradition of our context.

At the end of 2001, the Subdirección General de los Archivos Estatales promoted the creation of an Expert Working Group on Electronic Records integrated by archivists from the various administrations.

Its main objective is to contribute to the design of an electronic records management system that allows effective archival control, to guarantee that the documents produced from the Electronic Administration activity have archival characteristics (authentic, original, unaltered, etc.) and that they can be permanently kept despite technological obsolescence and that can also be accessible and retrievable over time.

This paper describes the most important activities and projects of the Working Group.

## CARMEN Group: Control ARchivístico de la Memoria ElectróNica (Archival Control of the Electronic Memory). Creation, objectives and projects.

### Creation and objectives

The technological and political promotion that the Electronic Administration has been receiving over recent years has made important progress concerning the production of digital information on the part of the Public Administration. This has driven competent bodies on archives and records to recognise the need to analyse and evaluate such production and, above all, its documental and archival consequences. Within this framework, there was a need to create a specific working group designed to study the Spanish situation and to attempt to develop a model of electronic records processing adapted to the historical, administrative and archival tradition within our context.

The Subdirección General de los Archivos Estatales was the driving force behind the creation of a Working Group of Experts on Electronic Documents, integrated by archivists from the following various administrations: General State Administration (Subdirección General de los Archivos Estatales, Ministerio de Administraciones Públicas, Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia), Autonomous Regions (Andalusia, Asturias, Catalonia, Madrid and Murcia), Local Authorities (Zaragoza) and Universities (University Carlos III of Madrid, Public University of Navarra). Such group is considered to be of vast importance not only because it can be relied on for its wide range of different experiences but also because of its ability to design a profile of professional training that should archivists should have in the coming information society.

Since December 2001, the Subdirección General de los Archivos Estatales has supported and coordinated the activity of the Group.

Its main objective is to contribute to the designing of a management system for electronic records enabling effective archival control in order to guarantee that documents produced as a result of electronic Administration activity are genuine archival documents (authentic, reliable, unaltered, etc.) which may be permanently kept despite technological obsolescence and that can also be accessible and retrievable over time.

This type of system, in the current environment of work, is a pre-requisite for preserving digital memory. Within this task, which is without doubt multi-disciplinary, the contribution of archivists, who are specialist in the handling of records, is essential. At the beginning of the documental process, there is need for determining the documents to be recorded as testimony of the activities of the public administration, and those that, not being considered as records, will not need the stringent validation required by the others.

Regarding the integrity, the archivists, along with creating agencies and other professionals (jurists, computer specialists), will have to ensure that the sequential character of the procedures documented in the records are maintained. This must be maintained regardless of the fact that the procedure may be originally produced entirely using electronic media, or produced partly using electronic media and partly using traditional

media, either over a short-term period of time or over a longer period of time. There is much effort needed here, which involves the analysis of the different administrative processes, the establishing of their quality and the validity of their duration, the appraisal for the retention or destruction of the records, and an additional series of accompanying factors including, among others, an efficient contribution to the exploitation of space, the rationalisation of methods and procedures, the modernisation of public institutions and, in short, the provision of an efficient service for citizens. This process, although expensive to start with, will bring so many noticeable benefits that it will soon more than pay off for itself.

As with regards to the preservation of documents, the archivist will not only have to determine the physical conditions for the preservation of such media, but in addition, all that is relevant to the migration of data, the related interest, the risks and costs involved and as a result, a thorough establishing of priorities.

In addition to all of the above, it is necessary to pay particular attention when carrying out two fundamental rights: the right of access to public archives and registers and the individual's right to privacy and the maintaining of his/her reputation. Concerning the above, electronic records and its processes have an extremely direct influence in that they risk causing conflict and therefore the archivists can contribute to better management of access and security classifications much more than it may appear to be at first glance.

In short, the aim is to contribute to the necessary symbiosis between management and archives, since the records creation phase is part of a system that covers the complete cycle, from the birth to custody, handling and making available the records of permanent value for historical and operational research as well as for the provision of information to the citizenry concerning the administrative processes that involves or interests them. This will contribute to making the work of public administrations more transparent and therefore enable them to improve their image in the eyes of the public.

**Analysis of the Situation in Spain**

The first steps of the Working Group focused on the gathering of information on the situation in Spain regarding the creation and preservation of electronic records. The results were presented at the DLM -Forum 2002 (7th-8th May, Barcelona) Preconference, held on the 6th May.

Firstly, it was considered necessary to understand the situation as far as Spanish Archives are concerned and, more specifically, public archives starting with those from State Administrations and Autonomies. In order for this to be executed, a questionnaire was sent from the Subdirección General de los Archivos Estatales to the competent bodies of archival material from Autonomous Regions. The questionnaire was based on the one used for the DLM study concerning relations between public administration and Archives[1], with some modifications, for example, the part dedicated to politics and projects of the digitalisation of documents originally created in traditional format.

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[1] EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Better access to information for the citizen: the relationship between public administration and archives services concerning electronic documents and records management*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publication on European Communities, 2001.

The questionnaire was structured into the following large sections: legislative framework, organisational framework, archival policy, appraisal/acquisition/disposition of electronic records, digitalisation of documents originally created in paper format, standards for preservation of electronic records, access and finding-aids, projected requirements for establishing a satisfactory electronic records policy and training. Twelve Autonomous Regions responded, out of 17, so we obtained an idea that was reasonably comparable to the general situation.

The information obtained allowed the Group to sketch an overview of that which was highlighted to be a relatively homogeneous outlook as much characterised by the concern of the creating bodies as by the archives due to the creation and preservation of electronic records, still without having established sufficient collaboration mechanisms.

Furthermore, it could be appreciated that while the Spanish Administration, the General State as much as the Autonomous Administrations, had decisively started the path of promoting the denominated electronic Administration, the Archives still moved within a fairly traditional framework: certainly, in general they already used TIC in their daily management and guarded documents in electronic format that they had produced themselves; however, although legislation stated that archives should collect also electronic records produced by the administration departments, there was no regular transfer flow of this type of document.

Since then there is no doubt that the situation has evolved, the advance in new technologies in Public Administration is unstoppable and the archive during the initial stages of the life cycle of records makes up an indissoluble part of their management. However, so that the still necessary change takes place, a study of the challenges created by the electronic management of records should be implemented from a multi-disciplinary perspective, in a way that all those involved make a joint effort in the preservation of digital memory. In any case, it could be interesting to carry out an inquest like the one that took place at that time, in order to understand the current situation.

### Translation and dissemination of *MoReq*

Afterwards, the Group carried out the review of the completed text of the Spanish translation of *MoReq (Model Requirements for the management of electronic records),* that was presented in front of the Spanish archivist community on the 8th June 2004 during an open day that was celebrated in Madrid at the headquarters of the Ministerio de Cultura.

The Subdirección General de Coordinación de Recursos Tecnológicos de la Administración General del Estado, of the Ministerio de Administraciones Públicas, sent the Spanish version of *MoReq* to the Subdirección General de los Archivos Estatales so that the archives management experts were able to carry out a review of the technical vocabulary employed.

The Working Group of Experts on Electronic Documents assumed this task, and has carried out a complete review in which it has attempted to:
- improve the selection of Spanish terms of the specialised glossary
- correct the translation of those paragraphs which as part of the previous translation were not considered to adequately reflect the meaning contained in the original text; and
- clarify the writing by making stylistic changes.

The result has been a new version of the Spanish translation that we believe facilitates reading and comprehension and, therefore, the use of this interesting work tool.

Firstly, the Working Group carried out an analysis of the vocabulary included in the glossary of *MoReq,* glossary that gathers the essential terminology and concepts used in the specification. Once these entries have been chosen, various general readings were carried out, the first of them were done individually by each member of the group, who compared the different interpretations and writings that emerged in order to select the most appropriate. With a final, collective, global reading, the review of each of the sections of the *MoReq* text was finalised.

The aim of this review has been to make a Spanish translation of *MoReq* available, one that is not an adaptation, one that is precise and easy to read from the point of view of the archivist. Therefore, the final text adopted by the Working Group aims to be true to the original and, following a criterion widely accepted, the titles of the stated publications have being maintained in the language that appears in the original text, quoting at the foot of the page the translation in Spanish, when it exists.

It has not been an easy task. In addition to the inherent problems associated with any translation, two recurring questions arose throughout the entire revision process. The first one was the lack of fixation in Spanish of terminology related to new information technology, and in particular with the creation, use and preservation of electronic records. The other one was the lack of precise equivalents of certain concepts used in *MoReq* in the Spanish archival environment and in the Spanish language in general and, consequently, the lack of precise terminology to translate them.

In spite of the difficulties, from the beginning the Group considered that, in order to develop the electronic records management, is was extremely important to make available an adequate translation of *MoReq* and to promote its dissemination and use. As a result of this, and as mentioned at the beginning of this epigraph, once the translation was finished there was a presentation open day celebration that was essentially addressed to the professional community. Always with this goal, the Working Group suggested that the Ministerio de Cultura in collaboration with the Ministerio de Administraciones Públicas, responsible for the development of the electronic Administration, could organize in Madrid a one-day-conference dedicated to *MoReq*. At present, the authorities, in collaboration with DLM, are thinking of transforming the conference into an international seminar.

## Congress and Conference Participation

Likewise, the Group has participated in various congresses and national conferences, with the aim of sharing its reflection on archive requirements, on electronic Administration impacts and on the role of archives and archivists within this context.

Regarding this subject, it must be mentioned that the Group is aware that the progressive use of new technology entails the need to integrate administrative production with archives management, by employing systems that allow the automating of the integral management of records from the moment that they are produced. This with the aim of creating corporative archival information systems that:

- support business management and decision making
- provide for access to the records and information needed for the management of interest of creating body and citizens in an easy and rapid way;
- ensure the formation of rational historical digital heritage, which is structured and reliable and which serves as identity and memory of the subsequent activities of organisations.

At present, the absence of a guiding model is considered by the Working Group to be one of the main problems involved in the integration process facing archive professionals at the point in time of implementing a management system of electronic records within their organisations. This is a new field and, in spite of the fact that there is much written information on the subject, so much so that on certain occasions it can be overwhelming, in no circumstance does it tackle the method to be adopted in a systematic approach: There is a desire to continue but, how? What steps must be taken and in what order? What are the key aspects of the process from the point of view of the archivist? What is the specific role that is expected to be played by the archivist? What strategies must be used in order to ensure the preservation and access of electronic records? What requirements are needed for the management system?

We understand, therefore that there is a need to devise a conceptual model for the management system of electronic records that unites in a structured way all the functions of the archivist concerning electronic Administration, this being one of the tasks that the Working Group proposes to deal with.

**Projects**

The projects undertaken by the Working Group, and those considered for the future are drawn together at the moment on two axis, both of which are important but among which it will be necessary to establish priorities.

On the one hand, one clearly appreciates the need to make easier for the Spanish speaker archive's professional the approach to international bibliography about electronic records and provide him/her with tools, work materials, useful recommendations, etc.

Regarding this subject, the Group has assumed the task of translating the new manual from the International Council of Archives relating to electronic records into Spanish (*Electronic Records: a workbook for archivist*, Study-16), whose final version has just been made available.

A further instrument useful for achieving this objective will be the development of information contained within the web pages dedicated to the Group in the Ministry's web site, in a way that it can provide a useful tool and a point of reference for archivists who deal with the management of electronic records within their organisations. Included in this information could be further documents of interest, with versions in Spanish, documents devised by the Working Group, links to other websites of interest, electronic document management experiences, an updated bibliography, an agency of courses, conferences and seminars of interest.

On the other hand, it is equally necessary to devise a management model for electronic documents, likewise a guide for explaining its implementation, which is as much aimed at

the politicians responsible as at the technicians in which is highlighted an additional value of the archive approach, that is to say that archivists can make decisions in the designing and implementation of an electronic document management system concerning conservation periods, classification codes, necessary metadata, systems that ensure authenticity, long-term reliability and integrity, conservation needs, control of access during the lifespan of documents, in addition to the procedures and the identification of document series.

The implementation of a model will require a definition of the previous prerequisites (normative, procedural and operative) which should be carried out by an organisation in order to allow for the running of a system that functions accurately and will have to be performed in close collaboration with the bodies that are directly responsible for electronic Administration.