I've long thought that metadata management is electronic recordkeeping. It is not another records process; it is not a part of recordkeeping. It is everything, or everything is done with metadata.

These statements so emphatic, that some of my pupils had heard from me, I heard recently from a great master, Julio Cerda, Arganda del Rey city council archivist and records manager, with whom I had the pleasure of sharing presentations at Jornadas Técnicas de Archivos de la Administración local, held in Malaga last April. Knowing that we had reached the same conclusion has encouraged me to write this post.

Most of the time records metadata management is approached from a very limited point of view, which may have two versions:

- The first considers that metadata are only the electronic version of the description of paper records. In this version metadata can describe different levels of aggregation, as in the practice for paper records, insisting especially in individual records and other larger aggregations as files or case files.
- The second believes that metadata management is the creation of the attributes, properties or fields that need to be created for each of the classes, types or objects in a particular EDMRS. In this version metadata management is the first step necessary for starting any implementation of an EDRMS (does not matter whether Documentum, FileNet, Alfresco, or otherwise).

Both are undoubtedly part of the management of metadata, but do not represent the whole.
Despite the efforts of the ISO 23081 series of standards since 2004, and the explanation of the possible models of multiple entities, cannot be said the broader view has been universally extended.

All traditional records processes are implemented for electronic records using metadata: registration, classification, access, manage retention schedules, disposition, preservation actions, conversion, traceability or tracking actions. The model of the metadata elements represented on an axis with six groups (identification, description, use, plan events and event history more relationships) is sufficient to cover all the possible information we need to manage electronic records.

But good electronic recordkeeping cannot be limited by the management of metadata of the entity Records (with all its aggregations, file, dossier, etc). The first one is always on stage is the entity agents. Although could be questioned whether or not the maintenance of a database of entities (staff or third parties) is part of recordkeeping, it is clear that is impossible without good management of that information or metadata. In all successful implementations of electronic records management this is a key element. And when implementing business process automation, almost always a goal of today's organizations, it is impossible to manage electronic records without taking in account metadata of the entity Business...

The challenge is to integrate the management of this metadata in the information systems of the organization and how to avoid duplication, inconsistencies or redundant and manual processes.