

Records analysis: trends and reflections

Written by Carlota Bustelos

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The demands of the digital environment affecting all facets of the organizations, both in public and private sector, are also producing a major change in what **records analysis** means or how to deal with.



As an evolving concept, the first thing we need to understand is what it is. Substantially processes and activities of an organization are analysed to determine the information to be created and fixed to document these processes and activities, at the same time requirements are identified. In Australia and the new [ISO 15489 \(2016\)](#) this new concept is named as **appraisal**,

term than in other countries is only been used for determination of retention schedules. While this new meaning is popularized and accepted, I deliberately use in this "post" the term "records analysis" to make myself understood by a broader audience.

The first major trend that can be observed is the **necessary convergence** between activities raised separately in the organizations. The analysis carried out by records managers or

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archivists, which in many cases was made retrospectively when the documents "came" into his hands, and the analysis conducted by specialists in processes when systemizing or designing business processes normally in the context of improvement initiatives or process reengineering. This confluence, produced not without tensions, is imperative for organizations that want to address the digital transformation being efficient.

The second is records analysis should be performed **prior to the implementation** of a process or procedure. Therefore, the digital transformation of business processes is an ideal time to start it, and many organizations are now at that time. After that, records analysis is a recurrent activity able to incorporate changes produced by new legislation, functional changes or innovations.

As **positive reflections**, a number of professionals has begun to walk this path for some time, inventing new tools such as [records maps](#), aligning with ISO management systems [\(ISO](#)

[O 30301\)](#)

, or trying to establish the methodology of analysis (the ultimate experience with colleagues of Metadata in the context of the project

[ARPAD Xunta de Galicia](#)

). Others, such as in the recent article by

[Maria Garcia-Gonzalez, in El profesional de la información](#)

, research on how to systematize the analysis for local governments in Spain ("process description model" is called). International standardization in the new ISO 15489 (2016) i, describes and explains this analysis as one of the fundamental concepts and principles of managing records.

However, for records professional is an important transformation of the tools and instruments used in the paper environment, which is still not taught or practiced in all contexts. We are at

that moment when **is difficult to identify the necessary competencies and skills** needed to participate in this new paradigm of analysis, and it is difficult to say that someone with traditional archival knowledge is prepared to do so. From my point of view, the first thing that should be assumed is the analysis is not specific to records management and records managers, but must be integrated into the definition of processes or procedures of the organization covering all kind of requirements.

Moreover, in the climate of immediacy around us, a previous records and well done analysis could be perceived as a slow down factor in the achievement of the objectives. The need to do the analysis in previous form, together with the endemic shortage of resources for records management, can make true that the **ability to address records analysis** is slower than the needs of transformation (could be the case of many public administrations in Spain having October 2018 as a deadline to implement all processes digitally).

Then comes the tendency to **step back and decouple** business processes and records management, proposing models similar to traditional paper records management. When business processes are completed records management begins. The analysis, the resulting instruments and applications for managing records are tools intended only for records management and records managers.

In these times of change, organizations need to decide what **information management model** to be implemented, and consequently how to approach to records analysis.