

Agradecemos a todos los autores su contribución, ya sea original, ya previamente existente y gentilmente cedida, a estos refrescantes aires: James Lowry, Michael Moss, David Thomas, Timothy Gollins, Federico Valacchi, Miguel Ángel Amutio, Luis Martínez, Geoffrey Yeo, Silvia Schenkolewski, Gillian Oliver, Fiorella Foscarini, Ragna Kemp Haraldsdóttir, Charles Jeurgens, Zhiying Lian, Ning Wang, Olimpia López, Francisco José Valentín, Pilar Campos, Danielle A. Batista, Victoria Lemieux, Lluís-Esteve Casellas, Sònia Oliveras y Maria Reixach. Todos ellos aportan valiosísimas percepciones sobre las que seguir construyendo.

No es por supuesto un monográfico redondo, perfecto; no tiene la pretensión de serlo; pero si de algo estamos satisfechos sus editores es del hecho de que, de la lectura de todos y cada uno de sus artículos, sin excepción, se sale con una sensación de frescura, de aire nuevo, como no conocíamos desde hace tiempo en el escenario archivístico nacional. “A uno le apetece pensar”, se diría. Si hemos conseguido que el lector tenga esa misma sensación cuando concluya su lectura, habremos conseguido nuestro objetivo. El mérito de los aciertos es por completo de los autores; los errores que se puedan encontrar son responsabilidad nuestra.

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Alexa, what was an archive?

Sometimes, while driving, we miss an exit indicated by the GPS navigation of our car or phone, just by mistake or curious to see the response of artificial intelligence to unforeseen events. The GPS then rings an invisible alarm and alerts us: “recalculating”. Well, it seems that, for external, internal reasons, or for a combination of several, the archives have found an exit on their road, they have discovered the turnoffs where they had previously been delayed, and have even found some closed roads; therefore, it is time to recalculate.

The difference between before and now must be clear. From the origin of the Archival Science as it has been known until recently, that is, the contemporary Archival Science generally agreed to have been born in the mid- nineteenth century, it usually seems to have been a discipline in continuous evolution. Of course, we are not talking about that eternal crisis status often mixed up with the exchange of ideas through discussion and debate. It is normal in an emerging discipline. Indeed, we do not believe that such a thing has happened in the past; After all, much older disciplines such as Medicine, Astronomy, Physics, needed centuries just to find their way, something that the Archival Science had to do in just a hundred and fifty years: building a theoretical corpus where to settle daily practice. Unlike other traditional disciplines, we may think that the Archival Science has been under construction until recently; likewise, we can argue that, and this is the trigger for this Tabula issue, it has moved from that state of construction to another of apparent demolition with no continuity solution, with not enough time to enjoy the benefits of crises. In fact, we would not even think it is

under construction – all disciplines, even the most established ones, are always in this state, let us not deceive ourselves – were it not for that ill-gotten coincidence: “Just when I finally could give it some stability, I drop all the pieces.”

It must also be said that this evolution of the Archival Science has often taken place in difficult times, because of the frequent social, economic, cultural and political crises which it has encountered and which as well, have helped to shape it, not allowing us however, to speak of a crisis typical of the Archival Science. After all, it must be difficult to begin a construction in the course of different revolutions, some world wars, the emergence of the contemporary avant-garde, the crisis of '29, the disappearance of the Big Science, the emergence of various countercultures, the expansion of democracy or sexual liberation: it might be regarded as an abrupt birth, but not because it would be involved in such crises, but because of its ability to be immersed in the richness of those around it.

The Turn-of-the-Century Archival Science, however, is no longer the isolated discipline wrapped in the cotton wool of the historical heritage and erudition of the nineteenth or even mid-twentieth century. The effervescence of its genesis and especially its development are closely conditioned by the transformation of society itself. Technological development and popularization in terms of the creation, management and distribution of information, its disruptive nature and the impact on new social and organizational habits and demands are not minor in any discipline involved in such transformation. There is no turning back for any of them, and all of them are forced to recalculate.

To paraphrase Borges, all this happened before, in the past, and it has little to do with this recalculating the archives, that of the last century, towards which we are driven in an unprecedented way and for different reasons. There are at least three peculiarities that make the current status of the discipline in its environment radically different from its earlier status: the major economic crisis, the major health crisis, and, third and somewhat invisible, but decisive despite our limited ability to plan its overall totality, the great paradigm shift that leads us to the inability to build a happy world.

Firstly, the devastating and protracted economic crisis, poorly managed, as its own managers have admitted, and which the world has not got over yet, unleashed in 2008.

Secondly, an unforeseen “new normal” that can be added to it and which by definition cannot be normal beyond political jargon – or the jargon of politicians, at the same level as that omnipresent “unprecedented” used extraordinarily without brakes; a new normal triggered by the Covid-19 virus pandemic, which in turn is related to another economic crisis even more devastating than the previous one, which has brought out many political, social, cultural, health fears, uncertainties and questions, which we suspected existed, but believed well hidden.

And the third peculiarity is what makes this moment different: if health and economic crises have rescued issues such as employment and its (bad) quality, global economic blocs, political populisms, the many gaps at very different levels of developed societies, the management of nationalisms, the usefulness of the European Union, of the situation of the Autonomous Communities, of the Monarchy, just to mention some of the headlines that have surrounded us during these last months, then the action of recalculating is no longer limited to the sphere of the Archival Science: everything must be recalculated. And everything means everything: society, politics, economics, culture, science, techniques, crafts, finance, agents, mediation among them, constructions, deconstructions, plans, distributions, times, heroes, enemies of the homeland... We could keep on enumerating, but we merely humbly paraphrase Borges, without pretending to be him. We believe that the above is clear enough: everything must be recalculated. It does not matter that at the time of drafting this introduction, some of the vaccines against the virus are being distributed. Some questions are not answered with a vaccine.

For archives, this means that this recalculation due to take place is minimized and, at the same time, it may become more disturbing: of course, we need recalculating, but we cannot compare doing so in isolation with doing it in the context of a total and global recalculation, where archives are just a small part and whose summaries, algorithms, formulas and results have to be weighted and connected to those of others – disciplines, ideas, spaces, self-confessed interests or not – to outline the scenario from now on. In fact, the archives, as we have known them so far, might not have to be recalculated, might already be outside the negotiating table, and consequently there might be no room for them, as there was not for video stores before, and soon there will not be for bank branches or small retail face-to-face channels. This possibility is not to be sniffed at.

Moreover, these changes, which may be coming at a quicker rate than usual, and in very deep waves, come, not for the worse, with the explosion of information and communication technologies, and by the latest emergence of the so-called disruptive innovations; although instead of explosions, emergencies or disruptions, we should be talking about awareness or visibility: technologies, including disruptive innovations, have been there for many years, some even before we were born. Certainly, they are not new, but they do take on another dimension in the current context of technological convergence and exponential interrelationship.

If living surrounded by its graceful and untouchable ubiquity seems innovative to us, is no doubt due, among many other circumstances, to the rediscovery of a sector that, in the worst of the 2008 crisis, seemed to be a potential source of abundance, being the traditional sectors depleted; and in the most recent health crisis, it has been mending failures, unsolved by a paper world: scientific data urged and we could not wait to have an abacus or manage them in a

perfect recordkeeping system that had not foreseen them. Thinking positively, actually information and communications technologies had already exploded at the beginning of the last century – perhaps with IBM and the Third Reich, just to set an arbitrary date? –, and their last disruption – since the one that now amazes us neither is the first nor will it be last – happened around the beginning of the 2008 crisis. Let us think that the youngest disruptive innovation of the moment, Blockchain, even though we say Bitcoin, came to light in 2009, so it is already a preteen followed by many younger brothers. Artificial Intelligence is undoubtedly the mother of disruptive innovations which after its failures since the 1950s, finally found its way into the semantic exploitation of millions of data, provided in many cases by mobile devices, whose first recognizable versions date back to the early 1970s. They were there; we forgot, but some of us worked with MS-DOS, before the disruption of Windows colored our monitors.

Be that as it may, at this very moment our economic pillars seem to crumble and the big market players are looking for new market niches as well as cost reduction and increased productivity. It is in this context that sustainability and digitization emerge as alternatives, or, to be precise, since they are inextricable linked, digital sustainability and sustainable digitization. Moreover, in parallel to this, a pandemic which, despite vaccines, not only has deeply wounded the world, but also has significantly opened up wounds in an eminently white society, which has rediscovered a fragility which, also in all likelihood, it had forgotten. Both circumstances have finally unveiled the potential of information and communication technologies, which we were not very aware of, even though they were available to all. If everything must be recalculated, then everything has to be located in a different position, had it not been relocated yet; and it has to be located in the place that is marked by information and communication technologies, which, far from being the enemy, as debated so many times, is the scenario of new economic and social perspectives, however good or bad they may be, as it has always been throughout history when global paradigms have changed: the Middle Ages were not as dark as not to lay the foundations for the Copernican Revolution, nor the Renaissance so luminous as not to shelter Tomas of Torquemada. In any case, the society, and especially the professionals involved in the management of technologies, information, records, evidence..., must ensure that ethics presides over this inescapable relocation of society propelled by technology.

As it has been already mentioned, this Tabula issue responds to this imperative: the archives, the Archival Science in general, its professionals, are no strangers to this abrupt step out of our comfort zone and we must think about our present and future, about our values and our place in a world that no longer has those comfortable and well-known limits that, as a matter of fact, just existed in the professionals' mind. Can our objects be what they traditionally were? What about our information management systems? Can we repeat the same processes

in such a dissimilar environment? Do we mean the same? Questions to which publishers have divergent views of.

The excellent articles of the present issue are devoted to the attempt to elucidate some of the infinite questions arising today. Data economy; cybersecurity; new access mechanisms; new skills, including the capabilities to design information systems; an information culture in the archives; digital management lights and shadows; what to do with traditional archival processes, in particular appraisal, classification and access; how has the pandemic managed the archives of different traditions; what are the ethical implications of the pandemic for archives; what methodologies to apply, including project management methodologies... Oh! It's so refreshing to read in an Archival Science magazine terms such as Scrum or PMBOK, and we hope it's not the last time!

All of these suggestive topics are approached by the editors as a kind of common thread based on different reflections on methodological rethinking facing the present and the future of archives and the profession, the orientation towards new management choices and their difficulties in the face of reality, the new challenges surrounding appraisal, going even beyond the traditional record, the role of archives in and after the pandemic and, finally, the planning and design of systems in the face of these new realities.

We thank all authors for their contribution, either original or previously existing and generously granted, to this breath of fresh air: James Lowry, Michael Moss, David Thomas, Timothy Gollins, Federico Valacchi, Michelangelo Amutio, Luis Martínez, Geoffrey Yeo, Silvia Schenkolewski, Gillian Oliver, Fiorella Foscarini, Ragna Kemp Haraldsdóttir, Charles Jeurgens, Zhiying Lian, Ning Wang, Olimpia López, Francisco José Valentín, Pilar Campos, Danielle A., Victoria Lemieux, Lluís-Esteve Casellas, Sonia Oliveras and Maria Reixach. They all bring valuable insights to keep building on.

Of course, it is not a perfect monograph; it does not attempt to be so; however, we, the editors, are genuinely satisfied with that feeling of freshness, that fresh air oozing from the reading of each and every one of its articles, without exceptions. Something that we have not seen for some time on the domestic archival scene. "You feel like thinking," you would say. If we have succeeded in making the reader have that same feeling, we will have achieved our goal. The strengths are entirely the authors'; the possible weaknesses are our responsibility.

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