

Maria Kallberg
**Archivists – A Profession
in Transition?**

Abstract: E-government development has put pressure on public organizations to work with electronic information. Records from complex e-government services have to be captured and managed in order to be accessible both in the present and in the long term. The data and analysis presented is based on a multiple case study of nine Swedish local governments (municipalities) identified as good examples of best practice of e-government. An analytical model for recordkeeping awareness in three arenas: the legal, the political and the workplace has been created in order to identify how political decisions and new technology impact on professional archivists' practice and status. The research findings demonstrate a gap between the legal and workplace arenas in both directions caused by lack of recordkeeping awareness primarily within the political arena. Archivists' professional status seems to be limited, which opens up possibilities for other professional groups to replace them.

Keywords: archivists, professional challenges, electronic recordkeeping, recordkeeping awareness, e-services, e-government

E-government development is a prioritized political issue and therefore affects the archivist profession, both as a collective professional group and as individual practitioners. The aim of the paper is to establish the awareness of recordkeeping legislative demands as part of e-government development within public organizations and its effect on archivists' status, e.g. positions and practice. The following research questions will be addressed:

RQ1. How aware are public organizations of the importance of recordkeeping legislative demands in their strategic e-government work?

RQ2. What is the status of archivist professionals within public organizations?

Information technology development makes it possible for public organizations to use information more strategically than ever before, regardless of time and place. This affects the interaction between governments and citizens and therefore the development of public administration. Freedom of information legislation gives the citizens the right to access information and follow the processes of government decision making. Therefore access to governmental records is vital in democratic societies. Legislation on recordkeeping, including freedom of information, makes no distinction between paper-based and electronic records. Consequently, born-digital records in e-services need to be captured and managed in order to be access-

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ible both in the present and in the long term. Otherwise it is not possible to manage, maintain and preserve the records to fulfil their purpose as evidence. This is necessary in order to fulfil the legislative demands, e.g. citizens' right to access official documents, the need for justice, administration and research. Projects and strategies related to electronic recordkeeping within e-government development are, or could be, the first building block of a new strategic approach to embrace and highlight recordkeeping skills as important factors. On the other hand, if archivists do not have any influence as professionals, it will likely create space for other professions to annex positions as experts at the expense of archivists. Furthermore, it may lead to economic and democratic consequences for the society if information is lost. Even though archivists have identified electronic record-keeping as a paramount challenge and have developed theories and methods as to how to meet this challenge in practice, it is important that records management needs top management support to be effective (Choksy, 2008; Dionne & Carboni, 2009, pp. 256-261; Kahn, 2004; Weller-Collison, Kahn, & Wescott II, 2008).

The Archival Tradition in Europe

The archivist profession has a long tradition as a keeper of records. The profession is as old as the first societal groups, since every organization needs a memory (Duranti, 1989a, p. 3). In the Middle Ages, written documents became recognized as records and as evidence of an act that had taken place. The records were used in order to defend the legitimacy of the state. It became important to establish methods to distinguish between authentic records and forgeries. Therefore, the science of document analysis, called 'diplomats', became an important method in the training of all European archivists (Bearman, 1994, p. 255).

The French Revolution was a starting point for the modern history of archives. The archives were considered to be national property and the principle of publicity of archives was proclaimed (Duranti, 1989b, p. 8). For the first time citizens had the right to access the public archives (Duchain, 1992, p. 17).

In the second part of the 19th century, the archival profession became autonomous and specialized, which according to Duchain (1992, p. 21) probably was linked to the rising awareness of the basic principle of archival administration, but also the creation of archival schools in most countries. Another distinctive result in Europe was that archival science was not intertwined with librarianship. Archives of all European countries gained a legal status regulated by laws and regulations at some point during the 19th and 20th century (Duchain, 1992, p. 21).

The organizational pyramid is a legacy of models for organizing work and businesses that grew up around the beginning of the 20th century. Formalization and standardization became more dependent on written documents, policies and procedures. The bureaucratic organization gave a solid framework for record-keeping. Information flows were adapted to the pyramidal structures that developed within hierarchical organizations. Documents were stored in certain predictable physical locations during predetermined periods as 'office archives' on the way to their final destination; the central archive repository (Sahlén, 2005, pp. 14-15). But, changes in organizational structures and the nature of records were posed by the development of electronic information. Bearman (1994) refers to this development as 'the electronic information revolution' and argues that European archivists' response has been coloured by their training in diplomats and by the

nature of their bureaucracies and notes that this poses two major challenges. First, it may transform the stable bureaucratic organizations and replace it with an inchoate organizational structure. Secondly, it leads to new forms of records, which are unclear, and therefore challenges diplomatics (Bearman, 1994, pp. 256-261). In the 1980s the hierarchical organizational structures were increasingly replaced by a more flattened organizational structure. Management by objectives was introduced and the ‘customer’ as a concept became an organizing factor. Organizations changed their focus from functions to processes. Attention has shifted from formal controlling organizations to business-oriented organizations. This changed the role of information in the organizations. Information is considered to be an important resource in order to obtain a sustainable and quality oriented organization that is constantly changing and becoming more reliant on information technology (Sahlén, 2005, pp. 15-19). The focus has moved from the archives as an entity to the context in which it has been created and will be used (Hofman, 2005). Issues of responsibility have to be taken into consideration – that is; who owns and is responsible for the records, appraisal, how to deal with the matter of secrecy and how to solve the problem of long-term preservation. Hence, technical and jurisdictional issues make the implementation difficult and complicated. The challenges described above have to be solved and therefore public organizations are in need of and dependent on specialized knowledge in order to be successful.

In Scandinavia there is no clear definition of the records management field – records management is understood as a dimension of the archival function (Gränström, Lundquist, & Fredriksson, 2000, p. 20; Lybeck, 2003; Valtonen, 2007, p. 180). In Sweden the National Archives regulations are not mandatory for the local governments. Consequently, skills and practice have changed over time, but they are also connected to the national context.

The present article focuses on Swedish local government (municipalities) motivated by their complex organizational structure with several politically controlled committees and administration departments that implement political decisions and provide services to the public. The municipalities are all self-governing, local authorities. Within Sweden public organizations’ records are official documents and Swedish citizens are entitled to have free access to them. There is no distinction between records and archives as the official documents are defined as the organization’s archives (The Archive Act SFS 1990:782). Archivists in local government are often organizationally connected to the archival authority within the municipality and are often working with a range of tasks from custodians of repositories to strategic experts on recordkeeping, often with an audit and advisory function towards other authorities, how they fulfil the legislative demands on recordkeeping.

Theoretical and analytical framework

Archivists have long been involved in characterizing ‘the nature of archives’ which is the core of the ‘archival body of knowledge’ (Eastwood, 2010, p. 3). Theory and practice support each other. As Thomassen stated, ‘the independence and autonomy of the archival profession and the archival discipline presuppose one another’ (Thomassen, 2011). Duchein (1992, p. 15) postulates that ‘the practice of archival administration grew as a natural, “organic” phenomenon as soon as the practice on perishable materials was invented’. ‘Archival thinking’ should be viewed as constantly developing in relation to the changes in the nature of records, the

organizations that create records, recordkeeping systems and the uses of records. Furthermore it is a part of a wider societal perspective influenced by cultural, technological, social, legal and philosophical trends. Radical changes in society have impact on archival theory and practice (Cook, 1997, p. 20). One of the greatest challenges to archival science is the fact that archives are changing in nature because of the information society development (Delmas, 2001). In traditional paper-based recordkeeping there has been a quite clear life cycle perspective for when records become archived at an archive institution (Schellenberg, 1956, pp. 15-16). Dollar (1992) describes three technological imperatives that affect the traditional archival landscape: 1. the changing form of documents; 2. the changing methods of work; and 3. the change of technology itself. The change from traditional to digital recordkeeping demands that archivists should shift towards an understanding of the archival information context (Dollar, 1992).

Archival discourse today addresses a shift in the theoretical focus from content towards context, since it is no longer possible to make a distinction between records and archives. A distinction between 'records' and 'archives' has created strategic problems for archivists in a digital environment, because electronic records require pro-activity in order to ensure preservation (Cook, 1997, p. 28).

In 1996 Frank Upward published the records continuum model. The purpose of creating the model was to build a 'recordkeeping-based activity theory' or 'new provenance theory', for archivists to help them understand the relationship between recordkeeping and accountability (Upward, 2005). The records continuum model can be used as a dynamic tool and method of thinking interpretative (Reed, 2005). When applying the records continuum model the location of the record is not an issue but the focus is the record itself. Hence, the records continuum model provides archivist professionals with arguments for strategic positioning and proactive thinking. However, the image problem related to the archivist profession, for example that archivists are only interested in old documents and that the archives is a function for old, outdated documents, is problematic in order to influence the management and preservation of electronic records (Bailey, 2007, p. 123).

The present article focuses on an on-going process which may have immediate but also future implications for archivists' professional identity, professional recordkeeping practice and strategic positioning. Professional identity can be understood as a sense of shared experiences, understandings and skills, common ways of perceiving problems and their possible solutions. The identity is produced and reproduced through a shared and common educational background and professional training, work practice and memberships in professional associations (Evetts, 1999, p. 14). There is a possibility that challenges related to electronic recordkeeping within e-government development will be crucial in deciding the future for the archivists as a professional group and their professional identity.

From the perspective of the sociology of professions, a model has been created as an analytical tool, inspired by Abbot's discussion about claim on jurisdiction in different arenas. The concept 'jurisdiction' is described as the link between an occupation and its work. The link embodies both cultural and social control. The cultural control arises in work with the assignment and is legitimated and authorized by formal knowledge that is rooted in fundamental values. The social control arises in active claims presented in the public, legal and workplace arenas (Abbott, 1988, p. 86). Claims of full jurisdiction are maintained by a mixture of means which, according to Abbott (1988, p. 189), start with the legitimation of the

professional activity itself, namely diagnosis, treatment and inference (1988, p. 189). A successful jurisdiction is supported by legal rules, as for example leaving out other professions from work with a claimed task, as well as by organizational rules within an organization (Abbott, 1988, pp. 70-71). Jurisdiction is exclusive, since professions form an interdependent system (Abbott, 1988, p. 86). Abbott (1988, p. 20) argued that analysing professional development is to analyse how jurisdiction is shaped in work and how it is anchored by informal and formal social structure. Professions develop depending on their internal relationships towards each other, which has to do with the way the professional group controls their knowledge and skills by using their jurisdiction (Abbott, 1988, p. 20).

External forces can cause direct disruption to the system by introducing new task areas for jurisdiction and by destroying old jurisdictions. An example of such a disturbance is the impact of new technology or organization changes. There are also internal sources for system change caused within the professions themselves, like for example development of new knowledge or skills (Abbott, 1988, pp. 91-97).

The analytical model has been developed for analysing recordkeeping awareness in three arenas: legal, political and workplace. Figure 1 illustrates the model.

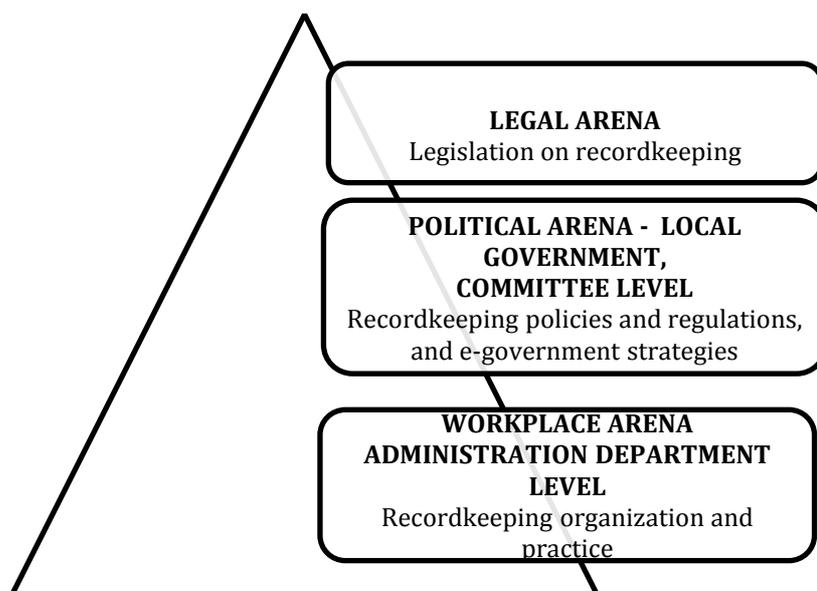


Figure 1. A model for analysing recordkeeping awareness in three arenas

The model is hierarchical, in which the legislation arena is on the top, representing the recordkeeping legislation, and the workplace arena on the bottom, representing the practice, which is placed at the administration department level of the local government organizations. The political arena, which is defined as the committee level of the local government organization, is in the middle, in between the legislative and the workplace arena. The politicians are elected by the citizens and therefore represent the public.

The legal arena is important because it represents the importance and the functions of archives, as well as giving archivist professionals the mandate and sanctions for their practice. So, there is a clear link between the legislation arena and the workplace arena. For example, in the Swedish context there is no distinc-

tion between records and archives. The archives consist of the public organizations' official documents (The Archive Act SFS 1990:782). The Freedom of the Press Act stipulates the citizens' right to free access to official documents (SFS 1949:105). Archives are to be preserved, kept and managed so that they meet the fundamental right of access official documents, the need for justice, administration and research. The archives are also considered to be a part of the national cultural heritage (The Archive Act SFS 1990:782).

The political arena is represented by the committee level and is vital for making the link between legislation and practice work. The political arena has an important function, because that is where decisions are made, including development of policies, regulations and strategy documents on recordkeeping, retention and disposal schemes approved, as well as financing of e-government projects. Policies regarding recordkeeping are important as they should state the organization's strategy on the capture of records to serve internal needs as well as legal requirements or the wider expectations of society (Shepherd & Yeo, 2003). Professional practice is therefore dependent on decisions made in the political arena. If there is a lack of recordkeeping awareness at the political level there will be consequences for overall recordkeeping management including e-government development, as for example when implementing e-services, as well as consequences for archivists as a professional group. If the archivists are not given a mandate to work strategically by the committees, they are not visible as experts and they risk a reduction in their professional status. A lack of recordkeeping awareness at the political arena may also have democratic consequences in the sense that it can lead to information loss and therefore inability to fulfil the citizens' right to access official documents.

The workplace arena includes the administration departments and the professional archivists. Archivists have an important tool to circumvent the political level as they often have the task of auditing recordkeeping. Auditing can be used to highlight the importance of legislative demands on recordkeeping and consequently strengthen archivists as professionals. Auditing can therefore serve as a powerful tool so that archivists can position themselves as experts. But, archivists need to be aware of their role as experts and be able to communicate their knowledge within the organization as well as at the committee level. It is very important that professional archivists are confident in having the right skills in order to do so. Consequently, the three arenas are connected to each other from two perspectives: top down and bottom up. The research findings will be discussed according to the model described above.

Research methodology

The research approach chosen for this study is case study, motivated by that the research reflects and analyses an on-going contemporary process within a specific context (Yin, 2009). This study is descriptive since it seeks to identify professional challenges regarding e-government implementation related to electronic recordkeeping.

The chosen research design for this research is a multiple case study design (Yin, 2009, p. 46). The selected cases are nine municipalities identified as good examples of best practice of e-government by SALAR (<http://www.skl.se/web/e-forvaltning.aspx>).

Data collection methods and research tools

Legislation is important since it has an impact on public organizations' structure and practice. Therefore, in order to understand the legal arena it is important to describe and present the Swedish legislative and administrative framework concerning recordkeeping. Laws and regulations as well as literature have been used to describe this arena. Furthermore, it contributes to a presentation of the context in which the archivist professionals operate.

Documents were used as a data collection method as a first step when examining SALAR's nine e-government best practice municipalities. An analysis of e-government activities of these nine municipalities was undertaken by analysing their e-government strategies which were downloaded from SALAR's web page during September and October 2010 (<http://www.sk1.se/web/e-forvaltning.aspx>). The majority of the e-strategies were created between 2005 and 2008, but one was undated. The e-government strategies were interesting in order to find out the extent of awareness of the importance of recordkeeping in their strategic e-government work, since they provided information on strategy motives: 'why', strategy goals: 'what' and strategy methods: 'how'.

Interviews were also used as a data collection method in the second step in order to explore the informants' experiences, understandings and skills, ways of perceiving problems and their possible solutions. Nine archivists representing the same nine municipalities were interviewed during January and March 2011. An interview schedule with semi structured questions was used as a research tool and was sent out in advance by e-mail to the informants. The interview schedule was designed around five themes: background facts, professional practice, electronic recordkeeping, skills and future role of the profession and finally an open question for additional comments. The interviews were standardized because the interview situation and questions used were the same for all interviews (Trost, 2005, p. 19). The data was compiled and sent out to the informants for information and comments.

Data analysis

The e-strategy documents and the interview transcriptions and notes were analysed by using content analysis, which is a research method based on the analysis of documents in order to classify the many words of the text into categories and themes (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007, p. 109). First, the e-strategies were analysed considering why, what and how the municipalities are working. In the organization step: the motives, the goals and the methods were described using a table in order to establish how aware the municipalities are of the importance of recordkeeping in their strategic e-government work. The analysis was made for each one of the municipalities. Secondly, a list was compiled of identified on-going activities. These activities were ranked according to the number of municipalities undertaking each activity.

Research findings

The research findings are presented according to the analysis model from a top down perspective, starting with a presentation of the Swedish administrative and legal framework. The research findings of the case studies are presented according to the undertaken steps described in the methodology section. First, a presentation

of the findings that emerged from the content analysis conducted against each of the e-strategies. Secondly, a presentation of the major findings from the interviews related to each theme within the questionnaire.

Administrative and legal framework

There are currently 290 municipalities in Sweden (Larsson & Bäck, 2008, p. 16). They are self-governing local authorities with responsibilities for different activities. The municipalities' main role is to conduct the responsibilities that are given to them by the Swedish welfare-state (Montin, 2007, p. 36). Most of the tasks are regulated in special legislation.

The Swedish Local Government Act (SFS 1991:900) gives the municipalities' great freedom to decide their local structure and they are good examples of complex structures. Their organizational structure consists of politically controlled local government committees with administration departments that implement political decisions and provide services to the public.

Legislation is the link between political decisions and implementation. Therefore the legislation has an impact on the structure and practice of public organizations (Montin, 2007, p. 25). The Freedom of the Press Act (SFS 1949:105) has its roots in the 18th century and ensures that the public has the right of free access to all official documents. This is important legislation for the promotion of democracy and transparency for the Swedish society (Gränström, et al., 2000, p. 64) and government efficiency (Bohlin, 2010, p. 23). The concept of official documents is defined in the Freedom of the Press Act, which considers a document official as soon as it is created, i.e. prepared according to certain criteria, or received by a certain agency. In the preamble of the Freedom of the Press Act it is stated that citizens shall have access to official documents: 'Every Swedish citizen shall be entitled to have free access to official documents, in order to encourage the free exchange of opinion and the availability of comprehensive information' (Larsson & Bäck, 2008, p. 117; SFS 1949:105). This fundamental right of free access is, however, tempered by the Public and Secrecy Act (SFS 2009:400). The general rule is nevertheless free access, secrecy is an exception and official documents that are not classified are accessible as soon as they are received or created by the agencies.

The Archive Act (SFS 1990:782) regulates the national, regional and local authorities' recordkeeping. Public records are a part of the cultural heritage and must be preserved, kept and managed so that they meet the right of access to public records, the need for justice, administration and research. This includes appraisal, retention, disposal, description, protection and responsibility issues. The official documents are defined as the public organizations archives (SFS 1990:782 § 3).

In addition to the enacted rules and regulations on recordkeeping there are local rules and legislation within the municipalities. The Council has the right to establish archive regulations and policies on recordkeeping for the committees and companies within the municipality. The Council decides which one of the committees within a municipality should function as an archival authority. Usually it is the Executive Committee that is assigned to this task. One of the archival authority's responsibilities is to audit the other committees' and companies' recordkeeping within the municipality (The Archive Act SFS 1990:782). Archivists are often organizationally connected to the archival authority and have an audit

and advisory function over other authorities, concerning how they fulfil the legislative requirements for recordkeeping.

Another responsibility for the archival authority is to function as a repository for the archives, often after the archives have been transferred for long-term preservation. The local municipal regulation further clarifies the responsibilities between the archival authority, the committees and companies within a municipality. Archivists are often involved in guiding and teaching administrators within administrative departments in the work of establishing retention and disposal schemes. Therefore, archivists need to have knowledge of the appropriate legislation in order to conduct appraisal. The archive authority is responsible for the long-term preservation of records that have been delivered from the committees. Archivists often work as managers of the archival repositories and therefore have long experience in how to process archives using arrangement and description principles and standards in order to make them accessible to the public. Since the public are entitled to access official documents, the work of organizing visits and tours for information users at the archival repositories is important (Holmberg, 2010, pp. 129-137). Archivists need to be skilled in the secrecy legislation (regulated by the Public and Secrecy Act 2009:400) in order to make decisions on information retrieval. Hence, archivists often work with a range of tasks, from custodians of repositories to strategic experts on electronic recordkeeping.

E-strategy motives, goals and methods

A key motive found across the municipalities was that IT development makes it possible to work with efficiency of internal processes and to deal with the citizens, other organizations and businesses. It was considered to be cost saving as well as improving services. Another important motivation was to strengthen democracy. The municipalities also addressed pressure from the national government to work with e-government development.

The goals identified focused on e-services, e-government and e-democracy. Strategic development was considered important, which was reflected in the hierarchical structure of the organizations since the Executive Committees had direct responsibility for the strategic development and function.

The e-government development and implementation was often undertaken through on-going activities within different but parallel projects, but was often under the supervision of an IT-focused Chief Information Officer or an IT strategist. It was possible to identify on-going activities according to the number of municipalities undertaking each activity. All of the municipalities are working with development of 24/7 e-services, improvement of use of their web to exchange information and the development of holistic business processes. Six to eight municipalities are working with implementation of well-defined responsibilities and roles for IT strategic development, establishing contact centres in order to help and support citizens and enterprises to use e-services, ensuring that IT-security had three components: secrecy or authorized access to information only, correct and complete information and access to the right information for authorized users by using electronic signatures; integration of systems and increased transparency to allow citizens to take part in the political process. However, less than half of the municipalities considered the integration of paper-based and electronic records, metadata or a digital archive as important components to address within the e-strategies. Only one municipality mentions their work with digital archive manage-

ment and the assignment of responsibility for and ownership of information and defining acceptable formats for information as important. There were no clear statements of the importance of establishing retention and disposal schemes for official documents. The analysis of the e-strategies also made it clear that it was IT strategists and IT units, not archivists that were considered as experts and coordinators of e-government development.

Interviews

In the second step of the research, interviews were conducted with nine archivists at the same municipalities. The findings from the analysis are thematically presented.

Several informants have many years of service and even though some of them are working at larger municipalities it is striking that three informants are working alone without colleagues. The informants have similar educational background in traditional academic fields like archaeology, history and political science with supplemented courses in archival science, which is not surprising if one considers the long professional working experience and the traditional way that archival science has developed over time. It is obvious that several of the informants originally discovered the archivist profession because of a historical interest which often inspired their choice of academic studies.

The questions designed within this theme intended to establish the current situation regarding the informants' working performance and how they identified themselves as professionals. What unites all of the interviewees is the mix of professional responsibilities: managing and preserving the delivered archives to the archival authority and making them available by systematic identification; giving advice about recordkeeping; working with establishment of retention and disposal schemes; and executing auditing. The most prioritized assignment tends to be to fulfil the citizens' right to access official documents. "The most important assignment is to fulfil the public right to official documents. It has to be prioritized by law. We have other assignments as well which are also important." (Archivist F).

All the interviewed archivists were representing the archival authority and several of them were responsible for executing auditing on behalf of the archival authority. Still, auditing is often not carried out. Sometimes the double role as advisor and auditor was perceived as conflicting when participating in development projects.

Several of the archivists identified valuation of information over time and within its context as a professional uniqueness for archivists. They considered their specialist knowledge of the legislative framework to be an important professional attribute of archivists.

The questions in this theme were designed to find out to what extent the transition from paper-based to electronic records has affected organizational positions and strategies. The archivists expressed a need for pro-active and strategic work as vital, including high-level management support. However, only a few of them are working with mapping processes even though they think it is important to be strategically involved in order to ensure authentic records through time to fulfil legislative requirements. Often a lack of resources is mentioned as an underlying cause. "I do not have time to work strategically. I have to work with the archives that are already delivered to the Archival authority." (Archivist E).

Only four of nine archivists are part of an on-going project or strategic development group within their own municipality. All interviewees were involved in some kind of regional or national network or project with other archivists on the issue of long-term preservation of information. However, six of nine interviewees stated that they did not have routines for electronic recordkeeping for long-term preservation. They made a clear distinction between paper-based and electronic records and stated that the electronic records were each committee's responsibility. When making a cross-synthesis between the different e-strategies and the interviews, it seems that the few municipalities with pro-active archivists appeared to be more aware of the importance of recordkeeping within their e-government strategies.

The aim of the questions related to this topic was to establish the archivists' need for skills development. It was also important to catch their perceptions and vision on future professional role.

Several archivists expressed a need for continuous skills development in order to be updated in general but especially in legislation and system science. The transition from paper-based to electronic recordkeeping seems to have raised other important issues for knowledge enhancement: "Different types of management training like managing projects and how to work strategically." (Archivist B).

Several of the interviewees also expressed a need for expertise in other important issues related to new requirements as a result of electronic recordkeeping implementation and the need for collaborative work with IT professionals: concept modelling, communication strategies, business process development, management, rhetoric and marketing.

The interviewees identified 'archivist' as a professional title closely linked to their professional performance and skills, therefore none of the informants wanted to change the professional title. However, some interviewees thought that the archivist profession will be divided into two types depending on spectrum of skills, i.e. IT archivists and traditional archivists. "I think the profession will be divided into traditional archivists and IT archivists. But skills about how to keep older records will still be needed. The archivist profession is very broad and that is also what makes it interesting." (Archivist E).

The interviewees thought of archivists as generalists and were convinced that archivist professionals will be needed in the future.

The interviewees could also add information to supplement the interview questions at the end of the interview. Two interviewees highlighted that higher education has an important role in supporting practice through research that strengthens the archivist profession by defining problems and developing new working methods.

Discussion

When analysing the research findings according to the model it is striking that the political arena is very important for the issue of recordkeeping awareness within the organization. The political arena makes crucial decisions including financing and organization, which the workplace arena has to implement. Even though the legislation arena provides very clear definitions of the importance of recordkeeping and archives' fundamental function in society, the research findings have identified several challenges that need to be solved. One of the challenges is related to the

definition of archives. Within the Swedish context the official documents constitute the archives of a public organization. However, it is questionable if the top management at the municipalities and the politicians have enough knowledge of the definitions of official documents. The issue of long-term preservation seems to be neglected in the e-strategy documents, which also is partly confirmed by the results of the interviews.

Auditing could be an important tool in evaluating electronic recordkeeping and identify important issues for improvement. The politicians need to be aware of the situation in order to make the right decisions. But, since auditing is often not carried out by the archivists the issues are very likely not recognized. This is serious since it can lead to information loss. The legal requirements regarding the need for justice administration and research may be not fulfilled. This might lead to a democratic societal problem, e.g. the citizens' right of access to official documents will not be sustained and this is a fundamental right. In the long term this might limit and decrease transparency for the citizens, which is actually the opposite of what the e-government development aims to achieve.

Electronic recordkeeping has been an issue for decades, even though e-government development highlights and accelerates the implementation process. Although all the archivist professionals are aware of the challenges with electronic recordkeeping and the need for a pro-active approach, they often do not work strategically and pro-actively. Underlying factors, based on the interview data, seem to be a lack in skills and resources: in particular skills necessary for long-term preservation and knowledge of legislation.

This research confirms that archivists do not have any major influence on strategic e-government development. Thus in reality, the archivists' autonomous functions as professionals are minimized. When archivists lose professional status it opens up possibilities for other professional groups to replace them: professions who have the power to communicate the challenges identified and present their own solutions. Research findings of this study indicate that IT professions are increasing their professional influence and positions within the strategic e-government work. Content analysis of the e-strategy documents and interviews makes it clear that IT-units are prioritized when it comes to extended resources. However, archivists cannot wait until they obtain more resources – they actually have to claim their positions and a possible way of achieving this is by exercising their mandates as auditors. A holistic view on recordkeeping within e-government development is needed in order to make sure that records are to be captured, managed, maintained and preserved. This is of paramount importance since major financial investments in the development of e-government are currently being carried out by the municipalities. The lack of recordkeeping awareness can lead to increased costs as well as democratic limitations. Hence, auditing is an autonomous task strongly connected to the legislation and a long tradition of practice. This research suggests that archivists need education in order to obtain the additional skills needed for pro-active and strategic work. Educational programs offered by institutions of higher education should be adjusted to include this professional knowledge and skills. The relationship between research, practice and higher education is important for archivists as well as the archival science research field since there is a strong link between science-based education and a specific position within the labour market.

Conclusion

The research findings contribute to a more complex picture than can be explained on the basis of Abbott's theory (Abbott, 1988). Nevertheless, the theory contributed to establishing an analysis model that identified issues of importance to consider for further research. It seems that new technology in a changing jurisdiction is not in itself a sufficient explanation; it is more complicated than that. Although the importance of public archives and their role in democracy and transparency in Sweden is clearly stated in the legal framework, the political sphere plays an important role in defining recordkeeping awareness and the kind of professional knowledge needed in strategic e-government development. Nevertheless, indications are that the spheres cannot simply be kept separate. Much depends, for instance, on the quality of the advice received by the politicians from the archivists, and the politicians' own understanding of the far-reaching implications of rapidly changing technologies and how these impinge on their ability to meet their legal responsibilities. Abbott's (1988) theoretical discussion is based on how professions other than archivists organize themselves and seek full jurisdiction for the benefit of their professions. However, the empirical result of this research identifies other influencing factors like the political system and implementation of e-government in close cooperation with the market as being of paramount importance for archivists' professional status. The effects of changing organizational structures and cultures within public organizations as a result of market adjustment and information technology development deeply affect the concept of the archive and its place in the organization's information flows and architecture. There appears to be stronger focus on technology-based solutions than the requirements stipulated in the legislation, which mandates the information that should be the professional arena of the archivists. The result of the study further confirms that there are differences regarding professional identity, which might be connected to lack in skills in relation to technological development and new professional demands. Additionally, it reveals a gap between academia and practice, which raises questions about professionalism and knowledge transfer from and between academia and practice. This may have implications not only for the archivists but also for academia since the political system decides the conditions for higher education. Archivists' reduction of professional status to the benefit of other professional groups is clearly an issue for further research.

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