'The Emperor’s New Clothes'
Recordkeeping in a New Context

Maria Kallberg
Avdelning för Arkiv- och datavetenskap
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Opponent är Professor Elizabeth Shepherd, Department of Information Studies, University College London
Title: 'The Emperor's New Clothes' Recordkeeping in a New Context
Name: Maria Kallberg
Faculty of Science, Technology and Media
Mid Sweden University, SE-851 70 Sundsvall, Sweden.

Abstract
This thesis examines if and how information capture and documentation practices and the function of the public archive are changing in relation to archival concepts in contemporary administrative settings, as a result of e-government strategic development. The study aims for a holistic approach from the beginning of the life of the records to their long-term preservation.

This research is situated in Sweden where the recordkeeping legislation takes a holistic approach: records management is understood as a dimension of the archival function and therefore records managers have not been recognised as a professional group, however recordkeeping practice involves two occupational groups: registrars and archivists. Swedish recordkeeping legislation is based on long administrative traditions in which the public right of free access to official documents is fundamental. Registration of official documents is important as the means of facilitating the citizens’ right to free access information and registrars are primarily responsible for this process, including classification. Archivists manage the full range of recordkeeping tasks, acting not only as custodians of repositories but also strategic experts on recordkeeping as well as auditing on behalf of the archival authority. The archive legally consists of all the ‘official documents’ created or received in the organisation.

This is an explorative and documented case study that used several local government bodies (municipalities) for the data collection by document analysis and interviews. Swedish municipalities are particularly interesting because they are autonomous in relation to the national government, with complex organisational structures consisting of several politically controlled committees and administrative departments that implement political decisions and provide services to the public. The National Archives does not have any supervisory role or monitoring function over local governments, but it does publish guidelines on recordkeeping. Nevertheless, the municipalities are controlled to a large extent by the implemented policies decided at national level by the Government and Parliament. Therefore, national initiatives regarding e-government have impacted on the municipalities’ recordkeeping.

A theoretical lens combining archival science and theory of professions has been chosen to analyse the observed changes in practice. The thesis analyses the issue of recordkeeping awareness in three arenas: the legal arena; the political arena; and the workplace arena in the light of the records continuum model.

The research findings demonstrate a gap between the legal and workplace arenas caused by lack of recordkeeping awareness primarily within the political arena. Despite the holistic view of keeping archives expressed in the recordkeeping
legislation, observed practice appears closer to a life cycle model than proactive continuum thinking and planning. A lack of recordkeeping legislation awareness in the wider organisation is potentially leading to a division between records management and archives management, jeopardising the continuum approach. Consequently registrars may in the future become more like records managers and archivists may be losing part of their professional jurisdiction. There is a strong focus on business benefits to the organisation rather than the wider view of democratic values and cultural heritage. As a result: archivists seem to suffer a lack of resources as well as skills in order to carry out their responsibilities. The future role of archival authorities such as the National Archives is unclear.

**Keywords**: recordkeeping, e-government, recordkeeping awareness, information management, continuum, public archive, archivists, registrars, local government, Sweden