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“Town and Townscape: the work and life of Thomas Sharp”

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Introduction.

With this paper, we will take a look at the dynamic evolution of archival standards, how this has changed and influenced the everyday work of professionals, and how it has changed the way documentary material is conserved in archival repositories, in the current context of globalization. As a start, we will take an overall view of current archival standards, especially for the creation of finding aids, and make brief comparisons with other related standards used for cultural heritage. After this initial overview, we will be taking a look at some examples of different methods for archives and archival project management. This will involve a conservation-management approach to heritage, and different models of archival collections management, and drawing some conclusions. These case studies will be focussed on Spain and the UK, including collections management systems from the first to last stages of the records management life cycle. Also, we will be looking at the interdependencies between these stages in the life cycle of records, from creation, to management, preservation and use.

Archival standards.

One of the main objectives of standards - for whatever activity - is to reach the widest possible audience. For archives, this means making the information as accessible as possible. In this context, standards seek to enable the globalization of information

resources. For this purpose, and for the particular nature of archival materials, ISAD(G) was designed. ISAD(G) is the 'General International Standard for Archival Description' created by the International Council on Archives and is the current descriptive standard. This is also Unesco's recommendation. The American and Canadian tradition, on the other hand, developed Encoded Archival Description, or EAD, and its successive versions in the Nineties. The Library of Congress supports this initiative in conjunction with the Society of American Archivists. If ISAD(G) provides instructions to archivists on the information required to describe archival records or create finding aids, the implementation of EAD provides the most appropriate encoding language in which a digital description should be made. The evolution from the earliest drafts of these standards to their current versions has been documented and studied, and this can be easily consulted on the official websites and in the bibliographies related to them. But at present we are interested in other aspects of these standards.

The formulation of the ISAD(G) standard for the description of records was very important for professionals because it provided some order for the multiplicity of treatments and techniques used by repositories. Before the establishment of these rules, different archivists were creating different archival descriptions. The variation in the techniques from one archival deposit to another changed eventually with the new descriptive rules. Using the standard means that nearly any kind of software or language can be mapped to an updated version - depending of course on the granularity of the language. This ISAD(G) standard has the widest audience worldwide is more widely used than national standards - including EAD.

The emphasis in the creation of EAD was on the standardization of the encoding language in which it was developed for digital description, starting with SGML (Standard Generalized Markup Language) and now with XML (Extensible Mark-up Language). The choice of encoding language is for the ease of interoperability between different resources. EAD also represents the original hierarchy of the collection of documentary material, therefore distinguishing itself as a more accurate technique ahead of the traditional databases, which are unable to represent this hierarchy. The use of this encoding language provided easier access through the World Wide Web, because it is straightforward to extract the data required, and thereby make it publicly available. There are some other aspects of this to consider as well - the use of EAD is more restricted in non-English speaking countries, though its use is increasing elsewhere. The encoding of the XML metadata is based on English, and not all archivists know foreign languages. This is the case in Spanish-speaking countries. The availability of archival software and user-friendly resources is increasing, but not to the extent that would be desirable. Such software should include both standards - EAD 2002 and ISAD(G)-2, and be made available in other languages. XML encoding can also be used for the MARC bibliographic metadata used by libraries. Library management software has been developed so that it can be easily updated, so libraries at least do work with easier software. It is to be hoped that software will soon reach the new requirements for archives management.

After the introduction of EAD, in Spain the Ministry of Culture created the EAG (Encoded Archival Guide), which is a metadata standard for structuring the guides of the National Archives, but not their collection descriptions as EAD does. On the same official website of the Spanish Ministry of Culture, there is the first draft of

NEDA or (translated) the Spanish Norm of Archival Description. This national standard is a consequence of other, international initiatives to regulate archival practices. There is an interesting statement in the NEDA documentation that we would like to quote (in this translated version) because it is very appropriate: "The archives centres are nowadays digital islands preserved from a knowledge that they cannot share." This phrase is very useful to describe the lack of standardization and the variety of digital resources - not just applicable to Spain though. Many archives resist changing their old procedures or old software to use the new metadata standards available now. The work of Alejandro Delgado of Cartagena Council Archives is very significant in this respect. He has published several articles and books on EAD and its implementation issues, and also took part in the workgroups of the Society of American Archivists. His "Normalizacion de la Descripcion Archivistica. Introduccion a EAD" is very valuable for Spanish users and implementors of EAD.

Furthermore, the next International Congress of the ICA in Malaysia in 2008 plans to present the definitive version of the standard called ISAF (International Standard for Archival Functions). This will be designed to be regulated by a DTD or an XML schema, in the same way as EAD, and probably entitled EAF. This will reinforce the work already developed in many countries with the special support of the Library of Congress. We should note as well that the Library of Congress itself is developing a new EAD schema for XML, and the beta version is available for testing purposes from their website.

All these initiatives - plus many more not mentioned here - look very positive, but maybe too many of them, create an atmosphere of continuous changes to the practicalities of archivists' work. Nowadays an archivist has to develop many IT skills that were not required for work not so long ago, which is a bit difficult for some senior professionals who might resist such changes. But this development can be otherwise extended to other professional activities, and it comes from the globalization of information resources provided by the World Wide Web. Another factor is that the software will not develop more user-friendly versions until the standards are stabilised in the same way as bibliographic ones. It is true that there is software adapted to archives management, but archival institutions have to face decisions about investing economic resources in software that may soon become obsolete. In respect of this particular issue the AHDS (the UK Arts and Humanities Data Service) encourages considering before investing in software, avoiding software that has not been in use for very long or that has not been taken up by many users.

The developments made by the Archives Hub (one of the Mimas services of the University of Manchester) have been valuable for, and appreciated by, UK Higher Education archives. Briefly, the Archives Hub provides their own free software to institutions who want to become 'Spokes' hosting their own data. An online template for EAD 2002 descriptions is also available on the Hub for other institutions, with the publication of their descriptions on the Hub website, and there is also friendly support from the IT team.

There are many other metadata standards created for a diverse range of activities: Dublin Core (for the Web), TEI (for text), VRA Categories (visual materials), Spectrum (museum objects), RSLP Collection Description, MARC in its different versions for libraries, and many more, but basically not as adapted to archival

requirements as are the two standards we have described earlier. There are cross-walks between the different standards, and all these forms of metadata can be made accessible for the Internet through a browser.

On this point, it is remarkable to note the coming into existence of virtual repositories - repositories of digital archives and digital catalogues of archival collections. The preservation of digital repositories and their descriptions is becoming a real challenge for institutions.

Case studies.

We are going to use a range of examples of archives collections and management. Most of these will be architectural and planning records, but they will also be administrative and other historical material. The case studies include collections of the records of institutions, distinguishing the different stages of the records life cycle and their varying treatment.

Archives of the Architecture and Planning Department, Jerez City Council (GMU), Spain.

The repository holds the collection of institutional records. The Department is part of the Council, and subsequently so is the archive. The type of archive in which we can classify it is a Central Archive, not yet historical, although there are some special collections in its custody, as we will see later.

The deposits of documents are held in different stores: an external store and the main building store. The first one will cover all the administrative 'active' records, which have legal, economic, and administrative responsibilities inherent to them. The second will cover the Special Collections and the offices (in the same building) with the administrative records of the current year.

(a) The external store

The external store includes, usually, all the archival material from 1980 to the current year. The documents are managed through a database which is organised by the different types and document series, such as: licences, planning projects, architectural projects, urbanisation etc. The extent of the whole collection in 2005 was around 700 linear metres, covering the management stage of the records life cycle. The maintenance of the store and its contents is subcontracted to an archives specialist company that covers: storage of the collection and replacing documents in archives standard boxes; collection and delivery; updating the database; and keeping the store in the appropriate conditions for the preservation of the records. All these activities are under the remit of the Archivist and Director of Archives responsible for the 'active' administrative records, and therefore governed by the conditions of access, copyright and so on.

The records housed in this store are of many kinds: private and public developments; administrative files (agreements, contracts, official correspondence, minutes of meetings etc), official planning schemes for the city, urbanisation projects, restoration

projects on sites and historic buildings and so on. This is just a brief list of the material, but shows how significant the collection is for the urban past of the city.

From this short overview, we can formulate a series of questions and conclusions. The records starting in 1980 have, under Spanish law, different regulations and stages of responsibility. It is different for a developer's planning or architectural licence dated in the Eighties than for one less than five years old. Are they treated the same? Have they the same information in the databases? If they are not used, why are they not already in the Historical Archive? And moreover, why this amount of documentation, is it not weeded?

The first answer will be No, they are treated differently, not yet designated for conservation because of a simple economy of resources, but still different. All the files are stored in proper archival boxes, and the database contains details of the files following ISAD(G). So, why not EAD? EAD is mainly used for archives to be published on the Web. If there is no intention of doing this, it would be a waste of resources. In fact, in the case of a structured document, it can be mapped onto the metadata when required. The most recent files are still treated as active administrative files, although they are not stored in the offices due to problems of space. The database will be mainly an inventory, but with precise details of electronic requests, loans and delivery to the offices. The access rules for the collection in this store require an administrative file in itself. A citizen making a request will be registered with the database, as will copies of the documentation, if any, required to demonstrate their right to see the file requested.

The older files dating from the Eighties and Nineties are not in the Historical Archive because of the same problems of space. As for the size of the collection, files are weeded in the offices, but the Spanish regulations are very strict about public records. Architectural and planning records have mostly to be preserved under Spanish law; when the administrative, economic, and related responsibilities associated with the records have expired, they (with only a few exceptions in some types of records), become historical records, so have to be preserved. This is an important issue nowadays as the increase in the amount of documentation generated by the Department is intensifying in the last few years.

(b) Special Collections

The Special Collections section of the Architecture and Planning Department of Jerez Council has been formed for the accrual of diverse materials. The main - and most valuable and appreciated - part is an institutional collection, the Plans Collection. This still forms part of the Department's collection, but the materials have a different character and legal status. There are a few collections of former directors of important sections of Architecture and Planning who had kept documentation on a diverse range of issues from their time in post. It is true that the records in these collections are not as impressive as others, but are of interest in relation to local urban and political history. These collections date from the early Forties to the end of the Nineties. There is just a handlist for these resources, with no public access for reasons of data protection.

Apart from the collection of records generated by the institution, there are a few personal collections in the Archive of the Department. There is the Eduardo Pereiras

collection of photographs from the end of the 19th century to the end of the 20th century. There is also the Alfaro collection of photographs and postcards (with digital copies of originals which date from the same time as Pereiras). So projects have been carried out in partnership with the Historical Council Archive: Bodegas la Merced Collection of Manuscripts and Library (which dates from 1432 to the 20th century), and Valdespino Bodegas Archive (19th - 20th century). We will say more about these later.

Plans Collections, 1910-2002

The genesis of this singular collection dates from the era before computers. Not so many years ago - as some of us still remember - computers were not used in the office, and there were no electronic printers, scanners, and so on. In this context, the Draughtsman in Chief created an office archive to which the draughtsmen working for the architects, planners and engineers had to deposit their master copies and modified plans. This was the early 20th century; this archive also had very useful older plans of the city and the surrounding areas from the century before. This tradition was assumed by the successors of this Draughtsman in Chief as the best way to maintain the records was to keep them in constant use. It is very expensive to measure an existing building, street or landscape! Each draughtsman had his own inventory of the records on which he had worked. And as they were usually exclusively associated with an individual architect, planner or engineer, the records of buildings and planning schemes or projects were kept together. Or at least that was the intention. There were 'seasonal efforts' for sorting the many inventories during the 'active life' of this collection.

When computers arrived, this original system lost importance because records began to be kept in digital form, but the older records were still consulted. And then there was a serious computer crash and all the electronic records were lost. So they started once more to print plans again and collect those printed versions. By the end of the Nineties and the beginning of this century, the security copies system was reliable, so the draughtsmen and draughtswomen brought the collection of printed copies to a definite end.

The original collection had plans dating back to 1836, extremely valuable from the historical viewpoint. There was a special series of files with administrative and technical information and plans called "Alineaciones" (about new streets and planning projects active in the 19th century). All these records were transferred to the Historical Archive because of its interest for researchers. In fact it is regularly consulted.

The current collection still has some treasures: the oldest plan, dated 1910, showing the whole city and its developments, a 1911 map of "Montes de Propios", piece of landscape with mountains outside the city, including different species of trees, and General Planning Schemes for the City, dating from the Fifties to the present. It also contains plans by the Council or commissioned by them: historic buildings, restorations, new projects, archaeological sites, exhibitions, demographic and social reports, copies of antique maps. There is a copy of plans collection of architect and

planner Hernando Rubio, dating from the 19th century to 1940, with some sketches. This adds up to 92 linear metres with more than 7000 records between rolls of plans, plus reports and the material already described.

The method of managing these archives was the traditional old-fashioned office inventory. The conservation of the material was fine, although some of the storage was inappropriate. The Draughtsman in Charge took care of packaging the plans, although not flat, but with suitable paper. Some of the old wooden furniture had plagues of insects, which at least had not reached the archival material. This was treated straightaway.

The first action for the collection was to review the old inventories, and sorting if necessary. A new handlist was required, and a database was designed, meeting the ISAD(G) standard. A cataloguer was contracted for this stage to support the Archivist. During the cataloguing process, some material was weeded and records identified as not belonging to the collection, and conservation needs were also identified.

Once finalised, the first stage of the process was to review access to the collection, which varied depending on the date of the material. The regulation of access will be in general managed as in the 'external store', except for the 'pure' Historical records, which are open to researchers. In addition, a digitization programme was planned - a very delicate operation - with the intention of creating a website for public access to the records. This digitization programme was also required for the work of the Department, as it would make distribution and access easier for internal users. The quantity of archival material meant that the process was very complicated: the first stage of the plan was to complete the catalogue, this time item by item, then mapping this to a digital format suitable for the Web - probably EAD, to follow standards. The concern at this point was to decide whether we wanted the digital images as part of the main XML file, or separate. The second option seemed more sensible because back-up copies were needed, and a secure place to store all these images. We could not restrict ourselves to the low-resolution images that would be used as illustrations on the website, since detailed, high quality images of the maps and plans were also needed for the work of the Department. The other issue was the cost, including appropriate storage, conservation if required, and a new repository - this was becoming an advanced and expensive project! Also, the implementation of the project requires considering the everyday reality of frequent requests for access to the material, and the legal obligation of producing them on time. This aspect is quite different from a Historical Archive, which has more freedom to set the access conditions for its records.

One of the inconvenient effects of digitization in management offices is that, once you have these nice new digital objects, the 'business managers' tend to forget about the issue of conservation and preservation. This is when a digitization project may become a risk, unless the archivists are very clear and firm in the design of their plans. Clearly, this is not an issue facing other cultural institutions, such as the education services, or the Council's heritage services.

Otherwise, the function of the document, in this stage of the records life cycle life, is to serve the offices and also the public - but this collection was primarily for the

Department. The title of this paper relates to this matter, where the archives professional is working in a Department with very rich and quality records, but which is interested in aims that are other than archival. Often in organisations of this kind, the person in charge has not served as an archivist for some time, and the introduction of new professionals is, unfortunately, only recent.

The development of collaborative projects with the Historical Archive has had different results. This is the case of: Bodegas la Merced Library (1907-1980) and Archive (1432-1970) and Valdespino Bodegas Collection (19th to 20th century). We will just look at this first example for this paper.

“Bodegas la Merced Collection”: Library (1907-1980) and Archive (1432-1970).

Bodegas La Merced is an industrial complex dating from the early eighteenth to the twentieth century in the heart of the historical centre of Jerez City. The settlement and some of the buildings were formerly part of an ancient convent that holds the collection. There was first an olive mill, and later bodegas for sherry wines and brandy. The Council acquired the building and their technicians start to work on it. The draughtsman and the historian were the first to visit. During these technical visits, the historian found several documents within the residence. Their collection, along with other documents found in other rooms, gave birth to the archival collection. Most of them were deeds of property owners of the complex and other buildings. The earliest document was an impressive parchment dating from 1432, the most recent documents dated from the 1970s. The extent of the collection is 0.5 linear metres. The principal research value of the collection is for family history and for the industrial heritage of the buildings, documenting both the existing and demolished ones. In addition, completing the collection was found what we can call a family library dating from 1907 to 1980, including a “Nacar Colunga” Bible. The library was remarkable for its political, religious, books in other languages and collections of magazines.

The collection was generally in good condition, except for the dirt deposited, so typical of empty buildings. The examination of the documentary material by the conservator indicates the same; the conservation requirements were cleaning and the removed of metal objects, and storage in archival boxes. In future, it would be desirable to remove the items from their current bindings, and store them in archival folders, though the binding is still working to preserve them. The finding aid created was a handlist, using archival standards, but not reaching the item level, following the American tradition of handlists. The archival collection was transferred to the Historic Council Archive.

The Library of the Collection was kept within the Central Library of the Architecture and Planning Department, Jerez City Council. This decision was reached after consultation with the Historical Library of the Council, mainly due to space problems in their stores. The collection is currently being cleaned, bound and catalogued. This project was done in collaboration with the Historical Archive and has had successful results. The key factors to be considered were: the economic cost required for the conservation project (excluding any digitisation), the small amount of documents, the good condition of the documents, and the existing resources within the Institutions.

“Town and Townscape: the work and life of Thomas Sharp”.

“Thomas Sharp (1901-1978) was a key figure in town planning in the mid-twentieth century. The concepts he developed in his writings and plans have been of enduring significance and influence on thinking about planning and design for both practitioners and academics in the UK and beyond. He was a major influence on the development of ideas of townscape and the significance of his thinking on historic cities stands comparison with, for example, Camillo Sitte.”

This is a piece of text from the website of the project (www.ncl.ac.uk/library/sharp) that we would like to quote here as an introduction to the significance of the collection in relation with his author. The project design consists basically in the cataloguing, re-housing, conservation and dissemination of the Thomas Sharp Collection. The collection was donated in 1984 by Christine Morrison, Rachel Sharp's sister, to the School of Planning of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The papers were part of the departmental Library until its inclusion in Special Collections section of Robinson Library. The collection is approximately 3.5 linear metres in extent, and it dates from 1932 to 1983. The papers consist of 67 files and its main contents are: correspondence, unpublished works (including an autobiography), photographs (including the family album), reports, development plans, contracts, plans and press cuttings.

The handlist is already developed, and a catalogue to the item level is on course, with more than 2000 items already encoded to date. The catalogue is using both the archival standards, ISAD(G) and EAD, making use of the Archives Hub's online template and with friendly support from its IT team. Also, a selection of forty images from the collection will be included as digital objects for different uses, such as: presentations, websites, leaflets and for other academic related activities.

The project is very interesting for its mixture of academic activities and its archival methods. The use of both current standards for finding aids was seen as the most appropriate form of cataloguing. The re-housing of the collection through the conservation project is the best way to ensure the safeguarding and preservation of the papers. All these activities are directed towards providing public access of the collection in the near future.

The project has a special focus on academic activities. Postgraduate students from Newcastle University will be researching on this collection to complete their final paper for the course entitled: " Linked Research Project 2006-2007. Planning research using documentary and archival sources".

Two papers will be presented on 12th International Conference of Planning History, New Delhi, 10-15 December this year. It is planned to design an Exhibition to be held at the same time at a major conference on "Visual planning and Urbanism in the mid-twentieth century", 13-15 September 2007. A special emphasis on Thomas Sharp will be given in these events.

The publicity for the project will include a promotional leaflet and a website. The website aims to focus on its resources on presenting as much information on Thomas Sharp as possible. The catalogue of the collection will be available for

online consultation with links to the Special Collections electronic request service. The website will have an annotated bibliography of Sharp's books and articles in conjunction with his life timeline and biography. Finally, an interesting document listing different resources and finding aids on Thomas Sharp.

This is a collaborative project between the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape and Special Collections Robinson Library of the Newcastle University, UK, funded by AHRC (Arts & Humanities Research Council, UK).

This is the example with the best economic resources of the all case studies presented today, and subsequently the one with the best cultural programme. This is the ideal treatment for any archival collection!

Conclusion.

The normalisation of the standards will be very helpful for the everyday work of archival professionals. As this hopefully will be followed with the incorporation of more user-friendly software appropriate for creating finding aids. We will like to note as well the importance of the traditional subjects of study for any archivist, such as: diplomatic studies, palaeography, history, languages and so on. Nowadays the new professional studies give more emphasis to information management, and standards, which is obviously necessary, especially for the globalisation of information. However, it is necessary, in my personal opinion, to have a real knowledge of what you are working on, and not just simply to be a cataloguer.

The examples here have shown different approaches to archives management. Economic factors play an important role in these differences. Some of the case studies have had varying approaches on the basis of the collection's character and stages of the records life cycle. This has been shown in the use, or otherwise, of archival standards, though for the preservation of digital catalogues it would be better to use EAD. Also conservation management is different, depending on the collection. It is interesting to observe, in these terms, how some collections or projects are not as "lucky" as other. For example Thomas Sharp papers is the one with the most appropriate programme, but again probably the one with the best economic resources for the scale of the collection.

Finally, we would like to conclude this paper by re-stating our "manifesto" or main objectives along these lines. Documentary heritage or archives are usually, and unfortunately, the ones with the poorest economic resources. This reality applies to many countries and archives. Archives have significance for academics and for non-academic researchers (we just have think of family researchers), and are vital for the understanding of our past. Also, our intention in showing examples of poor resources or lack of standards is to show the reality in which the archivist has to work every day. This is very simple: with more resources we will have more collections catalogued, thus more access to these collections, and at last better access for the researchers, wherever they are. How to convince the funding bodies of this, that is the real challenge!

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National Archives, UK. Website: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

NEDA, Norma Espanola de Descripcion Archivística. Ministerio de Cultura, Spain: <http://www.mcu.es/archivos/neda/neda.html>

Town and Townscape the work and life of Thomas Sharp website of the project: www.ncl.ac.uk/library/sharp

UNESCO archives portal: www.unesco.org/courier/archives