DOCUMENT AND ARCHIVE MANAGEMENT: AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM AIMING TO SATISFY THE NEEDS OF CUSTOMERS, CITIZENS AND ORGANISATIONS

NORMAND CHARBONNEAU joined the National Archives of Canada in 1990 where he held various positions, including Director of the Centre d'archives de Québec. The creation of Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec in 2006 brought him back to Montreal where he became head of the Directorate of Centre d'archives de Montréal, a position he held until January 2012 when he was appointed curator and director of the BAnQ archives. His professional work has led him to focus on photographic archives for a long time while integrated document management in organizations has caught his attention in recent years. Mr. Charbonneau is secretary-treasurer of the Association internationale des archivistes francophones.

Our profession looks at its objectives and activities with an awareness of the importance of actions taken and their consequences. Indeed, professionals working in the management of records and archives have always been on the razor's edge between tendencies that may seem paradoxical: being the guardians of our communities' memory, on the one hand, and being responsible for the records that ensure the continuity of our actions, protect the rights of citizens and defend the interests of organizations on the other. But this balance cannot be maintained without the additional, but equally important, responsibility to make the best use of the resources at our disposal.

ABOUT BIBLIOTHÈQUES ET ARCHIVES NATIONALES DU QUÉBEC

Before getting to the heart of the matter, I would like to say a few words about Bibliothèques et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ) which will help you better understand who we are, how we work and in which direction we are going. Created in 2006, BAnQ is the result of a merger of the resources from three institutions: the National Archives of Quebec (established in 1920), the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec (created in 1967) and a "big public library" (created in 1997), the last two institutions located in Montreal. BAnQ is a one of its kind institution when we consider other similar institutions that were formed from the fusion of archives and national libraries, since it also integrates Quebec's largest public library which also happens to be the most visited library in North America, attracting close to three million visitors each year.

BAnQ is growing and offers services that correspond to its three mandates: archives, national library and large public library. The Archive's General Board, which now includes the National Archives of Quebec, is active on six fronts:

1. *Centralized public sector* archives. The archives of some 150 organisations affiliated with the central government[1] of which we approve conservation schedules and from which we receive records.

2. *Decentralized public sector* archives. The archives of some 2570 organisations from the health, social services, education, municipal and public transportation sectors which, under the provisions of the *Archives Act*, are responsible for preserving their own permanent archives. BAnQ is involved with the management of their records, but it is not directly involved with their ultimate fate.

3. *Private archives* acquired by BAnQ.

4. *Territorial presence*. BAnQ has 10 offices in different key regions in Quebec. Guided by the principle that archives established in certain regions are better suited to serve citizens if they remain in those regions, the Archives nationales de Québec are no longer only based in Quebec, but have also taken root in Montréal, Trois-Rivières, and other cities throughout the province of Quebec.

5. *Partnerships*. BAnQ and the archival community throughout Quebec actively embrace partnerships. We have many collaborators that play an important role in the constitution, preservation and enhancement of our archival heritage. An example of these contributors is the centralized and decentralized public sectors that create and manage documents bearing witness of the relationship between the state and its citizens. Another example are the 36 private archive services approved by BAnQ,[2] located in every region in Quebec, that oversee and maintain archival material. Furthermore, there are also historical societies and museums that actively upkeep their archives. We have partner organisations such as the Association des archivistes du Québec and the Réseau des archives du Québec, to name only a few.

6. The sixth and last front, *public access*, breathes life to archival documents and adds pertinence to their conservation.

So this is who we are. All of our actions are guided by these six fronts.

OUR FOUNDING PRINCIPLES – THE DOCUMENT, CORE OF OUR ACTIVITIES

Our way of approaching document and archive management, as well as its relationship to governance, is to place records and theirs uses at the heart of our practices. I will use the definition of the word "document" found in the *Act to establish a legal framework for information technology* (2001) since it is the definition the *Archives Act* uses.

- Information inscribed on a medium constitutes a document. The information is delimited and structured, according to the medium used, by tangible or logical features and is intelligible in the form of words, sounds or images. The information may be transmitted using any type of writing, including a system of symbols that may be transcribed into words, sounds or images or another system of symbols.[3]

Thus, when I speak of the document, I am dealing with EVERYTHING, analog as digital, because the BAnQ approach inserts it into a process of integrated document management (IDM). Let us remember that IDM is the management of all documents, regardless of the medium, throughout their life cycle. Let us remember as well that the document implicitly takes on the meaning of *records*, that is to say paperwork – active and semi-active – needed to conduct the business of an organization.

Let us recall also that the BAnQ philosophy in terms of the management of records and archives is rooted both in the European archival tradition, French in particular, and in the U.S. Records Management approach because its action are applied to the whole, intervening at all stages of life of the documents, thus accentuating an integrated approach.

One of the benefits of this approach is to consider the document in a wider spectrum than the information it contains by placing it in the context of the series, the fonds, but also of public administration. It is in the latter very broad context that the BAnQ's action is most critical.

From a document management perspective, public bodies are subject to a regulatory framework that includes

a law, regulation and policies adopted since 1983. These documents, under review, state administrative and economic objectives, obligations to which must comply departments and public bodies, methods to achieve this and finally the roles and responsibilities of those involved, including BAnQ. Some 30 years after their adoption, it is necessary to say that the BAnQ philosophy is well honed.

To complement the legislative and regulatory framework in which we operate, it is worth mentioning also that the *Act to establish the legal framework for information technology*,[4] our *Act respecting Access to documents held by public bodies and the Protection of personal information*[5] and its *Regulations on the dissemination of information and the Protection of personal information*,[6] require public bodies to produce and publish on their website the classification plan of their documents, with the aim of making them identifiable by citizens.

INTEGRATED DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Behind these disciplinary foundations, there is a broader reality that must put citizens' rights and the interests of our organizations at the center of our practice. It is in this bias that our profession merits its place as one of the best ways to ensure good governance. It is in this bias that our profession is positioned favorably for decision-makers and citizens.

It is in this bias, therefore, that we believe document management contributes to good governance of the State and organizations, most notably by allowing them to:

- conduct their business effectively by facilitating decision-making;
- ensure the continuity of their activities, including in the case of disaster;
- comply with legal and regulatory requirements, particularly in terms of access to information, privacy and accountability;
- assume their responsibilities towards citizens, their customers and their staff; and
- establish their archival heritage and thus preserve their individual and collective memory for the benefit, if any, to society.

To do so, our processes must:

- ensure early identification and use of documents, thus satisfying the administrative needs, enabling efficiencies and optimizing the delivery of services to citizens;
- maintain documents integrity and ensure their safety by controlling access;
- consequently promote both transparency and accountability so that citizens can assert their rights and organizations can protect their interests; and
- allow the establishment of a representative documentary heritage of Quebec society.

This systemic approach to integrated document management must be based – at all ages and for all information media – on recognized criteria of authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability of ISO 15489 norm, as well as any device that supports our practices. Our profession is now framed by a remarkably diverse set of standards that continues to expand. We must take advantage of this. It is sometimes easy to highlight their binding character while forgetting that each of these standards, applied with discernment and with the resources available to organizations, is a useful lever. Moreover, in the digital environment that has been ours for many years, this normative apparatus has become a necessity. Why? Simply because only a high degree of standardization enables management systems for documents and archives implemented in organizations to be reliable, honest, consistent and usable. In short, no standards, no IDM worthy of the name.

FOR THE FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION IN QUEBEC

BAnQ has undertaken a review of the *Archives Act* and its regulations consistent with the objectives, principles and means elaborated, marked by enhanced action on document management because it is there, upstream, right from the creation of documents that our profession takes its place in good governance.

As a result, we intend to give records managers of departments and agencies tools/levers that will enable them to meet the expectations in terms of good governance and constitution of the archival heritage.

These tools/levers will be:

- The inclusion of document management in a systemic approach based on the implementation of a *records management program* which we define as the "set of rules, procedures and tools to plan, design, organize, coordinate and monitor activities related to the creation, use, classification, preservation of documents necessary for the functioning of an organization";
- *Accountability of the highest authorities* in the departments and agencies to ensure that the document manager there is no longer isolated and often, admittedly, discredited; that this authority endorses the objectives of the records management program and that the necessary means to achieve these be made available;
- The establishment of *accountability* to do a regular assessment of the functioning of the records management program in departments and agencies; and
- *Gains in efficiency* in easing the burden and simplifying the work of departments and agencies, as well as the BAnQ through the extensive use of conservation schedules. Indeed since 1988 and together with clusters from different milieux, we have been producing conservation schedules, that is to say repositories grouping typical conservation rules applicable in a given sector. Decentralized public sector organizations, for example, no longer have to produce specific retention schedule if they observe the conservation rules of their sector. The authority responsible for the organization's document management program will have to ensure that this is done and will only have to submit the rules that differ from the Code. The efficiency gain will be considerable, both for organizations and for BAnQ, therefore releasing essential resources to operationalize the document management program in these organizations and others, at BAnQ, which will enable us to accelerate the development of projects and increase our advisory assistance.

CONCLUSION

The document manager and the archivist are key actors in governance. Legislative review underway in Quebec demonstrates this and seeks to assert it. Tomorrow as yesterday and today, our profession will be split between seemingly contradictory tendencies in its fields of action:

EFFICIENCY – HERITAGE CONSTITUTION

RIGHTS OF CITIZENS – INTERESTS OF ORGANISATIONS

ACCESS TO INFORMATION – PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

The document manager and the archivist are the guardians of the evidence. This is the key. There is hardly transparency and accountability without the documents that we manage.

Moreover, the examples that demonstrate this are legion. Think of the different "truth and reconciliation" programs that have been incepted since the model developed in South Africa by Archbishop Desmond Tutu after the end of apartheid, and now used everywhere. In Canada, there are those who are interested in victims of the religious communities who administered residential schools, schools and orphanages. There are also commissions of inquiry, including one that concerns the Quebec construction industry and which would not get such results without the documents that serve as evidence. There are also citizens who undertake action to enforce rights, or others who, having committed an offense, have been convicted, served their sentence and, having behaved as exemplary citizens, are "forgiven." These are just a few examples of the (discreet) role that managers of documents and archives play in acquiring, processing, preserving and making accessible documents whose administrative relevance decreases over the life cycle, but whose probative value persists even if they are mainly kept for their heritage value.

In our opinion, the process of integrating the management of the lifecycle in a program of integrated management is the solution of the future, combining our goals to the means supporting the governance of our organizations. BAnQ is also looking to set an example in adopting an integrated document management system and in changing its approach to managing its own administrative documents, with the aim to simplify, to empower creators and to prioritize file sharing between employees. BAnQ is also developing a system for managing conservation schedules, which will eventually allow for the direct interaction between records managers of public bodies and BAnQ archivists and then, hopefully, direct transfers into our management and archives dissemination software.

Our *Archives Act* of 1983 innovated by requiring public bodies to develop the essential tool for document management and archival heritage constitution, which is the conservation schedule. A complement to the *Act respecting Access to documents held by public bodies and the protection of personal information* passed in 1982, our law implied that organizations should build document management units. With the current revision of the *Archives Act*, we hope to go where few states, if any, have gone so far: the obligation to implement a records management program, a vital means for good governance of the State and for the exercise of democracy, because it assumes administrative transparency, and for the establishment of a representative heritage of the entire society.

BAnQ will seek specifically to empower records managers of departments and agencies. In doing so, we want to simplify our processes so that we can devote more time and resources to activities that will position them properly in their organizations, and through which they can express their leadership.

NOTES

1 Including departments, but excluding independent legislative bodies of the executive as is our tradition.

2 After the adoption of the *Archives Act* in 1983, BAnQ has implemented an accreditation program that allows archives, under certain conditions, to receive an accreditation and, thereby, to benefit from financial assistance.

3 Article 3, www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=/C_1_1/C1_1.html.

4 www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=/C_1_1/C1_1.html.

5 www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=/A_2_1/A2_1.html.

6 www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=3&file=/A_2_1/A2_1R2.html.