

SIUSA

Sistema Informativo Unificato per le Soprintendenze Archivistiche (Unified Information System for Record Office Superintendencies)

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ABSTRACT

What we present here is a conceptual model to manage a complete information system related to the archival material. The model is divided into two sections: the first for the archival heritage descriptions, the second for the archival heritage management. The two sections are physically and logically separated but they are linked together so that the same records can be described in two different ways: according to the Archival Bureau requirements and according to the international standard description: ISAD (G) – ISAAR (CPF). The system has been designed to map only the high level structure of the archival documentation, but it will be also able to link the analytic descriptions located on different archival systems in Italy. The aim of the project is to set up a Archival Description Distributed System for the

italian archival community and, at the same time, to store the old archival descriptions produced by the project *Anagrafe Informatizzata degli Archivi Italiani* during the last ten years.

KEYWORDS

Archival Information System, Archival Logic Structure, Distributed Information Access

INTRODUCTION

The proposed project has been developed by a team of the *Ufficio Centrale per i Beni Archivistici, Divisione III – Vigilanza* and aims at reengineering the national information system known as “Anagrafe informatizzata degli archivi italiani” for the part concerning the institutional functions of record office Superintendencies. The team, composed by members from the above mentioned office, as well as officials from both

Superintendencies and state Record Offices, is supported by members of the *Centro di Ricerche Informatiche per i Beni Culturali (CRiBeCu)* of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* in Pisa; the latter are responsible for analysing and developing the information system. After a long and careful analysis, a conceptual model of SIUSA has been defined. The model is divided in two separate areas: an administrative managerial area and a descriptive area. The two areas are physically and logically separate, though they can be linked together giving a twofold presentation of one and the same record, i.e. a brief presentation, as required by Superintendencies, or one based upon a standard model. The principle is to create a descriptive section to be accessed by external users, as well as an administrative managerial section for internal use of Superintendencies, i.e. to support them in quality of supervisors. In defining the structure of the descriptive section we have followed international standards, ISAD (G) and ISAAR (CPF), to present information; as to the administrative managerial section, in particular concerning the definition of preservation tasks, the directions contained in a law issued on October 29th 1999 (decree n. 490) in matter of cultural and environmental heritage have been accounted for.

DESCRIPTIVE AREA

Three objects form the main data bases of the system:

- Archive
- Keeper
- Creator

For ‘Archive’ we mean a consistent and homogeneous set of records; indeed, in line with the aims of the project, we have considered only the ‘higher’ levels

in the hierarchy of an archive such as fonds, subfonds, series, subseries. All descriptive information is presented according to ISAD (G) standard rules. In the ‘Keeper’ file information about the preservation of records that might be of help for the user consulting them has been gathered. Information regarding the ‘Creator’ is handled separately, in line with ISAAR (CPF) rules, and interrelated with the description of records.



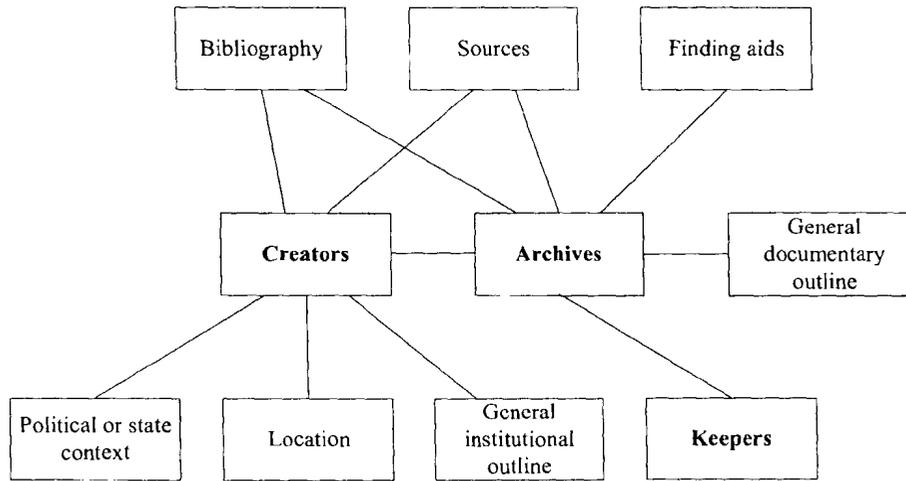
Besides these major entities, the descriptive section also contains files that are stored into ‘complementary’ data bases, completing the information about the sets of records and/or their creators, i.e.

- Finding aids
- Location (places of residence and/or existence)
- Political or state context
- General institutional outline
- Bibliography
- Sources
- General documentary outline
- Compiler of the description

All these objects form independent data bases that can be linked up with the help of defined relations; these relations can be of the one to many (1:n) or of the many to many (n:m) kind. To establish the connections – associations or relations – between different objects the system assigns a code (ID) to each so as to identify it in univocal manner.

The relations that can be established between the major objects of the system and the remaining data bases are

summed up in the diagram below:



ADMINISTRATIVE AREA

The administrative part of the system is divided into three main “complexes”:

- Archive controlled
- Owner
- Place of conservation

For “Archive controlled” we intend a set of records, identified and described in all its parts or only very briefly, subject to operations aiming at its preservation.

For “Owner” we intend people, families, public or private institutions who own, possess or keep records, with which Superintendencies interact in their activity of conservation and supervision.

For “Place of conservation” we intend the place where records are kept; in particular, the address as well as specific information about the exact “Location” are given, since several

archives may be kept in different rooms on one and the same premises: it is, therefore, essential to provide precise information on the place where records are actually stored. The place must fulfil certain technical requirements to be declared suitable for the preservation of records.

Besides these main objects, in the administrative area we find files forming “complementary” data bases that complete the information about Archive controlled, Place of conservation and Owner of the records. The system also makes it possible to provide information on the “Administrative persons”, i.e. staff or people who interact with the Superintendency on various grounds.

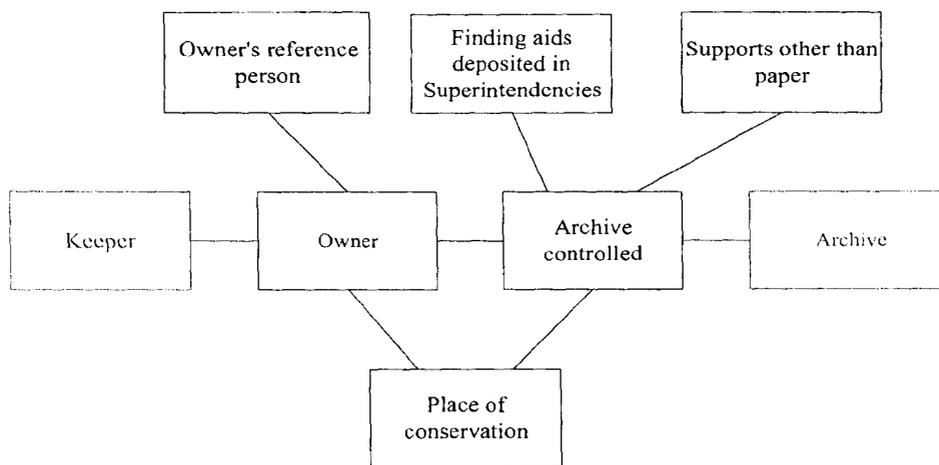
Moreover, the Owner file can be linked to the “Responsible”, identified on the basis of his/her personal data, who in some cases, particularly in large archives, may represent the liaison between Owner and Superintendency

and be directly in charge of the archive. The Archive controlled, on the other hand, may be linked up with two different data bases: the first containing a brief description of "Supports other than paper" of which it might be composed, the second describing the "Finding aids" deposited at the Superintendency.

Both Owner and Archive controlled, moreover, can be linked up to the descriptive area of the system: the Owner will be linked, when appropriate, with the corresponding Keeper; the Archive controlled will be linked with the Archive, usually at the highest level of hierarchy (fond): the description of

records according to standard rules can therefore be seen also from the administrative managerial area.

The described objects form independent data bases that can be jointed using defined relations. We have already mentioned the kind of links that may be established between different components of the system; here we simply sketch the possible links between objects of the administrative managerial area:



Besides all these entities, in the administrative area we may also register information that have been identified as fundamental for the tasks of survey and preservation performed by Superintendencies. We therefore call *Functions* the acts (of permission, assent or declaration) and the tasks

(inspections, interventions, controls) that derive or are part of the supervisory function according to current regulations and, in particular, to the directions issued by law 490/1999. The identified functions are suitably plotted and, when appropriate, linked up with other objects mentioned above,

according to whether the function is performed on Archive controlled, Place of conservation or Owner; each Function can be further linked to other Functions deriving from it.

The architecture of the system as a whole permits the organisation of a data base whose information is handled locally and that can also be consulted, entirely or only in part, via http; some of the recorded data, moreover, can be transmitted to the headquarters. For example: the information stored in the administrative area will help to manage the task of supervision within each single Superintendency and will, therefore, hardly be visible to the end user, though some of the data will necessarily form part of the periodical reports that Superintendencies have to produce to their Ministry.

As to the descriptive area, most of the information contained in it will have to be visible to the end user; this may be implemented either with systems spread over the territory or with a single centralised data base that receives only part of the data and links up with local systems. In the latter case we will have to determine kind and amount of centralised information: for this purpose suitable fields have been identified in the descriptive area providing standard

denominations and creating headings to access information.

Finally, we must point out that the SIUSA system allows only the description of higher level records (fonds or parts of these); other data bases (i.e. catalogues) have to be set up using different software tools. For this reason files contained in the archive should have a URL reference enabling the access to analytic descriptions of records, where there exist.

REFERENCES

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