The Archive of the University of Alcalá in relation to archives of other universities.

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Abstract

Este artículo trata sobre la situación del Archivo Universitario de la Universidad de Alcalá respecto al resto de universidades españolas. Su organización, servicios y recursos. Toma como punto de partida el Informe de la Conferencia de Archiveros de las Universidades Españolas de 2008.

Keywords

Spanish archivistics. Spanish archives. Academic archives. Archivistic sciences.

Introduction

This article analyses the situation of the Archive of the University of Alcalá (AUAH) and its context. It is based on a survey produced by the Conference of Archivists of the Spanish Universities (CAU).

Currently there are 74 Universities in Spain: 48 state universities; 24 private and 2 administered by the Ministry of Education. About 70% of them have an archive service (the average is higher in public than in private universities).

The University of Alcalá is representative of average medium-size public universities and has 3 campuses, 1,725 teachers, 790 services staff, and about 26,000 students.

In terms of figures, 63% of university archives started their activity after the University Reform Law (1983) that gave autonomy and a democratic organization both to public and private institutions. The AUAH began to work in 1983.

In terms of hierarchical level: about half of the archives in Spanish universities have the category of "services", whereas AUAH is kept as a plain "section". The CAU's advice is that the archives must have the category of services as the best pattern to achieve enough authority, visibility and autonomy to develop their functions.

AUAH follows the standard of being part of the Secretary General, although it reports to the Head Manager (Gerente). Fortunately, most university archives are not part of the library services anymore, because libraries have very different goals (study-research support versus record management). AUAH tries not only to be the keeper of the main institutional history sources but also to manage the whole lifecycle of records, supporting the administrative procedure. In fact, the service embraces all the aspects of any administrative procedure, given that it includes the General Registry Office (first step of the administrative procedure) and the Archive (last but not least stage of closed procedures), integrating all the stages of the administrative record.

Regarding its legal regulation: the position of any Archives service in its organization can be defined by seeing whether it appears in the main universities statutes. The Statutes of the University of Alcalá (Royal Decree 1280/1985) already included the Archive, as the following Statutes (Decree 221/2003 from the Direction Board), article 219 of wich defines the Archive's organization and functions. This rule has been developed with the Statute of the Archive, and some minor specific rules both for document loan and delivery.

The documentation managed by the AUAH is 98% administrative. Given how young our institution is (officially 1977), the oldest document would be from that date. However, there are some earlier records deposited by donation or inherited from older institutions such as the Normal School for Teachers or Labour University.

The volume of non paper formats increases slowly but steadily: photographic slides, digital video and pictures, electronic records, etc.

Resources

One of the latest CAU's reports shows clearly the lack of manpower. As mentioned above, the University of Alcalá is a suitable example of medium-size university. According to the findings of the Survey of Human Resources' detailed study on the needs of staff, the number of staff members should be multiplied by four to give the possibility to fulfill the service's goals.

Infrastructures: the AUAH has 5,500 linear footage of shelves, of which approximately 40% are free. This means that we will not have space worries for the next 10-15 years, taking into account the drop in document production because of growth in electronic records.

Services

Comparatively, the AUAH has a high number of enquiries (350) and document loans (600 a year). The measurement of these indicators needs to be more accurate in our unit service, because phone enquiries about the university or other departments are still not included.

The range of user type is not extensive: mainly administrative staff (90%), researchers (7%) and students (2%), but there are some outside enquiries as well.

The AUAH offers training courses for staff in charge of the office archives, grants students and organizes the workshop-school of new technologies.

The treatment of documents

The word "treatment" refers to a set of operations involved in working with archives, in particular their identification, organization, and description.

Most of the universities archives have worked hard to standardize the technical process. AUAH mainly follows the International Standard of Archival Description (ISAD-G) and ISO 15489 Information and Documentation.

The Description department has established the following instruments:
  – Control instruments: Transfer rules, Accessions register book, and the Classification schedule
  – Description instruments: Census guide, Archive's Guide, Inventory, Catalogues and Indexes.

All of them are already controlled by the Records Management Integral System.

One of the strongest points of the AUAH is the high rate of digitalization. This project started in the 90's and its result is more than 1 million of digital images of the most important records produced by our institution: minutes, bank accounts, budgets, covenants, etc. This huge quantity of digital records allows us an accurate and easier management, diffusion and conservation.

Appraisal & selection is other compulsory activity whose responsibility transcends the AU Direction. The AU Statutes set the Appraisal Commission, made up of archivists, teachers and researchers.

Cooperation

The AUAH is involved in several cooperative activities. It takes part in the CAU's Institutional Web Diffusion 2.0 Workshop. Also it stood as candidate both in the Increase Teams and Best Ideas contests for scale up procedures.

Besides, since 2007 it is cooperating to set up the Archive of the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua-Leon (UNAN-Leon) and University of Panamá.

Currently the most important challenge of the AUAH is building the Electronic Administration Project of the UAH, in which it is extensively involved.

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