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## RECPRO – developing a European records management programme

MARJO VALTONEN, CATHERINE HARE, PETER HORSMAN  
AND VOLKER SCHOKENHOFF

### Abstract

This article describes the genesis of a project to develop a European-wide curriculum for electronic records management and explains its aims and progress to date. It is jointly presented by the members of the project team who each represent an institution in Europe where archives and records management is taught.

### Introduction

RECPRO is a joint curriculum development project funded by the SOCRATES programmes of European Union. The project has two aims:

1. to devise an archives and records management programme by revising old and creating new course modules to take into account the current developments of information and communication technology and digitisation of information
2. to seek ways to integrate the curriculum development into current programmes in both archives and records management and information and library studies departments.

### Genesis and background to the project

The father of the original idea of Recpro project is Professor Pertti Vakkari from the Department of Information Studies at the University of Tampere. Professor Vakkari developed the idea when he was planning, in close cooperation with the Finnish National Archives Service, the general outline of the records management and archival programme for the Department of Information Studies in his institution. In May 1996 he

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wrote the application to get support from EU for this European curriculum project. Funding was allocated for a two year period and the initial meeting of the project team took place in Tampere in October 1997.

The point of departure for the project is the bringing together of the two main trends in the European information field: the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and the integration of information professions. The development of ICTs has challenged universities to restructure their curricula and to develop course modules to meet the new requirements.

In 1991 the EC in their report *Archives in the European Union* had recommended that educational expertise in electronic records management, which was spread across Europe, should to be brought together. Also the ERASMUS programme had designated library science, documentation and archiving as areas that needed to co-operate and work more closely together. A third element which added weight to the project proposal was a shortage of projects in the fields of documentation and archiving in the Inter-University-Cooperation Programmes.

The second main trend in the European information landscape is the merging of information professions. Development of information technology and information systems has resulted in the convergence of different information professions. This has made archivists, records managers, librarians and information officers aware of a common basic objective in their work: to facilitate access to information for the organisation they are serving. This development and shared recognition has caused the professions to unite in the search for common solutions to the problems of access to information. One result of this development is a wider acceptance of information management thinking as a framework for the integrating professions. The convergence of the professions has therefore created a need to combine the core qualifications of the professions in one curriculum.

#### Composition of the project team

With the University of Tampere (UTA), acting as the project co-ordinator, the three other partners: University of Amsterdam (UA)/Archiefschool, University of Northumbria at Newcastle (UNN) and Polytechnic/Fachhochschule of Potsdam (PP) were selected on the basis of their plans for restructuring or developing their archives and records management programmes, especially in the field of electronic records management.

University of Tampere is the leading university department of information and library studies in Finland. UTA is the first university in Finland to develop an extensive programme of records and archives management.

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The priority areas of UTA are information needs and searching, information retrieval and information management. All these support courses in electronic records management.

The University of Amsterdam is the only university department of Book and Information Science in the Netherlands. In collaboration with the Archive School in the Hague it has developed a Masters degree in Archival Science. The cooperation between the university and the archive school guarantees a high level of expertise in the education offered.

The University of Northumbria has offered an MA/MSc in Information and Records Management and an option in records management on the BA Information and Library Management degree and MA/MSc Information and Library Management since 1993. In 1996 it launched the first ever UK Masters in Records Management by Distance Learning. Of the four partners UNN represents the information and library science perspective.

The Faculty of Archives-Library-Documentation of the Polytechnic of Potsdam is the only institution with an integrated programme of library and information science with archival studies in Germany. The faculty specialises in information, library and archival sciences.

#### Who is who in the team

Catherine Hare of UNN has worked in a wide variety of types of library (including a year in Paris), ranging from a school library to University library and from a county library headquarters to a hospital library. Before joining UNN in February 1990, she was head of an information unit in the private sector working for a firm of economic consultants specialising in European Community affairs. Her professional interests lie in the field of information technology and its developments, information management and most recently records management. She is Course Leader for the Masters in Records Management by Distance Learning and is currently leading the FODL (Flexible, Open and Distance Learning) project to convert the course for electronic delivery. She is currently Chair of the Records Management Society of Great Britain, and joint editor of the *Records Management Journal*.

Peter Horsman has worked since 1981 in the National Archives in Netherlands. He has been involved in a variety of projects in the field of archival automation. He is also the chair of the International Council on Archives, Committee on Archival Automation. He has taught archival science at both the Netherlands Archives School and at the University of Amsterdam and in October 1998 joined the staff of the Archives School which has transferred to Amsterdam. Furthermore he has

worked as a consultant for the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations for which he prepared a system design for an electronic records management system as well as a project plan for development and implementation.

Peter Horsman's many-sided expertise and international experiences in designing record keeping systems are of great value to the project team.

Volker Schockenhoff is professor at the Polytechnic/Fachhochschule of Potsdam in the Faculty of Archives-Library-Documentation, in Germany. He is Professor of archival studies with his main teaching area being records management and documentation strategy as well as the present history of the communities and territories in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Marjo Rita Valtonen is a qualified archivist. Between 1977–1997 she worked in the Provincial Archives of Turku, Finland where she designed, developed and implemented courses in archival education and in user education and user service. Since Autumn 1997 she has worked as Senior Academic Assistant in the Department of Information Studies at the University of Tampere and has responsibility for records and archives studies.

#### Phase 1 – Development of draft curriculum

During the first phase between October 1997 and June 1997 the project team produced the framework for the draft curriculum. The starting points for planning the curriculum were:

- that the course must cover the whole of the records lifecycle/ records continuum
- that it should meet the needs of both archivists and records managers who would follow courses in either an archives or information and library studies department.

From these premises the curriculum proposed comprises three teaching areas:

- Teaching area 1 – Advanced archival theories related to electronic recordkeeping which explores how electronic records affect archival science but also how archival theory can be used to solve problems with respect to electronic records management
- Teaching area 2 – Information and communication technology in society focusing on the way in which ICTs impact on the nature of records

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- Teaching area 3 – Electronic recordkeeping which provides the solutions to records and archives keeping within the organisational context.

Each teaching area has been broken down into its component elements and for each element a description has been developed. The description establishes prior learning requirements and list learning objectives, a synopsis of content, a selected literature list with annotations, hours of study required, possible range of learning styles and assessment all within a standard template. The descriptions also indicate problems to solve e.g. contradictions in literature, no literature available and further comments based on experience of the project team. In addition a comprehensive literature list covering all three areas is being compiled.

#### Phase 2 – Evaluation programme

The next stage is to evaluate the course and this take place between October 1998 and June 1999 resulting in the final report of the project and the definitive curriculum.

Each of the project team will test the curriculum in their own institution as described below.

#### *Tampere*

Studies in information management constitute one of the core areas of research conducted in the Department of Information Studies. Now that there is a programme in archives and records management there is the need to study the role of records management – especially electronic record management – in document management, in information management and in knowledge management.

The content of the teaching units in the RECPRO plan are already at least in some way are part of Departments curriculum. Some units are easy to take with to the curricula as new ones, and some units need totally their own new courses.

There will be an extensive revision and renewal of the whole curriculum for the academic year 1999–2000. This revision then provides the ideal opportunity to integrate the programme the RECPRO team has designed.

#### *University of Northumbria*

The RECPRO curriculum will be evaluated within the context of the Masters in Records Management by Distance Learning for practising

records managers and the Masters in Information and Records Management for students who have chosen to embark on a career in information and records management. In these courses there is already a module which covers managing records in an electronic environment. This module is one of the pilot development areas for the FODL project which will thus provide to evaluate the RECPRO curriculum.

#### *University of Amsterdam*

The Netherlands Archiefschool (Netherlands Institute for Archival Education and Research) will evaluate the draft curriculum as a full 7 credits (280 hours of student workload) course at Amsterdam University between December 1998 and March 1999. The emphasis will be on teaching area 3 which is electronic recordkeeping. Where applicable, parts of teaching area 1 will be added. Most of teaching area 2 has already been covered by the Department of Information Science. The students will use the Internet to search for information sources. This approach fits into the University policy of teaching students to find their way independently as quickly as possible. Every week the students are given an assignment on a particular issue. The following week the outcomes of the assignment will be discussed with the lecturer concerned. It is intended to set up a dedicated web site for the course so that ideas can be exchanged and to establish links to other appropriate web sites

#### *FachhochschulePotsdam*

In 1993 Fachhochschule Potsdam introduced only the second course in Germany for archival studies. The intake each year constitutes 45 students of which 15 specialise in archives, 15 in library studies and 15 in information science. To keep pace with the developments in information and communication technologies, teaching staff have recognised the need to create new modules especially within the field of electronic records management. The curriculum developed by the project will provide the basis for these new modules.

#### Next stages to complete the project

The project outcome of the first year is a draft curriculum model for courses in electronic records management with descriptions of the teaching areas and teaching modules. Testing of the course units or at least parts of them is now going on in participating institutions as described above.

The International Council on Archives/Section for archival education and training (ICA/SEA) is also cooperating with the project. One of



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ICA/SEA's major concerns is to assist organisations in developing standard curricula for the education and training of archivists. The support of ICA/SEA means feedback and evaluation for the curriculum from a high level expert group in archival studies.

The project will test, evaluate and finalize the results during the next year. Feedback from ICA/SEA and from colleagues and students in each partner's institution will be handled in the meetings and necessary adjustment of the curricula model will occur before the final version is produced.

The final report of the RECPRO project will initially be presented at the last meeting in Tampere in summer 1999. During the course of phase 2 a programme for the wider dissemination of the curriculum will be developed and actioned by the project team.

### Conclusion

Prior to the first meeting in Tampere in October 1996 the members of the project team had never met. However from the very beginning the team developed a good working relationship and hopefully, through their co-operation and collaboration, have produced a curriculum which brings together their expertise and meets the needs of fellow archives and records management educators across Europe.

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