

THE ARCHIVAL HUBS

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Abstract. The intent of this paper is to introduce the Italian experience of the “archival hubs”, which may play a key-role in the pursuing of goals such as: preservation both of papers and digital records, sustainability, feasibility and the reduction of the costs of archive premises. Starting with the records held in the State Archives, the paper indicates how some previous initiatives of gathering different fonds might recall the idea of former archival hubs. Then, the recent steps officially and institutionally taken towards a national project are briefly shown, enlightening the innovative and positive involvement of different partners from the traditional ones, especially private partners. The Italian experience is studied through all the projects of archival hubs so far laid down, or already started. The final part points out the bright elements as well as what is still needed, in terms of cooperation, management and a deeper and more effective attention from the Government.

The idea of gathering archives together in order to protect them against loss and dispersion is an old and well-rooted one which, over the centuries and throughout the world, has produced collections of great value and importance. In Italy, one collection that is a paradigm of scale, historical range and amount of research carried out so far, is the *Archivi Notarili* [Notarial archives], precious records to be found in each of Italy’s State Archives. The very one preserved by the State Archives in Milan, for example, was formed in 1759, and contains records that date back to the thirteenth century.

The Milan case is not the only one, as it is not rare to find other State Archives which, in practice if not in theory, form what one might call “archival hubs” ahead of times as a result of their focus on the concentration and conservation of records. Indeed, a glance through the *Guida Generale degli Archivi di Stato* (General Guide of Italian State Archives) reveals that frequently a local *Archivio di Stato*, perhaps as the result of timely measures to protect and safeguard materials, brings together documents from Municipalities, as well as provincial authorities and other institutions operating within their area, both public and private.

The close link between the local *Archivio di Stato* and the territory where it is located, a territory whose past it is both custodian and designated preserver, has been gradually recognised and is today fully acknowledged. Therefore, it is easy to understand the strong relationship between the State archives and the various municipal and other local authorities, as the latter have received precious support from the former concerning the preservation and promotion of their fonds through exhibitions, conferences and publications.

An important example of a territorial archival hub is the Archivio di Stato in Cremona¹, which holds material dating back to the eight century (occupying 9 linear kilometres of shelving) in addition to the archives from many offices linked to the surrounding territory. More specifically, the archives of the Comune di Cremona, with their 1.000 linear metres of papers, are undoubtedly the most important fonds, and the core of the documentation preserved within the archive. However, together with the aforementioned fonds, there are also the numerous papers from the Ala Ponzone family (after whom the Museo Civico is named) and the archive of the Provincial Government of Cremona, from 1865 to 1935.

Now, speaking of thematic hubs, it is necessary to mention the territorial network of the archives belonging to the *Istituto Nazionale per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione in Italia* (National Institute for the

History of the Liberation Movement in Italy) and the various other institutions concerned with the history of the Resistance and the contemporary age. The historic core of the records is formed by the archives put together by the regional sections of the National Liberation Committee, political parties and movements, trade unions and partisan groups. Here one should mention the *Istituto per la Storia dell'Età Contemporanea* (ISEC, Institute for the History of Contemporary Age), a non-profit social organisation (ONLUS) since 2002. The Institute aims at guaranteeing the collection, preservation, organisation and ready consultation of the documents which make it possible to chart the social, political and economic life of contemporary Italy. Over the years it has collected a substantial body of documentation from industrial companies (occupying about 4,000 metres of shelf space), which includes administrative papers, technical designs and precious *libri matricola* (registers of employees) relating to individual workers.

Another significant example is Milan's *Centro per la Cultura d'Impresa* (Centre for Enterprise and Business Culture), which might be classified as both a thematic hub concentrating on economic material, and a territorial collection. Set up in 1991 with the main purpose of preserving and exploiting documentary material received from its own associates or donated by other archives, the Centre also aims at promoting a spirit of enterprise, setting up territorial and economic archives, establishing museums of business activities, training those who might operate in its own specific cultural field and finally publishing the results of its own activities.

A rather original "thematic hub" is the *Archivio Diaristico* (Diary Archive) in Pieve Santo Stefano outside Arezzo, which was founded in September 1984 by Saverio Tutino with the aim of collecting together and preserving autobiographical writings by private individuals. All in all, its collections now contain 900 autobiographies, 2,300 memoirs, 1,287 diaries and more than 400 other files – all of which is increased every year thanks to the materials sent to the annual *Premio Pieve* (Pieve Award).

A comparable collection is the *Archivio di Scrittura Popolare* (Archive for Vernacular Writing) within Trento's Museo Storico², which holds texts of vernacular origins. This is now a key centre for the evaluation of methodologies to be applied in the examination of letters, diaries and memoirs dating back to Italy's colonial wars and the First and Second World War.

All of the above, plus other similar institutions throughout Italy, have the goal of preserving resources which are neglected and yet extremely precious. As a matter of fact, such "hubs" have formed a real alternative to the traditional and well known State Archives, most of which are bursting with fonds and, in many cases, can no longer even receive the documents they are entitled to collect from the local agencies of the State administration.

In this situation of limited resources and inadequate or insufficient premises, the first National Conference on Archives – held in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato (Rome) in 1998 – was a major moment in the discussion regarding several issues such as: records management, digital preservation and the need to involve as many partners as possible, both public and private, which perform a considerable role alongside the State. They include: the *Associazione Nazionale dei Comuni Italiani* (ANCI, National Association of Italian Municipalities); the body which coordinates action by Italy's regional authorities; la *DigitPA Ente nazionale per la digitalizzazione della pubblica amministrazione* (the DigitPA, National Agency for the Digitization of Public

Administration); il *Garante per la protezione dei dati personali* (the Italian Data Protection Authority); l'*Associazione archivistica ecclesiastica* (the Church Archive Association); l'*Unione delle Comunità ebraiche italiane* (the Union of Italian Jewish Communities); l'*Associazione delle istituzioni di cultura italiane* (the Association of Italian Cultural Institutions); *Confindustria* (the Confederation of Italian Industry) and the various Italian Chambers of Commerce.

Still, decentralised initiatives, whether local or private, cannot entirely replace the State's institutional role, even when praiseworthy and innovative.

More than ten years later, the then Director-General of the State Archives, Luciano Scala, responded to a feeling widely shared by Italian archivists to keep assessing the current state of national archives. He brought to the attention of the scholarly community the various projects, critical situations and prospects for the future which were caused by the profound changes in institutions, technology and norms that had taken place since that first conference. The scientific programme of the second Conferenza Nazionale degli Archivi – held in Bologna in 2009 – was the result of a taskforce of representatives from archives administration and regional governments. It focused on the setting-up of archival hubs that would bring together territorial authorities and private bodies, and the definition of new strategies for archive premises and repositories.

The legal background was the drawing-up of the *Testo Unico sulla documentazione amministrativa* (Consolidated Law on Administrative Records), in addition to the *Codice in materia di protezione dei dati personali* (Data Protection Code) and the *Codice dell'amministrazione digitale* (E-Government Code). These changes in regulations and norms had an impact on the existing social and cultural structure, which was also influenced by other changes: the increase in the number of supervised archives; the extended role of regional authorities in the development of historical research, the emergence of new cultural agents, and first and foremost the strong recognition that the value of historical sources does not derive from the juridical status of those who had produced or stored it.

Then a taskforce named *Fare Poli* (Creating Hubs) was set up in order to study archival hubs – and define their aims and nature. In fact, it specified that

“The expression “archival hub” is used to define any structure in which the functions of the preservation, management, promotion and communication of ‘historical memory’³ is performed through cooperation between institutions, either with regard to a specific territory or a specific theme [...].

“Due to their joint and multilateral nature, deeply rooted within specific territorial contexts, territorial archival hubs can combine their principal tasks of conservation and cataloguing with activities that aim to exploit historical sources and thus nurture knowledge of history (for example, through the direct management of workshops for restoration or digital reproduction, as well as the creation of teaching and exhibition spaces).

“Finally, such territorial archival hubs can become points of reference for archives currently in the process of being established and for the application of the E-Government Code.

“A necessary condition for the establishment and correct functioning of such territorial archival hubs is the availability of functional, secure and economical archive premises. In its turn, if this condition is to be met, it requires the assertion of new guidelines with regard to archive premises and the use of resources destined for such conservational facilities.”⁴

This is, therefore, an innovative project of enormous importance that will not only have a great effect upon the traditional organisation of Italian archives, but will also lead to inter-institutional cooperation, which

is essential in a period of substantial reductions in the funding for the preservation of documents and the training and hiring of the staff. The attempt to find territorial solutions that require the active involvement of all the various bodies directly involved in the preservation of historical memory will, however, need measures to overcome that deeply-rooted tradition which leads each and every institution to see itself as a thing apart and thus resist changes.

The first step in this new direction was outlined during the course of the second *Conferenza Nazionale degli Archivi* (National Conference on Archives). On that occasion, a draft document was signed (March, 25th 2010) for the creation and promotion of the SAN - Sistema Archivistico Nazionale (National Archival System).⁵ In this, the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, the Autonomous Regional and Provincial Governments of Trento and Bolzano, the Union of Italian Provincial Governments (UPI) and the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) agreed to work together “to promote and support the conservation of the national archive heritage, ensure its management and archival description and also guarantee the best conditions of use and public enjoyment.”⁶

This is not the place to analyse the SAN, in its purposes, cooperative organization and coordination, as it would deserve. What is important here, is to point out the explicit programmatic intent of the agreement with regard to archival hubs, as shown in the following passage of the draft:

“The archival hubs are to be organisational bodies responsible for the management of archival structures and services in accordance with the aims set down in the present Agreement. They can involve other public bodies and institutions as well as the private bodies indicated in art. 2, section 2.”⁷

In order to meet such objectives – and guarantee uniformity of approach, with full cooperation between the various bodies involved – a *Joint National Coordination Committee* and *Joint Technical /Scientific Committee* were set up for a period of four years.

The aim of the agreement is to unify the numerous different projects launched in the recent decades – projects which are a clear reflection of the extreme vitality and variety of our territorial context. One new feature that should be underlined is the opening of the initiative to private institutions, which henceforward will be able to play a role of recognised importance. It was also envisaged that the creation of such archival hubs might draw upon the participation of various bodies that “possess or hold particularly important historical archives, with special focus on universities and cultural institutions.”⁸

The agreement was followed by the drafting of covenants, projects and various other agreements in different parts of Italy, which were then announced in 2011 at a conference held on occasion of the opening of the new premises of the State Archives in Pescara. This paper intends to examine just a few initiatives, which bear concrete witness to the vitality and potential that such archival hubs represent, reflecting possible solutions to the complex theme of the ‘preservation of historical memory’.⁹

THE STATE PROPERTY AGENCY. After the financial acts of 2007 and 2008, which required the reduction of public costs through the strict rationalization of economic resources, one of the institutions

called to monitor the use of its premises, was the State Property Agency. The result was the decommissioning of those properties that were no longer necessary to the needs of the Agency, which also started to examine the State-owned properties for government use, in order to stipulate rental or purchase contracts with third parties. At the moment, such actions have resulted in an annual saving of around 70 million euros.

THE REVENUE AGENCY. The 1996 tax reform aimed at strengthening the action of the administration towards individual taxpayers, organising the revenue service in “agencies”, which brought together in modern integrated offices all the old revenues offices that had previously been divided according to the different types of taxation (income tax, VAT, stamp duty, etc). Logistically speaking, this resulted in a radical simplification, with 384 combined offices replacing the previous 1.042. Furthermore, the quite remarkable real estate costs resulting from the storage and conservation of paper documentation was, from 2003 onwards, cut back thanks to a project for the creation of a single Document Management Centre, which will be supported by a Centre for the Digital Preservation and a single System of Document Management. Set up on the bases of criteria laid down in the E-Government Code, both centres aim at providing the Agency’s offices with the instruments necessary for efficiency in records management in accordance with their own methods of operation. The adoption of an integrated system, which covers the entire process of documentation, has a direct impact upon the transparency, speed and correctness of the administration’s response to queries and applications from private individuals and companies.

So far, the project has resulted in the transfer of around 4,100,000 files, of which 2,000,000 have been disposed by destruction in full respect of the law – that is, around 60% of the total; all of this has been done in collaboration with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities.

THE TERRITORIAL AGENCY. In December 2011¹⁰ the archives of the Territorial Agency occupied a total of 216 buildings – all in all, 554,000 square metres, of which 68% were used for office space and 32% to store archives. The cost of running such buildings was estimated at around 73 million euro, of which 23 million regarded the archives, a high cost caused by the maintenance and management of the buildings, which were either unsuitable or historic, and still working for the completely meeting of the standards of security and environmental health. A significant initiative was the campaign for the scanning of cadastral documents, already functioning in the ‘90s and accelerated in 2010, to the point that it is estimated that soon all original land maps will be available. Over time there has been a “natural” reduction in the tendency to consult papers, with a drop of some 40% in the three-year period 2008-2011. The year 2010 also saw the launch of a project to “rationalise and computerise archives”, which aimed at coordinating and reinforcing initiatives inspired by the general goal of streamlining the organisation of archives and records management. By 2013 the project envisages the removal of existing physical archives from their premises, the digital acquisition of some 170 million images and initiatives to reinforce and increase the discarding of paper archives through the development of protocols for such procedures (to be decided together with the Head Office of Archive Administration).

THE MINISTRY FOR ENVIRONMENT, TERRITORY AND SEA. Since 2010 The Ministry has been working on the “definition and implementation of measures for increased efficiency and energy savings”¹¹ within museums and monumental/archaeological sites of particular importance that are either owned or run by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and located in Southern Italy. The aim is to meet the energy outlines 2.2 and 2.5 of the Interregional Operation Programme entitled “Renewable Energies and Energy Savings”, an energy policy which will ensure a 20% reduction in current trends in energy consumption and greenhouse-gas emissions. The main goals are: reductions in energy consumption for heating and air-conditioning, the use of locally available renewal energy sources to meet part of the energy needs, improvements in the running, supervision and maintenance of energy-powered plant in order to maximise its efficiency. With regard to money saving on rents, a remarkable achievement has certainly been the use of real estate confiscated from organised crime.

THE NEW PREMISES OF THE STATE ARCHIVES IN L'AQUILA. The sad event of the violent earthquake which hit L'Aquila and its surrounding area on April 6th2009, causing loss of life and enormous damage to property, is well known.

The recovery of the oldest and most important material within the State Archives took place on 9-10 April, thanks to special squads of archivists and members of the National Fire Corps and Civil Protection; the material was then temporarily housed in the Sulmona State Archive. A building in the area of industrial development of Bazzano was then rented. This made it possible for services to the public to reopen quickly (in June 2009), as well as supplying spaces for the provisional storage of fonds both local and from other bodies within the afflicted territory (for example, the *Deputazione Abruzzese di Storia Patria* and its library).

THE URBINO ARCHIVAL HUB. The year 2007 saw the first steps towards drawing up a project for territorial development, together with measures necessary to safeguard, reorganise and describe fonds.

The collections identified in the project subscribed two years later were: the Municipal Historic Archive, the University Archives, the archives of the *Istituti Riuniti di Assistenza e Beneficenza* (“Joint Welfare and Charity Institutions”), which included the documents from the archive of the *Congregazione di Carità* and the Archive of the *Cappella Musicale Santissimo Sacramento* di Urbino.

PARMA'S CITTADELLA DEGLI ARCHIVI. The City Council has decided to create a complex of buildings to be known as *La Cittadella degli Archivi*. A single archival hub, this “citadel” is intended to house all the archives that had previously been spread over a number of premises, irrespective of the various creators of such funds. The new spaces will be designed to be compatible with technologically advanced systems of archive storage and consultation.

THE NEW PREMISES OF THE STATE ARCHIVES IN PESCARA. In 2010 it was decided that the new premises of the State Archives in Pescara would be located in the *Aurum* complex within the Pineta Dannunziana Nature Reserve. The structure had been redeveloped in 2003 as a modern and rational space, a “polyfunctional container of cultural activities” whose design was predicated upon the need “to maintain the

original physical and architectural character whilst also providing them with technological facilities that made it possible to meet modern functional requirements”.

THE LOMBARD ARCHIVAL HUB IN MORIMONDO. With remarkable speed, after the choice of the location for the *Nuovo Deposito Archivistico* (New Archival Hub), this was opened on December 19th 2011. The premises chosen were a former precious metals factory, FRM (*Fabbriche Riunite Metalli in Foglie e in Polvere*, Joint Factories of Metals in Sheets and Powder), which had gone bankrupt in 2008. The lease on the property is a renewable one lasting six years. The aim was to transfer to Morimondo all fonds from the principal local offices of the State. These fall into three types: material that has already been digitised (for example, various series of cartographical sources), material that has not yet been described, or is not yet open for public consultation according the law.

THE CATANZARO ARCHIVAL HUB - THE FORMER CITY SLAUGHTERHOUSE. The hub premises chosen in Catanzaro involved the redevelopment of the former slaughterhouse, in the centre of the city, leased from the City Council for thirty years. As part of the agreement, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities undertook the necessary restructuring work. A point of reference for the surrounding territory, the hub will promote periodic teaching activities and other initiatives aiming to exploit the archive material it houses.

ARCHIVAL HUBS IN THE REGION OF CAMPANIA. In its centuries-long history, Castel Capuano has been a Norman castle, a Swabian fortress, an Aragonese palace and then served as Neapolitan courthouses; after these latter were transferred to the new Court Complex in Naples, the structures were gradually left unused. As the State Archives in Naples could no longer house new material, the current and semi-current records from the Naples court offices have ended up being stored in unsuitable premises. This situation will be remedied by the Castel Capuano hub, where the documents will be divided between two large complexes: one housing the non-current archives (from 1809 to c. 1940), the other the semi-current and current archives (from 1940 onwards), which will contain the material not yet housed in the State Archives.

THE POLLIO BARRACKS IN CASERTA. The need to transfer the State Archives in Caserta from rented premises in an apartment building was met by the decision to move to a former barracks, which underwent structural consolidation a few years ago. However, shortage of funds has prevented the carrying-out of other necessary renovation and the building today is in a need of extensive structural repairs and refurbishment. These will now be carried out thanks to the State Property Agency, whose collaboration is the result of an application from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities.

THE FORMER TOFANO BARRACKS IN NOCERA INFERIORE. A decommissioned building belonging to the Ministry of Defence, the Tofano Barracks was the largest of the cavalry barracks which the monarch Charles III, of the House of Bourbon, had built in the mid-eighteen century. It is a three-storey building whose structure is almost square, and is surrounded by a large courtyard. Well located in the centre of Nocera Inferiore, it will benefit from cost-efficient refurbishment to bring it up to functional standards, having been selected as the premises for the Campania-Basilicata interregional archival hub.

PALO DEL COLLE. The town of Palo del Colle was chosen at the site of the joint hub for Puglia, Campania, Calabria and Sicily in order to house the semi-current records of the local offices of the Ministry of the

Interior and the non-current records of other State offices for which there is, at the moment, no space in those State Archives which detain the territorial jurisdiction. It is also to hold documents from the State Archives in Bari that are at present housed through outsourcing storage (with considerable expense to the archive administration).

THE CELESTINE MONASTERY IN BARLETTA. The former Monastery of the Order of St. Lazarus (subsequently, the Monastery of the Holy Trinity and later taken over by the Celestines and the Fatebenefratelli, i. e. the Hospitaller Order of St. John of God) ultimately became the Stennio Barracks. This former religious building will become the premises of the Barletta State Archives, a separate section of the State Archives in Bari. The structure was originally built in the twelfth century to house and treat lepers, before becoming military premises. The demolition which the structure underwent in 1964 was, fortunately, only partial.

THE ARCHIVAL HUB FOR EASTERN SICILY IN CATANIA. This hub is to house the archives created both by State local institutions and other institutions, the funds from the State Archives in Caltanissetta, Catania, Caltagirone, Enna, Messina, Ragusa and Siracusa, as well as the archives of the Catania court offices, those from the provincial government and any other body that might request such a service. Market research is at present underway to select an existing (or yet to be built) structure with a floor space of around 5,000 square meters that can be leased and used to store records and files.

THE ARCHIVAL HUB OF WESTERN SICILY IN PALERMO. A complex of industrial buildings in Palermo has been selected to house the funds from the State Archives in Palermo, Agrigento and Trapani; it comprises various industrial premises confiscated from organised crime. In 2011 the Directorate-General of Archives required that these buildings were assigned the national archival administration. The proposal would result in a significant saving especially because it would also allow the State Archives in Palermo to leave the present premises of Termini Imerese.

THE VERONA ARCHIVAL HUB. The hub will house the new premises of the Verona State Archives and archive deposits from offices in other areas of the Veneto. It will be built in an abandoned site opposite the current one of the Verona Trade Fair, in a complex that was formerly used as granaries and consists of various historic warehouses and cold-storage units. The redevelopment of the structure has maintained certain specific features such as the large doorways and the loading bay openings.

THE VENICE ARCHIVAL HUB. At the time of writing, the restoration of the monumental premises on the isle of Giudecca is about to be concluded. Meanwhile, the new premises in the Pertini district of Mestre are being built. There it will be finally possible to provide adequate accommodation for the nineteenth and twentieth-century archives relating to the Veneto, as well as for twenty-first-century records. It is envisaged that the premises will serve Venice and the archives in other areas of the Veneto (Padua in particular).

THE ARCHIVAL HUB OF THE PROVINCE OF ROVIGO. The State Archives and Provincial Archives in Rovigo are considering three possible solutions: the installation of new State Archive premises in the Rovigo Trade Fair area (a plan which has substantial economic advantages); the creation of new State Archive premises in a structure to be built *ex novo* near the train station; the refurbishment of the very sizeable former Sanatorium.

THE TRENTO ARCHIVAL HUB. In 2011 a preliminary study was launched to look at the feasibility of creating a single archival hub for the documents from the Provincial Government offices and from the local State offices. The bodies concerned are: Patrimonio del Trentino SpA (a company in which the Provincial government has a share) and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities - Head Office of Archive Administration. The aim is to conserve both provincial and State records attracting the interest of the Land Registry Office, the INPS and the INPDAP (both national insurance agencies) and the Fondazione Kessler.

THE ARCHIVAL HUB IN MOLISE. Available public premises have been identified as the ones which could provide suitable accommodation for several funds. They are: the State Archives in the area of Termoli, the archives of public (though not State) bodies, the archives of the towns within the Basso Biferno association of municipalities, the municipal archives of Termoli itself, and various school and educational archives that risk being split up. The premises need structural work as well as the refurbishment of all facilities in order to bring them up to current legal requirements.

THE ARCHIVAL HUB OF THE PROVINCE OF CUNEO. The State Archive in Cuneo is soon to be housed in its new premises in the former Cesare Battisti barracks. Due to its architectural layout and functional features, the structure is particularly suitable for exhibitions and other promotional/educational activities.

THE ARCHIVAL HUBS OF EMILIA ROMAGNA. In collaboration with the Regional Archival Department, the regional government has focused its attention upon drawing up a number of norms that provide guidelines for the various bodies involved and promote shared practices for the correct exploitation of cultural heritage. Furthermore, the data produced by more than twenty years of work cataloguing around 200 archive fonds (largely through the use of program Sesamo) has been recovered.

Important bodies here are the *Istituto per I Beni Culturali dell'Emilia Romagna* (Institute for Cultural Heritage in Emilia Romagna) and *Polo Archivistico Regionale dell'Emilia Romagna* (the Emilia Romagna Regional Government's "ParEr" project). The latter aims at being "the point of reference for the public administration in Emilia Romagna with regard to the conservation and management of digital archives, and every digital object that contributes to the innovation and simplification of public administration."¹²

Among the main projects there are: *Una città per gli archivi* (A City for the Archives), with the purpose of preserving and promoting archival resources, and *Archivi-a-MO*, focusing on the exploitation of the nineteenth and twentieth century non-current archives relating to Modena and the surrounding territory.

As for the archival hub in Reggio Emilia, this shall be located in the city centre, in the old San Domenico cloisters. Its aim is to be the instrument that enables the Reggio Emilia city administration to conserve and protect its substantial heritage of material in such a way that it is available for consultation by scholars and any citizen who wishes to study the resources of local history.

Conclusion. This examination makes it clear that the decisive impulse to set up archival hubs comes from the highest levels of the Directorate-General of Archives, addressing the needs of both public institutions and private individuals. During a meeting of the National Coordination Committee of the SAN on June 23rd, 2011, the Director-General Luciano Scala pointed out:

“[Archival hubs] have enormous potential, offering sizeable opportunities for the provision of new public services and the generation of new economies of scale. Various experiments in this field have been launched, and it has all been less difficult than one might have thought, because the proposals have attracted great collaboration from the various interlocutors involved. It seems fair to say that these first successes are only the beginning of a new direction in the archive sector. Take one of the most problematic issues to be tackled, security in archives: with agreement and collaboration between the various bodies involved, it shall be likely to find important solutions to this question.”

Security – together with the archive administration’s awareness of the prohibitive costs of renting/leasing premises – has triggered these important processes of change.

Another very important consideration is that new norms regarding safety and security mean that many rented/leased buildings fail, either completely or in part, to meet legal requirements. What will happen then when the contracts on such premises come to an end? It is clear that the administration cannot renew the lease on a property that does not meet these requirements. However, it is not clear that the various owners of these properties will be willing or able to take on the expense of bringing such large structures up to current standards.

Furthermore, the era of costly refurbishments is now over. Nowadays, solutions lie in identifying, at all levels, possible allies that, for institutional reasons or simply to make a profit, are interested in joining with archive administration to “form a single system”. However, I myself still have one deep-seated doubt regarding an issue that was itself raised at the Pescara conference. True, in the absence of legislation regarding archive premises and construction – legislation for which the need has long been felt – the current approach to archival hubs seem to be the most suitable response to the existing situation. However, why pay rent to private individuals without being able to build such hubs oneself where necessary? The regulations that prevent such construction should be changed, for there is no doubt that in the medium-long term our Nation would save money.

All websites have been last accessed on June, 10th 2012.

¹ I would like to thank Angela Bellardi, Director of the State Archives in Cremona, for the data supplied. I would also like to thank dr. Vincenza Petrilli, from the State Archives in Milan, for her help with the editing and proof-reading of this text.

² www.trentinocultura.net/catalogo/beni_cult/scritt_pop/scritt_pop_ind.asp.

³ I would solely like to add at this point that one of the positive goals envisaged for the hubs is the presence of all functions within a single site. Indeed, the agreement between MiBAC, the autonomous regions and provinces of Trento and Bolzano, the Union of Italian Provinces (UPI) and the National Association of Italian Town Councils (ANCI) gives the “joint management of structures” as the main feature of archival hubs (see below). The final draft of the document quoted can be found on www.conferenzanazionalearchivi.it/documenti/CNA2009_DocumentoGeneraleFinale.pdf.

⁴ Text from the Second National Archive Conference, 2009.

⁵ Based upon articles 9, 117 and 118 of the Italian Constitution, upon the law decree number 42 of 22nd, January 2004 (Code regarding the Cultural and Environmental Heritage) – with particular reference to articles 6, 102, 112 *et seq.* – and upon the agreement stipulated at the State and Regions conference of 27 March 2003 – the agreement responds to various guidelines formulated in recent years by the European Union with regard to archives.

⁶ *Accordo per la promozione e l'attuazione del Sistema Archivistico Nazionale*, art. 1, also available online at www.conferenzanazionalearchivi.it/documenti/CNA2009_AccordoPromozioneAttuazioneSAN.pdf.

⁷ *Ibidem*, art. 3.

⁸ *Ibidem*, art. 2.

⁹ The data presented in this part are largely taken from the document *I Poli Archivistici*, kindly made available during the meeting of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the SAN on June, 23rd 2011. I would like to thank Luciano Scala, Director General of Archives, Michele Durante and Luigia Cera for making it available to me.

¹⁰ I would like to thank Carlo Bonetti for the data supplied.

¹¹ As it is written in the “Programmatic Agreement” signed by the Sustainable Development Department within the Ministry for Environment, Territory and Sea and the Directorate-General for the Organisation, General Affairs, Innovation, Budget and Personnel¹¹, then headed by the architect Antonietta Pasqua Recchia.

¹² Gabriele Bezzi, *ParE-R Polo archivistico regionale dell'Emilia Romagna*, available on line at: forges.forumpa.it/assets/Speeches/2790/1427_gabriele_bezzi.pdf.