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<b>Author:</b>	InterPARES Trust Project
<b>Writer(s):</b>	Tove Engvall, Victor Liang, Karen Anderson
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## **The role of the archivist and records manager in an open government environment in Sweden**

This is a complementary study to Research Project 03 “The role of the records manager in an open government environment in the UK”.

### **Introduction**

By tradition the archival and records management profession has played a central role in citizens’ access to public records. Management frameworks, praxis and guidelines have been developed to ensure the records’ authenticity, reliability and trust and that sensitivity concerns are taken into account. But as we’re heading towards an open government there is a need to reconsider what is needed from the profession to ensure these values in a new context. Expectations of a more proactive release of public records and technical developments that support new ways of publishing and reusing digital information, for example as open data on the internet, create new challenges and change the way public records are managed and made accessible to citizens, which will also involve new professions in the management of records. Fundamentally this raises questions of how, in this new management environment, the trustworthiness of the records can be maintained and how the archival and records management profession can contribute to this, related to other professionals involved in this processes; but also in a more profound way, how the issue of trust is viewed in this new context.

In Sweden there is a long tradition of openness and citizens’ right to access public records. But with the implementation of e-government, a new perception of what openness means is developing and “open government” is a concept that seems to go further and be more proactive. A part of this study will be to analyze and define what is meant by “open government” and “open data” as they are used in Sweden. In Sweden there is no formal profession of records manager, but the archivist often undertakes the corresponding work. That is why this project also includes the archivists’ role in the open government environment.

### **Aim of the study**

The aim of this study is to consider the role of the archivist/records manager in the open government environment, in the context of new expectations and demands on access to public records, for example as open data. The study will seek to identify what competencies are needed for the profession in the future, by drawing on experiences from an existing project on open data. The study will concentrate on the situation as it is in Sweden.

### **Research questions**

1. What role does the archivist/records manager currently have in managing open data?
2. What knowledge, skills and competencies are needed?
3. What role, responsibilities and mandate would be preferable?
4. What guidelines and strategies are needed?
5. Other important or interesting issues raised in the interviews?

## Key words

records manager, archivist, records managers' role, archivists' role, records manager and open government, archivist and open government, open access, open data, open government.

## Methodology

### Choice of method – case study

To get an understanding of these questions, interpretation of existing work and the perception of the situation by practicing records managers/archivists would be valuable, which is why a case study was used as the method. The case chosen was a big municipality in Sweden, chosen for its progressive work on open data. The municipality runs an open data project, in which the municipal archive plays an active role. This will provide an opportunity to explore what role the archivist/records manager has in practice, experiences they bring, possible needs and missing factors. Data was collected through interviews and analysis of documents.

### Research Design

The case will be limited to the work on open data, which will include different roles and functions in the organization, as well as certain documentation.

### Interviews

One person, an archivist, was a primary source of contacts, and in our initial meeting contributed to the planning and suggestion of whom to contact. The people that were chosen have been involved in the work on open data and represent different professions and organizational functions. People from the following functions have been interviewed: the municipality archive, IT-department, the Deputy Major, the political leadership, the PSI-lab<sup>1</sup>, information security and external stakeholders.

The analysis of the interview data mainly involved addressing the five research questions: (1) What role does the archivist/records manager currently have with managing open data? (2) What knowledge, skills and competence are needed? (3) What role, responsibilities and mandate would be preferable? (4) What guidance in the form of guidelines and strategies are needed? (5) Any other important/interesting issues raised in the interview? The interview data that addresses these questions are provided below, followed by a discussion of the data.

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<sup>1</sup> Stockholms stad. Stadsledningskontoret. IT Avdelning. [Stockholm City. Executive Office. IT Department] (2012) *Förslag till genomförande av Open Stockholm Award 2014 [Proposal for the implementation of the Open Stockholm Award]*. 13 November 2012. Diarienummer 033-1282-2012.

## Related research

When thinking of the archivist's/records managers' role in open government, there are different practical and theoretical areas to explore.

## Practical context

When discussing the archivist's role in an organization, it is also relevant to consider how records management and archival work are valued in organizations and society at large. Unfortunately, records management and archives are not the top priority in many government organizations (Millar, 2003) despite their important roles in organizations and society, which is something that authors often point out (Svärd, 2014; Eastwood, 2006; Cunningham & Phillips, 2005; Millar, 2003). Millar (2003) stresses the importance of record keeping for the protection of citizens' rights, and that without the creation, protection and dissemination of reliable records, the governments are unable to meet the citizens' demands for effectiveness, openness and accountability. Svärd (2014) asserts that for public sector organizations to meet the demands from citizens for effective services, there has to be a "robust and effective information management" (Svärd, 2014, p. 6). Eastwood (2006) also highlights the importance of record keeping and accurate, reliable and authentic records for an effective and accountable business, and also for the historical understanding. Access to records is important for the citizens to claim their rights, evaluate the government's work, hold government accountable and be informed on different issues. But to be able to access records, the records have to be managed and preserved (Cunningham & Phillips, 2005). Records as a source for building societal memories and identity has also been highlighted (Millar, 2003; Cunningham & Phillips, 2005). Cunningham & Phillips stress the significance of records in a democracy for empowering people against maladministration, corruption and autocracy, and can be viewed as being "the currency of democracy" (Cunningham & Phillips, 2005, p. 303).

## The open access context

New technological possibilities, political agendas and citizen demands are making the "open access" agenda central in the public sector organizations' work. Archives and records management services in public organizations have a key role in ensuring compliance with Freedom of Information legislation ("FOI"). In order to provide access to records, the organization has to know what records they hold and where (Shepherd & Ennion, 2007; Crockett, 2009). Accessibility is also dependent on the quality of records and their reliability, which are products of record keeping (Crockett, 2009). To succeed in the implementation of FOI, one has to take into account issues of cultural change within organizations to promote transparency, leadership, records management systems and staff training (Shepherd & Ennion, 2007). There are both challenges and opportunities for records managers to contribute with their expertise with open access and open data (McLeod, 2012). If the data is going to be accessible for longer periods, preservation issues will be relevant, and it will be important early in the process that records managers and archivists contribute to system design to make sure data is created, collected and captured in a way that make it accessible and useable.

Appraisal and retention also have to take these new possibilities for re-use into account and there are several ethical questions that come with this and greater access to information (McLeod, 2012). With the open data agenda, there are new demands on how

the information should be made available, i.e. in raw format and unprocessed, thereby enabling further re-use. The emphasis tends to be on economic growth and innovation (McLeod, 2012), where records are seen as a public good (McLeod, 2012; McCausland, 2011; Millar, 2003; Cunningham & Phillips, 2005). Tough (2011) raises concerns though that with the development of open government, with the focus on user needs, questions of accountability are given a lower priority. He stresses the importance of protecting digital records from manipulation, particularly in the political arena, and assuring that they are captured and managed - especially because of the challenges with the digital environment (Tough, 2011). Tough notes that

“The primary role of records managers as active citizens should be to provide systems that will enable others to discharge their duties. The primary role of archivists in a plural democracy should be to secure the record for the future” (Tough, 2011, p. 233).

### **The archivist’s role in the organization**

The low priority of records management and archives also reflects the archivist’s role in organizations. According to Kallberg (2012), in a developing e-government environment, archivists have to be more proactive and claim a more strategic and high-level role in the organization. There is a need for change in the professional identity and in order to do that there is a need for better skills and tools, for which higher education plays an important role (Kallberg, 2012). If archivists are not proactive they risk being marginalized (Kallberg, 2012; Currall & Moss, 2008). In Kallberg’s (2013) discussion about the registrar’s role in a changing e-government administration, she stresses that it is not enough to change their professional status, it is a complex process where attitudes, knowledge and skills are important (Kallberg, 2013). Svård (2014) also says that values, attitudes and norms affect the overall informational culture in the organization, and have to be addressed to be able to create an effective administration.

### **The impact of ICT**

As a result of digital development, archivists and records managers are not the only ones working in the area of records management any longer, and cooperation with other professions is necessary. ICT (information and communication technologies) tends to dominate from a technical perspective, while processes of policy, procedure and participation tend to be secondary (Craig, 2011). Archivists must learn to communicate with IT-professionals and other professionals in their “language”. There has to be a shared responsibility and there is a need for better education (Currall & Moss, 2008). Millar (2003, p. 2) stresses the challenges to record keeping and accountability arising from information and communication technologies. The Internet also offers possibilities to present archival material in new ways (Menne-Haritz, 2001). Cunningham & Phillips (2005) discuss the impact of the World Wide Web as it has revolutionized publishing and distribution of digital information. Gill and Elder (2012) explore how the Internet has changed the archive; from traditionally being a physical and static place, to offering access from nearly anywhere, which gives archivists new possibilities. It has changed the archive

“from a paper-based treasure trove overseen by the trained archivist to one of an open, multi-vocal, democratic source with no one in control” (Gill & Elder, 2012, p. 271).

### Archivists' skills

In order to cope with these changes and the digital environment, education plays an important role (Kallberg, 2012; Tough, 2011; Eastwood, 2006). Eastwood (2006) highlights the importance of archivists' skills, which is comprised of designing, implementing and managing recordkeeping systems, especially in the electronic environment. In order to do that there is a need for skills to analyze business functions, activities, procedures and needs, which Eastwood calls "archival analysis" (Eastwood, 2006, p. 166). Metadata schema and analysis of the impact of technology on the way that records are managed are also mentioned as important tasks (Eastwood, 2006).

### Theoretical discourse

Theoretically the role of the archivist and archives have shifted over time. As presented in the section on the theoretical perspective, Cook (2013) argues for the view that there have been four archival paradigms over the past 150 years. It has moved from juridical legacy, to cultural memory, then societal engagement, and now into community archiving. Archival thinking has moved from focusing on evidence, to memory, to identity and community. However, one cannot say that the successive phases have totally replaced each other. In particular, the meaning of the record as evidence has maintained its importance over time and still does. According to the various paradigms, the archivists' role has also changed from being a passive curator, active appraiser, societal mediator to community facilitator. Cook suggests that the profession needs to reflect on its role in the digital era and consider contemporary changes that may affect archives as a concept, an institution and practice, where the possibilities to create and access information for many are profound. The archive is a space of shared custody and trust, but also has a moral imperative for belonging to a community through a common past that is sustained over time. Cook is also referring to Nancy Bartlett's view of the archivist as a mediator between past, present and future, and between creators, records and researchers (Cook, 2013). McCausland (2011) thinks that reference archivists have had a critical role in mediating between users and the archival material, where

"Mediation includes the reference interview, question negotiation, defining and refining search strategies, interpreting finding aids, and providing advice about tools and services" (McCausland, 2011, p. 311).

McCausland's point is that in the online environment many search and find the records they want by themselves. With the expectations of instantaneous access anytime and anywhere via the Internet, archivists have to better understand users' information needs and research methods, adapt to users' needs and be more proactive in using new technology. She believes that the archivist will continually have a mediating role, but this will have to change in relation to the users. Strategies for selection and appraisal of material that can be made accessible in new and different ways also need to be discussed (McCausland, 2011). Currall & Moss (2008) think that archives, libraries and museums will have an important role as starting points for searches, since no single institution will ever contain all the information that is sought. The archivist also has an important role in enabling research as search engines are not the sole solution to locating information (Currall & Moss, 2008).

### From storage to access

There is also a change in the archival paradigm from storage to access (Bastian, 2004; Menne-Haritz, 2001). The former emphasis on preservation brought a custodial view of the archivist as the protector of the records as evidence, where the use of the archives had a secondary role of regulating and controlling responsibilities (Bastian, 2004). In the post-custodial era there is much more focus on the user and the use of records, where the custodians should support the possibility for effective use, for as long as the records are needed. Bastian asserts that access is key to collective memory, and it should be viewed in a global context. She, too, stresses the need for archivists to meet users' needs and adapt their methods to these needs (Bastian, 2004). Menne-Haritz (2001) notes that the changing focus from storage to access affects a range of other areas in archival practice like description, appraisal and preservation and also changes the views of archival thinking. In her view, archivists no longer offer only their time, but also provide means for the use of time. The archivist's role is to make the archival material available and offer an infrastructure, and leave responsibility for the interpretation of the material to the researchers (Menne-Haritz, 2001). The access paradigm also has consequences for description, appraisal and preservation, which must all be viewed from the perspective of facilitating access in the digital era. The main issue concerning the Internet is not putting information into it, but getting the requested information out of it. That in turn places emphasis on the usefulness of the information, how to use it effectively and build knowledge from it. Archival methods

“are needed especially for the opening of the traces bearing experiences of past actions as knowledge potentials. But they can also offer analytical methods that explain how to learn from the different sources. Archival methods show how to use the past to gain new knowledge, not only in the form of explicit description of facts, but also in the form of past experiences as they can be reconstructed from traces left over by past events.” (Menne-Haritz, 2001, p. 81)

### What about trust?

According to McNeil (2011), archival professional identity

“has been constructed, in part, around two narrative tropes: the archivist as trusted custodian and public archival institutions as trusted repositories. These tropes revolve, in turn, around a set of assumptions about the archivists' knowledge of what makes records trustworthy and the role of archival institutions in preserving and safeguarding a society's records and making them available to the public.” (McNeil, 2011, pp. 175-176)

McNeil notes that the notion of trustworthiness stems from an organizational context and bureaucratic procedures, but has been challenged by the digital environment, which is why archivists have had to rethink many of their models. What becomes important in the digital world is the “chain of preservation” which assures that the identity and integrity of the records are protected and preserved throughout their life, by the implementation of processes and procedures at the point of creation and onward. This has driven archivists to work more proactively with the management of current records. Procedural controls over record making, recordkeeping and metadata as indicators of identity and integrity are all important factors, and theories for establishing trust in digital records and trusted digital repositories have been developed. But, archivists have to reflect on their self-image as trusted custodians. It is more or less accepted that archivists play an active role in shaping societal memory, through, for example, appraisal and description. Some



scholars believe that there has to be a more inclusive attitude in the appraisal and description processes, and that archival institutions are more transparent to users in these processes. Records are also open for different interpretations, and maybe also different authenticities. There are many ways to view the relation between identity, trust and archives, and since trustworthiness is historically situated and socially negotiated, it is time to consider other views than those that have been traditionally used. Perhaps, the dominant archival narrative of trusted custodianship has to be questioned, and the legitimacy and value of diverse narratives more recognized (McNeil, 2011).

In conclusion, it is clear that not much has been written about the archivists'/records managers' role in an open government context, but there are many that stress the value of good records management and the values it represents.

## Definitions of open data and open government

### Open data

In Sweden cooperative work at national level on open data is in progress. The three main actors are the Swedish E-delegation, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALAR) and VINNOVA - the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems.

The Swedish E-delegation (E-delegationen, 2013, p. 15), which is working on behalf of the Swedish Government, notes that open data is information which meets the requirements of open knowledge, and according to the Open definition, is defined as:

“A piece of data or content is open if anyone is free to use, reuse, and redistribute it — subject only, at most, to the requirement to attribute and/or share-alike.” ([opendefinition.org](http://opendefinition.org))

Open data is information that is free, and accessible with little or no technical or legal restrictions on how it can be used (E-delegationen, 2013, p. 15). The Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALAR) uses the Open definition as well; freely translated, open data is defined by SALAR as

“data that is free of charge and that could be reused by anyone with no limitations other than to possibly state the source” (Sveriges kommuner och landsting, s. 8).

VINNOVA, which is the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems, also uses the *eight principles of open government*, as developed by the Open Government Working Group<sup>2</sup>. According to this, the information should be *complete* (information that is not subject to valid privacy, security or privilege limitations ought to be accessible to the greatest extent possible), *primary* (the information ought to be collected at the source and when possible in original format and with the highest level of granularity), *timely* (the information is made accessible as quickly as possible), *accessible* (the information is made accessible to as many users as possible, for as many purposes as possible), *machine processable* (the information is structured in a way that allows automated processing), *non-discriminatory* (the information is accessible to everyone, without requirements of

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<sup>2</sup> <http://opengovdata.org/>

payment or restrictions such as licensing or registration procedures), *license-free* (the information is published in an open format/standard) (VINNOVA, 2014). They refer to the Wikipedia site<sup>3</sup> where the definition is actually the same as the eight principles developed by the Open Government Working Group.

Open data relates to the PSI-directive promulgated by the European Parliament (2003), but it is also different. Public Sector Information (“PSI”) includes public records, but the information does not have to be open. In an OECD report the concepts are discussed and PSI has been defined as

“information, including information products and services, generated, created, collected, processed, preserved, maintained, disseminated, or funded by or for a government or public institution” (Ubaldi, 2013, p. 5-6).

“Open Government Data” (OGD) has been identified as consisting of two main elements;

“The two main elements of OGD are normally defined as follows:

- Government data: is any data and information produced or commissioned by public bodies.
- Open data: are data that can be freely used, re-used and distributed by anyone, only subject to (at the most) the requirement that users attribute the data and that they make their work available to be shared as well.” (Ubaldi, 2013).

Open data can also be many forms of information and is not necessarily public sector information. Given these definitions, one could say that public sector information that is open is open government data.

Open sharing of information is an important aspect of open government work, where seamless information flows and principles of transparency, participation and collaboration are central (Chun, Shulman, Sandoval & Hovy, 2010). Open data is also important to the development of a common European information market and knowledge-based economy (Blakemore & Craglia, 2006).

The City of Stockholm (the “City”) interprets open data according to the PSI-Directive and the European Commission’s Inspire Directive<sup>4</sup>, which imply that the public records that are collected and stored at public agencies in digital format should also be available for reuse. (The City of Stockholm, at: <http://open.stockholm.se/fragor-och-svar/>) The City also uses the principles developed by the Open Government Working Group. According to the E-delegation’s guideline for reuse of PSI there is a difference, since PSI is not required to be free. But open data could be a strategy for meeting the recommendations in the guideline, the requirements in the PSI Directive and in Swedish law (E-delegationen, 2013, p. 12). According to the government’s strategy (Regeringskansliet, 2012, p. 11), open data facilitates the reuse of information and creation of services. Open data is also mentioned in one of the three objectives as a way

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<sup>3</sup> [https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Öppna\\_data](https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Öppna_data)

<sup>4</sup> INSPIRE: Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community: <http://inspire.ec.europa.eu/index.cfm/pageid/48> Accessed 01 July 2015.

to encourage economic growth and to contribute to greater openness (Regeringskansliet, 2012, p. 4);

“Openness. In order to take advantage of digital opportunities to strengthen democracy, increase transparency, and contribute to increased economic growth through open data” [*Putting the citizen at the centre*, p. 4]

### Open government

Sweden participates in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) (Regeringskansliet, 2014, p. 3), referred to in the government’s strategy as a collaboration for more openness and transparency (Regeringskansliet, 2012). The strategy is a way to broaden Sweden’s commitment to the framework of the Open Government Partnership (Regeringskansliet, 2012, p. 18). Therefore, we assume that as a participant in the initiative, the government also agrees with the definition of open government. According to OGP, the vision is that

“more governments become sustainably more transparent, more accountable, and more responsive to their own citizens, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of governance, as well as the quality of services that citizens receive. This will require a shift in norms and culture to ensure genuine dialogue and collaboration between governments and civil society.” (Open Government Partnerships, at <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/mission-and-goals#sthash.U4BXdn2A.dpuf>).

Countries participating in the OGP, agree on the Open Government Declaration (the “Declaration”). The Declaration stresses increased availability of information about governmental activities; support of civic participation; highest standards of professional integrity in the administration, transparency and anti-corruption policies; and increased access to new technologies for openness and accountability for the purposes of developing ways to increase accessibility, participation and public participation (Open Government Partnerships, <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/open-government-declaration>).

In Sweden’s OGP Action plan 2014-2016, the main areas of improvements are identified as putting citizens at the centre of government administration reforms, further improvements on the re-use of public administration documents and increased access to Swedish aid information. Sweden has a long tradition of openness, but current policy expands the work on eGovernment that has been done up to now to see citizens as possible co-creators of public services (Regeringskansliet, 2014, pp. 1, 8-10).

### The interviews

Key points from the interview data are presented below, without attribution of comments or opinions to the individuals interviewed.

#### 1. What role does the archivist/records manager currently have with managing open data?

- Generally, the archivist’s role is to control and support how information comes about and is handled to meet everyone’s needs; the archivist also considers the

- future and the rest of the world in their work - their perspective is hence much broader geographically and time-wise. They also help with creating frameworks and processes for what must be documented and collected - appraisal of information - as well as what gets published and disseminated to the public.
- To make information, albeit subject to privacy and other laws, as available as possible for public use. The City's municipal archives has a digital archives mission that includes open data solutions and how the City will work with open data. Currently the municipal archives help to manage the City's e-archives - an important task will be to develop solutions for access to information in the e-archives as open data.
  - Open data is a continuation of an increasingly digital and digitized society. The municipal archives works toward promoting transparency and openness, which has drawn more attention to the archives within the community. The "Dig In - digital arkivstrategi för Stockholms stad" discusses how to deal with modern digital information management, including open data, from an archives perspective (Stockholms stadsarkiv, 2014).
  - Open data has strengthened the municipal archives' role.

## **2. What knowledge, skills and competencies are needed?**

- Even though there is a desire and drive for openness, there are certain things you need internally to make it work. There is a desire to make the e-archives more open, but it hasn't really worked. It is complicated and expensive. The e-archives is built on security and searchability, not immediate openness. It is hard to tell what is needed as there are many opinions and legal questions and issues to take into consideration. The structural overview that archivists gain from their work is an important aspect, for example, in the determination of what should be open and available. Another competency that archivists have is the ability to identify ethical issues. You must also be able to determine a piece of information's consequences, such as how it will be used and you have to be aware of privacy issues. You will need both technical and industry knowledge. Most importantly, humans need to be part of the handling of open data, and not simply leave it to an automated machine or computer system to manage.
- The quality of information and data (authenticity, trustworthiness and accuracy) is important for any work with open data - and as with any other type of data - and must be there from the beginning and upheld throughout. There are many people involved and responsibility must be shared. Archivists must determine what their responsibilities are - and relinquish some responsibilities to others. In this regard, archivists have to be proactive to fill gaps or risk having another department take over and do things from their perspective.
- There is a need for insight of the overarching social benefit of open data including marketing information resources, making information available on a big scale and leaving the development of use (i.e. the type of information desired and how it is used) to users.

- Different skills and competencies are needed: technical (IT), legal (how information should be handled and classified according to law) and institutional/corporate.
- Archivists need to become more confident and explain why they are important and how they fit into democratic society.

### **3. What role, responsibilities and mandate would be preferable?**

- There is a risk that information is not properly contextualized. In this regard, the archivist's role should be expanded and reinforced as they can contextualize the information by explain what it is, how to use it, etc.
- Archivists can help explain how secure and trustworthy a piece of information is, and assist with the classification through arrangement and description.
- The municipal archivists have been part of the whole journey of improving digital processes and setting up the e-archives, especially in terms of being able to archive information digitally, and the move towards more open data could be a part of this process.

### **4. What guidance in the form of guidelines and strategies are needed?**

- Guidance will be important in numerous ways. It is important that data is open at the moment of creation so you do not need to restructure information. Much of it is also a mindset, not just technical skill and knowledge. Secure and accurate systems should be a priority. The notion that open data is good should be reinforced and strengthened and its benefits better communicated. This is a long-term and strategic project, but the problem is that politicians want to see fast results and are usually short sighted in their planning. Strategies and guidelines for effectively managing the glut of systems will be important.
- A lot of support is needed in terms of appraisal and identifying issues and risks with information. Certain work can be put in the hands of the users too; this is for transparency purposes and so users can evaluate the quality of the information themselves if they want. Different users should be able to access and read the open data information without too much difficulty. Of course, it is important that open data information is dependable, available and easy to work with. Here, it is important to keep in mind that the municipal archives has no connection with how the information is used, as the archives only provides information and does not associate with how, when, where, and why it is used, for example, ensuring that the municipal archives branding is protected and not attached to any use and publication of information without explicit permission.
- A big challenge is to establish a long-term perspective where everyone agrees that the term "open" relates to a quality the data possesses from birth. Information that is born in a public setting should be created in such a way that it is available for use as soon as possible. Archives need to take responsibility for the information not being compromised after it has been acquired by the institution; there may be gaps and errors in the quality of the information from its natural use, but this

should be clearly described with the information, in the form of technical guides, so that users are aware.

- Classify, arrange and describe more: if we know what we are dealing with, the easier it is to create guidelines and strategies.
- More publication of data is desirable. There is a need to identify future user groups, what is and will be of relevance to users and decide how to determine all of this.

## **5. Other important / interesting issues raised in the interviews?**

- Information is useful, because with it you can show and prove something. There are both economic and democratic benefits with open data. The municipal archives' chief manager has proposed the idea of information as raw material to help show the value of information.
- The benefit of open data is improved access for citizens, organizations and businesses. Conversely, making information more accessible carries with it the risk that PUL and confidential information is revealed. There's a strategic question of whether to create separate technological frameworks for open-data solutions or to create organization-specific solutions.
- The challenge is to protect confidential information from being leaked. It may be possible, amongst other things, to access full profiles of coworkers, politicians, and which websites they have visited. Collaboration with other big cities will be important so that EU lawmakers will take notice of big municipality governments, and not just national government bodies.
- Open data can be described and has been described in many different ways. One of the possibilities is to begin with the criteria established by the Open Government Initiative that are also used by pwc (2014) in their mission to map the open data sources that exist in Sweden. According to these criteria, open data should be:
  - Complete: information that does not contain personal and private information and is not confidential should be made as available as possible.
  - Primary: the information should be, whenever possible, kept in its original format.
  - Relevant: information should be made available as soon as possible so that it is up-to-date and the content does not lose its value. There should be a mechanism by which people are notified of updates.
  - Accessible: the information is accessible to as many users as possible for as many purposes as possible.
  - Machine readable: the information is made available in a manner that is readable and workable with current popular technology.
  - Free: information is made available for everyone without payment or any other limitations such as registration and licensing.
  - Open-source format: the information should be made available in an open-source standard or free from licensing restrictions.

- Advantages with open data are that citizens will be able to exercise their democratic rights, including knowing what information exists about them, what is going on in their community, what their politicians are doing, and administrative matters. The public should expect transparency from their government, but open data may not necessarily have that effect, as an increase in information will require increased knowledge and skills. We should be careful not to fall into the trap that open data is the solution to everything; it could turn out to be the opposite, in the sense that there may be such an overload of information that it becomes hard to navigate through. The driving force behind open data should be democracy and the public interest. Ultimately, one of the problems in working with open data may be that there are “too many cooks” involved.

## Discussion of the Case Study and Interview Data

As the first country in the world to permit freedom of the press - with the passing of the Freedom of the Press Act in 1766, and which forms part of Sweden's constitution - the tradition of openness and citizens' right to freely seek information has fundamentally shaped Sweden's identity and politics. Hence, the implementation of e-government and open data initiatives at the federal and municipal levels comes as no surprise. While open government has been in the mainstream for a few years already and is currently a popular and growing global trend, with many major governments like the US, UK, New Zealand and Canada having implemented open government databases, but as with any new and popular technology we have to be mindful and careful about how we proceed, making sure that we do not let the demand for the technology get in the way of best practices and security. Even more so with the opening up of government through digital and online avenues, where a lot of sensitive, important and personal information may float around relatively unchecked and at the risk of being used for improper and illegal means. It is in this context that we are considering City's work on open data - much of it progressive and laudable - and the information we gathered from our interviews with various industry and political leaders, players, representatives and stakeholders in the City. Of interest to our study are questions surrounding not just the archivists'/records manager's role with open data, but also more specifically what should be made available (and in what format), when it is made available, reuse of data (licensing, length of time), linked open data, metadata (at what stage of the process is it being captured and what, if any, are the standards), and the impact of open data on the Freedom of the Press Act. Some of these questions were addressed by the interviewees, while others require further investigation.

### Open data and Stockholm City's Digital Archival Strategy

As stated in their Digital Archival Strategy, “Dig In” (Stockholms stadsarkiv, 2014), Stockholm aims to have Sweden's most transparent information management system, one that promotes the public's needs, business and economic development, and secures openness and democracy today and in the future (“Dig In”). This strategy recognizes the central and important role of the City Archive in developing digital records and realizing the public's right to information in the e-government environment. This is clearly an excellent, not to mention fitting, opportunity for the City Archive to showcase its

expertise and skills in an area that has been highlighted by the EU and G8 as crucial to the future operations of democratic governments.

Open data was noted by one of the archivists interviewed as part of wider open government work, where information is available in many different ways and open data is one of them. The same archivist sees the work with open data being more about the technique and mechanics, the management of systems, and not as much about the information. Ideally, as much information as possible should be made available in a raw and unprocessed format as soon as it is created. As well, the information should be machine-readable and highly accessible across all platforms.

In working with open data it is important that roles are clarified and work divided up accordingly. The area of information is where archivists/records managers have competency and expertise, and not, for example, system security or administration. Hence, archivists/records managers are well-situated to identify and determine what should be made available and in what format, taking into account copyright and privacy laws. Further considerations should also include the PSI law and creating appropriate policies around reuse of open data that fits into the PSI-law framework, something that one of the archivists believes is appropriate since the PSI-law definition of open data, which does not restrict itself to just digital information, does a better job of addressing business and public interests. Still, as one of the archivists points out, the release of information remains ultimately a political decision, but archivists/records managers will prepare everything as if it is open data and once the political go-ahead has been given it will be an easy process. At the same time, including the public in the process of evaluating information would go a long way towards creating greater transparency. Arguably, and putting aside inherent complications and issues with such an approach, this is the greatest transparency an open government could give to its constituents: one where the public takes an active role that goes beyond being mere consumers of information. The archivist goes on to say that many questions remain to be addressed around open data (storage, responsibility etc.) and with the way the municipality has approached open data so far, as not everything can be considered fully open and that there are degrees of openness. Ultimately, archivists/records managers need to bring the democratic perspective to open data information.

Currently, the archivists/records managers interviewed are already working with digital materials and digital processes, of which, from a government perspective, open data is an extension and evolution; for example, archivists/records managers working with the city's e-archives are working towards creating open data solutions for the e-archives, and the municipal archives' *Digital Archival Strategy* refers to open data. Furthermore, the concept of open data is about transparency and openness, and making information available to the public, all of which archivists and records managers have as part of their professional mandate and are familiar with in their work.

Overall, the interviewees feel that by promoting open data and its benefits, we will dually be promoting the role of the archivist and records manager, creating further work and emphasizing their importance to government, organizations and society. Going forward



though, it is important to define what the archivist's/records manager's role will be with open data, especially, in relation to other professionals who will also be working with open data, for the purposes of improving efficiency, preventing overlap, and ensuring that information is treated properly. As much as archivists and records managers bring to the table already, it is also important to establish what will be needed and who within the organization will be in charge of which duties, which may entail a reconfiguration of archivists'/records managers' current roles in the open government environment.

### **Skills and competencies**

Archivists / records managers have many appropriate skills and competencies to work with open data in an open government setting, such as identifying ethical, privacy and access issues, what should be made available, and consequences with regard to information. Unsurprisingly, archivists believe humans need to be in charge of open data, as opposed to leaving it to a machine or automated systems, which is in line with the paradigm of archivists and records managers as community facilitators (Cook 2013). Archivists and records managers should be present throughout the whole process of open data management for the reason of maintaining the authenticity, trustworthiness and accuracy of data from the beginning and until it is published. After that they do not take any responsibility for further use. The interviewee from Information security expressed concerns about this, noting that it will be a potential challenge when information from different sources can be combined and thus reveal more sensitive details. The interviewee also expressed concerns that the data might not be reliable in the final stage because there might be misinterpretations on the way and that raises problems. An important factor in the question of authenticity, accuracy and reliability is the metadata. Archivists/records managers will also have to understand how metadata works and the impacts of new technology on open data management. With metadata being a crucial component in the open government and open data movement it is important to establish parameters. According to one of the archivists, it would also be a good idea to create a city-wide standard for metadata, as with all other processes. Furthermore, metadata is an important aspect when thinking about raw data versus manipulated data. Given the power of metadata to reveal private information, indirectly and through amalgamation, it is an issue that cannot be ignored in the open government environment, and that needs to be defined and understood by all involved, including the public.

The IT professional interviewed believes working with open data will require various skills and competencies, including technical, legal, and administrative; archivists and records managers will have to learn new skills and roles, as well as collaboration with other professionals, internal and external, and stakeholders; but according to the archivists in our study, there is a concern that archivists need to clearly define and establish their roles or risk losing control. Collaborating with other professionals will also help stress the importance of archivists/records managers in the process and continued work with open data, and as part of a democracy.

As far as preferred roles and responsibilities of archivists/records managers, the interviewees, particularly the archivists, generally expressed the importance of properly contextualizing information and data. What this entails ranges from arrangement and description to explaining the trustworthiness of data. Archivists/records managers should

expand and reinforce this role as the government moves toward more open data. Information Security, rather obviously, emphasized security and trustworthiness of information, and classification, while the politicians would like to see archivists/records managers carry over their work with e-archives to open data.

### **Guidance needed**

When discussing guidance, in the form of guidelines and strategies, the various interviewees identified the following main agendas. First of all, the archivists saw a need for reinforcing and strengthening the notion that open data is good and beneficial. Strategies and guidelines for effectively managing the glut of systems will be important, including appraisal and risk assessment. On that note, it was pointed out that the municipal archives have no connection to how information is used once it is made available, and there needs to be guidelines to ensure that the municipal archives is insulated in this regard, for example, protecting the archives' branding and that it is not attached to a given use of information without explicit permission. Initially, the big challenge will be to establish a solid and enduring definition of "open", which from an archival perspective relates to the quality the data possess at creation, and here guidance would be helpful. From an Information Security standpoint, useful guidance will involve greater classification, arrangement and description; knowing more intimately what kind of data is being dealt with will help in creating appropriate guidelines and strategies. The municipal government agrees that more transparency and readily available data are desirable and, hence, there needs to be guidance on identifying user groups, and what information users will find relevant. More practical guidance is needed to support the work on open data and archivists/records managers will have to figure out practical solutions to open data that will be easily understood by users and other professionals.

### **Potential impact on the Freedom of the Press Act**

An interesting and important question for our study is the impact of open data on Sweden's Freedom of the Press Act, one of its constitutional crown jewels, and central to Sweden's sociopolitical identity. Generally, the various interviewees did not see open data fundamentally changing the public's right to government information and records, in both the legal definition and spirit, but did identify some issues to consider. One archivist sees all open data as public records; with the PSI Directive as an extension of the Freedom of the Press Act, which explicitly emphasizes accessibility. The IT expert interviewed did not see open data changing the right in essence, although, it does provide a new access dimension, at least in terms of time. Eventually, the IT expert notes, open data will likely change our expectations for how fast we can access public information and, by extension, how long will it be available. A local chamber of commerce member did not see open data changing the law around the right to information, but that it has raised the discussion, in particular, as it relates to digital formats of information and whether this addresses questions of information integrity - keeping in mind that the current law also allows for paper format. This interviewee argued that a modernized law that takes into account open data should allow for access to whole databases so one can see patterns and properly contextualize individual pieces of information, thereby, better understanding the information.

One of the local politicians interviewed did express some tentative concerns about open data changing the application of the Freedom of the Press Act, likely for the worse in the sense that there may be information overload making public information more obscure and making it more difficult to identify what is useful. Previously there would have been more discussion and documentation of information requests and the potential usage involved when information was not as readily accessible. This is not to discourage a move towards open government, rather, it is expressing caution that we not be blinded by all the positivity around open data and recognize that there are major issues to be resolved before we have a proper open government institution that is beneficial to everyone. In this regard, the politician argues, there is a lot of work ahead for archivists, lawmakers and others involved with open data.

## Conclusion

There are many advantages to open data. Archivists see open data work as promoting the value of information and improving access to it. Conversely, this carries with it the risk that confidential information may be revealed, which is also the main concern of Information Security - who see the big challenge being more about how we protect information in the open data culture. For the municipal government, it will help address transparency issues and make for more informed citizens. The caveat for government is avoiding the trap of thinking that open data is the only solution, when in reality it can have the opposite effect, especially if there is an overload of poorly documented data, thereby, creating accessibility problems. Most importantly, there was a consensus that democracy and public interest should be the driving force behind open data at all times.

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