TransPa_BA: a tool for improving active disclosure of library and archive information

TransPa_BA: una herramienta para la mejora de la publicidad activa en bibliotecas y archivos

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Resumen

Proyecto de elaboración de una herramienta para la mejora de la publicidad activa en los archivos y bibliotecas, en consonancia con la Ley 19/2013 de Transparencia española. La transparencia, como cualquier proceso, requiere ser evaluada si se persigue su mejora. Este es el fin de la herramienta TransPA_BA, inspirada en MESTA (Metodología de Evaluación y Seguimiento de la Transparencia) que evalúa la publicidad activa de las sedes web cuyo proceso de adaptación se explica en este trabajo. El resultado es una tabla integrada por 20 o 21 indicadores para bibliotecas y 22 para archivos y sus correspondientes criterios de valoración. Se persigue mejorar la transparencia en las webs de las bibliotecas y archivos españoles que valoren este concepto y quieran medirlo. Su aplicación permitirá ver resultados, efectuar cambios objetivos que se traducirán en movimientos reales de la información con ella relacionada que pueden juzgar los ciudadanos usuarios de estos servicios a través de sus sedes web.

Palabras clave: Transparencia. Publicidad activa. Indicadores. Sedes web. Bibliotecas. Archivos.

Abstract

A project to develop a tool to improve active disclosure by libraries and archives of the information stipulated in Spain's Transparency Act 19/2013 is presented. In transparency, as in any other goal, assessment is imperative to improvement, the objective pursued by TransPA_BA, a tool designed to evaluate the active public disclosure of information on websites. Its adaptation from MESTA (Spanish acronym for transparency assessment and monitoring methodology) is described in this article. The result is a table comprising 20 or 21 indicators for libraries (state-run and university) and 22 for archives and their respective scoring criteria. The ultimate aim is to enhance website transparency by enabling Spanish libraries and archives to measure their performance in that regard. Institutions using the tool, results in hand, will be in a position to modify their websites as necessary to allow citizens using their services readier access to the relevant information.

Keywords: Transparency. Active disclosure. Indicators. Website. Libraries. Archives.

1. Introduction

Act 19/2013 of 9 December on Transparency, Access to Public Information and Good Governance (Spanish initials and hereafter LTAIPBG) (España, 2013) addresses transparency from two different but complementary perspectives: active disclosure and the right to access information or passive disclosure. The former is a governmental obligation and the second a civil right citizens may exercise to access unpublished data, within the limits laid down by law.

As defined in the act, active public disclosure requires public administrations and the institutions under their aegis to proactively publish and periodically update information that must by law be included on their websites. The aim is to guarantee transparency in the activities conducted in the exercise of their duties. That obligation translates into citizens' right to certain information that government must disclose ex officio.

The information subject to active disclosure defined in Chapter II of the act includes institutional, organisational and planning data, along with economic, budgetary and statistical information of legal significance (Sections 6, 7 and 8). The act itself implies that institutional transparency depends on the existence of a website or electronic portal (Ch. II, Section 5, item 4):

> The information subject to transparency obligations shall be published on the respective electronic portals or websites in a manner that is clear, structured and understandable for those concerned, and preferably in reusable formats.

As organisational units or parts of such units under government aegis, libraries and archives are bound by the Transparency Act to publish information on the results of their activity, the purposes they serve and their raison d'être. Today most libraries and archives have websites on which such information can be published. Whilst the provisions of the act must be adapted to their

idiosyncrasies, its compulsory or voluntary application will indisputably add value to the institutions concerned. To quote Arizmendi (2017, p. 44):

> Voluntary transparency beyond legal obligation, the evidence that what is believed in is done with no need for prompting, will be an indication of adult, real and sovereign transparency.

This study describes the development of a tool, inspired by specific Government-sponsored methodology for assessing and monitoring transparency (Spanish initials and hereafter, MESTA) (AEVAL and CTBG, 2016), designed specifically to measure and improve active disclosure by archives and libraries. The article also discusses the assessment indicators and respective scoring criteria. The tool is intended for both libraries and archives of whatsoever type subject to the act as well as those which, while not subject to its provisions, decide to intensify and draw value from their commitment to transparency. Its ultimate purpose is to serve as an aid to these public institutions in their pursuit of greater transparency.

Its use will enhance taxpayer access to all the information of interest on institutional governance, what libraries and archives do, how they do it and the use to which they put the resources allocated to render their services. It will also contribute to more accurate appraisal of such services where deployed to show the efforts made to meet user needs, especially in the wake of crisis-mandated cutbacks of the sort that have prevailed in recent years.

2. Transparency assessment methodologies

Application of the LTAIPBG has prompted the development of a series of transparency assessment methodologies whose utility has been borne out by the enhancement of the information published on institutional websites. They have been authored by both public (Transparency and Good Governance Council (1) and private (Transparency International (2), Fundación Compromiso y Transparencia (3), Asociación Española de Acreditación de la Transparencia (4)) organisations and are described in the reports published on their websites and other vehicles (García Melián, 2016). Procedural initiatives of academic origin such as Infoparticipa are also in place (Molina Rodríguez-Navas, 2015). Whether the assessment target is international, national or local, measurement aims to ascertain, improve, advance, compare, change and qualitatively and quantitatively manage transparency-related information, as Arizmendi (2017, p. 42) noted in connection with MESTA.

That official methodological tool was developed in 2016 to facilitate Transparency Act application and assessment by the State Agency for Assessing Public Policies and Service Quality, in conjunction with the Transparency and Good Governance Council. As the tool and respective indicators are adapted to the provisions of the act, institutions are able to self-assess not only as concerns active disclosure but also the right of access to public information in terms of the quantity as well as the quality of the information provided. Whereas active disclosure can be measured externally, the right to access must be assessed in-house, inasmuch as the data and information available to outside parties on an institution's website do not include its response to citizens' requests for information.

MESTA is designed for national, regional and local scale entities, although the resources available vary from one level of government to another. As noted, however, the right to access information is the same for all citizens, irrespective of the size of the institution or the population served (Molina Rodríguez-Navas, Simelio Solà and Corcoy Rius, 2017, p. 824) or even its position on government organisational charts which, in the case of libraries and archives, need not necessarily be known to citizens/users.

The tool defines two types of indices, labelled indicators, intended to distinguish between the compulsory information laid down in the LTAIPBG and all other (non-compulsory) data. The former, the active disclosure compliance indicators (Spanish initials, ICPA), score the information subject to compulsory publication on websites (content, form and currency) and its parameters or characteristics (accessibility, clarity, structure and reusability), as well as the technical conditions prevailing on the host website (accessibility, structure, placement and existence of a banner). The latter suite of indicators, designed to assess active disclosure transparency (ITPA), includes practically the same items along with non-compulsory information and web support functions. Institutional replies to a questionnaire on the activities associated with various categories of information provide the grounds for assessment expressed as a numerical score for each indicator. Those characteristics have earned the tool a reputation for complexity (Ros Medina, p. 8).

Although MESTA has been no less exempt than other methodologies from criticism for its constraints and flaws, as Ros Medina notes (2018, p. 2):

> some thought is in order on the importance of such tools and the attitudes we should adopt toward them. That transparency can be measured in different ways attests to the difficulty in precisely defining

that property in the context of the practical implications for public institutions.

Proof of that is to be found in the methodologies put forward by both public and private institutions and ready for use even before enactment of the LTAIPBG (Sierra Rodríguez, 2018, p. 73). MESTA has been criticised primarily for the complexity of the questionnaires to be answered by the target institutions based on the compliance of the information on their websites with legal provisions. In its favour, it takes account of both the quantity and quality of the information furnished, although further enhancement will be needed to ensure accurate assessment of information and its accessibility.

3. Transparency in archives and libraries

A review of the literature on libraries and archives identified scarcely any studies on transparency understood as the availability of governance-related information, and many fewer than papers dealing with other governance matters such as quality. In contrast, such institutions', particularly archives', involvement in citizens' right to access other public body information, has been widely researched and found to be indispensable to the transparency of those other institutions (De Andrés Díaz, 2015, p. 82; Capellades Riera, 2019). With scant exceptions, their own compliance as units, entities or institutions under government aegis with the requirement to publish the compulsory information specified in the act is essentially missing from the literature. Pérez Santana (2018) identified a lack of statistical information and therefore of transparency around the activity conducted by Spanish archives. That situation has since been confirmed by other authors (Pacios and La Torre, 2018; Pacios, Torreiro and Moro, 2019; Pacios and Cerdá, 2019).

The two types of institution studied here occupy a similar position within government organisational structures, although libraries' greater transparency than exhibited by archives would appear to denote greater interest in the subject. That notwithstanding, the papers published on both public and university libraries identify shortcomings and areas where substantial improvements in transparency could be made (Pacios et. al, 2018; Rey Martín, Rodríguez Parada and Camón Luis, 2019; Rey Martín et al., 2020).

University libraries tend to be more compliant in this respect, perhaps due to their interest in service quality and displaying their efficacy from very early on (Carmena Escribano, 1999, p. 25). One example is to be found in the annual management reports uploaded to their websites. With that practice, consolidated in some cases over more

than 30 consecutive years (Pacios and Serna, 2020, p. 6), they exhibit transparency vis-à-vis both their funding institution and their users transparently informed.

An analysis published by Burke (2016) on transparency based on the information on U.S. public libraries' websites identified the benefits for the institutions themselves of furnishing data on their efficient use of public resources. The author drew from different types of documents associated with transparency, including annual reports, strategic plans and budgets for her analysis. Several of the 18 indicators to measure transparency proposed by Pacios (2016), in turn, referred to the same types of documents as analysed by Burke. Both authors associated transparency with accountability, as is usually the case in the literature. Nonetheless, contrary to common belief, a joint review of the two features showed that transparency does not always generate accountability (Fox, 2007, p. 668).

4. Methodology

TransPA_BA is the outcome of a process, described stage-by-stage below, preceding its use by libraries and archives.

4.1. Preliminary indicators

The initial proposal for TransPA_BA, informed by an idea put forward by Barrio and Cavanna (2013) to identify the most transparent Spanish universities, defined 18 indicators for university libraries based on the types of information listed in the LTAIPBG as subject to mandatory active disclosure (Pacios, 2016). Enlarging on the definition provided by the author of the latter article (p. 111), indicator can be understood as a unit of information (document, data or symbol) whose assessment can attest to or appraise achievements and changes in transparency.

The initial decision to establish indicators for university libraries only was based on their track record for publishing a wide spectrum of governance-related information and documents and the expansion of that information over time (Pacios, 2003). That first analysis was conducted on a small sample, namely the university libraries affiliated with Madroño, a consortium of universities located in Greater Madrid which main aim is to improve the quality of library services by promoting inter-library cooperation.

The aforementioned set of indicators was later applied to historic archives after evaluating the suitability of such information units for such institutions (Pacios and La Torre, 2018). The subsequent introduction of a new archive-specific

indicator (classification table) and elimination of another relevant only to university libraries (institutional open access policy) left a total of 18 for both types of institutions.

Indicators that could not be feasibly or readily obtained were avoided from the outset and the ones defined, with the aforementioned exceptions, were intended to be applicable to both libraries and archives, despite the differences between those two types of institutions. A review was subsequently conducted to determine indicator validity, defined as each one's presence on at least one library or archive website.

Those preliminary tasks aimed to verify whether the indicators established were in line with actual practice, i.e., whether the information on transparency sought was available on Spanish library and archive websites.

4.2. Comparison to and adaptation of MESTA

With the release and dissemination of MESTA in 2017, particular importance was attached to having an official system for measuring public body compliance with the act's provisions on transparency, even though the LTAIPBG had been the grounds for defining library transparency indicators from the outset. Once MESTA was made available, it was appraised both to determine whether the legal obligations included were applicable to libraries and archives and to verify whether it covered the 18 indicators already in place. More specifically, the appraisal analysed the 37 information categories defined in MESTA and the four areas under which they are grouped in that tool, in turn structured around the four sections of the LTAIPBG that list the information subject to transparency requirements. The directors or heads of five libraries and archives of different types collaborated in this process. Their participation prompted the inclusion of new indicators such as the ones listed under area 4 for archives and more precise denominations for others. The indicator 'User charter of rights and duties' was deemed redundant and eliminated, for the respective information is often included in institutional regulations and their citizen charters. Conversely, codes of conduct, regarded as management tools related to the standards that foster transparent behaviour in public service bodies, were added as a transparency indicator (Prieto Romero, 2011, p. 325).

Bearing in mind that the institutions subject to LTAIPBG provisions such as municipal governments, ministries or even foundations and associations do not all conduct the same legal activities, any attempt to impose the same transparency requirements on all would quite obviously be futile

(Ros Medina, 2018, p. 9). That is especially true of libraries and archives, given their specificity. The indicators on information of legal significance, for instance (Ch. II, Section 7 of the Act), were seen to be inapplicable to libraries and archives, which have no legislative competence.

The result of this stage of the process was the establishment of 20 transparency indicators on active disclosure shared by all libraries and archives, in addition to others specific to some. Three models were ultimately formulated, with 20 indicators for public libraries, 21 for university libraries and 22 for historic and university archives.

Since the system was intended to assess active disclosure qualitatively as well as quantitatively, the way in which such information is published was also taken into consideration, as it is in MESTA. That entailed reviewing the parameters appraised by that tool under each indicator and choosing the ones that could be objectively applied to libraries and archives.

4.3. Archivist and librarian validation of indicators

A survey was designed to determine whether the indicators defined were deemed suitable by the professionals heading the libraries and archives that would presumably be conducting self-assessments or constitute the assessment target for outside agents. Their opinion about the aptness of the eight groups or areas under which the indicators were classified was also sought, along with whether they believed any of the indicators listed should be deleted or replaced with others. They were likewise asked to assign a value to each parameter to establish the expediency or otherwise of weighting them within the total score allocated to all the parameters as a whole.

The survey, formulated with Google Forms, was sent to all the directors of provincial historic archives (n=54) and the 48 public university archives (n=48) with websites (according to the University of Castila-La Mancha's map of Spanish university archives (5)), as well as all state-run public libraries (n=53) and all public university libraries (n=50). The sample included a total of 205 directors of institutions under government aegis with websites from which their services can be accessed. The link to the respective version of the survey (of which there were four, one each for historic and university archives and public and university libraries), was e-mailed to each director's personal institutional account, wherever available. Otherwise, it was sent to the e-address on the institution's website. The text of the mail explained the purpose and context of the survey. The mails with the link to the survey were sent from 25

November to 9 December 2019 and the deadline for return was extended to 16 February 2020, after sending a second mail encouraging those who had not responded by the initial deadline to do so.

The two core sections of the five on the questionnaire dealt with the indicators and the area categories under which they were grouped. The first section covered the respondent's data (contact, name of position, years of experience and whether they deemed application of the LTAIPBG applicable to the scope of the institution). The second asked them to score the eight information areas or categories under which the indicators were grouped on a scale of 0 to 5 (0-irrelevant, 1-scantly relevant, 2-moderately relevant, 3-relevant, 4-highly relevant and 5-absolutely relevant). The third asked for an opinion on the suitability of the indicators proposed using the same scale (0-unsuitable, 1-scantly suitable, 2-moderately suitable, 3-suitable, 4-highly suitable, 5-absolutely suitable). Of the 20 to 22 indicators on each questionnaire, depending on the type of institution, only four varied, all in area 4, dealing with the documents or collections in their custody. Such variation was necessary in light of the differences between the documents in an archive and the works in a library collection. The fourth section asked for opinions on the possibility of including other indicators and where affirmative, the area in which they should be classified. The fifth invited participants to add comments or suggestions. The form closed with a word of gratitude for participating in the survey. As explained in the section on the results, the survey was designed to corroborate the suitability of the indicators proposed for each type of information unit and the areas into which they were grouped.

4.4. Development of the TransPA_BA tool

The indicators validated by the survey respondents were imported to a two-page Excel workbook, reproduced in Tables I and II. The first worksheet, comprising a list of the indicators, automatically calculates the results as the information on a library's or archive's website is assessed further to the criteria specified for each parameter, described on the second worksheet.

5. Results and discussion

The process described in the section on methodology yielded a first version of TransPA_BA, comprising a suite of transparency indicators associated with active disclosure and the information parameters to be assessed under each. Unlike MESTA, TransPA_BA has only one type of indicators, equivalent to what in MESTA is known as active disclosure transparency indicators (Spanish initials, ITPA). They cover the mandatory information laid down in the act applicable to libraries and archives, as well as data that enhance the quality of transparency and are specific to each type of institution. The indicators are grouped under eight headings:

1. Purpose of the service and objectives pursued
2. Governing bodies and operating rules
3. Service offering
4. The collection
5. Staff
6. Results
7. Financial information
8. Partnering/cooperation

These headings or areas are defined by the type of information contained rather than around the four sections of the LTAIPBG as in MESTA. All were deemed pertinent by the respondents to the questionnaire. The lowest score recorded (for Area 7, Financial information, by the professionals heading public libraries) was 3.0416.

The 20 indicators under seven of the eight headings are identical for the four types of institutions, public and university libraries and university and historic archives (Table I). The items under heading four vary with the type of institution. With the exception of indicator 4.1 (Collection/document management policy or programme), which is shared, two others under that heading are specific to historic and university archives (4.2, Document classification chart and 4.3, Conservation calendar) and one other to university libraries (4.2, Institutional open access policy). In other words, the tool envisages three sets of indicators, one for public libraries with 20, a second for university libraries with 21 and a third for provincial historic and university archives with 22 (Table I).

Some of the indicators defined are aligned with the mandatory information stipulated in the act and consequently also present in MESTA. Others while not so aligned, are nonetheless associated with information or documents with an obvious impact on institutional activities and services. The indicators on institutional information such as their mission (1.1), strategic plan (1.2), management board (2.1), organisational chart (5.1), staff directory (5.2) and management indicators (6.1) are all included as compulsory in Chapter II (Section 6) of the act. In contrast, the code of ethics, values or good practice (2.4), although not envisaged in the act is included among the TransPA_BA indicators as it is deemed to constitute institutional information, for it refers to required behaviour and organisational attitudes.

		Parameters						Total
	Presentation of active disclosure on the website of the archive or library							
	Active disclosure indicators	Content	Form	Reusability	Accesibility	Dating	Updates	
1	*Purpose of the service and objectives pursued*							
1.1	Definition of mission							
1.2	Strategic plan							
	Total area 1							
2	*Governing bodies and operating rules*							
2.1	Identity of library's or archive´s management board members							
2.2	Regulations							
2.3	Specific regulations on service provision							
2.4	Code of ethics, values or good practice							
	Total area 2							
3	*Service offering*							
3.1	User charter							
	Total area 3							
4	*The collection*							
4.1	Collection /Document management policy or programme							
4.2	Document classification chart (A only)							
4.3	Conservation calendar (A only)							
4.2	Institutional open access policy (UL only)							
	Total area 4							
5	*Staff*							
5.1	Organisational chart							
5.2	Staff directory							
	Total area 5							
6	*Results*							
6.1	Management indicators (scoreboard)							
6.2	User satisfaction surveys							
6.3	Annual report or report of activities							
6.4	Distinctions, prizes, certifications							
6.5	Statistics							
	Total area 6							
7	*Financial information*							
7.1	Budget implemented							
7.2	Tenders, contracts and bidding							
7.3	Subsidies and assistance awarded							
	Total area 7							
8	*Partnering / cooperation*							
8.1	Partnering networks, task forces, commissions							
8.2	Agreements							
	Total area 8							
	Total all areas							
	Total active disclosure							

Table I. Indicators and parameters appraised by the active disclosure measurement tool TransPA_BA (A=archives; UL=university libraries)

Regulations (2.2) and specific regulations on service provision (2.3), in turn, can be likened to information of legal significance (Section 7).

The obligations laid down in the act in connection with financial, budgetary and statistical information (Section 8) are addressed by the following indicators: statistics (6.5), annual report (6.3), budget implemented (7.1), tenders, contracts and bidding (7.2) and conventions, subsidies and assistance awarded (7.3). In addition to the item on agreements (8.2), also envisaged in the act, the tool includes an indicator on partnering networks, task forces and commissions (8.1) as supplementary information, in light of the benefits the visibility of such information entails for establishing further agreements.

Publication of information (for website)		
Parameter	**Explanation**	**Assessment criterion**
Presentation	Library website or page setup with a specific and visible page on transparency	*Score: 10 or 0*
		10 if the home page on the library/archive website provides specific access to the transparency page containing information on active disclosure as stipulated in the Transparency Act or 0 if the website has no such specific section
Information parameter (for each indicator)		
Content	The website contains the information (data, text, graph or similar) specified for the indicator	*Score: 10 or 0*
		A score of 10 denotes the presence and a score of 0 absence of the data and information specified
Form	Two possibilities:	*Score: 10 or 0*
	Direct publication: the information appears directly on the website itself in html, jpeg, pdf or any other format or is displayed directly from a link on the site	A score of 10 denotes direct publication; 0, indirect publication
	Indirect publication: the information is accessed with a link to the site where the information is published but not directly to the information itself.	
Reusability	The information is shown as provided in Act 27/2007 of 16 November on reusability of public information and supplementary legislation, or otherwise	*Score: 10 or 0*
		A score of 10 means the information is Act 37/2007-compliant, i.e., can be reused further to established standards; 0 that the medium is not reusable
Accesibility	Number of clicks needed to access the information, i.e., to view it on the screen, counting from the institution's home page	*Score: 10 to 0, inclusive*
		A score of 10 denotes three clicks or fewer
		Four clicks scores 9; five clicks, 8 and so on down to 12 clicks, which scores 1. In other words, scores decline as the number of clicks rises.
		More than 12 clicks scores 0
Dating	The information for the indicator specifies the date of publication or otherwise	*Score: 5 or 0*
		5 if the information is dated, 0 otherwise
Updates	The date of issue is up to date (i.e., the year prior to the date of the analysis or later)	*Score: 5 or 0*
		A score of 5 means the information content is up to date. In other words, the date is within or corresponds to the established year. A score of 0 means the content of the information is not current.

Table II. Parameter scoring criteria for active disclosure indicators
(adapted from MESTA, furnished by the Transparency and Good Governance Council)

Even though no mention is made of user charters (3.1) in the act, their presence is another indicator deemed to be related to institutional information, given that they identify commitments and establish objectives and criteria against which to measure compliance. Their omission is inconsistent with the fact that they were created to further government transparency in Spain (España, 2005) and are deemed to be one of the major public expressions of transparency in terms of public service performance, efficiency and efficacy (Löffler, Parrado and Zmeskal, 2007, p. 18). The mandatory updating of these documents and the certification process guaranteeing their compliance with the requirements set out in the certification protocol underlie the inclusion of a specific indicator (6.4, Distinctions, prizes, certifications),

that can be applied as well to other types of acknowledgement.

In addition to the above, other indicators specific to institution type and associated with management of one of the essential service resources, the collection, are grouped under heading 4, as noted earlier. Table II lists the parameters assessed under each active disclosure indicator.

TransPA_BA draws from MESTA for just seven parameters (Table II): four dealing with the information itself and its disclosure (content, form, dating and updates) and the other three with its quality (accessibility and reusability). The tool omits items that might be subject to subjectivity (clarity) or refer to website or informational structure as set out in the act. One of the parameters included refers to the position of the information on the website in terms of greater or lesser visibility (presentation). Some of these parameters are likewise considered in other transparency assessment methods, such as used in the reports issued by Fundación Compromiso y Transparency (visibility, accessibility, updates). As in the MESTA model, each parameter is scored, in most cases with only two options: 10 if it is present or present in a given way and 0 otherwise. One of the three exceptions is accessibility, for which a scale of 0 to 10 is established. The other two are dating and updates (comprising a single joint parameter in MESTA). The scale defined for each is 5 to 0, given that in TransPA_BA they are listed as separate items for readier identification. Fifty points is the highest score that can be allocated to any given indicator.

The professionals surveyed (response rate= 44.8 % of the total 205 head librarians/archivists invited to participate) validated the indicators proposed. Respondent breakdown by type of institution was as follows:

- Provincial historic archives: 35.1 % (n=54)
- State-run public libraries: 47.1 % (n=53)
- University archives: 47.9 % (n= 48)
- University libraries: 50 % (n=50)

Although the scores revealed a number of differences in the perception of indicator suitability (on a scale of 0 to 5 in ascending order), in all but two the values were consistently >3. The two exceptions were indicators 7.2 (Tenders, contracts and bidding), scored at 2.9166 and 7.3 (Subsidies and assistance awarded) at 2.8333, in both cases by head librarians at state-run public libraries. Nearly all the indicators were, then, perceived as suitable for measuring archive and library transparency.

Overall the indicators sum 100 points. Each indicator was assigned the value found by weighting the mean score attributed to it by respondents to accommodate the particularities of each type of archive and library.

Synthesising in a single final score the quantity and quality of the information published based on a total of 100 points, more than indicating a pass (≥50) or fail (≤50), helps institutions identify areas in need of improvement.

As the system of indicators comprising this first version of TransPA_BA should not be static, the tool cannot be deemed to be in its final state. It is, rather, a 'preliminary', open method that will need to be adapted in keeping with developments. Moreover, as it is regarded a 'lowest common denominator' model, it may call for additions and amendments, as well as more specific definitions of some of the criteria applied to the indicators as the information located with the use of the tool detects weaknesses in that respect.

TransPA_BA will be made available to librarians and archivists as an Excel workbook designed with an algorithm that automatically calculates the results and provides a detailed description of the parameters to be scored under each indicator. The design pursues ease of application to encourage use, the intention being to upload the findings to a website after notifying head librarians and archivists of the respective results. The aim is to further the publication of transparency-related information and documents. Verification of the utility of the tool will depend on whether the findings are reported periodically over time, and whether the quantity and quality of the information published on institutional websites improve.

6. By way of conclusion

The dissemination of the TransPA_BA tool indicators and assessment criteria is intended to inform libraries and archives of how their transparency will be measured and, if they deem it expedient, to prepare accordingly. The survey e-mailed to professionals was meant to serve the same purpose. The aim is not to formulate rankings, although application will reveal any inter-institutional differences, but to facilitate the gradual inclusion of transparency-related information on library and archive websites, while favouring collective learning. The ultimate objective is to provide citizens with more and better information and to induce their participation. The possibility of fraud, corruption or mishandling of public resources by these institutions is not envisaged. Rather, the idea is to foster exemplary transparency by services devoted to furnishing information on other institutions.

The creation of effective, transparent and accountable institutions is one of the targets under goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Libraries, as contributors to that target, should also be transparent (IFLA, 2020).

The use and monitoring of transparency indicators in connection with active disclosure by archives and libraries will afford all citizens, users and non-users, fuller information on how these services operate, giving rise to possible critique or value judgements. Transparency does not exist unless citizen participation is encouraged. Conveying what institutions do relative to what they aspire to do is consequently imperative and websites are the vehicles best suited to the purpose.

Acknowledgements

Notes

(1) https://www.consejodetransparencia.es/ct_Home/index.html

(2) https://transparencia.org.es/

(3) https://www.compromisoytransparencia.com/

(4) https://acreditra.com/

(5) https://www.uclm.es/areas/asistencia-direccion/archivo/mapas-archivos/archivos-espanoles

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