

# Presentation of the 2009 Emmett Leahy Award

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## Introduction of the Awardee, Maria Guercio

Luciana Duranti, Presenter

The Emmett Leahy Award is the highest award for individual accomplishment in the information and records management profession. Given in honor of Emmett Leahy, the legendary pioneer of records management, this award annually recognizes an individual whose contributions and outstanding achievements have had a major impact on the records and information management profession. The Emmett Leahy Award differs from other awards in the following ways:

- The recipient does not have to be a member of a professional organization
- The Award does not require a service component and is not based on volume or number of contributions, and
- The Award acknowledges the unique impact of an individual who has moved the field in a direction that it might not have gone otherwise, thereby recognizing the visionary and the activist.

The 2009 recipient of the Emmett Leahy Award is an individual who has always regarded the information and records management function as a civic, legal and moral responsibility of everyone, from the politician to the auditor, from the legislator to the administrator, from the employee to the user. To be a records professional involves first and foremost reminding the citizenry at large and those who govern and control us that accountability and transparency, democracy and justice depend on good records, and ensuring that they recognize the need for a highly educated community of trusted professionals managing such records throughout their life cycle.

The 2009 Leahy Award recipient's career has been varied and multifaceted. This professional has developed records systems for organizations in the public and private sectors, from banks to utilities companies, and from regional and city administrations to insurances; has been state archivist and archival superintendent, government appointed member of the highest bodies having oversight on public assets, and university professor, vice-president technology, and Provost. In addition, this person has exercised a strong influence on the International Council on Archives, the DLM Forum, the European Union Cultural Activities Committee and the Forum for Information Society; has been co-principal investigator in international research on digital preservation projects, such as ERPANET, DELOS and CASPAR, head of a national team in InterPARES, member of the boards of Digital Preservation Europe and DigCult Curriculum; member of ISO standards committees, and of the Moreq 1 and 2 editorial boards; editor of several professional journals, a prolific writer, with 3 books and so many articles that I have stopped counting after one hundred, and an indefatigable contributor to continuing professional education, with hundreds of seminars, workshops and public lectures delivered all over the world. With every position occupied and every role played, this person has left a recognizable mark. I will only mention the most significant contributions.

In the years 1998 and 2000, as a member of the Parliamentary Committee responsible for drafting the legislation regulating public offices, this person succeeded in including in the legislation the requirements for:

- a record management office in each department of every level of government (state, region, province, municipality);

- a records management professional with graduate education in records and archives management as the manager of such office;
- the development of classification and filing plans as integrated tools; and
- the development and mandatory use of a records management manual for each agency. Today this manual is used also in the private sector.

Since then, this year's Leahy Award recipient has led all the initiatives of the country related to records management and digital record making and keeping by drafting the policies, strategies, procedures and regulations issued by its competent organs. Moreover, this person has developed policies and procedures for digital records creation and use for the IT departments of several important universities in the country.

In 2003, this individual designed and developed an entire graduate level program on Electronic Records Management and Preservation, today delivered by four universities, and adopted by the European Commission as the foundation of a European Master's Program in Electronic Records Management and Preservation. Presently, this person is teaching the courses of the Supreme School for Public Administrators, which prepares all public managers for the positions to which they have been appointed.

Many colleagues regard this individual's intellectual contribution to MoReq 1 and 2, the European model requirements for electronic recordkeeping, as seminal and deserving of the award on their own right. However, if asked about her most important achievement and the one with the most impact, this year's award recipient would most likely say that it is to have educated so many graduates in records management who firmly believe in their mission of "active citizenship" and who are already leaving their mark as professionals, teachers, researchers, and engaged contributors to all aspects of their field, especially the political, legal, and ethical aspects.

For all the activities and the research that she has spearheaded in Europe, for the impact that she has had on the legislative and regulatory framework of her country, for the difference that she has made in the education of the new generation of professionals in Italy and Europe, the Emmett Leahy Award Committee is proud to present the 2009 Emmett Leahy Award to the Chair of the Master of Records Management and Archival Science Program, Head of the Archival, Library and Information Studies Department, Vice President Technology, and Provost of the University of Urbino, Italy, Dr. Maria Guercio.