

Editorial

Book launch for the *Archival Science and Records Management Manual*

On 13 October in the assembly hall of the Maritime Museum, we held a book launch for the *Archival Science and Records Management Manual*: an ambitious project that our association began more than seven years ago, which is now finally a reality.

First, we should emphasise that the development and publication of this *Manual* has been a long, complex project for several reasons: the desire to combine a wide range of knowledge about archival science in one publication, the need for conceptual debate to enhance the end result and bring in different archival perspectives, the large number of authors involved, the difficulties inherent in a group project, etc. Clearly, this complexity increases the value of the final product and reflects the diversity of professional profiles and the wealth of theoretical and practical contributions, all contained in a single overall framework.

Second, the goal was to devise a manual in which all professionals would be recognised and which would therefore be useful to everyone. The *Manual* brings together the professional experience of Catalan archivists in recent years and, above all, is meant as a reference tool for professionals and students in the field of archival science and records management.

Lastly, the writers worked with the guiding principle that the underlying theory and methods are essentially the same in administrative archives as in historical archives, though the specifics may vary based on the different contexts in which the profession is practised.

Back in December 2001, the Archivists Association of Catalonia (AAC) created a working group to establish the methodological foundations—both theoretical and practical—for our country's first archival science manual. This working group, consisting of Pilar Blesa, Emília Capell, Mariona Corominas, Josep Fernández, Jordi Serchs and Jordi Serra, eventually agreed on a table of contents that would form the basis for the manual.

In keeping with this plan, in 2004 the AAC Board of Management entrusted the writing of the chapters to a large group of well-respected professionals, based on a proposal from the working group that had developed the table of contents. Authors were selected so that each chapter's working group consisted of professional archivists who were longtime specialists in the topics they would write about. Groups of writers were chosen instead of individual authors for two reasons: first, to be more representative of professional archivists as a whole, and second, to encourage conceptual debate and consensus in the writing phase.

When the volume was formally commissioned, two editors were selected: Emília Capell and Mariona Corominas, who would manage the project from the assignment of chapters to the various authors (November 2004) and on through publication. The editors' job was to ensure consistency, coordinate the writing teams and facilitate communication among them, keep track of all terminology, and standardise the texts and prepare them for publication.

Finally, though a bit later than originally planned, the *Archival Science and Records Management Manual* is now available to professionals. We at the AAC believe it has been a worthwhile effort, because the archival community in Catalonia has managed to bring together in print the fruit of its experience and the knowledge of archival science and records management that it has amassed in recent years, without forgetting the past or ignoring our profession's prospects for the future.

The *Manual* now being launched contains a total of 552 pages, structured into eleven chapters and a subject index. Each chapter is divided into sections to simplify searches for specific information.

The consistency of the book's format and content means it can be read either as a whole or in parts, depending on the reader's interests.

The material is organised as follows: the first part deals with the theoretical foundations of archival science—the sort of overview that any good science manual should include; the next part focuses on approaches to management, with chapters on planning, document processing techniques and the records management system, as well as electronic document management and computerised management of an archive; the following part addresses conservation and dissemination, with chapters on preservation techniques, access and communication and dissemination; and the final part is devoted to archival science in Catalonia and the current challenges facing the profession.

The first edition is in Catalan, but over the next few years the AAC also hopes to prepare an edition in Spanish and perhaps one in English, which would provide considerable international visibility for Catalan archival science. In this editorial, we wish to take this opportunity to give special thanks for the cooperation and financial support of the Sub-Directorate General for Archives and Records Management, as well as the Cultural Heritage Office of Barcelona Provincial Council. Without this support, it would have been hard to bring this ambitious project to fruition. As a scientific publication, the *Archival Science and Records Management Manual* should be a basic reference for members of the profession and a regularly consulted volume in our everyday work. This book also summarises the efforts to standardise archival science in Catalonia, and at the same time seeks to strengthen the role of archives and professional archivists in both the public and private spheres.