

# Butlletí 103

Informatiu de l'Associació d'Arxivers-Gestors de Documents de Catalunya

## A professional sector entering the new year in good health

Or at least it looks that way, because the new season began with a wide range of activities related to archival science and records management. Although we are experiencing a time of extremely limited resources, the broad spectrum of activities and initiatives related to our profession serve as a clear indication of the vitality in the sector brought about by professionals in the field. Because, in spite of the crisis, this is a professional sector in rude health!

In terms of media coverage of the sector, after the soap operas surrounding the so-called 'Salamanca Blood Papers', the Centelles Archive and Wikileaks, the sector has also featured as news elsewhere in the media, this time without necessarily bringing the word 'archive' into the controversy. Some examples of the importance of archives have been the matter of investigation into children who were apparently stolen, the recovery of the treasure from the wreck of the ship *Mercedes* and the semantic web projects launched by Google and Wikidata.

In the first case, Catalan archives are being used a great deal to clarify the circumstances of the disappearance of children from hospitals in recent decades. The efforts of several archivists are helping to document activities that are the subject of legal investigations. In the second case, the archives have served to demonstrate Spanish ownership in the dispute against the company Odyssey concerning the treasure from the shipwreck of the *Mercedes*. And in the third case, archiving techniques are helping to create data that is readable by computer applications by the addition of semantic and ontological metadata to the World Wide Web.

In addition to these things, other significant developments include news of the launch of the Archives Portal Europe, the exhibition of hundreds of documents in the Vatican Secret Archives that are no longer secret (including documents on the trial of Galileo Galilei and the papal bull dividing up the New World), the online publication of Einstein's personal archive, which contains more than 7,000 manuscripts, and the return of the first documents confiscated at the end of the Spanish Civil War to Catalan organisations and families.

From a more technical perspective, we ended last season with a large number of initiatives, including the 9th InterPARES 3 Project International Symposium held in Barcelona and the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Archives by UNESCO, as well as other activities involving our professional sector, such as the International Conference 'European Trade Union Archives: a Plural Model', the launch of the Master's Degree in Archival Science and Records Management at the School of Archival Science and Records Management (ESAGED), the 5th Postgraduate Course in Electronic Records Management and the Innov@doc Conference, among others.

The field of archives continues to demonstrate its vitality in 2012: the 7th Conference on Municipal Archives on 19 April, a workshop on auditor training

on 26 April, the 11th Symposium of Study and Debate on 29 May, the 12th International Conference on Image and Research in November, the ISO 30300 course for auditors in the coming autumn, etc., in addition to a large number of activities that are organised by each of the municipal and regional archives. Unfortunately, space restrictions mean we cannot print the full list here, as it contains such a huge number of events.

At the same time, the programme of courses offered by the AAC is worth noting. These include a large number of new training options together with a new postgraduate course in the management of photographic records to be given in Spanish organised by the School of Archival Science and Records Management (ESAGED), the Centre for Image Research and Diffusion (CRDI), the Catalan Institute of Photography Studies (IEFC) and the AAC, aimed at meeting demand for specialised training in this area of archiving.

In short, we can say that all of these developments suggest that the archiving sector is in very good health and this extensive collection of ideas, activities and actions are a clear indication of this. With this in mind, we would encourage you to take part in the wide variety of options available and help the professional archiving sector keep up this momentum.

We would not like to finish without mentioning that, as this editorial was going to the press, the Council of Ministers passed the long-awaited draft bill on administrative transparency, access to public information and good governance, an area in which we professional archivists have a lot to say. The process of appeals is now open and the AAC will appear before the council to defend the notion that access must be a right that is recognised by law.

In this regard, the arguments to be put forward by the AAC include the consideration of access as the rule and not the exception and, in line with the recommendations on access to public documents of the Council of Europe, we consider that, as a general rule, information must be public and access to information must also include access to documentation, whether this is in archives and registries or not.

The design of the draft bill goes entirely against international conventions when it states the object of the bill (Article 1) to be to 'broaden and reinforce' transparency, when what it must in fact do is 'guarantee' this.

Continuing along these lines, the draft bill outlines an interpretation of access that is far removed from the model of transparent administration and good governance, which is made clear in a series of very general restrictions that would allow for a great deal of discretion and arbitrary decision making on the part of institutions. A clear example of this is the first final provision, in which the modification of Law 30/1992 on the legal system of public administrations and common administrative procedure is more limited and less ambitious.

There are many reasons to appeal (in our opinion close to 100) but of particular importance is the underlying notion of the lack of importance placed on the organisation of archives or the adoption of records management systems. Here at the AAC we have always defended the notion that this would provide an essential qualitative leap forward by enabling the principles of the right to access to be applied and by making public institutions truly transparent to citizens.

