

THE ARCHIVES WE WANT

A look back through the editorials of the issues of the past few years shows just how many reflections and proposals we at the AAC have made for the Catalan Archives System to rouse from too many years of lethargy. That's not a lament, we accept our purpose, which is to promote the most appropriate legal and political frameworks so that our members can actively develop their capabilities in order to approve archives and records management in Catalonia. It's that simple and that complicated. Particularly in such turbulent times as we have lived through in the last eight years or so. First the cuts, then the uncertainty surrounding the independence 'process', the application of Article 155... the outlook has become increasingly bleak. Lack of ideas? We have often thought so, but perhaps that was unfair. Lack of resources? A permanent, systemic, lamentable lack of economic and human resources. Lack of political leadership and impetus? Definitely. And we could add passiveness and even adverse interests against archives, and especially records management, making headway outside the scope of Culture. The diagnosis is one of wholesale disappointment. The perception is of removing the capacity to make decisions and generate impact. In recent years we have been cornered by the Ministry of Culture. It has let itself go and simply kept a minimum budget to get by, to not shut up shop. Of course we've always kicked back against that and we will continue to do so. These aren't the archives we want.

Even so, despite all the setbacks, the Catalan Archives System marches on. And it does so thanks to the push it receives daily from the professionals that carry on archives, who undertake archival treatment, promote dissemination, who try to foster transparency policies, who facilitate access to information, who complain and criticise, who stay active as a vocation, because they love their profession, simply to be accountable to themselves after years and years of study and silent, constant work. If they hadn't, we would have had to shut up shop. For good. And shutting up shop doesn't mean literally closing down archives, it means leaving in the hands of other professionals a job they cannot do. Shutting up shop means over-'museumising' archives, de-contextualising them, locking them away, leaving the way open to opacity, corruption, lack of economic and political control, to memory loss. It might sound as though we're taking this a bit too philosophically, but maybe the time has come to stop and think, something we have done a bit too much on the fly. The AAC first and foremost. We wanted to be dynamic, without looking back and without considering that maybe we were leaving someone behind. We wanted to think about the future without solving any of the precariousness of the present. We wanted to fix the country from Barcelona, without considering the peculiarities of the regions and municipalities, of the difficulties our professionals face. Everyone, in their place of work, knows what type of archives they want, which archives would be best, how to improve the records management system. Our professionals visualise the archives we want, and they do it every day.

The referendum of 1 October was probably a collective landmark, everyone was involved. Whether for or against. But it was undeniably a collective catharsis, the results and consequences of which we live with every day. And no doubt we will continue to live with them for some time to come. In September's editorial we talked about mobilising. About whether it made sense to continue in silence, unmoving or whether it was time to starting heading somewhere. The AAC is clear that we must move forward, advance, let ourselves be propelled by the driving force of our professionals. This is the real driver of change in the profession and by the profession, of society itself. A society that we want to be more just and democratic with more solidarity. A society that we want to be less corrupt, passive and exclusive. Archives that enable this society to have the best values and get rid of the negative ones, these are the archives we want.

#ArxivemElMoment

One of our most powerful shows of strength as a group that provides ample proof that our archivists are an unstoppable driving force is undoubtedly the #ArxivemElMoment (#Let'sArchiveTheMoment) campaign. The aim was to promote archives' capacity for immediate action to preserve the present, for interacting with members of the public who have produced photographs, texts and audiovisual material on the days leading up to and following the referendum of 1 October. The campaign has ended up bringing together material from the period between 20 September and 27 October, a historical time when groups of all political colours decided to take action. Of course the campaign proposed by the AAC was to compile, in an archival fashion, documentation that showed the action that we understand to have openly violated the human rights of many people, including freedom of expression, the right to demonstrate and the right to put a bit of paper in a ballot box. The AAC felt called upon by the citizens' need to preserve their basic rights and that's the side we took. Not without controversy, professional and among professionals. The campaign has enabled the coordinated mobilisation of 55 public archives throughout Catalonia. Officially. Unofficially there were many more, some of which preferred not to make their involvement known. Out of fear. Not of the campaign failing or of the public refusing to take part, but of reprisals. Post-1-October Catalonia has lived, and still lives, in fear of certain conduct on the part of the State and law enforcement. The most frequently asked question in the suggestion box was whether or not we were doing law enforcement's job for them, by compiling possible evidence of the police charges on the day of the referendum. This fear is real. But the archives of Catalonia have continued to take part in the campaign, either publicly or discreetly. The results are difficult to assess. We will not have quantitative data for some time; we have yet to ask for it. What the AAC was interested in was seeing whether we could mobilise ourselves as a profession to face up to the immediacy, the turn of events, capturing the historic moment, the building of a collective memory without institutional intervention, directly with the public. Our proposal was postcustodial archival action with the theoretical discussions, support and lack thereof that this gives rise to. The AAC is satisfied with the outcome. More than 20 articles and interventions in the media from all over the country; more than 50 archives mobilised, large numbers of archivists committed and taking action. The profession has its own driving forces that we must continue to investigate and advance. If we want to make a real change, we need to activate them soon. This is the AAC's goal for the coming months.

Archives as the drivers of transparency and e-administration.

It is indisputable to us that if there is a professional sector and theoretical knowledge giving rise to serious thought regarding transparency policy in Catalonia, it's the archivists and records managers. Transparency policies are not implemented with a one-size-fits-all web portal for the whole country, like the Catalan Open Government Consortium. Or with market-based records management products and little else. They are put into practice thanks to people who are familiar with the tools, can use them, maintain them and suggest ways to improve them. That's obvious. Yet many organisations continue to leave the use of these tools to enthusiastic innovators, technologists, experts in organisation and motivated lawyers, none of whom have the necessary comprehensive vision. Archivists-records managers bring this knowledge and the labour market is showing positive results in this respect, as we will explain shortly.

What interests us here is that the AAC continues to be fully engaged in explaining in detail why records management is the essential methodology for managing the information capital of a public or private organisation. In recent months we have done this in two important training events. The first was held in Toledo on 9 and 10 November as part of

the *5th International Congress on Technological Innovation and Public Administration* organised by the Luis Ortega Álvarez Centre for European Studies and autonomous community of Castile-La Mancha. We presented the main guarantees records management provides in achieving complete transparency. We spoke of the articles of the Catalan Transparency Act that favour the use of records management and the amendments to the Archives Act deriving therefrom that have enabled greater visibility of the inventories and registers that archives manage, amongst many other points. The audience was made up mainly of jurists who were most interested in our proposals. People of certain academic influence were able to view transparency from a different perspective. The event also provided an opportunity to see how many transparency commissions in the autonomous communities are incorporating archivists in their ordinary management to increase weighting capacity and gain a broader contextual view. We were surprised to see how this is becoming the norm in many communities and is considered necessary, and yet, in Catalonia, where we have possibly the most advanced transparency and records management legislation, we continue to have a Commission to Guarantee Right of Access to Public Information (GAIP) with five designated jurists. Well, in actual fact there aren't five, there are two who must have their work cut out for them just getting started. There is no question that the new Parliament resulting from the elections of 21 December will have to deal with the current status of the GAIP urgently, responsibly and respecting the Act.

We raised many of the points covered in Toledo at the *3rd Conference on Transparency and Archives* organised by the Transparency and Good Governance Council on 12 December. The conference was the response to an explicit request by the AAC for a meeting of this type last July. We made a total of 17 specific proposals, not to have the Transparency Act amended, but to change the mindset and do away with the prejudices that many jurists still harbour in regard to archives. All our proposals were well received by those attending but especially so by the Transparency and Good Governance Council, with whom we have met to discuss the proposals and study their feasibility. Transparency and access to information are paramount to our promotion and defence of the profession. We have shown this since the work prior to the passing of the Catalan Transparency Act and we will continue to do so for as long as possible. Archives have a leading role in Open Government policy and, as we said earlier, the labour market appears to bear this out.

A changing labour market

We speak very little of the action the AAC takes to promote new job offers and ensure that those that arise offer minimum guarantees of decent and appropriate employment. It is a silent, arduous task that requires us to be ready for offers, news, changes, suspicions or hints from a frankly complex market. In this editorial, however, we want to give specific figures to show that we want the archives to be full of archival scientists. From the beginning of September to the end of November we published 37 job offers in our vacancy information service. Most of these were for archive technicians, 28 senior technicians, 5 assistant technicians and 1 consultant, along with 3 grants, to deal with aspects related to e-administration. That figure is lower than July and August when 40 offers were published for a total of 71 jobs. Thirteen people also signed up to the AAC job vacancies information service and there were 16 responses to requests for guidance and queries regarding working conditions, job offers and conditions for freelance workers, among others. We have had 10 direct requests from companies and government agencies to include job offers in our vacancy information service. And in regard to protecting and defending professional status, what we could describe as our job offer quality control, we have lodged three appeals with three government agencies to improve the conditions offered. Since May we have set out to reinforce job market monitoring more intensively and extensively, assigning two members to the task instead of just one. We are beginning to see results that will no doubt enable us to better understand the Labour Market Study we

have again undertaken to compare it to 2014's. In 2018 we will have data and a more complete understanding of its development to offer our professionals the best guarantees. The best, fairest conditions are what we want for the archives we want.

#ElsArxiusqueVolem (#TheArchivesweWant)

Yes, the archives we want. That was the title of the electoral debate we organised on 11 December in the Sala Joan Maragall in Barcelona's Pati Llimona Civil Hall. Some 50 people attended the event, where six representatives of six parties standing for election on 21 December explained proposals in their programme to improve the Catalan Archives System. The parties were JuntsxCatalunya, ERC, Catalunya en Comú, PSC, CUP and PP. Other parties invited to take part failed to show up. The debate, which we understood as a more-than-positive initiative that would serve to bring politicians before professionals, lasted two hours and covered numerous topics. One idea, however, was particularly central and shared by most of the participants. The Catalan Archives System (SAC) cannot continue the way it has done up to now; it desperately needs a shake-up of its leadership and political impulse. Eight years of such a lack of drive take their toll and, in fact, this along with the aforementioned sensation of neglect and spoiling was one of the harshest criticisms of the political parties that have recently been responsible for implementing the Archives Records Management Act. There was also a firm conviction that one way to reactivate management of the SAC would be to institute a higher organic rank than we have had up to now. The AAC has asked time and again for a directorate general for archives and records management. Some advocated taking a step-by-step approach and rebuilding from scratch, reincorporating the post of deputy director which has been vacant for seven years despite being envisaged on Government of Catalonia staff. That is not only neglect, it is a will not to bother. And this will, in our opinion, is tied to not wanting to hire someone who, along with dealing with the necessary archive asset activity, would properly pave the way for records management, access to information, transparency and open government. Such matters have been of no interest to the heads of the SAC so far. They probably saw it as a threat. The short-sightedness of some people who can't or won't see further is detrimental to a system of such comprehensive scope as the SAC aims to be.

Open government, the fight against corruption, various proposals to reorganise the SAC's top management, such as making it part of the Ministry of the Presidency or Governance or even creating an independent archive management body. Ideas that undoubtedly need consideration and broad professional consensus. And most parties called once again for a strategic plan. A strategic plan that, let's not forget, was supposedly in the pipeline in July 2017, but whose results, presuming there are any, have not been mentioned or brought to the attention of the AAC. If the strategic plan aims to go ahead with just the Government's internal vision, there is little chance of the AAC joining in and being in favour. We need a strategic plan, but it must be developed in earnest, not just a pipe dream that everyone talks about but sees no evidence of. We can consider it lost in 2017. The last meeting of the National Council on Archives and Records Management was on 12 December 2016. Its Standing Committee has met only once. They say the strategic plan has been set in motion without even minimal agreement with the AAC, with a professional sector that will just have to get on with it and implement it. A lot of things will have to change as of January for this to be believed.

The electoral debate also discussed the precariousness of economic and human resources. It is undeniable. The labour market needs a strong push and one sure-fire way to ensure it gets it is for archives and records management to form part of the sphere of influence of Open Government. Heritage doesn't create jobs. Or not enough. And the ones it does create are low-quality. I suppose that putting it that way will make it clear once and for all why

the AAC makes such a firm, open defence of the need to change attachment to government agencies and the need to urgently change the focus of our responsibilities from heritage to access to information from any period. It's not short-sighted tactics; it's a strategic decision that we believe is substantially endorsed by the profession. If it weren't, we wouldn't dedicate so much time and effort to it.

Talking to the political will means a lot of fine words and undertakings that will likely come to nothing in the end. We are no strangers to this tendency, so typical of Catalan political culture, but indisputably it is better to try than just believe it will never work. What's behind the organisation of this debate is the constant monitoring of political action and close contact with all Catalan political parties. Rome wasn't built in a day. We have spent months talking with all concerned, trying to agree on ideas and modulate a favourable political will. We seek shared ideas, not one party's greater sway over another. We have been accused of wanting to defend certain parties' ideas against others. There is no greater moral turpitude than taking this view of it while hiding the responsibility and probably the inability of certain leaders to promote the necessary political and technical impetus. The AAC works with all political parties so that when the time is right a new Archives and Records Management Act can be drawn up, if it is decided that that is what it is to be called. Maybe the time has come to talk, as many are starting to see and advocate, of a new Governance and Preservation of Information Act, so that we may have a majority agreement with greater scope and an opportunity for more tangible improvement in every respect.

In conclusion, the AAC has many matters on the table that it works on daily to improve conditions for the profession. We are at your disposal, we want to improve alongside all of you. We want everyone to feel involved on a shared path. We want you to send us your doubts, complaints and suggestions, to tell us what we're doing right and what we're doing wrong. We want you to consider the AAC your ally, not a stone in your shoe or a passive agent. Our efforts are constant and persistent and our spirits high to continue in this vein in 2018. We couldn't do it any other way. We want the archives we want to have the strong cohesion our profession has always had in Catalonia.

This being the last bulletin of 2017, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous and productive 2018!!!