

## ***ARCHIVIST: A PROFESSION FOR THE FUTURE***

After the election of the new Board it is customary for the first editorial of the Bulletin to set forth the proposals for the action to be taken in coming years. However, on this occasion we have encountered a situation that requires virtually the whole issue to be devoted to it. This, logically, is the approval, by Parliament, on 27 June of the **Law on Archives and Documents of Catalonia**.

Because of agreement among all political groups (despite the large number of amendments made to the initial bill drawn up by the government), it was passed unanimously in the chamber. We should be particularly satisfied by this circumstance as it guarantees that, over and above future changes that may occur, all parliamentary groups must ensure the Law is applied and, as a result, that the regulations and the bodies it contemplates are developed and created.

It has nevertheless not been a simple process despite unanimous approval. Without taking credit away from any of the different parties that have been involved, the role played by the AAC has been crucial and essential. Now is a good time to mention the committee that was founded in 1997 at the headquarters of our association and is made up of the following members: Ramon Alberch, Mariona Corominas, Josep Matas, Miquel Casademont, Joan Domingo, Ma Carme Martínez, J. Ma Masachs, Alfred Mauri and Marc Taxonera. These committee members have been involved in the different stages of this legislative procedure. Mention should also be made of the collaboration of many other archivists from our group who throughout the process have been involved by giving their opinions. Lastly, there are the professionals who participated on the committee formed in 1998, upon which Francesc Olivé and Josep Ma Sans represented the Department of Culture, and the former presidents of our organisation represented the Association of Archivists of Catalonia.

All these people must be thanked for their disinterested collaboration and contributions. It also seems fair to acknowledge the role played by our former president, Mariona Corominas, throughout the elaboration and procedural phase of the Law. Not only has she fortunately been able to combine her job with that of Parliamentary archivist, but her enthusiasm, know-how, dedication and ability to assimilate and make constant contributions have also meant that many of the pitfalls that appeared along the way have been avoided. This is not only the opinion of archivists, but her decisive contribution has also been publicly acknowledged by all the members of the Parliamentary Cultural Committee that was entrusted to draw up the bill.

This legislative text has been described in the chamber as **modern and flexible** and one that should be considered by everyone as a starting point and not the end of an era. The new Law provides a framework that orders and acknowledges much of the work already being done in our profession and may become a useful tool for the authorities (whose management efficacy and

efficiency will be enhanced) and for the public at large, both on a daily basis in dealing with their business and in the key area of access to information. The regulatory development that arises from it should also share in the “modernity and flexibility” attributed to the Law so that our profession may participate and develop fully in what is known as the information or knowledge society.

The area of action awarded to us by the Law, however, once again manifests an urgent need for specific training for the **profession of archivist**. We believe that this training, which we shall repeatedly call for in the coming months, together with the new regulatory framework, which is much more suited to the needs and challenges of the new century, will make the archivist’s work a profession for the future.

**Symposium *La informació: un dret social de la ciutadania (Information: a Citizen’s Social Right)***  
**8 June 2001**

### **Conclusions**

The Symposium *La informació: un dret social de la ciutadania* (Information: a Citizen’s Social Right), organised jointly by the Official Association of Librarians-Documentalists of Catalonia, the Association of Journalists of Catalonia and the Association of Archivists of Catalonia, took place on 8 June at the Association of Journalists of Catalonia. Its intention was to raise awareness of the social importance of public information and the role the authorities should play in its management. The symposium’s working sessions focused on the needs and difficulties of the professionals who manage information and on the rights the public have to access this information.

Below are the conclusions, written by the presidents of the respective organising bodies, of this symposium.

The public and organisations very often consider professional associations merely as corporate bodies whose aim is to defend their members.

Without losing sight of this role, today’s Symposium has clearly shown that these groups are rather more than this and that we are deeply involved in the defence of civil, political, social and individual (the right to privacy) rights.

We understand that to be really useful, now and in the future, to members and associates, we need, above all, to be useful to the society we work for, and to take an active part in defending its rights. This refers specifically to the social right to information, which is what has brought us together today and is intrinsically linked to our professional work, both in the public and private sectors.

We consider information to be a right and a social asset and that the right to information is an essential tool for exercising democratic rights.

We therefore declare a need for:

- o the right to easy, streamlined and transparent access to public authority information that is both user-friendly and intelligible for the public, and provides access in companies to authority studies and reports, written using public resources, that enable the public and companies to make decisions.
- o the right for everyone to have equal opportunities to take part in and contribute to the knowledge society, in the knowledge that this will only be possible through integrating initiatives. This involves a change from being simple receivers to issuers, and to becoming active parts of the new society.
- o the right of access to information with public access points to the Internet network in schools, libraries and archives in order to overcome the boundaries among the “haves”, the “have nots” and the “cannot haves”.
- o the right to knowledge and ongoing basic training to survive the great mass of information and its exponential growth.
- o active support in the IT sector, with an ability to see the importance of content, over and above necessary connectivity.
- o involvement with the European Community in all information policy-related aspects.

We declare the need for profound cultural change in companies and in the public authorities and one that is based upon the notion that information and knowledge are a core item in new society. For the authorities, this should lead to lines of modernisation that are common to and jointly agreed by all authorities.

Lastly, we wish to manifest the commitment of the three organising bodies to continued future collaboration in areas of common and of social interest. We thus include the proposal for the creation of a forum to work towards the right of access to information.

***Official Association of Librarians-Documentalists of Catalonia***  
***Association of Archivists of Catalonia***  
***Association of Journalists of Catalonia***