

AAC, 1985-2005. FROM AUDACITY TO NORMALITY

The celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Association of Archivists of Catalonia (AAC) is an opportunity to both reflect on a range of issues that affect our association and to advance as far as possible in consolidating the profession of archivist, which still occasionally reveals itself to be vulnerable in certain areas.

It seems that most of us acknowledge reality in our consensus that audacity has been a constant feature of our profession in the last twenty years. And although this approach has been of undeniable value, it seems that the time has come to claim a certain “normality”, to vocalise our desire to be considered “normal”.

Under no circumstances should the concepts of ‘normality’ and ‘normal’ be considered to be synonymous with regression, apathy or paralysis. Quite the contrary, in fact.

We would simply like to claim for archivists the same normality attributed, for example, to doctors, architects, engineers, computer analysts, even to librarians and documentalists.

Two of the many ways in which a profession can achieve normality is to operate within a legislative framework and to have the support of an officially recognised and thorough university training programme.

Laws and the accompanying enactment of regulations are fundamental to the development of any professional association. Not only do they mark out powers and responsibilities, they also set limits and establish requirements.

Our profession by now has an excellent Law on Archives and Documents, approved unanimously by the Catalan Parliament in June 2001. We fully acknowledge and support the regulations that have subsequently been drawn up, and which, in the interest of not jeopardising the development of the profession, should shortly be published in the Official Journal of the Government of Catalonia.

Training was also referred to above, and specifically, the university training issue. If our profession has been audacious in relation to any single issue, this is a prime example. We have progressed from the initial self-training of twenty years ago to the formal training currently offered by the Graduate School of Archival and Records Management (ESAGED). Along the way, we have passed through many editions of the Master’s in Archive Studies offered by universities located in the four Catalan provinces. Nor should we fail to mention the current offer in post-graduate courses and the ongoing training offered annually by our association.

The new training scenario opened up as a result of the Bologna Declaration and the European higher education area represents an opportunity that we cannot afford to miss if we wish to achieve professional normality. In this matter, however, now more than ever we need the support and assistance of public bodies, and most particularly, of the Ministry of Universities, Research and the Information Society of the Government of Catalonia.

Nevertheless, we must be careful when making demands. We must be seen to offer something in exchange, we need to repeatedly point out what it means to be an archivist today, to demonstrate time and again what we can contribute and what benefits we offer to both public bodies and society in general. We ourselves are fully aware of what we have to offer, but this is not sufficient - in order to overcome the relative clandestineness in which we sometimes find ourselves, our efforts in terms of communication must be constant and ongoing.

Review 2001-2005

It is customary to dedicate part of the editorial of the Bulletin that coincides with a Board changeover to evaluating the activities of the previous four-year term of office. This is a custom we have no wish to disregard, and so here we will describe the most important issues and most innovative developments of the period, referring the reader to the annual reports for more in-depth information.

As with previous Boards, these four years have been highly active ones with very satisfactory results. We mentioned the significance of the creation of ESAGED during this Board's term of office, which also saw the definitive approval of the Professional Code of Ethics of Catalan Archivists in June 2002.

The publication of this Code announced the creation of the *TEXTOS* collection, which brings together works of undeniable importance that will become undoubted landmarks for the areas they refer to. Worthy of particular mention, for example, are the works on the Catalan documents held in Salamanca and on the Archives of the Crown of Aragon, as also the article that analyses the current status of the Catalan protocol collection.

The project to develop the Archival Description Standard of Catalonia (NODAC), which commenced in 2001 and culminating towards the end of 2004, was another of the more important achievements of this period. Its presentation in the framework of the 10th Archive Conference in Terrassa (Barcelona) was evidence of the positive outcome of the cooperation between the AAC and the Sub-Directorate General for Archives.

Another cooperation project, which in this case, involved Barcelona Provincial Council, was the drafting and publication of an Archivist's Manual. It was no simple matter to decide on content or to commission works from the different archivists, but we are convinced of its significance and of what it may achieve in terms of consolidating our profession.

At the State and international level, of particular note is the fact that we assumed the presidency of the Archive Association Coordinating Committee (October 2003-May 2005), as also the presence of our members on executive committees representing different sections, branches, and work groups of the International Council on Archives (ICA).

No less significant was the organisation of a number of Archivist Conferences, Image and Research Conferences, Municipal Archive Laboratories, and Symposia of Study and Debate, not to mention the regular publication of our *Lligall* journal, the improved

level of service available through our website, the great success of the *Arxifòrum*, and the achievements of our different work groups.

It is evident that eleven Board members acting alone would not have been capable of carrying through the range of activities implemented over the last four years, which we have only outlined here. As has happened since the creation of the AAC, our members have responded in the most admirable and decisive manner each time that their cooperation was required. Our last words in this editorial, therefore, must be to thank all our members for their faith in us and for their support and encouragement over the last four years.