

University archives are also part of the SAC

For some time, the archival profession has been moving towards norms in working conditions and contracts that all members of the profession would like to see established. This has been driven by the increasing demands that organisations are making on our professionals, the prestige built up by member archivists, as well as the application of Law 10/2001 regulating archives and documents.

Good examples of progress down this path in recent years are the processes of public examinations for admission to the professional body of archivists of the Government of Catalonia or the upcoming exams at Barcelona Provincial Council, which bring an end to long and anomalous periods of temporary work. The appointing of senior technicians by local councils is an example of the slow but constant progress in the regulation of the situations of municipal archives in accordance with Article 22.1 of Law 10/2001, regulating archives and documents.

Recently however, the optimism of the profession has been overshadowed in relation to important areas such as the universities. Even though, under Article 20 of Law 10/2001, university archives form part of the Archive System of Catalonia (SAC), the attitude of certain universities when the time came to provide positions for senior archive technicians in 2007 has led the AAC to initiate a series of legal actions with the aim of satisfactorily resolving these circumstances.

The first of these actions involves the University of Lleida, with which there is already a history of litigation dating from 2003. At the beginning of 2007, the AAC decided to lodge an appeal against the Resolution of the Rector of the University of Lleida to offer a place for a mid-level archive technician. This resolution breached Article 22.1 of Law 10/2001, which makes reference to SAC archive personnel. Currently, the appeal is awaiting sentence by the Administrative Disputes Tribunal of the High Court of Justice of Catalonia, Section Four.

The AAC will be presenting two arguments before the court. The first is a breach of Article 22.1 of Law 10/2001, regulating archives and documents, which states that "...the direction of archives must be undertaken by persons with a higher degree". Under this law, the University of Lleida must offer a place for a senior technician, which requires a higher university degree, and not a mid-level technician, which only requires a three-year university degree. The reasoning in support of this argument is that: firstly,

at the time when the position of mid-level technician was offered, that of head of archive was not offered; secondly, the duties of the position are really those of a head of archive; and finally, in 2003 a similar situation occurred and the process was halted by an agreement with the Rector to create a head of archive position for the university with a job description in accordance with Law 10/2001. It is true that the position appears in the list of positions at the University but such a post has never been publicly offered.

The other line of argument is that the composition of the university tribunal was inadequate, since no professional specialised in archiving was included. As such, the University of Lleida invited the AAC to participate in the tribunal in an advisory capacity, able to speak but not vote, but our Association declined to participate in this process, which was not compliant with Law 10/2001.

The other university which has acted in a very similar fashion is Rovira i Virgili University. The university offered a group B archive management technician position on a temporary basis, to replace an employee on leave without pay. It is clear that this is in breach of Article 22.1 of Law 10/2001, since the duties of the position are the same as those of a director of archives. According to the aforementioned law, these duties must be performed by a person with a higher university qualification. In offering this job the same problem occurs as with the tribunal, in that the principle of specialisation not respected because there is no archive and document management professional involved.

These cases involving universities are possibly the most acrimonious for our profession, since both the University of Lleida and Rovira i Virgili University organised, together with the AAC and it must be said, with considerable success, the *Master of Archival and Document Management Studies*. These universities trained professionals with a higher university degree to develop the competencies necessary to become responsible for and direct the archives of the provinces of Lleida and Tarragona, and now these universities are not making use of these professionals to manage their own archives.

Additionally, the Association of Archivists of Catalonia informed the Government of Catalonia so that they could urge these universities to comply with Law 10/2001, but it appears that the measures taken by the Ministry of Culture have not achieved the desired result.

Even though they are not generalised, these types of practices are a comparative insult to the administrations that do abide by Law 10/2001, at times with a significant effort, and they force the AAC to make use of all legal means available in support of the hiring of senior technicians.

The union of archival professionals must continue to work towards the same objective, which is to dignify the profession of archivist, making it necessary to denounce those types of offers, where in reality, on the basis of the job description, a senior technician is being contracted for the price of a mid-level technician.

It is important to remember that Catalan archivists have great professional prestige in Spain for many reasons, and that one reason is that they helped to bring in a very innovative law. To maintain this esteem it is necessary to insist on full compliance with Law 10/2001, regulating archives and documents, and therefore, we believe that attitudes such as those displayed by the aforementioned universities must be rejected.

Finally, in accordance with its statutes, the Association of Archivists of Catalonia will continue to watch over the rights and interests of professional archivists, and will bring all cases that do not respect current regulations to the attention of our legal services so that they may assess the possibility of taking legal action.