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# Research Libraries in the Autonomous Basque Community

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This brief presentation is aimed at offering you an overview of research libraries in the Autonomous Basque Community. The Community in question is located in the north of Spain. Its land mass is 7,261 km<sup>2</sup> and its population is approximately 2,200,000. It encompasses three provinces. Their capitals are Bilbao, San Sebastián and Vitoria. Together, they have 40 % of the Community's total population.

Regarding research libraries, there are 38 libraries. They depend mostly on cultural institutions and to an important extent on religious orders, given the economic characteristics of the Community and the links with business. Generally, these libraries have a modest number of volumes - between 1,000 and 8,000. They are highly specialized, and access is normally restricted to users having to do with the institution in question.

There is currently no body in the Autonomous Community attempting to standardize, co-ordinate or work out co-operation plans among these libraries. In this way, they work on their own with no established relationships except for those emerging from good relationships among their personnel. This factor means as well a lack of contact among researchers and regarding exchange the libraries might offer.

The only attempt at co-ordinating the above came about a couple of years ago when the Education Council made the Basque Country University responsible for a study aimed at the creation of an automated network of specialized libraries. At that point the University undertook a census of this sort of library as well as of their holdings, growth rates, technical norms in effect, general situation and an evaluation of costs and analyses of automation systems. This led to a proposal for such a network. 38 libraries were analysed in the study. The number of available volumes in them was put at over 1,250,000 with an expected annual growth rate of 100,000. At the same time, the number of magazine titles was fixed at 20,000. This project was given up with the change in government owing to the most recent elections, but there is still the idea of reinstating it and putting the network into effect.

It would be tiresome to describe all the research libraries, even on a general way, but I would like to mention that the two largest are those associated with the existing universities in the Autonomous Community: the University of Deusto and the University of the Basque Country. The libraries are very different

regarding organization and functions, owing to the characteristics of the institutions which support them: one is privately run by the Society of Jesus and the other is publicly run by the Autonomous Community. Let me describe first the Library of the University of Deusto and then move on to the UPV.

The former institution was founded in 1886, and for many years it was the only centre of higher education in what is now the Autonomous Community. It has a campus in Bilbao with five Faculties with several Institutes and Schools on the post-graduate level and another campus in San Sebastián which offers two more Faculties. Currently it has 14,836 students. *Grosso modo*, it might be termed an older university with a rather slow development, regarding the number of students as well as the specialties it offers. As we mentioned, it is divided into two campuses.

Regarding its library, only from the point of view of its private nature, we must take into account the rapid and serious transformation undergone as of nine years ago. It changed from a dispersed library system (over 25 Faculty and Seminar libraries) to a unified concept, bringing about a Central Library. This Library currently houses all the holdings of the Bilbao Campus, with the exception of the Business Faculty which will soon become part of the system via automation.

The Central Library is organized as follows: Liberal Arts and Education Sciences, Law and Sociology, International Law and European Studies, Basque Studies, and Informatics and Economics and Business Sciences. They are all designed in the same way: a reading room for students and a research room for professors with direct access. There are some 4,200 magazines and 250,000 volumes, including a dozen *incunabulae* and 3,000 volumes from the XVI<sup>th</sup> and XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries. The latter is significant compared with the number of old holdings existing in the Autonomous Community. The collections in International Law are extremely important as well, encompassing an extensive grouping of international reviews and treaties. We should also stress the importance of its holdings related to Basque Studies.

Just as at the Bilbao Campus, the holdings in San Sebastián have been consolidated to make up another Central Library which has approximately 75,000 volumes. Both libraries have the same technical norms and design. The top-level organization of the University Library has a General Administration with two Technical Directors, one on each Campus, allowing for co-operation and co-ordination between the two.

On the Bilbao Campus - linked to the University, but in the hands of the Society of Jesus - we have two highly specialized libraries: the Loyola Library with 60,000 books on philosophy (all in the original language) and the Theology Library with 90,000 volumes on the subject.

Before describing the Library of the University of the Basque Country, I would like to stress that efforts made to reorganize it have brought about opti-

mum results - regarding utilization of resources as well as an increase and improvement of services.

Analysing the Library of the University of the Basque Country, we see that - compared with the other State University Libraries - there are differences owing to the following factors:

- The University of the Basque Country is a young university which originated with the University of Bilbao. It was created in 1969 with three Advanced Centres. Subsequently, with the creation of the Basque University District in 1977, it brought together centres existing in San Sebastián and Vitoria which were dependent on other universities.
- This is a University with a large growth-rate. In the past 20 years it has come to have 44,000 students in 13 Advanced Learning Centres, nine University Schools, one Post-graduate School and a large number of Research Institutes. It has a University Campus in Lejona and other Centres in Bilbao, Vitoria and San Sebastián. Currently in the latter two, there is a consolidation of facilities and little by little campuses are emerging.

We might ask how these characteristics have affected the University Library. They are more or less as follows: The fact that it is a young University has allowed for an organization free of the hangovers and habits of the older institutions. From the beginning, this University Library was organized on a unitary basis. This idea took shape in a unified administration with members having responsibilities in all the Centres, each one operating under the same technical norm and the same bases of organization and functioning. At the same time, it was organized as a network of Centralized Libraries with the level of Centre as a minimum, keeping in mind that such centralization must be on a Campus level as each one emerges.

Another basic aspect which sees to it that the University Library functions and is considered as a single University service is the fact of a single budget, set at present at 4 % of the total University budget. This budget, currently amounting to 550 million pesetas per year, covers primarily needs regarding bibliographic material. The amounts designated here are divided among different areas according to academic, administrative and cost needs.

Besides this, funds are earmarked for the renovation, extension and conditioning of areas as well as for the offering of new services and special expenditures in functioning. The specification of funds in these areas as well as the creation of new ones is done by the Administration of the University Library and approved by the Government Council of which the Library Director is an automatic member.

An aspect which might be called negative here, regarding the relative youth of the University, has to do with the collections themselves. The University Library

currently has 325,000 works with an annual growth-rate of 35,000. It has 9,250 periodical titles, 5,374 of which are on-going subscriptions.

This growth has not been uniform throughout the years of the Library's existence, since the consolidation of the budget at 4 % of the University's total only came about three years ago. Very serious budget difficulties in earlier years forced the collections to grow on a minimum level and limit themselves in many areas to what was absolutely necessary. For these reasons we are forced to say that the collections are currently, in the majority of areas, in a formative phase. They are being consolidated only in Humanities and Social Sciences, with all areas lacking in notable older material.

Another characteristic which differentiates this University from other similar institutions is the distribution of its 23 Centres over three Campuses, as well as the dispersed nature in the Centres themselves. Regarding the Library, the structure comes together in a Central Library in Lejona and 19 Central Libraries in Vizcaya (7), San Sebastián (8) and Vitoria (4).

The first problem which this type of organization presents is co-ordination and communication among the three Campuses and among the Central Libraries on a specific Campus. There must be unity, although not uniformity, in functioning and organization.

This situation is dealt with by the creation of Joint Administrations on each Campus whose functions are equivalent to those of Sub-directors of University Libraries. This allows for the co-ordination among the Campuses, acting as a part of the Administrative Team of the University Library, and for the co-ordination of libraries on a particular Campus, since all depend upon these administrations.

We might stress that within the structure of the University Library the fact that the old University of Bilbao had a single University Campus in Lejona with a building designed as a General Library and Documentation Centre allowed at the moment of grouping the different Faculties on the Campus for the creation of a Central Library. This brought about the disappearance of the Department Libraries projected for the different Faculties.

This Library is located in a building in the centre of the University Campus. It has approximately 17,000 m<sup>2</sup> on five floors of which the Library uses four. It is a modular building, square in shape, with an inside courtyard around which we find the holdings rooms. These take up the west part of the building forming a holdings-tower from the second to the fifth floor.

Apart from gathering all the holdings of the Campus Centres, the Central Library acts as the co-ordinating centre for the Library network and offers services of a general nature which affect the totality of the University Community. Among them are: the Documentation Service, the University Periodical and Union catalogues Library or the full gamut of the Libraries such as the Department of Placing and Development of Automation.

Apart from the above, it is worthwhile pointing out the Libraries specializing in Basque topics. Owing to political reasons our Community does not have a National Library. This means that volumes having to do with Basque culture, history and language are housed in different institutions and one and the other make an effort to collect such material. Without being exhaustive we should mention the Sancho el Sabio Library under the auspices of the Caja de Ahorros in the city of Vitoria which is currently involved in reorganization and has over 30,000 volumes and 800 periodical titles. It collects everything published currently on Basque subjects. There is the Basque Parliament with the José Ramón Urquijo Collection. There is also the Library of the Lazcano Monastery (Benedictine Fathers) with over 45,000 works, 30,000 pamphlets and important periodicals holdings. There is as well the Deputation of Guipuzcoa and its Julio Urquijo Collection which researchers consider - along with the collection at the Newberry Library in Chicago (microfilm copies exist at the UPV Library) - one of the most significant collections in Basque literature and language.

The Library holds as well part of the manuscripts of Prince Luis Luciano Bonaparte. The Libraries of the Deputations of Vizcaya and Navarra have as well an important collection on Basque topic where we find another part of the above-mentioned manuscripts.

One might also mention the Azcue Library under the auspices of the Royal Academy of the Basque Language - Euskaltzandia - with its 87,000 volumes specializing in Basque language, literature and culture. Finally, we should also mention the Libraries of the Franciscan Fathers in Aránzazu and Zarauz and those of the Diocesan Seminaries in Derio and Vitoria.

The above-mentioned lack of a National Library means that several of its functions are taken up by other institutions. Thus, the Library of the University of the Basque Country has become the point of access for locating and sending all publications put out at all times in the Basque Country, while the Basque Bibliographical Documentation Centre located in Vitoria puts together and edits the Basque Bibliography - *Eusko Bibliografia*.

To conclude, we could say that the Autonomous Community has a rich bibliographic heritage. Above all regarding the Basque language, culture and history. However, this whole body of information is not really at the disposal of the scientific community in a simple and manageable form. This owing to the scattered nature of the holdings and the lack of common mechanisms of access and search regarding information and documents. Therefore, it is essential to establish a body which would promote and finance co-operation and co-ordination among all the libraries in order to bring about unification without it being necessary to change the location of the holdings. This would allow for maximum benefits regarding available library holdings.