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Specialized Libraries in Spain

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1. Introduction

Until a very few years ago, Spain did not have available data on specialized scientific libraries, their holdings and their services.

In 1983 an interesting study was published regarding preliminary work on a plan to move this sector ahead. The document in question is normally called PLANIDOC.¹ Today we have several studies and recent publications in the area.² They reflect a growing interest in our society, and on the part of our Administration, in libraries and serve as background for discussion regarding shortcomings and development tendencies in this library subsector.

This work offers relevant data regarding indices of modernization in this type of library. We go on to detail the data regarding the above and, finally, to suggest certain conclusions about the professional future in this sector.

2. The Data Source

The collection from which we have gathered data is the above mentioned *Directorio* (see: footnote 2). It was worked out by the General Administration of Scientific and Technical Research which operates under the Ministry of Education and Science. It was done on the basis of polls and will soon be available on an online basis.

The poll includes 2,085 libraries divided among the Autonomous Communities.³ This is shown in Table 1. As is indicated in this table, 917 of them (44.5 %) are located in Madrid and Barcelona. This offers an idea of the concentration of resources in the country.

It is clear from the previous presentation that research libraries in Spain are undergoing a period of change, study, automation, etc. This, in general, stimulates a good deal of professional interest regarding the modernization of these libraries.

However, in some cases, the efforts to modernize are purely cosmetic: certain automation, the purchase of a CD-ROM or a TELEFAX, etc.

Here we have sought out among the libraries included in the *Directorio* (see: footnote 2) "indices of modernization" regarding all the data included. The two indices we consider here are:

- whether or not their collections include microfiche or microfilm documents (whatever the number of documents),
- whether or not their services include interlibrary loan.

The results were not very encouraging. Only 254 of the libraries (12 %) have some sort of microfiche or microfilm documents. Only 449 (21 %) offer interlibrary loan among their services.

The distribution of these services according to each Autonomous Community is shown in Table 1, where there is one piece of information very worthy of note: Cataluña scarcely surpasses the general average, while Madrid shows a 17.4 % plus in microform collections. It is generally believed in professional circles that Cataluña is the most advanced region regarding library services, including modernization and the training of professionals, etc.

3. More Detail

As a contrast with the exactness of the data from the *Directorio*, we have taken a certain number of libraries we know more directly through our work in the institution on which they depend, the CSIC.⁴

There are nearly 90 libraries under the auspices of CSIC. At this point, there are 30 already linked in a developing informatics network, on which we have first-hand data.

According to the data, 23 of them are located in Madrid. 14 of them (over 50 %) offer "personal loan" services. These libraries are connected to the computer and catalogue the books online. But in fact, only three use the automated circulation facility which the software provides. This suggests that what the rest call a "loan" means a more or less lax lending of materials to the offices and laboratories of the researchers of each particular institute.

Regarding interlibrary loan, 18 of the above claim to offer the service. Nonetheless, an examination of the institutes which within CSIC deal with document supply (ICYT and ISOC⁵) shows that only six provide the institutes with the documents requested. The rest merely offer consultation of their catalogues, access to their holdings and in some cases the transfer of materials to ICYT or ISOC for photocopying.

It is logical to assume that serious corrective measures must be taken regarding the data of the *Directorio* used for this study as concerns the services the libraries claim to offer.

4. Conclusion

On the one hand, libraries in Spain - and in particular research libraries - appear to be on the brink of major changes. But one must be cautious concern-

ing concrete achievements. True modernization of libraries does not mean the mere use of informatics or the optic disk. It means a completely new focus regarding services and a radical change in objectives. It is no longer a question of compiling elegant bibliographies for the delight of our colleagues, but of making an effort to understand the demands of the users - in this case, researchers and students - and of trying to present the services as rapidly and efficiently as possible. Tomorrow could be too late.

Table 1

Autonomous Community	Libraries	Microforms	Interlibrary loans
Andalucía	220	16	45
Aragón	58	11	14
Asturias	69	7	8
Baleares	32	5	2
Canarias	61	6	5
Cantabria	28	1	7
Castilla-La Mancha	52	3	8
Castilla y León	148	9	20
Cataluña	361	39	95
Extremadura	41	7	4
Galicia	105	11	19
La Rioja	14	3	3
Madrid	556	97	148
Murcia	52	5	10
Navarra	26	3	7
País Vasco	123	19	35
Valencia	112	12	19
TOTALS	2,058	254	449

References

- 1 *Directrices para un plan nacional de actuación 1983-86 en materia de documentación y información científica y técnica. Anexos.* Madrid, 1983.
- 2 *Inventario de la Situación Española en Materia de Información y Documentación de la Comisión Interministerial para la Ciencia y la Tecnología.* 1988. - *Directorio de Centros de Documentación y Bibliotecas Especializadas.* Madrid, 1987. - *Quién es quién en información y documentación: España 1988.* Madrid, 1988.
- 3 Spain is divided into 17 Autonomous Communities. Each has its own government, parliament, etc.
- 4 The CSIC or Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas has 90 institutes involved in research of specialized nature. It works under the Ministry of Education and Science.
- 5 The ICYT processes some 120,000 requests for documents each year. The ISOC handles some 15,000.