

TOWARDS A PROVENANCE DATABASE IN THE HISTORIC COLLECTION OF THE LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA

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Pedro Rueda Ramírez
Universitat de Barcelona
Facultat de Biblioteconomia i Documentació
pedrorueda@ub.edu
www.ub.edu/biblio/

Marina Ruiz Fargas
Universitat de Barcelona
CRAI Biblioteca. Reserva
marinaruiz@ub.edu
www.bib.ub.edu/biblioteques/reserva/

RARE BOOKS & MANUSCRIPTS LIBRARY

The historical collections of the Library of the University of Barcelona holds approximately **150,000 items printed between 1465 and 1800**. In number of volumes, it is the **second historical bibliographical collection in Spain**, after the National Library of Madrid. The library has launched different awareness projects of its bibliographical patrimony and has developed a research project about **Printers marks**, together with the **Ownership marks project** (Verger, 2008).

The main part of the Library collection comes from the convents of the Barcelona province, as a result of the depriving laws of Mendizábal in the first third of the 19th century. These legal dispositions, promulgated between 1835 and 1837, ordered the suppression of the religious orders and the appropriation of their goods. As for the convent libraries, they ought to be assigned to the establishment of provincial public libraries or to provide the enrichment or creation of university libraries.

The fate of the books from the Barcelona convents, until their definitive location in the University buildings in 1880, was not free of removals, accidents and dangers. Many books were lost, but those that have been preserved show the ownership evidences of those who possessed them, in their great majority religious institutions, but also individuals and associations.

Although it is true that the history of our historical collections is characterized by deficiencies of various kinds, we can make a virtue of necessity when affirming that fundamentally, we are facing a **closed collection**, meaning that, from the confiscation date, no purchases have been made and hardly any donations. As well, it constitutes a positive factor to have the **manuscript catalogs of the former convent libraries**, most of them written in the 18th century and beginnings of the 19th century, kept in the Library, as well as the existence of documentation on the depriving process and about the first years of history of the Library available in the University of Barcelona Archive and the Municipal Archive of Barcelona.

Library of St. Catherine's Convent (Barcelona). Manuscript catalogue (Ms. 1864)

PROVENANCE DATABASE OF THE HISTORICAL COLLECTION

In 1986 the Library of the University of Barcelona started with the retrospective cataloguing of its historical collection. The OPAC includes from its very beginning a specific field for recording the origin of the items, with inclusion of information about the provenance data: printed or manuscript ex-libris, labels, stamps and other kinds of inscriptions, as well as shelfmarks. However, the provided references and the limited retrieval options soon proved to be insufficient.

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When considering the limitations of the system used to state these evidences, the Library decided to begin a database of provenances, whose beginning can be situated in February of 2009. Since then, and in what one might consider as a first phase, the working system is the following: **in parallel to the cataloguing of our collection, the details of the previous owners, individuals or institutions, are described in the authority file.**



University of Barcelona. Library Catalogue

At the same time, the entries of the ownerships, already standardized, are included in the bibliographical records where provenance evidences are present. In view of a quick identification of the copy that holds the evidence, the entry is accompanied with the **call number**. In addition, the information concerning ownership marks continues to be recorded in the **item's field**, according to a set of specific rules. Thus, each piece of evidence is transcribed, even the notes of purchase and the notes of censorship, including the approximate data, when it can be determined.

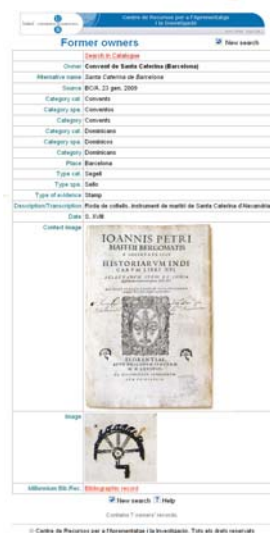
This way, the database that we present is a product of the Library catalog and **values and to promotes the use of provenance information**, attending to the needs of users interested in tracing the history of the single copies and being a key aspect of the cultural inheritance that the new technologies can enrich (Pearson, 2006). **The bibliographic description of records is based on the ISBD standards and follows the guidelines of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR)**. On the other hand, since June 2008 the description of the records is made following the MARC21 format.



University of Barcelona. Provenance Database

The starting point of the database is, as indicated above, the authority records of the catalog, with the **basic goal of linking the names of the former owners** with the bibliographic records of the editions that have copies with the corresponding provenance information.

During a second phase of the project, the information present in the item's field that have not been yet standardized will be retrieved to proceed to **the establishing of the authority files**, to the inclusion of the **secondary entries** of the former owners, accompanied with the call numbers, and to the standardization of the information in this field, with the aim of offering an exhaustive and faithful vision of the provenances of the historical collections of our Library.



University of Barcelona. Provenance Database

Equally, we offer the possibility to **view the images of these evidences** and, if feasible, to show their context in the document, as well as to obtain their description. In the same way we provide wherever is possible, **historical or biographical information on the former owners**, indicating bibliographical sources, following the proposals of other European online catalogues (Curwen; Jonsson, 2007).

TECHNICAL FEATURES OF THE PROVENANCE DATABASE

The database will be presented in:

- Catalan
- Spanish
- English

It will offer the following search fields:

- **Owner** (individuals as well as institutions) - Indexable
- **Categories** (groups of eminently professional character and belonging to religious orders) - Indexable and available in Spanish and English
- **Keyword** (all the fields of the description included in the search)
- **Place** (applicable only in the case of institutions) - Indexable
- **Date of the evidence** - Indexable
- **Evidence type** - Indexable and available in Spanish and English
- **Transcription/description of the evidence** - Indexable

In conclusion, this database constitutes a **unique experience in Catalonia**, and follows the path initiated in Spain by the Royal Library, the Library of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the Universidad de Salamanca.

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