

Librarian Activities at the Spanish National Book Fair - LIBER 2007

Barcelona October 3-5, 2007

My LIBER Thoughts (Adan Griego, Stanford University Libraries)

"Passion for Book" was the theme of LIBER's 25th annual meeting which this year hosted Peru as featured country. And passion was certainly in the air long before the Book Fair opened its doors in Barcelona. A few days earlier, a small group of ultranationalists in Catalunya had staged a public burning of royal family photos, an action condemned by the conservative opposition and the Socialists in power.

Linguistics politics had passion on its side as well, starting with the polemic earlier in the year when the delegation of Catalan writers attending the 2007 Frankfurt Book Fair (where Catalonia was to be guest of honor) excluded those not writing in Catalan. It did not help that Uruguayan-born author Cristina Peri Rossi (a 30 year resident of Barcelona) was let go from a radio talk show because she did not speak Catalan.

It was certainly no surprise that Prince Felipe, heir to the Spanish throne, and also Prince of Girona (among his many titles) was present at the opening ceremonies, where he was warmly welcomed by the president of the Spanish Publishers Association with these words: "donde se le quiere y se le respeta." The royal heir spoke in Spanish and Catalan and by the warm applause, seemed to have found a friendly audience.

Politics aside, passion for the book was also shared by the SALALM and WESS members attending the book fair, which this time was a day shorter than in previous years. These booklovers were not deterred by the high value of the euro and explored not only LIBER's exhibit halls but also the open air antiquarian book fair being held a block away from our hotel. I have been to a similar event held every Fall in Madrid's Paseo del Prado and was surprised at how amiable book dealers appeared to be.

Barcelona bookstores were also hosting LIBER attendees, "Lynn Shirey was here today," said the owners of the Passim store when I made a last minute stop and kept the store open for an extra 30 minutes on a Friday evening so that I could jot down a few more titles.

Perhaps with a similar passion I collect newspapers during my visits abroad, always looking for items of interest and this year there was no disappointment.

- On September 26th a new daily hit the newsstands (Publico) at ½ the price of the competing newspapers, offering DVDs and music CDs. That same day, *El Pais* noted that it had increased circulation by 5% and 7% during the months of July and August respectively (beating the closest competitor by more than 110,000 copies). Its previous page noted "un nuevo periodico...un diario nacional de 64 paginas en color..."
- Perhaps indicative of the potential power of immigrants (ever so present in the news), a cable channel had just added Rumanian sports programming appealing to the more than 500,000 new Eastern European immigrants. Earlier in the year, noted *El Pais*, the same cable outlet had added South American coverage to attract the more than 2 million immigrants from the "other side of the Atlantic" which collectively account for more than "15% of the new cable subscribers."
- On the 30th anniversary of the Vicente Aleixandre's winning the Nobel Prize for Literature, *El Mundo* carried the good news of the poet's literary archive having found a home thanks to a 5 million euro joint acquisition by the Junta de Andalucia and Diputación de Malaga. The more than 5,000 documents and over 3,000 books will be housed at the Centro Cultural Generación 27 in Malaga.
- Already at the Barajas airport on the long way to California, I caught a brief note about the ARCE presentation I had attended briefly the previous morning: [Perfil sociodemográfico, hábitos de lectura y estilos de vida.](http://www.revistasociales.com/loslectores/) (<http://www.revistasociales.com/loslectores/>). The typical ARCE reader is a male over 45, college educated and head of household. It would be interested to see if ARCE tries to expand its audience.

Tour of the Biblioteca de Catalunya (Patricia Figueroa, Brown University Library)

SALALMistas and WESSies had the opportunity to visit the Biblioteca de Catalunya (BC), the national library of Catalonia, thanks to the good organizational skills of our SALALM colleague Lluís Agustí, former library director of the Instituto Cervantes in New York City. Margarita Losantos Viñolas, head of reference at the BC, was responsible for the tour in both Castilian Spanish and English languages.

The tour began with a visit to a current exhibit devoted to the history of the BC as the institution responsible for compiling, processing and distributing the bibliographic heritage of Catalonia.

The BC was founded in 1907 as the library of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans. In 1929, when the Library was acquired by the city government of Barcelona, it was moved to the 15th century buildings of the old Hospital de la Santa Creu de Barcelona. Within the cloister of the hospital, visitors may find the 17th-century Casa de Convalecencia (Convalescence Home) and the 18th-century Academia de Cirugia (Academy of Surgery). Nowadays the building houses the Catalan Women's Institute, the Institute of Catalan Studies, Sant Pau City Library, the Library of Catalunya and the Massana Art School. The BC was made the national library of Catalonia by the Llei de biblioteques of 1981, which was approved by the Parliament of Catalonia.

Recently, Google and five Catalan libraries, including the BC, have begun digitizing their bibliographic holdings in the public domain, making them available on the Internet. The BC is also involved in PADICAT (Digital Patrimony of Catalonia), a project that will ensure permanent access to the Catalan production in digital format. According to the PADICAT team, "by 2009, the project will operate at full capacity, with quantitative indicators of 100,000 Web pages captured in different editions. This may include some 50 million files and 30 terabytes of data. Furthermore, cooperation agreements are scheduled to be signed with 300 institutions of all kinds and online open access to a considerable part of the collection will be available."

Versions of these essays also appear in the WESS wiki:

http://wess.lib.byu.edu/index.php/%22LIBER_2007%22