

République Rwandaise

Margarita VAZQUEZ DE PARGA

1 D

12 p

Rapport

20 May 1995

0.047

INTER-REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON ARCHIVAL DEVELOPMENT

Tunis, Tunisia, 16-20 May 1995

4th working session:

Partners in archival development: evaluation of international assistance

(Wed., May 17)

**SPAIN'S COOPERATION WITH
ARCHIVES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

**Report by
Margarita VAZQUEZ DE PARGA
Director, Spanish State Archives**

0. INTRODUCTION

Spain has played an active part in the provision of assistance to archives in developing countries since the early 1970s when this process began to be organised on an international scale.

In some cases, Spain's contribution has been conditioned by its membership of the international bodies (UNESCO, CIA) involved in such cooperation and this has enabled it to participate directly in drafting assistance plans and also in the direct implementation of some of these plans. In other cases, however, even without being a member of such bodies (the OAS, for instance), Spain has effectively participated in their working programmes through the management or coordination of specific projects entrusted to Spanish archivists and experts.

Apart from these activities developed within the framework of programmes linked to multilateral or regional organisations, Spain has also tried to promote bilateral cooperation mechanisms, since the mid-80s in particular. Furthermore, it has always tried to coordinate actions implemented through this channel with those simultaneously being carried out in the international arena.

1. PRIORITY FOCUS OF SPANISH COOPERATION: COOPERATION WITH LATIN AMERICA

Spain's cooperation work has been focused first and foremost on Latin America for obvious reasons connected with their common historical and cultural background. In the case of historical records, the existence of a common administration throughout more than three centuries has led to extremely close links between the records conserved in archives all over Spanish America and those safeguarded in the former mother country. Consequently, Spain's actions have always been built on the underlying notion of a common Spanish-Latin American documentary heritage within which all the national records of individual countries - including

Spain itself - make up complementary parts of a whole. By extension, its work is based on the belief that any action contributing towards the protection and conservation of any one of these parts will benefit the whole. This fact fully justifies the priority given by Spain and the Spanish state archives to cooperation actions with archives in Latin America for many years.

Within this field of cooperation, professional training is an area that Spain has always targeted as a priority goal. Spain believes that this area constitutes the mainstay of all future development and one which would make it possible to set up a homogeneous forum for dialogue between the Spanish-Latin American professional communities on both sides of the Atlantic.

1.1. Fields covered by assistance

In an attempt to summarise the work carried out, I have divided it up into the following sections:

1.1.1. Spain's participation in archival development policies in Latin America

Ever since the development of Latin American archives first became a topic of debate in international forums, Spain's presence has always been required and its opinion has always carried weight within such spheres. In this respect, the following events could be picked out as a background review: the First Inter-American Meeting on Archives, organised by the OAS in October 1961, or the series of multilateral meetings held in subsequent years to coordinate international assistance programmes for the development of Latin American archives and which became known under the generic name of Toledo I, II, III and IV, simply because the very first of these meetings took place in the Spanish city of Toledo¹.

On the other hand, Spanish participation has played a significant role within the ALA (Latin American Archives Association), the regional professional body set up in 1973 and integrated shortly afterwards into the CIA as a regional branch. Right from the very outset,

¹ These meetings were held respectively in: Toledo, Spain (June 6-8, 1979), Santo Domingo (October 8-9, 1981), San Carlos de Bariloche, Argentina (December 5-7, 1983), and New York (September 2, 1987).

Spain has been represented on the management committee of this body, thus enabling it to take a direct part in drafting the working programmes designed for region-wide implementation. Another point to be highlighted is that the First ALA Conference on Development of Archival Services in Latin America, which laid the foundations for the first medium-range working plan to be drawn up, was actually held in Madrid back in 1982.

1.1.2 Professional training

Professional training has been a primary field of action since the very start of cooperation. Educational activity has taken the form of either general or specialised courses taught in Spain or direct training given by Spanish archivists in the Latin American countries themselves.

General training courses aimed specifically at Latin American archivists have been taught in Spain continuously since 1973.

For twenty years (1973-1992) a course was regularly organised in Madrid under the aegis of the Organisation of American States (OAS) and dealing with the management and organisation of historical archives. Spain was responsible for providing all the necessary infrastructure and for the didactic content of these courses which took place each year over a period of four months. As a result, more than two hundred Latin American students came to Spain to attend the courses.

From 1992 onwards these courses were replaced by the "Archives for Latin America School-Workshop", organised and financed by Spain. The primary objective of this initiative is to collaborate in teaching and training Latin American professionals in Spanish archivist theory and practice with a view to them spreading this same know-how in their own countries and, in turn, sowing the seeds for a forum for dialogue to be set up between members of Spanish and Latin American archival communities. The "School-Workshop" in its post-1993 format is a three month-long course focusing specifically on management of contemporary records. To date, more than 50 students have benefited from this training initiative.

Apart from these more general training courses, Spain has also provided more specialised training periods in the country for Latin American archivists and technical staff.

During the 1980s, the OAS also awarded scholarships for these training periods although over recent years they have been exclusively carried out in the framework of bilateral agreements signed by Spain with different countries. Although these grants were initially restricted to instruction in restoration and microfilming techniques, the range of disciplines has been diversified and for this year training periods lasting one month will be taking place on: reprography applied to archives, conservation and management of photographic records, design and organisation of archive systems: problems and legislation, description standardisation, records computerisation (the computer system used in Spain's *Archivo General de Indias*).

This educational activity undertaken in Spain is not all. It has been supplemented by the countless courses and workshops taught by Spanish archivists in countries on the American continent since the end of the 1950s to the present day. The participation of Spanish archivists in the design and start-up of some of the training centres created in Latin America is also significant, such as the Latin American Archival Development Centre located in Cordoba (Argentina).

Another element to be highlighted here as further support for training activities is the equipping of each national archive in Latin America with a basic professional library so as to contribute to creating or reinforcing their auxiliary libraries.

In this same context, we should also mention the role played by the Archives Documentary Information Centre in Madrid since 1982 as the information and bibliographical dissemination centre for Latin America.

1.1.3 Implementation of national archives systems

During the 1980s, in the framework of different UNESCO pilot projects, Spain was commissioned to carry out advisory missions in Costa Rica and Peru which laid the foundations for the setting up of their archives systems. The final result of this process has been the passing of legislation on archives in the respective countries and the inauguration of new buildings to house their national archives.

As part of Spain's bilateral initiatives with Latin American countries, a Spanish mission was responsible for preparing a technical report on the Central American General Archives in

Guatemala. As a follow-up to this mission, Spanish aid workers were sent over to Guatemala to collaborate for one year on the work involved in organising the Archives.

Spain is also collaborating in Colombia and Paraguay in the development of its national archives system.

1.1.4 Support for professional meetings held in the region

Spain has always tried to support as far as possible the participation of Latin American archivists in any meetings held to swap professional knowledge either in Latin America or elsewhere. In some cases, its contribution has been of a general financial nature, helping to cover the costs of organising these meetings and in others this aid has been allocated to funding the travel expenses of Latin American experts.

Furthermore, the presence of Spanish archivists in conferences and seminars in the region has been a constant factor for almost thirty years.

1.1.5 Cooperation to recompose Latin American national documentary heritage

The policy followed has been one of total support for the recomposition of national records forming Latin America's documentary heritage. In this same context, within the framework of bilateral cooperation agreements, many of these countries have been given a microfilm copy of any records that may be of interest to them which are conserved in Spanish archives.

1.1.6 Information on Latin American documentary heritage

This section includes the main ongoing or completed actions directly related to the dissemination of documentary sources conserved in Latin American archives.

Following a chronological order, the first mention must be for the work carried out in Spain within the framework of the joint UNESCO/CIA "Guides to Sources for the History of Nations" project. The first series of these "Guides" was devoted to sources for the history of Latin America conserved in foreign archives and the volume kicking off this series in 1966 was

a volume listing the sources conserved in archives in Spain and which were duly located and described by Spanish professionals for this purpose.

To follow on and complement the previous work, quite a number of years later two other wide-ranging projects were embarked on that were actually an extension of similar projects already underway in Spain² and which incorporated the application of new technologies; the "Census-Directory of Latin American Archives" and the "Guide to Sources for the History of America". Both projects are currently being implemented and specific cooperation agreements have been set up with the respective Latin American state archives authorities for their development. Under these agreements, the Spanish Ministry of Culture is responsible for financing as well as providing the design of the computer structure required to implement both projects and is also in charge of general coordination of these projects.

The aim of the "Census" project, dating back to 1990, is to create a data base assembling all information of a general nature about the largest possible number of Latin American archives, both public and private. In each of the countries involved the respective national archives are in charge of managing and coordinating this information-gathering task. Argentina, Bolivia (Potosí region), Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Colombia, Nicaragua, Mexico, Peru (Cuzco dept.) are all currently participating in the project. Two others, Uruguay and Bolivia (La Paz area), have also applied to join the project. To date, the Costa Rican Archives Census is already available on-line and information corresponding to other countries is still being inputted. Mexico, on the other hand, has published its "Census-Directory of Mexican Archives" in optical disk format and Colombia, in turn, has done the same for the part of its Census corresponding to the region of Antioquia.

The "Guide to Sources", on the other hand, includes detailed descriptive information about America to be found in Spanish and Latin American archives. In Latin America, only Cuba and Chile have joined the project so far and the references corresponding to the Cuban National Archives and the Chilean National Archives³ are already available for consultation.

² The *Censo-Guía de Archivos Españoles*, Census-Directory of Spanish Archives and the *Guía de Fuentes para la Historia de América*, Guide to Sources for the History of America.

³ In 1992, the *Guía de Fuentes*, Guide to Sources, in Chile was financed by the Latin American Cooperation Institute attached to the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In the case of both the Census and the Guide to Sources, the information is centralised in Spain in two separate data bases held in the Archives Documentary information Centre (CIDA - *Centro de Información Documental de Archivos*) which are distributed by the Ministry of Culture and are shortly to be linked up to INTERNET.

Also with regard to the dissemination of Latin American documentary sources it must also be pointed out that the CIDA, through its participation in the European Information Network on Latin America has made the information on Latin American records stored in its data bases available throughout Europe.

Apart from the two projects mentioned above, over recent years Spain has also sponsored a number of projects relating to the use of new media (oral history, photographic records), broadly aimed at recovering testimonies of interest to contemporary Spanish history. For instance, it has been collaborating with Mexico on an oral history programme on Spanish exiles in that country⁴ or the reproduction of the "Mayo Brothers Photographic Records" and of the "Register of Spanish Immigrants in Mexico"⁵. In Argentina, too, similar programmes have been underway since 1990 through an agreement reached with the Sánchez Albornoz Foundation.⁶

⁴ The project has led to an Oral History on Spanish Exile in Mexico Archive being created in Spain. From 1985 onwards, it was developed in collaboration with the National Anthropology and History Institute attached to Mexico Autonomous University. Over one hundred interviews were held with Spanish exiles in Mexico and the tapes of these interviews together with their corresponding transcriptions are held in the Civil War Section of the National History Archives, Salamanca.

⁵ These reproductions have been made in collaboration with the Mexican National General Archives and have been deposited respectively in the Civil War Section of the National History Archives in Salamanca, and in the State General Archives in Alcalá de Henares, Madrid.

⁶ Projects to recover (or microfilm where recovery of original documents is not possible) the records of Spanish exiles in Argentina and to create an oral history archive on Spanish exile in Argentina.

1.1.7 Provision of conservation infrastructure and the application of new technologies

In the framework of bilateral cooperation, Spain has donated various kinds of restoration materials to the Costa Rican National Archives over recent years and has provided the national archives in Colombia and Cuba with restoration laboratories.

Likewise, it has donated microfilm readers to Argentina, Ecuador and Guatemala.

Furthermore, Spain has also tried to inform the national archives in Latin America about the facilities offered by the computer system developed in its own *Archivo General de Indias* through two workshops which have received UNESCO funding.

1.2 Non-central state cooperation initiatives with Latin America

Spanish cooperation with Latin America, either channelled through multinational organisations or developed within the framework of bilateral contacts, has been organised centrally by state bodies (Ministry of Culture, through the State Archives Authority - in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Nevertheless, an interesting development over recent years has been the broadening of this scope and the emergence - albeit timidly - of different cooperation initiatives originating in the official decentralised sector and the private sector.

Some examples of decentralised official cooperation are the initiatives in the field of municipal archives promoted by Alcobendas Town Council (Madrid), including the awarding of various grants for Latin American municipal archivists to be trained in Spain and workshops or technical advice given by Alcobendas Municipal Archives staff in Colombia. Another example worthy of mention is the cooperation agreement signed between the University of Salamanca and the Cuban National Archives which has entailed up to now the donation of a microfilm laboratory, professional exchanges, advisory missions and training workshops given by Spanish archivists, as well as a joint professional publication.

As for private sector-fostered initiatives, the work carried out since 1992 by the Spanish foundation "MAPFRE America"⁷ is an excellent example. This work has involved equipping

⁷ An Archives Committee has been created within this foundation to coordinate specific action carried out in Latin America.

several Latin American archives with infrastructure (conventional furniture, computer equipment), technical collaboration in record computerisation processes, grants for descriptions of records, sponsorship of professional meetings, or donation of bibliographical works. The Foundation has also financed the preparation of an important professional publication due to come out sometime over the next few months entitled "*Fuentes manuscritas para la Historia de Iberoamérica: Guía de instrumentos de investigación*", Manuscript Sources for the History of Latin America: a guide to research instruments".

1.3. From simple assistance to full-blown collaboration. Assessing past cooperation with Latin America and prospects for the future

Although the assistance provided by Spain to Latin America might be regarded as relatively modest when expressed in figures, a look back over more than 20 years of collaboration presents an overall assessment with wholly satisfactory results. Spain's ultimate goal, i.e to bring about the existence of a professional Spanish-Latin American forum on both sides of the Atlantic is on its way to becoming a reality. The most striking proof of the success of this aim lies in the creation of a number of joint working groups set up to make progress in the development of archival research and to pool criteria and working methods. The very first results of its activity will be seen over coming months.⁸

Nevertheless, although important achievements have been made, especially in some countries, there is clearly a lot of work still to be done if we consider the backward state of archival organisation and infrastructure still prevailing in some of the countries in the region.

What the Spanish Government wants to do, in line with the conclusions of the Summits of Latin American Heads of State and Government which have been held since 1991, is to boost cultural cooperation of a bilateral nature including cooperation in the area of national records. In this respect, it is interesting to highlight that cooperation on archives was one of the sections in the working document discussed at the meeting of Culture Ministers (San Salvador-Bahía, July 9-10, 1993) prior to the Third Summit. However, these declarations of principle clash with the very real economic difficulties affecting the different countries including Spain, with constant

⁸ The following groups have been created: management of current and semi-current records, description, conservation and terminology.

cutbacks in their already meagre cultural budgets making it difficult to even continue with ongoing projects let alone embark on new ones. Nevertheless, we do hope to maintain the lines of cooperation already existing and if possible expand contacts with other countries with under-developed archival systems.

2. BILATERAL COOPERATION IMPLEMENTED WITH COUNTRIES IN OTHER GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS

Spanish cooperation on a bilateral level has also included several North African countries and the Philippines although its scope has been much more limited than in the case of Latin America. In all of these countries the action developed is more recent and has been directly related to conservation of their respective heritages.

2.1. Cooperation with North African countries

Following an initial evaluation mission by Spanish experts to Mauritania in 1988, the decision was taken to bring 252 Arab manuscripts belonging to the Mauritanian Institute of Scientific Research in Nuakchott over to Spain so that they could be restored in Madrid.

In Morocco, apart from some other earlier contacts, between 1991 and 1994 Spanish experts were involved in designing and supervising the work to set up restoration and microfilming laboratories in the Rabat General Library and Archives. Also in 1994, the costs of an advanced restoration and microfilming course in Spain for a staff member of that public institution were funded by Spain. The relevant procedures have been set in motion to send a Spanish archivist to Tetuan some time during 1995 to evaluate the documentary records that could be of interest to Spain with a view to a possible information swap.

Similarly, since 1991 several expert missions have been sent to Tunisia for the purpose of planning infrastructure work to install restoration and microfilming laboratories donated by Spain.

Lastly, a mission of Spanish conservation and restoration experts is due to visit Egypt later this year.

2.2. Cooperation with the Philippines

Like Latin America, the history of the Philippines is closely linked to Spain. In 1992, a joint initiative led by several official institutions⁹ was set up in Spain. Prompted by the serious consequences of the earthquake which hit Philippines in 1990 the initiative involved microfilming Spanish records in Philippines i.e. documents produced by the Spanish administration following the discovery of the islands in 1565 until they finally broke away from Spain in 1898, accounting for some 2,700 metres of documentation shelving. Spanish contribution to the work has taken the form of the donation and installation of the microfilming laboratory, training of technical staff and the supervision of the microfilming work which currently stands at around 30% of the total to be carried out.

⁹ Besides the Ministry of Culture, the project also involves the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Higher Council for Scientific Research.

