

# Maria Àngels Iglesias de la Varga (1940–2001), librarian of the Zoological Museum in Barcelona

The death of Maria Àngels Iglesias in a traffic accident in August has shocked and deeply saddened everyone who has links with the Zoological Museum. She was a loyal colleague, and a friend to everyone who worked with the Museum. She provided an attentive professional service to those who used the library and will be greatly missed by all of us who were fortunate enough to know her in her capacity as librarian of the Zoological Museum.

Maria Àngels Iglesias was born in the La Ribera area of Barcelona. She studied the first part of a Biological Science degree and then went on to obtain degrees in Psychology and Library Science.

From 1981 she worked in the library of the Ethnological Museum and she became librarian of the Zoological Museum in 1993.

The library of the Zoological Museum experienced mixed fortunes for many years. Periods of technical staff shortage overlapped with occasional appointments of professional library staff which, for different reasons were only ever short term. Maria Àngels was faced with what can best be described as a conflict between providing the services expected of a library and the need to catalogue the resources. Similarly, it was clear that the quality of the service would benefit from the most extensive catalogue possible.

Following an agreement with the Museum directors, it was decided to suspend the public reference service in order to carry out the process of cataloguing against the clock. Maria Àngels was able to resolve the conflict by sheer hard work, drawing up an inventory, revising and finally cataloguing the collection of books and periodicals. It was the only way to ensure that the reference service would be resumed as quickly as possible. It goes without saying, however, that on many occasions Maria

Àngels saw the reading room filling up with people and was unable to see them leave empty handed. She became disillusioned on many occasions, but her resoluteness never allowed her to slacken her frenetic work pace.

At the same time, she was able to overcome her initial lack of familiarity with the subject matter contained in the resources thanks to her immense personal energy and her unlimited capacity for making contacts for the benefit of the library. Not only did she attend the public diligently, she never missed the chance to ask questions and obtain useful information from everyone who used the library.

The tasks which Maria Àngels carried out over the years are manifold. The most significant among them are the cataloguing and computer archiving of the book collection, cataloguing the periodicals including a historical revision for each title, and coordinating the cataloguing and computer archiving of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century book collections.

Ever since she was a little girl she had an active and independent character, and an insatiable curiosity for knowledge and learning. She loved travelling and visited many different places, making friends and enjoying each experience intensely, as was her way. She was tireless, never missing the opportunity to see a beautiful landscape, a sunset, a museum, a palace or a cathedral, even if it meant she had to skip a meal or lose a night's sleep.

She always displayed a great love for animals, and had many of her own. At various times throughout her life she gave her support to animal protection organisations.

She loved life as she loved her family and friends. Although she still had a tremendous desire and energy to continue enjoying life, she lived her days passionately and to the full.