

Archives and museums

An archive with over a thousand press references on the nativity scene movement, accessible to everyone

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Pere Catà Vidal (1935) is a nativity-scene and figure maker who has made a life-long collection of press and magazine clippings on all aspects of the nativity scene. Dr. Catà's newspaper and periodicals library was donated to the Col·lectiu El Bou i la Mula in 2012, with the organisation's commitment to take care of it and make it available to nativity scene and popular culture scholars.

The archive contains 1150 elements (mostly press clippings) that mention nativity scenes. The oldest is the copy of a document from the City of Barcelona Archive, and the most modern is an article published in *Mataró Escrit* in 1987, on the craftsmen of Christmas. The majority of articles are from newspapers and magazines from 1930-1960, predominantly in Spanish. The collection has articles from 108 different publications including: *La Veu de Catalunya*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Diari de Barcelona*, *El Noticiero Universal*, *Destino*, *Condal*, and *Canigó*.

The repository includes work by 516 different writers, scholars and folklorists, such as: Joan Amades, Violant i Simorra, Duran i Santpere, Josep M. Garrut, Basili de Rubí, Joaquim Renart, P. Andreu de Palma, Antoni Balsach, Esteve Busquets, Evelio Bulbena, Miguel Capdevila, Aureli Capmany, Anna Nadal, and Santiago Alcolea. The library's value stems from the fact it is specialised in the world of nativity scenes, making it a very inter-

esting collection from which to study this tradition at the Catalan level. Even so, there are many other documents dealing with Christmas traditions in general: for example, Christmas cards, food, and music also figure among the articles in the archive.

There are very few books published on the nativity scene movement in Catalonia, particularly from the first half of the 20th century. Reading the press articles gives you a very accurate and diversified idea of how this nativity scene movement evolved. We must bear in mind the fact that, prior to the re-founding of the *Associació de Pessebristes de Barcelona*, the Barcelona association of nativity scene makers, in 1921, there is very little documentation on the tradition of creating crib scenes, and the books published *a posteriori* have normally been produced under the umbrella of the Barcelona organisation. Being able to read opinion articles on the nativity scene movement from that time, helps us understand how the association's official line co-existed other less orthodox ways of understanding nativity scenes.

Christmas 2016 saw the end of the first phase of cataloguing and dissemination of the Catà archive by the members of the Col·lectiu El Bou i la Mula, thanks to a grant from the Catalan Government's Ministry of Culture.

Digitising, cataloguing and publishing this set of documents, on the one hand, gives the general public access to a large amount of highly specialised information on nativity scenes that is not found in published books. On the other, it provides the base for extending this newspaper and periodicals library

by incorporating material published later than those compiled by Dr. Catà, as well as including other similar documentary collections that are currently only in paper format. The project remains open for ongoing expansion.

To make the Arxiu Catà archive available to everyone, the following tasks have been carried out:

- Treatment of physical documents: the original archive was stored in twelve, different-sized ring binders. The documents, mainly newspaper sheets, had begun to deteriorate over



Original archives (October 2016).

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Final archives (October 2016).

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time. The processing and preservation of the physical documents has been standardised, whenever possible, to DIN A4 format. In some cases the specific item to be kept was cut out, isolating it from the entire newspaper sheet that had been preserved. All the documents have been put in plastic covers and sorted into new filing cabinets, maintaining the original file numbers. This process has highlighted the fact that some documents were already missing from the original donation.

- Document selection: from the entire archive, it was first necessary to select the documents to be scanned, since there were some repeats, and due to content or format-related issues, certain documents could not be digitised. The digitised catalogue includes 95% of the documents comprising the original physical archive.
- Document scanning: Scanning was done manually, taking into account the various sizes of the originals. All the digital documents have been generated in .pdf format. Where newspapers have scanned or online resources, these were taken advantage of. Due to the size of the older original publications, which do not always correspond to current standards, some double spread articles from very large newspapers have been scanned in parts, adapting them to the standards DIN A4 or DIN A3.
- Online document repository: the documents have been deposited in a free space that allows the creation of hyperlinks. All the .pdf files are now located in a DRIVE space in one hundred percent correlative folders, according to the original numbering of the documents. This DRIVE space, linked to the Col·lectiu El Bou i la Mula profile, allows open hyperlinks to be created for each document, as well as the possibility

of sharing the entire archive online with researchers or other interested parties.¹

- Creation of a database, cataloguing and indexing of scanned documents by assigning a link to each record. Given the type of material and possible end users, we decided to choose simple fields that both identified the document (a physical description), and assigned some subjects in case the user wanted to know which topics were the most common. A total of 83 subject labels have been created. The database is now complete, with a physical description and access points classifying and indexing it. Fields like author, title, and magazine title are the most significant in the physical description. They are all recoverable and can be used in combination. The hyperlink allows the user to view and save each document in .pdf format.
- Webpage of the database <http://www.elbouilamula.net/>: For the first phase of this project, it was decided to locate the entire Access archive online so that interested users could download it completely onto their own computer and use it from there. A second phase is planned where the entire database will be located in a

free online resource and the searches made always online. This will also favour the automatic updating of the database after any modifications, and it will not be necessary to download the archive to a personal computer.

Once the cataloguing and online uploading of the archive had been completed, a campaign raising awareness of the project was undertaken through the popular culture study and diffusion entities in Catalonia, and via the organisations of nativity-scene makers. During this first year, a selection of articles from the resource are being periodically highlighted on the El Bou i la Mula website, together with a brief commentary. In time for next Christmas, a second phase of dissemination beyond Catalonia is planned, especially considering that most of the documents are written in Spanish and may therefore be of interest to Spanish-speaking users. ■

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You can consult the archive at: <http://www.elbouilamula.net/>



Cataloguing process (October 2016). ENRIC BENAVENT