White Rose University Consortium: College of Arts and Humanities

Arts and Humanities Research Culture in Spain

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Arts and Humanities Research Institutions

Research in Spain is carried out not only by universities and the state research institute, the [CSIC](#), but also by private foundations and institutions. These are often linked to political parties, the local region or Autonomous Community or certain individuals. They often have their own archives and libraries, organise events and talks, and publish their own research. For example, in Catalonia there is the [Institut d'Estudis Catalans](#), which promotes Catalan Studies.

The CSIC is the largest public research institution in Spain and the third largest in Europe, employing 6% of all those who work in Research and Development (R+D) in the whole country. It is organised into different centres and structured according to *áreas científicas* (scientific areas), including *[humanidades y ciencias sociales](#)* (humanities and social sciences).

The majority of research is funded by the state, which awards funding for research projects. The state organises its research policy through four-year plans. The application process for the important *[proyectos de investigación fundamental no orientada](#)* scheme (which are general research projects) has been delayed this year. In 2012, the scheme funded [3182 projects](#) with a total investment of €384 million, which includes €40 million from European funds. Budget cuts are also having a devastating effect on Spanish research.

Funding for research also comes from private foundations and institutions, such as the [Fundación Alternativas](#), and public institutions.

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Libraries

There is a system of public libraries throughout the whole country, organised by the Autonomous Communities. A [national webpage](#) allows you to search for books from any library in Spain. There is a [directory of libraries](#) which enables you to search for or browse libraries.

Municipal and university libraries are generally easy to access and free to use. In municipal libraries you will probably need to apply for a library card in order to take books out of the library.

Be aware that university students often study in the municipal libraries and consequently desk space can be limited.

It is unlikely that staff will speak English.

Finding and accessing what you need

Not everyone who works in a library in Spain is strictly speaking a *bibliotecario* or *bibliotecaria* (librarian). If you're looking for general advice related to your research topic and what material the library has, it is worth asking to speak to the *bibliotecario* and explaining your research topic and what you're looking for.

It is also a good idea to have some sort of accreditation from your university in case you need authorisation from the librarian to consult older material. Different libraries have different procedures. For *in situ* research a library card is not usually necessary, but it is for loans.

Most libraries now have electronic catalogues which can be accessed remotely – check the website.

Libraries are organised according to the Dewey decimal system, and will generally have a separate local or provincial section too, with areas such as literature, culture and history. The *Hemeroteca* is the newspaper collection. Usually only a limited number of books are available on the shelves and you may have to fill in a form to request a book from the *depósito* (stacks).

There is a *préstamo interbibliotecario* (interlibrary loan) system. Check with the library for details and to find out how much it costs, as it depends on from where the book will be loaned. To borrow books between public libraries (not university ones) is free.

Borrowing books

The procedure for borrowing books is relatively similar to the UK. There are usually machines or a counter (often it will say *préstamos* - 'loans'), and a library card is necessary.

To obtain a card, you will generally need to fill show your passport and hand over a photocopy of it, and fill in a form, giving a local address.

Facilities

There is usually a photocopying service in libraries – check the library's website. Photocopying is also available in *copisterías* (copy shops). However, the photocopying of chapters from books can be more difficult because of copyright issues. Depending on the library and the age of the material, you may be able to take photographs of the relevant pages.

Libraries have internet access via computers, and often wifi too. The individual website of the library or municipal library network website should provide exact information about the facilities at each library.

The [Biblioteca Nacional de España](#), the Spanish National Library, has two centres: in the centre of Madrid (metro: Colón and Serrano) and in Alcalá de Henares (about 35km east of Madrid). The collections are detailed on the [website](#).

There is a downloadable [user's guide in English](#).

A *carnet* or *carné* (library card) is required. There are two types: *carné de lector* (reader's card) and a *carné de investigador* (researcher's card). They can be applied for online in advance of your visit via the webpage of the BNE.

Reader's card (*carné de lector*) – Lasts for 3 years, grants access to materials published since 1931 and requires one official ID document to obtain.

Researcher's card (*carné de investigador*) – Lasts 5 years, grants access to all materials and required one official ID document and two documents that accredit you as a researcher to obtain.

*Check the webpage (ES, EN) of the National Library for a list of suitable documents. Always take photocopies of your documents, just in case.

There are strict security checks – no metal is allowed into the library. Computers must be tagged.

It is recommendable to order material in advance to avoid having to wait. You can reserve material from between 48 hours and two months in advance using the online catalogue. Bear in mind that some material is kept in Alcalá de Henares.

There are different rooms for the consultation of different material. The online catalogue will tell you the location of a specific text and in which room (*sala* or *salón*) it can be consulted.

There is wifi and a photocopying service – the [prices](#) are published on the website. You can photocopy a limited amount of post-1958 material yourself, but the reproduction of other documents you will have fill in an application form. See the [website](#) for further details.

Archives

Access

Public archives are accessible to all, although some material is of restricted access. Check the webpage of the relevant archive for specific details.

To request and consult material, you will generally have to show your passport or ID card and complete a request form. Most members of staff will not speak English.

If you want general advice about the archive and how it may help you in your research, ask to speak to the *archivero* or *archivera* (archivist) who may not necessarily be the person who is at the

front desk, and explain what your project is in order for them to be able to guide you through what is available to you.

It is always helpful to have some idea of what material they possess. Otherwise, ask for the *catálogo* or *inventario* (catalogue), although there may be several, each for different areas. For semi-private archives, such as Church archives, personal contacts/introductions can be helpful.

If you return to an archive more than once, you will probably be considered a *investigador* (researcher) and may be asked to fill in a form with your details and subject of study. A national researcher identity card is no longer necessary, nor are they available.

Most archives will offer photocopying services and you should not have problems with photographing documents: ask for permission beforehand – it is likely you will have to fill in a form in order to do so.

The Archival System

There is a network of public archives from municipal to national levels. Each province has its own archive, in addition to each city/municipality. In cities and towns there is usually an *archivo municipal* (municipal archive), with more recent documents, as well as the separate *archivo histórico municipal* (historical archive of the municipality).

There is a [census of archives](#) run by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. The Autonomous Communities and provinces often have their own guide to their networks of archives, which are worth checking. See, for example, the portals of [Galicia](#) and [Andalucía](#). Material has been digitised to differing degrees – see the section entitled 'Online Resources' for a guide to some of the resources available.

In addition to the state, provincial and municipal archives, universities have their own collections, as do other organisations and institutions, such as private foundations, businesses and political parties. For instance, the Socialist Party (PSOE) runs the [Fundación Pablo Iglesias](#) and the Workers' Commissions trade union (CCOO) has the [Fundación 1º de Mayo](#). Similarly, in the Autonomous Communities and provinces have institutions that in addition to fomenting the study of their area, also houses archival material. For example, there is the [Institución Fernando el Católico](#) in Zaragoza, which promotes the study of Aragón through research, events and publications.

Church archives contain valuable information for tracing the genealogy of individuals due to their records of baptisms, marriages and deaths. There is an extremely useful and [exhaustive directory of Church archives in Spain available online](#).

The National Archives

The [PARES website](#) (Portal de Archivos Españoles – Portal of Spanish Archives) provides both a guide and search function for the state archives run by the Ministry of Culture, Education and Sport (in addition to the information about provincial archives of the Basque Country [Álava, Bizkaia and Gipúzkoa]).

The National Archives are formed by the following archives. The summary information in English below is provided by the websites themselves.

- [Archivo General de la Administración](#) (Alcalá de Henares)

'The General Administration Archive (AGA) is the one that preserves our most recent history, as its collection is mainly restricted to the 20th century, and especially to its second half, although it also holds an important number of documents from the second half of the 19th century.'

- [Archivo de la Corona de Aragón](#) (Barcelona)

'The Archive of the Crown of Aragón conserves documentation on the counts of Barcelona and the kings and queens of Aragon, Valencia and Majorca (14th-17th centuries) in addition to archives from different private civil and ecclesiastical institutions from the Spanish territories of the Crown of Aragon (Aragon, Balearic Islands, Catalonia and Valencia), between the 10th and 20th centuries.'

- [Archivo General de Simancas](#) (Valladolid)

'The General Archive of Simancas, started by Carlos V and completed by his son Felipe II, houses all the documentation produced by the government bodies of the Spanish monarchy from the time of the Catholic Monarchs (1475) until the birth of the Liberal Régime (1834). It represents, therefore, the most homogeneous and complete document collection of our historical memory of the 16th to 18th centuries.'

- [Archivo Histórico Nacional](#) (Madrid)

'Since its inception the National Historical Archive became established as the "historical archive of the kingdom of Spain", an archive that is public in nature. It was set up to house the documentation produced by Central Government departments that no longer has administrative value but still has historical value. Currently, documents classed as historical must be deposited in the archive, having successfully passed the rational and compulsory screening processes stipulated by article 58 of the Spanish Historical Heritage Act.'

- [Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica](#) (Salamanca)

'The Historical Memory Document Centre is comprised of collections from Spanish Government Document Services and the Special Court for the Repression of Freemasonry and Communism of the Franco era, in addition to those added after 1979.'

- [Archivo de la Real Cancillería de Valladolid](#) (Valladolid)

'The Archive of the Royal Chancellery of Valladolid is a sub-archive of the Ministry of Culture through the Assistant General Office of National Archives, the main functions of which are to preserve and promote the documentary heritage that it looks after: around twenty linear kilometres of exclusively judicial documentation, comprising documents from the early medieval centuries to the end of the twentieth century, making it the most important judicial archive dating back to the Spanish Old Regime preserved in Spain.'

The PARES website provides [information about accessing the archives](). The first time you visit you will be assigned an *expediente de investigador único* (individual researcher's file), for which you will need to show passport or ID document (plus proof of address if this is not included on the ID document). They will take a photograph for the file. You are allowed to use a pencil, paper and/or laptop in the national archives. The full rules and regulations are available online.

The archives of the individual ministries are different, and you need to obtain permission in advance. Information is available online about the process; see the archive section of the relevant ministry website for details. Make sure you check first that what you are looking for is not in the national archives.

Other institutions and lodgings

The [Casa de Velázquez]() in Madrid is an institution dedicated to Iberian culture. It has an extensive library and also offers rooms for researchers.

If you are looking for a place to stay, the local university websites often have pages with useful information about where to look.

Online Resources

There are many different digitisation projects in Spain. The following is just a sample of some of resources available. Municipalities, Autonomous Communities, foundations, universities each have their own initiatives.

Literary and Historical Sources

The [Biblioteca Digital Hispánica]() is the digital library of Spain's national library and provides access to various digitised collections.

The [Miguel de Cervantes Virtual Library]() contains a collection of open-access texts of Spanish and Latin American works.

[Hispana]() is a search engine which provides access digitised resources from the regional and provincial collections.

Press

The Biblioteca Nacional has its own dedicated [digitised press search engine](), which contains many important titles from the history of Spain, such as *El Sol* and *La Revista Blanca*.

The [Biblioteca Virtual de Prensa Histórica]() provides access to many different historical newspapers and publications. You can search by name, year and even place, using the map.

The Catholic daily [*ABC*]() maintains its own archive. Each edition is freely downloadable from the *hemeroteca* section of the website. The same goes for the Catalan newspaper [*La Vanguardia*]().

Catalunya has its own portal for searching the digitised Catalan press.

Galicia has a directory of Galician press.

State Publications and Legislation

The *BOE* (or *Gazeta* 1661-1959) is the official state bulletin. It is the official publishing channel for laws, legal information, adjudications, appointments and adverts.

There is also a Historical Legislation (1000-1868) database.

Statistics

The Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas carries out surveys and polls, including a monthly barometer of people's opinions on politics and the economy.

The Instituto Nacional de Estadística includes not only current statistics, but also historical data.

Online Repositories

As in the UK, there is a move towards more open-access research. In general, more academic output is freely available for download than in the UK.

Dialnet is the essential resource for browsing and searching for journals and articles.

Most universities have online repositories (often *repositorio digital*) which will provide access to theses, articles and even archival material. See, for example, the national research institute, the CSIC or the digital space of the Spanish equivalent of the Open University, the UNED. There are also digitisation initiatives for theses, such as TDX, a cooperative project between several universities.

El Buscón is the metasearch engine run by the national library which searches a wide variety of libraries and collections, including REBIUN (see below).

The REBIUN search engine is roughly equivalent to the UK's COPAC directory: it searches university libraries.

IT Equipment

Institutions have different levels of access to online resources. It is worth checking with the university library to see what they offer their students in terms of access to databases such as Jstor.

Students have to pay for printing and photocopying. There is often a service at the university and generally there are *copisterías* (copy shops) clustered around the campus – these are generally cheap (usually 5-10 *céntimos* per page) and frequently used.

Glossary

Archivero: Archivist, an official post.

Archivo (municipal, provincial, diocesano, parroquial, etc): Archive (municipal, provincial, diocesan, parish, etc)

Biblioteca: Library (librería = bookshop)

Caja: box

Carnet: ID card

Carpeta: Folder

Catálogo: Catalogue

Correo electronic: Email

DNI: *Documento nacional de identidad* = National ID card. For foreigners, a passport is usually acceptable.

Estante, estantería: Shelf, shelf unit

Expediente: Record, document

Ficha: Card, index card

Fotocopiar: To photocopy

Hemeroteca, sección de prensa: Press section

Informe: Report

Inventario: Inventory, catalogue

Investigador: Researcher

Lector de microfichas, de microfilme: Microfiche, microfilm reader

Legajo: File/bundle (usually within a box)

Libro: Book

Microficha: Microfiche

Ordenador: Computer

Reproducción: Copy, reproduction

Sección: Section

Signatura: Catalogue number, such as in a library.

Solicitante: Applicant

Solicitud: Request

Tomo: Volume

Web Links

Libraries and Archives

Library catalogue search for Spanish public libraries. (ES)

The directory of Spanish public libraries. (ES)

The BNE, the Spanish National Library, provides details on its collections and offers a downloadable user's guide in English. (EN, ES, FR)

The national census of archives. (ES)

The directory of Church archives. (ES)

The PARES website (Portal of Spanish Archives) provides both a guide and search function for the state archives, including: the Archivo General de la Administración, the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, the Archivo General de Simancas, the Archivo Histórico Nacional, the Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, and the Archivo de la Real Cancillería de Valladolid. There is also information about accessing the archives. (EN, ES)

Digitised Resources

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Open Access Resources and Online Repositories

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The CSIC. (EN, ES)

The UNED. (ES)

The TDX (EN, ES) thesis repository.

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