

# The Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB): Fifty years of public service supporting teaching and research

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### Abstract

The Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), founded 50 years ago and closely tied to the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) —the longest-standing communication studies programme in Catalonia— has evolved to become a key actor for students, teachers, researchers and journalists, and for society in general, keeping pace with digitalisation.

This article sets out to further explore the evolution of this facility and the knowledge in its collections, both of which have made it a benchmark in the arena of university libraries and in support for teaching and scholarly research specialising in communication. The quality and uniqueness of the holdings also provide a glimpse into a time period and a country.

### Keywords

University libraries, communication research, communication training, critical thinking, digital humanities, innovation.

### Resum

La Biblioteca de Comunicació i Hemeroteca General de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), nascuda fa 50 anys i estretament vinculada a la Facultat de Ciències de la Comunicació (UAB) —degana dels estudis de comunicació a Catalunya—, ha evolucionat com a actor actiu per als estudiants, docents, investigadors, periodistes i la societat en general, al compàs de la digitalització.

L'article que presentem es proposa d'aprofundir en l'evolució d'aquest equipament i en el coneixement de les seves col·leccions, que l'han convertit en un referent en l'àmbit de les biblioteques universitàries i també en matèria de suport a l'ensenyament i a la recerca científica especialitzada en comunicació. La qualitat i la singularitat dels seus fons ens permeten, al mateix temps, entendre la història d'una època i d'un país.

### Paraules clau

Biblioteques universitàries, recerca en comunicació, formació en comunicació, pensament crític, humanitats digitals, innovació.

## 1. Introduction

University libraries have traditionally been affiliated with higher education institutions and have unique features based on the merger of three fundamental elements: a specialised human team to serve and support the wide array of users, unique bibliographic and document collections that allow information to be transformed into knowledge, and a specific facility

that guarantees the preservation of the collection in optimal environmental conditions. University libraries have also been a source for the development of scholarly research and journal articles and support for teachers and curricula, with a direct impact not only during bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes but also in training and lifelong learning.

The purpose of this article is to study the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), which

has become a true driving force, impetus and support for research, development, transfer and innovation in the field of communication studies in its first 50 years of existence (1972-2022).

Even though providing an in-depth definition of the concept of communication studies would be the purpose of another article, we can note that by communication studies we mean the set of scholarly disciplines associated with the social sciences that study and analyse the phenomenon of communication in a broad sense, from social communication to journalism, including the history of communication, institutional communication, marketing, advertising, public relations, audiovisual communication, cinema, the media, communication policy and the communication economy, just to mention some examples.

Over the years, interdisciplinarity and the furtherance of the digital transformation have also made its purview expand to other subjects which may originally seem more closely related to engineering and computer science, like the information and communication technologies, videogames and, more recently, artificial intelligence. However, they also have a component that indisputably links them to social communication.

The research we are presenting in this article has a twofold objective: to analyse the change that this university library has spearheaded as a public facility open to society which is evolving to adapt the needs of its contemporary target users, and to present its document holdings and study their most salient features.

Regarding the collections, the mainstays are the teaching and learning support materials. Via coordination between the faculty and the library's human team, all the publications needed for the classes taught in the faculty are added to the library's collection. This is a deliberate institutional focus to offer students equal opportunities.

This basic collection more geared towards teaching and learning is complemented and enriched with the special collections from institutional or personal donations, documents that enable us to preserve and disseminate the history and culture. Their prime value is their uniqueness.

Both of them are tools that allow users to better specialise, cross-check information and gain the knowledge and skills needed to learn how to be critical with information, both to develop properly during university education and for students' future professional lives

In order to tackle the subject of this study, we first took into account the complete collection of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), to which we have access because of the authors' employment relationship with it.

In July 2023, this complete collection was comprised of 138,016 books, 17,547 doctoral theses and research projects, 29,263 audiovisual and graphic documents and 18,878 periodical publications and communication journals, in addition to the collection of digital documents, which is constantly growing (Servei de Biblioteques UAB, 2023).

At a second level, we drew from primary sources, with six personal interviews with professionals associated with the history of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives.

We first interviewed Miquel de Moragas i Spà, emeritus chair of the Department of Media, Communication and Culture (UAB), founder of the Faculty of Communication Studies, the Communication Library and the then called General Newspaper Archives (UAB), dean of the faculty (1978-1980 and 1982-1984) and vice-rector of research (UAB) (1985-1989). He was also the founder and first director of the Olympic Study Centre (CEO-UAB) (1988-2009) and the Institute of Communication (InCom-UAB) (1997-2009), two institutions with permanent partnerships with the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives. He donated his personal collection to this library in 2019.

We also interviewed Enric Marín, current dean of the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) and secretary-general of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona from 1998-2002; Jaume Soriano, coordinator of Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB); Tomàs Fabregat, head of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives; Oskar Hernández-Pérez, manager of the General Newspaper Archives (UAB); and Martín Becerra, professor at the Universidad Nacional de Quilmes (Argentina), who has contributed his experience as a library user while pursuing his predoctoral training at the UAB in the late 1990s. We have also consulted secondary sources (bibliographies and periodicals documents), which are listed in the references section.

To develop this article, we have organised the text into four main sections. The first section examines the background and historical context that enabled this public university, a pioneer in Catalonia, to be created. The second focuses on the main collections in the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB). Next, the third section focuses on the evolution of this facility as a library open to users. Finally, the fourth section, which contains the conclusions, strives to detect the main future challenges in a changing environment where university libraries are becoming meeting points yet may also be sites that facilitate innovative training and service learning.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Background and historical context

The Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) was founded on 6 June 1968 within a social context of constant upheaval marked by the onset of the late Franco regime and the yearnings for freedom and democracy spearheaded by intellectuals and university students, who were acting against the stream, seeking open spaces that had no censorship while also seeking to avoid ideological control, the constraints placed by the regime and the influence exerted by the Church at different levels of the education system.

Based on the organisation of the first four faculties (Humanities, Medicine, Sciences and Economic Sciences), which had been operating since academic year 1968-1969, the UAB gradually added new official university degrees to the programmes offered by its faculties, first with programmes offered at different sites in Barcelona and later by moving the campus to Bellaterra, in Cerdanyola del Vallès, which would mark the identity of this new public university that took root outside the urban environment.

### 2.1 The Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), a space to foster specialised research

With the founding of the Faculty of Information Sciences (UAB) in academic year 1971-1972, the bachelor's degree in Journalism was launched, which became an official university degree for the first time thanks to Decree 2478/1971 of Spain's Ministry of Education and Science (BOE, 16-10-1971). In practice, this new programme prompted the gradual disappearance of the programmes that had been offered by the School of Journalism of the Church at the Institutíó Cultural del Centre d'Influència Catòlica since 1964.<sup>2</sup>

One year later, in 1972, the Communication Library and Newspaper Archives was founded, along with the bachelor's degree in Advertising in the same faculty. It had initially been housed on Carrer de les Egipcíiques in Barcelona (behind the Library of Catalonia and the Institute of Catalan Studies in Raval neighbourhood), but it moved to the Bellaterra campus in academic year 1972-1973 (Moragas i Spà, 1992 and 2021)

It was an opportunity design with a new public university which sought to exist in a democracy, a plural university with its sights set on Europe, especially on the educational models of French, German, British and Italian universities, as well as those on the other side of the Atlantic, especially in Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Argentine and Chile.

In the field of research, there was also a desire to learn from benchmark research centres like the International Centre for Higher Communication Studies for Latin America (CIESPAL) created in Quito (Ecuador) in 1959 by the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO). This centre became a model worth following due to its research on mass communication, its impact on local regional development and its efforts to build bridges between the practical knowledge of professional journalists and the theoretical and academic output of professors and researchers. The connections with members of academic associations also fostered the international outreach of the Faculty of Information Sciences at the UAB and, by extension, its Library and Newspaper Archives, from the very beginning.

The possibility of students doing curricular internships in the Newspaper Archives was a chance for them to gain professional experience at a time when there were more students than means of doing internships.

The Newspaper Archive was launched as an auxiliary service for the journalistic practice that the bachelor's students were doing, and this allowed it to grow in different journalistic genres',

recalls Miquel de Moragas i Spà, founder of the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) and the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB). In his opinion, one of the most salient aspects was the possibility of creating a regular and a newspaper library from scratch and to use scientific and scholarly criteria to decide what publications to purchase in order to gradually lay its foundations with the goal of being able to guarantee and maintain entire collections over time (Moragas i Spà, 2023).

The first book purchased for the Communication Library was *El espíritu del tiempo* by Edgar Morin, a volume that analyses mass media and culture written by one of the founders of interdisciplinary communication studies. In the opinion of Miquel de Moragas i Spà, the choice of this book *per se* entailed a reflection and an academic decision, because it was 'viewed poorly at that time by more academic, official sociology'. Regarding newspapers, 'the job was to go to a newsstand on [Barcelona's] La Rambla every morning and buy the daily press for the Newspaper Archives: the Barcelona newspapers and *Le Monde*, the *International Herald Tribune* and *The Times*, among others. These copies which were bound are part of the current holdings of this large periodicals library at the UAB' (Moragas i Spà, 2010).

The diversity of journalistic genres was one of the key factors that helps us to understand the quality and current value of the Library and Newspaper Archives today compared to other university communication libraries. 'Even though it may have seemed strange at first, publications beyond general newspapers and scholarly journals were added, like specialised gossip, travel, automotive magazines and the local and regional press. They are fields where the materials may not be consulted as much, but thanks to the efforts to define the collection at that time, they have been conserved. And I should say that because it has these holdings, [doctoral] theses on gossip magazines and the local press have been defended at the UAB over the years' (Tomàs Fabregat, head of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), in Civil i Serra, 2020).

While laboratories filled with test tubes are the field of experimentation for researchers in medicine, chemistry or physics, 'libraries were the laboratory for making scientific policy of researchers in the humanities and social sciences' (Moragas i Spà, 2019). Thus, the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) was a major touchstone, especially for Latin American researchers, who would visit temporarily or do research stays on campus and spend part of their time researching in the reference room. 'In contrast, European researchers had other theoretical influences and access to European publishing trends in Paris and Milan. But I don't recall having been in any university library in Europe—not even in the one in Lugano (Switzerland)—that has a Latin-European collection like ours, because the other European university libraries only contained European works and perhaps works from North America, but only some of them' (Moragas i Spà, 2023).

Between 1972 and 1987, the Communication Library and the then called Newspaper Archives (UAB) was housed in the Faculty of Law, initially on the first floor and later on the ground floor. In 1987 they were moved to the basement of the new Faculty of Information Sciences building, a facility that also included classrooms, laboratories (for writing practice) and radio and television sets. In 1994, its name was changed to the Faculty of Communication Studies (Berrio, 1997; Moragas i Spà, 2021).

The training of journalists in the 1970s and 1980s entailed the consolidation of a professional journalistic and academic model that was comparable to other professional fields within the social sciences and humanities which already had prior university recognition, like law, political science, economics, history and philology.

Within this university context, the Faculty of Information Sciences (UAB) was the only faculty that offered a university degree in communication in Catalonia (Journalism since 1971-1972 and Advertising since 1972-1973, which 20 years later were renamed Advertising and Public Relations). Starting in academic year 1992-1993, the UAB expanded its offerings to include an Audiovisual Communication programme, the same year that Universitat Pompeu Fabra started offering its three classic degrees in Journalism, Audiovisual Communication and Advertising and Public Relations.<sup>3</sup>

This was a historic moment when there were institutional efforts to create a unified communication library in Catalonia among all the universities. However, this did not come to fruition, as Universitat Pompeu Fabra and other universities after it wanted to create their own libraries, so this idea became a failed attempt, as Miquel de Moragas i Spà (2023) recalls.

Getting back to the educational programmes offered at the UAB, it is noteworthy that the Faculty of Communication Studies also started offering the second-cycle programmes in the bachelor's degree in Documentation in academic year 1999-2000 for a specific ten-year period.

After joining the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010, the faculty made the transition to turn the three degrees into European bachelor's degrees in Journalism, Audiovisual Communication and Advertising and Public Relations, and in academic year 2019-2020 it expanded its offerings with the bachelor's in Interactive Communication and Communication in Organisations.

However, the growing book and periodicals collection at the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) had prompted a new need on campus in the mid-1990s: the space set aside for the Library and Newspaper Archives was becoming too small and daily practice made it essential to create a new building that would meet the library's needs, thinking not only about the present but more important about the future. This request was defended and approved as one of the priority lines of action of professor Carles Solàs's team during his first mandate as the rector of the UAB (1994-1998).

## 2.2 The strategic bid for a new building and new name

In 1998, construction began on the new library building in Plaça Cívica, which opened at its new site on 8 April 2002 thanks to the strategic efforts of the UAB's governing team to merge three iconic facilities: the Communication Library, the General Newspaper Archives and the General Library.

The new building needed a name, and at the meeting of the governing team, the then-secretary general and current dean of the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB), Enric Marín, helped to come up with a solution, with a clear proposal: 'without a doubt, what we have here is the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives; therefore, this should be its new name' (Marín, 2023). 'The desire to turn the current building in Plaça Cívica into the General Library in 1999 would have been an irreparable mistake' (Perona Páez, 2010). Therefore, seen from hindsight, this particular definition of the name has been one of the assets that has assisted in the international outreach of this scholarly facility in teaching and research.

After this historic juncture, with the move to its new site, the holdings of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) came to include the local collection, the reserve collection and the doctoral theses from the entire campus as long as they were published on paper.

The new facility also houses the headquarters of the Library Service (UAB) and three research centres: the Document Centre on Communication (CEDOC), part of the library's own structure; the Institute of Communication (InCom-UAB); and the Olympic Study Centre (CEO-UAB), which became the Sport Research Institute (IRE-UAB) in 2018.<sup>4</sup>

The turn of the twenty-first century came with new habits that forced the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) to adapt to new environments, with the digital transformation which enabled it to expand open-access to the documentation available until then. It was also headed towards a new structural change in education and research as Spain joined of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA), which entered into force in 2010.

In the field of research, the Budapest Open Access Initiative promoted by the Open Society Institute in December 2001 pushed to accelerate the international efforts for open access on the Internet, which the European Commission had adopted as a priority.

## 2.3 The avenues of work of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), a public service open to society

As an integral member of the Library Service (UAB),<sup>5</sup> the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) participates in its seven main lines of work.

First, it processes, conserves and disseminates the UAB's book and document holdings in order to serve the university's teaching, research and innovation needs. Secondly, it organises

activities and promotes the dissemination of its holdings and services (bibliographic exhibitions, training courses for users, new acquisitions, user guides, etc.). Thirdly, it partners with teaching projects and innovation strategies. Fourthly, it optimises support for research accreditation and assessment, an essential task for teaching and research staff who want to consolidate their professional academic careers. Fifthly, it promotes implementation of Open Science and Open Data. Sixthly, it contributes to the visibility of the UAB's entire body of scholarly output. And seventhly, it promotes the community's ability to efficiently and ethically use information, which enables users to be trained in media literacy and know how to be critical in the consumption of the information they receive.

### 3. Special collections in the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB)

Special collections and holdings are prized resources for libraries and contribute significant added value to users' research and learning experiences. They afford a unique perspective on history, culture and society and are useful tools for teaching, learning and research. Furthermore, the management, conservation and dissemination of these materials helps to protect the cultural heritage for future generations (Santos, 2010; Farré Fiol & Gómez Escofet, 2013; Calvet Renedo, 2011; Camps i Miró, 1998).

Some of the features of these special collections are:

1. **Exclusive content:** Special collections tend to include unique materials that cannot be found in other libraries: manuscripts, historical documents, photographs, maps, drawings or personal collections with archival materials that afford a unique perspective on history, culture and society and enable us to trace people's lives and activities.
2. **Specialised research:** Special collections are particularly useful for specialised research. Researchers find specific materials there which allow them to more deeply explore a topic and discover details that would not be available otherwise. This can be particularly important for areas of research that require access to original materials.
3. **Teaching and learning:** Special collections are also invaluable tools for teaching and learning. Professors can use materials from these collections to improve their classes and offer their students a richer and more comprehensive learning experience.
4. **Preservation of the cultural heritage:** Libraries that house special collections also play an important role in preserving the cultural heritage. These libraries strive to ensure that the materials are conserved properly and will be available for future generations. By doing so, they contribute to protecting history and culture.

Some of the most prominent collections that are part of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB)

are the following (the description includes the address where they can be consulted, whenever possible):

- **Marca Collection:** Primarily Catalan magazines on artistic and literary topics (1805-1960) (<https://bit.ly/3PJZRQ2>).
- **Local UAB Collection:** Documents published by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona since it was created (1968-today).
- **UAB Theses:** Theses read at the university since it was created, initially on paper and currently digital (<https://ddd.uab.cat/collection/tesis>).
- **Daniel Jones Collection:** Books, magazines and thematic dossiers on communication compiled by Dr Daniel Jones (1950-2007), a professor in the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) and the Faculty of Communication and International Relations-Blanquerna (Universitat Ramon Llull) and an expert researcher in communication structure and policies (<https://bit.ly/46gvEz7>).
- **Joaquim Romaguera Collection:** Books, magazines and thematic dossiers on cinema compiled by the writer, film critic and researcher Joaquim Romaguera (1941-2006) (<https://bit.ly/3RFqJ6x>).
- **Miquel de Moragas i Spà Collection:** Books, magazines, thematic dossiers, manuscripts and personal and professional documentation of professor Miquel de Moragas i Spà (Barcelona, 1943), the driving force behind the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) and the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB).
- **Ràdio Barcelona Scripts:** Radio scripts with the daily programming of Barcelona's EAJ-1 Radio España station, later called Radio Barcelona (1925-1958) (<https://bit.ly/46ACGhX>).
- **Radioteatro Scripts:** Scripts of radio plays broadcast in the Radioteatro programme of Ràdio Barcelona, directed by Armand Blanch (19??-1981).
- **Fanzine Collection:** Self-published publications made with few resources. Even though some fanzines were produced individually, the bulk of the collection is comprised of collectively authored works. The contents are heterogeneous, but they share the fact that they address phenomena and bring visibility to actors that do not appear in other media from the same period.
- **Mallorquí Collection:** Creative work and professional and personal documentation of the writer, scriptwriter and translator José Mallorquí (1913-1972).
- **Olympic Study Centre (UAB) Collection:** Specialised documentation on the 1992 Barcelona Olympics and the impact of the Olympics on society (study of the ceremonies and coverage of the Olympics and their economic and urban value to cities, among other topics).

Other noteworthy collections are still being internally processed and described include:

- **Nova Cançó Collection:** Documentation collected between the 1960s and 1980s by Josep Porter Moix, manager of

this artistic and cultural protest movement, which promoted the creation and dissemination of contemporary songs in Catalan during the Franco regime.

- **La Crida Archive Collection:** Documents from La Crida a la Solidaritat en Defensa de la Llengua, la Cultura i la Nació Catalanes (The Call for Solidarity in Defence of the Catalan Language, Culture and Nation), a Catalanist movement that was founded in 1981 and dissolved in 1993.
- **La Voz de España Administrative Collection:** Administrative documentation from the dubbing studio La Voz de España (1936-2010).

All of these collections are connected to and complement each other, and they enable us to delve more deeply into the political, social or trade union movements of each period. For example, the collection of radio scripts from Ràdio Barcelona helps us to hear and experience the history of the first half of the twentieth century, just like the Nova Cançó collection sheds light on a cultural protest movement in the late Franco regime and the start of the transition to democracy.

Also worth noting is the added value provided by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona's (UAB) publications generated on campus, which are part of the holdings of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB).

On the occasion of the opening of the new building in 2002, professor Armand Balsebre reflected on the role this university facility plays in preserving the heritage: 'Deposited in the collections of the Library and Newspaper Archives is the legacy of our historical memory and scholarly knowledge of communication in the twentieth century, precisely a century that today we describe, without rhetorical exaggerations, as the century of communication. It has to be protected, because it contains part of ourselves, of us communication professors, students and researchers. This heritage value also dovetails with a value that is more symbolically important: by protecting the conservation and growth of the document collections of the Library and Newspaper Archives, the hallmark of our identity as researchers who process information, accumulate knowledge and then redistribute it to society (through teaching, publications, scholarly conferences, everyday contact with the media), we are also protecting the source of the knowledge that reaches our society' (Balsebre, 2002).

The digital preservation efforts and its associated learning in the field of the humanities led the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) to create a Digital Humanities network in 2016, a sub-network of the Cultural Heritage CORE (Community Oriented at Special Challenges), with which the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) shares an area of interest.

One outstanding example of the library's work in the field of the digital humanities is the Radio Sound Archive of Catalonia project (<https://arxiuradio.uab.cat>), an initiative of the Institute of Communication (InCom-UAB) and the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) geared at compiling,

describing, preserving and disseminating sound fragments from Catalan and Spanish broadcasters on the radio bandwidths in Catalonia and the Catalan radio stations that distribute their contents on the Internet.

### 3.1 The uniqueness of the CEDOC section of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB)

The Document Centre on Communication (CEDOC) is a section of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) specialising in compiling, classifying, conserving and disseminating documents and materials that analyse the contemporary political situation in Catalonia and Spain.

CEDOC was launched in 1973 by collecting the underground periodicals that were not open to consultation in the UAB libraries. This undertaking was started by professor Eugeni Giral, along with his collaborator Toni Estupiñà. The job of documenting the media got underway at that time, fostered by the centre's location in what was then Faculty of Information Sciences (UAB). This is why it was named the Document Centre on Communication (CEDOC), and today, this acronym recalls its origins.

The transition and attainment of democracy, with the onset of the activities of political parties, trade unions, platforms and associations, led CEDOC towards the conservation, preservation and dissemination of the materials that these organisations produced, which are often quite ephemeral. At the same time, CEDOC has also worked on recovering the testimonies of the political activities of the Franco regime and the anti-Franco movement as the forerunners of the transition and democracy (Giral, 2010).

The most significant volume of documentation at CEDOC comes from the anti-Franco movements and is particularly valuable because it includes publications that originated underground. The documents compiled come from a variety of organisations: political parties, trade unions, neighbourhood associations, nongovernmental organisations, municipal entities and all types of social movements.

CEDOC is the home to more than 45,000 documents. By volume, books are the most common (more than 21,000), along with periodicals (more than 9,000) and paper posters (more than 15,000), although it also includes other types of materials like brochures and stickers.

Noteworthy among the periodicals is the collection of Catalan political press, most of it from the Franco era and the 1960s and 1970s. Part of this collection is digitalised and can be consulted online in the Digital Repository of Documents (DDD-UAB): <https://ddd.uab.cat/collection/ppc>.

The Viladot Collection, which contains anti-Franco press compiled by the journalist Albert Viladot (1954-1993), is a very important part of this periodicals collection (Culla, 1993).

Regarding the collection of political posters on paper, more than 6,000 documents have been catalogued and digitalised and can be consulted online at the Digital Repository of Documents (DDD-UAB): <https://ddd.uab.cat/collection/carpol>.

This collection is one of CEDOC's most important ones and primarily reflects the political activities during the years of Spain's transition to democracy. It contains election propaganda from the different elections (European, Spanish, regional and local) and advertisements from political parties, trade unions and civil society organisations.

The collection of political posters is a living collection that continues to grow today, albeit with newer methodologies, given that nowadays political posters are native digital documents and are compiled automatically via the capture of the publications of political parties on the social media. CEDOC is thus carrying on its original mission of preserving and disseminating this ephemeral documentation.<sup>6</sup>

Other unique collections affiliated with CEDOC are books on poster art, Western Sahara and the Basque Country, along with political stickers (<https://ddd.uab.cat/collection/adhpol>) and the archives of organisations such as the Socialist Party of National Liberation (PSAN) (<https://ddd.uab.cat/record/168400>) and the Party of Labour of Spain/Catalonia (PTE in Spanish, PTC in Catalonia) (<https://ddd.uab.cat/record/144582>).

#### 4. A facility open to society

The Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), just like the other facilities comprising the Library Service (UAB), offers open access and equal opportunities for everyone.

By turning part of the second storey into the COMTEC Centre, an extension of a usable space shared with the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB), the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) has taken yet another step to open itself up not only to students in the faculty but also to society at large (Fabregat, 2021; Hernández-Pérez, 2022). This is an open space with three main areas: an experimentation area, an agora (with modular, movable stands and audiovisual equipment) and a creation-coworking space opened in April 2021, still during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COMTEC Centre is part of a broader Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) project called the COMTEC Project, which focuses on training teachers, researchers and administrative and services staff. It also seeks to be an environment and space of contact where outside companies can hold demonstrations or new product launches.

Geared primarily at teaching innovation, the COMTEC Centre coexists with students' spontaneous use of it for group work, studying or even as a place to relax. The goal is to 'define the space around the three areas: to host innovation activities from participative perspectives and using codesign and cocreation methodologies' (Hernández-Pérez, 2022).

'Much of the project's success will depend on being able to integrate it into the institutional routine and structures and incorporating innovation into its management', claims Tomàs Fabregat, head of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) (Fabregat, 2021).

Similarly, Oskar Hernández-Pérez, manager of the General Newspaper Archives (UAB), believes that 'the transformation of spaces fosters collective cocreation; in this way, the Library and General Newspaper Archives make the collections available to users so they can participate in codesigning new uses of our holdings. After all, the spaces themselves are not transformative: they have to be defined and the community that inhabits them has to feel like they are theirs' (Hernández-Pérez, 2023).

In the opinion of the current coordinator of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), Jaume Soriano, 'the Library's main strength is the team of people who manage the service, as well as the possibilities afforded by the space'. Regarding the milestones achieved, he believes that one of the most important ones is 'the Library's ability to agilely adapt to the changes in the science system in recent years, especially the addition of digital scholarly literature and services published open-source'. The challenges still facing the library include the optimisation of the periodical collections and the steps started to expand the collection with the hardware and software that would enable it to serve teaching and research in videogames. "On the other hand, I think that it might also be worthwhile to foster partnerships with other institutions and centres within the UAB and off campus. One example is the presentation of the Radio Sound Archive of Catalonia on 13 February 2023, which was held at the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (Institute of Catalan Studies) headquarters thanks to the Societat Catalana de Comunicació (Catalan Communication Society). This is the type of activity we have to continue doing" (Soriano, 2023).

On the other hand, the current dean of the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB), Enric Marín, believes that 'one thing we don't dare say, even though it is true, is that comparatively speaking our library is better than many American university communication libraries. Why? We are very powerful as a university communication library and general newspaper archive because from our European perspective—and this is thanks to Miquel de Moragas i Spà—it encompasses all the traditions from Europe and Latin America (in addition to those from North America), and these two aspects are virtually non-existent in many communication libraries in the United States. We're not always aware of this, and it is our unique hallmark; it is what enables us to be considered the benchmark communication documentation centre in southern Europe, and that is indisputable. And from the strategic standpoint, we should now be aware of the innovation in communication coming from the Pacific' (Marín, 2023).

In the opinion of Martín Becerra, a professor and researcher at the Universidad Nacional de Quilmes (Argentina) and an expert in the media and cultural industries, in the 1980s and 1990s the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona afforded many Latin American researchers the opportunity to make a personal effort to earn a doctorate there, given that in their home countries only bachelor's degrees and *maestrías* were available (the latter is halfway between a European master's and doctorate).

'The entire Library Service (UAB)—and in particular the

Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB)—was a kind of temple or sanctuary that enabled me to access contents that would otherwise have been impossible to reach. In academic year 1996-1997, when I began my postgraduate degree at the UAB, the Internet was very new and of course the majority of publications were not online. Basically, without this vast number of hours I spent here in the library, I wouldn't have been able to pursue my postgraduate programme. At that time—and I imagine today as well—it was the best equipped communication library, at least in Ibero-America, with an amazing service, as I recall it: you needed a book and requested it, and just a few days later the book had been added to the library's catalogue.' In this sense, Martín Becerra also stresses that 'access to materials in different languages, with different traditions of thinking and authors from a variety of perspectives, was always extremely enriching. Plus, the library was a place for gathering, reference and learning with other classmates, as we shared our readings and interpretations. And thanks to the training at the time, many Latin American researchers in the field of communication were able to be educated at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, and back in our countries we launched doctoral programmes starting in the early 2000s' (Becerra, 2023). In his opinion, the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), along with the libraries at the University of Buenos Aires and Oxford University, are the three main international touchstones among university libraries specialising in communication studies around the world.

The Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives' (UAB) focus on supporting students, teachers, researchers and journalists in their daily tasks is still alive and well 50 years later.

## 5. Conclusions

In the past 50 years, university libraries have been restructured both physically and socially. They are no longer spaces with a collection on physical shelves and have instead become libraries that open their space to the world around them, to society, with the goal of being useful to the users who want to consult them. The reorganisation of the space, with open rooms adaptable to many uses and teaching innovation, have also forced them to reconsider where to store the physical collections that also take up space.

Over five decades (1972-2022), the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), which has been associated with the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) since it was founded, has managed to earn a reputation as an international benchmark in communication research and studies. Its intelligent historical drive from the very beginning to build a collection that encompasses the diversity of European and Latin American thinking and trends, along with those of their North American counterparts, has made it a unique library due to the qualitative value of its unique book, periodicals and

special collections. Regarding its future challenges, it remains to be seen whether it manages to collect the scholarly output of interest currently being developed elsewhere in the world, such as Asia and the Pacific.

In terms of collections, it must continue to support teaching and learning with the acquisition of course materials, which are now primarily digital. This evolution towards a predominantly digital collection will enable spaces to be freed up which can then be adapted to the university community's new needs.

Regarding the special collections, their use as the foundation of academic studies and journalistic research should be encouraged. Furthermore, we must remain alert to the possibilities afforded by incorporating artificial intelligence into the management and dissemination of the heritage collections. Technological advances should help improve the management of the special collections by making it quicker to describe and classify the documentation, thus boosting the accessibility options, as well as by establishing relationships among documents and collections in a quick, efficient fashion.

The library's evolution in this direction will not be possible without the involvement of its staff, a human team that is increasingly multidisciplinary. Ongoing training programmes will be essential in ensuring that their knowledge and skills are up-to-date, which will enable the staff to successfully rise to the new challenges. It will also be increasingly necessary to forge alliances with other university services, as well as outside stakeholders.

The effort of digitalising the collections of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) and making them open-access means that this scholarly facility remains a benchmark as a service open to society which offers equal opportunities. The work in Digital Humanities also leads us to believe that new pathways in preserving the cultural heritage and transforming information into knowledge will continue to arise.

Finally, we must continue to motivate students, researchers, teachers and journalists to familiarise themselves with the document holdings of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) so that they consult and analyse them to contribute new views and interpretations of recent contemporary history.

The innovative approach to ensure that users participate in co-designing new uses of the holdings of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) will unquestionably expand this university facility's current public service dimension by generating new knowledge, which will also give back to society and enable us to achieve new milestones that have been unimaginable until now.



## Notes

1. Service learning (SL) is an 'educational proposal whereby students are trained via participation in a project geared at resolving a community's real need, thus improving people's living conditions or environmental quality. This type of training, which is being implemented in certain classes at the university, is a way of linking education with the territory, with tangible proposals in which students learn how to resolve current social challenges. Source: UAB [online]: <https://bit.ly/3F4fSeS>
2. In Catalonia, Journalism programmes had begun in 1952 as a section of the Escuela Oficial de Periodismo (Official Journalism School) founded in Madrid in 1941. In May 1963, this body closed its doors, which ushered in a period of uncertainty, with the risk this entailed of the country, in the midst of the dictatorship, being left without this type of programme. However, this situation also paved the way for the organisation of new types of programmes 'outside the direct oversight of the regime, and this fortunately occurred' with the creation of the School of Journalism of the Church in the Institució Cultural del CIC, which were founded in Barcelona in 1964 (Berrio, 1997: 24).
3. Later, first-, second- and third-cycle programmes were gradually added in the other universities in Catalonia, both public ones: Universitat de Barcelona, Universitat de Girona, Universitat de Lleida, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, and Universitat Rovira i Virgili, and private ones: Universitat Ramon Llull, Universitat Abat Oliba-CEU, Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya and Universitat de Vic- Universitat Central de Catalunya.
4. When the Olympic Study Centre (CEO-UAB) became the Sport Research Institute (IRE-UAB) in 2018, the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) came to house the entire historical document collection of the CEO-UAB.
5. As of July 2023, the Library Service (UAB) is comprised of a network of facilities which work in coordination: the Science and Technology Library (UAB), the Communication and General Newspaper Library (UAB), the Social Sciences Library (UAB), the Humanities and General Map Library (UAB), the Medical Library (UAB) and the Veterinary Library (UAB) on the Bellaterra camps; the University Library of Sabadell (UAB); and the libraries of the Medical teaching unit in Vall d'Hebron (UAB) and the Josep Laporte (UAB) teaching unit in Barcelona.
6. In Catalonia, there is another benchmark political documentation centre, the Pavilion of the Republic (Universitat de Barcelona) which also specialises in political documentation, but its contents focus on the Second Republic, the Civil War and the exile, historical periods prior to the materials housed at CEDOC.

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