



Government Libraries Section

## ***Preservation and conservation of the digital information in the Catalan Government special libraries***

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## **PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION OF THE DIGITAL INFORMATION IN THE CATALAN GOVERNMENT SPECIAL LIBRARIES**

### **SUMMARY**

This communication wants to offer information and facilitate a debate to create awareness about the fragility of the conditions of preservation and conservation of the digital documentation in the Catalan Government Special Libraries, stressing the need of improved performance by all the agents involved.

The actions presented here were carried out during the years 2008 and 2009 by a work group that was formed by professionals of this kind of libraries and whose goal basically consisted in the identification of the problem, the establishment of the state of the question, his analysis and, in consequence, the detection of possible necessary actions to ensure the preservation and conservation of the digital documents that are kept within these centres.

Finally it aims to show some possible solutions and expose the organizational changes within the library system of Catalonia, a framework in which the Department of Culture, guardian of the cultural heritage of Catalonia, will lead the necessary applications to guarantee the preservation of the digital production of the whole *Generalitat* of Catalonia.

### **Keywords**

E-documentation, preservation, conservation, government libraries

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### **PRECEDINGS**

## **The working groups of the BEG (Special Libraries of the *Generalitat* of Catalonia).**

In March 2006, within the annual meeting of the BEG, different working groups were found, with the aim of promoting combined operations to improve the services that these libraries offer to their users and the institutions that they belong to.

Seven working groups were created; some of them are still working and others have been dissolved after finishing their purpose. Other new ones have been born to answer new needs.

Therefore the working group *E-information* has been created in March 2008. It was initially made of six people from different special libraries and documentation centres of the *Generalitat* of Catalonia, with the following aims:

- a) Study the situation of conservation, treatment and publicize of electronic documentation generated by each institution of the public administration of Catalonia in which a library or documentation centre exists. All types of institutions were included (departments, general secretary, general directorate or other organizations). In order not to exceed the dimension of the project control, the field of work, the members of the group decided to leave for a second place the study of the situation of electronic documentation stored in these libraries but not generated by the proper institution. In several cases the knowledge of the situation of the first type of documents gave information about the situation of the second ones.
- b) Establish contact with organizations of the administration responsible for edition on a general level.
- c) Publicize the result of the study between the institutions affected and the managers of the library system of Catalonia.
- d) Propose joint actions for cataloging and classification of this kind of documentation and for the establishment of guidelines on a general level to ensure protection throughout the Catalan public administration.

## **THE SITUATION OF THE TREATMENT OF THE ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTATION IN THE LIBRARIES AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRES OF THE CATALAN AUTONOMIC ADMINISTRATION: 2008-2009**

In 2008, the year when the working group was created, the situation with regard to the conservation of the digital documentation produced or conserved by the Catalan autonomous public administration was, in bold strokes, the following:

An important quantity of digital documentation existed already and those responsible of their preservation and conservation were worried about its future. Some of the documents already were not accessible publicly in the net and possibly neither in any another format.

In spite of this, sometimes thanks to the proper initiative of determined communities of people involved in the treatment of documentation, the working group detected the existence of different initiatives and solutions developed to preserve and conserve the documentation produced and stored in the institutional libraries as well as in the responsible editing services.

The solutions furnished in each case vary in function of the computing capacities of each institution, the degree of awareness of the managers of edition and conservation and of the support received by the institution to which they belong to.

There were not certain of the existence of common guidelines neither on the librarian level nor between the heads of edition inside each department.

Instead, there was a certain awareness and general worry among the heads of libraries and documentation centres about the need to ensure that the electronic documentation generated and conserved by the public administration and currently stored in their libraries would not disappear in the future.

This was the situation that stimulated the creation of a working group with the idea of treating the question in a joint way.

### **Concrete actuations carried out by group**

The general ignorance of the situation on a general level and on the level of each producing centre, and besides the verification of the existence of multiple cases in the treatment of the electronic documentation generated by them, called for the establishment of a very precise work methodology . Thus an action plan was created in order not to exceed the possibilities of group action . Consequently, the study was limited to those institutions of the Catalan autonomous public administration that have a library or documentation centre. Once the action plan was agreed on, the group contacted the managers of publications and maintenance of web contents of each institution, in order to know about the aims of the managers of the corresponding libraries and documentation centres.

The group drafted a questionnaire about the policies and/or practices in preservation, conservation and publicize of the electronic information generated by departments, general secretaries, general directorates and other organizations of the *Generalitat*. The questionnaire referred to:

- The type of electronic documents generated by own institution

(bulletins, magazines, documents monographs, proceedings of congresses and working days, memories, yearbooks, reports, studies or others),

- The means of communication (web, intranet, e-mail, local net),
- If they applied some policies of conservation, and its typology for each type of documentation (local net, paper or web) and in the affirmative case, during how much time,
  - If they considered appropriate the establishment of common policies of conservation of the electronic documentation generated by organizations of the *Generalitat*,
  - And finally, if they thought as usual to create a common repository for all the organisms of the *Generalitat*.

The questionnaire was sent to 36 organizations. In those where different people were responsible for the maintenance of the web and of the publications, both received the questionnaire. Of the 47 letters sent, we received 27 answers, corresponding to 24 entities. The distribution by typology of entities was the following: 10 departments, 4 general secretariats, 3 general directorates and 10 corresponding to other minor organizations.

Simultaneously the group established contact with responsables for the Autonomous Entity of the Official Newspaper and Publications of the *Generalitat* and with the Publishing Council of the *Generalitat* in order to know about their guidelines and procedures related with the conservation and diffusion of the electronic publications edited by the Catalan public administration. We stressed the good reception and the interest in the subject of the people we contacted, as the result of our conversations; thanks to the joint efforts and the interest in the future preservation and conservation of this type of documentation, the new publishing rule of the administration of the *Generalitat* of Catalonia, approved by the plenary of his publishing council in session of 30 of March of 2009, explains that all the publications (in any format) edited by organizations of the *Generalitat* have to remain deposited in the respective documentation centres and libraries<sup>1</sup>. This text withdraws one of the functions stipulated by the Guideline for Libraries of Government Departments<sup>2</sup> of the IFLA, regarding

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*Chapter 9. preservation and access to the publications*

Article 36. Preservation and access

1. Of each publication, the editor organization of the public Administration of the *Generalitat* has the duty of conserve so much the master copy as the final publication. It has also the duty to file them, according to the corresponding classification, so much the physical as the electronic publications.

2. In order to have its disposition and a historical access, the editors organizations have to deposit in the documentation centre or the library of his organization or department, at least two copies of the physical publications and a file and his

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the mission of the different types of libraries that belong to the public administration.

While we proceeded to the analysis of the information received, we established contact with two departments of the *Generalitat* (Health and Culture) that were working on the design of electronic repositories of their own departments, for the conservation and treatment of the electronic documents generated and kept by the respective institutions.

### **Analysis of results**

Once we had compiled the answers to the questionnaire, we proceeded to its analysis.

#### *Quantitative results*

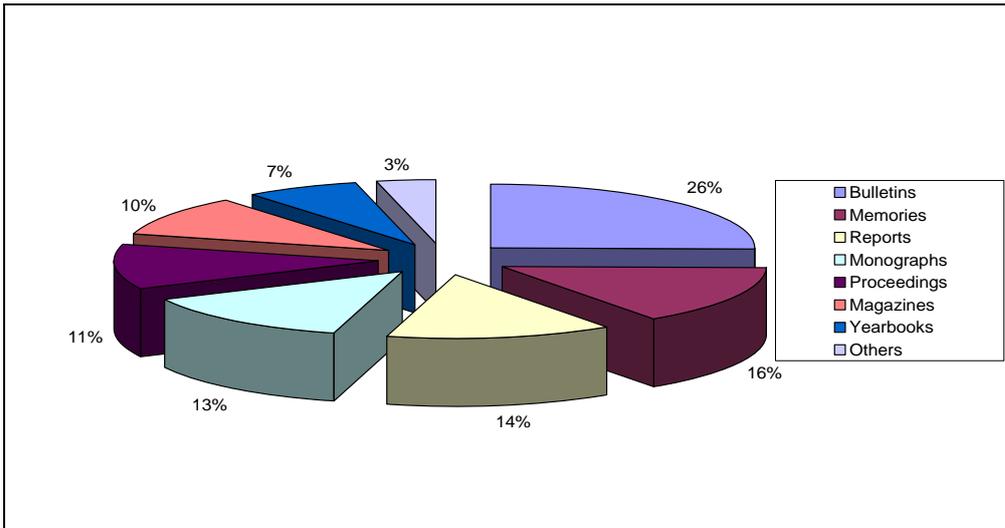
From the total of questionnaires sent, we obtained 54,1% of answers, corresponding to 66% of entities.

#### Type of electronic documents generated by own institution

Bulletins	28%
Memoires	16%
Reports	14%
Monographs	13%
Proceedings	11%
Magazines	10%
Yearbooks	7%
Others	3%

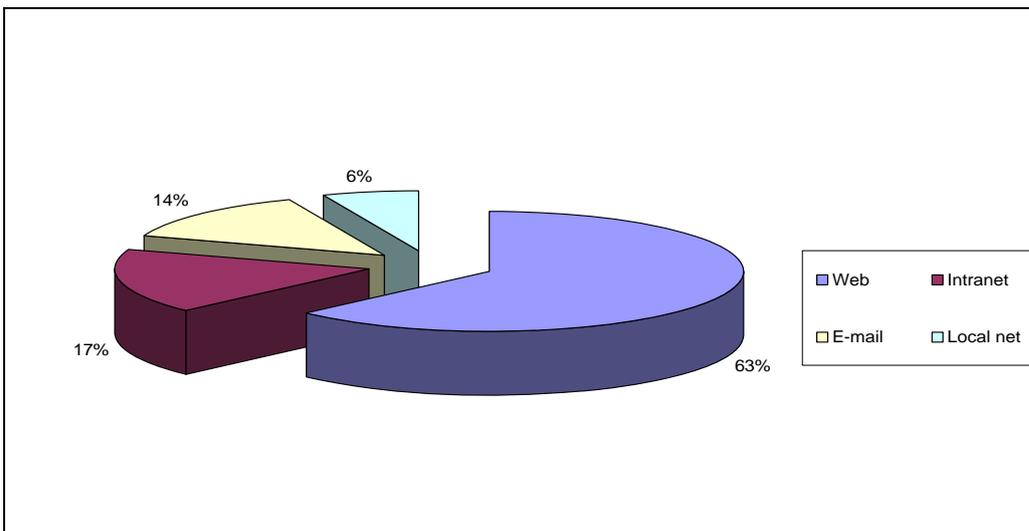
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The primary function of government libraries is to serve government at different levels by making available all kind of information published by government and non-government bodies and individuals.



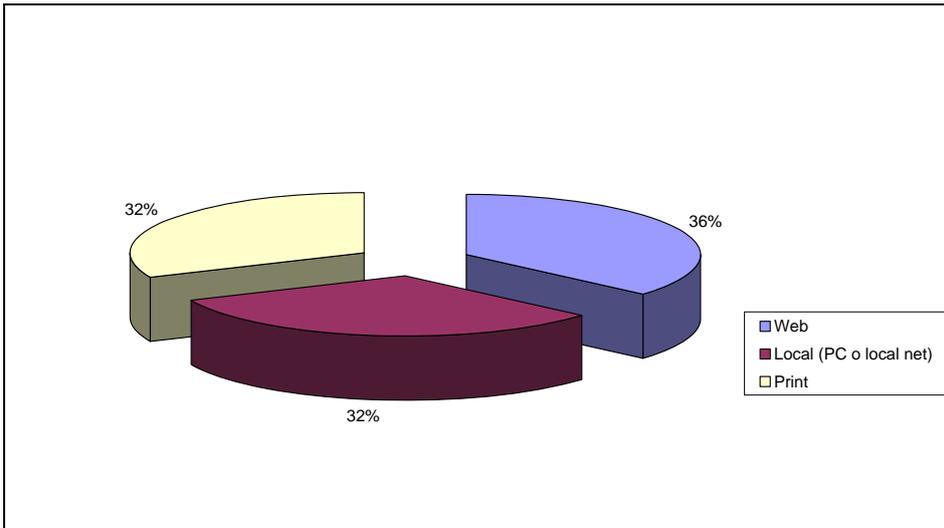
### Means of communication

Web	63%
Intranet	17%
E mail	14%
Local net	6%



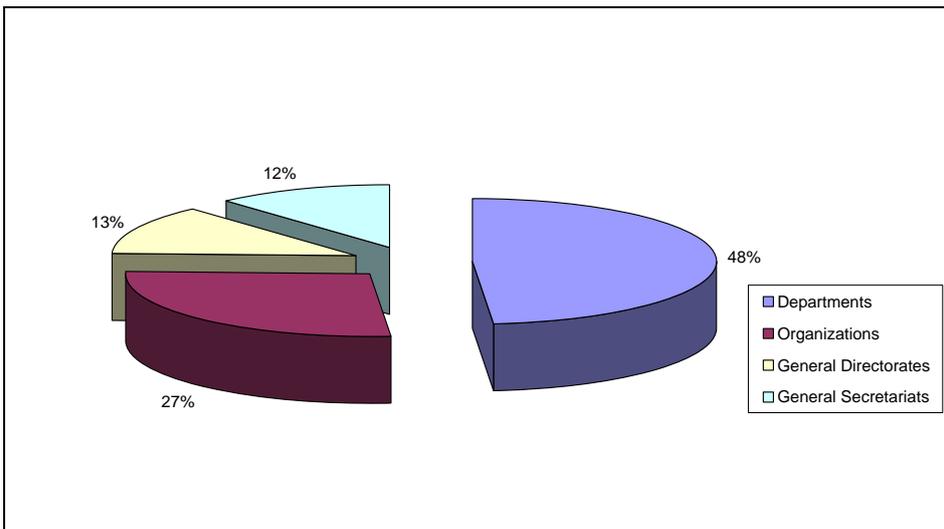
### What kind of format do they use for conservation of their documentation

Web	84
Local (PC o local net)	74
Print	73



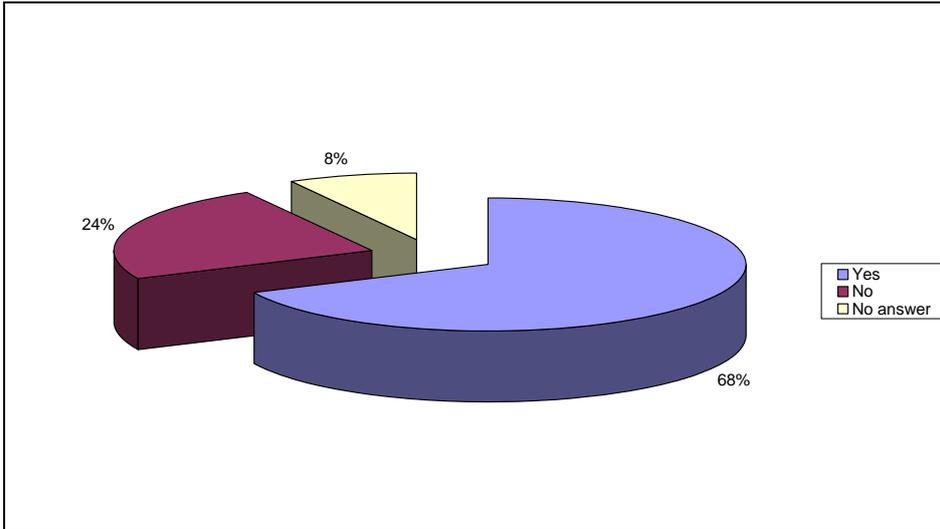
Which kind of organizations do publicize their own documentation best

Departments	48%
Organizations	27%
General Directorates	13%
General Secretariats	12%



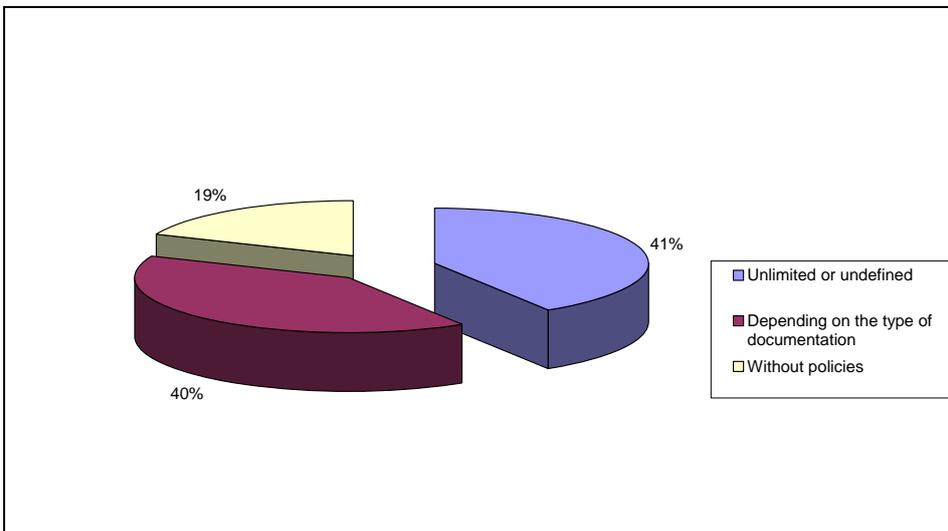
Which of them declares to have their own conservation policies of their documentation

Yes	68%
No	24%
Don't answer	8%



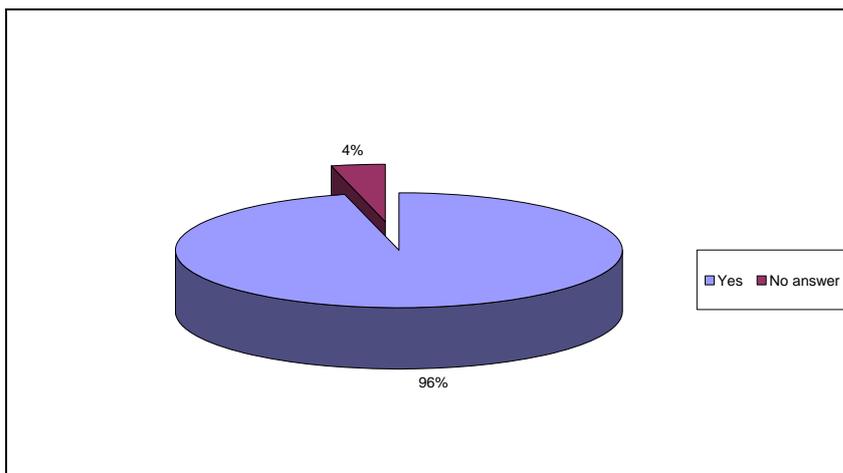
During how much time

Unlimited or undefined	41%
Depending on the kind of documentation	40%
Without policies	19%



Consider appropriate establishment of common policies of conservation of the electronic documentation generated by organizations of the *Generalitat*

Yes	96%
Don't answer	4%



### *Qualitative results*

The data shows that broadly speaking a high degree of awareness exists with regard to the problem, as well as a will of conservation of the digital documentation produced by each organization, but at the same time detects a lack of established guidelines and above all a fault of common procedures. We found, thus, in front to a great diversity of situations and types of conservation of the electronic documentation produced by each organization. Each body acts with proper criteria and, in some cases, out of initiatives of the heads of publications, of maintenance of the web or of the corresponding documentation centre. The change of people with responsibility can involve a change of guidelines, or in the worst case, lead to the entity's abandonment. In several occasions the willingness of conservation of the librarians and the custom to print a paper copy of the electronic documents have saved them from the loss of ancient versions of documents replaced by updated ones. There does not exist a common criterion on which types of documents need conservation on a long-term basis and which one don't, neither criteria on the type of format. Furthermore in general all the people asked, consider necessary to establish policies of documentary management integrated and shared by all the departments and organizations of the *Generalitat*.

### **PERSPECTIVES OF FUTURE**

Once achieved the most of the objectives of the government plan for 2004-2007 regard the improvement and modernization of the Catalan Library System , one of the objectives for the period 2008-2012 was to promote the grouping of the libraries of Catalonia in networks and thus enhance the cooperative work between them. One of the results was the creation of a section inside the General Sub-Directorate of Libraries (Department of Culture of the Generalitat of Catalonia) specifically devoted to the coordination of all the special libraries of Catalonia. This section has proceeded to the creation of new working groups, among them one that will be especially devoted to the digital libraries.

## **What needs to be done in order to have success with this project? We aim at some suggestions**

### *Constitution of a cross-disciplinary work team*

Create a commission integrated by representatives of the BEG and the members of the new working group of digital libraries, that together with the managers of the repository of the Department of Culture and an computing team, manage the implementation in the BEG, interested in, offering tools and assessment at any time.

### *Selection of documents, of digital objects and of formats*

As the most of repositories apply, supposedly this will only collect the documentation produced or entrusted by the Generalitat of Catalonia or the one to external companies or people.

It will also be necessary to value the different types of documents (articles, magazines, technical reports, publications, photographs, communications to proceedings, seminars and congresses etc.) and digital objects (text documents, images, audiovisual, music, etc.) that will be incorporated into this application and establish some criteria (quality, formats) of selection of these documents.

### *Digitalization*

Promote simultaneously a structured and ruled process of digitalization of materials that are still only on paper.

### *Guidelines*

Establish some clear guidelines, of normative character, for all the special libraries and documentation centres. The creation of only one repository, as the only resource on only one platform, needs of a documentary treatment that incorporates instruments of subject cataloguing and description of contents (metadates) with unified criteria, in order to facilitate the classification, the research and the reuse of the incorporated contents incorporated, independently of his origin.

### *Publicity and visibility*

The repository, as "only one box office" would promote the production of contents in the net of which the public administration is the author. It would also serve to organize that material, increase its visibility and impact in the net and it would facilitate free access and the gratuitousness, giving full public service to all of this process.

### *Institutional commitment*

Promote a commitment of the managers of web maintenance, edition and libraries and documentation centres.

Attain a commitment of the manager teams of the organizations, general secretariats, general directorates and departments of the Generalitat in order to have an initial budget and afterwards be able to maintain the common repository.

Consolidate the contact with the Autonomous Entity of the Official Newspaper and of Publications of the Generalitat and with the Publishing Council of the Generalitat and assess this organization in the specialised themes of the library field.

#### *Establishment of a common legal frame for the author's rights*

In this sense we believe that it would be interesting to study the possibilities that the licences offer Creative Commons, since they are the ones that would allow us put the available documentation of our libraries to all citizens, aim of our institutional repository, without any legal problems.

It is very important to mention that the application of these licences does not mean that the authors lose their rights; on the contrary, it's a way to exert them and a possibility to offer rights to third persons in certain circumstances.

In the case of the BEG the application of the Creative Commons is especially appropriated to the contents generated by the administration itself. As is well known, some works are not subject to rights of an author<sup>3</sup>, but the rest yes. In this last group, there is a type of documentation included, soon only available in our governmental libraries: the one that comes from the investigations that our institutions fund. It's important to mention that this documentation is one of our values added that make us different from other institutions.

Although in Spain an elaboration of a law is foreseen to promote the public access<sup>4</sup> to the contents generated with public money, while we expect these legislative changes, it will be advisable to give power to the use of the Creative Common licences in some fields like the web sites.

Hopefully we will see that some public administrations already use these licences and, even though very slowly, see that we are approaching the open access of information. It is necessary that all actors involved make an effort in reaching this aim, that we believe to be a priority.

#### ***Examples of institutional repositories***

One good example of good institutional repositories in Spain is RIA, the Institutional Repository of Asturias, created by the Government of the

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<sup>3</sup> 1- Real Legislative Decree 1/1996, of 12 of April, which approves the Rewrite Text of the Law of Intellectual Property, regularizing, clearing and harmonizing the legal disposals valid on the subject. Art. 13. They are not object of intellectual property the legal or statutory layouts or his corresponding projects, the resolutions of the jurisdictional organs and the records, agreements, deliberations and the judgements of the public organizations, like the official translations of all the previous texts.  
[http://News.juridicas.com/Base\\_data/Admin/rdleg1-1996.html](http://News.juridicas.com/Base_data/Admin/rdleg1-1996.html)

<sup>4</sup> 2- The main question of discussion in this debate on the public contents is if it's enough with a public access, that in a lot of cases already exists, or if we would have to demand a free access, with an implicit permission or an authorization to use these contents without practically restrictions, in a similar way to the model proposed by the scientific community that promotes the open access.

Principality of Asturias and in which in addition to other institutions the University of Oviedo also takes part.

It is a digital platform of open access to the scientific and technical literature produced in the field of the Principality of Asturias with the aim to collect the digital contents generated by the research activity of the Principality of Asturias and make easier the management and diffusion of said contents to complete text, including its preservation, organization, access and distribution.

If well regarding contents, the institutional repositories differ of the ones of the Universities, they would have to be based on some concepts developed in the academic frame. On the one hand the common authorities in communities or thematic fields, on the other the organization of the contents in collections and subcollections. Both concepts surpass the classical administrative hierarchy and are based on the transversality of the performances between departments. We will quote two recent examples created in Catalonia: the repository of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) and the one of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF).

We will highlight that these repositories, the institutional ones as much as the ones of the universities, are framed in the international movement known like OAI (Initiative of Open Access) and apply the protocol OAI-PMH that during the last years has tried to promote free access, without restrictions to the scientific and academic literature and allows to be grouped together by other collective repositories and in consequence broaden the visibility of contents.

## **CONCLUSION**

The community of professionals that work in the special libraries and documentation centres of the Catalan government assumes its part of responsibility in the possible development of a project to create an institutional repository, but at the same time is conscious of the need of having some clear guidelines and some tools of precise work, and that it is absolutely indispensable to have the support of the administration. Such a kind of project cannot be developed based only on good will and understanding between professionals of the same field.

We think that the organizational changes established during the current government period as regards the library system of Catalonia and the leadership of the Department of Culture regarding the special libraries of the *Generalitat* can constitute an ideal way to guide a project of these characteristics. We are therefore glad about the initiative of design of a department repository led by the Department of Culture of the *Generalitat* of Catalonia. Besides, we have been informed that, once set up, the possibility exists that other departments take part in it. We think that this organization, as guarantee of the cultural heritage of Catalonia, is the adequate institution for leading the creation of a system that ensures the

preservation, conservation and publicize of the electronic documentation generated and maintained by the Catalan public administration.

The leadership of the Department of Culture of the *Generalitat* in the creation of an institutional repository in which could take part all the other organs of the Catalan public administration will involve, among other things, the following advantages:

A great step forwards in the possibilities of preserving, conserving and publicize documentation as it grows, especially the technical ones generated by all the departments of the *Generalitat*.

Guarantee the conservation of the documentation independently of their hierarchical appointment of the organizations. Ensure, therefore, that the change of appointment of a library or documentation centre from a department to another would not affect the conservation of the documents generated by the institution to it belonged.

Open the possibility of normative treatment of the graphic materials, audio and video, as well as the abundant grey literature generated by the governmental agents.

And especially, and fundamentally, ensure that the electronic documentation generated by the different departments and organizations of the administration will be preserved and conserved now, and recovered and consulted in the future without any type of limitation except the one imposed by the legislation, guaranteeing the preservation of the historical memory of the institutions.

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