

**Zuzanna Jaśkowska-Józefiak**

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. Faculty of Historical Studies

e-mail: z.jaskowska@gmail.com

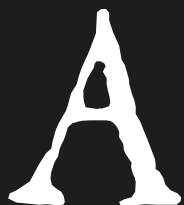
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4399-5311

**Agata Łysakowska**

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. Faculty of Historical Studies

e-mail: aklysakowska@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8065-5645



# Archivists without Frontiers: 20 years of the activity for the preservation of the international documentary heritage

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Zuzanna Jaśkowska-Józefiak, PhD, is an employee of the Department of Archives of the Institute of History at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań. Her research interests revolve around broadly understood archival studies, including, in particular, Spanish archives. Publications: Jaśkowska Z., *Hiszpańskie archiwa w sieci – Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES)*, *Archiwista Polski*, Yearbook 18: 2013, nr 2(70), pp. 7–14; Jaśkowska Z., *Hiszpańska sieć archiwalna: historia i organizacja*, *Archiwista Polski*, Yearbook 21: 2016, nr 1(81), pp. 7–15; Jaśkowska-Józefiak Z., *Współpraca archiwistów jako sposób samokształcenia na przykładzie wybranych organizacji i stowarzyszeń archiwalnych Hiszpanii* [in:] *Problemy nauczania ustawicznego po studiach historycznych, archiwistycznych i pokrewnych*, ed. M. Ausz, M. Szabaciuk, (Lublin 2017), pp. 75–85.

Agata Łysakowska, MA, is a PhD student at the Historical Department of the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań, where she is preparing her doctoral thesis devoted to charitable activities. She studies the history of everyday life; she is also interested in international archival cooperation and film archives. Her publications include: the article *Polska Kronika Filmowa jako źródło historyczne* [in:] *Historia a media. Studium selektywne*, vol. 3, ed. D. Gołaszewska, T. Sińczak, M. Zmudziński (Toruń 2017); *Wielmożna hrabino dobrodziejko! Akcja charytatywna Celestyny Działyńskiej z 1848 roku*, *Kronika Miasta Poznania*, 2018, nr 1, pp. 157–168.

**K**

**Key words:** *Archivists without Frontiers*; international cooperation of archivists; non-governmental organizations; public benefit organizations

**S**

**Summary. Aim:** The aim of the article is to present the activity of *Archivists without Frontiers* set up in Catalonia in 1998. The following paragraphs discuss the history of the association,

its structure, method of operation and examples of initiatives in which the organization was involved. Due to the wide range of projects undertaken, the article only describes selected issues that allow us to see the wide scope of the organization's activity and the manner in which *Archivists without Frontiers* operate. A separate part of the text is devoted to the activity of securing and promoting the documentary heritage of Catalonia. **Research method:** The text is based on information from information bulletins (*Boletín AsF*) regularly published by *Archivists without Frontiers* and individual published articles. The source database is supplemented with information from the public sphere, such as the media or the Internet. **Conclusions:** The article recapitulates twenty years of the association's activity, which from the group of local enthusiasts has evolved into a widely recognized and appreciated initiative playing an important role in the international archival cooperation.

The need to protect and preserve the archival resources constitutes one of the most important responsibilities of archivists all over the world. The General Declaration of Archives refers to "the role of archivists as educated professionals in the field of elementary and lifelong education, who serve society by the creation, selection and preservation of the documentation, making it suitable to use"<sup>1</sup>. It was also the principal idea of Catalan archivists who in the 1990s set up a public benefit organization *Archivists without Frontiers*. The aim of the article is to show the history of the organization, its structure and the most important aspects of its activity. As the association is active in many projects, the text presents only some of them which show a variety of the association's activity. Despite the fact that there have been established numerous branches of the organization *Archivists without Frontiers*, the article addresses only the Spanish branch of the organization – the most active and the oldest one, which this year celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## Organization

The organization *Archivists without Frontiers* (Spanish: *Archiveros in Fronteras*, Catalan: *Arxivers Sense Fronteres*, further on referred to as the AsF) was set up in 1998 upon the initiative of a small group of Catalan archivists. Many of them had already been involved in various ventures the aim of which was to support archives and archivists in developing countries such as Equatorial Guinea and Niger<sup>2</sup>. The experience which the archivists had acquired during the projects made them believe that similar initiatives should not be isolated. Future members of the association were all deeply convinced that all the countries of the world had the right to preserve their heritage, including the documentary heritage. The pre-

<sup>1</sup> *Stowarzyszenie Archiwistów Polskich. Powszechna deklaracja archiwów* [online], [Accessed February 28, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: [http://sap.waw.pl/dzialalnosc\\_statutowa/powszechna-deklaracja-archiwow-2](http://sap.waw.pl/dzialalnosc_statutowa/powszechna-deklaracja-archiwow-2).

<sup>2</sup> Since 1997 Catalan archivists had taken part in sorting out the documentation, computerizing the processes of its management, creating registers of files and training archivists from selected towns of Equatorial Guinea, including the capital city – Malabo. The cooperation took place as a result of the agreement between the offices of the cities of Barcelona and Malabo. A similar project was introduced in the city of Niamey in Niger. Vide: *Proyectos de colaboración entre los Ayuntamientos de Barcelona y Malabo (República de Guinea Ecuatorial)*. *Noviembre 1999*, *Boletín AsF*, 2000, no. 1, p. 2.

servation of documents should be independent of unfavourable political, economic or social conditions<sup>3</sup>. As was pointed out by the first president of the organization Ramón Alberch y Fugueras, the values such as solidarity and cooperation should not be ignored in the archivist's profession, "which is based on civic and ethical principles"<sup>4</sup>. Thus, all the institutions and private people not able to preserve documentation in an appropriate manner should be offered necessary assistance. Taking into account numerous military conflicts and collapses of military regimes, this help seemed even more urgent<sup>5</sup>.

The name *Archivists without Frontiers* appeared for the first time in the journal of the Association of Catalan Archivists *Lligall. Revista catalana d'arxivística* in the report concerning the initiative of organizing an archive in Malabo<sup>6</sup>. The AsF was officially established on 1 May 1998 when the association was entered into the register of public benefit organizations. On 4 September 1998 its articles of association were approved of by the Catalan *Generalitat*<sup>7</sup>. The aims of the organization included:

- protecting, securing and popularizing the documentary heritage endangered by destruction or harm;
- making society aware of the importance of appropriate preservation and use of archival materials in order to respect the right of communities, to control the administrative authorities, to carry out research and to promote the economic, social, scientific, technological and cultural development along with regaining and reinforcing the national identity;
- supporting projects aiming at regaining, sorting out and promoting archival activities in accordance with the archival policy applied in a given state;
- promoting the archival awareness through training and counselling;
- supporting the international cooperation among archivists and facilitating contacts with specialist of related branches;
- protecting and respecting the human rights and rights of certain communities<sup>8</sup>.

The breakthrough in the creation of the organizational structure of the AsF took place when the organization was entered into the National Register of Associations (*Registro Nacional de Asociaciones*) in 2003, which resulted in two major changes. The first change consisted in extending the range of the organization to cover all the country; the other change involved reformulating articles of association and adjusting them to the needs of the organization open to the supranational cooperation<sup>9</sup>. Within a short period of time, there appeared national sections of the

<sup>3</sup> R. Alberch y Fugueras, *Archiveros sin Fronteras*, El profesional de la Información, vol. 9: 2000, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Idem, *Una nueva ONG: Archiveros sin fronteras*, Boletín ACAL, 1999, no. 32, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> idem, *Inicios y fundación de Archiveros sin Fronteras* [in:] *Archivos y cooperación. Diez años de Archiveros sin Fronteras*, ed. C. Bolfill and M. Martínez, Girona 2008, pp. 22-23.

<sup>6</sup> M. C. Martínez, *Arxivers sense fronteres: una experiència de cooperació internacional entre els ajuntaments de Barcelona i Malabo*, Lligall. Revista catalana d'arxivística, 1998, no. 13, pp. 205-225.

<sup>7</sup> R. Alberch y Fugueras, *Una nueva ONG...*, s. 18.

<sup>8</sup> *Objetivos*, [in:] *Archiveros sin Fronteras* [online], [Accessed February 15, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.arxiv.org/home/es-es/qui-som-2/objetivos>.

<sup>9</sup> A. Font i Segura, *Organización Jurídica*, [in:] *Archivos y cooperación. Diez años...*, p. 58.

AsF<sup>10</sup>, which quickly became independent and created their own organizations. In 2008 it was decided to set up the international network of the AsF (*Archiveros sin Fronteras Internacional*) with the aim of maintaining and organizing further cooperation. Apart from the Spanish institution, the network included associations from Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay, Columbia, Chile, Ecuador, France and Mexico (under the name of *Colegio Nacional de Archivistas de México*). All the associations are entitled to use the name and logo of the AsF<sup>11</sup>. In order to ensure the coordination of actions the Council for Cooperation (*Consejo Internacional de Coordinación*) was set up, which consisted of two representatives from each country which had a branch of the AsF. Another body that was established was the Executive Council (*Comité Ejecutivo*), which consisted of a few people<sup>12</sup>. The organization was to focus mainly on helping the states whose documentary heritage was endangered by the loss or destruction due to military conflicts, natural disasters or political repressions<sup>13</sup>. Irrespective of the international bonds, each organization has its own board and structure. At present (the term of office for the years 2017–2021) the management of the Spanish branch of the AsF consists of 13 members. The head of the organization is the person who normally works in the Department of Justice of the Catalan *Generalitat* – Nuria Carreras<sup>14</sup>.

## Projects

During twenty years of its activity, the AsF has got involved in a number of projects carried out in Africa, South America and – to a lesser extent- in Europe. The aim of the action was to help in the organization of particular archival sites or networks of archives. Activities of the AsF were based on trainings, sorting out the resources and providing financial support. In the recent years more and more popular became projects, the aim of which was to collect, consolidate and promote documents which within a short period of time could have been forgotten because of the lack of interest on the part of the state archival authorities. This group included materials which were unrecognized – such as accounts of victims of dictatorships and political conflicts. Despite the fact that the AsF took part in several dozen of projects, only a few of them shall be addressed here. They show the variety and a wide scope of actions undertaken by the organization. They also illustrate the manner in which the institution operates.

One of the first projects in which the the AsF was involved was to help archivists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who, after the ongoing civil war in 1992–1995,

<sup>10</sup> Originally, due to problems with the harmonization of home law with international law, branches of The AsF were set up only in Argentina and France. With time, new branches were opened. Vide: *Expansión de Archiveros sin Fronteras* [in:] *Archivos y cooperación. Diez años...*, p. 53.

<sup>11</sup> *Archiveros sin Fronteras Internacional. Carta Internacional*, [in:] *Archiveros sin Fronteras* [online], [Accessed February 15, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: [http://www.arxiv.org/home/pdf/carta\\_internacional\\_es.pdf](http://www.arxiv.org/home/pdf/carta_internacional_es.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> *Constitución de Archiveros sin Fronteras-Internacional y aprobación de la Carta Internacional*, Boletín AsF, 2008, no. 18, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Archiveros sin Fronteras Internacional. Carta Internacional...*

<sup>14</sup> *Organización*, [in:] *Archiveros sin Fronteras* [online] [Accessed February 28, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.arxiv.org/home/es-es/qui-som-2/objetivos-2>.

faced the problem of a new organization of archival facilities<sup>15</sup>. The aim of the action was the professional substantive preparation of archivists from Sarajevo and Banja Luka. The training was preceded by gathering information about the most urgent problems and needs of archivists. The first part of the courses took place in 2001<sup>16</sup>. Participants included both professionals who, due to the war<sup>17</sup>, were forced to take a few years' break at work, and those who took their first steps in the archives. The action would not have been possible without the financial support of the Catalan *Generalitat*, but the involvement of Spanish regional archival associations deserves attention. The cooperation was joined by, among others, the Association of Catalan Archivists (*Asociación de Archiveros de Cataluña*) and the Association of Archivists of Castile and Leon (*Asociación de Archiveros de Castilla y León*), who participated in the selection of bibliographic materials for training. The textbooks translated in Barcelona were put at the permanent disposal of archivists from Bosnia and Herzegovina. As part of the assistance, microfilming equipment financed by the National Archives of Andorra was also transferred to the City Archives in Sarajevo. This fact was significant because during the civil war the equipment used for reprographics and the maintenance of the archives had been completely destroyed. In 2005, the project was restarted<sup>18</sup>. During this period specialized trainings in the implementation of the international ISAD(G) archival standard and a basic course for new employees of archives were carried out<sup>19</sup>.

The project carried out in 2005–2011 in Morocco was also to serve the proper organization of the archiving facility. Its purpose was to organize the documentation of the Municipal Archives in Fez, which stored in the basement documentation dated from 1912. The immediate impulse to launch the action was a request for help directed by the City of Fez to the same facility in Barcelona, which, as a result, offered to cooperate with the AsF. The Catalan *Generalitat* also contributed to the financing of the project<sup>20</sup>. “Two, three wardrobes” of files expected by the Spanish archivists turned out to be 3.5 kilometres of documentation stored in a complete disorder, placed in the regularly flooded cellars of the city office<sup>21</sup>. The clean-up action involved not only the staff of the office who were regularly trained, but also people employed at the Historical Department of the local university and volunteers from Catalonia. The project was also attended by archivists from the French AsF section. The main work was decided to be carried out during summer camps, which allowed, on the one hand, to mobilize Moroccan archivists to further activity,

<sup>15</sup> It has been estimated that during the four-year conflict even 90% of the administrative state documentation could have been destroyed. Vide: A. Lafuente Izquierdo, *Una década de destrucción de archivos en la antigua Yugoslavia*, Boletín ACAL 1999, no. 32, pp. 14–16.

<sup>16</sup> Vide: M. J. Sánchez Carrasco, *Bosnia-Herzegovina: un reto para la historia y para los archiveros*, ArchiVamos, 2002, no. 43–44, pp. 42–45.

<sup>17</sup> It refers to the military conflict of 1992–1995.

<sup>18</sup> A. Lafuente Izquierdo, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> [2001–2005] *Seminario de formación en archivística para el personal de los archivos de Banja Luka y Sarajevo* [in:] *Archiveros sin Fronteras* [online], [Accessed February 28, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.archivers.org/home/es-es/proyectos/luka-sarajevo>.

<sup>20</sup> [2005–2011] *Proyecto de organización de la documentación de la Comuna Urbana de Fez.*, [in:] *Archiveros sin Fronteras* [online], [Accessed February 28, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: [http://www.archivers.org/home/es-es/que-hacemos/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=97&Itemid=492](http://www.archivers.org/home/es-es/que-hacemos/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=97&Itemid=492).

<sup>21</sup> *Efectos secundarios. Fez (Maruecos)*, [in:] *Barcelona Solidaria, 15 años de cooperación internacional*, ed. R. Snahuja and A. Dionís, Barcelona 2010, p. 136.

and on the other hand, to monitor the progress. Negotiating and acquiring new warehouses for the use of the archives from the city of Fez should be regarded as the project's great success<sup>22</sup>. The result of many years of activities is a structured archive, with a developed and protected resource and qualified employees, some of whom gained experience also during their visits in Spain<sup>23</sup>.

The support of Moroccan archivists did not prevent the AsF from engaging in the project in the territories of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara), unrecognized by most countries and combated by Morocco<sup>24</sup>. Its purpose is to organize the National Archives of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, whose representatives have asked for assistance directly to the AsF. The first attempts to establish cooperation were made in 2006, but official activities commenced in 2007<sup>25</sup>. As in the case of the project in Bosnia/Herzegovina and Morocco, the AsF carried out preliminary research to help detect and prioritize the needs of the archive located in the refugee camps in Algerian Tinduf (where the state authorities of Western Sahara also reside). The basic goal was to train the personnel and familiarize them with the latest international archival standards. These activities were to allow the archivists of Western Sahara to administer the collections as soon as possible. The training was carried out directly in the Tindouf camp; however, selected archivists from the Saharawi National Archives also had the opportunity to visit selected archival facilities in Spain. One of the most important goals of the ongoing project is also the preparation of appropriate archival infrastructure. In 2008, in order to facilitate the transport of documentation, the AsF undertook to finance a car<sup>26</sup>. The AsF's activity in Western Sahara has often been the subject of discussions and debates, which could have been associated with the AsF's involvement in the promotion and protection of human rights. In 2016, a session was organized in Madrid, which was devoted to the ten-year support for the Saharawi Archives. In the same year, there took place a discussion in Sant Feliu de Guicols titled "Archives and human rights: Archives of the Republic of Saharawi ". A similar event took place also in Reus<sup>27</sup>.

Works related to archiving and securing the documentation were also undertaken in Latin American countries. An example is the "Cuba decriptiva" project. This undertaking was carried out in cooperation with the Institute of History of Cuba (*Instituto de Historia de Cuba*) with the financial support of the City Council of Barcelona. It should be emphasized that the archive which took part in the project constitutes part the Institute; it is one of the largest archives in Cuba: it consists of 25 complexes and 14 collections of documentation including a total of 1310 rm of files, including 72 thousand photographs, military plans and other graphic

<sup>22</sup> During the implementation of the project, it happened that the warehouses were flooded, and the already structured documentation had to be dried and the recently given layout had to be reconstructed. Vide: *ibidem*, p. 138.

<sup>23</sup> Vide: *Proyecto de organización del Archivo de la Comuna Urbana de Fez*, Boletín AsF, 2007, no. 15–16, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> The venture was financed by the Cataln *Generalitat*, the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport along with the City Council of Torredembarra.

<sup>25</sup> [2006] *Estudio de prospección en el Archivo Nacional de la RASD en Tinduf*, [in:] *Archiveros sin Fronteras* [online], [Accessed February 22, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.arxiv.org/home/es-es/proyectos/archivo-nacional-rasd>.

<sup>26</sup> *Entrega de un coche al archivo nacional Saharawi*, Boletín AsF, 2008, no. 17, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Actos de difusión*, Boletín AsF, 2016, no. 28, pp. 17–19.

and audiovisual materials. The collected documents are a very interesting testimony to social, economic, administrative, political and cultural life in Cuba<sup>28</sup>. The AsF got involved in the new initiative owing to a poor condition of the preserved documentation and the fact that the archival infrastructure did not ensure proper conditions for its storage. The aim of the project carried out in 2015–2016 was to collect funds to finance the proper security of the archive and the maintenance of archival materials, their classification, correct description, as well as, what is worth emphasizing, securing the archival resources through digitalization and making them available online<sup>29</sup>.

The AsF has also implemented a number of smaller initiatives that are part of the project “Archives of dictatorships in Latin America” (*Archivos de las Dictaduras de América Latina*). In 2007–2008, the cooperation with the Center for Documentation and the Archives of Human Rights (*Centro de Documentación y Archivo para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos*) was established in Paraguay, in the city of Asunción. The institution protects the files of the archive of the military police of General Stroessner, the dictator of Paraguay in the years 1954–1989. The collected documentation, also known as the “Archives of Terror”<sup>30</sup>, was created as part of the so-called “Operation Kondor” – a project of South American countries (including Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile), whose aim was to murder opponents of political dictatorships. The task that the AsF project set for itself was cooperation with the Documentation Center in the field of digitizing collections. A scanner was purchased from the funds organized by the association and a training how to handle it was provided. In addition, two specialized archival courses were organized: for the staff of the Documentation Center and employees of the Supreme Court. People connected with various state institutions who shared their experience in organizing archival collections during the training were also persuaded to cooperate<sup>31</sup>.

While discussing the activities related to organizing documentation remaining after the period of dictatorships in Latin America, it is worth mentioning the project concerning “missing children” (*Proyecto de los niños desaparecidos de Uruguay durante la dictadura militar (1973–1985)*). The initiative took the form of recording – through collecting interviews, written accounts and photographs – testimonies of women who in the 1970s and 80s found themselves in prison and gave birth to

<sup>28</sup> The documentation covered by the project comes mainly from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and is a testimony of the political activity of the nation (including the Cuban Communist Party), the activity of student, military and feminist movements. An interesting part of the archive is the collection from 1911–1913, consisting of the findings of statistical surveys carried out by local officials in individual Cuban municipalities. This activity was supervised by the government administration that wanted to collect data from each town in the country. In the case of Havana, these descriptions relate to the development of individual districts, the construction of the Palacio de Gobierno, the water supply system or the street lighting plan. Vide: [2015–2016] *Proyecto para la descripción y digitalización de la colección “Cuba Descriptiva”*, [in:] *Archiveros sin Fronteras* [online], [Accessed February 15, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.arxiv.org/home/es-es/jornada-es/item/192-2015-en-curo-proyecto-para-la-descripcion-y-digitalizacion-de-la-coleccion-cuba-descriptiva>.

<sup>29</sup> Available on the World Wide Web: <https://archive.org/details/cubainstituteofhistory> [Accessed February 22, 2018].

<sup>30</sup> *Archives of Terror* [online], [Accessed February 22, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/memory-of-the-world/register/full-list-of-registered-heritage/registered-heritage-page-1/archives-of-terror/>.

<sup>31</sup> [2007–2008] *Proyecto de colaboración con el Centro de Documentación y Archivo para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos. Corte Suprema de Justicia de Paraguay*, [in:] *Archiveros sin Fronteras* [online], [Accessed February 28, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.arxiv.org/home/es-es/proyectos/paraguay-corte-suprema>.

children there. The outcome of the project is the book *Maternidad en prisión política. Uruguay 1970–1980* published by the AsF<sup>32</sup>. The members of the Uruguay AsF section were also involved in the project<sup>33</sup>.

When discussing the AsF's projects, we should mention the sources of their financing. Individual actions are carried out with the support of many institutions, mainly from the Spanish territories. Among the most active are the Autonomous Government of Catalonia and the Government of Spain. The local authorities of the regions in which the projects are carried out are usually also involved in project financing. Part of the cost is also borne by membership fees<sup>34</sup>. Donations to the AsF may also be made by private individuals or legal entities<sup>35</sup>.

## Popularization of knowledge and activity

The activity of the AsF includes not only projects, but also the promotion of knowledge about the functioning of the association itself and good archival practices. As part of the publishing activity of the organization, three books were published: *Archivos y Cooperación. Diez años de Archiveros sin Fronteras*, *Actas del Congreso Internacional de Archivos y Derechos Humanos: El acceso y la desclasificación de los Documentos* and *Maternidad en prisión política: Uruguay 1970-1980*<sup>36</sup>. It is worth noting that the AsF efficiently uses the opportunities offered by the Internet<sup>37</sup>. Since 2000 the association has issued a semi-annual newsletter online. The journal informs about initiatives and projects implemented by the AsF as well as meetings and decisions of the management board<sup>38</sup>. The organization is also present in numerous social media: on LinkedIn (263 tracking users), Facebook (1340), Google+ (47), Twitter (2525), Instagram (1239) and Youtube (21)<sup>39</sup>.

The AsF's activity related to the organization and participation in conferences on archival issues is also worth discussing. Upon the initiative of the association, seven scientific sessions have been held so far as part of the Days of Archivists without Frontiers (*Jornadas de Archiveros sin Fronteras*). The meetings concerned topics such as the preservation of the documentary heritage, or the development and cooperation of archivists. The activities of the AsF are not limited to cyclical conferences, an example of which is the already mentioned conference summarizing the project's achievements in Western Sahara (*Archiveros Sin Fronteras: el*

<sup>32</sup> *Archiveros sin Fronteras. [2007–2011] Proyecto de los niños desaparecidos de Uruguay durante la dictadura militar (1973-1985)*, [in:] *Archiveros sin Fronteras* [online], [Accessed February 15, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.arxiv.org/home/es-es/proyectos/dictadura-militar-uruguay>.

<sup>33</sup> *Los niños de la cárcel (Uruguay)*, Boletín AsF, 2007, no. 15–16, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> R. Ibarra Ollé, *AsF 2013–2017: Consolidar para avanzar*, Boletín AsF, 2017, no. 29, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Haz un donativo* [in:] *Archiveros sin Fronteras* [online], [Accessed February 22, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.arxiv.org/home/es-es/que-puedes-hacer-tu/haz-un-donativo>.

<sup>36</sup> C. Bofill, C. Martínez, *Archivos y cooperación. Diez años de Archiveros sin Fronteras* Girona 2008; *El acceso y la desclasificación de los documentos: actas del Congreso Internacional de Archivos y Derechos Humanos*, ed. M. Asumpció Colomer, Sarrià de Ter 2009; *Maternidad en prisión política: Uruguay 1970-1980*, ed. G. Jorge, Ediciones Trilce 2010.

<sup>37</sup> The Internet as the tool for communication was discussed in 2008 when *Archiveros sin Fronteras International* was set up. Vide: *Constitución de Archiveros sin Fronteras-Internacional...*, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> The journal is available on-line. Vide: *Archiveros sin Fronteras. Boletín* [online], [Accessed February, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.arxiv.org/home/es-es/siguemos/boletines>.

<sup>39</sup> R. Ibarra Ollé, op. cit., p. 3.



*activismo al rescate de la memoria 10 años junto al pueblo saharauí*). Members of the AsF also take part in independent initiatives addressing the topics that interest them. In 2017 AsF participated in the session “Archives for Democracy and the Right to Information” (*Archivos para la democracia y el derecho a la información*). In addition, the association willingly conducts lectures and workshops concerning their projects<sup>40</sup>. Every year the AsF employees visit students who study at the College of Archival Studies and the Management of Documentation in Barcelona (*Escola Superior d’Arxivística and Gestió de Documents*), where they talk about the functioning of their organization<sup>41</sup>.

It should be noted that the AsF also participates in human rights activities. In 2008, along with the authorities of Sarrià de Ter (Girona province) and the city hall of Girona, the AsF organized an international congress titled “Archives and human rights” (*Archivos y derechos humanos*). The aftermath of the event was the already mentioned book publication. In 2014, representatives of the organization participated in a conference on the role of archives in the defense of human rights and historical memory<sup>42</sup>. A year later, the AsF itself – as part of the annual archival meetings – organized a conference titled “Archives, Human Rights and Democracy” (*Archivos, derechos humanos y democracia*). In the invitation, the organizers drew attention to the growing social movements declaring their willingness to return to the policies and ways of action that were applied forty years earlier: “The solution is not forgetting, closing archives or blocking funds. That is why now, more than ever before, archivists must participate in this democratic revolution by performing their work for transparency and access with utmost accuracy”<sup>43</sup>.

## AsF and regionalism

Finally, it is worth mentioning the AsF’s activity in promoting the documentary and cultural heritage of Catalonia. Since 2006 the association has been involved in activities aimed at organizing and sorting out the emigration archives of Catalonia in Latin America. So far, 4 projects covering the territories of Mexico, Cuba, Uruguay, Argentina and Costa Rica have been completed. Another 2 – in Cuba and Argentina – are underway. The attachment to your own region is visible not only through the initiation of projects. The political turmoil in Spain related to Catalonia’s struggle for independence<sup>44</sup> in 2017 did not remain unheeded in the AsF. On 20 September 2017, after the arrests of the representatives of the Catalan authorities involved in

<sup>40</sup> In April 2017 the president of the AsF Ricard Ibarra gave classes to students of History at the University of Rovira and Virgili in Tarragona. Vide: *AsF en la Universidad Rovira i Virgili de Taragona*, ibidem, p. 21.

<sup>41</sup> *Actos de difusión...*, p. 19.

<sup>42</sup> Vide: R. Ibarra, *Archivos, Archiveros y derechos humanos*, Boletín AsF, 2014, no. 25, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> *Archivos, derechos humanos y democracia* [online], [Accessed March 7, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <https://jornadasasf2015.wordpress.com>.

<sup>44</sup> On 1 October 2017 in Catalonia there was a referendum on the separation of this autonomous region from Spain. However, this event was illegal – according to the decision of the Constitutional Tribunal, the police had an order to confiscate ballots and voting cards. Clashes between the police and the Catalans took place in front of the polling stations. Vide: *Interior asegura que 431 policías y guardias civiles resultaron heridos en el dispositivo del 1-O*, La Vanguardia [online], [Accessed February 22, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20171002/431755741107/interior-policias-guaidas-civiles-heridos-1-o.html>.

the organization of the illegal independence referendum and mass protests, the AsF published the following statement on its website:

“*Archivists without Frontiers* express their total disapproval of the action of the police of the Spanish State that took place yesterday in Catalonia. We consider it unacceptable to use repressive actions against the freedom of speech and Catalan institutions. Ideas cannot be defended by the repressive and violent reactions, which are typical of authoritarian states rather than modern democracies. For all those reasons we insist that the repressive and intimidating actions be stopped immediately as they breach fundamental human rights”<sup>45</sup>.

A more severe comment appeared on the AsF website on October 2, 2017, the day after the referendum:

“*Archivists without Frontiers* express their deep astonishment and total disapproval of the events that took place yesterday. We find it disgraceful and scandalous that the only answer to yesterday’s democratic act was police attacks and violence directed by the state forces against Catalan citizens. Regardless of their [Spanish government – the author’s note] opinion concerning the referendum and trial, we believe that the repressive and violent reaction of the Spanish government was unacceptable. This statement does not come only from Catalan society, but also from other places in Spain and the international community, which were terrified by yesterday’s act of violence. The human rights of Catalan society have been attacked and violated [...]. We want to declare our support and solidarity to all those citizens who have been attacked and beaten [...] and show our sadness and indignation towards these reprehensible events [...]. Democracy should allow us to discuss, and the word must be the only weapon that speaks of everything”<sup>46</sup>.

Despite the fact that in the case of other political conflicts the AsF tried to remain apolitical and distance itself from the judgement of the parties of the conflict, the situation in Catalonia turned out to be a special case. It is not surprising given the pronounced domination of the Catalans in the Spanish branch of the AsF. Yet, against the background of earlier apolitical activities of the organization, such a strong reaction may arouse surprise.

The AsF is celebrating its twentieth anniversary this year. Throughout twenty years, an association formed by a small group of enthusiasts from Catalonia has grown into an international institution. The establishment of *AsF Interacional* in 2008 was only a confirmation of the existing *status quo*. The growing interest in the organization resulting from the archivists’ establishing new contacts in distant parts of the world led to the establishment of a branch of the AsF in 11 countries, mainly in Latin America. What should be particularly highlighted are the number and variety of projects carried out at that time: from securing documentation in the face of armed conflicts and natural disasters, through helping to organize archival

<sup>45</sup> *Comunicado de AsF en relación a los hechos acaecidos en Barcelona el 20 de septiembre*, [in:] *Archiveros sin Fronteras* [online], [Accessed February 28, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.arxiv.org/home/es-es/jornada-es/item/215-comunicado-de-asf-en-relacion-a-los-hechos-acaecidos-en-barcelona-el-20-de-septiembre>.

<sup>46</sup> *Comunicado de AsF en relación a la actuación policial del día 1 de octubre*, [in:] *Archiveros sin fronteras* [online], [Accessed February 28, 2018]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.arxiv.org/home/es-es/jornada-es/item/219-comunicado-1o>.

networks in developing countries, down to the struggle for the maintenance of the documentary heritage and respect for human rights – so uncomfortable for politicians nowadays. The AsF's activity is appreciated not only by the institutions that have been helped. In 2017, the Vidal and Llecha Association awarded the organization with *Memorial por la Paz* for peace and disarmament activities.

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**Zuzanna Jaśkowska-Józefiak**

Uniwersytet im. A. Mickiewicza w Poznaniu. Wydział Historyczny

e-mail: z.jaskowska@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4399-5311

**Agata Łysakowska**

Uniwersytet im. A. Mickiewicza w Poznaniu. Wydział Historyczny

e-mail: aklysakowska@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8065-5645

Dr Zuzanna Jaśkowska-Józefiak jest pracownikiem Zakładu Archiwistyki Instytutu Historii Uniwersytetu im. A. Mickiewicza w Poznaniu. Jej zainteresowania badawcze skupiają się wokół szeroko pojmowanej archiwistyki, w tym przede wszystkim archiwistyki hiszpańskiej. Publikacje: Jaśkowska Z., *Hiszpańskie archiwa w sieci – Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES)*, *Archiwista Polski*, R. 18: 2013, nr 2(70), s. 7-14; Jaśkowska Z., *Hiszpańska sieć archiwalna: historia i organizacja*, *Archiwista Polski*, R. 21: 2016, nr 1(81), s. 7-15; Jaśkowska-Józefiak Z., *Współpraca archiwistów jako sposób samokształcenia na przykładzie wybranych organizacji i stowarzyszeń archiwalnych Hiszpanii*, [w:] *Problemy nauczania ustawicznego po studiach historycznych, archiwistycznych i pokrewnych*, red. M. Ausz, M. Szabaciuk, (Lublin 2017), s. 75–85.

Mgr Agata Łysakowska jest doktorantką na Wydziale Historycznym Uniwersytetu im. A. Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, gdzie przygotowuje pracę doktorską poświęconą działalności dobroczynnej. Bada historię życia codziennego, interesuje się także międzynarodową współpracą archiwalną oraz archiwami filmowymi. Publikacje: artykuł *Polska Kronika Filmowa jako źródło historyczne*, [w:] *Historia a media. Studium selektywne*, t. 3, red. D. Gołaszewska, T. Sińczak, M. Zmudziński (Toruń 2017); *Wielmożna hrabino dobrodziejko! Akcja charytatywna Celestyny Działyńskiej z 1848 roku*, *Kronika Miasta Poznania*, 2018, nr 1, s. 157–168.

## Archiwiści bez Granic: 20 lat działalności na rzecz zachowania międzynarodowego dziedzictwa dokumentalnego

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**Słowa kluczowe:** Archiwiści bez Granic; międzynarodowa współpraca archiwalna; organizacje pozarządowe; organizacje pożytku publicznego

S

**Streszczenie. Cel/teza:** Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie działalności powołanej w Katalonii w roku 1998 organizacji Archiwisci bez Granic. W kolejnych akapitach omówiono historię stowarzyszenia, jego strukturę, sposób działania oraz przykładowe inicjatywy, w które organizacja była zaangażowana. Z powodu szerokiego zakresu podejmowanych projektów, w artykule opisano jedynie wybrane z nich, pozwalające rozeznąć się w rozmachu oraz sposobie działania Archiwistów bez Granic. Osobny fragment tekstu poświęcono działalności dotyczącej zabezpieczenia i promowania dziedzictwa dokumentalnego Katalonii. **Metoda badawcza:** Tekst opiera się na informacjach zaczerpniętych z regularnie wydawanych przez Archiwistów bez Granic biuletynach informacyjnych (*Boletín AsF*) oraz pojedynczych, opublikowanych artykułach. Bazę źródłową uzupełniają informacje ze sfery publicznej, jak media czy sieć WWW. **Wyniki/Wnioski:** Artykuł podsumowuje dwadzieścia lat działalności stowarzyszenia, które z grupy lokalnych pasjonatów przekształciło się w szeroko rozpoznawaną i docenianą inicjatywę odgrywającą istotną rolę w międzynarodowej współpracy archiwalnej.

**Zuzanna Jaśkowska-Józefiak**

Adam-Mickiewicz-Universität Posen. Fakultät für Historische Wissenschaften

e-mail: z.jaskowska@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4399-5311

**Agata Łysakowska**

Adam-Mickiewicz-Universität Posen. Fakultät für Historische Wissenschaften

e-mail: aklysakowska@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8065-5645

Dr. Zuzanna Jaśkowska-Józefiak ist Mitarbeiterin der Abteilung für Archivistik im Institut für Geschichte der Adam-Mickiewicz-Universität in Posen. Ihr Forschungsinteresse bezieht sich auf die umfassende Archivistik, darunter vor allem auf die spanische Archivistik. Publikationen: Jaśkowska Z., *Hiszpańskie archiwa w sieci – Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES)* [Spanische Archive im Netz – Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES)], *Archiwista Polski*, Jg. 18: 2013, Nr. 2(70), S. 7–14; Jaśkowska Z., *Hiszpańska sieć archiwalna: historia i organizacja* [Das spanische Archivnetz: Geschichte und Aufbau], *Archiwista Polski*, Jg. 21: 2016, Nr. 1(81), S. 7–15; Jaśkowska-Józefiak Z., *Współpraca archiwistów jako sposób samokształcenia na przykładzie wybranych organizacji i stowarzyszeń archiwalnych Hiszpanii* [Die Zusammenarbeit der Archivare als Selbstbildung anhand gewählter Einrichtungen und Archivgesellschaften in Spanien], [in:] *Problemy nauczania ustawicznego po studiach historycznych, archiwistycznych i pokrewnych* [Probleme des lebenslangen Lernens nach den Studien Geschichte, Archivistik und anderen], hrsg. M. Ausz, M. Szabaciuk (Lublin 2017), S. 75–85.

Mag. Agata Łysakowska ist Doktorandin an der Fakultät für Geschichte der Adam-Mickiewicz-Universität in Posen, wo sie an ihrer Dissertation über die Wohltätigkeit arbeitet. Sie untersucht die Alltagsgeschichte, interessiert sich auch für die internationale Zusammenarbeit im Bereich des Archivwesens und für die Filmarchive. Publikationen: Beitrag *Polska Kronika Filmowa jako źródło historyczne* [Polnische Filmchronik als eine historische Quelle], [in:] *Historia a media. Studium selektywne* [Die Geschichte und die Medien. Ein selektives Studium], Bd. 3, hrsg. D. Gołaszewska, T. Sińczak, M. Zmudziński (Toruń 2017); *Wielmożna hrabino dobrodziejko! Akcja charytatywna Celestyny Działyńskiej z 1848 roku* [Euer Wohlgeborene Gräfin! Die Wohltätigkeitsaktion von Celestyna Działyńska von 1848], *Kronika Miasta Poznania*, 2018, Nr. 1, S. 157–168.

# Archivare ohne Grenzen: das 20. Jubiläum der Tätigkeit zur Erhaltung des internationalen Dokumentationserbes

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**S** **tichworte:** Archivare ohne Grenzen; internationale Zusammenarbeit im Bereich des Archiwesens; Nichtregierungsorganisationen; gemeinnützige Anstalten

**Z** **usammenfassung. These/Ziel:** Der Beitrag stellt die Tätigkeit der 1998 in Katalonien gegründeten Organisation „Archivare ohne Grenzen“ dar. In den einzelnen Paragraphen besprach man ihre Geschichte, Struktur, Tätigkeit und einige der von ihr unternommenen Initiativen. Wegen zahlreicher von ihr realisierter Projekte schilderte man im Beitrag nur die ausgewählten, die es erlaubten, sich einen Überblick über die Tätigkeit der „Archivare ohne Grenzen“ zu verschaffen. Ein getrenntes Textfragment widmete man den Aufgaben, die sich auf die Sicherstellung und Verbreitung des Dokumentarerbes Kataloniens beziehen. **Forschungsmethode:** Der Text stützt sich auf die von den „Archivaren ohne Grenzen“ regelmäßig herausgegebenen Informationsbulletins (*Boletín AsF*) sowie die einzelnen veröffentlichten Artikel zu diesem Thema. Die Quellenbasis ergänzen die Berichte der öffentlichen Medien oder aus dem Internet. **Ergebnisse/Schlussfolgerungen:** Der Artikel fasst zusammen 20 Jahre der Tätigkeit einer Organisation, die sich aus einer Gruppe lokaler Liebhaber zu einer bekannten und anerkannten Organisation entfaltete und demzufolge in der internationalen Archivzusammenarbeit eine wesentliche Rolle spielt.