

O património histórico ferroviário pode dividir-se em património documental e industrial. Desde as primeiras décadas do século XX, houve a preocupação de salvaguardar este património. Em 1979, a RENFE preocupou-se também com este assunto e criou o Arquivo Histórico Ferroviário. O património documental ferroviário teve uma evolução mais visível que o industrial ao longo do tempo, com a implementação de legislação própria. Em 1985, a gestão do património histórico ferroviário foi confiada a uma Fundação criada pela RENFE (operadora pública) nesse mesmo ano. Em Junho de 2010, foi decidido por esta Fundação, integrar no Museu Ferroviário das Delícias – Madrid (responsável há vários anos pelo património industrial), a Biblioteca Ferroviária e o Arquivo Histórico Ferroviário, serviços já amplamente divulgados e utilizados pelo público em geral. Este facto, representou uma mudança substantiva através da substituição do modelo mantido durante três décadas, por um novo, que unificou a gestão do património ferroviário.

Spanish Historical Railway Heritage

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The management of historical railway heritage generated by the Central Government has been entrusted in Spain since 1985 to a foundation created by the public operator in the same year. From its foundation, it distinguished between documentary and industrial heritage, linking together different institutions to manage each one of them. The decision taken by the Board of this foundation in June 2010 to integrate into the Madrid-Delicias Railway Museum – responsible for industrial heritage over the years – the Railway Library and the Historical Railway Archive-AHF (managed from the Documentation and AHF Department), represents a substantive change by replacing the model maintained for three decades with a new one, whose main feature is that it unifies the management of historical heritage.

We should begin by recalling that private railway companies in Spain like their European counterparts were those that gave rise to current railway heritage. The commemoration of anniversaries made it possible for the first collections to be spontaneously established with vehicles and objects withdrawn from railway operation. And the need to provide documentation for managing the different sources of information also led to the emergence of the first libraries and archives. There was therefore a split between the two types of heritage, which although complementary, followed different paths.

The conservation of catalogues and regulations bear witness to how MZA created its first libraries in the twenties. In the next decade, the same company and Norte¹ would organize a joint library with the object – according to its code of conduct established in 1934 – “of bringing

Steam and electric locomotives from the Museum's permanent collection

together all works and publications relating to the operation of railways and transport [...] in order to facilitate items of study and consultation to senior and technical staff.”

The nationalization of private companies and the creation of Renfe² in 1941 meant a continuation of this practice since in this same year the new public operator reunited the libraries inherited and called them the General Library. The first milestone of this commitment was in 1969 when Renfe reformed, by Circular No. 366, all these documentary services in the new Documentation Division, the highest corporate level that could be achieved. The latter, in addition to receiving all publications issued by the company had to provide its employees with the necessary information services and maintain relations with Spanish documentation offices and the UIC.

Another milestone arrived in 1979 when the Renfe Board of Directors created the Historical Railway Archive, on the one hand to collect, organize, evaluate, manage and conserve this heritage, and secondly, to raise awareness of railway history. The chairman himself was absolutely clear when he noted a few years later that “Renfe has an interesting and substantial historical documentation, which represents priceless collections for studying the transport sector in Spain, and specifically the railway, from the second half of the nineteenth century. (...) However, these collection, which represents a significant part of the country’s cultural heritage, are today in dispersed conditions, lacking accurate identification, evaluation and documentation and practically impossible to consult and even at grave risk of deterioration or disappearance. It is necessary to grant them special attention, to proceed to their inventory and management, organize their safekeeping and conservation and, in short, make them available for use by scientists and historians and offer them to the sensitivity and interest of society in general.”

With respect to industrial heritage, as mentioned before, the centennial celebration, initiated in 1948 to commemorate the opening of the Barcelona-Mataró line, gave rise to the formation of different collections. After three years of preparation, the first railway museum in the country opened its doors in 1967 in the Palace of Fernán Núñez, the seat of the company chairmanship. This reduced space was only intended to exhibit a small part of this heritage, but it was illuminated now in a very different context. Indeed, the silent and well-intentioned effort of the public company took a qualitative leap in 1980 when they agreed with the Ministry of Culture, after starting proceedings to declare the centennial station of Madrid-Delicias a Heritage Site, to finance its restoration to house the Madrid-Delicias Railway Museum and the National Museum of Science and Technology.

The Vilanova i la Geltrú Railway Museum would appear in parallel fashion, and whose origin dates back to a steam locomotive exhibition organized in 1972 by the Friends of the Railway Association of Barcelona to complement the 19th European Congress of Railway Modellers (MOROP)

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held in Barcelona. In 1983 Renfe and the Department of Culture of the Generalitat of Catalonia signed an agreement to turn this collection into a museum, which would eventually be managed by the Spanish Railway Foundation (Fundación de los Ferrocarriles Españoles - FFE).

We must point out how this scenario has been enriched during these thirty years with new museums dependent on regional and municipal governments, as in the case of the Basque Railway Museum and the Asturias Railway Museum. Nor can we ignore the existence of various public projects, small local museums, interpretation centres and historical memory retrieval projects, which, if successfully culminated, would significantly expand this infrastructure.

And finally, we must recognize the significant role played by various initiatives of the so-called “civil society”. Organized in different types of institutions, mainly associations of friends of the railway, they were ahead of the Government itself, gathering together a good deal of this heritage, which would later swell the collections of many of these museums and which were also an important incentive for their creation. Since then they have continued to grow



The old Delicias station in Madrid, a magnificent example of the “iron architecture” of the nineteenth century and site of the Madrid Railway Museum

and consolidate themselves, to such an extent that they now represent a by no means negligible heritage site.

The establishment of museums in Madrid and Vilanova i la Geltrú meant of course, an appropriate culmination of the great efforts that the public company had made. But its greatest importance was that it incorporated the social awareness that emerged from the demolition of Euston station in England in 1962, i.e. it accepted that industrial heritage was as culturally worthy as the classical arts.

Based on this background and in a new context where the protection of historical heritage and its return to society had become new social obligations, Renfe and FEVE³ created the Spanish Railway Foundation in 1985.

This groundbreaking decision also coincided with the enactment in that year of the Spanish Historical Heritage Act, which identified it in its preamble in its most general meaning as “all property of historical, artistic, scientific and technical value that make up Spain’s contribution to universal culture”. For the law, all protection and promotion measures established would only make “sense if, ultimately, they lead to an increasing number of citizens being able to see and

enjoy works that are the legacy of the collective capacity of a people. Because in a democratic State such assets must be properly placed at the service of the community in the belief that with their enjoyment they facilitate access to culture and that this is, in short, a sure path towards the freedom of peoples.” The configuration and protection of historical heritage corresponded to an indisputable intention of deepening democracy.

Although industrial heritage was implicitly included in many of the articles, it did not receive the special treatment given to documentary heritage, to which Title VII was dedicated. Although legislation in this area had its starting point in the provisions of Article 46 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978, its substantive development did not begin until the enactment of the actual historical heritage act. In particular, when expanding its definition in the preamble, it specifically stated in its first article that documentary and bibliographic heritage form part of Spanish heritage. The act required owners of documentary heritage property to conserve, protect and allocate it in a manner which did not preclude its conservation, and in view of this, it formulated



General view of the Traction Hall

the principle that documents cannot be destroyed as long as they retain historical or administrative interest. It established, therefore, the obligation of the Government and its public companies to adequately preserve their documentary heritage and to make the information it contained available to society.

After fifteen years of waiting, the first specific legislative measure arrived, a Royal Decree of 2000 creating the High Commission for Administrative Document Classification as the senior advisory body to Central Government in making decisions on the conservation and use of documents generated by the **Central Government and its agencies**. Its functions include study and judgement on matters relating to classification and use, their integration into archives and the system of access and administrative futility of such documents. The system and procedure for the disposal of documents and, where appropriate, for preserving them in media other than the original, was eventually covered by a Royal Decree of 2002. Recently, a Royal Decree of 2007 incorporated the above into all existing ministerial departments and established a Permanent Committee and a Permanent Secretariat as bodies of assistance and support.

In the case of industrial heritage, there have been no other legislative initiatives so far from Central Government. The legislative path passed through the Autonomous Communities during the 1990s, which have enacted their

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own laws on cultural heritage. Industrial heritage has gradually been given a different definition within these. Without wishing to be exhaustive, it should be emphasized that these definitions have ranged from specific definition of the law in Asturias to the broad interpretation of the law in Castilla y León.

It should therefore be stressed that the creation of the FFE in 1985 did, in short, correspond to the purpose of adapting these principles to the new social reality that democracy came to represent, the reason why Renfe entrusted it with the management of those assets, as stated in its statutes. It was understood that this was a response to the obligation to give back to society a heritage achieved as a result of the monopolistic nature of the company, and that it was the most effective and economical way to fulfil the legal obligation of the Government, its agencies and its companies.

As regards documentary heritage, there has been a substantial advance in converting this "company" heritage into "public" heritage. To accomplish this end, FFE created the Documentation Department, which was organized into three departments. It chose names from 1999 that were recognizable by society and public institutions: Railway Library and Historical Railway Archive.

We can gain an idea of what this transformation has meant from its most basic data: the number of library titles has increased by 17.1-fold from 2,000 to 34,287, the space required for storage has grown from 143.4 m² in 1969 to 646.2 m² at present, the archive has grown from a collection of 872 serial titles in 1988 to 2,999, and all this heritage requires almost 3,000 linear metres of shelving.

This quantitative change does not in any case cease to be the most apparent expression of the qualitative transformation that the bookstock has suffered. Railway related titles account for most of it, highlighting those that have been organized with the "railway history" description (both in Spain and worldwide), "railway infrastructure", "rolling stock" and "railway research". Two sections then appear where papers relating to "business and economics" and "engineering and computer science" have been organized. And we should finally point out the other major sections devoted, respectively, to "transport in general" and "transport policy". We are therefore talking about a library with clear railway specialisation, but which also has other large sections capable of providing those aspects needed to complete the information of the former.

A second subject that confirms the transformation described corresponds to the development of various activities whose ultimate purpose was to facilitate and ensure the access of society to its collection. The first of these measures has been the obligatory description of the collection which, under a radical technological change, has always been carried by scrupulously complying with international documentary criteria. The second of these measures has been the publication of a Guide to Services, which involves a commitment to society to maintain the library as a public

service, i.e. it sets out the rules and the rights of citizens to access the collection. During these years we have, finally, changed from the old card catalogue to an automated service and installation of the On-line Public Access Catalogue to manage the database query module.

The service rendered to society, measured through the queries, shows a first phase that coincides with the beginning of the library, with dynamics characterized by its stability since its numbers ranged from 300 in 1985 to 516 in 1989. A second phase can be identified between 1990 and 2002, which coincided with major research activity into railway history, in which queries experienced a steady growth and increased from 415 to 2,362. 2001 sees the start of the final stage, which extends to the present, and in which the curve shows a fall, leaving the figure at around a thousand and a half.

As already indicated, six years after its formal creation, the Historical Railway Archive was transferred to the FFE so that it could continue conserving and managing this type of documentary heritage in order to transform it into a public service. The time of its transfer to the FFE, in 1985, practically coincided with the reception of the documentation it looks after today, the majority coming from the legacies of private companies and, to a lesser extent, from collections that the company itself considered to be deserving of that end at the time. More than 30,000 document units were actually transferred.

The tasks of describing the collection started before the creation of the FFE, since the first work was undertaken in 1979, the result of which were the first inventories prepared on paper. But the big descriptive drive took place from 1997 when classification tasks were carried out. These began by identifying the various documentary series to create the Archive Classification Table, an essential tool to address the archival tasks. The result of the study is an organic-functional classification table, which, after assessment and identification of documentation, allows a flexible structure. Archive documentation has been divided into four collections: "Old Collections" being those created by institutions that no longer exist and generally correspond to railway companies before the creation of Renfe in 1941; "Modern Collections" generated by institutions that exist today and that, considering the life cycle of the documentation, deserve to be kept in the Historical Railway Archive; "Personal Collections", belonging to historically important people related to the railway world; and "Figurative Collections", mostly graphic documentation such as photographs, postcards and slides.

All this descriptive work has merely been a prior step to allow access to the AHF collections. This was also the reason why the "Historical Railway Archive Regulation" was drafted, which, by establishing the rights and duties of users, completed the mandate of transforming the AHF into a public service.

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protection of industrial heritage as its inherent responsibility through this institutional figure in order to recover, integrate and preserve that heritage. It was accepted without question that the museum was the natural destination of any collection of historical items, as is laid down, not surprisingly, in the actual Code of Ethics of The International Council of Museums when it states that good management of collections is inherent to this public interest mission and includes concepts of rightful ownership, permanence, documentation, accessibility and responsible disposal.

But with this decision it went further, given that its ultimate goal was to transform company assets belonging to public and private railway companies into public property – a condition also dictated by its original⁴ nature – through such a unique institution. Therefore, the museums immediately joined the Spanish Museum System and it was decided to comply with the Regulation of State-owned Museums, forcing it to describe its headquarters, its collections, its principal functions, its financial support, its organization and its governing body.

The result of all this is that, at present, these museums house the major collections of Spanish industrial railway heritage – steam, electric and diesel locomotives, coaches, wagons, clothing, tools, equipment, etc. A rich heritage that will be enhanced by the documentary heritage provided by the Railway Library and the Historical Railway Archive.

This decision, absolutely right without a doubt, even though it occurred so late, leads us to a new era full of new challenges that will shape a new scenario, wherein the Madrid-Delicias Railway Museum has become an essential reference. While the progress experienced has been remarkable, social demand has grown probably faster, in such a way that a greater effort should be made if possible.

A first issue to be tackled concerns the legal framework. It is clear that while documentary heritage has advanced significantly, industrial heritage has displayed a more incomplete and, above all, irregular evolution. Given the characteristics of railway heritage, the solution should be reached by the promulgation of a special regulation that recognizes it as a unique item and that defines it as specifically as possible to ensure more solid protection.

The management model of the former may well be a reference to develop the second. In both cases, this would require the preparation of plans to build a proper and safe mechanism for the transfer of any part that should form part of historical heritage. The mandate of the legal framework is clear in this regard and makes it necessary, firstly, for these plans to identify this group, and, secondly, that the necessary resources have been prepared to allow their implementation. A second issue that is essential to develop for these plans to be successful is the definition of an identification and inventory methodology that is common to all institutions that end up receiving and managing those assets.

Finally, we must continue to break down the barriers preventing the access of citizens to the enjoyment of this

heritage. As the historical heritage act rightly sets out, the use of public resources to ensure their conservation and access has no other reason than this, as a necessary instrument to contribute to the betterment of society. Achieving this requires the management of historical heritage to involve a thoughtful, critical, and therefore, useful contribution for citizens. At the end of the day, we are working for them.

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- 1 The Madrid to Zaragoza and Alicante railway company (Compañía de los Ferrocarriles de Madrid a Zaragoza y Alicante - MZA) and the railway company of northern Spain (Compañía de los Ferrocarriles del Norte de España - Norte) were the two major private railway companies in Spain; in Muñoz (1995).
- 2 Renfe was the public company that emerged from the nationalization of Spanish private companies in 1941; in Muñoz (1995).
- 3 FEVE is the public company that operates the narrow gauge railways; see Muñoz (2005).
- 4 See García Fernández (1998).