THE "INSTITUT D'ESTUDIS CATALANS"

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INSTITUTIONS

"INSTITUT D'ESTUDIS CATALANS", COURTYARD, BARCELONA.
In 1907, faced with the need to revive and organize all aspects of Catalan culture after many years of institutional neglect, the Diputació de Barcelona founded the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (IEC), which was gradually to extend its fields of study, initially centred on the humanities, until it included all the sciences, always according to three principles which have been preserved unchanged to this day: the demands of science, the Catalan spirit and an open-minded approach.

The beginning of the century was a time of renovation, and to avoid any possible confusion between the organisms forming part of the IEC and the already obsolete academies of the 18th century, it was decided that the autonomous bodies responsible for the different fields of investigation be called Seccions. So in 1911, the initial nucleus of the IEC became the Secció Històrico-Arqueològica, and the Secció Filològica and the Secció de Ciències were also founded. Of these, the latter was divided, in 1968, into the Secció de Filosofia and the Secció de Ciències Socials. During this century, the history of the IEC has run parallel to that of Catalonia generally, and to that of Catalan culture in particular. The Institute became gradually established over the first few years, especially with the help of the Mancomunitat, an administrative organization made up of the four provincial deputations in Catalonia, and founded in 1914 by Enric Prat de la Riba, who was also the inspirer of the IEC. The dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera (1923-30) banned the Mancomunitat and was a temporary setback for the Institute. Following the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931, Catalan culture, and with it the IEC and the Generalitat, to which it belonged, started to recover once more. Unfortunately, the civil war (1936-39) and the subsequent dictatorship under General Franco (to 1975) condemned Catalan cultural activity first to total clandestinity, then to semi-clandestinity, and to a vaguely tolerated existence in the regime's final years. The IEC only managed to survive thanks to the resistance of its members and to private patronage. Since 1976, when the Monarchy explicitly legalized its activities in the Països Catalans, the Institute -like the rest of Catalan culture- has started on a process of normalization. It is impossible to sum up the enormous task undertaken by the IEC during these eighty years, since its book production alone exceeds six hundred volumes - an extensive work which has consolidated Catalan as a scientific language. We shall therefore have to concentrate on the most important aspects. The Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya, for example, was originally the library of the IEC, which made it into the first public library in the Spanish state in 1914. Today, it contains over one million books, 3,000 manuscripts and 640 incunabula, amongst other documents of great historical value. In Catalonia, the IEC is best known for its Secció Filològica, in which Pompeu Fabra stood out for his work of codifying modern Catalan, which he completed with his Normes Ortogràfiques (1913), Gramàtica (1918) and his normative Diccionari (1932). At the moment, the Secció Filològica is preparing the Diccionari del català contemporani, based on the analysis of a large number of Catalan texts -of all styles, li-
terary and otherwise—written between 1883 and the present. Information-processing techniques are used to establish the frequency with which a given word appears, as well as contexts and sources. The outcome will be a non-normative dictionary of Catalan use and a lexicographical data bank of interest to researchers. This undertaking is an example of a laborious task requiring an organizational capacity and a versatile structure over and above the universities and the local and autonomous authorities.

As regards the Secció de Ciències, which has organized courses in which scientists of the category of Albert Einstein and Jacques Hadamard have taken part, one of its most recent undertakings has been the creation of the "Centre for Mathematical Research" (1984), located on the campus of the Autonomous University of Barcelona and catering for certain necessities that the Universities neglect. Every year, this centre, which is unique in Spain, invites between 25 and 30 scientific researchers to Catalonia for long-term study visits. It also organized the 1986 Conference on Algebraic Topology, in which papers were presented on subjects as complex and as important today as quaternionic projective spaces. The Secció de Ciències has also published such works as the Flora de Catalunya, in six volumes.

The Secció Històrica-Arqueològica, descended from the Institute's original nucleus, has centred largely on the study of medieval history, with collections such as "Estudis de Bibliografia Lul.liana", "Catalunya Carolingia" and "L'arquitectura romànica a Catalunya". The IEC has belonged to the International Academic Union since 1922, and contributes to undertakings like the dictionary of medieval Latin and the Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi. This section's continued work has helped decisively in methodically establishing the history of the Catalan nation.

The Secció de Filosofia i Ciències Socials, the youngest section, has undertaken work ranging from the study of ancient legal texts and works of philosophy to the cultural integration of immigrants. Through the International Academic Union, the Institute takes part in the International Council of Philosophy and the Social Sciences, closely linked to UNESCO, and maintains contacts with the European Community and important Academies like the Science Academy of the Soviet Union. It also has good relations with the Spanish ministry of education and science, which makes the second most important contribution to the IEC's budget, after the subvention from the Generalitat.

The need for specialized research has led the Institute to set up a series of affiliated societies, from the Societat Catalana de Biologia (1912) to the Societat Catalana de Comunicació (1985). The IEC has also set up "services"—the Meteorology service, the Carbon 14 dating service—, laboratories—the Experimental Phonetics laboratory, the laboratory of Geophysical Studies—and research centres, in collaboration with other institutions.

Finally, mention should be made of the recent increase in the number of members of the Institute. Also, it now boasts an original, automatic substitution mechanism, another example of the running of an organization which has made the balance between tradition and innovation a guarantee of a job well done.