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Using Internet Resources for Researching Religious History: the Dominican Order in Medieval Spain as Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the use of Internet resources for historical research, using the history of the Dominican Order in Medieval Spain as a case study. Several free Spanish online resources are presented, which are useful not only for historians specialising in religious history but for all historians generally. In my case, I have used them for locating archives and libraries, primary sources and bibliographical references, some of which may be available in full-text digital format. The difficulties encountered during this research are discussed, as are some methodological questions. I also suggest some ways of improving the digitalization process, always with the historian in mind. Finally, I reflect on the role of the Internet as a primary source.

The Internet is of vital importance for the historian. However, it also has certain shortcomings, such as a lack of suitable search engines, a shortage of digitalized sources and inadequate information about the process involved in registration and digitalization. The Internet is also viewed by researchers with a certain amount of distrust as a medium for the publication of their scientific work, and there is a general lack of awareness about the best way to preserve Internet content. I have not attempted to solve these problems in this short chapter; rather, I present them as matters to be reflected on by computer experts and historians.

El presente trabajo pretende analizar los problemas que plantea la utilización de recursos disponibles en Internet para llevar a cabo una investigación histórica. Para ello se ha escogido como caso de estudio la historia de la orden dominicana en la España medieval. Se presenta una serie de recursos españoles de acceso libre y gratuito, que resultarán útiles no sólo para investigadores interesados en la historia religiosa, sino también para cualquier historiador en general. A través de dichos recursos se han localizado archivos y bibliotecas, algunas fuentes primarias y referencias bibliográficas, a veces disponibles en formato digital y a texto completo. También se exponen las dificultades que se han encontrado durante el

proceso de búsqueda y se reflexiona sobre cuestiones metodológicas. Se señalan asimismo algunas vías para mejorar el proceso de digitalización, siempre conforme a criterios que sean adecuados para los historiadores. Finalmente se reflexiona sobre el papel de Internet como fuente primaria.

Todo ello permite poner de relieve la importancia de Internet para el trabajo de los historiadores, a pesar de las limitaciones todavía existentes, tales como la falta de herramientas de búsqueda adecuadas, el escaso volumen de fuentes digitalizadas, la ausencia de información relativa a los criterios utilizados para el registro y digitalización de materiales, la desconfianza a la hora de utilizar Internet como vía de distribución de la producción científica, o la ausencia de una conciencia conservadora de los materiales creados en el propio marco de Internet. Más que resolver problemas, lo que planteamos son preguntas que hagan reflexionar a informáticos e historiadores.

INTRODUCTION

The Internet has become a very important tool for historians. It allows us to locate easily the main libraries, archives and centres where historical sources and documentary collections are kept, and electronic access to the catalogues of these institutions greatly simplifies the search for bibliography and sources. It also offers direct access to books, articles, papers, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, atlases, statistical sources, documents, photographs, videos and other materials useful for historical research¹. For example, Alexandra Smith, in her contribution to this volume, describes in detail the utility of different computer resources (including the NASA website) for researching issues about calendars, while Dimitar Grigorov's chapter shows how it is possible to link Internet sources and traditional ones. Indeed, the Internet's value for historians is constantly increasing, as the digitalization process is extended to include more and more institutions, and as the Web itself becomes an important primary source for historians.

Historical methodology refers to the work of analysis, synthesis and theory that is carried out in order to acquire historical knowledge. The historian compiles data by extracting information, generating working hypotheses and critically assessing data in order to confirm or refute those hypotheses². The Internet is now a very useful tool for that process. The digitalization of historical resources and their online accessibility saves time and money, since it means that historians no longer have to travel physically to the place where those sources are kept. This also facilitates comparative approaches.

Nevertheless, the amount of historical sources available online is not yet very significant, and varies considerably from country to country. Besides, many resources have been digitalized according to criteria which have little to do with research needs: it may have been done at someone's request, because the original documents are deteriorating, due to a forthcoming anniversary, the political interests of some institutions or finan-

cial availability. Thus, there are doubts about the usefulness of digital resources, and some scholars insist that historians should participate in the digitalization of historical materials by helping to establish selection criteria. At the same time, questions have been raised about whether new methodologies for the research and teaching of history should be developed in order to take account of these materials³.

My objective is to reflect on these problems through the analysis of a series of different free Internet resources that I have used in my own research into religious history. Given the range of the topic, I have decided to focus my attention on the issue that I presented in the first volume of *CLIOHRES TWG3*, namely the Dominican Order in Medieval Spain. This chapter should therefore be considered as a complement to that study. I also hope that some of the resources and methods introduced will be of interest to historians involved in more general research. This topic could be taken as an example of how to use the Internet for historical research. I am concerned not only to present the most important Spanish resources available online, especially those related to my topic (therefore offering a kind of guide to the most effective search procedures), but also to highlight the main problems involved in using Internet for historical research and reflect on the methodology needed for a critical analysis of digitalized contents. Finally, I will suggest some ways in which the situation may be improved, in accordance with historically useful criteria.

SEARCHING PRIMARY SOURCES

How should one go about researching the Dominican Order in Medieval Spain using the Internet? As in any historical research, the work should begin by locating primary sources and bibliography related to the topic. These primary sources are kept in different Spanish archives, and my first task was to analyse the presence or absence of those archives on the Internet.

There are several lists of Spanish ecclesiastical archives circulating on the Internet, most inspired by the *Guía de los Archivos y las Bibliotecas de la Iglesia en España* [“Guide to Church Archives and Libraries in Spain”], published in Madrid in 1985⁴. But there is also much more up-to-date information in the *Census-Guide to the Archives of Spain and Latin America* prepared by the Spanish Ministry of Culture, available online since 2005⁵. The researcher needs to know Spanish for using this database – indeed, as we shall see, this will be a constant feature of the resources I present here. Besides, there is not just one keyword for all ecclesiastical archives, but several. Nevertheless, it is a good start.

To search my topic, I chose the keywords *Archivo Diocesano* [Diocese Archive] and *Archivo Monástico* [Monastic Archive] in *Tipo de Archivo* [Type of Archive]. Through these two keywords, I was able to access two lists of archives with addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail information. I managed to locate the websites of some archives,

which usually included a reference to digital records if the process of digitalization had begun. But I also found that links to websites are not always updated, or may simply have disappeared, which is another constant problem faced by Internet users.

According to the Census-Guide, only some of the diocese archives included have begun to digitalize their records, and not all are available online. Sometimes it is possible to consult the archive search engines, and then request and pay for a copy. But the catalogues I checked did not always include documents of interest for my research⁶.

Many Dominican communities, especially the female ones, which were less affected by the 19th century process of confiscation and sale of ecclesiastical property and estates, kept very important records in their archives. Through the Census-Guide, I managed to find 22 Dominican communities, 5 male and 17 female. But most of those institutions did not have websites, nor had they begun to digitalize their records or permit online access to their catalogues. Besides, not all the archives of the Dominican monasteries and convents were recorded in the Census-Guide (as in the case of the Monastery of Santo Domingo el Real in Caleruega, which is mentioned in the 1985 Guide). Another remarkable exception is the Convent of Santo Domingo el Real in Toledo, whose nuns have designed a website⁷. This provides some information about the archive, which has largely been digitalized. A database of this kind may be consulted by selecting a document or topic, and the results give the catalogue number, name of document, place of writing, dimensions, quoted names and places, and an abstract of the text in question. The main inconvenience is that researchers must pay to get a copy of most of the materials. There are, however, some free documents on the main page of the website.

Most of the Dominican records that were confiscated in the 19th century are currently kept in the *Archivo Histórico Nacional* [National Historical Archive] in Madrid and the *Archivo de la Corona de Aragón* [Archive of the Crown of Aragón] in Barcelona⁸. Their classification systems are available online⁹. I have found records related to my topic in the *Clero Regular* [Regular Clergy] section of the *Archivo Histórico Nacional*, which distinguishes between male and female religious orders; both include Dominican friars and Dominican nuns. Also interesting for my topic was the section entitled *Fondos de la desamortización eclesiástica* (“*Monacales*”) [Records of the process of confiscation and sale of ecclesiastical property and estates during the 19th century (“Monasteries”)] in the *Archivo de la Corona de Aragón*. Individual documents were also found in other sections of these two archives, and in other archives.

It was for this reason that I decided to use PARES, the *Portal de Archivos Españoles* [Internet Portal for Spanish Archives]¹⁰. This database is useful for accessing some of the records in the eleven State archives presently included¹¹. This was created by the Spanish Ministry of Culture at the beginning of 2007 in order to promote the national documental heritage kept in Spanish archives. The tool is still under construction, and it is to be hoped that the remaining Spanish archives (public and private) will even-

tually be included in the project. This would greatly facilitate the work of historians interested in Spanish history. On the other hand, it would also be convenient if PARES could include information and search engines in other languages, which would enable it to fulfil its main objective.

PARES has two search engines, *Búsqueda Sencilla* [Simple Search] and *Búsqueda Avanzada* [Advanced Search]. The former allows records to be searched by topic. It is also possible to define partial or complete data. Roman numerals should be used for searching centuries and Arabic ones for searching years, although this is explained only in *Ayuda* [Help]. This search option allows access to the 100 most relevant results, although the relevance criteria are not given.

The same type of search may be made using the Advanced Search facility, which also allows the possibility of selecting optional filters, such as archive, catalogue number and keywords (topics, names, places and institutions). The researcher may choose to view the 100 most relevant results or all of them. This option also includes a tool called *Agenda del Investigador* [Researcher's Diary]. After choosing an ID and password, researchers may retain the results of their search and export images by email. This is a very good reason to use this option.

In both cases, the researcher may access digital registers, non-digital registers or any kind of registers. It is expected that, by the end of 2007, it will be possible to access 28 million images, although no information is provided about the kind of rules that are being used in the digitalization process.

Finally, PARES gathers together in a single tool the *Inventario Dinámico de Contenidos* [Dynamic Inventory of Contents], all the search engines that are regularly used in an archive, such as guides, inventories and catalogues. It allows documents to be located through the sections and series of each archive, although this requires prior knowledge of the Spanish archive system.

Let us look now at the kind of problems a researcher might encounter when using PARES for researching primary sources about a concrete topic, such as the history of the Dominican Order in Medieval Spain. First, I carefully chose the keywords for the search, given the lack of any kind of thesaurus, and defined the chronological period I was interested in. I selected *dominico* [Dominican friar], *dominicos* [Dominican friars], *dominica* [Dominican nun], *dominicas* [Dominican nuns], *fraile predicador* [Preacher friar] and *frailes predicadores* [Preacher friars] as keywords, and the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries as the chronological period. I decided to use the Advanced Search, because that would enable me to view over 100 results and use the Researcher's Diary. I did not employ any kind of filter. Although I was interested in excluding those archives without Medieval records, the tool only allowed one or all the archives to be selected, not a group of archives.

Having begun the search, I acquired a list of records from the *Archivo Histórico Nacional*, the *Archivo de la Corona de Aragón*, the *Archivo de Simancas* and the *Archivo de Indias*. The tool enabled me to quickly locate documents kept in different archives, which would have been very slow and arduous if I had decided to work in a traditional way. But it yielded few records:

KEYWORDS	NON-DIGITAL SEARCH	DIGITAL SEARCH
<i>dominico</i> [Dominican friar]	7 records = 10 documents (interesting: 6 documents)	1 record = 1 document (not interesting)
<i>dominicos</i> [Dominican friars]	13 records = 11 documents + 5 collections (interesting: 10 documents + 4 collections)	1 record = 1 document (interesting: 1 document)
<i>dominica</i> [Dominican nun]	1 record = 1 document (not interesting)	1 record = 1 document (not interesting)
<i>dominicas</i> [Dominican nuns]	3 records = 1 document + 2 collections (interesting: 2 collections)	1 record = 1 document (not interesting)
<i>fraile predicador</i> [Preacher friar]	no results	1 record = 1 document (interesting: 1 document)
<i>frailes predicadores</i> [Preacher friars]	4 records = 5 documents (interesting: 3 documents)	no results

The figures are not spectacular, particularly when compared with those given for the period between the 16th and 18th centuries:

KEYWORDS	NON-DIGITAL SEARCH	DIGITAL SEARCH
<i>dominico</i> [Dominican friar]	38 records	18 records
<i>dominicos</i> [Dominican friars]	51 records	16 records
<i>dominica</i> [Dominican nun]	25 records	8 records
<i>dominicas</i> [Dominican nuns]	28 records	2 records
<i>fraile predicador</i> [Preacher friar]	no results	2 records
<i>frailes predicadores</i> [Preacher friars]	4 records	4 records

The number of documents available for the Modern period is considerably larger than for the Middle Ages. As not all the documents available are registered in PARES, the difference between the figures could be due to a certain preference for modern records. Why should that be the case? Are there more researchers interested in the history of the Dominican Order during the Modern period than in the Middle Ages? Is this a

general tendency that could be checked by conducting searches on other topics? Is it cheaper/easier/more feasible to digitalize modern records? Are documents from the Modern period, which are mostly written on paper, at greater risk than the parchment documents of the Middle Ages? Is there any relation between the figures provided by PARES and the state of digitalization in each archive? As the Portal does not specify the criteria used for digitalization, I am unable to answer these questions.

Given the shortage of useful records for my topic, I decided to employ another tool provided by PARES, the Dynamic Inventory of Contents. With this, I discovered that the sections and series of each archive were not complete, and that the results given are not the same as those yielded by the Advanced Search. For example, I checked the sections and series of the *Archivo Histórico Nacional*, and through the Inventory, chose the section “Regular Clergy”, which distinguishes between male and female religious orders. Within the male category, there is no reference to Dominican friars, although this subsection exists in the archive. The female category contains a subsection for Dominican nuns with only 6 records relating to some communities in Aragon, only 3 of which were related to my topic. In short, the “Regular Clergy” section of the *Archivo Histórico Nacional*, which is the most interesting for my research, has not been completely included in PARES. The religious orders included belong to the first letters of the alphabet, so I have the impression that the people in charge of the Portal have embarked on the process in alphabetical order, although this not indicated anywhere. But even this criterion is not used consistently, as there are female Dominican communities recorded in Aragon though not in Andalusia.

If PARES is to be improved, the Dynamic Inventory of Contents should be given priority, in my opinion, so that historians are able to find out which series and sections of the different archives are useful for their research, irrespective of whether they will access the records through the Internet or directly. A physical visit to the archives is still unavoidable, but it would be more productive if researchers had prior knowledge about how the archives were organised and how to look for records. The opinion of archive users, particularly the historians and other researchers who need to access the records, should be taken into consideration during the processes of registration and digitalization of the records. It would also be desirable if the Portal could indicate the criteria used in those processes.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC SEARCHES

The Internet makes many different types of databases available to researchers. For bibliographic searches on any topic of Spanish history, historians can find three types of databases: those related to books; those including information about doctoral theses; and finally those presenting references to articles and papers published in academic journals, abstracts, conference proceedings, etc.

The Spanish ISBN Agency database belongs to the first group¹². It provides information about books published in Spain since 1972, when the use of this registry number became compulsory. This database allows book searches based on the ISBN, author's name, book title, subject, publisher, year of publication, collection in which the book has been included, year of publication and keywords. It is also possible to restrict the search according to language and type of record, and to choose between available books, out of stock books, or both.

During my research with this database, I inserted the same keywords as I had used in PARES. I chose the search tool *Materia* [Subject], and selected any kind of books. Unfortunately the search was not successful. When I used the same keywords in a different search tool, *General*, I got results only for *dominicos* [Dominican friars] and *dominicas* [Dominican nuns]. Only 19 of the 105 references about Dominican friars and 5 of the 54 references about Dominican nuns were useful for my topic. I found that neither category included books related to the monasteries, so I did a new search using a different keyword, *monasterio de Santo Domingo* [monastery of Saint Dominic], although of course I was aware that not all the monasteries of the Dominican Order used that name. With this, I got 22 results, but only 6 were related to my topic. So I needed a list of Dominican monasteries in order to find more references. I ultimately concluded that this tool was really limited, because the lack of a thesaurus complicated the work of researchers.

The *Catálogo del Patrimonio Bibliográfico Español* [Catalogue of the Spanish Bibliographical Heritage] is more complete than the ISBN database. It was prepared by the Spanish Ministry of Culture from 1985, and may now be accessed through the Internet¹³. This database is still under construction, and for the moment contains only almost 800,000 references on more than 2 million printed works, manuscripts, scores, etc. published between the 15th century and 1958, and kept in 722 Spanish public and private libraries and institutions. Again, Spanish is the only possible language for making the search and retrieving the information. There is a link, *Consultar Catálogo* [Consult Catalogue], where different fields may be selected (general, name of person or institution, title, place of publication, printer or editor, date, subject and language). Each bibliographical reference offers information about the author, editor, translator, printer, title, place and date of printing, a physical description, the subject (with a very useful thesaurus), a control number, number of available copies and the libraries where they are kept.

In this case, to conduct a bibliographic search on my topic, I decided to use *dominicos* [Dominican friars] and *dominicas* [Dominican nuns] as keywords in *Materia* [Subject], given that both keywords were included in the thesaurus. I got 782 references in the first case and 16 in the second. Unfortunately, there is no tool for exporting the results from the Catalogue, as in PARES, which is a real disadvantage, which meant that printing out the information was the only alternative.

Nevertheless, it is a very useful tool, and as soon as information relating to the period between 1958 and 1972 is included, it will be the perfect accessory for the ISBN database. I have not mentioned documents written before the 15th century, because there seems to be another project dealing with those. In September 2007, the Spanish Ministry of Culture and the governments of the autonomous regions inaugurated the *Biblioteca Virtual del Patrimonio Bibliográfico* [Virtual Library of the Bibliographical Heritage] in the press¹⁴. This Virtual Library is an accessory for the Catalogue of the Spanish Bibliographical Heritage. Its main objective is the dissemination of old books and manuscripts, particularly those that are difficult to find. There is a link that allows researchers to choose the language of their search, including English, which gives it an advantage over other databases. However, for the moment, only the books from 5 public libraries are available¹⁵. Almost a thousand books and manuscripts from the 10th to the 19th centuries are available in digital facsimiles, making a total of 250,000 digital pages, although 400,000 have been promised before the end of 2007¹⁶. The intention is also to increase the number of institutions involved and types of materials.

The Virtual Library of the Bibliographical Heritage is divided into two sections, one for manuscripts and another one for printed books, and has two search engines, Basic Search and Advanced Search. However, the keywords must be written in Spanish. Each bibliographical reference appears with a control number, the author's name, publication information, a physical description, notes, subject, place, printer and publisher, type of publication and holdings. The digital pages may be viewed via the link to *Objetos digitales* [Digital objects], and all may be printed or downloaded.

I encountered further problems during my work. Doing a Basic Search using the same keywords as before, I only got results with the keyword *dominicos* [Dominican friars]. I found 9 references searching in "General" and 5 searching in "Subject", which were not different to those from "General". All except one are included in the database of the Catalogue of the Spanish Bibliographical Heritage and none were useful for my topic. The results were the same with an Advanced Search. In my opinion, the Virtual Library of the Bibliographical Heritage is still a very limited tool. But it will undoubtedly have an inestimable value in the future. For this reason, I believe it should be included in international projects like World Digital Library, the European Library or in the prototype European Digital Library, which will apparently be launched in November 2008¹⁷.

The only Spanish library included at the moment in the European Library is the *Biblioteca Nacional de España* or BN [Spanish National Library]¹⁸, whose collections have been partially included in the Catalogue of the Spanish Bibliographical Heritage, but not in the Virtual Library of the Bibliographical Heritage. That is probably because the *Biblioteca Nacional* is developing its own digitalization project, the development of which may be followed on the Internet¹⁹. From the main web page of this library, it is possible to access the English version through the link *Lenguas* [Languages], although not all the information has been translated. That is not the case with the Digital Collec-

tions and BN e-resources (electronic journals and databases subscribed to, newspapers, official gazettes and a database on heraldry and genealogy).

The *Biblioteca Nacional* has digitalized its most frequently consulted collections and those which are most damaged and need to be maintained in good condition. Materials used for Virtual Exhibitions and a collection of the Spanish Classics are also available. But the search is very slow, because the only search engine operates by subject only, and once the researcher accesses the images, the bibliographic information about each work is not included. In fact, this database seems to have been designed for use through the catalogue of the *Biblioteca Nacional*, which actually includes different ones. There is a General Catalogue, another one for the Special Collections (incunabula, manuscripts and maps) and a third for the Digital Collections, which presents only a part. This dispersion makes the search process very time-consuming, and in addition, the search engines are only in Spanish.

It is possible to do three kinds of search in the General Catalogue of this library: *Búsqueda sencilla* [Simple Search], *Búsqueda avanzada* [Advanced Search] and *Búsqueda por signatura* [Search by Catalogue Number]. Each option offers different filters, but it is not possible to restrict the search to digital materials. The results are presented as a list, and each bibliographical reference offers information about title, author, date of publication, physical description, number of copies and catalogue numbers, and a link to *Acceso electrónico* [electronic access] if the book has been digitalized. The results may be kept and later printed and/or sent by e-mail. The digital images may be downloaded and/or printed. In order to search for references related to my topic, I chose the same keywords as before. These were the results:

KEYWORDS	<i>BÚSQUEDA SENCILLA</i> <i>PALABRA CLAVE</i> [SIMPLE SEARCH KEYWORD]	<i>BÚSQUEDA SENCILLA</i> <i>LISTADO ALFABÉTICO</i> [SIMPLE SEARCH ALPHABETICAL LIST]	<i>BÚSQUEDA AVANZADA</i> <i>TODOS LOS CAMPOS</i> [ADVANCED SEARCH ALL SEARCHING TOOLS]	<i>BÚSQUEDA AVANZADA</i> <i>MATERIA</i> [ADVANCED SEARCH SUBJECT]
<i>dominico</i> [Dominican friar]	347 records	663 records	347 records	568 records
<i>dominicos</i> [Dominican friars]	938 records	643 records	938 records	7 records
<i>dominica</i> [Dominican nun]	324 records	134 records	324 records	36 records
<i>dominicas</i> [Dominican nuns]	480 records	106 records	480 records	114 records
<i>fraile predicador</i> [Preacher friar]	no results	no results	no results	no results
<i>frailes predicadores</i> [Preacher friars]	8 records	no results	8 records	no results

The results were the same when I chose Keywords in the Simple Search and all the search fields in the Advanced search. In the other cases, the results were dissimilar, but thanks to the tool that enables interesting references to be retained, repetitions could be avoided. Only after checking every reference will I be able to establish the number of digital materials related to my topic of research.

None of the sections in the catalogue of the *Colecciones digitales* [Digital Collections] of the *Biblioteca Nacional* were interesting for my work, except *Hemeroteca digital* [electronic journals]. This will certainly be needed for tracking down articles and papers in old journals that I find in other databases. For the moment I have consulted the catalogue of the *Colecciones especiales* [Special Collections], using the usual keywords. Only the manuscript section yielded interesting references:

KEYWORDS	RESULTS	INTERESTING FOR MY TOPIC
<i>dominico</i> [Dominican friar]	12	0
<i>dominicos</i> [Dominican friars]	46	2
<i>dominica</i> [Dominican nun]	9	0
<i>dominicas</i> [Dominican nuns]	2	0
<i>fraile predicador</i> [Preacher friar]	0	0
<i>frailes predicadores</i> [Preacher friars]	1	0

As these are not available in digital format, like most of the references I found in the general catalogue, a visit to the *Biblioteca Nacional* is completely unavoidable.

The database TESEO contains information about doctoral theses that have been presented at Spanish universities²⁰. Once more, it may only be used if the researcher knows Spanish. It is possible to search through a very limited thesaurus, but for a general search, the use of keywords in *Título / Resumen* [Title / Abstract] is more suitable. Each reference includes information about title, author, year, university, centre, department, doctoral study plan, study centre, director, examiners, keywords, abstract and archive where a copy is kept. The tool *Añadir reg.* [Add records] allows the results to be kept.

When I looked for theses related to my topic, I used the same keywords as in the other databases. I got the following results:

KEYWORDS	RESULTS	INTERESTING FOR MY TOPIC
<i>dominico</i> [Dominican friar]	38	2
<i>dominicos</i> [Dominican friars]	24	1
<i>dominica</i> [Dominican nun]	120	7
<i>dominicas</i> [Dominican nuns]	9	5
<i>fraile predicador</i> [Preacher friar]	2	0
<i>frailes predicadores</i> [Preacher friars]	1	1

The number of references for the keyword *dominica* [Dominican nun] is quite amazing, but that is because this database does not distinguish between it and the word *dominicana* [woman of the Dominican Republic]. Having used the tool that enabled me to keep the interesting references and discard the rest, I finally got 7 doctoral theses about my topic. When I attempted to access those, however, I received the following message for each one: “*Texto no disponible en este momento*” [Text not available at present]. Does that mean that the contents of the theses will be available in future? When will that be? What criteria is being used for digitalization? Or will there be links to the universities, which will digitalize the theses themselves, for inclusion in their own digital libraries and repositories²¹? Again the answers to these questions are not given.

A search for bibliographical references about articles published in academic journals, conference proceedings, reports, etc. must begin with the databases of CINDOC, the Centre for Scientific Information and Documentation of the CSIC, which is the High Commission for Scientific Research in Spain²². These provide information about academic production since 1975. It is possible to request photocopies of these documents, although they are not free, and companies and public institutions are allowed to borrow books. Again, researchers need to know Spanish in order to be able to use them and retrieve the information about how to request documents.

The CINDOC databases refer to different areas of knowledge, including Social Sciences and Humanities, which are the most interesting for historians. These can be accessed via the link *Acceso gratuito* [Free Access], and then *Sumarios ISOC – Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* [Summaries ISOC – Social Sciences and Humanities]. It is possible to search for a topic in each one of the 13 Social Sciences and Humanities databases, or do a *consulta conjunta* [joint search]. In both cases, the researcher may make a *Búsqueda simple* [Simple Search], a *Búsqueda por campos* [Search by Field], choosing between author, ISSN, journal and title, or a *Búsqueda por índices* [Searching in the table of contents]. Each reference includes the record number, author’s name, title of reference, journal name and ISSN, location inside it and copyright. All references may be kept and downloaded in different data formats.

In order to search for references related to my topic, I decided to do a Simple Search in all the Social Sciences and Humanities databases using the usual keywords. These are the results:

KEYWORDS	RESULTS	INTERESTING FOR MY TOPIC
<i>dominico</i> [Dominican friar]	72	8
<i>dominicos</i> [Dominican friars]	381	54
<i>dominica</i> [Dominican nun]	19	5
<i>dominicas</i> [Dominican nuns]	56	10
<i>fraile predicador</i> [Preacher friar]	1	0
<i>frailes predicadores</i> [Preacher friars]	4	2

Some of the references appeared more than once under a different keyword, but as I used the option which allowed me to keep the results, discarding repeats, I finally got 71 references, all published after 1975.

For those researchers interested in the Medieval Period, the *Repertorio de medievalismo hispánico* [Repository of Hispanic Medievalism] is essential. It includes the bibliographic work carried out by Emilio Sáez in the *Instituto de Historia Medieval de España* [Institute for Medieval History of Spain] until 1968, and in the Medieval Studies Department in the Milá and Fontanals Institution until 1988. The task was later continued by others. The repository was first published in 4 volumes between 1955 and 1985, but the up-to-date version can be freely accessed online²³.

This database contains not only information about Spanish and Portuguese publications, but also from other countries. Again, researchers need to know Spanish to access it, although updated information is sent every six months to the International Medieval Bibliography. However, this last one is not a free resource. Once the *Búsqueda en el Repertorio* [Search Repository] has been selected, the researcher may choose to search by author, title or topic, may filter the year of publication and decide upon the order for viewing the information. The first screen presents a brief list, and each reference includes a full bibliographical reference (author, title, year, edition, volume, pages, publisher, city, collection, topics, fields of search, secondary author and language). But this database does not have a system for keeping and downloading the files.

To find references related to my topic of research in the Repository, I chose *Materia* [Subject] as search field, and used the same keywords as before. I got the following results:

KEYWORDS	RESULTS	INTERESTING FOR MY TOPIC
<i>dominico</i> [Dominican friar]	0	0
<i>dominicos</i> [Dominican friars]	59	45
<i>dominica</i> [Dominican nun]	0	0
<i>dominicas</i> [Dominican nuns]	2	1
<i>fraile predicador</i> [Preacher friar]	0	0
<i>Frailes predicadores</i> [Preacher friars]	0	0

Most of these references had also appeared in the CINDOC databases, but not all of them, so the repository is really useful. In any case, the references date from 1974, so the chronological period is very similar to that of the CINDOC databases. When researchers are interested in older bibliographical references, the only possibility is to consult traditional publications which are not available online²⁴.

Dialnet is one of the most interesting bibliographical projects now available in Spain²⁵. It was designed by the University of La Rioja as an alerting service, for which researchers must register, even though it is completely free. This Portal now includes informa-

tion about 4,671 journals published in different European and American countries. Each subscriber receives by mail summaries of the journals he or she has chosen as soon as a new number is published, and is informed about new inclusions, which may be added to the list. It may also be used to search for articles in journals, papers in collective works, doctoral theses and books. *Dialnet* also makes it possible to access the full text of some content, and offers special services for libraries and academic journals. The information on *Dialnet* is available not only in the different Spanish languages, but also in English, French and Portuguese, by clicking a link on the box near *Ayuda* [Help] (although that has not been translated).

To search the bibliography in *Dialnet*, the researcher may choose the type of document (articles in journals, papers in collective works, doctoral theses, books or all), or go directly to author/s and title/s. The references are presented as a list, with an indication as to the availability of the abstract and/or the full text of the document. There is also a link to the full information for each reference. Associated institutions may also request references for which a full text has not been included. It is also possible to keep the search and export it to different bibliographic management systems, but only if the researcher is working from a computer in one of the associated institutions.

Using the usual keywords in *Dialnet*, I got the following results:

KEYWORDS	RESULTS	INTERESTING FOR MY TOPIC
<i>dominico</i> [Dominican friar]	45	6
<i>dominicos</i> [Dominican friars]	133	23
<i>dominica</i> [Dominican nun]	53	3
<i>dominicas</i> [Dominican nuns]	37	6
<i>fraile predicador</i> [Preacher friar]	1	0
<i>frailes predicadores</i> [Preacher friars]	6	4

As my university is not an associated institution, these will have to be checked in order to find out the final number of digital documents.

Dialnet reveals the ambivalence of scholars and publishers towards the Internet as a vehicle for spreading their work. There is no debate as to its usefulness for publicizing titles of articles, papers, books, etc. But few are willing to allow full text access. The use of *Dialnet* also makes clear one of the main problems for researchers nowadays. When they work in an institution which is prepared to pay for some of the tools and resources available online, then their work is considerably easier than for researchers that are not supported. Moreover, even when the tools and resources are free, access is not always world-wide, because there are sometimes restrictions for researchers who do not carry out their work within the associated institutions. In short, although the Internet seems to support free knowledge without limits of space or time, the fact is that it also generates a certain amount of discrimination – though this is minimal compared to the barrier existing between those who have Internet access and those that do not.

Finally, I will describe a very interesting resource for researching Spanish history, namely the *Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes* [Miguel de Cervantes Virtual Library]²⁶. This was set up by the University of Alicante and some private institutions in 1999, but is sponsored by a number of companies and Spanish ministerial offices. Its main objective is the dissemination of Spanish and Latin American literature, science and culture, so all the information appears only in Spanish. This virtual library offers many services, including information about other libraries, discussion forums, notice boards, bibliographic search tools and subscriptions to news bulletins. It also includes a collection of digitalized materials (studies, journal articles, facsimiles, doctoral theses, archives of audio, video and teaching resources). Its materials are not only in the different Spanish languages but also in German, Italian, English, Portuguese, French and others, though always related to Spanish heritage²⁷. Everything is completely free and can be found using the *Catálogo general* [General Catalogue], or by looking in the section *Historia* [History], which includes links to the catalogue and different portals, sections for historical personalities, archives, museums, associations, history academies, cultural centres and electronic journals.

The history catalogue of this library allows you to search by *Autor* [Author], *Título* [Title] and *Clasificación de Materias (CDU)* [Subject (UDC)], but it only offers information about materials written in the Spanish languages. The same search fields are available in the general catalogue, where it is also possible to search for materials in other languages quoting author or title, or via a *Búsqueda avanzada* [Advanced Search]. This last option offers different search fields (title, author, subject and others), and allows the century to be filtered from the 10th to 21st. When the digitalized materials have been found, the researcher can mark the references, if a personal profile has been set up in *Mi biblioteca digital* [My digital library]. It is also possible to take part in forums and read the digitalized materials.

For my research topic, I began with an advanced search. I got the best results when I introduced my usual keywords in *Otros campos* [Other fields], which yielded 5 references for Dominican friar, 21 for Dominican friars, 3 for Dominican nun and 2 for Dominican nuns. But only 4 of them were useful for my research. Later I used the same keywords in the *Buscador* [Web Searcher], and the results were much more spectacular, basically because this tool also looks for the keywords inside the contents of the materials and in the different portals:

KEYWORDS	RESULTS
<i>dominico</i> [Dominican friar]	694
<i>dominicos</i> [Dominican friars]	802
<i>dominica</i> [Dominican nun]	254
<i>dominicas</i> [Dominican nuns]	139
<i>fraile predicador</i> [Preacher friar]	289
<i>frailes predicadores</i> [Preacher friars]	276

Therefore, I arrived at the conclusion that the catalogue is not the most suitable tool for searching the materials in the *Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes*, and needs to be considerably improved. But this virtual library is very useful for finding less traditional resources, and is more related to Internet production, which also could be useful for the historian.

THE INTERNET AS PRIMARY SOURCE

The Internet has become a new form of mass media. Millions of pages have been produced and may be visited by people from all over the world. Multiple viewpoints on all events are recorded, which allows for much richer analyses and interpretations. As Anaclét Pons has said,

Nowadays, everyone is present on the web. Anyone can offer their voice, their version of the facts – not only those producing serious information for the historian, but also the curious amateur, governments, the mass media, institutions, all kinds of bodies, and also people who otherwise would perhaps never have been heard²⁸.

It opens up all kinds of new possibilities for ego-documents and self-testimonies, which, as Thomas Ruhland mentions in his contribution to this volume, are valuable for historical research. But the number of people capable of making their own analysis and interpretation is also growing, which is why historians need to reflect about their role in current and future society.

The amount of information available on the Internet is truly amazing, and one of the problems is how to find what we are interested in, as I have described in the preceding pages. But no less important is the discouraging problem of missing websites. Sometimes the loss is due to the disappearance of the institution that hosted the site, a problem that is of particular concern to historians interested in religious history, given that the number of religious communities is declining in the current atmosphere of secularization. The phenomenon may also be related to marketing and competition, which pressurise institutions and companies, and sometimes also individuals, into creating more alluring and fashionable web pages, with new and different information.

Historians could not imagine exploring the history of the Dominican Order in Medieval Spain without the Papal charters and bulls, or the parchments, files and books of the Dominican communities. But where now are the e-mails from the Pope, friars and nuns? Are they in the recycle bin, where all the old web pages will be heading very soon? Is a new veil drawing over the Catholic Church's documents, just at the moment when this institution seems to be developing a more open-minded policy, at least with regards to the archive of the Holy Roman Inquisition, as Elena Brambilla explains in her contribution to this volume? How will future historians be able to find what will never again be on the Internet? Could we not set up archives for Internet content that

is no longer in use or has been replaced? These are some of the challenges that should be given serious consideration, not only by computer experts but also by historians.

CONCLUSIONS

The Internet is a vast ocean of information, and historians need to be able to search it and select the most appropriate materials for their research, just as they do in a library or archive. When the general information is available in different languages (instructions, help command, etc.), the researcher's work is greatly facilitated.

But historians cannot limit their work to the use of digital materials. The process of digitalization is still at an early stage, and not everything is online; and even those materials that are available in digital format sometimes have to be paid for. At present, researchers still need to combine the use of digital materials with more traditional methodologies.

Historians also have to be responsible in their use of selected resources, applying a careful critique in order to avoid biased interpretations. Who has carried out the digitalization of the document in question? What was their purpose? What procedures did they use? What level of digitalization is there in every archive that a historian needs to consult for his or her work? Researchers also need to participate in the digitalization of materials required for historical purposes, suggesting criteria for improving the process.

Historians should demand materials that have been digitalized according to scientific criteria. There should be images of the original documents when possible, transcriptions of the documents in their original language (including the palaeographical criteria of transcription), facsimile editions of old books, recognition of author/s and rejection of plagiarism, etc. Quality should be demanded. They should also advise the technicians on the most suitable tools for conducting searches of digital records and bibliographies, such as the convenience of including historical thesauri, or systems for downloading the information or sending it to bibliographical management systems.

The Internet is also a very useful tool for divulging our own work. Researchers should not be afraid of publicising their works online or taking part in debates. This makes it easier to be read and quoted, and to establish networks with other experts, especially when languages accepted in the academic world are used.

Finally, historians should fight for the conservation of Internet materials that could be useful for history in the future. The elimination of web information should be considered as serious a crime as the burning-down of libraries or archives.

NOTES

- ¹ E. Moradiellos, *El oficio de historiador*, Madrid 2003, pp. 220-224.
- ² J. M. de Bernardo Ares, A. Calvo Cuenca, *Historia e Informática. Metodología interdisciplinar de la investigación histórica*, Córdoba 2005, pp. 35-39.
- ³ See the blog by the Task Force 5 of CLIOHnet2: <http://www.clioh.net/digihistory>.
- ⁴ For example, <http://www.diocesisdecanarias.info/01d510944b13b9b02/01d510956e09ced01.html>.
- ⁵ http://aer.mcu.es/sgae/index_censo_guia.jsp.
- ⁶ I have checked the catalogues of the following archives: *Archivo Histórico Eclesiástico de Bizkaia* (<http://www.aheb-beha.org/>). *Arxiu i Biblioteca de la diòcesi de Girona* (http://www.arxiuadg.org/principal.php?leng=cat_). *Archivo Histórico Diocesano de San Sebastián* (<http://mendezmende.org/>). *Archivo Histórico Diocesano de Santiago de Compostela* (<http://www.archicompostela.org/archivo/default.htm>). *Archivo Diocesano y Archivo Catedralicio de Tudela* (<http://www.palaciodecanaldetudela.com/palacio/archivos.html>). *Archivo Histórico Diocesano de Vitoria* (<http://www.ahdv-geah.org/index.html>). All the resources quoted in this chapter have been consulted in November 2007, and given that the growing process of digitalization, the results could be different in a few days.
- ⁷ <http://www.dominicos.org/monjas/conventos/TOLEDO/archivo.htm>.
- ⁸ See *Archivo Histórico Nacional* in <http://www.mcu.es/archivos/MC/AHN/index.html>. See *Archivo de la Corona de Aragón* in <http://www.mcu.es/archivos/MC/ACA/index.html>.
- ⁹ See Classification Scheme of the *Archivo Histórico Nacional* in <http://www.mcu.es/archivos/MC/AHN/FondosDocumentales/CuadroClasificacion.html>. See its organization of the ecclesiastical institutions records in <http://www.mcu.es/archivos/docs/MC/EclesiasticosAHN.pdf>. See Classification Scheme of the *Archivo de la Corona de Aragón* in <http://www.mcu.es/archivos/docs/MC/ACA2007Cuadroclasificacion.pdf>.
- ¹⁰ <http://pares.mcu.es>.
- ¹¹ PARES allows partial access to the following archives: *Archivo de la Corona de Aragón*, *Archivo de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid*, *Archivo General de Indias*, *Archivo General de la Administración*, *Archivo General de la Guerra Civil Española*, *Archivo General de Simancas*, *Archivo Histórico Nacional*, *Sección de Nobleza del Archivo Histórico Nacional*, *Archivo histórico provincial de Álava*, *Archivo histórico provincial de Guipúzcoa* and *Archivo histórico provincial de Vizcaya*.
- ¹² <http://www.mcu.es/libro/CE/AgenciaISBN/BBDDLlibros/Sobre.html>.
- ¹³ <http://www.mcu.es/bibliotecas/MC/CCPB/index.html>.
- ¹⁴ <http://bvpb.mcu.es>.
- ¹⁵ Biblioteca Pública de Soria (collection of the Monastery of Santa María de Huerta), Biblioteca Pública del Estado en Tarragona (collections of the Monasteries of Santes Creus and Poblet), Biblioteca de Castilla-La Mancha/Biblioteca Pública del Estado en Toledo (Borbón-Lorenzana's collection), Biblioteca Pública del Estado en Orihuela and Biblioteca Pública del Estado en Palma de Mallorca (Raimundo Lulio's collection).
- ¹⁶ *Cultura abre a Internet el acceso al patrimonio bibliográfico español*, in "Madri+d", 19 September 2007: <http://www.madrimasd.org/informacionidi/noticias/noticia.asp?id=31593&origen=notiweb>.
- ¹⁷ See World Digital Library in <http://www.worlddigitallibrary.org>, and the European Library in <http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org>. See more information about the project of the European Digital Library in "Madri+d", 29 November 2007: <http://www.madrimasd.org/informacionidi/noticias/noticia.asp?id=32423&origen=notiweb>.
- ¹⁸ <http://www.bne.es>.

- ¹⁹ <http://www.bne.es/cgi-bin/wsirtex?FOR=WBNCONS1>.
- ²⁰ <http://teseo.mec.es/teseo/jsp/teseo.jsp>.
- ²¹ The authors of the doctoral theses I have found in TESEO belong to six universities. The following ones are including the doctoral theses in their digital collections: the University of Alcalá (<http://dspace.uah.es/dspace>), the Complutense University (<http://www.ucm.es/BUCM/atencion/5761.php>), the University of Granada (http://www.ugr.es/~biblio/biblioteca_electronica/proyecto_digibug/index.html), the University of Santiago de Compostela (http://iacobus.usc.es/search*gag~S7) and the University of Seville (<http://fondosdigitales.us.es>).
- ²² <http://www.cindoc.csic.es>.
- ²³ <http://www.imf.csic.es/tbibliograficos.htm>.
- ²⁴ For example, F. González Ollé, *Manual Bibliográfico de Estudios Españoles*, Pamplona 1976. See also the database *Bibliografía general española, Siglo XV-1998*, Munich 1998.
- ²⁵ <http://dialnet.unirioja.es>.
- ²⁶ <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com>.
- ²⁷ <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/catalogo/index.jsp?lang=1>.
- ²⁸ A. Pons, *La historia maleable. A propósito de Internet*, in “Hispania. Revista Española de Historia”, 2006, 66, 222, p. 129.

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- Moradiellos E., *El oficio de historiador*, Madrid 2003.

