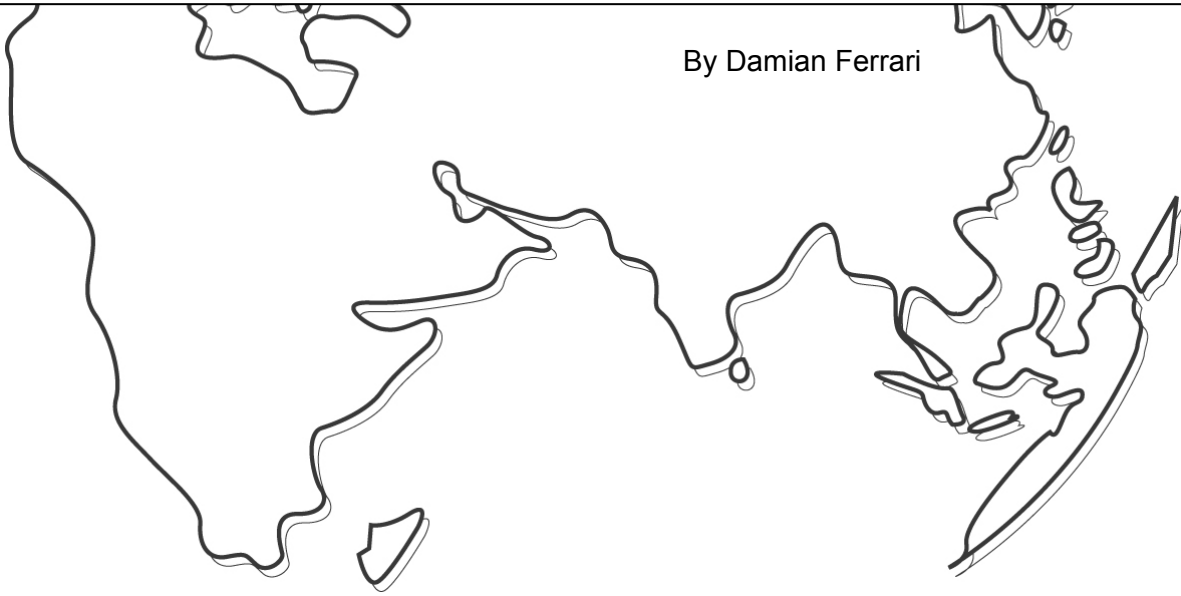




# Open Memory:

Using inter-institutional cooperation to facilitate access to human rights

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## **Part One**

### **Introduction: Documentary Heritage Program**

Documentary Heritage is a program of Memoria Abierta (Open Memory), whose goal is to improve the use of and access to the documentation stored in the institutional archives of participating human rights organizations.

The program coordinates the organization of documents at each member site in tandem with a description, analysis, and preservation of materials. Each document is assigned its own file, which can then be accessed in an online database.

An interdisciplinary team of professionals works directly with a representative from each organization to coordinate the archives.

The Documentary Heritage Program seeks to make all of the documentation related to the period of state terrorism (1976-1983)<sup>1</sup> and its present consequences accessible for research and educational purposes, thereby increasing knowledge and contributing to a social conscience about what occurred in Argentina.

We view the archival process as a way to support the work of member organizations, not only to use their own materials, but to also increase cooperation among various institutions. This cooperation is particularly relevant when placed in the national and regional context of several recuperation and archival projects.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Documentation: A Resource for the Truth**

From their inception, human rights organizations have accumulated materials related to legal proceedings against forced disappearance and other human rights violations.

This documentation, provided by survivors and victims' family members and housed in institutional archives, aids in legal proceedings and prosecutions. In addition, it reveals clues about the fate of detained-disappeared persons and children kidnapped by the regime.

The archives form an indispensable legacy in the work of telling the history of the human rights struggle. They also constitute an invaluable resource in the struggle for truth and justice.

### **Memoria Abierta**

Founded in 1999, Memoria Abierta is a coordinated action of seven human rights organizations that have to come together to promote activities that contribute to remembrance of the recent past. Its mission is to bring together and preserve documentary materials that speak to what occurred in Argentina during the period of state terrorism.

The human rights organizations that form part of Memoria Abierta are:

- Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS)
- Good Memory Association
- Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo-Founding Line
- Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH)

<sup>1</sup> See attachment: "The Archives of Human Rights Organizations: Social and Political Context"

<sup>2</sup> Among these initiatives, it is important to highlight the recent Presidential decision of March 2004 to construct a "Space for Memory and for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights" at the Navy Mechanics School (ESMA), which functioned as a clandestine detention center.

- Relatives of Detained and Disappeared Persons for Political Reasons
- Peace and Justice Service (SERPAJ)
- Social and Historical Memory Foundation

The organizations that make up Memoria Abierta joined forces to advance collective memory. This coordinated action is based on a fundamental premise: A society that knows its past and promotes remembrance has more opportunities to elaborate a collective memory that contributes to the construction of identity and the consolidation of democracy.

Each of Memoria Abierta's activities links building of consensus among human rights groups to targeted professional development. Memoria Abierta's programs exemplify this principle, constituting a tool for the creation and promotion of collective memory.

Within the Documentary Heritage program, one of the first tasks was to process the existing material housed in institutional archives of the organizations that make up Memoria Abierta.

Other areas of concentration include:

#### Oral History Archive

The Oral History Archive produces the testimonies<sup>3</sup> of relatives of detained-disappeared persons, survivors, and human rights activists, among others, whose lives were touched in some way by the experience of state terrorism. The goals of the archives are to construct sources for further study of this historic period.

#### Photographic Archive

The Photographic Archive gathers, organizes and coordinates access to photographs that speak to social and political processes from the 1930s up to the present.

#### Topography of Memory

Topography of Memory registers and systematizes all of the existing information related to the hundreds of clandestine detention centers that existed in Argentina during the period of state terrorism. The program seeks to facilitate an understanding of the system of state repression from a topographical perspective. In addition, the program lends technical assistance to several recuperation initiatives to recover clandestine centers of detentions and to make them "visible" in their geographic context.

### **Program Results: Using the Archives**

*"Every page of the archives stored in the 60 catalogued boxes or in the 110 boxes still to be catalogued is a cold and impersonal paper that transforms into a living testimony based on its content and what is expressed in it."*

*"Testimony in which historic value, sentiment, and solidarity intermingle..."*

*"The richness of our documentation brings back memories of rallies, declarations, reports, and press releases, all faithful reflections of our activities."*

*"These pages reveal for us the names of thousands of disappeared persons and repressors, the horror of clandestine detention centers, and the pain of each relative that filed a habeas corpus in the desperate search for a loved one."*

*"Today we know what 9,850 documents from the archives of Relatives (of Detained and Disappeared Persons for Political Reasons) say..."*

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<sup>3</sup> The interviews are filmed by a team of film professionals.

*“The key is that this allows us to make the documentation available for society and for all those who would like to or who need to consult it.”*

(The comments of **Mabel Gutierrez, Relatives of Detained and Disappeared Persons for Political Reasons**, during the presentation of the Documentary Heritage Program at the Colegio Público de Abogados de la Capital Federal, Buenos Aires, 22 December 2003.)

The Documentary Heritage Program began its work in April 2002. By July 2004, the archives had been physically organized and more than 25,000 documents had been processed. Currently all materials are accessible through the “Collective Catalogue” on Memoria Abierta’s website. Processed documentation is also published in a catalogue and distributed to each of the seven organizations that make up Memoria Abierta. These two tools allow each organization to consult its own documentation and that of the other participating human rights groups.

Since its inauguration, the Documentary Heritage Program has improved and increased access to documentary materials related to the period of state terrorism. In the past six months, 15,000 people have visited Memoria Abierta’s website, and 668 are registered for online searches of the “Collective Catalogue”.<sup>4</sup> Many times after consulting the online database, users contact the respective human rights organizations for direct access to the document.

The archives are also consulted within the organizations themselves. Often they are incorporated into investigative materials and publications. Specific examples of these uses include the photos from the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo-Linea Fundadora in the book, “Memoriales a pura tripa: pretéritos que resisten a ser pasado”,<sup>5</sup> and a photo of an activist from Relatives of Detained and Disappeared Persons for Political Reasons in the magazine “Acción (IMFC)”. The organization of these materials in the “Collective Catalogue” was indispensable for their finding and use.

The materials contained in the archives also figure in educational materials. Memoria Abierta’s virtual exhibition, “Otras Voces de la Historia” is a multimedia CD-ROM that combines testimonies from the oral history archive with other sources such as photographs, written documents and audiovisual materials. The CD-ROM, a compilation of materials from the archives, also enriched the Documentary Heritage Program. Through these documentary sources, visitors are able to explore the history of what occurred in Argentina from 1960-1990.

The Documentary Heritage Program also produces special collections, including the banners of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo-Founding Line<sup>6</sup>, and the posters and judicial documents of the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS).

The program has also created and advanced technical instruments that aid in the analysis of documentation, such as the Index of Institutions, and an expansion of our “thesaurus”<sup>7</sup>, to which we have added new “descriptors”<sup>8</sup> to account for the specific vocabulary of the field of human rights, regionalism, and new uses of the language.

## **Part Two**

### **The Challenges of Coordinating Archives Among Several Organizations**

Coordinating the archives of various organizations, each with their own system of document classification, requires overcoming a series of challenges:

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<sup>4</sup> Site visitors must register to search the “Collective Catalogue”.

<sup>5</sup> Omar Basabé, Editor. Buenos Aires: Ed. Catálogos, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> The posters contain the personal items (photos, poems, writings, etc.) of detained-disappeared persons.

<sup>7</sup> A thesaurus is an archival language used to provide consistence to the process of indexing and document recovery.

<sup>8</sup> A descriptor is the authorized symbol or term that appears in a thesaurus. It is used to represent, without ambiguity, the concepts contained in documents, and in petitions for the recuperation of information.

In the first place, it involves improving the actual state of the archives: organization; the physical space dedicated to archives; the availability of technological resources. To deal with these varying conditions, we designed several strategies. Among others, they included: increasing awareness of archival preservation methods (environmental conditions); providing or increasing the number of computers; and designing new work spaces for archiving.

In the second place, we also had to deal with the tensions that sometimes resulted in the process of coordinating activities. Some of the challenges we faced included: differing opinions within organizations with respect to collective decisions<sup>9</sup>; changes to long-established documentary practices<sup>10</sup>; the diverse criteria related to archival access and documentation<sup>11</sup>, among others.

### **Work Teams**

The Board of Memoria Abierta is made up one member from each of the seven participating organizations. The function of the Board involves discussing and establishing areas of concentration and institutional policies. Work teams coordinate each of Memoria Abierta's areas of concentration.

The Documentary Heritage Program develops its activities with a team of interdisciplinary professionals, contracted by Memoria Abierta, which works with the archival coordinator of each organization.

A team of librarians organizes the archives and describes the documents, uploading them to a database at each organization.

The team is made up of a Program Coordinator, Librarian Coordinator, Program Assistant, and an Information Technology Assistant.

The person in charge of archiving from each of the organizations that make up Memoria Abierta acts as the interlocutor between their institution and the Documentary Heritage program. Their principle tasks are to maintain the proper environmental conditions of the archives, to communicate institutional priorities, and to ensure access to the documents and to the technology necessary to accomplish cataloguing.

#### **Documentary Heritage Work Team: Job Descriptions and Time Allotment**

*-Program Coordinator:* Responsible for coordinating the team; maintaining contact with the person in charge of archives at each organization; making contact with other archives or similar initiatives. Time allotment: Full Time.

*-Librarian Coordinator:* Professional librarian whose main task is to coordinate the team of librarians and to oversee the maintenance of the database. Time allotment: Part Time.

*-Program Assistant:* Performs general tasks related to the program. Time allotment: Part Time.

*- Information Technology Assistant:* Installs and maintains software at each organization; system management for uploading information to the online "Collective Catalogue". Time allotment: Part Time.

<sup>9</sup> Dialogue working toward consensus is essential for viable agreements.

<sup>10</sup> In some instances, organizations already had "documentation centers", which systematized materials. In these cases, we selected parts of the collection that corresponded to the initial goals of the Documentary Heritage program and reviewed the rest of the materials to later apply common criteria to them.

<sup>11</sup> Each organization has their own criteria for determining which of their materials can be made public. To deal with this reality, we established two mechanisms: 1) the elaboration of three levels of accessibility (see ahead); and 2) the designation of one person assigned to determine the appropriate level of accessibility of the materials from each organization.

- *Librarians*: Five librarians are assigned to the organizations, according to criteria of equity and to the demand and urgency of the tasks of each archive. In those cases where there is a professional in charge of the archive already, tasks of training, assistance and coordination are developed.

### **Part Three**

#### **Surveying Documents: Classifying Materials**

The Documentary Heritage program began with a preliminary survey of the archives of each of Memoria Abierta's member organizations. The survey sought to determine: 1) the condition of the materials; 2) the quantity of materials based on the categories of documents defined by the Documentary Heritage program<sup>12</sup>; 3) the organization and systematization of the archives<sup>13</sup>; and 4) the existing information systems employed by each organization.

A team made up of an archivist, an information technology specialist, and an assistant conducted a three-month survey, based primarily on interviews with pertinent representatives of each member site.

The results were organized in a report divided into three main sections:

- 1) General theoretical considerations.
- 2) An analysis of the documentary materials housed in the human rights organizations.
- 3) Recommendations and work priorities for the Documentary Heritage program.

Preliminary Survey of Documentary Materials of Human Rights Organizations  
October 2001 (excerpt)

#### **5. Recommendations and Priorities**

##### **5.1 General Observations**

Throughout their existence, human rights organizations have had to adapt to historical realities, modify internal procedures, and orient themselves toward institutional structures that reinforce their founding goals. The Documentary Heritage Program is based on the premise that human rights organizations are poised to define solutions to the challenges of preserving the materials housed at their sites.

##### **5.2 Recommendations**

###### **5.2.1 Institutional**

-Define one person to be in charge of documentary materials. Said person shall be in charge of: organizing and maintaining the materials; making sure that technical capacity is always functioning; preparing the materials so that many can benefit from its use.

-Determine where materials shall be stored within the organization, based on a collective institutional decision.

-Elaborate the terms of use of the materials, placing priority on those materials for use among the human rights organizations, or the individual organization.

-Define the level of accessibility to materials, whether for organizational use, or for the general public. In addition, the responsible person will determine how the catalogue of materials will be disseminated and the time frame for doing so.

-Advance cooperation with other archives, whether for future information networks, collective catalogues, etc.

<sup>12</sup> See attachment: "Types of Documents Surveyed in Preliminary Report"

<sup>13</sup> We focused especially on accessibility (or how easy or difficult it was to find materials) and the level of technology, i.e. databases, digitalization.

### 5.2.2. Preservation and Conservation

*The Building.* If the building is maintained in good conditions, it is also essential that the archival space be equally well maintained.

*Archival Room.* Whenever possible, it is important that the archives be maintained in one single room (not on the ground, nor in a basement, attic, or other space with difficult accessibility). The access to the archival room should remain unblocked, to allow for the free flow of documents to and from the space. At the same time, only staff members shall be allowed access to the archival room, specifically the person in charge of documentary material. The archival room should remain separate from the public consultation room. If there are materials (for example books, objects) in public consultation rooms, a glass case or cabinet should be installed to protect the materials from damage and/or theft.

*Shelving.* Shelves should not exceed 2.5 meters in height. They should always be metallic to prevent corrosion, which could damage the documents.

*Containers.* Plastic folders, cardboard boxes, sleeves, etc. should be replaced in favor of acid free storage materials. If organizations still wish to use the existing storage, they should place all documentation in acid free paper to prevent deterioration.

*Attitude Toward the Materials.* Both staff and public should demonstrate extreme care when consulting the documentation. Each organization should establish a set of procedures to avoid improper use of the documentation.

### 5.2.3. Computerized Material

Electronic documentation should also figure in digitalization and preservation processes.

## 5.3 Areas of Concentration for the Documentary Heritage Program

The Documentary Heritage Program plans to work with the organizations in four areas of concentration:

### *Normalization of Documentary Materials*

Normalization refers to adopting common terminology and language based in international archival methods and organizational experience, which will aid in archiving, identifying and describing materials, and processing them. The diversity of material contained within the organizations makes this task particularly worthwhile and urgent.

### *Technological Tools for Accessibility and Preservation*

As we have already seen, technological tools aid in both preservation and accessibility. Our team will investigate and propose software solutions to optimize our work.

### *Strategies for Cooperation Among Archives*

To make the most of this cooperation, it is necessary to define communication models. Technology affords us the opportunity to exchange data through internal networks (intranets) and through global exchange networks (Internet). Further exploration of their potential is indispensable for this cooperative work. The creation of a catalogue which describes the materials housed in each organization will be a fundamental tool for this area of concentration.

### *Training.*

Organizing archives and ensuring longevity requires training those responsible for documentary material. Training shall be provided to improve organization, systematization and the preservation of material.



## Program Organization

- a) **Decentralized Organization of Archives:** One principle that determined how we carry out our work was the decision to organize the materials at their actual sites. In this way, all of the materials stay physically in each institution, and the original organization structure may be preserved. The registry, which is produced after all information has been processed, is incorporated into the organizational database and then uploaded to the online “Collective Catalogue” for public consultation.
- b) **Joint Publication:** The online “Collective Catalogue”, which contains the records of all of the organizational databases, is periodically updated. A copy of the Catalogue is printed and distributed among the organizations, in addition to being uploaded to Memoria Abierta’s website for public consultation.<sup>14</sup>
- c) **Description of Documents:** Each document is described in an individual record. We rely on international standards for each record in addition to the before-mentioned thesauri.
- d) **Selective Digitalization:** The materials selected to be digitalized are chosen based on the records available in the “Collective Catalogue”, keeping in mind the following criteria: 1) the organizational necessities; 2) historic importance of the documentation; and 3) state of conservation, among others. Once digitalized, the materials are uploaded to the web for public consultation.
- e) **Defining Levels of Accessibility:** Each organization determines the level of accessibility to their materials. Three broad levels of accessibility have been defined:
  - Public: total access to the record and to the document(s)
  - Limited: Access to the record, but limited access to the document(s)
  - Restricted or Confidential: Access to the record or to the document(s) is possible through the organization only.

Once all materials have been reviewed, the work team begins to process the information, including creation of the database and the installation of work spaces in each member organization.<sup>15</sup>

### Instruments for Describing and Analyzing Document Contents

We use the following systems and thesauri to complete the analysis and description of documents:

- Bibliographic Information System: **CEPAL**, Santiago de Chile: United Nations, 1984.
- Reglas de Catalogación Angloamericanas**. Second edition.
- Thesauri** specializing in Human Rights:
  - CODEHUCA. San José Costa Rica, 1987.
  - Chilean Human Rights Commission. Santiago de Chile, 2002.
- General Thesauri:
  - UNBIS, Dag Hammarskjöld Library. United Nations, 1986.
  - Macrothesaurus OCDE. Fifth edition. Paris: OCDE, 1998.

### Challenges Facing the Documentary Heritage Program

Throughout development of the Documentary Heritage Program, we have faced a series of technical and operational challenges.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.memoriaabierta.org.ar>. See attachment: Sample Search of online “Collective Catalogue.”

<sup>15</sup> This takes approximately two months. The Documentary Heritage Program began this effort in five of the organizations that had offices. A next step will be to process those materials stored in private homes and in member organizations that do not have offices.

One challenge has been the construction of a set of criteria for the classification of documents among a team that works at several different locations. To make the work flow better, we established regular meetings with the librarians and a quality control system to monitor the work.

Quality control has figured among the main challenges. The nature of the documents has necessitated the creation of terminology that the librarian team has learned in order to avoid describing similar documents with a variety of descriptors. For example, one descriptor adopted by the team has been the phrase “escrache”. An “escrache” is a highly performative form of protest that was inaugurated by the human rights group H.I.J.O.S. to publicly identify the homes of repressors that enjoy freedom to this day.<sup>16</sup>

The archives contain several types of documentation, among them testimonies of relatives of detained-disappeared persons, legal documents, institutional correspondence, signs, posters, banners, publications, etc. At the same time, these materials have several different formats, including video, photocopy, digital prints, etc. We are regularly faced with the challenge of developing standards that account for the diversity and complexity of materials based on both historical content and format.<sup>17</sup>

### **Information Processing**

During the first stage of the Documentary Heritage program, we used the WINISIS software, provided free of charge by UNESCO for general use amongst professional librarians. Installation of the software in each of the organizations that make up Memoria Abierta was preceded by an evaluation of the technological equipment at each site. When necessary equipment was updated or provided.

After the preliminary evaluation of Memoria Abierta’s programs, we embarked upon the development of a multimedia index system.

The information systems implemented consisted of a CEPAL-based catalogue format. The CEPAL system allows each program to define data base fields, such as names and variations in presenting information. Based on institutional decisions regarding document description, it is possible to define variants corresponding to the necessities of each of Memoria Abierta’s programs.

Uploading information to the system can occur online or offline.<sup>18</sup> Afterwards, all of the information is synchronized in Memoria Abierta’s central database and then readied for public access online. Each organization possesses the information before it is synchronized to the online “Collective Catalogue”.

The system generates a record for each document processed, to which can be added unlimited links such as texts, images, or video.

Access to materials is possible online through a search interface that permits a consultation of the record corresponding to the desired document(s). Before embarking on a record search, the system allows users to see a list of persons, institutions, descriptors, and places that appear in the documents.

As mentioned, documents are defined by three levels of access. Likewise, there are also various types of users, from regular visitors to the site with permission to consult public documents, to

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<sup>16</sup> H.I.J.O.S. is human rights organizations made up primarily of the children of those detained-disappeared during the period of state terrorism.

<sup>17</sup> The librarians frequently consult the members of the human rights organizations when documents are missing pertinent data stored in the memories of the protagonists themselves. For example, people that appear in photographs, or the dates that appear in certain posters and banners.

<sup>18</sup> This applies to those working directly on the Documentary Heritage program.

specific staff members from participant organizations with to access to restricted or confidential materials.<sup>19</sup>

We have utilized an “open code”<sup>20</sup> format to develop our system, based on the Linux platforms. We arrived at this decision for various reasons: 1) longer-lasting software; 2) more technological stability; and 3) the benefits of not having to rely on brand or copyrighted products.<sup>21</sup>

In tandem with this development, the work team used specialized uploading software. We completed various imports to the systems prior to the software installation.<sup>22</sup>

The system<sup>23</sup>, developed by an “open code” software company under the supervision of Memoria Abierta<sup>24</sup>, was installed in stages. The most important advancements included:

- 18 December 2002: Web site launch (fixed content)
- 24 March 2003: Search interface up and running.
- August 2003: Work begins on the editing and uploading records.
- October 2003: First data export of the online “Collective Catalogue”

### **Conclusion: Coordinating the Organization of Archives to Improve Access to Documentation**

The decision of human rights organizations to come together for coordinated actions to recuperate the recent past gave shape to Memoria Abierta’s programs. This coming together also gave further impulse to pursue a long-term goal of human rights organizations to create a Museum dedicated to the history of state terrorism in Argentina.<sup>25</sup>

After more than two years of work, the achievements of the Documentary Heritage program have confirmed for us the value of coordinated action, not only for human rights organizations, but also for society as a whole.

Reflecting on our own trajectory, we can extract several lessons that may serve others as they begin projects to coordinate archives among various organizations:

- It is fundamental to define the objectives and scope of projects among all of the organizations.<sup>26</sup>
- It is important to include those responsible for documentary materials from each organization, regardless of professional expertise. Along these same lines, it is necessary to create spaces of dialogue in which each organization has a voice with respect to the use of its own materials.<sup>27</sup>
- The Documentary Heritage program outlined its own type of “thematic selection”<sup>28</sup>, whereby we were able to concentrate our efforts on special collections from within the total body of archives available to us.
- The creation of a work team with expertise in library science and a coordinator dedicated to monitoring work progress and promoting communication among the organizations resulted fundamental to our work. Some of the characteristics of a productive team include: a

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<sup>19</sup> The system allows for the definition of user groups with different level of access for both viewing and editing information. In both cases, Memoria Abierta monitors and administers the use, modifying user groups based on changing necessities.

<sup>20</sup> The software is the result of many source code lines, written in a particular program language. “Open code” software allows its users to study, understand and improve the details of its implementation.

<sup>21</sup> Licensing costs, risks of discontinuing the software, costs of software updates, etc.

<sup>22</sup> Winisis, Access, etc.

<sup>23</sup> The system is made up of four elements: a Firebird client-server database; a PHP search system; a PHP security administration system; and an uploading system designed based of SQLWindows.

<sup>24</sup> Under the responsibility of the Information Technology Assistant.

<sup>25</sup> See attachment, “The Museum We Want”.

<sup>26</sup> In our case, we created a new institution, Memoria Abierta, the characteristics of which we have already discussed.

<sup>27</sup> For example, each organization determined which of their materials could be made accessible, in addition to assigning priority to documents for processing.

<sup>28</sup> Documentation related to state terrorism and its present consequences have priority.

Program Coordinator; a technical coordinator dedicated to information processing; and an information technology specialist.

In addition, we relied on a wide variety of technological resources and solutions that aided us in the coordination of archival work. Some of these methods included: installing software in each member organization; data importation to construct the "Collective Catalogue"; the publication of catalogues and their dissemination online. We recommend using systems available free of charge or without copyright, many of which are compatible with a variety of operating systems. The software developed by UNESCO is a very good option for archival management. Furthermore, this software has a wide array of programs which are adaptable to different tasks, for example MicroIstis, WinIstis, WinIstis for MARC, and OpenIstis, in addition to a series of tools available on the Internet and which are compatible with other technologies.

The organization of documentary material requires important resources such as large physical spaces, specialized furniture, computers, and, above all, knowledgeable personnel. When we began we found that the wide variety of methods with which the organizations housed their documentary materials did not result satisfying or productive for the institution as a whole. In this sense, our cooperation made the most out of resources, improved the organization of archives, and aided in tasks that many organizations could not accomplish alone, for example online access to information.

We hope that this publication inspires or aides similar initiatives, and that our reflections can facilitate and strengthen the path toward cooperation in the organization of archives.

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

### **The Archives of Human Rights Organizations: Social and Political Context**

In what context did concern about organization the archives of human rights organizations emerge? To understand, it is important to mention several key political events in Argentine history.

In 1976, the armed forces overthrew the democratic government of Isabel Perón (widow of Juan Domingo Perón). However, this was not the first time that the armed forces had interrupted the democratic process: From 1930 to 1983, only two constitutional governments were able to finish their terms.

By the end of the 1960s, Argentina was experiencing a charged political climate based on two factors: 1) the ban on Peronism, the majority political force in the nation, from 1955 until 1972; and 2) increasing youth activism, which, under the call for "Liberation or Dependence", concentrated on neighborhood, union and political struggles. The strategy of workers, the majority of whom were Peronist, and the numerous youth organizations, were diverse. They included strikes, factory takeovers, and direct and armed actions.

The armed forces, under the call for a "Doctrine of National Security", based on the policies of the U.S. Department of State throughout Latin America, organized a systematic plan of illegal repression. This system was characterized by the detention of persons without judicial order, and the installation of clandestine centers of detention and torture as a method to humiliate detainees and to obtain information. The detainees, the majority of whom were never heard from again, came to be known as *desaparecidos*, or "disappeared".

In this context, the relatives of those detained and disappeared began to act. They formed diverse organizations to confront the state for information about the fate of thousands of people illegally and clandestinely detained.

In 1983, the military dictatorship, in power for almost eight years, was forced to call for elections. In its wake, the regime left 30,000 detained or disappeared persons, thousands of prisoners and

exiled citizens, a crippling external debt, and countless more affected physically and/or psychologically by the Malvinas War (Falkland War) with Great Britain.

The democratic transition exposed the horrors perpetrated by the military government, and human rights began to form part of the national political agenda.

In 1985, the main military leaders were tried and convicted for their crimes. Nonetheless, shortly thereafter strong military opposition led Congress to pass two “impunity laws” that put a halt to continuing judicial processes. In 1986, the “Full Stop” law formally put an end to the trials. In 1987, the “Due Obedience” law absolved lower ranking officers of their responsibility in the crimes committed by the regime.

The next constitutional government, calling for “national reconciliation”, pardoned the only repressors that had been convicted of crimes. At the same time, it also pardoned the members of guerrilla organizations, who were also serving sentences.

The struggle of human rights organizations and the majority of society to learn the fate of those detained-disappeared and the call to punish those responsible for the repression continue to this day. The constant work of these organizations and their public strategies have recently led Congress to repeal the “impunity laws” and to reopen judicial processes throughout the country.

This process has been energized by several key judicial actions outside of Argentina having to do with the disappearance of foreign nationals or people with dual citizenship. The documentation provided by human rights organizations has been fundamental to the success of these efforts. The struggle for truth and justice is deeply rooted in many sectors of Argentine society, as demonstrated by the massive march organized every 24 March, the anniversary of the military coup.

On 24 March 2004, the current national government formally initiated the process to create a Museum of Memory at the Navy Mechanics School (ESMA), an emblematic clandestine detention center, prominently located in Buenos Aires. Until recently, the site functioned as a naval training facility. The government has called the initiative, “A SPACE FOR MEMORY AND FOR THE PROMOTION AND DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS”. The process to define the site characteristics represents an enormous opportunity for further debate about our recent past.

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### **The Museum We Want**

Memoria Abierta advocates and works toward the creation of a Museum to make known what occurred during the period of state terrorism in Argentina and its consequences up to the present.

We view the museum as a site to foster democracy through a reflection on the past. Based on this premise, we support the state initiative to construct “A Space for Memory and for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights” at the Navy Mechanics School (ESMA).

During the dictatorship and the subsequent struggle to obtain truth and justice, human rights organizations amassed valuable material that attests to their work in the defense of life and human rights. It is the desire of these human rights organizations to house this valuable material in an institution that presents a documented narrative of what occurred in the past.

The museum we want will be a place where citizens of all ages can gather to learn about this history through documents, testimonies and objects. We believe that the Museum will contribute to an understanding of the events of recent decades and will stimulate visitors to make a commitment to solve the problems of our country.

Through its various initiatives, Memoria Abierta works to collect, organize and preserve all material related to the history of the period of state terrorism. This material (both written and audiovisual), which will form the main collection of the future Museum, comes from private collections, human rights organizations and public registries.

For more information, consult Memoria Abierta's website, <http://www.memoriaabierta.org.ar>.

### **Types of Documents Surveyed in the Preliminary Report**

Material for public and internal use:

Testimonies  
Materials for public dissemination  
Periodic publications  
Books  
Press releases  
Audiovisual materials  
Objects of remembrances or prizes  
Materials for exhibitions  
Reports  
Judicial proceedings

### **Preservation**

We regard preservation as all of those actions and environmental controls that seek to retard the deterioration of documentation: maintenance of archival space; technological equipment; norms and processes to protect original documents, etc. The factors that contribute to deterioration can be physical, chemical, biological, technological, human or accidental.

Conservation includes all of those tasks that can maintain documents in the best conditions possible, seeking to delay any form of deterioration as long as possible. Direct conservation work includes cleaning, disinfecting, re-packaging, etc.

Preservation and conservation can be organized in stages, beginning with the most fragile and important materials.

The Documentary Heritage program has accomplished the following conservation tasks:

- Removing all paper clips and staples from documents.
- Storing all documents in polypropylene folders that protect papers from damage.
- Placing photos in eco-botanical preservation paper.
- Storing photos in conservation boxes.
- Digitalizing files to preserve the original documents.

### **Memoria Abierta: Sample Search**

To enter the system, log on to Memoria Abierta's website, <http://www.memoriaabierta.org.ar>. Once on the site, click "Búsqueda Documentales" (Document Search).

After registering with the system a screen pops up, which allows you diverse search options.

You may then select the Memoria Abierta program within which you would like to search. (A program defect brings up each program for searches.)

An initial search field appears that allows users to enter in words or phrase combinations that appear in documents, for example title, summaries, and other data base fields.

An advanced search allows a more focused search of the database. From these fields, we can consult by Country/Region; People; Institution; Collections; Content Description; and Interviewee Category, in the case of the Oral History Archive. The system allows users to see which information has been entered into the data base records, which can be accessed by clicking on the “Ver Listado de Datos” (See Data List) button of the right hand of the screen.

The search result is presented in list form, which contains identifying information about the records. Selecting the “Ver Ficha” (See Record) button, a window with complete information about the file appears. Clicking “Ver Adjunto” (See Attached) allows users to see the entire document, when available.

Below is a concrete example of a search of the database. In this sample search we will add more precise information to improve the search at each step.

1. Enter **marcha** in the BUSCAR field. This will bring up 1079 items.
2. Add the word **impunidad** in the DESCRIPTORES field. This will bring up 400 items.
3. Add **\*no\* impunidad** (the complete phrase reads: **marcha \*no\* impunidad**). This brings up 124 items.
4. Add **16/05/1986** and **16/05/1986** in the FECHA DESDE y FECHA HASTA. This brings up 88 items.
5. De-select “Proyecto Documental”. This will bring up 6 items. See how the first item contains a photograph.
6. Re-select “Proyecto Documental”.
7. Select “Ver Listado de Datos” (See Data List) in the Búsqueda de Persons (People Search) field. Once the screen appears, enter **Au** in the “Filtros comienza con:” (Filters Begin With:) field.
  - Select the “Búsqueda” (Search) Icon.
  - When the names appear, select **Auyero, Carlos**.
  - Click “Seleccionar” (Select). This will bring up one item

Note: To perform another search, click the “Limpiar” (Clear) button.