JLIS.it

Voluntary Transparency in Spanish University Libraries

Ana R. Pacios[a], Margarita Pérez Pulido[b], Marina Vianello[c]

a) University Carlos III of Madrid, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2887-882X
b) University of Extremadura, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2831-6341
c) University Carlos III of Madrid, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8745-3947

_____

Contact: Ana R. Pacios, areyes@bib.uc3m.es; Margarita Pérez Pulido, marperez@unex.es;
Marina Vianello, mvianell@bib.uc3m.es

_____

ABSTRACT

The research reported here aimed to ascertain the degree of transparency exhibited by Spanish public university libraries based on their active public disclosure practice. Transparency was measured by applying the TransPa_BA tool to the transparency-related information published by the country's 50 public university libraries on their websites. The tool addresses 21 indicators grouped under eight areas, used in this study to measure university libraries' public disclosure performance. The data collected were scored pursuant to the provisions of Spanish Act 19/2013 of 9 December on Transparency, Access to Public Information and Good Governance as adapted to university libraries, as well as in terms of other factors scantly developed in or omitted from the Act. The indicators and their respective parameters (content, form, accessibility, reusability, dating and updating or validity) constitute guidelines enabling libraries to enhance transparency and accountability by reporting their activities and practice in key areas to society in general and their stakeholders in particular. The objective is to help such institutions operate more transparently, for the information afforded by the indicators is deemed relevant to their activity while also monitoring their performance. The findings show that university libraries, which have become more transparent over time, are more transparent than other information units (national public libraries and historic and university archives). Some were nonetheless found to have room for improvement. On the grounds of their scores, these libraries can be classified under three headings: transparent, translucent or opaque. The parameters where good practices were most frequently identified included service usage rules and regulations, user charters and the annual report.

KEYWORDS

Transparency; Active public disclosure; University libraries; Indicators; Spain.

JLIS.it

1. Introduction

In the nineteen seventies Harrigan (1971) viewed accountability as a challenge libraries would need to confront to continue to receive public support. Osman and Hanon Bidin (2004) deemed it a key factor for responding to twenty-first century demands and issues. With time the notion has become a constant management concern for libraries aiming to substantiate their relevance to their parent organisations. The ACRL, in turn, identified one of the 2010 Top Ten Trends (286) to be an increase in 'demands for accountability and assessment'.

Accountability is not new to Spanish university libraries, which have been disseminating information on their management performance online ever since they created their websites in the late nineteen nineties to provide access to their services (Álvarez and Suárez Samaniego 1999). As the web burgeoned, the amount of information uploaded gradually grew, with inclusion becoming standard practice for many libraries (Pacios 2003). Even before then, some were already routinely publishing a (printed) annual report describing their activities, an exercise recommended by some libraries as an aid to decision-making (Carmena Escribano 1993).

Transparency, along with its accessibility and other associated parameters, is directly related to accountability and as such affects the type of information made available to citizens. In other words, it involves more than simply publishing facts and figures. It is also involved in citizen participation, which depends on suitable reporting and ready access.

Spain's Act 19/2013 of 9 December on Transparency, Access to Public Information and Good Governance (hereafter abbreviated with the Spanish initials, LTAIPBG) distinguishes between the obligation to proactively provide citizens with certain types of data (known as active public disclosure) and the right of access. In the latter citizens must raise a request for unpublished information they wish to receive, which must be honoured subject only to the limits laid down by law.

As university services, academic libraries are not required by law to disclose information on their performance to the community, for that obligation is incumbent upon the university itself (Ch. I, Art. 2, LTAIPBG). Nor must such libraries have a transparency portal where the data are published. Nonetheless, providing such information enhances the esteem in which these institutions are held by the community benefitting from their services and society in general, for it guarantees the transparency of their operations overall. The introduction to the University of Valladolid library's page containing such information reads: 'The University of Valladolid Library's (BUVa) new service offering includes the dissemination of information relevant to its stakeholders and more specifically facts and figures on its key areas of activity. The report provides university users with an efficient tool to acquire a fuller acquaintance with the library and the university itself with data useful for decision-making. At the same time, it makes these data available to outside stakeholders, informing them of the BUVa's most prominent services in keeping with the library's commitment to society.'[1]

Such information is essential to know what libraries do, how they do it and the use made of the resources they receive.

Transparency is itself a value adhered to by some university libraries (Pacios and Fernández

---

[1] https://biblioteca.uva.es/export/sites/biblioteca/1.informaciongeneral/1.5.bibliotecaencifras/index.HTML

JLIS.it

Fernández-Cuesta 2019). The University of Cádiz Library, for instance, apply the notion to their organisation and operation, stating: 'We manage our library transparently'.

Transparency in Spanish university libraries has been addressed in earlier studies. Pacios (2016) established a series of transparency indicators applied to the *Consorcio Madroño*. Those same indicators were later used in a review of the Catalonian consortium (Rey Martín, Rodríguez Parada and Camón 2019) and other Spanish academic institutions (Rey Martín et al. 2020), where a need for improvement was detected. Whilst the existence or otherwise of the indicators was identified in all those surveys, none quantified the parameters the information should include. Aspiring to advance in that direction, the present study deployed a digital tool, TransPa_BA, to numerically rate library transparency.

2. Objectives and methodology

The study described used specifically designed software, TransPa_Ba (Pacios, Vianello and De La Mano 2020), to rate the transparency performance of Spanish university libraries. Inspired by MESTA (Spanish initials for 'transparency assessment and monitoring methodology'), a tool developed by Spain's Transparency and Good Governance Council, TransPa_BA is built around 21 public disclosure indicators associated with LTAIPBG (España 2013) requirements as adapted to university libraries. It also addresses matters scantly mentioned in or omitted from the Act, such as user charters. The aim was to help such institutions operate more transparently, for the information afforded by the indicators is deemed to be relevant to their activity while also monitoring their performance. A second aim was to test the tool to detect possible inconsistencies in the indicators or their parameters.

The universe defined comprised the libraries affiliated with Spain's 50 public universities. Justification for that selection lay in their status as publicly funded institutions, a fact also particularly relevant to transparency. The information on transparency in connection with public disclosure was drawn from libraries' websites as accessed from the REBIUN[2] network portal. In the event of broken links the library's page was sought on the respective university's website. The URLs used to find the information on which assessment was based are listed in the annex, where library names are abbreviated as in the present text (IUNE 2018).

Information was analysed on the grounds of the 21 indicators grouped into the eight areas defined by TransPa_BA. Library websites were searched for the indicators in May and June 2021. Each indicator was assigned a specific weight in a total score of 100, calculated from the mean value found for each indicator in a survey conducted among head librarians (response rate=50 %; n=50). Between December 2019 and February 2020 respondents were asked to specify the importance they attached to each category and the suitability of each indicator on a scale of 0 to 5. The 21 indicators and respective weighting factors are grouped under the eight category headings in Table I.

---

[2] https://www.rebiun.org/quienes-somos/bibliotecas.

JLIS.it

	UNIVERSITY LIBRARY			
	Presentation of active public disclosure on the library website			0.01%
	ACTIVE PUBLIC DISCLOSURE INDICATOR	INDICATORS	AREA	
1	PURPOSE OF THE SERVICE AND OBJECTIVES PURSUED			
1.1	Definition of mission	6.35%		
1.2	Strategic plan	6.35%		
	TOTAL AREA 1		12.71%	
2	GOVERNING BODIES AND OPERATING RULES			
2.1	Identity of library's management board members	2.77%		
2.2	Regulations	3.40%		
2.3	Specific regulations on service provision	3.43%		
2.4	Code of ethics, values or good practice	2.83%		
	TOTAL AREA 2		12.44%	
3	SERVICE OFFERING			
3.1	User charter	13.77%		
	TOTAL AREA 3		13.77%	
4	THE COLLECTION			
4.1	Collection management policy or programme	6.03%		
4.2	Institutional open access policy	6.80%		
	TOTAL AREA 4		12.83%	
5	STAFF			
5.1	Organisational chart	5.77%		
5.2	Staff directory	6.37%		
	TOTAL AREA 5		12.14%	
6	RESULTS			
6.1	Management indicators (scoreboard)	2.20%		
6.2	User satisfaction surveys	2.52%		
6.3	Annual report or report of activities	2.63%		
6.4	Distinctions, prizes, certifications	2.36%		
6.5	Statistics	2.43%		
	TOTAL AREA 6		12.14%	
7	FINANCIAL INFORMATION			
7.1	Budget implemented	3.95%		
7.2	Tenders, contracts and bidding	3.86%		
7.3	Subsidies and assistance awarded	3.99%		
	TOTAL AREA 7		11.81%	
8	PARTNERING / COOPERATION			
8.1	Partnering networks, task forces, commissions	6.07%		
8.2	Agreements	6.07%		
	TOTAL AREA 8		12.14%	
	TOTAL AREAS		100.00%	99.99%
	TOTAL ACTIVE PUBLIC DISCLOSURE			100.00%

Table I. Weights assigned in TransPa_BA to public disclosure indicators for university libraries.

Six parameters were analysed to assess transparency-related information: content, form, reusability, accessibility, dating and updating/validity. The scores for each ranged from 0 to 10 except in the last two mentioned, where the scale ran from 0 to 5. The highest score for a given indicator

was consequently 50 points. A seventh variable analysed, 'location', denoted the position on the site where the information was found and on which visibility was largely deemed to depend. Ten points were awarded when the site contained a specific section on transparency.

The parameters defined to assess the indicators are described briefly below.

Content. This parameter, associated with the document per se, was understood to consist in 'all information regardless of medium (physical or digital) and format (graphic, audio or video)', therefore included the most disaggregated or "rawest" data' (Act 18/2015 of 9 July on reuse of public sector information) (España, 2015). Although no minimum requirements on content were defined for the indicators, in some cases their presence or absence was determined on the grounds of the existence of specific elements:

- For the definition of mission, that specific term, rather than library objective, purpose or function.
- For regulations, the presence of the ones for the most basic service, namely lending or library usage.
- For the graphic description of unit or service hierarchy, the respective organigram.
- For the staff directory, at least one person's name and contact information.
- For the operational indicators, uninterrupted presence with access to results (via vehicles such as service-focused scorecards indicative of library commitments and monitoring-confirmed routine use).
- For partnering/cooperation with networks, task forces or commissions, logos or icons proving its association with the respective entities.

Some indicators, such as budget, were sought and found in others such as the annual reports where the information provided was particularly comprehensive.

Form. This parameter refers to the position of the information and the pathway to reach it. It was deemed direct when the information or a link to the content was found on the home page. An example of the latter would be the inclusion of a direct link to the official site containing the legislation or regulations cited, saving users any further searching. Links were deemed to be direct for these purposes even if not denominated with the exact wording specified here if the labels were sufficiently descriptive of the content. Examples would be the words 'staff' or 'team' in links to the staff directory. Links were regarded as indirect when they opened the home page of the respective website that had then to then be searched to locate the information. Here an example would be links to REBIUN statistics cited by some libraries, where users must enter the name of the library at issue to retrieve the data. Another would be link labels that do not refer explicitly to their content, as when staff directories are buried in links to a library's various locations. Where information or documents were accessible via more than one pathway, the library was scored on the grounds of the one most favourable to its final assessment.

Reusability. Only two scores were defined, 0 or 10, with no intermediate values dependent upon ease of reuse, given the wide range of constantly evolving opinions and weighting scales put forward in that regard since the Berners-Lee (2006) proposal was first published. A score of 10 was awarded for structured formats (XLS, CSV, XML) whose use requires no extra techniques or

JLIS.it

effort. Acrobat PDF was not deemed reusable in light of the criticism levelled at the format in connection with transparency (García-Melián 2014), despite its extensive use on the Datos.gob.es site, the platform that organises and handles Spain's national catalogue of open data. Although PDF was deemed a valid format for public disclosure, its inconvenient editing constitutes an obstacle to reuse. As Camacho (2016) noted, 'PDFs should be furnished in conjunction with reusable formats: XML, CSV, XLS, DOC…'.

This parameter might well be thought to be applicable only to the indicators adopting the form of quantitative data, such as statistics. Given, however, the reuse that might be made of any of a library's documents and bearing in mind that some (strategic plans, citizen charters, reports, policy statements) are the object of analysis, reusability was analysed in all.

Accessibility. This parameter was measured as the number of clicks required to reach information on the indicator. The values ranged from 10 (for three clicks or fewer) to 0 (for more than 12) and proportionally in between.

Dating. This parameter assumes that all information and documents published should be dated to enable citizens to position them in time. Where a date was provided the score awarded was 5 and 0 otherwise.

Updating/validity. Although the cut-off year defined for valid updates was 2019, this parameter was not deemed applicable to all the available information, for not all the indicators proposed, such as user charters or strategic plans, need to be updated yearly. In such cases the expiration date of the document was the grounds for verifying whether it was in effect. A score of 10 was awarded where the information was up-to-date and 0 otherwise. Some types of information, regulations for instance, do not require yearly updates. As that is something the present authors could not determine, however, the year 2019 was adopted for all indicators bearing no specific expiration date. If the information was updated in 2019 or later, the score was 10 and 0 otherwise.

TransPa_BA is a tool designed for use by library and archive managers seeking to improve their institutions' transparency. The respective software will be available to them on https//www.uc3m.es/investigacion/transpa_ba. Although on this occasion sites were assessed by the authors, i.e., third parties, such assessments should ideally be conducted in-house, for only then can the accuracy of the valuation of certain parameters, such as validity, be ensured. Library staffers and they alone know whether a given type of information must be amended and consequently whether it merits the maximum score even though it may not have expired. Third parties, unaware of such circumstances, might well underestimate a library's transparency rating.

3. Results

The fieldwork itself, consisting in an exhaustive review of each and every one of the 50 libraries' websites to locate the aforementioned indicators and subsequent entry of the data gathered with TransPa_BA, revealed searching to be an arduous task, for transparency information and data were scattered across scores of links.

JLIS.it

The results for the parameters addressed are discussed below in the following order: location, content, form, reusability, accessibility, dating and updating/validity.

3.1. Location

Scattered information was characteristic of most of the libraries. Only one, UNIZAR, grouped all the indicators on a single site devoted to transparency. The UPCT library site's link labelled 'Quality and Transparency' carried some of the indicators. Since the UNED library had dispensed with its former transparency site (Rey Martín et al. 2020, 243), some documents were more difficult to locate. In all cases with the sole exception of UNIZAR, then, indicators and parameters had to be located starting from each library's home page. That in turn meant transparency-related information had to be sought by opening a succession of links, not a particularly user-friendly procedure. Normally all indicators should be listed under a single tab, similarly termed in all institutions. The tabs most frequently used for the present purposes included 'About us', 'About the library' or 'The Library'. Transparency indicators were normally grouped under other names such as Regulations, Strategy and Quality, Quality Management, Library Documents, Planning and Quality, Management and Organisation, Quality, Publications, Documents on Quality or Planning. Others bore scantly explicit descriptions of the content. The heading 'Participate' found on the UCM library site included surveys, regulations, annual reports, indicators and statistics. The UJAEN library's site carried similar information under 'Communication/Participation'. As a rule, the labels denoted the relationship between transparency and quality. Further to LTAIPBG, Arts 6, 7 and 8, all that information could be suitably grouped under a link or tab titled 'Transparency', irrespective of whether the documents at issue can be accessed from other pages where deemed appropriate. Some libraries, the UAH's and the UJAEN's among others, while lacking a page specifically devoted to transparency, clustered many of the respective links under a single heading, a practice favouring the visibility as well as the accessibility of the information.

One prominent finding that merits comment with a view to possible improvements was that links to some of the indicators were so discreetly placed (either at the bottom of the library's page, against a dark background or in a very small font size) that they might go practically unnoticed.

Institutional open access policy was a type of information especially difficult to find in some libraries, for two reasons. Either the link bore the repository rather than the university name or it was displayed outside the suite of documents routinely grouped under the heading 'Regulations'. Some such policies were explained in the section carrying library guides or in the area reserved for the support afforded researchers. In others (UA, UCO and UGR), although the policy existed, it was not published on the library's site. The UA had no link labelled 'Policies' on the repository page. The UCO had a link titled 'Helvia Policies', alluding to the name of the repository, but none addressed open access, which was found rather on the RECOLECTA[3] site. The UGR library, like UPF's, carried no link to the policy on its own site, although one appeared when the repository page was searched. In 2019 a total of 32 libraries had policies in writing (Altuna Esteibar 2019, 1224), whereas the searches conducted for this study identified 29.

---

[3] https://www.recolecta.fecyt.es/sites/default/files/contenido/PoliticaAccesoAbiertoUCO.PDFThe

3.2. Content

A total of 604 documents or information items associated with the 21 transparency indicators were found for the university libraries taken as a whole. All the indicators were present in at least one library. The ones most frequently found were definition of mission, specific regulations on service provision and partnering networks, ask forces and commissions in which the libraries participated. Data on tenders, contracts and bidding were only provided by UNIZAR, and there only indirectly, in the form of a link to the university's portal on the matter, where tenders can be located by tendering unit. Information on the transparency of collection management was observed on only 13 of the 50 sites analysed (26 %). The UNICAN's and UdG's sites were identified as examples of good practice in that regard.

The frequency with which the 21 indicators were observed is listed in Table II.

INDICATOR	TOTAL (n = 604)	%
1.1 Definition of mission	46	92.00%
2.3 Specific regulations on service provision	46	92.00%
8.1 Partnering networks, task forces, commissions	46	92.00%
2.2 Regulations	45	90.00%
5.2 Staff directory	43	86.00%
3.1 User charter	40	80.00%
6.5 Statistics	39	78.00%
6.3 Annual report or report of activities	35	70.00%
7.1 Budget implemented	32	64.00%
4.2 Institutional open access policy	29	58.00%
6.2 User satisfaction surveys	28	56.00%
2.4 Code of ethics, values or good practice	27	54.00%
6.1 Management indicators (scoreboard)	25	50.00%
1.2 Strategic plan	24	48.00%
6.4 Distinctions, prizes, certifications	23	46.00%
5.1 Organisational chart	23	46.00%
8.2 Agreements	21	42.00%
4.1 Collection management policy or programme	13	26.00%
2.1 Identity of library's management board members	11	22.00%
7.3 Subsidies and assistance awarded	7	14.00%
7.2 Tenders, contracts and bidding	1	2.00%

Table II. Indicators located

Further to the data in the table, the areas best represented were 1 (Purpose of the service and objectives pursued) and 2 (Governing bodies and operating rules). The indicators least often addressed were 8 (Partnering/Cooperation) and 7 (Financial information), which when present con-

JLIS.it

sisted in mere brief descriptions of both the subsidies / assistance awarded and tenders, contracts and bidding.

Although no minimum content was defined for the indicators, wide inter-library differences were observed. One characteristic example was found in the type and form of the statistics provided: in tables with many types of data referring to different indicators (UCM); as a structured selection of the most indicative figures (UAB, UB); in an annex to the annual report (UAM); in statistical yearbooks (UPM); as infographics (UA, UNAVARRA); or as links redirecting users to REBIUN statistics (UPO, UC3M and others). Other libraries opted to use several of these alternatives. Such differences prompted the authors to consider the possibility of establishing quality criteria in a future version of TransPa_BA that would assign greater weight to most comprehensive indicators, or minimum content for an indicator to score. The strategic plan and annual report, which contain much of the information related to other indicators, would be cases in point. At the same time, however, enormous differences were observed in the content of those documents.

A comparison of the present findings on the existence of indicators to the results reported in the sole other paper identifying practically the same items, conducted in 2018 (Rey Martín et al. 2020), revealed a slight improvement in some. The indicators located more frequently now than then included: the definition of mission (35 to 46), collection management policy (9 to 13), staff directory (38 to 43), annual report (24 to 35), partnering/cooperation (37 to 46) and budget (24 to 32). That would attest to the beneficial effect of such studies, in a way analogous to the successive reports on university transparency conducted beginning in 2011 (Barrio and Cavanna 2012), which prompted yearly progress and a concomitant rise in the number of institutions awarded transparent status.

3.3. Form

This parameter was the most difficult to value since, with the aforementioned exception of UNIZAR, the academic libraries analysed had no transparency pages from which to launch assessment. It was therefore decided to score the presence of a specific link to each indicator as direct form. Although that approach deviated from the criteria applied by MESTA (AEVAL, CTBG 2016, 24), the method on which TransPa_BA drew for inspiration, it was adopted to distinguish the indicators accessed via a clearly visible link or section from those that had to be found by searching another page or document. The latter typically comprised indicators indirectly accessible by searching annual reports (agreements, subsidies, statistics, organisational charts and so on). In light of the findings, UNIZAR was awarded the highest score for it had a transparency portal of its own that included links to all the documents identified under each indicator.

A total of 436 could be accessed directly, defined to mean via a link that carried the user to the content sought. The remaining 168 indicators were indirectly accessible, i.e., called for further searching on a website containing the information or a document with which the user needed to be acquainted to be able to locate the indicator sought. By way of example: a user aware of the content of user charters and seeking the definition of mission would know it should be found there. Such a procedure can hardly be deemed transparent.

JLIS.it

3.4. Reusability

Libraries have not taken this parameter into account to provide access to this type of information. Although the possible use of such documents is unknown, the LTAIPBG (Ch. II, Art. 5.4) reads: 'the information subject to transparency obligations shall be published on the respective electronic portals or websites in a manner that is clear, structured and understandable for those concerned, and preferably in reusable formats'.

The most common formats found for indicators, by order of frequency of use, were: PDF (367) and HTML (208) and on rare occasions (just 11), both. Many of the pages on the UCA site could be converted to PDF. Neither format was deemed reusable, however, in light of the extra effort or knowledge of other techniques involved, as noted earlier.

Exceptionally, some indicators were found in reusable formats: CSV (3), XLS (7), DOC (8). The UVA's statistics, on a page similar to REBIUN's where data and indicators can be searched, could be downloaded in CSV format. The UCM's site allowed the reuse of data and indicators furnished in CSV. Libraries such as UC3M, UPO and UCA enabled access to statistics via a link to the REBIUN site where data on the library could be retrieved as XLS documents, albeit indirectly.

3.5. Accessibility

Although generally speaking indicators were readily accessible, with most (451) found in three clicks or less, in some cases it took six to nine to reach the information sought (107 required 9 clicks; 33, eight; 4, seven; and another 4, six). Failure to group all the information in the same place, such as a transparency page, translated into a larger number of steps needed to find documents, detracting from accessibility. The same effect, i.e., scoring lower in this parameter, was observed when documents such as the annual report were located in the institution's repository and consequently more clicks away from the library's home page.

In some cases (UA, UCA, UM) indicators existed but were not accessible to visitors. Clicking on the respective links carried users to the library's intranet where the information was only accessible to authorised users.

3.6. Dating

In all, 84.60 % of the indicators located were dated. Where (although exceptionally) documents such as library regulations were found with no date, even the date of approval by the competent authority, their validity could not be determined.

Some user charters were also observed to be un- or outdated, therefore constituting mere lists of services offered and commitments to users. That is not compliant with the legislation (Royal Decree 951/2005; España 2005) laying down the requirements to be met by such documents, which include their periodic updating to enhance transparency.

JLIS.it

3.7. Updating/Validity

Updates are due whenever changes are made, which is more or less continually. Surprisingly, some documents were found to have gone unamended for 20 years. That is the more amazing bearing in mind the vast change affecting Spanish university libraries that would entail document updating. Exemplary dating and continuous updating were found in the UAB's specific regulations on service provision, which begin with a list of the versions issued from 1996 to 2019, including the dates of the revisions and of their approval by the competent authority. The UAB adopted the same approach to its overall regulations. The UNAVARRA's user charter constituted another example in which the dates of all the respective revisions and updates were listed.

Based on the year, 2019, defined for this parameter to be deemed valid, 52.48 % of the documents were up-to-date, inasmuch as not all would need to be updated in the aforementioned year, as explained earlier.

Strategic plans and service charters would typically require updating. Of the 24 strategic plans located, 14 were observed to be valid, whilst 18 of the 40 user charters had not been updated. Analogous values were found for seals and certificates of quality: of the 23 certificates, seals or acknowledgements published online, 10 had not been renewed. Those findings attest to the relaxation of good practice in some cases.

3.8. Public disclosure transparency index

Libraries seeking greater transparency can use the TransPa_BA tool to rate their public disclosure performance on a 100-point scale and rank the institution from the standpoint of its transparency, based on the presence of the 21 indicators on its website and compliance in terms of the respective parameters. The assessment conducted here resulted in the list given in Table III. The values shown must be deemed approximate only, however, insofar as the present authors were not in an ideal position to evaluate parameters such as form (for UNIZAR was the sole library with a page or site specifically addressing transparency) or updating/validity (the year defined need not necessarily be applicable to some documents if no update was due in 2019, which is something people outside the organisation cannot know).

JLIS.it

UNIVERSTY	1.1 Definition of mission	1.2 Strategic plan	2.1 Identity management board members	2.2 Regulations	2.3 Specific regulations on service provision	2.4 Code of ethics, values or good practice	3.1 User charter	4.1 Collection management policy or programme	4.2 Institutional open access policy	5.1 Organisational chart	5.2 Staff directory	6.1 Management indicators (scoreboard)	6.2 User satisfaction surveys	6.3 Annual report or report of activities	6.4 Distinctions, prizes, certifications	6.5 Statistics	7.1 Budget implemented	7.2 Tenders, contracts and bidding	7.3 Subsides and assistance awarded	8.1 Partnering networks, task forces, commissions	8.2 Agreements	Total active public disclosure	
UNIZAR	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	68.97	T
UB	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•	66.40	R
US	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•		•	•	•	64.69	A
UNICAN	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	64.62	N
UAB	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	62.22	S
UVA	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•	•	61.05	P
UdG	•	•		•	•		•	•	•		•		•	•		•	•		•	•	•	59.37	A
UAH	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•		•	•	•		•	•		57.43	R
UGR	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•		56.60	E
UdL	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•		55.56	N
ULPGC	•		•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•		55.51	T
UNEX	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•			•	•	53.61	
UNIRIOJA	•	•		•	•		•	•		•	•	•	•	•		•	•			•	•	52.94	
UPC	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•			•		52.34	
UIB	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•					•	•	52.12	
UV	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•		•	•				•		50.70	
UMA	•	•			•	•	•		•	•	•		•		•	•	•			•	•	48.56	T
UA	•			•	•		•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	48.18	R
UM	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•				•	•	•			•		47.24	A
UCLM	•		•	•	•		•			•	•		•	•	•	•	•			•	•	44.88	N
UNED	•	•		•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•				•		44.81	S
UHU	•			•	•		•		•		•		•	•	•	•				•	•	44.17	L
UNAVARRA	•			•	•	•	•		•		•	•	•	•	•	•				•		43.78	U
UJAEN	•		•	•	•	•	•	•			•		•	•	•	•	•			•		43.41	C
UAL	•			•	•		•			•	•	•	•	•	•					•		41.86	E
UC3M	•	•		•	•		•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•				•	•	41.09	N
ULL	•	•		•	•	•	•			•	•		•	•		•				•		41.01	T
UCM	•	•		•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•				•	•	40.13	
USAL	•	•		•	•	•	•			•		•	•	•	•	•				•		38.95	
UJI	•			•			•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•	•	37.81	
UBU	•		•	•	•		•		•	•	•								•	•		37.65	
URV	•			•	•		•	•	•						•	•					•	37.12	
UNIOVI	•			•	•	•	•				•				•	•			•	•	34.28	
UPM	•				•		•		•		•	•	•		•	•				•		34.19	
UPF	•			•	•		•		•	•		•		•		•	•			•		34.02	
UPCT	•		•		•		•		•			•	•		•	•				•		33.87	
UCA	•			•	•	•	•		•		•			•		•				•		29.92	
UPO	•			•	•			•	•	•		•	•		•					•		29.00	
UAM	•	•		•	•	•						•	•	•	•	•				•		27.15	
UCO	•			•	•	•	•			•										•		25.54	
EHU	•			•	•		•		•		•									•		25.52	O
USC	•	•		•		•			•			•		•	•					•		25.28	P
UPV				•					•		•	•	•	•	•	•				•		24.66	A
UNILEÓN	•			•	•		•			•										•		21.48	Q
UMH	•		•	•	•					•			•			•				•		19.73	U
URJC				•	•			•		•										•		17.68	E
UVIGO				•	•		•								•					•		17.44	
UDC	•			•	•				•											•		16.05	
UNIA	•		•						•													8.74	
UIMP																						0.00	

Table III. Transparency of public disclosure in Spanish public universities

85

In all 30 libraries (60 %) had more than 11 of the 21 indicators defined, whilst just 16 (32 %) had scores of over 50, i.e., a passing mark in transparency. The inference is that merely ensuring the availability of information on the indicators (content) does not suffice. Rather, other factors must be considered, such as the form, accessibility, reusability, dating and validity of the information to comply with the MESTA transparency parameters assessed by TransPa_BA.

A library's score affords institutions an idea of the route they should follow to be more transparent, which would in some cases entail enhancing their practice, in others call for substantial improvement and in yet a third group mean embarking on that route as a new venture.

The libraries with the highest transparency rating were UNIZAR, UB, US, UNICAN, UAB and UVA, all of which had scores of over 60. They were followed in the 50-point range by: UdG, UAH, UGR, UdL, ULPGC, UNEX, UNIRIOJA, UPC, UIB and UV.

Further to the consolidated methodology deployed in reviews of university transparency conducted by institutions such as the Fundación Compromiso y Transparencia (Barrio, Cavana and Martínez 2019), libraries could be grouped here on the grounds of their transparency rating as transparent, translucent or opaque. The first group would comprise those scoring 50 points or higher (websites with 12 to 21 indicators), the second those with >30 and <50 points (9 to 16 indicators) and the third those with <30 (0 to 11 indicators). Although some of the translucent institutions exhibited the same or a larger number of indicators than some of the ones deemed transparent, the parameters identified for the former lay below the threshold set for the respective indicator to score. That reinforces the importance of taking into account not only the presence of indicators but the values of the associated parameters as well.

4. Good practice

The TransPa_BA-mediated search and analysis of indicators revealed a number of good practices that might be deemed benchmarks for libraries seeking to institute transparency. Given the limitations to the length of this paper just a few of the most relevant were chosen as examples.

- Very comprehensive and up-to date **annual reports**, one of the most complete indicators given the information they contain on library results (Pacios and Serna 2020), were located for UAB, UAH, UNIZAR, UPC, US, UVA.
- Good examples of **strategic plans**, documents that describe the library's projected course and priorities in a given period of time, were found for UAB, UAH, UB, UdG, UGR, UNED, UNEX, UNIZAR, UPC, US, UVA and UV.
- **Staff directories** aim to provide users with a tool to identify and contact the managers responsible for library services. Close contact and transparency are guaranteed if personal data are given to identify the staff associated with the organisation, operation or public activity engaged in. As Blanes (2019) contended, 'personal data protection legislation does not rule out disclosure where required to exercise the right of access to public information', although such protective legislation may exceptionally prevail under the circumstances legitimised by the LTAIPBG, Art. 15.2 (España 2013). Staff directories containing staffers' professional status, speciality and photographs in addition to the contact information, such as in UNICAN and UPC, are especially user-friendly.

JLIS.it

- **Comprehensive scorecards** are very useful tools for libraries for they 'can be used to disseminate the strategy defined, enabling both library staff and the community of users served by the institution to visualise its constituent items' (Malo de Molina 2013, 53), all to the benefit of good library governance (De la Mano and Creaser 2014). Only a few examples were found, however, specifically for UJAEN, UNIZAR and UPF (in keeping with UPF culture the library no longer uses that denomination, but continues to use the tool, having been the Spanish university library that pioneered its implementation).

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The overview afforded by the public disclosure rating for university libraries aims to provide them with insight into their transparency status and on those grounds decide whether to enhance it by furnishing their stakeholders with data they lack or enable them to access such data more readily and establish the parameters they should comprise.

The findings on the transparency indicators used by university libraries proved most to be committed to the principle, even though the obligation is incumbent on their parent institutions. As noted, that attitude is not new, but rather has been in place since libraries began to use their websites to show what they do and how and to ratify their commitment to the university to which they are accountable. Even taking into account the differences in types of institutions, academic libraries engage more deeply in highlighting their transparency than other information units such as public libraries (Pacios, García López and Morales García 2021) or historic archives (Pacios, Martínez Cárdama and Moro Cavero 2021).

The upward pattern found for some of the indicators over time would denote the favourable effect of analyses such as this, that advocate for more transparent institutions and services. The good practices identified in connection with many of the indicators attest further to the progress underway.

One recommendation institutions might bear in mind when disclosing transparency-related information is to also provide the necessary data on the associated parameters. Merely ensuring the availability of information on indicators (content), as many libraries tend to do, does not suffice. Rather, their constituent parameters (form, accessibility, reusability, dating and updating/validity) must be taken into account to comply with transparency standards. When a library's website is searched for indicators, the access pathway should also be assessed and the items possibly relocated for grouping under a single link which should in all propriety be labelled 'Transparency'.

Some libraries have earnestly instituted transparency measures whilst others have ample room for improvement in that regard. Providing effective and transparent services is a challenge in keeping with Agenda 2030 sustainable development goal 16 (IFLA 2020) to which many organisations such as universities aspire and to whose fulfilment libraries can contribute.

Acknowledgements

JLIS.it

References

Agencia de Evaluación de las Políticas Públicas y de la Calidad de los Servicios (AEVAL) and Consejo de Transparencia y Buen Gobierno (CTBG). 2016. *Metodología de Evaluación y Seguimiento de la Transparencia de la actividad Pública (MESTA).* Madrid: Ministerio de Hacienda y Función Pública, accessed June 5, 2021, http://www.aeval.es/export/sites/aeval/comun/PDF/evaluaciones/E42-2016.PDF.

ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee. 2010. "2010 top ten trends in academic libraries: A review of the current literature". *College & Research Libraries*, 71(6): 286-292, accessed June 7, 2021, https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/view/8385/8558.

Álvarez Álvarez, María Antonia and Suárez Samaniego, Marta. 1999. "Las páginas web de las bibliotecas universitarias andaluzas". In *Les biblioteques i els centres de documentació al segle XXI: peça clau de la societat de la información*, 289-304. Barcelona: Collegi Oficial de Bibliotecaris-Documentalistes de Catalunya, accessed July 6, 2021, http://www.cobdc.org/jornades/7JCD/5.PDF.

Altuna Esteibar, Belén. 2019. "La Biblioteca de la Universidad Pública de Navarra, hoy". *Príncipe de Viana*, 275: 1213-1228.

Barrio, Esther and Cavanna, Javier Martin. 2012. *Examen de transparencia. Informe de transparencia voluntaria en la web de las universidades españolas.* Madrid: Fundación Compromiso y Transparencia, accessed June 10, 2021, https://www.compromisoempresarial.com/wp-content/uploads/Universidades2012.PDF.

Barrio, Esther; Javier Martín Cavanna and Pablo Martínez. 2019. *Examen de transparencia 2018. Informe de transparencia voluntaria en la web de las universidades españolas.* Madrid: Fundación Compromiso y Transparencia, accessed July 12, 2021, https://www.compromisoytransparencia.com/informes/examen-de-transparencia-2018-informe-de-transparencia-voluntaria-en-la-web-de-las-universidades-espanolas.

Berners Lee, T. 2006. *Linked Data*, accessed June 25, 2021, https://www.w3.org/DesignIssues/LinkedData.HTML.

Blanes, Miguel Ángel. 2019. "El nombre y apellidos de los empleados públicos solo puede ser restringido en casos excepcionales". *Blog de Transparencia y Gobierno Abierto*, accessed June 15, 2021, https://miguelangelblanes.com/2019/10/24/el-nombre-y-apellidos-de-los-empleados-publicos-solo-puede-ser-restringido-en-casos-excepcionales/.

Camacho, Rafa. 2016. *Del derecho a saber al derecho a conocer. Supervillanos del acceso a la información pública: PDF-man*, accessed July 12, 2021, https://mymabogados.com/PDF-transparencia.

Carmena Escribano, Miguel Ángel. 1993. "Tomar decisiones en una biblioteca. Algunas sugerencias sobre las posibles pautas a seguir en la elaboración de memorias – informes". *Boletín de la Asociación Andaluza de Bibliotecarios*, 9(33): 25-40.

De La Mano, Marta and Claire Creaser. 2016. "The impact of the Balanced Scorecard in libraries: From performance measurement to strategic management". *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 48(2): 191-208. Doi:10.1177/0961000614558078

JLIS.it

España. 2013. *Ley 19/2013, de 9 de diciembre, de Transparencia, Acceso a la Información Pública y Buen Gobierno.* BOE. 295 (10-12-2013) 97922-97952, accessed June 14, 2021 https://www.boe.es/buscar/PDF/2013/BOE-A-2013-12887-consolidado.PDF.

España. 2015. *Ley 18/2015, de 9 de julio, por la que se modifica la Ley 37/2007, de 16 de noviembre, sobre reutilización de la información del sector público.* BOE. 164 (10-06-2015) 57436-57450, accessed July 1, 2021, https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2015/07/09/18.

España. 2005. *Real Decreto 951/2005, de 29 de julio, por el que se establece el marco general para la mejora de la calidad en la Administración General del Estado.* BOE. 211 (11-09-2005) 30204-30211, accessed June 11, 2021, https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2005-14836.

García Melián, Juan Carlos. 2014. "La transparencia y el PDF". *Acreditra*, accessed April 12, 2021, https://acreditra.com/2014/10/19/la-transparencia-y-el-PDF/.

Harrigan, Joan. 1971. *Library accountability.* Paper presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of Librarianship. Denver: University of Denver, accessed August 7, 2021, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED060851.PDF.

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). 2020. *Libraries, Development and the United Nations 2030 Agenda*, accessed June 12, 2021, https://www.ifla.org/libraries-development.

IUNE. 2018. *List of acronyms of Spanish universities*, accessed June 12, 2021, http://www.iune.es/es_ES/glosario/listado-universidades.

Malo de Molina, Teresa. 2013. "El Cuadro de Mando Integral, una herramienta para visualizar la estrategia en la biblioteca". En *XII Jornadas Españolas de Documentación FESABID13* (24-25 de mayo de 2013), accessed June 23, 2021, http://fesabid.org/documentos/fesabid13-actas.PDF.

Osman, Zaiton and Sharipah Hanon Bidin. 2004. "Accountability In Library Management: Issues & Strategies For The 21st Century". *Kekal Abadi*, 23(1): 1-14, accessed June 4, 2021, http://rizal.lib.admu.edu.ph/rlconflibmgt/PDF/zaiton.PDF.

Pacios, Ana R. 2003. "Management-related information on Spanish university library Web pages". *The Electronic Library*, 21(6):528-537. Doi: 10.1108/02640470310509081

Pacios, Ana R. 2016. "Universidades transparentes con bibliotecas transparentes". *Revista de Investigación Bibliotecológica*, 70 (4):105-128.

Pacios, Ana R. and Paz Fernández Fernández-Cuesta. 2019. "Publicación de los valores de las bibliotecas universitarias españolas a través de sus sedes web". *Profesional de la Información*, 28(5), accessed July 8, 2021, https://revista.profesionaldelainformacion.com/index.php/EPI/article/view/77379.

Pacios, Ana R. and Nacho Serna. 2020. "The annual report, indicator of library transparency". *International Information & Library Review,* 52 (4): 253-262. Doi: 10.1080/10572317.2020.1728176.

Pacios, Ana R.; Marina Vianello and Marta de la Mano. 2020. "TransPa_BA, a tool for improving active disclosure of library and archive information". *Ibersid*, 14(2): 57-66.

JLIS.it

Pacios, Ana R.; Fátima García López, F. and Ana M. Morales García. 2021. "Assessment of transparency in national public libraries". *Métodos de Información*, 12(22): 58-85, accessed November 9, 2021, https://www.metodosdeinformacion.es/mei/index.php/mei/article/view/917/1026.

Pacios, Ana R.; Sara Martínez Cárdama and Manoli Moro Cabero. 2021. "Evaluación de la transparencia en los archivos históricos provinciales". *Anales de Documentación,* 24(2). Doi: 10.6018/analesdoc.479881.

Rey Martín, Carina; Concepción Rodríguez Parada and Luis Enric Camón. 2019. "The transparency of CSUC member university libraries". *Library Management*, 40(8/9): 558-569. Doi: 10.1108/LM-02-2018-0008.

Rey Martín, Carina; Concepción Rodríguez Parada; Ana R. Pacios; Blanca Rodríguez Bravo and Marina Vianello. 2020. "Transparency in the management of spanish public university libraries through the internet". *Libri*, 70(3). Doi: 10.1515/libri-2019-0051.

JLIS.it

Annex. URLs for the university library websites assessed

Acronym	University	URL web
EHU	Universidad del País Vasco	https://www.ehu.eus/es/web/biblioteka
UA	Universidad de Alicante	https://biblioteca.ua.es/
UAB	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona	https://www.uab.cat/bibliotecas/
UAH	Universidad de Alcalá de Henares	https://biblioteca.uah.es/
UAL	Universidad de Almería	http://cms.ual.es/ual/universidad/serviciosgenerales/biblioteca/index.htm
UAM	Universidad Autónoma de Madrid	https://www.uam.es/uam/vida-uam/bibliotecas
UB	Universitat de Barcelona	https://crai.ub.edu/es
UBU	Universidad de Burgos	https://www.ubu.es/biblioteca
UC3M	Universidad Carlos III de Madrid	https://www.uc3m.es/biblioteca/inicio
UCA	Universidad de Cádiz	https://biblioteca.uca.es/
UCLM	Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha	https://www.biblioteca.uclm.es/
UCM	Universidad Complutense de Madrid	https://biblioteca.ucm.es/
UCO	Universidad de Córdoba	http://www.uco.es/servicios/biblioteca/
UDC	Universidad de A Coruña	https://www.udc.es/es/biblioteca/?language=es
UdG	Universitat de Girona	https://biblioteca.udg.edu/es
UdL	Universitat de Lleida	http://bid.udl.cat/ca/
UGR	Universidad de Granada	https://biblioteca.ugr.es/
UHU	Universidad de Huelva	http://www.uhu.es/biblioteca/
UIB	Universidad de las Illes Balears	https://biblioteca.uib.cat/
UIMP	Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo	http://biblioteca.uimp.es/
UJAEN	Universidad de Jaén	https://www.ujaen.es/servicios/biblio/
UJI	Universitat Jaume I de Castelló	https://www.uji.es/serveis/cd/
ULL	Universidad de La Laguna	https://www.ull.es/servicios/biblioteca/
ULPGC	Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	https://biblioteca.ulpgc.es/
UM	Universidad de Murcia	https://www.um.es/web/biblioteca/
UMA	Universidad de Málaga	https://www.uma.es/ficha.php?id=62379&
UMH	Universidad Miguel Hernández de Elche	https://biblioteca.umh.es/
UNAVARRA	Universidad Pública de Navarra	http://www.unavarra.es/biblioteca
UNED	Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia	https://www.uned.es/universidad/biblioteca.html
UNEX	Universidad de Extremadura	https://biblioteca.unex.es/
UNIA	Universidad Internacional de Andalucía	https://www.unia.es/biblioteca-y-publicaciones
UNICAN	Universidad de Cantabria	https://web.unican.es/buc/
UNILEÓN	Universidad de León	https://biblioteca.unileon.es/
UNIOVI	Universidad de Oviedo	https://buo.uniovi.es/
UNIRIOJA	Universidad de La Rioja	https://biblioteca.unirioja.es/
UNIZAR	Universidad de Zaragoza	http://biblioteca.unizar.es/
UPC	Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya	https://bibliotecnica.upc.edu/
UPCT	Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena	https://www.bib.upct.es/
UPF	Universitat Pompeu Fabra	https://www.upf.edu/web/biblioteca-informatica/
UPM	Universidad Politécnica de Madrid	http://www.upm.es/UPM/Biblioteca
UPO	Universidad Pablo de Olavide	https://www.upo.es/biblioteca/
UPV	Universidad Politécnica de Valencia	http://www.upv.es/entidades/ABDC/indexc.html
URJC	Universidad Rey Juan Carlos	https://www.urjc.es/estudiar-en-la-urjc/biblioteca
URV	Universitat Rovira i Virgili	https://www.crai.urv.cat/ca/
US	Universidad de Sevilla	https://bib.us.es/
USAL	Universidad de Salamanca	https://bibliotecas.usal.es/
USC	Universidad de Santiago de Compostela	https://www.usc.gal/gl/servizos/biblioteca/
UV	Universidad de Valencia	https://www.uv.es/uvweb/servei-biblioteques-documentacio/ca/servei-biblioteques-documentacio-1285867215074.html
UVA	Universidad de Valladolid	https://biblioteca.uva.es/export/sites/biblioteca/
UVIGO	Universidad de Vigo	https://www.uvigo.gal/universidade/biblioteca