

Universal Bibliographic Control at the crossroads: the challenges of unifying IFLA bibliographic standards

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Nélida Piñon Personal Collection: cataloguing documents from the Nélida Piñon Library at Instituto Cervantes Rio de Janeiro: a case study

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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is discussing some aspects of the cataloguing process of the documents from the personal collection of the writer Nélida Piñon, which was donated to the library of the Cervantes Institute in Rio de Janeiro. This collection gathers around 8,000 documents from the Humanities area and they are in several languages. Many works have dedications and origin marks, among other characteristics. The Nélida Piñon Library is part of the Cervantes Institute Libraries Network - RBIC - which has a collection development policy as well as a cataloguing and document classification system, defined for the network collective catalogue. To meet this need, a cataloguing project was developed and is being carried out under the consultancy of the Art Libraries and Information Centres Network of the State of Rio de Janeiro - REDARTE/RJ. Taking into consideration that RBIC is a network of Spanish libraries, a profile of the cataloguer's competencies was established in order to perform the descriptive representation of the personal collection of Nélida Piñon to meet the RBIC procedures, such as good knowledge of the Spanish language and culture, knowledge of other languages (English, French, German, Italian, Galician, Catalan), experience with UDC, RDA, MARC21, ISBD. However, during the realization of the project, it was observed that this personal collection presents particularities that require a more detailed descriptive representation so that the informational richness of each document is reflected in the cataloguing file and consequently in the collective catalogue. This fact led the cataloguing team to search in the specialized literature the rules and standards of descriptive and thematic representation that could meet these peculiarities of the collection. It was realised that for the technical processing of special collections, the skills of the cataloguer are fundamental and are reflected in the quality of the catalogue: a good descriptive representation allows users to access the information they are seeking. To this end, the list of competencies of the Special Libraries Association (SLA) and of the European Council of Information Associations (ECIA) was consulted to identify a series of requirements necessary for the cataloguer who works with special collections. It is observed that librarians who will carry out the cataloguing process, in addition to their

academic training, need to develop competencies to work with special collections. The cataloguer must have a general culture, know how to read and analyse a document, that is, know how to verify the data needed to transcribe and describe a document. It is believed that the professional cataloguer needs to remain in constant learning, to be updated on innovations in the area of cataloguing, to be familiar with standards, policies and different methods of cataloguing and descriptive representation. This is an experience report with a qualitative focus on the development of special collections.

Keywords: Personal libraries; Personal collections; Nélida Piñon; Information competencies; Information professional.

Introduction

Personal collections usually bring together a variety of items of different natures (bibliographic, archival, iconographic, museological) derived from a person's literary, artistic, scientific, social, or cultural activities. They constitute a set of elements that bear witness to their personal and professional trajectory, their influences in their social context, as well as socio-cultural and historical characteristics of the society to which they belong. According to Lacerda (2017)

There are important sources of research and represent an inexhaustible range of bibliographic research of scientific, literary, cultural and artistic interest, each one covering a universe of the particular knowledge of its holder, according to the intellectual or artistic interest of the owner. These libraries aggregate diverse materials, kept throughout a lifetime, objects beyond books (bibliographic materials), personal objects that represent not only the individual experience, but of the social group in which he/she, the owner, is or was inserted. (LACERDA, 2017).

In recent decades, the incorporation of writers' libraries into public and state library collections has occurred very frequently. This is not a recent practice: in the 18th century, Catherine II, Empress of Russia, acquired Voltaire's personal library, which is now in St Petersburg, within the collection of the Russian National Library. The French writer Victor Hugo donated in his will (1881) all his writings and drawings to the National Library of France. In relation to this movement, Krtalic, Dinneen, Liew, Goulding consider that:

People of cultural significance sometimes keep extensive personal collections that attest to their life's work and their influence on society and even capture the social and political milieu of their time. Sometimes such collections are donated to organizations that preserve and make those 150 library trends/fall 2021 collections accessible to others, like national memory or heritage institutions (KRTALIC, DINNEEN; LIEW; GOULDING, 2021, p. 148-149).

The donation of the personal library of the Galician-Brazilian writer Nélida Piñon to Cervantes Institute in Rio de Janeiro can be considered an example of the comments of the above authors. This collection attests not only to the writer's personal and literary life but also to the social and cultural universe in which she was inserted. It is the responsibility of Cervantes Institute to preserve this legacy and spread the memory of Nélida Piñon through her personal collection. In this sense, the work of the cataloguer is fundamental to capture the information that singularises and makes each document a historical artefact, an object of study for researchers from different areas of knowledge.

In 2020, the Cervantes Institute honours one of the world's greatest contemporary Portuguese-language writers, Nélida Piñon, by naming the library of Cervantes Institute in Rio de Janeiro the Nélida Piñon Library, inaugurated on June 20th 2022. In recognition of this gesture, Nélida Piñon donated her personal library to the institution, which is currently in the process of cataloguing.

This collection comprises around 8,000 documents, as well as art objects, and has a variety of characteristics that make it unique, such as handwritten dedications and provenance marks. These aspects, besides enriching the catalogue, require a detailed descriptive representation of each document. This article aims to present and discuss some of these characteristics of the cataloguing process of Nélida's personal collection that requires a cataloguer's skillfull profile to deal with personal collections, as it will be seen throughout this work.

The Red de Bibliotecas del Instituto Cervantes – RBIC

Founded in 1991 by the Government of Spain, the Cervantes Institute has the mission to promote and disseminate the Spanish language and the Hispanic--American culture throughout the world (Law 7/1991 of 21 March 1991). One of the foundations for achieving this mission is the Cervantes Institute Library Network (RBIC), the largest international network of Spanish libraries in the world (60 libraries spread across five continents). RBIC is part of the Spanish Library System and falls under the legislation of the state libraries. One of its information units in Brazil is in the library of Cervantes Institute in Rio de Janeiro.

Nélida Piñon Library

Opened to the public in 2004, the library has become a reference for all those interested in languages, literatures and cultures of the Hispanic world. Its collection brings together more than 30,000 documents to meet the information needs of researchers, Hispanists, academics, students of Spanish and those interested in Hispanic cultures.

RBIC libraries are named after a representative writer of Spanish or Hispanic-American literature. Unlike the others, the library of Cervantes Institute in Rio de Janeiro is the only one in the network to bear the name of a Portuguese-speaking author: Nélida Piñon.

An exponent of Brazilian and universal literature, and also internationally recognised, Nélida Piñon (1937-2022) was the first woman to chair the Brazilian Academy of Letters (1996). She was honoured with numerous international awards, including the Menéndez Pelayo 2003 and the Príncipe de Asturias 2005. In 2012, she was appointed Ibero-American Ambassador for Culture, which reveals the solid presence of this writer in the Ibero-American context.

The Personal Collection Nélida Piñon

Nélida Piñon's personal library is a legacy that brings together facets of the writer that bear witness to her experience in different spheres (personal, professional, historical, literary, cultural and social). It also testifies to Nélida Piñon's relationships and connections with the Ibero-American universe during the 20th and 21st centuries.

Considering these aspects, the Department of Libraries and Documentation of Cervantes Institute established the guidelines for the reception, incorporation and technical processing of this collection, thus defining the Cataloguing Project.

Due to the legal and diplomatic nature of Cervantes Institute, it was necessary to comply with some legal administrative procedures such as:

- a) Identification of companies specialised in collections cataloguing;
- b) Request for quotation according to the criteria established by the Department of Libraries and Documentation of the Cervantes Institute;
- c) Analysis and selection of the company qualified to manage the project.

The contracted company, in this case the Rede de Bibliotecas e Centros de Documentação em Informação em Arte no Estado do Rio de Janeiro (REDARTE/RJ) [Network of Libraries and Documentation Centres for Art Information in the State of Rio de Janeiro], was responsible for the selection of information professionals (librarians) specialised in personal collections. In order to meet the needs of the Nélida Piñon Library Cataloguing Project, the professional profile determined by RBIC established the following requirements:

- a) Knowledge of the Spanish library management system AbsysNet;
- b) Fluency in Spanish
- c) Knowledge of other languages (English, French, German, Galician, Catalan and Basque, among others);
- d) Experience in cataloguing (ISBD, MARC21 and RDA)
- e) Experience in classification (UDC);
- f) General knowledge of Hispanic and universal culture and literature.

Considering the linguistic and technical specificities of the system (Cataloguing in Spanish, AbsysNet, UDC, ISBD, MARC21 and RDA) and the fact that it is a personal collection, a one-week training course was organised for the team to get to know and adapt to the nature of the collection and the system. Because of these essential characteristics to meet the RBIC cataloguing standard and given the specificities of Nélida Piñon's personal collection, the need to adapt the descriptive representation of this special collection to the standardisation established by RBIC was verified during the initial phase of the project, in order to ensure the informational reliability of each document.

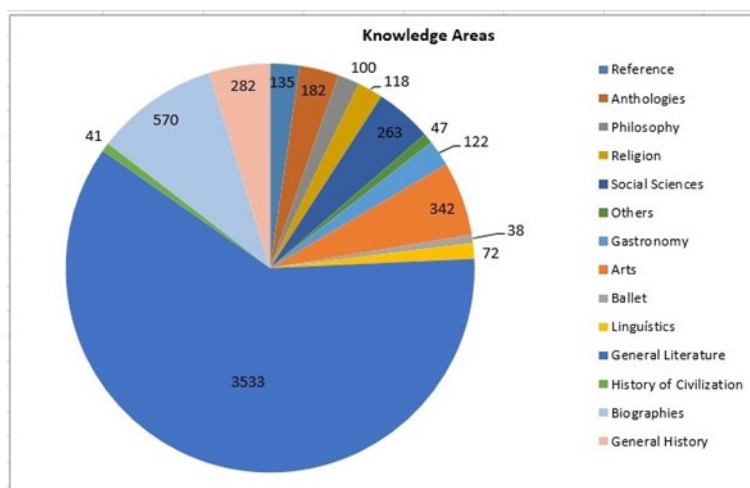
However, it was also observed that this personal collection presents particularities that require a more detailed descriptive representation so that the informational richness of each document is reflected in the cataloguing form and, consequently, in the collective catalogue.

Some of these particularities are presented below. The data shown are partial, as the Cataloguing Project is ongoing.

1) Diversity of knowledge areas and fields

It is often expected that a writer's personal library contains only works of literature. Nélida Piñon's, on the contrary, shows the author's different interests by bringing together a diversity of themes and subjects from almost all areas of knowledge, as can be seen in Graphic 1.

Graphic 1 – Knowledge Areas

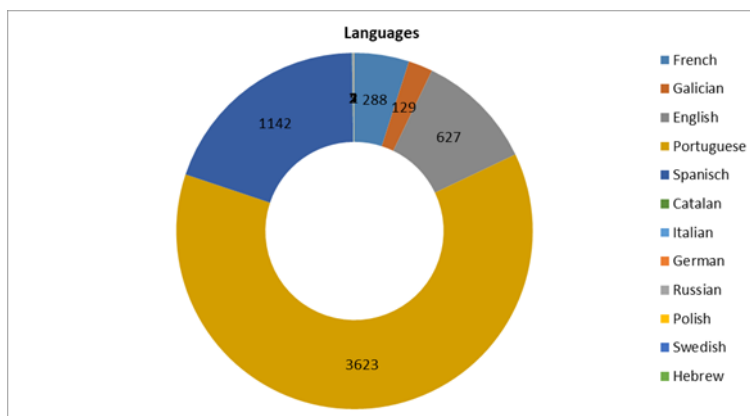


Source: From the authors

2) Language diversity

The collection contains works, as well as handwritten dedications, in several languages. This reveals Nélide Piñon's linguistic knowledge, as well as the reception of her literary work in the various countries where it was translated (Galician, Catalan, Spanish, French, English, Italian, Polish, Russian), as shown in Graphic 2.

Graphic 2 – Languages

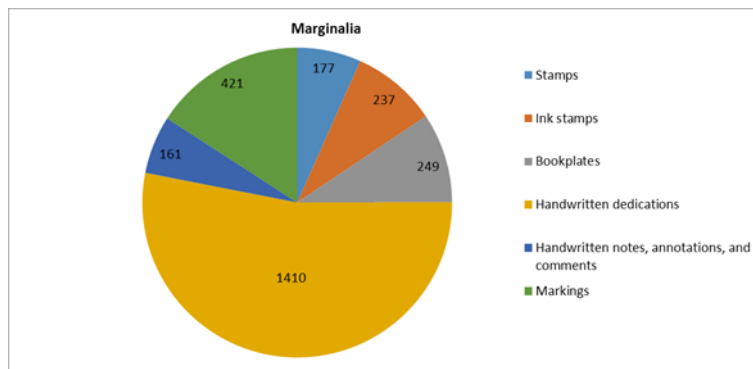


Source: From the authors

3) Marginalia

Much of the collection contains notes, annotations, comments and markings in the author's own handwriting, dedications and handwritten signatures, as well as marks of provenance: stamps, seals, bookplates, etc. as shown in Graphic 3.

Graphic 3 – Marginalia

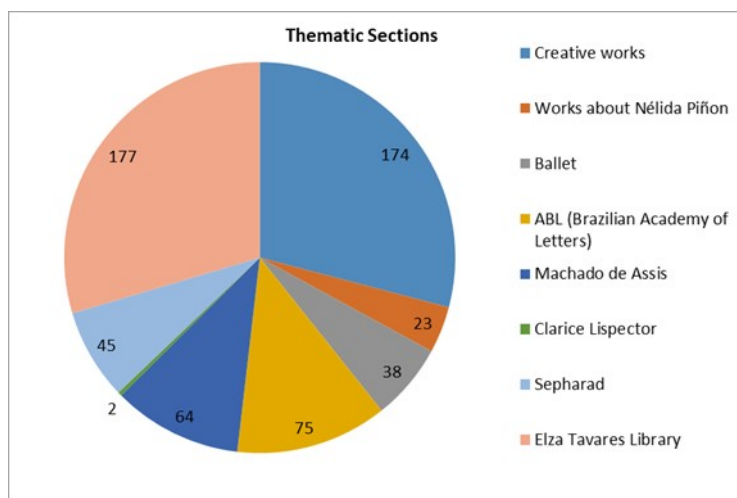


Source: From the authors

4) Thematic sections

Nélida Piñon requested the creation of the section "Galicia de Nélida" [Galicia of Nélida], which brings together all the works on Galician culture, language and literature. This led the cataloguing team to create other sections which themes are important for research into the work and life of Nélida Piñon, as shown in Graphic 4.

Graphic 4 – Thematic Sections



Source: From the authors

It is necessary to elucidate the composition and relevance of each thematic section:

Works by Nélida Piñon – gathers all the literary production of the author, as well as the translated works and those in which her name appears as collaborator and/or organiser.

Works on Nélida Piñon – contains secondary literature on the writings of Nélida Piñon. It also includes works in which quotations done by her, dedications printed to her, etc.

Ballet – Ballet was Nélida Piñon's second great passion after literature. This section is composed of works on Ballet, as well as the programmes of the seasons of the ballet companies at the Municipal Theatre of Rio de Janeiro, which the writer attended, collected and bound in four volumes, containing the programmes from 1948 to 1957. This section is unique in that it

contains the first Spanish translations of works on ballet published in Argentina, as well as including important 20th-century critics of this art and handwritten autographs of great ballerinas such as Tamara Toumanova, Tatiana Leskova and Margot Fonteyn.

ABL – Brazilian Academy of Letters – This section aggregates the publications of the Brazilian Academy of Letters of which Nélida Piñon was the first woman to preside.

Machado de Assis – It brings together works by and about Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, founder of the Brazilian Academy of Letters and Nélida Piñon's favourite author and reference.

Clarice Lispector – Composed of works with handwritten dedications from Nélida Piñon's personal friend.

Sepharad – Dedicated to the Jewish culture that Nélida appreciated so much. Also includes literary works by Jewish Brazilian writers such as Clarice Lispector and Moacir Scliar.

Elza Tavares Library - This section contains works from the personal library of the lexicographer Elza Tavares, inherited by Nélida Piñon.

As described above, this diversity of the collection led the cataloguing team to search the specialised literature for rules and standards of descriptive and thematic representation that could meet these peculiarities of the collection, such as cataloguing rules (ISBD, AACR2, RAK, RDA), DCRM(B): Descriptive Cataloguing of Rare Materials (Books), and bibliographic data formats (MARC21, IBERMARC). This led to the preparation of a glossary of the particularities of the collection and the typological standardisation of the provenance marks on the cataloguing form.

The daily experience with Nélida Piñon's collection revealed a series of requirements that should be contemplated in the training of professionals working with personal collections. Searches were done in the literature for the skills needed to catalogue this type of collection, as well as exchanging experience and good practices with professionals in institutions that house personal collections.

The result of this search was two documents on the competencies of information professionals, drawn up by two reference associations in the field of information and libraries: the Special Libraries Association (SLA) and the European Council of Information Associations (ECIA), which are presented below.

SLA – Special Libraries Association

The Competencies for Information Professionals established by SLA describes the skills and knowledge that professionals of special libraries must have to be effective in their role of meeting the information needs of their users and contributing to the success of their organisations. The document discusses six core competencies: 1) Information and knowledge services; 2) Information and knowledge systems and technologies; 3) Information and knowledge resources; 4) Information and data retrieval and analysis; 5) Organisation of data, information and knowledge assets; 6) Information ethics. In addition to these, the text mentions the main enabling competencies of the information professional, such as critical thinking, continuous learning, business ethics or project management, among others. Table 1 below shows the competencies recommended by the SLA.

Table 1 – SLA Competencies

Competencies for Information Professionals	Elements of this competency include:
1: Information and Knowledge Services	<p>Recognizing and articulating information and knowledge needs;</p> <p>Analyzing information and knowledge flows relevant to the context of community characteristics and organizational goals;</p> <p>Enabling the sharing of knowledge through interpersonal contacts and relationships as well as by using digital or electronic systems and processes;</p> <p>Prioritizing information services to meet the organization's most critical operational or strategic needs;</p> <p>Advocating for the effective use and management of information systems and processes;</p> <p>Teaching, training, and developing information literacy and associated skills for stakeholders;</p> <p>Using information management skills to learn about a domain, discipline or industry;</p> <p>Applying subject domain knowledge to the work environment to support the organizational mission; and</p> <p>Understanding the varied aspects of human information behavior.</p>
2: Information and Knowledge Systems and Technology	<p>Engaging multiple stakeholders to recommend the information architecture needed by the entire organization;</p> <p>Selecting and implementing information and knowledge systems;</p> <p>Selecting and using information management tools, such as library management systems, content management systems, social media platforms, and information retrieval and analysis tools</p> <p>Identifying systems and tools to meet requirements of specific communities;</p> <p>Designing interfaces for an intuitive user experience;</p> <p>Coding using appropriate scripting and other tools;</p> <p>Curating, publishing, and/or packaging information in usable formats; and</p> <p>Continuously evaluating information and knowledge systems and technologies.</p>
3: Information and Knowledge Resources	<p>Establishing a budget for resources and advocating for allocation of funds;</p> <p>Aligning the strategy for managing information resources to support the strategic goals of the parent organization and community needs;</p> <p>Systematically evaluating new or unfamiliar resources by applying analytical frameworks and methods;</p> <p>Delivering authoritative information resources to meet the needs of a particular audience, cover a certain topic, field, or discipline, or serve a particular purpose;</p> <p>Managing and delivering relevant resources of all types, media, and formats, including published and unpublished, internal to the organization as well as external, digital, textual, numeric, and visual;</p> <p>Negotiating appropriate pricing and terms and conditions for the licensing or acquisition of information resources;</p> <p>Continually analyzing the effectiveness of the portfolio of resources under management, making adjustments as needed to ensure relevancy and provide users with optimum decision-support content;</p> <p>Identifying experts and sources of expertise and facilitating knowledge sharing within organizations;</p> <p>Auditing and mapping information and knowledge assets available within the organization in order to advise users about resources relevant to various business activities; and</p> <p>Teaching others to critically evaluate information and information sources.</p>
4: Information and Data Retrieval and Analysis	<p>Interviewing and consulting with community members to identify and clarify information and knowledge needs;</p> <p>Developing sophisticated search and retrieval strategies to discover and retrieve information from varied systems and repositories;</p> <p>Understanding search engines and information retrieval systems, including the unique functionalities provided by different systems, and applying this understanding to information search and retrieval projects;</p> <p>Assessing the veracity or quality of information and its underlying sources in search engines and information retrieval systems;</p> <p>Using appropriate data analysis, text analysis, visualization, and similar tools to analyze information in order to extract insights and meaning;</p> <p>Communicating the results of information retrieval and analysis projects in a way that is usable and actionable by the intended audience; and</p> <p>Teaching all competencies in a variety of formal and informal settings.</p>
5: Organization of Data, Information, and Knowledge Assets	<p>Applying standard professional practices for descriptive and subject metadata to information assets;</p> <p>Developing custom metadata schemas;</p> <p>Developing custom taxonomies and ontologies as local circumstances warrant</p> <p>Developing retention and destruction policies and procedures based on legal requirements and organizational operational needs;</p> <p>Training others in effective practices for information organization and management;</p> <p>Applying quality control practices to ensure the appropriate application of policies and practices for information organization and management; and</p> <p>Coordinating the development and implementation of archival systems and processes that are customized to support organizational needs.</p>
6: Information Ethics	<p>Recognizing ethical issues relative to information handling, including but not limited to privacy and confidentiality, information security, intellectual property and copyright, and intellectual freedom;</p> <p>Modeling ethical information behavior;</p> <p>Teaching, influencing, and coaching others;</p> <p>Contributing to organizational policies, procedures, and other initiatives; and</p> <p>Assessing and auditing the organizational implementation of information ethics.</p>
ENABLING COMPETENCIES	<p>Critical thinking, including qualitative and quantitative reasoning;</p> <p>Initiative, adaptability, flexibility, creativity, innovation, and problem solving;</p> <p>Effective oral and written communication, including influencing skills;</p> <p>Relationship building, networking, and collaboration, including the ability to foster respect, inclusion, and communication among diverse individuals;</p> <p>Marketing</p> <p>Leadership, management, and project management;</p> <p>Life-long learning;</p> <p>Instructional design and development, teaching, and mentoring; and</p> <p>Business ethics.</p>

Source: SLA Competencies (2016)

ECIA – European Council of Information Associations

Euroguide in Information and Documentation is the document of the European Council of Information Professionals' Associations (ECIA), which brings together the competencies and skills required of European information and documentation professionals. It is structured in thirty-three fields of competency, divided into five groups: I - Information; T - Technologies; C - Communication; G - Management; S - Other Knowledge. For each group, there are four levels of professional experience: basic (basic notions), intermediate (mastery of basic tools), advanced (mastery of techniques), master (mastery of methodology and management). The document presents another twenty aptitudes divided into six groups, corresponding to states of mind oriented towards the development of relationships of a different nature, such as autonomy, adaptation, intellectual curiosity, initiative and sense of organisation. Table 2 below summarises the competencies structured by ECIA.

Table 2 – ECIA Competencies

Summary of the fields of expertise and principal aptitudes

THIRTY-THREE FIELDS OF EXPERTISE ¹	TWENTY PRINCIPAL APTITUDES ¹
<p>Group I – Information I01 – Relations with users and clients I02 – Understanding the LIS environment I03 – Application of the law of information I04 – Contents and knowledge management I05 – Identification and validation of information sources I06 – Analysis and representation of information I07 – Information seeking I08 – Management of collections I09 – Enrichment of collections I10 – Material handling of documents I11 – Organisation of site and equipment I12 – Conception of products and services</p> <p>Group T – Technology T01 – Computer based design of information systems T02 – Computer based development of applications T03 – Publishing and editing T04 – Internet technology T05 – Information and computer technology</p> <p>Group C – Communication C01 – Oral communication C02 – Written communication C03 – Audiovisual communication C04 – Computerized communication C05 – Using a foreign language C06 – Interpersonal communication C07 – Institutional communication</p> <p>Group M – Management M01 – Global management of information M02 – Marketing M03 – Sales and diffusion M04 – Budgetary management M05 – Project management and planning M06 – Diagnosis and evaluation M07 – Human resources management M08 – Management of education and training</p> <p>Group S – Other scientific knowledge S01 – Additional fields</p>	<p>A – Personal Relations 1 – Autonomy 2 – Communication skills 3 – Availability 4 – Empathy 5 – Team spirit 6 – Sense for negotiation 7 – Teaching skills</p> <p>B – Research 1 – An enquiring mind</p> <p>C – Analysis 1 – Analytical ability 2 – Critical ability 3 – Ability to synthesise</p> <p>D – Communication 1 – Discretion 2 – Responsiveness</p> <p>E – Managing 1 – Perseverance 2 – Rigour</p> <p>F – Organising 1 – Adaptability 2 – Foresight 3 – Decisiveness 4 – Initiative 5 – Sense of organisation</p>

Source: ECIA Competencies (2004)

Both documents include various competencies for information professionals: the SLA for librarians in special libraries, and the ECIA for information professionals in general (archivists, librarians, documentalists, etc.). However, these documents lack specific competencies that address the training of professionals working with personal collections.

The competencies identified by the cataloguing team correspond to those recommended by the SLA and the ECIA. Although, it was noted that the competencies indicated by the two

institutions do not present a degree of details of the skills required by the professional who works in the cataloguing of personal collections, as in the case of the cataloguing team of the Nélida Piñon Library of Cervantes Institute Rio de Janeiro. Table 3 below shows the competencies identified by this team.

Table 3 – Cataloguing Team Competencies

NÉLIDA PIÑON LIBRARY CATALOGUING TEAM - COMPETENCIES	
Profile	Information professional with expertise in Personal Collections
Information Units	Archives, libraries, museums, cultural, documentation and information centres
Work Area	Cultural and academic
Education	Degree in: Librarianship and Documentation, Archivistics, Museology
Library Skills	Bibliographic tools: ABNT, ISO, APA, Chicago, ANSI, etc.
	Cataloguing tools: ISBD, RDA, Cataloguing Rules, AACR2, etc.
	Classification tools: UDC, DDC, LC, etc.
	Library technologies: Apple and Microsoft systems, OFFICE Package, HTML, Internet, bibliographic software, integrated library systems (ILS), integrated search tools, intellectual property/copyright management systems, institutional repository platforms, scanning techniques and digital file formats, etc.
Historiographic Skills	Paleography to decipher spelling, writing, dedications, notes, etc.
	Diplomatic to know about the material and structure of rare works and special editions
Languages	Modern languages: English, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Galician, Catalan, Basque, etc.
	Classical languages: Latin, ancient Greek, etc.
	Transliteration systems for non-Latin alphabets (Arabic, Hebrew, Russian, Armenian, etc.)
Complementary Knowledge	Continuous learning
	Post-graduate studies: masters, doctorate, etc.
	Academic and cultural production
	Previous professional experience
	Training practices in information units with special collections.

Source: From the authors

It is observed that the competencies identified by the cataloguing team can complement the competencies proposed by the SLA and ECIA .

Final Considerations

It appears that librarians working in special libraries, in addition to their academic training, need to develop competencies to work with special collections. The professional cataloguer needs to remain in constant learning, to be updated on innovations in the area of cataloguing, to be familiar with the standards, policies and different methods of cataloguing and descriptive representation. In addition to having a general culture, knowing how to read and analyse a document, that is, knowing how to verify the data necessary to transcribe and describe a document. When the special collection is a personal one, the skills to be developed need to be directed to this specific type of collection, as found by the cataloguing team of Nélida Piñon Library. It is hoped that the competencies and skills identified by this team can contribute to the training of information professionals that specialise in personal collections.

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