

The Public and Corporate Use of History: Commemorative Books at Catholic Schools

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ABSTRACT: The present research is framed within the study of Catholic schools and more specifically, in the commemorative books that these centres promoted and published. In order to carry out the study, a total of 34 books have been analysed. They all deal with the history of different Catholic schools in the Balearic Islands (Spain). The involvement of educational community members (students, alumni, teachers, families, ecc.) in the production of the books, together with the institutional and reputational use made of them, link these historiographical products to both the genre of public history and the field of corporate history. In order to understand the nature of these links, as well as the idiosyncrasy of these monographs, this study aims to shed light on the “who”, “what” and “how”, that is, on the authorship, content and format of the commemorative books in question. The results obtained show that the commemorative books, apart from offering a wealth of useful data regarding the past of Catholic schools, help to better understand the evolution

of a historiographical practice that has formed the basis of “new” historiographical genres related to the public and corporate use of history.

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: Catholic schools; Commemorative books; Public history; Corporate history; History of education.

*Introduction*¹

Designing and releasing an autobiographical narrative has been an oft-used practice not just by famous figures, but also by social and political organisations (nation states, unions, cultural institutions, sports clubs, NGOs, corporations, ecc.). Many studies have shown how most of these organisations follow common patterns to bolster and promote their official history, taking up public space through monuments, building museums, organising celebrations, creating audiovisual material or publishing case studies².

The education sector and its institutions have long been cognisant of this need for legitimacy and promotion within wider society³. This article aims to analyse this phenomenon in the education sector by spotlighting one of the most important and influential institutions in Spain: Catholic schools. There have traditionally been few studies on Catholic schools in history of education research, particularly in terms of the history of schools themselves⁴. Nonetheless, certain recently published work has helped to explain the variety of methods and elements used by Catholic schools to promote their own history⁵. In this sense, and according to published findings, religious schools have resorted to many methods, including corporate publications, public events, institutional symbols and a hidden curriculum⁶.

¹ This work has been carried out under project PID2020-113677GB-I00, funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033. The authors are members of the ISCHE Standing Working Group Public Histories of Education [<https://www.ische.org/about-ische/standing-working-groups/>].

² E. Hobsbawm, *Introducción. La invención de la tradición*, in E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger (edd.), *La invención de la tradición*, Barcelona, Crítica, 2002, pp. 7-21; M. Pereira, *Algumas reflexões sobre histórias de vidas, biografias e autobiografias*, «História Oral», vol. 3, 2000, pp. 117-127; C. Booth et alii, *La memoria social en las organizaciones. Los métodos que las organizaciones usan para recordar el pasado*, «Revista Empresa y Humanismo», n. 2, 2005, pp. 95-131.

³ A. Viñao Frago, *Las autobiografías, memorias y diarios como fuente histórico-educativa: tipología y usos*, «Revista Teias», n. 1, 2000, pp. 1-26.

⁴ P. Dávila, L.M. Naya, *Las escuelas de los Hermanos de La Salle en Gipuzkoa. Evolución y tendencias en el alumnado y profesorado (1904-2006)*, «Ikastaria», n. 16, 2008, pp. 271-315.

⁵ M. Ostolaza, *La historiografía sobre las Congregaciones religiosas y la educación en la España contemporánea (2000-2015). Balance y perspectivas*, in F. Montero, J. De la Cueva, J. Louzao (edd.), *La historia religiosa en la España contemporánea, balance y perspectivas*, Alcalá de Henares, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, 2017, pp. 223-235.

⁶ S. Moll, F. Comas, *Corporate History or the Education Business. A Case-Study: Sant Francesc De Sales School, Menorca (1939-1945)*, «Paedagogica Historica», vol. 59, n. 6, 2023, pp. 1388-1407.

This article uses a holistic approach to offer an analysis of the contribution from one of the most commonly used and significant methods in constructing the history of Catholic schools: commemorative books. These corporate publications aim to commemorate the foundation of schools, review a specific centre's history and highlight historical elements such as founding myths, alumni and benefactors. When analysing these historiographic publications, one notes how their production and promotion follow certain corporate history patterns and rules, with a major institutional and commercial element⁷. In turn, the active and decisive participation of the educational community at these schools in producing commemorative books, as well as the use of the historical method from outside academe, also indicate a link to the genre of public history, although they do not strictly align with current collaboration and shared authority criteria in this field of history⁸.

Thus, the research here will provide readers with an inventory on the production of commemorative books in the Balearic Islands, whilst dissecting their content in order to explore their relationship to the fields of public and corporate history.

1. *Catholic schools in Spain: evolution and sociopolitical tug-of-war*

The position and role of Catholic schools in the Spanish education system have undergone many changes depending on the historical period in question. For the purposes of this research, the most important period encompasses the latter third of the 19th to the early 20th centuries, when public authorities attempted to establish an organised schooling system. This period saw the initial introduction of differences between a network of public schools and private religious schooling. Specific mention of the work by Manuel Revuelta⁹ and Ana Yetano¹⁰ should be made here, in which they explain how religious schools – which had held a monopoly over education during the Ancient Regime – resisted losing influence in education after the Liberal Revolution. Events from this era are well-known: different liberal and conservative political

⁷ A. Delahaye, *The genre of corporate history*, «Journal of Organizational Change Management», vol. 22, n. 1, 2009, pp. 27-48.

⁸ S. Noiret, M. Tebeau, G. Zaagsma, *Handbook of Digital Public History*, Berlin-Boston, De Gruyter, 2022.

⁹ M. Revuelta, *La Compañía de Jesús en la España contemporánea. I. Supresión y reinstalación (1868-1883)*, Madrid, Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 1984; M. Revuelta González, *Los colegios de jesuitas y su tradición educativa (1868-1906)*, Madrid, Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, 1998.

¹⁰ A. Yetano, *Congregaciones femeninas de enseñanza fundadas en Cataluña en el siglo XIX*, in A.J.R. Aymes, E.M. Fell, J.L. Guereña (edd.), *Ecole et Eglise en Espagne et en Amérique Latine. Aspects idéologiques et institutionnels*, Tour, Publications de l'Université de Tours, 1988, pp. 297-307.

regimes and governments alternated in power, the former attempting to reduce or even eliminate the educational importance of Catholic schools, and the latter attempting to maintain and even bolster its educational influence and hegemony. Two important periods that stand out from the various flashpoints in this tug-of-war, termed by authors such as Vicent Faubell as «the game of nothingness and essence»¹¹ are the cultural and educational battle between liberal governments and the church¹², and the period of the Second Republic as a whole. In this sense, many publications analyse the secular policy implemented in the Second Republic – especially during the Progressive Biennium (1931-33) – and the real consequences to emerge from it. For instance, the work undertaken by José Ignacio Cruz¹³ or Sofía Rodríguez¹⁴ shows how the republic's legislation was framed to realign and limit Catholic education, and how this specifically impacted religious schools. Héctor Vicente summarises the situations as follows:

The republican government inherited 19th-century thinking that linked secularism to national progress. In order to modernise Spanish society and make it secular, they deemed it necessary to control religious orders and their activities, particularly in the field of education. In order to achieve this, the governments in the initial two years implemented a set of measures, the most important undoubtedly being the Religious Faiths and Congregations Act which banned teaching in religious centres. Whilst secularists attempted to wrest control of education to transform the traditional order, Catholics did all they could to keep hold of it to ensure the traditional order remained unchanged¹⁵.

Nonetheless, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and subsequent military dictatorship not only put an end to previous republican policies¹⁶, but also purposely strengthened the hegemony and social and educational dominance

¹¹ V. Faubell, *Órdenes, congregaciones y asociaciones eclesiales masculinas dedicadas a la educación y a la enseñanza*, in B. Bartolomé Martínez, *Historia de la acción educadora de la Iglesia en España II. Edad Contemporánea*, Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1997, pp. 323-448.

¹² T. Garcia Tejedor, *La polémica sobre la secularización de la enseñanza en España (1902-1914)*, Madrid, Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, 1985.

¹³ J.I. Cruz Orozco, *Laicismo, Iglesia y Educación en la Constitución española de 1931*, in A.J. Colom Cañellas, B. Sureda Garcia, J. Vallespir Soler (edd.), *Iglesia y educación en España: perspectivas históricas. IV Coloquio de historia de la educación (Palma, Septiembre de 1986)*, Palma, Universitat de les Illes Balears, 1986, pp. 105-115.

¹⁴ S. Rodríguez, *Religiosidad, secularización y entorno educativo: Valladolid 1931-1936, «Diacronie: studi di storia contemporanea»*, vol. 41, n. 7, 2020.

¹⁵ H. Vicente Sánchez, *La secularización de la enseñanza primaria durante la Segunda República*, «Historia de la Educación: revista interuniversitaria», n. 36, 2017, pp. 301-320; M. Ostolaza, *La “guerra escolar” y la movilización de los católicos en la II República (1931-1936)*, in J. De la Cueva, F. Montero (edd.), *El conflicto político religioso en la Segunda República*, Alcalá, Universidad de Alcalá – Servicio de Publicaciones, 2009; R. Zugasti, *Fariseos de la libertad*, Sevilla, Comunicación Social Ediciones y Publicaciones, 2021.

¹⁶ B. Sureda, *L'educació a Mallorca a l'època de la Guerra Civil: els canvis a la cultura escolar*, «Educació i Història: Revista d'Història de l'Educació», n. 12, 2008, pp. 65-90; G. Barceló, F. Comas, *Ser mestre, malgrat el franquisme: testimonis etnogràfics d'una pràctica escolar*, «Educació i Història: Revista d'Història de l'Educació», n. 35, 2020, pp. 103-134.

of Catholic schools during the early years of the Franco regime¹⁷. Despite some legislative and progressive changes in the regime regarding public schooling¹⁸, stability and expansionism characterised the status of Catholic schools, so much so in the Balearic Islands that the church's educational project became hegemonic, especially through a network of primary schools for girls in the rural areas¹⁹. It was not until 1970 that socioeconomic transformation and influence from Europe pushed the regime to reform the education system through the General Education Act²⁰. From the introduction of this law, changes became perceptible in the dual nature of the Spanish education system (public / private schooling)²¹. In this sense, a middle way was proposed for private and public schooling at the time, providing public funding to many Catholic schools in exchange for regulation and auditing by government authorities. Nevertheless, it was not until well into the democratic period with the victory of Felipe González as prime minister and the approval of the LODE Act (1985) that educational subsidies were effectively implemented. This led to a new system which, despite specific changes, has remained in place until today²².

It should be noted that since the 1990s many Catholic orders no longer have members dedicated to teaching, handing these duties over to secular staff. This has underscored the need to create narratives around schools' identities which society at large traditionally identified with a religious institution; in the 21st century, this distinctiveness and history are in danger of disappearing.

In spite of the passing of time and successive governments, politicians and education acts, it is clear that Catholic schools have survived all changes and transformations by adopting different forms and approaches, and are currently benchmark centres around Spain. Nevertheless, their survival was in question at different historical moments, given their very existence was subject to different social and political struggles. Throughout history, Catholic schools have been

¹⁷ M. Puelles Benítez, *La educación secundaria en la España democrática: Antecedentes, problemas y perspectivas*, «Cuadernos de Pesquisa», vol. 41, n. 144, 2011, pp. 710-731.

¹⁸ M.C. Pérez Ruiz, *La democratización de la enseñanza en España (1952-1982)*, Málaga, Universidad de Málaga, 2015.

¹⁹ The importance of Catholic schools in the Balearic Islands has been assessed both from a comparative perspective and with regard to the entire educational approach in the region. See: P. Fullana Puigserver, M. Ostolaza Esnal, *Escuela catòlica y modernización. Las nuevas congregaciones religiosas en España (1900-1930)*, in J. De la Cueva, F. Montero, *La secularización conflictiva. España (1898-1931)*, Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2007, pp. 187-213; P. Fullana Puigserver, *Església i educació a la Mallorca del segle XX*, «L'Arc», n. 5, 2009, pp. 42-49.

²⁰ P. Muñozerro González, *La educación concertada en España: origen y recorrido histórico*, «Historia de la Educación: revista interuniversitària», vol. 41, n. 1, 2022, pp. 405-425.

²¹ Article 96 in said Act sets out that non-national centres may agree unique charters. It should be stated that many Catholic schools closed in the 1970s, and nearly all the most renowned and solvent schools became charter schools.

²² J.J. Guardia Hernández, *Marco constitucional de la enseñanza privada española sostenida con fondos públicos: Recorrido histórico y perspectivas a futuro*, «Estudios Constitucionales», vol. 17, n. 1, 2019, pp. 321-362.

embroiled in different “cultural wars”, whether these involved liberal politics, the workers’ movement or secularism, and have become the spearhead for the Catholic Church and conservative sectors in these conflicts²³. In their constant struggle for survival, Catholic schools have implemented different strategies to attain a presence and influence in society, as well as increase supporters to their cause (associations, social and religious activities, cultural promotion, sporting activities, ecc.)²⁴. Different publications edited and distributed by the schools themselves (magazines, newsletters, booklets, yearbooks, books, ecc.) have echoed and promoted their activities. The publications not only listed and explained all events tied to academic, social, cultural and religious life at the schools, but also gave space to their history as educational institutions²⁵. Commemorative books should be highlighted here. In line with the few studies analysing the nature of these historiographic publications, commemorative books aimed to circulate a history that articulated and operationalised the official institutional narrative²⁶. In this sense, the research here will attempt to provide new information on this phenomenon with a view to better understanding its use in publications from different historical periods, looking at its traits and the historiographic genres that possibly served as inspiration.

2. *Study methodology and sources*

In order to attain the research objectives, the historical method requiring the use of heuristics (source location and collection), criticism (verifying source authenticity and value) and synthesis (final product) has been used²⁷. The research here is based on the content from 34 commemorative books from different Catholic schools which, in line with the method in question, have

²³ F. Montero, *El Movimiento Católico en España, 1889-1936*, Alcalá de Henares, Editorial Universidad de Alcalá, 2017.

²⁴ P. Fullana, F. Montero, *Los modelos educativos juveniles del movimiento católico en España (1868-1968)*, «Historia de la Educación: revista interuniversitaria», n. 22-23, 2003, pp. 33-51.

²⁵ Moll, Comas, *Corporate History or the Education Business*, cit.

²⁶ M. Nieminen, *From elite traditions to middle-class cultures: images of secondary education in the anniversary books of a Finnish girls’ school, 1882-2007*, «Paedagogica Historica», vol. 52, n. 3, 2016, pp. 236-251; S. Ramos, T. Rabazas, C. Colmenar, *Fotografía y representación de la escuela privada madrileña en el franquismo. Entre la propaganda y el relato*, «Historia y Memoria de la Educación», n. 8, 2018, pp. 397-448.

²⁷ J. Ruiz, *El método histórico en la investigación histórica de la educación*, «Revista Española de Pedagogía», n. 6, 1976, pp. 449-475; F. Comas et alii, *Guia pràctica per a l’elaboració de treballs historico-educatius. Material adreçat a alumnes de grau i Màster de la Universitat de les Illes Balears*, Palma, Edicions UIB, 2015.

been subject to the relevant historical criticism. Most of the books were located thanks to the CABIB (Bibliographic Catalogue of the Balearic Islands), whose online catalogue lists bibliographic resources from most libraries in the Balearic Islands and makes them available to users. The catalogue currently contains around 200,000 book titles and other documentary material from 500,000 volumes, housed across approximately 100 libraries²⁸.

Table 1. Geographic distribution of the analysed books

Island	Books
Majorca	28
Minorca	5
Ibiza	1

Source: prepared by the authors.

The descriptive information on the books summarised in the table above enables us to contextualise and better understand the phenomenon under analysis. With regard to geographic distribution, most of the books have been published in Majorca (28), followed by Minorca (5) and Ibiza (1) to a far lesser extent²⁹.

Table 2. Book distribution according to pupil gender

Centres	Percentage
Male	64%
Female	27%
Mixed	9%

Source: prepared by the authors.

In terms of the gender of pupils originally taught at the schools included, there is a clear majority of boys' schools (64%), far above the number of girls' (27%) and mixed (9%) institutions.

²⁸ You may view the catalogue at the following link: <<https://cabib.uib.es/>> (last access: 10.01.2024).

²⁹ One should consider that Majorca's population accounts for 77% of total inhabitants in the Balearic Islands. In turn, the provincial capital Palma is home to 36% of the entire archipelago's inhabitants.

Table 3. Book distribution according to school ownership

Ownership	Books
Brothers of the Christian Schools	10
Society of Jesus	4
Franciscan Friars of the TOR	3
Diocesan Schools	3
Missionaries of the Sacred Heart	2
Trinitarian tertiaries	2
Salesians	2
Franciscan Daughters of Mercy	2
Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate	1
Augustinians	1
Daughters of the Most Pure Virgin Mary	1
Brothers of Charity	1
Sisters of Charity	1
Dominican Sisters of the Presentation	1

Source: prepared by the authors.

With regard to the ownership/religious orders of schools, “De La Salle” centres appear most often in commemorative books (10), followed by the Jesuits (4), Franciscan Brothers (3), Franciscan Sisters (3) and diocesan schools (3).

Table 4. *Book distribution according to year of publication*

Period	Books
[1939-1949]	4
[1950-1976]	1
[1977-2021]	29

Source: prepared by the authors.

Finally, the years of publication mark a timescale that shows most publications appeared from 1976 onwards (29 versus 5 from the previous period). This is evidence of a publishing boom. After having set out some descriptive details on the study sources, the following section will concentrate on analysing their character and content.

3. Results

In order to comprehend the nature of these historiographic productions and their connection to the fields of public and corporate history, an attempt has been made to “deconstruct” the commemorative books by looking at three key questions: who produces them? How are they developed? And, what content do they contain? In other words, this section will respond to the question of who, how and what.

4.1 Authors and collaborators

Identifying and looking deeper into the books’ authors, i.e. the “who”, enables us to understand their origins whilst analysing the possible constraints of the monographic publications at the hands of their authors. Thus, particular attention will be paid to variables such as the authors’ and collaborators’ ties to the school, their academic training, and the underlying reason for their participation in these projects.

With regard to school ties, in most instances authors are from the school’s educational community, regardless of whether the publications are individual or joint productions. In many cases, alumni take on leading roles in producing the books, although former and current teachers, and parents of pupils also take part. This is in line with what other studies and experiences have confirmed regarding the active participation of alumni and former members of the academic community in creating and reading mnemotechnic publications that evoke and hark back to their own schooling³⁰. It should also be noted that authors who seemingly have no formal or emotional tie to the school in question have been identified, albeit in a minority of instances. This is true for Pere Fullana³¹ and Josep Antoni Morell³² who, although not belonging to the school communities in question, are religious scholars in social and education aspects, with long careers in and many publications on the topic.

In turn, and in addition to the main authors, collaborators from academe have a particular presence and usually contribute to the projects by writing prologues or chapters, or reviewing content. A couple of good examples would be the contributions from Chair of Pedagogy, Antoni J Colom, in *Col·legi Beat Ramon Llull: educació, història i societat*, and the Chair in Legal History,

³⁰ S. Moll, F. Comas, *Los antiguos alumnos: “patrimonio vivo” para la historia de la escuela*, «Cabás», n. 29, 2023, pp. 1-12.

³¹ P. Fullana, *La pureza, 200 años educando*, Palma, Hermanas de Pureza de María, 2009.

³² J.A. Morell, *La Salle a Sóller (1905-1938)*, Sóller, Publicacions dels Germans de les Escoles Cristianes, 2021; J.A. Morell, *Segle i mig de Caritat. Història de les germanes de la Caritat a Sóller i Fornalutx*, Sóller, Germanes de la Caritat, 2016.

Román Pinya, in *450 años de historia del Colegio de Montesión de Palma de Mallorca*. These different collaborations from academe with members of the schools' educational communities could be interpreted as a type of scientific endorsement or quality assurance which would help strengthen the reputation and credibility of these historiographic publications, regardless of any need for them.

In terms of author qualifications, circumstances vary depending on the book in question. Nevertheless, three categories can be outlined: older institutional monographs usually spearheaded by members of religious orders (with training in theology); more recent school monographs coordinated by teachers with specific training (teacher training, pedagogy, ecc.); and finally, historiographic monographs led by community members with history training (graduates or self-taught³³) or by external individuals linked to the local history sector³⁴.

These three categories outline a trend where authors' qualifications and professions may condition the adopted focus. For example, in certain instances religious authors cover aspects such as spiritual practice or a congregation's charisma³⁵, whilst historians tend to concentrate more on historical contexts³⁶. In turn, teachers tend to look at day-to-day life in the classroom and at the school, e.g. Maria Camps³⁷ used testimonies from pupils, alumni, and former and current teachers to write *La Salle Alaior-Menorca: i ja són 100*.

Finally, and to round off the "who", authors' underlying reasons and motivations in writing these commemorative books should be mentioned. As the name itself states, these books aim to commemorate and, in most instances, celebrate the founding of a specific Catholic school. The bibliography compiled here, as well as what the books themselves indicate, commemorative monographs are generally commissioned by the schools themselves from «individuals associated with the congregations themselves»³⁸. For example, Manel Santana Morro, a graduate and PhD in history and former teacher at the De La Salle School in Palma, is deemed by the school board as «a De La Salle researcher who has demonstrated his unconditional esteem for the order on

³³ A good example could be Gabriel Reus Mas who wrote *Col·legi Fra Joan Ballester: Campos 1943-1993*. The author was a renowned erudite and local historian who, although having officially studied at the Diocesan Seminar in Majorca, was also self-taught in historiography.

³⁴ This is true for Pere Xamena Fiol, a priest and renowned local historian, who published many books on the history of the local population in Felanitx and Majorca.

³⁵ See, for example: P. Xamena, *Religiosas trinitarias de Mallorca: reseña històrica*, Palma, Gràfiques Miramar, 1980.

³⁶ See, for example: M. Santana, *El Col·legi de La Salle a Manacor. Fets, protagonistes i la incidència d' una institució educativa (1913-2013)*, Manacor, Germans de les Escoles Cristianes, 2013.

³⁷ A graduate in Spanish philology, Maria Camps was an active teacher at the De La Salle School in Alaior when she coordinated the publication of its commemorative book.

³⁸ P. Dávila, L.M. Naya, *Las escuelas de los Hermanos de La Salle en Gipuzkoa. Evolución y tendencias en el alumnado y profesorado (1904-2006)*, «Ikastaria», n. 16, 2008, pp. 271-315. (quotation: p. 272).

many occasions»³⁹. The shared enterprise between authors and schools often means the copyright for the work belongs to the order in question⁴⁰, or the publication has been produced and sponsored by the schools themselves⁴¹ or associations⁴² linked to them. Certain works that have received logistical and financial support from public institutions such as city/town councils⁴³, private institutions such as banks⁴⁴ or private sponsorship⁴⁵ – rather than schools – should also be highlighted. Much fewer projects are undertaken on the author's own initiative. One example would be *Crònica 50 anys: Mater Misericordiae*, where the author states «it was my initiative since I have fond ties to the institution» and «the book came about when I put the proposal to the school board»⁴⁶. A further example is *Col·legi Beat Ramon Llull: educació, història i societat*, a book whose publication originates in private academic research, although it was timed to coincide with a school almanac⁴⁷.

In summary, and despite the nuances in each specific instance, to a greater or lesser extent most projects promoting commemorative publications come about thanks to assistance and participation from different members of the educational community at schools. At times, however, they also receive support from external collaborators in academe or local historiographers. The logistical and financial drive behind the projects at Catholic schools largely explains their existence, although it could also point to another possible conditioning factor in terms of content (providing documents, payment, supervision, self-censorship, ecc.), as well as other variables such as the author's academic training or emotional ties to the school.

³⁹ M. Santana, *El Col·legi de La Salle a Manacor (1913-2013): fets, protagonistes i incidència d'una institució educativa*, Manacor, Germans de les Escoles Cristianes, 2013.

⁴⁰ See, for example: R. Bordoy, *Ara fa cent anys: La Salle a Santa Margalida: (1912-2012)*, Binissalem, Germans de les Escoles Cristianes, Gràfiques Rubines, 2012.

⁴¹ See, for example: Santana, *El Col·legi de La Salle a Manacor (1913-2013)*, cit.

⁴² The sponsorship and support from the Col·legi Sant Francesc de Sales Alumni Association for Rafel Cortés Casasnoves' book *Menorca, María Auxiliadora y la obra salesiana: 1899-1939* is a good example of this.

⁴³ See, for example: J. Pons, *Los Hermanos de la Salle en Alaior en todos los campos: educativo, cultural y social*, Alaior, Edicions J. Pons, 2008.

⁴⁴ A good example of this could be Banca March's sponsorship of *La Salle a Santa Margalida. 56 anys d'història* by Rafel Bordoy. It should be highlighted that the bank's founder, Joan March Ordines, was a benefactor of the school from its early days, which was located in his home town.

⁴⁵ See, for example: B. Obrador Vidal, *450 años de historia del Colegio de Montesión de Palma de Mallorca*, Palma, Associació d'Antics Alumnes de Montesión, 2011.

⁴⁶ Joan Josep Matas Pastor, personal interview, 25th May 2023.

⁴⁷ P. Fullana, S. González, F. Comas, *La fotografía en els llibres commemoratius dels centres escolars (1939-1975)*, in F. Comas, S. González, X. Motilla, B. Sureda, *Imatges de l'escola, imatge de l'educació*, Palma, Universitat de les Illes Balears, 2014, pp. 147-157.

4.2 *Format and design*

Understanding the nature of commemorative books not only involves knowing who was involved in their inception, but also identifying the formats used to structure and organise content. There are many different aesthetic approaches in physical designs, although most resemble classic books, magazines or encyclopaedias.

A few examples include: *Una escola per al poble* (book), *Col·legi Santa Magdalena Sofia. 1969-1994: 25 anys* (magazine) and *450 años de historia del Colegio de Montesión de Palma de Mallorca* (encyclopaedia). More recent projects with higher budgets are clearly more appealing and sophisticated, whether this be due to paper quality, the images used, the cover design or the binding format. In this sense, each category – and especially the many examples with a classic book design – includes “rustic” (softcover, basic adornment, black and white images, ecc.) and more commercial approaches (lots of colour and images, hardcover, glossy paper, ecc.). Thus, cover designs are hugely important and impactful in terms of appearance and visual message. All the covers analysed here show a clear evolution in terms of content. With a few exceptions, the oldest book covers mostly use institutional symbols from Catholic schools (e.g. the official crests of the religious orders)⁴⁸. Over time, these symbols are replaced by other elements, such as emblematic spaces in schools (cloisters, entrances, courtyards, ecc.)⁴⁹. In turn, the most recent covers show photographs of school groups or children playing in the schoolyard⁵⁰. Although indoor images will be looked at in the following section, it should be noted how many there are across all historical periods – they are one of the many narrative elements in the publications and play a key role in enhancing and supplementing the information contained in the books.

Three methods of organising the information contained in the books can be identified, and are either used in isolation or in combination. Firstly, many books chronologically order key events selected by the author in tandem with the school’s history. Some publications date these highlighted events by year⁵¹, some use a general historical period (the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, the Second Republic, the Franco regime, ecc.)⁵², and others establish a school-

⁴⁸ See, for example: Unattributed, *Cincuenta años de labor salesiana en Ciudadela de Menorca (1899-1949)*, Ciutadella, Impremta Al·lès, 1949.

⁴⁹ See, for example: Santana, *El Col·legi de La Salle a Manacor (1913-2013)*, cit.

⁵⁰ Despite the stated trend, there are instances where the pattern is not followed and, for example, different cover types are combined. This is the case for *Col·legi de Sant Bonaventura de Lluçmajor 75è aniversari al seu domicili actual: (1934-2009)*, where the cover shows the school façade, school crest and the Franciscan church in Lluçmajor.

⁵¹ See, for example: Unattributed, *Cincuenta años de labor salesiana en Ciudadela de Menorca (1899-1949)*, cit.

⁵² See, for example: M. Miralles Gili, *Col·legi Beat Ramon Llull: educació, història i societat*, Inca, Edicions Col·legi Beat Ramon Llull, 2002.

specific timeline (foundation, crisis, closure, building, school coordinators, ecc.)⁵³. Secondly, certain books link either fully or partially convey their narrative through homages to individuals (founders, coordinators, benefactors, alumni, ecc.)⁵⁴ and institutions (alumni associations, former pupils, families, social and religious activities, ecc.)⁵⁵ which were key for the school's foundation and evolution. Finally, certain publications look at the past via testimonies from those who were there. These books are community-type projects that approach the topic in question through personal perspectives at different school levels, providing a rich varied narrative filled with nuance that moves far beyond the strict religious narrative seen in other approaches. The following are a few examples: *Ara fa cent anys: La Salle a Santa Margalida (1912-2012)*, where nearly the entire content comprises testimonies from alumni, and *Col·legi Santa Magdalena Sofia. 1969-1994: 25 anys*, which is based on contributions from members of the educational community, as well as the management team, alumni, parents, ecc.⁵⁶. Other books also use this method but in a more supplementary manner, such as the aforementioned *La Salle Alaior-Menorca: i ja són 100* and the monograph *La Salle a Manacor: notes històriques. 75è aniversari de la seva arribada*, which concludes with different testimonies, including one from its first pupil.

In short, commemorative book designs are diverse in terms of appearance and format. Nonetheless, there is a certain evolution over time with regard to the image and messages conveyed to society and the sphere of influence where the school aims to expand and consolidate. The first three publications in the sample are more institutional and focused on internal readers, making for starker and identity-forming works. In contrast, later publications are more commercial and community-oriented, and take advantage of school anniversaries to transmit a strong modern image where the institution and its symbols do not eclipse the real protagonists: teachers, students and families.

⁵³ See, for example: J.J. Matas Pastor, *Crònica 50 anys Mater Misericordiae*, Palma, Impremta Rapitbook, 2015.

⁵⁴ See, for example: P. Trías, *El Colegio de Nuestra Señora de Montesión en Palma de Mallorca: Apuntes históricos*, Palma, Impremta Mossèn Alcover, 1948.

⁵⁵ See, for example, S. Arrom Coll, *Sant Josep Obrer (1951-1997): 46 anys d'il·lusions i de treballs*, Palma, Fundació Col·legi Sant Josep Obrer-Corpus Christi, 2004.

⁵⁶ In this vein, we should also highlight *100 años educando. Colegio Sagrado Corazón. Son Español*, which provides a comprehensive view of the school thanks to participation from all stakeholders in commemorating its first centenary.

4.3 *Content and narrative elements*

After having looked at the “who” and “how”, we now turn to the “what”. In this vein, this section will describe the content and narrative elements in the histories presented in the books, and analyse the following categories: space, time, activity and protagonists.

With regard to spaces, the publications describe and detail the evolution of two location types: the geographic context of the school (town, area, island, ecc.) and the educational, social and religious facilities where the school’s history elapses. Most books describe the surrounding geography in terms of a town’s demographics, economy, schooling and religion at the time the school was founded, providing data and statistics on the number of inhabitants, public and private schools, literacy levels, parishes, cultural activities, ecc. Particularly in the older books, the situation tends to be defined as lacking in education and culture which, in line with the book’s narrative, improved significantly thanks to the founding of Catholic schools⁵⁷.

In turn, although the books are biographies of schools, the historical narrative includes both school spaces and other types of facilities to a large extent, i.e. religious⁵⁸ (sanctuaries, chapels, oratories, ecc.) and social spaces⁵⁹ (theatres, social clubs, sports complexes, ecc.) linked to the school in question. The many photographs of these facilities help to portray the schools as more than just centres for education, linking them to a variety of activities with a strong religious identity and certain social prestige.

In turn, maps are included on occasions to enable readers to locate different buildings these schools once occupied in the towns⁶⁰, as well as floor maps of the indoor layout⁶¹. The photographs, maps and plans are supplemented by lots of information comprising much of the content in the books. Most spotlight the original building and the fragile early days, as well as describing moves, purchases or renovations. Moreover, some publications also include spaces which, despite being linked to a school’s order, have nothing do with the aforementioned educational, cultural or religious facilities. These include farms, land, houses and other assets run commercially by the orders for additional income. Examples include the Alicantí estate (Santa Margalida)⁶²

⁵⁷ See, for example: S. Rubí, *La Salle Baleares: Apuntes Históricos 1904-1940*, Valencia-Paterna, Germans de les Escoles Cristianes, 1974.

⁵⁸ See, for example: P. Trías, *El Colegio de Nuestra Señora de Montesión en Palma de Mallorca: Apuntes históricos*, Palma, Impremta Mossèn Alcover, 1948.

⁵⁹ See, for example: Arrom Coll, *Sant Josep Obrer (1951-1997)*, cit.

⁶⁰ See, for example: M. Muntaner, *La Salle a Manacor: notes històriques. 75è aniversari de la seva arribada*, Manacor, Edicions Manacor, 1988.

⁶¹ Unattributed, *Cincuenta años de labor salesiana en Ciudadela de Menorca (1899-1949)*, cit.

⁶² See, for example: R. Bordoy, *La Salle a Santa Margalida. 56 anys d’història*, Santa Margalida, Gràfiques Siba, 1994.

and Biniac Nou (Alaior)⁶³, or the land in Cala Morlanda and Cala des Capellans (Manacor)⁶⁴.

Time is another factor in analysing narrative elements. Most commemorative books set out a binary timeline: one internal to the school and one external relating to the historical context, establishing a cause-and-effect relationship that helps provide a logical coherent narrative. Some examples include the arrival of the De La Salle brothers across different towns in the Balearics due to the secularisation policies introduced by French president Émile Combes (origins)⁶⁵; the different strategies and ploys used by Catholic schools to avoid restrictions imposed by the Second Republic (instability)⁶⁶; the closure of Catholic schools in Minorca due to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (crisis)⁶⁷; the expansionism and stability enjoyed by certain schools during the Franco dictatorship (growth)⁶⁸, or the changes made to adapt to the requirements in new general education laws, such as the LGE or LOGSE (modernisation)⁶⁹. It is of note that that these historical events are treated differently depending on the year the books were published. When analysing older books, authors avidly describe these events through abundant adjectives and opinions. In most instances, they define their very existence “in opposition to”, i.e. the school is necessary to fight against enemies in society such as “the red beast”⁷⁰ or the “anti-religious”⁷¹, such as Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia. In turn, the oldest books vindicate their participation in conflicts such as the Spanish Civil War, where they generally collaborated with the insurrection led by Francisco Franco⁷². More recent books, however, show a major evolution in exploring these issues. Newer books often look at educational reforms and tensions from a more objective, cool-headed perspective. Adjectives and opinions are not as common and certain events, such as support for Franco, are neither justified nor, in certain instances, even mentioned. Authors of more recent books do not define the schools’ existence “in opposition to” but rather aim to legitimate it “in support of”, i.e. vindicating added value based on spirituality, academic success

⁶³ See, for example: Pons, cit.

⁶⁴ See, for example: Muntaner, *La Salle a Manacor: notes històriques*, cit.

⁶⁵ See, for example: Rubí, *La Salle Balears: Apuntes Històrics 1904-1940*, cit.

⁶⁶ See, for example: Santana, *El Col·legi de La Salle a Manacor (1913-2013)*, cit.

⁶⁷ See, for example: Unattributed, *Cincuenta años de labor salesiana en Ciudadela de Menorca (1899-1949)*, cit.

⁶⁸ See, for example: P. Trías, *El Colegio de Nuestra Señora de Montesión en Palma de Mallorca: Apuntes históricos*, Palma, Impremta Mossèn Alcover, 1948.

⁶⁹ See, for example: Arrom, *Sant Josep Obrer (1951-1997)*, cit.

⁷⁰ See, for example: J. Marzo y Abecia, *Montesión durante la pasada guerra civil: 1936-1939*, Palma, Impremta Guasp, 1939.

⁷¹ See, for example: Rubí, *La Salle Balears: Apuntes Històrics 1904-1940*, cit.

⁷² In her book, *La Salle a Manacor: notes històriques. 75è aniversari de la seva arribada* Maria Muntaner explains how the school allowed the nationalists to use its facilities as a warehouse and military hospital.

and support for causes that society values today (non-violence⁷³, academic inclusion⁷⁴ or gender equality⁷⁵).

After looking at spaces and timelines, school activities and narrated events require analysis. The schools' foundation and later evolution is a topic covered extensively in the books. With regard to foundation, many publications explain how the early days were marked by a lack of resources⁷⁶ and, at times, a hostile social climate⁷⁷. In turn, the schools' evolution is also explained heroically, highlighting notable progressive growth through tables and statistics on enrolments and the aforementioned school facilities⁷⁸. After this initial stage, the commemorative books look at schools' educational activities⁷⁹ which, despite the books focusing on schools, are given no more space than other social⁸⁰, religious⁸¹ or business⁸² activities. In this vein, notable events such as processions⁸³, festivities⁸⁴, cultural competitions⁸⁵ and openings attended by civil and ecclesiastical authorities⁸⁶ stand out. In contrast, daily life at schools is rarely mentioned. The books including experiences and recollections from alumni and former teachers focus more on this aspect. These interviews or chapters recall anecdotes, liturgies and organisational routines, and are retold in a nostalgic tone and often with some sadness⁸⁷.

⁷³ See, for example: M.D. Amat Codina, *Una escola per al poble*, Ferreries, Col·legi Concertat Sant Francesc d'Asís, 1999.

⁷⁴ See, for example: J.J. Matas, *Crònica 50 anys: Mater Misericordiae*, Palma, Impremta Rapiatbook, 2015.

⁷⁵ See, for example: M. Camps Sintes, *La Salle Alaior-Menorca: i ja són 100!*, Alaior, Associació de Pares La Salle Alaior, 2009.

⁷⁶ See, for example: Pons, *Los Hermanos de la Salle en Alaior en todos los campos*, cit.

⁷⁷ S. Rubí Darder explains in *La Salle Balears: Apuntes Històrics 1904-1940* that the Brothers of the Christian Schools were jeered on their arrival in different towns in the Balearics, and even pelted with stones in Manacor.

⁷⁸ These contents promoted an institutional reputation that fostered a public perception of success. The message outlined that schools and their governing organisations were expanding through a profitable project, with a future defined by ongoing and inevitable growth in resources and infrastructure.

⁷⁹ See, for example: B. Obrador Vidal, *450 años de historia del Colegio de Montesión de Palma de Mallorca*, Palma, Associació d' Antics Alumnes de Montesión, 2011.

⁸⁰ See, for example: Morell, *Segle i mig de Caritat. Història de les germanes de la Caritat a Sóller i Fornalutx*, cit.

⁸¹ See, for example: Morell, *La Salle a Sóller (1905-1938)*, cit.

⁸² There are many books that look into schools' economic activities, often including accounts, asset sales and purchases, property and land exchanges, ecc.

⁸³ See, for example: Unattributed, *Cincuenta años de labor salesiana en Ciudadela de Menorca (1899-1949)*, cit.

⁸⁴ See, for example: Rubí, *La Salle Balears: Apuntes Històrics 1904-1940*, cit.

⁸⁵ See, for example: M. Torres Torres, *Les religioses trinitàries. Sant Antoni de Portmany. Eivissa 1937-1987*, Eivissa, Editorial Mediterrània, 1988.

⁸⁶ See, for example: Muntaner, *La Salle a Manacor: notes històriques*, cit.

⁸⁷ Emotional memories and recollections prevail over any historical or heuristic analysis. See, for example: M.D. Amat Codina, *Una escola per al poble*, Ferreries, Col·legi Concertat Sant Francesc d'Asís, 1999.

Historical protagonists are the last narrative element requiring analysis. In this sense, nearly all commemorative books include homages to figures and their contribution to school success, both in terms of the parent organisation (congregation, order or diocese) and specific school. In the older books, it is usually more explicit and easier to spot, where standout figures are included in a specific hierarchical order. A clear example would be the book on Sant Francesc de Sales school in Ciutadella where, in strict order, the author glorifies the figure of Saint John Bosco (founder of the Salesian order), Federico Pareja (founder of the school in Ciutadella) and Saint Francis de Sales (protector of the school and congregation) in the early chapters. According to the narrative, the foundation and growth of the school was based on a providential historiographic approach, as if these milestones were the result of divine and earthly intervention to ensure the success of the Salesian institution. Moving down the hierarchical chain, there are chapters on coordinators, benefactors and illustrious alumni. With regard to former pupils, the book spotlights those who attained any of three academic and professional profiles – religion, military and academe – with a particular emphasis on the first to attain any standing in these areas⁸⁸. In this vein, former pupils had a highly valuable symbolic and commercial standing since they were living proof that the Salesian approach to education worked, attributing an added value which stood out from other approaches. Lastly, certain books describe the collaboration and support from individuals outside the school community. A good example is the homage paid to ecclesiastical and public authorities from different towns, who became key to providing logistical (managing the school's opening, granting land, paperwork, ecc.) and financial support (public subsidies, student grants, loans, ecc.)⁸⁹.

In short, this section highlights how the analysed content and narrative elements help reconstruct school history, whilst also uncovering other functions and intentions that explain the existence of these institutional biographies. Similar to what occurs in corporate history, extolling certain data and information whilst omitting others helps build a historical narrative, and thus provides a functional and enticing narrative for members of the organisation, whilst also legitimating and promoting the school in question.

⁸⁸ See, for example: Unattributed, *Cincuenta años de labor salesiana en Ciudadela de Menorca (1899-1949)*, cit.

⁸⁹ See, for example: Morell, *La Salle a Sóller (1905-1938)*, cit.

Conclusions

After analysing the sample of commemorative books found in the online bibliographic catalogue of the Balearic Islands (CABIB) and taking into account the initial research goals, the following conclusions have been reached.

Firstly, the analysed sample is varied and rich in nuance in terms of the characteristics and nature of the source in question. As shown in the findings, the aesthetic, content and format differences between different commemorative books are due to a confluence of distinct factors (school ownership, authorship, budget, methodology, ecc.) which result in publications that present scant similarities at face value. Nonetheless, by systematically analysing the source through questions regarding the “who” (authors and collaborators), “how” (format and appearance) and “what” (content and narrative elements), many dynamics and patterns appear which, to a greater or lesser extent, match the essence and features of historiographic genres such as public and corporate history. Initial research had already perceived possible links between commemorative books and these historiographic genres, and this was posited as one of the main goals to investigate. The new evidence from the sample confirms these suspicions, although certain considerations on the nature of this relationship require explanation.

For example, a superficial analysis of the link between commemorative books and public history points to many publications largely aligning with the premises of the genre, such as the use of the historical method from outside academe, the initiative and leadership of the community in question, or collaboration with external individuals who work at universities or scientific institutions. Taking the overlaps into account, and in the knowledge that this approach was neither intentional nor systematised (the authors in no way vindicate the inclusion of these works in this historiographic genre), we could see the books as unwitting or fortuitous products of public history. If this were the case, we would be faced with an interpretive model based on chance and coincidence to explain a phenomenon which, as set out above, is based on a set of common patterns and dynamics. However, our response may change and adopt more solid and substantiated propositions if the order in which we posit the link between both elements is reformed. In other words, what if commemorative books are not related to public history but rather it is public history that has a relationship with commemorative books? In this instance, the response to the question would make more sense than our previous answer and fit the pieces together without forcing or twisting any hypothesis. In this vein, different authors have pointed out that the current public history paradigm takes inspiration from a set of “ancient practices” from outside academe by individuals, public institutions, the media, museums and private corporations. And this is indeed the case here: private or chartered educational organisations involved in schooling which, in most instances, took advantage of their history

by including and embracing their own communities, long before the emergence of public history. Consequently, it could be stated that the link between current public history and commemorative books indeed exists, although their relationship is not explained by spontaneity but rather by the publications in question being a further example of the public uses of history to construct new historiographic practices, such as those currently found within the framework of public history.

In turn, this public use of the past, alongside social and commercial benefits from publishing commemorative books, also steer debate towards including these monographs into another historiographic genre: corporate history. The evidence here is much more direct and easier to spot. Certain studies based on systematic reviews of corporate history products have helped outline the methods, authorship and topics involved in the genre. In this sense, they include commemorative books as a “key format” mostly produced through commissions, which become the space and method where official histories of corporations are explained and established. Certain authors point out that their popularity is largely due to their publication coinciding with a corporation’s anniversary. This is used as a pretext to place the organisations in a privileged position compared to other institutions, since their longevity itself is testimony to their success – a recurrent element shown in our findings on commemorative books. Moreover, the most common content in corporate history also matches the content seen in the analysed commemorative books, including promoters (founders), collaborators (benefactors), results (alumni) and corporate growth (foundation and evolution). In short, the link between corporate history and commemorative books is clear and transparent, not only in the product itself (recognised as one of the most common in the genre) but also in the faithful reproduction of patterns and dynamics with regard to function and content.

Finally, and as seen clearly in this research, commemorative books from Catholic schools are a highly useful historiographic tool for historians. This is thanks both to their providing a greater knowledge on the history of these institutions and specially to outlining the image these schools wish to project to their community and society at large. In this sense, commemorative books provide highly valuable data and information to identify elements and methods included and promoted in these historical narratives. These elements not only helped energise and unite communities at the schools, but also enabled them to vindicate and differentiate their “brand” with regard to other educational institutions.