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Madrid: Subdirección General de los Archivos Estatales (Subdirectorate general of the state archives), 2007. Accessed 12 May 2020.
pares.culturaydeporte.gob.es/inicio.html.

Since 2007, the PARES database has given online access to the descriptive records (*registros descriptivos*) for twelve of the principal Spanish state archives. Those of greatest interest to early modernists will likely be the Archivo General de Simancas (General Archive of Simancas), the Archivo de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid (Archive of the Royal Chancery of Valladolid), the Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN; National Historical Archives), and the Archivo General de Indias (General Archive of the Indies). The administrators of PARES call it a "dynamic inventory," meaning that its scope, content, and number of records increase over time. It is not a complete catalogue of documents, nor anything akin to a library catalogue, but its dynamic nature is also its greatest asset in the form of a continuing digitization project. As of 31 December 2019, digitized documents comprised 34.3 percent of the 5,349,645 available records across all the archives. This equals a total of 1,836,756 scanned documents that are freely accessible and downloadable without the need for a login. Publication and re-use of scans requires permission in writing, but image-sharing on social media can be done instantly through linking icons that appear above each individual image. Among the links are the options to print or save directly to one's computer. One can also print the entire series of images comprising a document, although this process adds a substantial border to each page. The resulting smaller images can affect the legibility of manuscripts with a minuscule hand. Researchers who desire maximum legibility will have to download each image individually, which can be cumbersome for large documents.

The search engine for PARES is flexible and powerful, but most instructions and help pages are still available only in Spanish. Here and there, help in English will appear, like hints for searching or headings like "Date of formation," "Notes," or "Location in the archive classification scheme." PARES works best for Hispanists who are already familiar with the basic contents of

the different Spanish state archives and their subsections, or who wish to spend some time exploring the system to achieve this familiarity.

Take, for example, a filtered search of Inquisitorial records, using the advanced-search feature. First, one must select the main archive of the Archivo Histórico Nacional, then the subsection "Instituciones de la monarquía" (Monarchical institutions) under "Instituciones del Antiguo Régimen" (Institutions of the *Ancien Régime*), and finally the sub-subsection "Consejo de Inquisición" (Council of the Inquisition). The PARES home page offers two basic search types, each of which has an advanced option that allows for much refinement. The first type is "Documentos" (Documents), which matches search terms with information within each record for each document description and the headings therein. The second type is "Registros de autoridad" (Records by authority), which leads the searcher to links for browsing sections and subsections of the archives. Returning to the example of Inquisitorial records, entering the search term "Inquisición" (Inquisition) in the "Registros de autoridad" section yields links to different collections of documents catalogued by specific Inquisitorial tribunals or officials. To cite one more example, the search term "Lope de Vega" in "Registros de autoridad" leads to four very distinct archives that contain documents related to the famous playwright specifically listed with each link. In this way, the "Registros de autoridad" search option provides a useful and dynamic method to browse archive subsections according to their creators, themes, or subject persons.

The biggest limitation for PARES at this time stems from the sheer immensity of the combined archives that the database is meant to cover. There is a significant gap between online records and the greater number found in unique in-house database terminals or photocopied catalogues that are only available at physical archive locations. For example, the physical Archivo Histórico Nacional contains an unpublished catalogue for the Consejo de Castilla (Council of Castile) collection that is specifically for *legajos* (files of papers, literally "bundles") numbered 50,696 through 50,841. For the advanced search function of PARES, entering "50696" as a reference number currently yields a single *expediente* (document) for this *legajo*; "50697" yields no results; "50598" yields five *expedientes*; "50599" yields no results, and so on.

Many will be disappointed if their first instinct in PARES is to chase down a digital copy of a "Consejos" (Councils) document they saw referenced in a scholarly source. The reviewer himself has been waiting several years for

the *Inventarios de Causas Criminales de la Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte* (Inventory of criminal cases from the courtroom of the capital's [Madrid's] magistrates) in the "Consejos" subsection to become digitized, but for now one must still visit the AHN in person to look at the microfilm. Researchers will also discover gaps during the process of exploring the archives using keywords in PARES. The same historical person may be named in multiple related court cases, while it is possible that only one of those cases has been digitized, leaving the overall legal picture for that person incomplete. In short, the amount of information available through PARES is impressive, but researchers must maintain reasonable expectations about how much of it pertains to their specific topic and how many of the relevant documents are digitized.

Learning how to take full advantage of this resource requires patience but is ultimately very rewarding. At times, the structure and idiosyncrasies of PARES itself can shape a research approach. This is not necessarily a bad thing and may even lead to useful discoveries. One of the database's great gold mines is the *Registro de ejecutorias* (Record of final judgments) at the Archivo de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid. The subsection that is accessible in PARES contains thousands of scanned final judgments for lawsuits. As a combined entity, these *ejecutorias* reveal a level of everyday detail regarding early modern Spain that would be impossible to search and assimilate by any pre-digital means. Witness the variety of examples of fully accessible judgments from this panorama, all found by the reviewer within five minutes: disputes about housing additions or aggressive dogs, results of apothecary inspections, and acts of defamation. All of these were quickly found through the keywords "ventana" (window), "perro" (dog), "visita de botica" (apothecary's shop inspection) and "injuria" (insult) respectively. If the prospect of sifting through thousands of lawsuits seemed questionably productive before, it can now be a fruitful and enjoyable experience. With good reason this subsection, or "serie documental" (series of documents), of *ejecutorias* is listed as one of the five most consulted in PARES on the website's statistics page.

Other popular subsections are the "Pleitos de hidalguía" (Lawsuits over nobility), also part of the Real Chancillería, and the "Libros de asientos de pasajeros a Indias" (Passenger lists for those travelling to the Indies) at the Archivo de Indias. The first of these is hit-or-miss in terms of scanned documents, which is understandable because it comprises "42,086 units (documents) or more" (pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/184142). On

the other hand, the "Libros de asientos" contain fewer than thirty discrete, though lengthy, documents and appear to be fully digitized. One of the most-consulted single documents on PARES is *Derrotero del viage de Fernando de Magallanes en demanda del Estrecho. Desde el parage del Cabo de San Agustín,* once vaguely located in a mid-twentieth-century catalogue as "Simancas, en un legajo," but now fully scanned and accessible. Like all descriptive records, the one for the *Derrotero* contains useful hyperlinks in English that lead to different *autoridad* headings. With a few clicks, the researcher can leap from an account of Magellan's journey to a "Letter from Christopher Columbus to Luis de Santángel, Accountant of Wages of Their Majesties, about his first journey to the Indies," also fully digitized.

The gaps in PARES must be taken in stride because what the system offers is truly monumental. Often one can find exactly what one is looking for, though perhaps only described and not digitized. In such cases, a traditional visit to the archives is ultimately required. Other times, through keywords, hyperlinks, and associative searching, one may find real treasures that were not even on the researcher's mind beforehand. This reviewer has published more than one article with archival material that was found through simple keyword searches on PARES. Those with nostalgia for the feel of crackling *legajos* in places like Simancas or the Archivo de Indias can use the database as a timesaving device for identifying items of interest before a visit to the physical location. But those who invest the time to explore PARES online and are flexible in their research topic may find all the scans they need to avoid a trip to the archives altogether.

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