



Defensa dels mèrits del doctorand a càrrec del doctor Josep A. Blat Gimeno

It is my responsibility, and nevertheless my honour and pleasure, to introduce Sir Raymond Rickett as Doctor Honoris Causa of our University.

The relevance of his personality and career need not be mentioned here: his being a CBE since 1990 acknowledges a highly successful career, both as a scholar who is an FRSC (Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry), and as a top administrator both abroad and in the British academic system. He has been Vice-Provost of the City of London Polytechnic, Director of Middlesex Polytechnic and Chairman of the Council for National Academic Awards since retiring from Middlesex in 1991, which have been his key positions in the British system. He has also been a relevant member of various committees in UNESCO, ERASMUS and the British Council in the international arena.

It is his relevant international activity which started the relationship with our University. The biggest result was giving birth to the collaboration between what is now Middlesex University and the UIB in the development of new courses in Hotel Management and Tourism, which are of key importance in the qualification and re-qualification of managers in the main industry in our islands. The importance of the idea and of the achievement will never be sufficiently stressed.

My own experience of this fruitful relationship has been in the development of two key pilot programmes, both led by Middlesex University: the first is the European Master in Image Synthesis and Computer Animation, and the second is the TEMPUS programme for developing training in Computers in Art and Design for Hungarian institutions.

The **European Master in Image Synthesis and Computer Animation** has been, and still is, a challenging and rewarding experience in developing a truly joint European course where the syllabus is shared by four institutions in the UK, Holland, France and Spain, where the students take half of their courses abroad. It includes compulsory practical experience in companies in the form of a three-month placement. Taught in English, it is a wonderful experience for both lecturers and students who take part in it. It is also a pioneer course in the vanguard of Audio-visual Communication and New Technologies, where its computer science facet meets its creative facet to offer new ways of using media. And it is recognised through its validation by the British Council for National Academic Awards. It is not surprising that it has received funding from three different European programmes: Media'92, for its character as New Technologies for the Media; COMETT, for its placement experiences; ERASMUS, for the co-ordination of student mobility and lecturing.

The TEMPUS project **Computing in Art and Design** is also a pioneering project led by Middlesex University, which enables the training of young Hungarian students and lecturers in the uses of New Technologies for expression and communication. Last year we had eight students who, for three months, explored Interactive Multimedia and its different components using the most recent hardware and software available, and had the personal experience of discovering life in our Balearic Islands and offering us their Central European experiences and recovered traditions.

My experience also tells me of the influential role played behind the scenes by both Sir Raymond Rickett and his friend Professor Nadal Batle. Europe is still a developing idea with a considerable degree of fragility, as recent political events have dramatically shown. New schemes always face quite a few administrative hurdles within institutions. Credit must be given to the people who have promoted and enabled the development of these projects from their key positions.

But besides the credit due to the individuals, I would like to give credit to the underlying ideas that we are celebrating today, which are, in my view, those of Science and Technology without boundaries, and of international excellence in the activity of our University, which stems from these experiences.

What Europe means to us is the chance of a permanent break with a long-standing tradition of isolation from the scientific and technological mainstream. This isolationist tradition was inherited from the Inquisition and from Franco's dictatorship, which destroyed the emergent modern attempts to join this mainstream and promote our national identities. The exchange of ideas without boundaries, apart from the quality of thought and results, is one of the main sources of development in science and technology that had been barred for many years in Spain. The lack of exchange gave rise to many bad habits in which results are compared locally and inside official boundaries, but do not get into the open air and receive fresh criticism from traditionally more developed countries, which is the guarantee of quality and usefulness. This isolationist tradition is beginning to be replaced by a modern view of science where the exchange of ideas, collaboration and criticism play key roles. In this respect, some aspects of the current general research and development policy in Spain and European R&D programmes are pushing towards **normality**. These changes take time to settle down and to become a stable tradition. I think it will take more than a generation to see whether, and to what degree, this policy has been a success.

The previous point does not yet define a specific role for our University. In the trend towards scientific and technological normality, our medium-term aim is to promote our excellence at a European level in some specific areas (We will never be a large powerful centre like the big European capitals.) at a moment when telecommunications play a key role in many aspects of work in developed countries. Our tourist tradition, which in some respects hinders other lines of development, has placed us in a wonderful communication situation within Europe, based on our quality of life. Our young but developing University is one of the pillars of regional plans for promoting technology associated with telecommunications (*telematics*), and we want these plans to succeed. We also want our University and our islands to be renowned not only as a wonderful tourist resort, but also as a truly international centre for specific areas of science and technology.

Sir Raymond, we are very pleased and honoured to have you as an honorary member of our Academic Assembly. With this event we want to celebrate past European successes where you have played a key role and to share with you our views of an even better future. Thank you for your generosity in the past and your stimulus for the future.