

Carles Miravittles, founding director of the ICMAB, has passed away



Carles Miravittles | ICMAB, CSIC

We are deeply saddened by the death of our dear friend and colleague, Prof. Carles Miravittles, founder of the ICMAB in 1986 and director of the center for 21 years, from 1986 to 2008. Carles left us on April 16, 2023, at the age of 80.

His legacy and memory is extraordinary, both for his human and professional qualities. He was a key figure in the creation of the Institute of Materials Science of Barcelona and in the promotion of research in Catalonia.

The funeral will take place this Wednesday, April 19, 2023, at a quarter past three (3:15 PM) at the Tanatori de Sant Gervasi (Barcelona). The wake will be from Tuesday, April 18, at five o'clock in the afternoon (from 5 to 9 PM) and Wednesday morning (from 11 AM to 3 PM) at the same place.



Enric Banda, Carles Solà and Carles Miravittles

Carles, a visionary man

Carles Miravittles, born in Barcelona on September 9, 1942, received his PhD in pharmacy, and began his scientific career as a crystallographer at the University of Barcelona (UB), later moving to the CSIC, specifically to the Institut Jaume Almera and later, among others, at the Institute of Materials Science in Barcelona, where he was still linked. His scientific interest was focused on structural crystallography and X-ray diffraction, mainly in direct methods to solve crystal structures.

Apart from his interest in scientific research, in the second half of the 1980s he combined a very successful vision and a great capacity for work to create and promote the ICMAB in frontier Materials Science research. He was able to mobilize this emerging discipline, anticipating it within the CSIC, achieving the creation of 4 new Materials Science Institutes in Spain and later promoting the existence of a "National Materials Science Plan". The debt we owe him goes far beyond the ICMAB community and extends to the entire scientific community in this field.



Inauguration of the ICMAB building in 1991

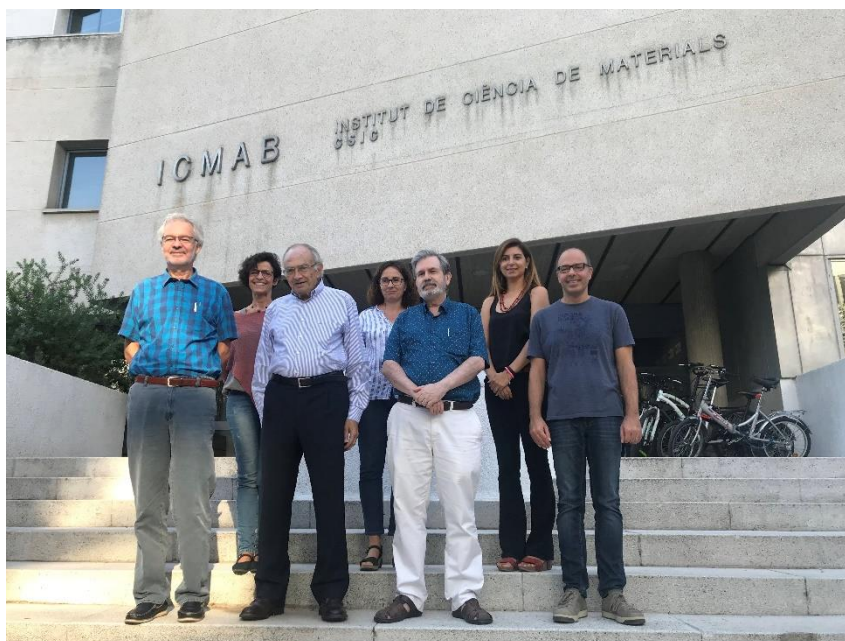
On the other hand, Carles Miravittles' wisdom in promoting a new CSIC research center on the campus of the Autonomous University of Barcelona was the seed that later turned this campus into one of the largest research concentrations in southern Europe. Carles' ability to attract diverse talent, to convince political and institutional leaders to launch large-scale operations was enviable. And this is the legacy he has left to all of us at ICMAB: the passion for excellence, internationalization and scientific ambition that has led us to be recognized twice as Severo Ochoa centers in the area of advanced functional materials.



Jaume Casabó, Carles Miravittles and Andreu Mas-Colell

Carles Miravittles not only contributed to build the foundations of the ICMAB in its origins, he was also decisive in other areas of management of the CSIC and his beloved Catalonia. First as CSIC Delegate in Catalonia (from 1987 to 1992), where he was able to promote institutional relations with the Generalitat de Catalunya. Later, encouraging the CSIC to create a new research center in Nanoscience and Nanotechnology that eventually became the current Institute of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology (ICN2). He also managed to collaborate with companies with the capacity to carry out research on the campus, creating the MATGAS Economic Interest Group, with the participation of Carbueros Metàlics, the CSIC and the UAB. Once released from the direction of ICMAB, he accepted to become the director of the Eduardo Torroja Institute in Madrid (2008-2009) in order to modernize and reorganize the center. Finally, Carles Miravittles returned to ICMAB, and until a few days ago he was still coming regularly to the center.

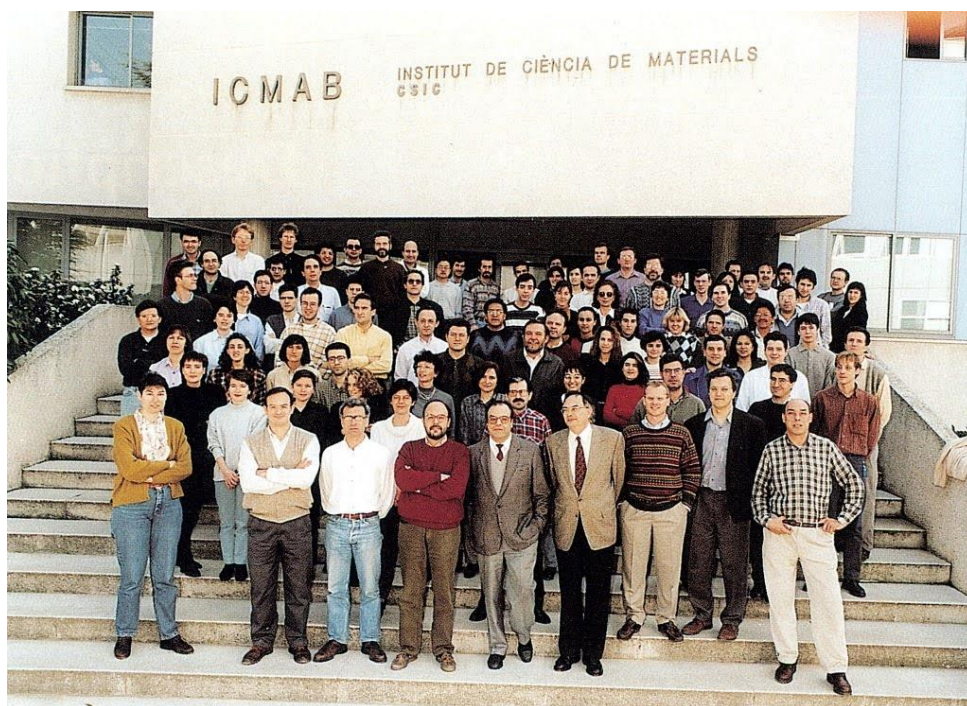
In addition to the positions and dedication to CSIC, Carles Miravittles was president of the Spanish Committee of Crystallography, and since 1993 a full member of the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences of Barcelona, of which he was also vice-secretary. He was a member of the Chemistry Section of the European Academy, president of the Expominer Fair, and an academician of the Royal Academy of Pharmacy of Catalonia since 2016. In 1992 he received the Narcís Monturiol Medal in scientific merit from the Generalitat de Catalunya, for his dedication to the study of new materials and for contributions to the fields of crystallography.



Crystallography research group at ICMAB, with Elies Molins, Joana Martínez, Carles Miravittles, Mònica Benito, Jordi Rius, Anna Crespi and Ignasi Mata

Carles Miravittles' human qualities and bonhomie were hallmarks that accompanied him throughout his life and were recognized by everyone. He distinguished himself by being very positive, kind to everyone, whether they shared his opinion or not, and always keeping a certain degree of irony and sarcasm about the management structures of research and administration, both state and autonomous. In any case, his mastery of human relations at all levels and of political structures made him an undisputed leader among research managers.

Dear Carlos, we ICMABers rejoice in the full life you have had and thank you from the bottom of our hearts for what you have given us. We want to convey to the family you are leaving that we will always remember you. Your name is already registered forever in the conference room of the center so that the newcomers will have you in mind. Have a safe trip!



ICMABers, when Carles Miravittles was director of the center

Xavier Obradors, Elies Molins, Jordi Rius, Anna May

They say about Carles...

"Carles is the person who has most influenced my scientific and professional career. He first encouraged me to move to ICMAB in 1989 when I was a young Full Professor at the Faculty of Physics of the University of Barcelona. His support and that of the president of the International Scientific Committee, Prof. Manuel Cardona, were decisive to create a powerful research team in Magnetism and Superconductivity. Later, in 2002, he proposed me to be the deputy director of ICMAB and, finally, the 2008 director. I always thanked him for the trust he had in me, as well as for the unconditional support, help and expertise I received from him when I took on the tasks of responsibility of directing the center" explains Xavier Obradors, director of the ICMAB between 2008 and 2023.

"Carles Miravittles brought the Institute into being; it is clear that he made a very wise choice of researchers from the beginning, and guided the expansion of the Institute throughout the 21 years that he was its director. His dynamism, intelligence and creativity allowed ICMAB to grow both in size and quality, his mark is indelible, and those of us who have been able to interact with him know what a great loss his passing means. In the broadest sense, he had a very important influence on research in Catalonia and Spain. He will be greatly missed. My deepest condolences to his family, friends, collaborators and colleagues" explains David Amabilino, current director of ICMAB.

"Carles Miravittles 'took me in' to the ICMAB at a difficult time for me, it was 1992. This determined my professional career. From the beginning, we had a trusted relationship. Carles was an intuitive, social person; he had a visionary point of view and a humor that was not always politically correct. He was a tireless and tremendously restless worker with the ambition and obsession to make ICMAB a modern research center of reference. He used to head his e-mails with a 'dear friend and colleague'. Carles, dear friend and colleague" in the words of Anna Roig, ICMAB researcher.

"Of Carles I can say that he had an advanced vision, both scientifically and technically. He had the virtue of knowing how to surround himself with good or very good people in his field. He had an idea of the future (I am talking about the late 80s) of ICMAB of scientific and technical excellence, and obviously also in the field of computer science. For example, making proposals ahead of his time, such as the idea of making a kind of Virtual Institute (he said without walls), where you could work remotely securely as if everyone was in the same institution. At that time, talking about Virtual Private Networks was a very advanced idea, which led ICMAB to have a world-class Computer Network in the following years, being a computing reference, both at the CSIC and at the UAB campus" explains Joan Figuerola, Head of Computer Science at ICMAB for many years.



Marta Vendrell, Joan Figuerola and Carles Miravittles in December 2022 for the ICMAB Christmas party