



## SANDRO PIGNATTI'S COLLECTION IN THE LIBRARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL BIOLOGY

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**ABSTRACT** – Library sciences study the specific value of Personal Collections preserved in libraries. It is crucial to valorise them and to make them accessible. Here we present the collection which was donated by Professor S. Pignatti to the library of the Department of Environmental Biology. It contains rare reference materials, mainly concerning his extensive research in the fields of flora, vegetation, phytogeography and ecology, through which it is possible to follow one century of scientific history of what Pignatti has sometimes referred to as “the green belt of the planet”.

**KEYWORDS:** PERSONAL COLLECTIONS; AUTHORIAL LIBRARIES; LIBRARY AND ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS; PHYTOGEOGRAPHY; VEGETATION; ECOLOGY; SANDRO PIGNATTI.

*“Guardando la biblioteca che fu di un grande studioso, ci assilla la domanda che cosa da quelle migliaia di volumi sia filtrato nella personalità intellettuale di lui e abbia contribuito a formarla. È disperante solo tentare di mettersi alla ricerca delle fonti dei pensieri umani: le influenze più profonde sono forse le meno evidenti. A ogni modo quei volumi racchiudono il segreto di un colloquio appassionato durato una vita intera: anche questo ce li fa degni di rispetto”* (Barberi F. citato in Guerrini, 2017, p. 94)<sup>1</sup>.

For several years, the field of library sciences has been studying the specific value of Personal Collections preserved in our libraries; not only the actual archival collections – for

example the importance for twentieth-century culture of the writers' archives preserved at the University of Pavia thanks to Maria Corti – are study material, but now the libraries themselves become tools to study the personalities and working methods of authors and scholars who donated their collections to public institutions.

It is therefore crucial, in the first place, to make these materials accessible by cataloguing them in a way that attests their presence in each specific library, and facilitates their search through the National Library Service (SBN) catalogue. Today, however, it also seems necessary to promote these personal libraries as a tool for exploring and analysing esteemed personalities in science and culture. In this regard we can follow the example of the National Central Library of Rome with the Falqui Hall, where the bookstock of the literary critic Enrico Falqui is preserved and can be viewed; and now with the Calvino Hall – which was established to celebrate the 100th anniversary of his birth – which contains the writer's bookstock and furniture. Sapienza University is also moving in this direction. The

<sup>1</sup> “Looking at the library that was a great scholar's, the question nags at us what from those thousands of volumes filtered into his intellectual personality and helped shape it. It is despairing just to try to set out in search of the sources of human thoughts: the deepest influences are perhaps the least obvious. In any case, those volumes hold the secret of a lifelong passionate conversation: that, too, makes them worthy of our respect”. [trad. dell'a.]

Enrico Barone Library at the Economy Department has completed cataloguing the Alexandre Marc Collection and the Library of the Environmental Biology Department has completed cataloguing the De Notaris Collection. For both collections Documentary Exhibitions are present on-line.

Sandro Pignatti's bookstock contains his rich personal collection of monographs, periodicals, abstracts, pamphlets, phytosociological tables (also unpublished), charts, correspondences with eminent scholars of Plant Science such as Tüxen, Braun Blanquet and other notable personalities. The collection was donated by Pignatti himself to the library of the Department of Environmental Biology between April 2016 and June 2020.

Looking at single documents and at the collection as a whole, the prolific intellectual activity of Pignatti, his network of relationships, the multiplicity of his interests, and the historical-cultural context in which the Professor operated, emerged. Sandro Pignatti held his long career in University teaching, from 1955, at the Universities of Pavia, Padova, Trieste and lastly at Sapienza University of Rome where he was full professor in Ecology from November 1st 1988 and where he is currently Professor Emeritus. In 1999 he became a member of the National Academy of Lincei.

The rich library and documentary heritage we briefly want to illustrate, originates and develops from his teaching experience as well as from the extensive research carried out in the fields of flora, vegetation, phytogeography, ecology, with particular reference to Mediterranean and Alpine ecosystems.

The main topics of the publications of his Collection are the studies of the flora of Europe and other continents and countries, especially Japan and Australia.

Many works also include environmental issues: conservation of threatened and endangered habitats and species, consequences of antropogenic impact, national parks, origin and development of the environmentalist movement, especially in Germany; other works focus on forest vegetation, nature conservation, vegetation evolution in different European areas – Germany, Austria, Balkans, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Eastern Europe, Iberian Peninsula, France, Mediterranean and Asiatic Regions. In addition, the works concerning the evolutionary taxonomy are the focal point of the two editions of his monumental work “Flora d’Italia” – the latter divided in 4 volumes (Bologna, Edagricole, 2017-2019) – in which the Author made significant changes in the systematic classification of the botanic families described, using the modern approach based on DNA techniques for the identification of phylogenetic affinities between taxa, instead of using the approach based uniquely on morphology.

Pignatti's Collection testifies to the polyedric nature of his personality, the multiplicity of his interests, and his vast scientific production in the fields of Botany and Ecology. All of this has an impact on his bookstock representing a

complex and original reality where documents often blur the line between the biblioteconomical and archival types.

For example documents containing original handwritten notes are recurrent: books with dedication and signature of the donor which mostly coincide with the author of the book, ownership notes or reading notes with the signature of the Professor, comments and original elaborations; most of the documents are marked with a stamp of ownership. During the catalogation process we registered the presence of any autographic interventions which serve as a sort of roadmap of cultural and human exchanges and mark milestones in the professional and personal life of Sandro Pignatti.

The books preserved almost all of the paratextual elements such as covers, original dust jackets and wraparound bands. Between the pages bookmarks, working notes and newspaper clippings are frequently present.

The majority of the works are exclusive of this personal collection which represents a priceless, diverse heritage, through which it is possible to follow a century of scientific history of the world sometimes called by Pignatti “la fascia verde del pianeta” (lit. “the green belt of the planet”).

After acquiring the Collection, it was immediately clear that specialists with diverse competences would be required to interpret the collection: from the librarian and the archivist to the researchers in the different fields.

The arrangement of the Collection was also a matter of consideration: the choice was whether to maintain the original disposition of the documents or rather to adjust them to the new location, preserving at least a memory of the original arrangement.

After several meetings with the Professor and analysing the material, we realized that there was not always a systematic or deliberate order, as the Professor collected and kept his own documentation not only on the basis of specific and contingent needs, but sometimes, probably, also in relation to events he casually experienced; indeed we often found within the collection traces of different arrangements which oriented us to identify and consider the various changes and their motives. The first analysis showed that part of the material was arranged by subject and geographical area, while another part was organized in folders arranged according to sociological *syntaxa*<sup>2</sup>. For the accomodation of the collection, which occupied a hundred linear metres in the library and another hundred in the warehouse, and to preserve its organicity, it was

<sup>2</sup> Sociological *taxa* are the units into which the Phytosociological Science classifies vegetation of all environments on the planet. *Taxa* or rather *syntaxa* are organized in a hierarchical system of classification that includes sets (of Phanerogams) ordered from the largest to the smallest: class, order, alliance, association, referring to the simplest scheme devised by Braun-Blanquet “the “Father of Phytosociology” (cfr. Braun-Blanquet Josias & Huns Jenny, 1926. Vegetations-Entwicklung und Bodenbildung in der Alpen Stufe der Zentralalpen. – Schweiz. Naturforsch. Gesell. Bd. LXIII- Abh. 2).

necessary to undertake a series of adjustments of the space and the furnishings of one of the halls in the library in order to guarantee that the materials could be consulted in accordance to the most advanced criteria of library science, to provide the user of the library with the information required.

When the materials were acquired and inventorised, they were placed on shelving selected and purchased following the rules and criteria of the Technical Office of Sapienza University, with a dedicated plaque.

The Collection has been marked with its own location section in order to certify and preserve over time its origin and that of the individual documents, and to guarantee formal identity in the electronic catalogue and shelf material unity as requested by the Professor himself at the time of donation. In addition, he also specifically asked that all the materials on shelf should be available for consultation and loan, in compliance with the library's rules and Regulation; except for the pamphlets and periodicals for which the library, in agreement with the donor, asks for specific and justified requests for the use of the document. Due to their considerable number and the variety of topics they cover, the monographs were appropriately arranged following the Dewey Decimal Classification, which is particularly useful for books placed on open shelves, in order to be directly accessible to the users. This would allow them to consistently navigate the collection, which was recently added to the library of Department of Environmental Biology. The pamphlets were organized in appropriate containers trying as much as possible to maintain the original arrangement; they are numbered per box and, within the box, in numerical sequential order.

Regarding the periodicals, not all of them had significant consistency; many were single issues or gifts sent for a brief period. These also reveal the diverse interests of Sandro Pignatti. At the end of 2020 we started the stocktaking job and the insertion in the catalogue of the National Library Service (SBN). As of today, we have inserted 1800 items.

The topic of the author libraries is one of the most appealing for a librarian: the privilege of receiving a donation, but above all, spreading knowledge of the material, which is not merely stored but also utilized, is one of the most thrilling activities, in addition to being the primary means of heritage preservation. The conservation and the study of such collections are even more crucial and necessary in the University sphere, as stated by Fiammetta Sabba:

*“Un nuovo ambito di analisi per le biblioteche d'autore potrebbe aprirsi partendo dunque da qui, dalle Università e dai loro fondi librari e archivistici, come luoghi eletti per le attività di didattica, sperimentazione e laboratorio, e soprattutto per la ricerca, che distingue un paese come il nostro erede di una tradizione letteraria, culturale e storica di grande valore e prestigio”* (Sabba, 2016, p. 432)<sup>3</sup>.

For completeness, we would like to provide some data regarding the Environmental Biology library. This important specialized library in Botany in central Italy serves as a focal point for professors, students, and experts on the subject. It is located on the first floor of the Botany building, which was designed by Giuseppe Capponi between 1933 and 1935, within the University campus of Sapienza, commissioned by Marcello Piacentini.

One notable characteristic of the project is the allocation of around 500 square metres of space dedicated to the library. It is structured into specific and well-defined areas: the botanical library, the periodicals reading room, and an office. The library owns a collection of around 70000 documents including monographs, periodicals and pamphlets. For years it has been guaranteeing 50 hours of access per week, Monday to Friday, from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm. It provides to the users support on national and international catalographic research and assistance in database search and in the main electronic resources of Sapienza University.

In addition to consulting the entire bibliographic heritage through a totally automated catalogue, containing all the bibliographic informations, the library offers local and inter-library lending, and search and supply of articles not available in library service.

The library organises periodical introductory courses in the use of the resources and the informative and documentary services which take place within the library itself, or in collaboration with other libraries in similar fields. The library owns an important, antique and rare bibliographic heritage consisting of Collections from various origins which hold scientific, artistic and historical value as they represent the meeting point between aesthetic beauty and the enduring importance of botanical research and its ongoing developments.

The library owns 1237 volumes dating back to the period between 1535 and 1837, many of which are illustrated with exceptionally beautiful engravings depicting plants and flowers. These are pictorial works enriched with explanatory texts, serving the educational purpose of distinguishing between different species.

Many of these volumes also serve as a valuable source of information for understanding the role of Botany in the advancement of science. Additionally, they are rarely found in other Italian libraries, as indicated by the national automated SBN catalogue (National Library Service).

The donation from Pignatti significantly enriched the library's book collection.

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collections, as elected places for teaching, experimentation and laboratory activities, and above all for research, which distinguishes a country like ours, with a literary, cultural and historical tradition of great value and prestige”. [trad. dell'a.]

<sup>3</sup> “A new field of analysis for author libraries could open up, therefore, starting from here, from universities and their libraries and archival

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