

THE LIBRARY OF A YOUNG MARINE BIOLOGY STATION (MBS OF UNIVERSITY OF SALENTO, ITALY)

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ABSTRACT: The marine Biology Station of Porto Cesareo was founded in 1966 having Naples and Monaco as models. It experienced the transition from "paper" libraries to "electronic" ones and, notwithstanding the absence of historical books (due to its young age) and the difficulty (economic and deriving from availability of texts), it discovered the necessity of a solid book based collection. The efforts of MBS of Porto Cesareo have been addressed in the direction to collect all titles on Marine Biology that are published every year and, for the future, the acquisition of ancient books.

The library of Marine Biology Station, MBS (formerly the Marine Biology Station of Salento) has been founded in 1966 by Pietro Parenzan (1902-1992) contemporaneously with the opening of the Marine Biology Museum at Porto Cesareo. In 1977 the structure came under the control of the University of Lecce (today University of Salento), and from 1988 it is under the direct control of the Department of Biology (today Dept. of Biological Environmental Sciences and Technologies, BEST). The entire library collection today is hosted at BEST. It reaches about 2.700 volumes (1200 monographs), and 156 journals dealing with (in order of title numbers) Marine Biology, Ecology, Evolution, Biogeography, Natural History, Biodiversity, Paleontology, Ethology and Behaviour, Limnology, Africa (Fig.1).

The MBS of University of Salento is part of the framework of excellence of MARBEF (Marine Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functioning) from 2003. It publishes the journal *Thalassia Salentina* which is sent free of charge to 230 Institutes in the world (110 Italian), from which the MBS receives 90 journals in exchange. All the articles published on the journal are available (as pdf files) on the web site <http://siba2.unile.it/sbm/periodici.htm> (Fig. 2). All titles have been recently inserted in an electronic data-base which can be consulted by using, as keywords, Author, Argument, Year, Journal/Book name/title.

The 90 % of books acquired in the last 10 years are in English, and more than 50 % of articles published on the last 10 numbers of the journal *Thalassia Salentina*, too. This testifies the effort carried out to bring the MBS Library (and the journal) in an international context. The MBS Library has an annual budget of € 20,000.00 (purchase, functioning, and publishing activity), a University staff of 4 units, and 2 additional contractors. Economic resources (structured personnel are not considered) are destined to the book/journal purchase (65 %), journal publishing (30 %), and mail costs of expeditions (5 %).

Due to the youth of the Institution, ancient books (i.e., those published > 100 years ago) in the Library are no more than 0,6 %. And no one of the original ones has been published before 1850 (Fig. 3). A re-edition of a 1778 book represents the most ancient publication of the library, but books older than 1850 are just 3 (and all re-editions).

The Marine Biology studies carried out by Lecce researchers allowed the judgment "excellent" from the MARBEF. Notwithstanding the modernity of studies and the vanguard position of Lecce Marine Biologists in the Italian scenario, researchers are obliged to search for ancient articles (over

all original species description) in other, historical, libraries (Naples, Genoa, Trieste, Sevastopol, Copenhagen).

The library is connected via web with the most important Publishers whose journals are available also on line. These electronic versions, however, do not consider numbers and/or articles more ancient than 1990.

The necessity to have ancient references to be consulted has begun one of the most important perspectives for the future development of the “young” MBS library of the University of Salento. This is testified either by visits that Lecce researchers were obliged to do in other libraries, and/or by the investment of a part of the library budget in acquiring ancient titles.

Captions:

Fig. 1:

The room of scientific journals of the MBS library, at Porto Cesareo, before their transfer to the Dept. BEST, in Lecce.

Fig. 2:

The 1st number of the journal published by MBS library, in 1966

Fig. 3:

The oldest original book (1854) of the library