

# From Disorder to Order: A Challenge for the Philosopher and the Librarian (Milan, Italy)\*

Laura Frigerio

Philosophy Library, University of Milan, Via Festa del Perdono, 7,  
Cortile Ghiacciaia, I-20122 Milano, Italy, <laura.frigerio@unimi.it>



Born in 1964, Laura Frigerio studied philosophy at the University of Pavia. In 1990 she started to work at the Public Library of Gropello Cairoli, a small town in northern Italy, dealing with bibliographic services and reading promotion for adults and children. Since 1996 she has been working at the University of Milan, first in interlibrary services and then in books acquisition. In 2001 she became the Director of the Library of Philosophy, an academic library for students and researchers, with a collection of about 50,000 ancient and modern books, and 200 academic journals.

Frigerio, Laura. *From Disorder to Order: A Challenge for the Philosopher and the Librarian (Milan, Italy)*. *Knowledge Organization*, 36(2/3), 150-159. 2 references.

**ABSTRACT:** The Philosophy Library at the University of Milan was born in the fifties by the merger of the two Institutes of Philosophy and the History of Philosophy. Once the restoration had been completed, it was necessary to devise a suitable classification system in order to arrange the books and to meet the new research needs of the Institutes. The project was entrusted to Prof. Corrado Mangione and Prof. Maria Assunta del Torre, with the theoretical contribution of Giuliana Saponi, chief Director of Central Library of the Faculty of Laws and Humanities. The model had been conceived as completely anew, without any reference to other existing classification systems. The inspiring principles were from one hand the choice for an open shelving system, from the other one the idea that the orientation criteria and the book search had to be user-friendly for everyone. This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the making-up of the call number as applied to each section of the collection, and how the scheme has been developed over the past fifty years. Points of strength and weakness of the scheme are also discussed at the light of the technological innovations which have gradually affected the whole of the library activities, notably with the introduction of the electronic catalogue. The original classification scheme has maintained its coherence and functionality over time, in spite of the expansion of the collection and the automation of all stages of the classification process. This is the main reason to keep using it in the future.

\* Translated by Michela Dalbagno.

## 1. Introduction

The conference held at the University of Padova, *Classifying the Human Sciences: The Case of Philosophy* (February 2, 2007), has provided the opportunity to recover historical information about the Philosophy Library at the University of Milan. The research was based on the analysis of the Annals of the University and of an unpublished typescript by Giuliana Saponi (1991), the Library Director of the

Faculty of Laws and Humanities from 1959 to 1982. The dating of some very meaningful events in the development path of the library called for reference to the relevant acts and deliberations from the archives of the Philosophy Department and to interviews to some academic staff. Through their historical memory and witnesses it was possible to reconstruct the first stages in the process of bringing the collection together and to trace the inspiring guidelines of the classification system which was then

adopted and has remained practically unchanged ever since.

## 2. The birth of the library: a brief historical account

In the 1950s the University central seat hall was restored after the ravages of the second world war bombings. The two Institutes of Philosophy and History of Philosophy were then relocated from their temporary home in the via della Passione in Milan to their present location in the restored wing of the building in the via Festa del Perdono, which adjoins the Ghiacciaia courtyard. Thus the Philosophy Library had found its permanent home.

Up until that time the philosophy books owned by the University of Milan had been kept in the Faculty Central Library. The subject subdivision, conceived by Giuliana Saponi on the basis of the material available at that time, included the following areas:

- |                 |                        |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| 15.             | Theoretical philosophy |
| 16.             | Ethics                 |
| 17.             | History of philosophy  |
| F.S. I, II, III | Philosophy - general   |

As the Institutes were being relocated, a first collection of some hundred volumes was reported to be on its way to the central seat. The books were at first stored in a basement room next to the teaching staff offices. This was the nucleus of the library: casual piles of books in a small room with no librarian. In those days there were neither technical staff nor any supervision over the books and their handling.

## 3. Devising a special classification scheme

In the 60's a project was started to restore a room in the basement underneath the library. The one being used was becoming too small to host the collection, which was increasing in number.

Two professors were thus entrusted with the task of devising a classification system which would both serve the purpose of arranging the books and meet the new research needs of the Institutes.

The persons in charge were Professor Corrado Mangione, teaching Logic (a subject first introduced at the University of Milan) and Professor Maria Assunta Del Torre, teaching History of philosophical historiography. The choice was all but random, if one considers the structure they had in mind for the new system.

The theoretical contribution of Giuliana Saponi – at that time the chief Director of the Central Library of the Faculty of Laws and Humanities – was essential to create a classification scheme in the “library style” that would allow for the complexity of a call number, the rising growth of the collection both in subjects and numbers, as well as the layer structure of several works in more than one volume. The scheme had to make it possible to represent reference-only works as well as any information that might be of relevance to the current Institute research areas and lecture subjects.

Once the restoration had been completed and a technical-administrative staff unit assigned to the library, the books could be moved downstairs. Only then did the collection start its substantial growth and some of the volumes of the Faculty Central Library were gradually transferred, at the request of the academic staff, to the Institute. In reality, the inventory of the new books, which were bought upon the advice of the teaching staff, was still made by the librarians of the Central Library, who also catalogued them. The shelf mark, though, started to be defined by the teaching staff on the basis of the new classification scheme.

The model had been conceived anew, without any reference to other existing systems. The inspiring principles were the choice of open shelves and the idea that the orientation criteria and the book search should be user-friendly for everyone. The *Dewey Decimal Classification* system was judged unsuitable to satisfy the current needs of a library created for study and research. Its adoption was therefore immediately ruled out.

## 4. The make-up of the call number

The call number of the books in the Library is made up by four fields:

- 1: *Section*: it is the same for all monographic works, e.g. 3L (3L was the identification code assigned to all the books of the library by Giuliana Saponi, in order to identify the Library of Philosophy as the third library of the Faculty of Humanities (as a matter of fact, each library of the Faculty Institutes had been given a code to distinguish it from the Central Library);
- 2: *Shelf mark*: it can be in turn broken down into class, type and chain number, whereas:
  - the *class* identifies the century or centuries with reference to the author or to the content of a book;

- the *type* distinguishes between the works by an author, e.g. letter T (for Italian *testi*), and the studies on an author, e.g. letter S (for Italian *studi*);
  - the *chain number* is an identification number assigned to each author. It is used, without distinction, for both the works by and the studies on that author.
- 3: *Specification*: it depends on the order of arrival of the work in the library. It doesn't necessarily reflect the publication chronological order, but rather the inventory order;
- 4: *Sequence*: it is the final set of numbers and is used when a work consists of more than one volume.

#### 4.1 Applicability of the scheme to circulating works

The works for borrowing are divided by class into 20 groups:

Class
01. Eastern philosophy – works and studies
02. 6 <sup>th</sup> - and 5 <sup>th</sup> -century B.C. authors – works and studies
03. 4 <sup>th</sup> -century B.C. authors – works and studies
04. 3 <sup>th</sup> -, 2 <sup>th</sup> and 1 <sup>th</sup> -century B.C. authors – works and studies
05. 1 <sup>th</sup> -, 2 <sup>th</sup> and 3 <sup>th</sup> -century A.D. authors – works and studies
06. 4 <sup>th</sup> -, 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies
07. 7 <sup>th</sup> -, 8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies
08. 10 <sup>th</sup> - and 11 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies
09. 12 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies
10. 13 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies
11. 14 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies
12. 15 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies
13. 16 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies
14. First half 17 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies
15. Second half 17 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies
16. First half 18 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies
17. Second half 18 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies
18. First half 19 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies
19. Second half 19 <sup>th</sup> -century authors – works and studies

Table 1. Circulating works

3L. 19.T.173.013 is, for instance, the call number for:

Brentano, Franz

The \*True and the Evident / by Franz Brentano ; edited by Oskar Kraus ; English edition edited by Roderick M. Chisholm ; translated by Roderick M. Chisholm ... <et al.>. - London : Routledge and K. Paul, 1966. - XXIX, 190 p. ; 22 cm.

The different elements of the call number carry the following information:

- 3L. : the work belongs to the Library of Philosophy;
- 19.: it is a work by/on an author from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century;
- T.173.: it is a work *by* Franz Brentano (173 is the chain number assigned to Brentano within class 19);
- 013: it is the thirteenth work by Brentano acquired by the library.

#### 4.2 The 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy

Owing to its richness, the last group of circulating books – e.g. the works and studies related to 20<sup>th</sup> century authors – is divided into 19 subgroups:

Class
20b. Italian language authors and studies
20c. Chinese language authors and studies
20d. Philosophy of language – works and studies
20e. Aesthetics – works and studies
20h. French language authors and studies
20k. <i>Communication Science – works and studies</i>
20i. German language authors and studies
20l. English language authors and studies
20m. Russian language authors and studies
20n. Other languages – works and studies
20o. Philosophy of science – works and studies
20p. Physics – works and studies
20q. Natural Science – works and studies
20r. Mathematics – works and studies
20s. Logic – works and studies
20u. Philosophy of history – works and studies
20v. <i>Artificial Intelligence – works and studies</i>
20w. <i>Bioethics – works and studies</i>
20z. Anthropology – works and studies

Table 2. 20<sup>th</sup> century authors

The class list immediately reveals a basic ambiguity resulting from the mingling of two grouping criteria: language and subject. That is the reason why the attribution of a shelfmark to the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy books is based on the following priorities:

- If the subject matter of the work is clearly identifiable, it prevails over the language, then and the author is classified according to the area of expertise (It is still true that a 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher might eventually turn to and even favour new areas of thought. In such a case he might be moved into another group);

- If the author is involved in more than one subject area or in general philosophy, then the language prevails (By *language* it is meant the source language of the author, which does not necessarily coincide with his nationality);
- If a subject area is lacking – as is the case with political philosophy, a teaching subject recently introduced for which the addition of a new group is being considered – then the identification is based on the language.

Obviously, once the chain number for an author has been established, the related translation works will be put under that same number, in order to support the readers in their search for different versions of the same work.

L.20v.T.0010.001 is, for instance, the call number for the following work:

Dreyfus, Hubert L.

\*What computer can do : the limits of artificial intelligence / by Hubert L. Dreyfus. - New York [etc.] : Harper & Row, 1979. - XIII, 354 p. ; 21 cm.

The different elements of the call number carry the following information:

3L : the work belongs to the Library of Philosophy;

20v.: it is a work by/on a 20<sup>th</sup>-century author who wrote about artificial intelligence;

T.0010.: it is a work *by* Hubert L. Dreyfus (0010 is the chain number assigned to Dreyfus within class 20v.);

001: it is the first work by Dreyfus acquired by the library.

Given the growing number of 20<sup>th</sup>-century authors, the shelfmark subfield reserved for the chain number was expanded to 4 figures. Works by more than three authors and the general studies about an age or a subject are grouped under the chain number 000., which is a fixed identification available in each class.

The book:

\*Studies in post-medieval semantics / E. J. Ashworth. - London : Variorum reprints, 1985. - 1 v. (various pagings) ; 24 cm.

is identified by the call number 3L.13.S.000.230, which reveals that this is a general study on the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The volume:

\*God and time : Essays on the divine nature / edited by Gregory E. Ganssle and David M. Woodruff. - New York [etc.] : Oxford University Press, 2002. - IX, 252 p. ; 25 cm.

is identified by the call number 3L.20L.S.0000.030, which reveals that this is a general study on the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy in English.

#### 4.3 Reference works: instruments and critical editions

Reference works, which may not be borrowed but only used in the library reading room, are divided into Instruments and Critical Editions.

“Instruments” are divided into 9 subgroups:

Class

- A.01. Bibliographies
- A.02. Encyclopaedias
- A.03. General Histories of philosophy
- A.04. Compendia
- A.05. Handbooks and manuals
- A.06. Dictionaries
- A.07. Conference proceedings
- A.08. Anthologies
- A.09. Exhibitions catalogues

Table 3. Instruments

“Critical editions” are divided into 19 subgroups; the last group further distinguishes between language and subject area, according to the instructions given in the preceding/previous section.

Class

- 02A. 6<sup>th</sup>- and 5<sup>th</sup>-century B.C. authors
- 03A. 4<sup>th</sup>-century B.C. authors
- 04A. 3<sup>th</sup>-, 2<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>th</sup>-century B.C. authors
- 05A. 1<sup>th</sup>-, 2<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>th</sup>-century A.D. authors
- 06A. 4<sup>th</sup>-, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>-century authors
- 07A. 7<sup>th</sup>-, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>-century authors
- 08A. 10<sup>th</sup>- and 11<sup>th</sup>-century authors
- 09A. 12<sup>th</sup>-century authors
- 10A. 13<sup>th</sup>-century authors
- 11A. 14<sup>th</sup>-century authors
- 12A. 15<sup>th</sup>-century authors
- 13A. 16<sup>th</sup>-century authors
- 14A. First half 17<sup>th</sup>-century authors
- 15A. Second half 17<sup>th</sup>-century authors
- 16A. First half 18<sup>th</sup>-century authors
- 17A. Second half 18<sup>th</sup>-century authors

## Class

- 18A. First half 19<sup>th</sup>-century authors  
 19A. Second half 19<sup>th</sup>-century authors  
 20bA. etc... 20<sup>th</sup> century authors

Table 4. Critical editions

## 4.4 Personal collections

The Library houses rather substantial personal collections, received as donations, which are shelved in special areas. They include Mario Dal Pra's collection of about 4500 volumes, which came to the library after the philosopher's death and, according to his precise instructions, was made totally available to students and academic staff. Between 1991 and 1992, the Philosophy Department received the donation of a part of Professor Mario Del Pra's private collection, who had held the chair of History of Philosophy at University of Milan. The works were catalogued by Marina Cappelletti and divided into 10 groups, following the instructions given by the professor himself, who had expressed the will that the collections should be available for borrowing and reference on open shelves. The books were classified as follows:

Oriental philosophy	3L.DP01.T/S
Ancient philosophy	3L.DP02.T/S
Christian and Medieval philosophical culture	3L.DP03.T/S
Renaissance philosophical culture	3L.DP04.T/S
17 <sup>th</sup> -century philosophical culture	3L.DP05.T/S
18 <sup>th</sup> -century philosophical culture	3L.DP06.T/S
19 <sup>th</sup> -century philosophical culture	3L.DP07.T/S
20 <sup>th</sup> -century arts, literature, history and religious, political and pedagogical culture	3L.DP.MISC.
(MISC. = miscellaneous)	

The other collection is Giovanni Vailati's. Donated to the then Institute of History of Philosophy at Milan's Università degli Studi by a close relative of Giovanni Vailati's, Enzo, in March 1959, the book collection includes about 2000 volumes as well as a substantial manuscript and typescript archive. In the second half of the nineties, Lucia Ronchetti completed the card-indexing of the Vailati collection, nowadays entirely traceable through the electronic

catalogue. The books are arranged in close shelves, in alphabetical order by title and author, and are catalogued according to the rules provided by the Italian National Library Service, *Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale*. Since the books are mostly 19<sup>th</sup>-century editions, they could not be made available for borrowing but for reference use only. (All quoted web-sites URLs were checked in December 2008. For a biography of Giovanni Vailati's in English, see <http://www.giovanni-vailati.net/biografia.php>.)

The shelfmarks for personal collections have been devised ad hoc to contain the initials of the donors, in order to allow the immediate identification of the documents:

3L.DP	Mario Dal Pra's collection
3L.GV	Giovanni Vailati's collection

The initials are followed by a set of numbers which parallels the division in use for any other book.

## 4.5 The shelfmark of periodicals and multi-media

About ten years ago the philosophy journals were moved from the Faculty reading room to the library. A new section had to be especially created, since the original classification system did not cover periodicals:

3L.PER. + progressive number assigned to each title; PER stands for the Italian "periodici," "periodicals" in English.

For distribution purposes, the material available on open shelves was arranged according to the same criterion in use at the Faculty Library, e.g. the alphabetical order by title, without following the number progression.

As to the multi-media, the adopted shelfmark simply refers to the type of media:

3L.CD.	+ progressive call number
3L.VHS.	+ progressive call number
3L.DVD.	+ progressive call number

No reference is made to either the contents or the author.

Let's now give some examples to clarify the process of call number assignment by the librarian. The work to be classified is by David Hume, who belongs to class 17 (authors of the second half of the

18<sup>th</sup> century) and has been given the chain number 003.

1. E.g.: A work by Hume, the forty-third acquired by the library:

Dialogues concerning natural religion / David Hume ; edited, with an introduction, by Norman Kemp Smith. - 2. ed. - London ; Macmillan, 1947. - XII, 249 p. ; 18 cm.

Assigned call number: 3L. 17.T.003.043

2. E.g.: A study on Hume, the fifty-first acquired by the library, has the same chain number 003:

Philosophy and ideology in Hume's political thought / by David Miller. - Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1981. - IX, 218 p ; 22 cm.

Assigned call number: 3L. 17.S.003.051

3. E.g.: Works by Hume on electronic device. In this case, the CD-ROM progressive number (010) prevails over both the chain number and the chronological specification:

Works & correspondence / David Hume. - Charlottesville : InteLex, c1992. - 1 CD-ROM ; 12 cm.

Assigned call number: 3L. CD.T.010

#### 4.6 Recent innovations

##### 4.6.1 Ancient and rare books

Since 2006 a project for the safeguarding of ancient and rare books has been carried out at the library, with the following purposes:

- Final survey of the ancient and 19<sup>th</sup>-century modern material (up to 1899) owned by the library (a small number of these books has not been catalogued, yet; note that, according to the guidelines of ICCU (*Istituto Centrale Catalogo Unico*, Central Institute for the Union Catalogue), 'ancient' are the books published until 1830);
- Binding and restoration of the worn-out and/or damaged volumes;
- Creation of a suitably furnished area where books can be safely kept in compliance with the best possible preservation standards;
- Reduction of the risk of theft/violation;
- Fitting up of a permanent display section for the most rare and valuable editions, as well as the most philosophically relevant or peculiar volumes;

- Optimization of a controlled Reference Service;
- Abatement of damage factors such as dust, improper or careless handling, photocopying.

In view of the physical transfer of the volumes, the call numbers have been changed on occasion of the bibliographic control check and are now structured as follows:

3L.ANT (ANT stands for Italian "antichi," "ancient" in English)

+ 500, 600, 700, 800 (e.g.: specification in short of the century of the edition)

+ volume progressive number

Since this is an expanding sector, the classification according to the progressive number might cause a continuity gap with respect to the authors. However, the chronological aspect was deliberately preferred, since it was thought to be more relevant as to the value of the editions. For obvious reasons, these books are going to be kept in closed shelves.

##### 4.6.2 New subject areas

New class numbers have been recently added to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century group for the following new subject areas:

20k	Communication science
20v	Artificial intelligence
20w	Bioethics

## 5. Evaluation of the classification scheme

### 5.1 Merits and points of strength

Despite its fifty years, the expansion of the collection and its increase in subjects, the classification scheme adopted by the Library of Philosophy has kept some features unaltered in time. These are valuable both for the users and the librarians. Regular visitors have acquired familiarity with a scheme which has basically remained unchanged. The shelfmark structure is both immediately comprehensible and easy to bear in mind. Both teaching staff and researchers appreciate the fact that the arrangement of books reflects the internal organization of the research branches and the orientation of the Department of Philosophical studies.

A further advantage is the fact that the works in the original language are shelved side by side with their

translations. From a practical point of view, the same chain number for both the studies *on* and the works *by* an author allows the researchers to comfortably find on neighbouring shelves both the works by the studied author and the critical literature of the same.

The ease of change of the shelfmark is undoubtedly fully appreciated by librarians. Moreover, there is the awareness that subject indexing, which has been constantly carried out since the Eighties, makes up for the non-application of a more traditional classification system. The cataloguing by subject is carried out according to the Florence guide to cataloguing by subject (Soggetario 1956).

### 5.2. Limitations and points of weakness

The weak points of the system are of both theoretical and practical nature as well as subject-related. First and foremost is the rare possibility of further expanding the thematic scope, either in connection with philosophy in general or with new/future research fields at the Department.

Secondly, some classification choices made by the librarians were in time to be somewhat arbitrary. For instance, in the case of composite works including studies on various subjects, which should be given priority? The first work or the most extensive? The one written by an author from the University or the one dealing with a subject currently of great interest?

Librarians have gradually replaced the teaching staff in the task of assigning call numbers, and they have inevitably personalized some choices, giving different interpretations to ambiguous cases. It has, for instance, become rather difficult to establish which is the most proper call number for the studies concerning longer periods of time (as is the typical case with Medieval philosophy). Authors who lived around the turn of a century have been classified by the year of their birth in some cases, or the period of richest scientific production in some others. Also 20<sup>th</sup>-century works show some inconsistency, should they be classified according to the language or subject area? Such is, however, an insuperable fault, bequeathed by the original system. The classification of contemporary authors is not free from any doubt either, for they are not classics, yet, but they might become so. Should their writings then be included among the works or the studies?

As well as this, the expansion of the collection has brought about the necessity to frequently relocate large groups of call numbers. Researchers have pointed out, in particular, that the Instrument sec-

tion needs updating and that the arrangement of reference-only books on shelves is unfit for 'browsing-through' searches. This has given rise to a revision process. A revision of the Instruments was started in 2007, aiming at the updating of the existing resources, at the distinction of the dictionaries between linguistic and thematic as well as the introduction of a new class for library science. Conference proceedings and Anthologies are going to be incorporated in the collection and changed shelfmark. Furthermore, school handbooks are going to have their own shelfmark and be relocated in an upstairs room of the library. The operation, including the following modifications and additions (Table 5), was to be completed in 2008.

Current classes	New classes
A.01. Bibliographies	A.01. Philosophical bibliographies
A.02. Encyclopaedias	A.02. Encyclopaedias
A.03. General histories of philosophy	A.03. General histories of philosophy
A.04. Compendia	A.04. Compendia
A.05. School handbooks	A.05. Thematic dictionaries
A.06. Dictionaries	A.06. Linguistic dictionaries
A.07. Conference proceedings	A.07. [empty]
A.08. Anthologies	A.08. Library science
A.09. Exhibition catalogues	A.09. Exhibition catalogues
	[School handbooks – new class to be defined]

Table 5. Modifications and additions

The librarians themselves have noticed a weakness, which is after all inevitable in a model conceived by teaching staff, e.g. the lack of a class for library science works, which for the past few years have been directly acquired by the Library, as an instrument for staff professional training and activity.

From a more strictly technical point of view, it was necessary to revise and manually correct some hundred shelfmarks – which had been previously assigned – in order to:

1. make the number of characters and field separators in a shelfmark uniform;
2. remove the mixed use of Roman and Arabic numerals;
3. solve the problem of the inverted alphabetical order of studies (marked by letter 'S') and works (marked

by letter ‘T’), which had already been changed over on shelves, in order to allow the application of digital technologies for the topographic control on shelves through the RFID system.

RFID (acronym of ‘Radio Frequency IDentification’) is a technology for the automatic identification of objects. The system is based on the remote scanning through an optical reader of the information contained in a RFID tag, e.g. a microchip applied to each book and storing its inventory number.

Here is a table which sums up the result of such a long and thorough revision:

Past		Present
3L.III.T.2.525	→	3L.03.T.002.525
3L.XXB.S.98.34	→	3L.20b.S.0098.034
3L.XXD.T.859.3	→	3L.20d.T.0859.003
3L.XIX.S.000.27	→	3L.19.S.000.027
3L.A.IV.534	→	3L.A.04.534

Table 6. Shelfmark revision

Finally, many inconsistencies have been found through time, resulting from the unintentional duplication of some authors, especially when they happen to have the same name as another author or alternatively belong to ancient times. As a matter of fact, it is only in the last six years that new authors have been entered and the existing tables have been gradually corrected by means of the authority control lists. For information about the Authority control, visit the related page in the website of ICCU (*Istituto Italiano per il Catalogo Unico*, Central Institute for the Union Catalogue) <http://www.iccu.sbn.it/genera.jsp?id=335&l=en> (page in English).

## 6. The current situation and the electronic catalogue

The Department of Philosophy, born of the fusion of the two Institutes of Philosophy and History of Philosophy in 1982, was the first Department of the Faculty of Humanities. As a Department, it could enjoy administrative autonomy and such a condition favourably influenced the development of the Library. From then on, the constant devotion of the Library Directors has been fundamental to its success.

On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1989 Milan’s *Università degli Studi* joined SBN production data bank for the classification work management, and the Library of Phi-

losophy has actively participated in the University library automation project. SBN stands for *Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale*, National Library Service. For information about SBN, visit ICCU website, section SBN, at <http://www.iccu.sbn.it/genera.jsp?s=5&l=en> (page in English).

On 9<sup>th</sup> November 1999, according to a resolution passed by the University Senate, the Library of Philosophy became an independent body in the University Library System. This position, besides being an acknowledgment of the quality of its educational standards and possessions, gives the allocation of an annual fund for Library running costs, directly by the Board of Directors. Projects and investments, which are to be deliberated on by a Library Council in the manner provided for by the University Library System (<http://www.unimi.it/ateneo/1015.htm>), are managed by the Director, who has been a librarian since 2001. Up until that time the person responsible of the Library had been the Department Director, hence a professor.

The process of growth has continued, further supported by the autonomous management and decision-making of the institution, which in the year 2000 adopted a set of rules and in 2002 a Service Charter. Nowadays all the Library holdings can be traced through the University OPAC (provided by Sebina SBN/opac Open Library <http://opac.unimi.it>).

The introduction of an electronic catalogue pushed the reclassification needs to the background, despite the awareness of inconsistencies and problems connected with the current system.

The adoption of a more common library classification standard (e.g. *DDC* or *LCC*) would require a huge work, both manual and technical, to change all shelfmarks and re-label all books. At present, such a work is not perceived as a priority neither from the librarians, nor from the researchers. Through its potentials, the OPAC enables a multiple-criteria access to the Library collection. Specifically, an entry can be traced in any part of the bibliographical description through a key-word search.

From a psychological point of view, it was not easy to transmit this new approach to the users. The passage from a paper to an electronic catalogue was not painless and many members of the teaching staff were at first disoriented by the fact that a number of books had been moved or removed from their reference location. At present, it can be stated that everybody is at ease with the electronic catalogue and hardly ever does anyone ask to change a call number assigned by a librarian. Books are found even when

they are shelved in a different place from the one expected. It's been six years since the paper catalogue was last updated.

### 6.1. The Judaic Library

Following the drawing up of an agreement with the Cukier Golstein Goren Foundation in 1996, Milan's Università degli Studi received a collection of volumes on the philosophical aspects of Judaism. The Judaic Library, which is still expanding, has been housed in a basement room of the Library of Philosophy for a few years now. At present, it counts 1300 volumes, about 400 of which are in Hebrew. Today all the works written in Latin characters are in the electronic catalogue and a project is being implemented to enter the rest. Also the Judaic Library collection is available for borrowing and reference. For classification purposes, the new section 3L.JUD., as well as new classes by subject area, have been created. The volumes have been classified according to the following subject list, which also provides for subdivisions.

Exegesis	01-04	
Mishnah	01-02	
Talmud	01-05	
Halachah	01-05	
Midrash	01-02	
Jewish thought	01-02	
History	01-02	
Grammar	01-02	T/S
Literature	01-02	T/S
Liturgy	01-03	
Mysticism	01-02	T/S
Chassidism	01-02	T/S
Reference works	01-07	

There are texts from the Hebrew Tradition, among which annotated copies of the *Tanach*, editions of the Babylonian and Palestinian *Talmud*, Halakhic texts, rabbinical *responsa*, editions the *Midrashim*, editions of the *Zohar* and other mystic literature works, comments, theoretical works, liturgical and historical texts. The Hebrew collection is supplemented by a large number of translations into the main European languages, in order to make the works understandable on a larger scale to those who are interested in topics and questions concerning the Judaic culture and tradition.

## 7. Conclusions and projects for the future

The choice to keep using the original classification system in the future derives from an awareness that the pattern, specially conceived for the philosophy subject area, has maintained its coherence and functionality through time, in spite of the expansion of the collection and the computerization of all the stages in the classification process.

A recent restoration work carried out between 1998 and 1999 brought to light the archaeological area of the ancient ghiacciaia, a typical storeroom to keep perishables cold in ice, which was an annex to the old 15<sup>th</sup> century hospital. For historical information about the Ca' Granda, the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century building wanted by Francesco Sforza and housing the central seat hall of Milan's Università degli Studi, see <http://www.unimi.it/ateneo/645.htm> (in Italian). The Library thus enlarged its premises considerably, with the addition of a very characteristic basement room, in which the open-shelf tradition has been preserved.

The Library collection currently include:

Total:	52.000	
Periodicals	215	(current: 167)
[Jewish section]:	702	+ about 600 volumes not in the opac
Other resources:		
E-journals	6500	(off campus access only by login)
Data-bases	154	(off campus access only by login)

While reference-material cannot be easily monitored, over 11,500 items were borrowed in 2006. In the light of such encouraging data, it can be expected that new rooms will be required in the next four or five years. This has never stopped further thoughts, modification plans and new solutions being considered for the current distribution of the books.

In the writer's opinion, the secret of the success of the old classification scheme consists above all in its flexibility and philosophical rigour, which has been found to be very functional by those who prefer familiarity and comfort of use to the strict rules imposed by library science.

Thus, it can be stated beyond doubt that favouring the ease of access to Library resources has in time proved to be a winning strategy.

As to the new projects for the near future, an operation is being carried out for the revision, renewal

and reclassification of the Instrument section, explained above. Furthermore, the idea is being contemplated to process a new database for the automatic attribution of call numbers and the processing of the electronic tables that list the assigned call numbers.<sup>23</sup> As a matter of fact, besides being rather complicated, the current attribution system isn't integrated with the electronic catalogue and doesn't allow sharing among users. The creation of a new class number group for the 21<sup>st</sup> century authors is being considered, which would parallel the 20<sup>th</sup> century one and would be equally divided according to the language and subject area.

As far as the organizational structure is concerned, the Library offers orientation sessions to first-time visitors, with the aim of making them familiar with the services and arrangement criteria of books on shelves. Within a few minutes users have

gained sufficient confidence, helped by the system of signs and the information booklets. After all, it takes a few hours for the grant holders, who have been cooperating with the library as a support staff for years now, to acquire the necessary skills to rearrange the returned books. In the future, the Library intends to continue promoting user independence, for instance through the production of new information material like maps and guides, also in digital format.

## References

Sapori, Giuliana. 1991. *Note sulla Biblioteca delle Facoltà di Giurisprudenza Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università degli Studi di Milano*, typescript.

*Soggettario per i cataloghi delle Biblioteche italiane*. 1956. Edited by Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze. Firenze: Stamperia Il cenacolo.