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The golden Library. A not linear system from past to future
TYPE of proposal

Topic: Generative processes from Ancient Books

Authos:

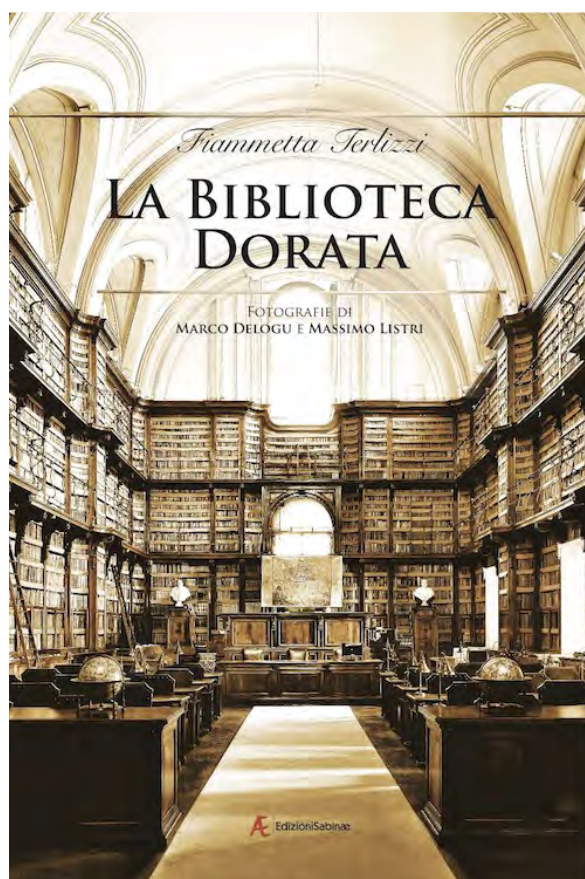
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Abstract:

This new published project is dedicated to the Angelica Library as another important *tessera* of the mosaic of the library activities. These are focused in discovering the bibliographic, architectonic and historical inheritance kept by this Institution. During four centuries, The Angelica Library has been so important for Roman and European cultural life. It is a great opportunity for people expert and also for students in human science to have the possibility to look up in an illustrated catalogue. This can reach everybody, following an impressive selection made by author, as a deep knowledge of the so very complex material by discovering. Four centuries ago the Angelica was founded by the Augustinian bishop Angelo Rocca for Rome's and Europe's "*public benefit*" but it is still nowadays an important cultural attraction, not only because of its bibliographic collection, but also because of its peculiar and exceptional *fondi*.

The novelty of being the first library of the modern era opened to "public use" is an example of non-linearity, a breakthrough in the European system. This freedom for culture creates an unique and unrepeatabe configuration for opening minds of young people..



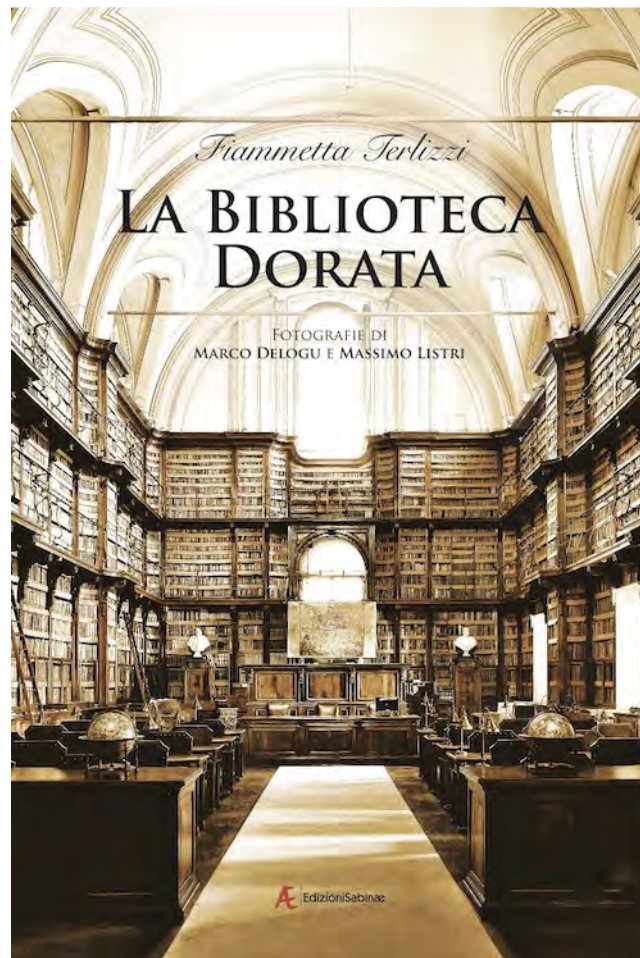
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Non-linearity of a Library

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To understand the innovation represented by the Biblioteca Angelica it's interesting to briefly analyze the historical evolution of the different models that have characterized the library at various times, to track the real purpose that this institution has taken in different moments in history, through the analysis the cultural significance of each model and the factors that have contributed to its appearance and its disappearance.

The library is a system of organization and supply of knowledge, so every historical period changes its shape in a different way according to a cultural model based on past experience following different factors that interact each other forming a real cultural project.

The cultural objective of the library is defined by the selection of the material to be preserved, and by the development and conservation of the collection.



THE LIBRARY OF ALEXANDRIA

The most important library of the ancient world was that of Alexandria, established at the beginning of the third century BC, which is thought to have contained over 500,000 books.

Catalog, glossary, dictionary, edition, commentary - all of these tools today so widespread - were the result of the creative mind of the Alexandrian scholars who - in relation to such a huge amount of material - had to provide to create such intellectual tricks like selection, synthesis, categorization, textual segmentation.

The arrangement of the texts, their treatment and the work of translation and of editing is the epicenter of this monumental project, unique model that integrates two ideas almost antithetical:

a storage container from side to side, a giant hypertext that was created as additional texts, examples and other variations came in this center of knowledge.

But the Alexandria library was a cathedral of knowledge, a library of state without public: its role was not the education and dissemination of knowledge in society, but the "deposit" of all the works of the known world to preserve them in only one place.

MEDIEVAL LIBRARY

The deposition of the last Roman emperor Romulus Augustus in 476. C. conventionally marks the beginning of the Medieval Age. The end of the ancient world led to the decay of the cities that were the basis for the development of libraries. For the first time, the crisis of public storage was compensated by the creation of libraries by great patrician families. Later with the spread of monasticism, this task was taken from monasteries.

Like the other structures within the monastery, the library was completely self-sufficient, able to produce everything necessary for its "life". The practice of reading moved from the open places, squares, to closed monasteries, churches, cloisters. It was a collective reading during the liturgical celebrations, during meals or during a retirement, or it was an individual reading. Slowly the custody of the books became almost exclusive task of the monastic institutions. The disappearance of the Roman administrative organizations, in fact, left a vacuum that was quickly filled by new ecclesiastical structures. Quite inadvertently, the Church became the only guardian of the entire classical cultural heritage. This monopoly of knowledge allowed the Church to decide what to keep alive and what to give up, influencing the history of culture.

The monastic library was a library of mere preservation: there were no users, and the only people having advantage were the monks of that particular community. The Medieval Age books, so big, heavy, awkward to carry, tells us about their immobility; its large letters, the text lying comfortably on the page, the indexing and miniatures, are elements that tell us how it was just a beautiful object to display and to carefully store.

The MODERN AGE

Starting from the second half of the fifteenth century, the invention of printing was the answer do the new request of knowledge coming from universities and from the development of the schools. It was the event that shocked the world of intellectuals and consequently that of libraries.

In 1455, Johann Gutenberg printed the first Bible through a process of printing with movable type, opening the way for a new approach in spreading culture. The printing facilitated scholars in their interests and it made accessible the world of culture also to a different and enlarged audience that before was far from it, especially because of the cost of the manuscript book. Even the religious leaders, both Christian and Protestant, identified in the press an important resource in the struggle for ideological supremacy, and both sensed the importance of libraries as repositories of possible dangerous weapons. But these were still preservation libraries and rarely library "of use"; in these libraries the books were kept as valuable assets and shown sparingly also to scholars: the books, in other words, were an important part of the heritage of God. An example of library preservation is the Malatesta of Cesena, established in XV century, where the manuscripts are linked to the reading benches (plutei) by chains.



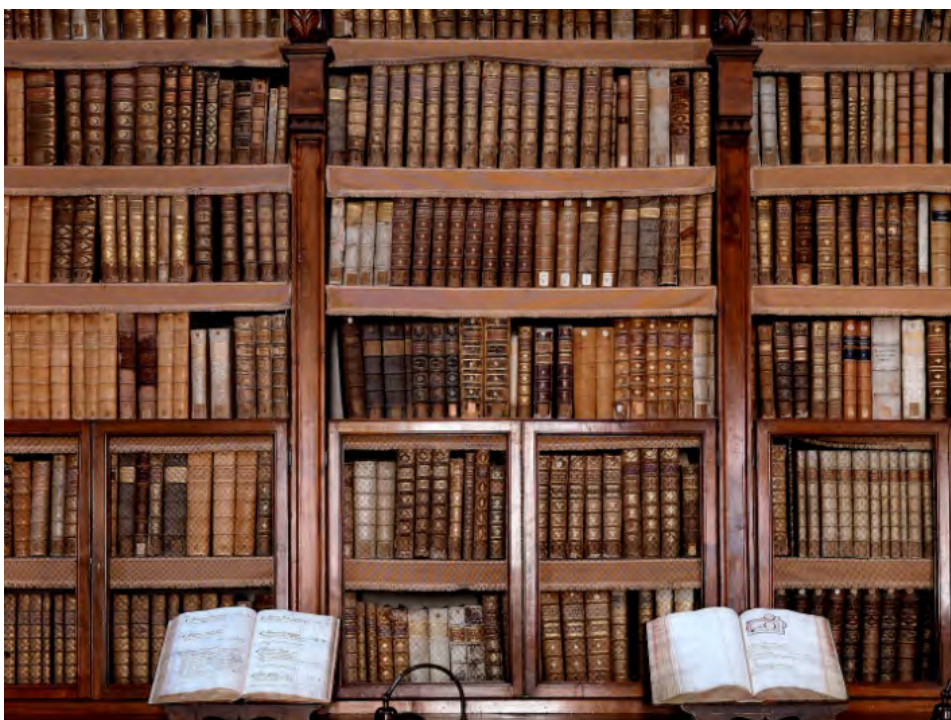
Keeping books, however, means organizing in a more organic way. In the sixteenth century the need to guide the reader on his reading path arose. It was really difficult because of the birth and evolution of new sciences. A key of knowledge was offer by the creation of catalogs. They were divided according to different disciplines and subjects.

With the Lutheran Reformation the monasteries were suppressed and the libraries of these monasteries supported the performing of a new type of library, a public library, useful for the whole community. Luther thought that libraries and books in general, should be used for the education of the people, in the religious, political and commercial field. His aim was to bring together and make available the necessary books to the community.

Generally the 'public' library was not widespread and certainly not as we understand it:

Typically humanists put available their collections for friends, creating 'open private' libraries. The birth of a public library is an idea of a 'Renaissance mind': thanks to the spread of literacy and new cultural needs carried out by the humanists, the huge change derived from the press led to a greater number of books than never was available before. The books return to be both objects to be preserved but also to be exhibited: the baroque halls of libraries seem designed more to surprise the visitor than for the study. It's a "museum-library", usually with a central plan with the furniture itself as a part of the architecture and the volumes arranged around the perimeter of the room, often in full-height shelves, accessible through galleries; the reader has a central location: is a library where container and contents are identified and almost merged together.

The monumental hall lives by the richness of its furnishings, and the ornate shelving for books .Among the Roman libraries, the Biblioteca Angelica is a symbol of this cultural model.



THE ANGELICA LIBRARY - It's the oldest public library in Rome and Europe and owes its name to the Augustinian bishop Angelo Rocca (1546-1620), who in the last years of the XVI (sixteenth century), entrusted his collection of books to the friars of the convent of St. Augustine in Rome. Angelo Rocca, a passionate collector of precious editions, head of the Vatican Press during the pontificate of Sixtus V (fifth), gave to the library an suitable site, own income, a regulation and wanted it to be open to everyone.

"... omni artium et scientiarum genere refertissimam ... comparatam coenobio Sancti Augustini Urbis ... non solum religiosorum, sed etiam clericorum, et laicorum commoditati". So it was that Rocca wanted to clarify the public function of the Angelica Library which since 1604 (one thousand six hundred and four) opened its doors to those who, researchers or not, without limitations of status and wealth, had the pleasure, the usefulness or the simple curiosity to discover its library treasures. Sure it was a daring and pioneering idea, considering the historical times and the social dynamics of the moment. The intellectual foresight of this choice is obvious and is the principle of knowledge, art and culture sharing, and of goods produced by them, which could never exist without placing the focus on the "public", undisputed protagonist in any process of safeguard and valorization.

The Generative Art, by the use of specific generative software of high quality, has the aim to perform projects of "species" starting from an idea and the ability to create with transforming algorithms, structures ever more complex and different but extraordinary for their "uniqueness". The innovative element, therefore, is to refer not to the final product (as it may be a book, a painting or a photography) but to the "process", therefore to the methodology of work. In this key operates a chain process in which art is created not only by creations-mother, but also from the many works that these creations can give birth.

The generative project carried forward by the Polytechnic of Milan, thanks to the leadership of Prof. Celestino Soddu, borns from the will to explore and expand the fields of human creativity not achievable nowadays without the use of computer tools. Generative Art has as its purpose the search of beauty, the produce a reflection on form and on art as a cognitive process; it is a way to make art that has a complicated relationship with the traditional artistic currents, because everything is experimental and tied to new media in a completely unconventional way.

The Generative Art, understood as *modus operandi*, is akin to the vision that the Golden Library has of the "cultural heritage". From the beginning the Angelica was an example of "non-linearity", of non-conventional approach to the system, considering the Know as a not private but as a "common heritage", believing every opportunity of meeting not only as an opportunity of growth and of personal and collective knowledge, but also as a precious opportunity to generate new ideas and, therefore, new cultural experiences. For this purpose, diversifying wisely its offer and relating to a ever wider public, it has tried to bring users to the art and to its various manifestations, considering it as an essential principle to ensure its survival in the present and in the future.

What has been said shows the enhancement and promotion of the site, and the preserved heritage, through events such as exhibitions, theatrical performances and artistic performances of various kinds. For this meritorious work extra institutional, it adds the output in the past few months of the volume, the golden library (Edizioni Sabinae) that highlights - through an agile description of the major bibliographic treasures preserved, and not only that, the enormous cultural and social potentiality of a Library projected into the future. A future which, I repeat, this is only possible through innovation and new opportunities for the dissemination.

