

DOCUMENTATION IN ITALY

0 European prehistory

The National Research Council-CNR, founded in 1923, was one of the first partners of Mundaneum and one of the first members of the FID-International Federation for Information and Documentation. CNR's delegates participated at the first FID World Congress of Universal Documentation (Paris, 1937).

1 reconstruction

After the Second World War, Italy has been one of the leading countries in carrying on the mission of Documentation. The 18th FID World Congress was held in Rome, at CNR, in 1951. CNR-Centro di Documentazione was founded the same year.

2 the precocious phase: 1960s-1980s

The Italian contribution to the field has been remarkable especially as far as the work of Paolo Bisogno (1932-1999) is concerned. He was the founder and Director of the CNR Institute of Documentation, Istituto di Studi sulla Ricerca e Documentazione Scientifica-ISRDS (1968). He also edited the 20 volumes of the Italian translation of the UDC (1972 -1985).

Professor of Documentation at the University of Rome "La Sapienza", Bisogno was the Italian delegate at the European Commission for ICT and member of the Unesco and OCSE Board for R&D policies.

3 Documentation as a theory

In *Teoria della Documentazione* (1980) Bisogno describes the identity of Documentation as a convergence of different disciplines: logic+ rhetoric+linguistic+informatics.

The work was not intended as a professional handbook but as a highly cultivated epistemological analysis.

4 Documentation as a professional activity

The emerging paradigm of informatics was immediately understood. In the 1980s the CNR-ISRDS created both the OPAC of the Italian Union Catalogue of Serials ACNP-Archivio collettivo nazionale delle pubblicazioni periodiche and the National research network GARR (Gruppo per l'armonizzazione delle reti di ricerca). CRID-Italian Reference Centre for Diane (Direct Information Access Network for Europe) held seminars for improving information literacy. Italy could then access databases through Euro-net and then by way of Internet.

5 R&D

Documentation has always used a political approach for the dissemination of information. Paolo Bisogno continued this tradition as the book *Introduzione alla politica della scienza* (1979) clearly demonstrates.

ISRDS-CNR edited the Italian Annual Report on current researches (1980s-1990s).

6 "advanced"

AIDA-Associazione italiana per la documentazione avanzata (since 1984), both a learned and professional Society, with its own journal and scheduled conferences. The use of the adjective "avanzata" refers to a progressive, political and technological approach.

7 postmodern

ISRDS-CNR believed in an international, multicultural, interdisciplinary – that is to say postmodern – research activity. The quarterly journal «Prometheus» (1984-1997) dedicated to research policy, well represented the "spirit of the time".

8 we lost, but we are right

Still, at the beginning of the Web Age, the Documentation apparently disappeared in Italy. It seemed an untimely ending after such a timely beginning! This was due to many causes: Bisogno's death (1999); the consequent disintegration of the Institute ISRDS-CNR; finally, FID «went out of existence under mysterious circumstances in 2001» - as W. Boyd Rayward says in *European Modernism and Information Society*, 2008. Italian Documentation then endured its darkest period, banished to the boundaries of LIS "American empire".

9 European rebirth

During the past few years, some feeble signs of a rebirth are been shown: American scholars consider Mundaneum to be the cradle of Internet and the Web (M. Buckland, W. Boyd Rayward, C. Burke, R. Day, A. Wright, etc.); many classics have already been translated or edited, and some are still under way (Otlet, La Fontaine, Briet, etc). The journal «AIDAinformazioni» is being published again in Italy; new university courses have been activated as documentation or record management.

Now, more than 100 years after La Fontaine received the Nobel Award for Peace, Documentation still offers an interdisciplinary approach that fits in with our contemporary paradigm. In particular, the political tradition of Documentation works as a valid instrument for a better understanding of the relationship between new technologies and access policies. Now that the American Century is over, Documentation presents a truly European, humanistic, interdisciplinary point of view. Therefore, the reappraisal of our tradition is an absolute priority.