

# The library of the Professor

A. MAMMINI, L. IANNUCCI

*Biblioteca del Dipartimento di Scienze fisiologiche, Pisa, Italy*

## ABSTRACT

*The authors, who were the librarians at the Institute of Physiology in Pisa during the epoch of Professor Moruzzi and few years afterwards, concentrate on the efforts made by the Professor to rebuild and develop the collections of the Library of Physiology following the Second World War. Thereafter, he continued this task with great determination and energy.*

### **Key words**

*Giuseppe Moruzzi • Historical library of neurosciences •  
Library of the Physiological Institute of the University of Pisa*

*And since the sight of the beautiful implies peace, and since our appetite is calmed similarly by peacefulness, by the good, and by the beautiful, I felt myself filled with great consolation and I thought how pleasant it must be to work in that place.*  
(Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, 1983)

Annamaria Mammini (hereafter called AM) worked in the Library of the Institute of Physiology from 1962 until 1998. AM had no previous experience of library work and was hesitant about the idea of working in the Institute. She remembers the almost perfect silence which pervaded the environment and the anxiety of being introduced to Professor Moruzzi, who was already a mythical personality in the University of Pisa. When she entered into his study, the Professor greeted her with an encouraging smile and explained what her future work would be. She should collaborate with Professor Amilcare Mollica (1924-2011) who was then responsible for the library. The interview was short but AM left with the impression of having entered into a special place, directed by an exceptional person. Since then she has been a witness to all the changes that have taken place in the University, in the research and

in the libraries, and she experienced the “golden years” of the Institute. Sadly, she also witnessed the decline of the Institute after the period of Professor Moruzzi, and she eventually left with deep regret at the decline of the cultural and human heritage he had created and which was further eroded by the constant reduction of funds.

Among the moments of AM’s daily work in the library, she remembers, for instance, that every Monday morning she would find the tablets with the records of all the volumes that had been taken. These loan tablets were controlled on Sunday by the Professor who lived with his family on the top floor of the Institute. They were in plywood, cut by Mr. Biagini, the carpenter and handyman for all the laboratories, and were covered with white paper (*Roma Tenax* brand). The Professor was very strict about the rules concerning loans and punished those who returned books late by banning them from loans for at least two weeks.

He also took great care over how the volumes were bound. He used to choose with Mr. Cesarotti, the owner of a famous Pisan bindery, the type of leather and the colour for the cover, and he prepared the titles to be engraved on the dorsum of the volumes

in gold. The Professor loved beauty, and he endeavoured to make all the newly-bound volumes into an aesthetically harmonious creation. The visitor, who happened to enter the library for the first time, had the impression of entering a microcosm of culture, beauty and peace.

During the summer the Professor moved to his villa of Bombodolo but he continued his activity and correspondence. In the years from 1962 until about 1966, throughout August, when the Institute was closed, he used to send AM by registered mail, parcels with letters and manuscripts, all hand-written under the mythical cedar tree of his garden. By means of an *Olivetti Lettera 44* typewriter, brought from the Institute to AM's house, she typed everything. Afterwards, again by registered mail, the documents were returned to Bombodolo (Fig. 1).

Another "unforgettable" work for AM was the transcription of the lectures given by the Professor to the students and tape-recorded by Daniela Bolelli, one of his medical students. Mr. Leopoldo Nicotra, the ingenious technician of the Institute, had built a special kind of pedal device for AM by which the tape could be stopped (and started), without interrupting the typing process. The Professor often silently entered the library (where she was concentrating on typing the transcriptions) and he would look at her with apprehension, worried about the hearing apparatus and inviting her to remove the earphones from time to time to have a rest from the noisy crackling of the recorder. This work took a long time and when the book with the lectures was eventually published (Bolelli, 1971), the Professor thanked AM for the outstanding quality of the results and for having continued to take care of the library work throughout.

Whenever some visitors, even famous ones like Sir John Eccles and Professor Ragnar Granit, came to the Institute, Professor Moruzzi called AM to assist him during the visit to the library. He lingered on the rare collections and the old books of the historical fund, originally located in his office (room n. 3 in Figs. 2 and 3) and then in the Aducco room placed in the glass container (room n. 5 in Figs. 2 and 3). Here one could admire a rare 16<sup>th</sup> century edition, and several volumes from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, including the almost complete works of Claude Bernard, the physiologist the Professor admired more than any other. The visit was much

appreciated and the guests expressed their gratitude for the opportunity of seeing and consulting such precious volumes. The Nobel Prize winner, Daniel Bovet, in a letter to Giuseppe Moruzzi wrote in 1957: "this morning the mail has brought me the list of the Journals in your splendid library. I dream of a vacation in Pisa, as short or as long as it may be, in the peace of Via San Zeno. What did San Zeno do of such importance to deserve such a famous street?". During the golden years of the Institute and Library, all the staff worked with enthusiasm and dedication to ensure the full functionality of both research and teaching; everyone gave the best of themselves to Professor Moruzzi, aware of being part of a project aimed at bringing the Institute to internationally prominence. The Professor was a far-sighted director who believed in the future of our country and knew how to select and to foster the best qualities of everyone, from the technicians to the researchers. With his severe appearance, his clear gaze, seemingly always absorbed in mental elaborations, he fascinated everyone who met him, leaving an indelible memory.

The "presence" of *il Professore* can be felt everywhere in the library. Everything here contributes to favour concentration, study and reflection, from the silence to the illumination, from the furniture to the environments. Here entire generations of Pisan physiologists and doctors have acquired their scientific knowledge, Italian and foreign scholars have profited from the collections kept here (see also Piccolino, 2010).

Since 1990, Livia Iannucci (hereafter LI) has been librarian in the present Department of Physiological Sciences. She shared with AM a part of the declining phase of the library, which started around the end of the 1970s. This phase followed a thirty-year period during which it had been possible to create in Pisa a Neuroscience library almost unique in the world, such that it received interlibrary loan requests from many countries. This was the result of a constant commitment by many members of the Physiological Institute, combined with wise use of adequate funds, some of which came from abroad. From 1980 onwards, constantly decreasing funds and inflation, combined with the increase of the number and cost of publications imposed a drastic cut in the purchase of journals and publications. Little by little, many



Fig. 1. - A room of Giuseppe Moruzzi's Library in his residence at Bombodolo.

journal subscriptions have ceased, in the hope – which proved to be groundless – that the economic crisis would not last for long.

Until the mid-1990s, the effort was concentrated on limiting the cuts by drawing on the resources of the journal published from the Physiological Institute, the *Archives Italiennes de Biologie*, and to gifts from researchers who were members of the editorial boards of some journals. At the beginning of 1990, the arrival of new technologies and the development of computers networks, have favoured the cooperation among libraries and the emergence of library systems in the universities for integrated and economic purchasing and sharing of products and services. From 1998 our library became a component of the Library Centre of Medicine of Pisa University. In the last ten years consortia have been developed aimed at purchasing electronic journal subscriptions

and data bases with two main aims: on the one hand, to optimise the available resources and on the other, to negotiate better arrangements with the main scientific publishers. The classical paper journals have become progressively electronic journals, which can be locally consulted by users from their own personal computers, with no need to access the library physically. Projects aimed at digitizing entire collections of documents, created and/or funded by both public and private institutions, have made available through the Internet, the cultural patrimony of small or large libraries or archives, often at no charge for the user. The worlds of universities, research and education feel the effects of economical, political and technological changes, and libraries are both the witnesses to and promoters of these changes. The idea of “building up” a digital SuperLibrary, making millions of publications accessible to people is no

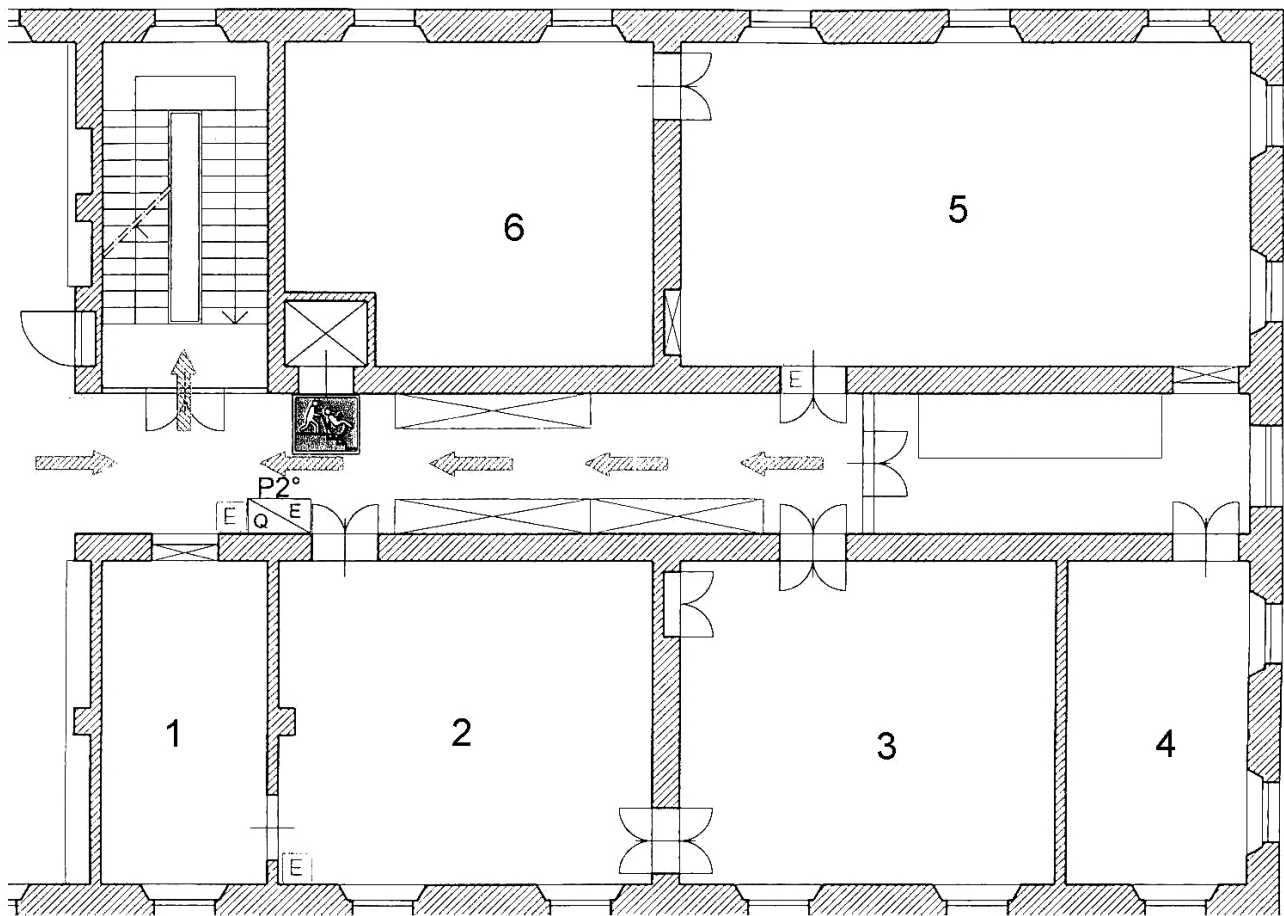


Fig. 2. - A map of the Library at the Institute of Physiology, University of Pisa.

longer a dream. In such a context, the Physiological library, with its specialised collections of great historical value, has still an important role whose value could be further potentiated.

The completeness of the collections made the Physiological Library unique in Italy and in Europe. Since the establishment of the Institute of Physiology, Vittorio Aducco – the first director – was able to purchase the complete collections of the physiological Journals published in Italy and abroad. The library was sacked in 1944. When Professor Moruzzi took over the direction of the Institute in 1949, the library consisted of two rooms (room n. 1 and 2 in Fig. 2) with the bookcases practically empty. During the following years the Professor dedicated much of his time and of the funds coming from Italy (CNR) and from United States (Rockefeller Foundation, NIH) to a laborious search of journals and volumes to complete the existing collections. “Want lists”

of the missing books were updated and regularly sent to the most important Italian (Santo Vanasia in Milano), European (Lange & Springer, Blackwell) and American (Johnson, Brunner) antique book dealers. On this subject it should be mentioned the fruitful relationship between the Professor and the Pisan antiquarian Fernando Vallerini, the founder of a famous bookshop in Pisa (“*Sala delle Stagioni*”). Vallerini was for many years a wise and careful provider for the needs of the library of Physiology. With the epochal advent of photocopying machines in the mid ‘60s, even what before seemed impossible to find, could come to hand. Many requests for interlibrary loans of the missing volumes were sent to the main university libraries in Italy (Pavia, Padova, Bologna) and in Europe (Paris, Oxford and Wien). To have an idea of the strong and constant increase of the collections one may consider that in 1949 the value of the existing collections amounted



Fig. 3. - The six rooms of the Library at Pisa numbered in accordance with Fig. 2.

to 3.678.550 Italian Liras, and twenty years later, in 1969, it was increased to 60.039.959 Liras, owing to the investments made by the Professor (see Università di Pisa, 1969). As a consequence the space dedicated to the library was increased from

two to six large rooms, all with bookcases on their walls (Figs. 2 and 3).

Among the Journals, previously owned by the library since the first issue which were completely lost during the war and could be replaced and continued

by Professor Moruzzi, we shall mention *Pflügers Archiv* and the *Journal of Physiology*, founded in 1868 and 1878, respectively.

As may be noticed in the inventory records, in 1953 were purchased volumes 150-246 and 248 (1913-1944), in part from the “Bibliothek Teylers Stichting” of Haarlem, and in 1955 the volumes 1-149, while volume 247 of 1944, reproduced in facsimile, was purchased from Edwards Brothers, Ann Arbor, Michigan. The first nine volumes of the *Journal of Physiology*, reproduced from the original and printed in photolithography, were purchased, in 1953, from Dawson & Sons of London.

Between 1953 and 1963 the journal *Comptes rendus hebdomadaires de la Société de Biologie*, was also replaced. It did exist from volume 2 but all were lost. The great contribution given by Professor Moruzzi to the creation and to the development of the special profile of the Library of the Institute of Human Physiology and to the promotion of its collections, is based on a careful policy of investments aimed, on the one hand, to preserve and complete the possessions of the past, and on the other, to enlarge and to update the number of journals, treatises and monographs for research and teaching activities. In Professor Moruzzi's view, it was essential to create library abreast with the development of the physiological sciences, as a service for the scientific community. This modern vision underlying his policy of accumulation of books and documents is clearly testified by the collections that we have inherited.

We wish to conclude with the words pronounced by Giovanni Berlucci at the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of Professor Moruzzi death, held in April 1996 (see Cerimonia commemorativa, 1997). Referring to the great libraries that he had visited in Italy and in Europe, the Professor “said to feel a very strong sense of gratitude for anyone, known or unknown, who had contributed to create these centres of knowledge and to preserve them for the scholars of the present and of the future. For him the libraries must be beautiful, complete and, above all, usable by anyone who desires to read,

learn and know. His almost fierce determination for the respect of the rules for their conduction, far from being an expression of power, aimed to ensure that the books should be always available to everyone”.

### Acknowledgments

The authors are very grateful to Brunello Ghelarducci and Nicholas Wade for help with the English translation, and to Leopoldo Nicotra and Marco Piccolino for assistance in preparing the illustrations. Paolo Moruzzi has kindly provided the picture of Moruzzi's Library at Bombodolo.

### References

- Bolelli D. *Lezioni di fisiologia umana*. Pisa, Libreria Universitaria Cooperativa Editrice, 1971.
- Cerimonia commemorativa per il decennale della scomparsa del professor Giuseppe Moruzzi, Aula magna della Sapienza, 27 aprile 1996. Pisa, Università di Pisa, 1997.
- Eco U. *Il nome della rosa*. Milano, Bompiani, 1980 (English translation: *The Name of the Rose*, San Diego, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983).
- Meulders M. Moruzzi scienziato e umanista = Moruzzi: scientist and humanist. In: Meulders M., Piccolino M., Wade N.J. (Eds.) *Giuseppe Moruzzi: Ritratti di uno scienziato = Portraits of a scientist*, Pisa, ETS: 9-40, 2010.
- Moruzzi P. Il filo ininterrotto. Un ritratto familiare di Giuseppe Moruzzi = The unbroken thread. A family portrait of Giuseppe Moruzzi. In: Meulders M., Piccolino M., Wade N.J. (Eds.) *Giuseppe Moruzzi: Ritratti di uno scienziato = Portraits of a scientist*, Pisa, ETS: 147-161, 2010.
- Piccolino M. La biblioteca del professor Moruzzi = The library of Professor Moruzzi. In: Meulders M., Piccolino M., Wade N.J. (Eds.) *Giuseppe Moruzzi: Ritratti di uno scienziato = Portraits of a scientist*, Pisa, ETS: 163-179, 2010.
- Università di Pisa, Istituto di Fisiologia. *Resoconto amministrativo per il periodo 1949-1969*. Pisa, Arti grafiche Pacini Mariotti, 1969.