A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LIBRARY
OF THE ROMANIAN ACADEMY, BRANCH OF IAŞI

MARIANA IGNAT and LAURA MOCANU

Iaşi Branch of the Romanian Academy – The Library
Corresponding author: dafilaur@gmail.com

> *"No period in the life of the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi*
> *can be accounted for without taking into the consideration the library."*
> Cristofor Simionescu

The history of the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi, starts in 1949, with Academy member Radu Cernătescu as its first president. The same year, a library was constituted to benefit the research activity. Its first location was the Mihăileană Academy building, 7, Filimon Sârbu street.

The Mihăileană Academy (1950s) (Cristofor Simionescu archive, Special Collections)

The first collections of the library, both monographic and serial publications, were donated by the Romanian Academy Library in Bucharest. The following years, library holdings increased as a result of further donations and transfers from Bucharest, domestic and external exchange, purchasing. It was not long before that the size of the library collections exceeded both the stacks and the staff capacity

(until 1957, library staff counted only three librarians). Consequently, the Board of the Romanian Academy, the Branch of Iaşi, decided to reorganize the library by establishing libraries in all research institutes.

Innitially, six such libraries were created, operating as branches of the central library: The Mathematics Institute Library, The Chemistry Institute Library, The History Institute Library, The Medical Studies Institute Library, The Physics and Technical Research Department Library, The History of Moldavia Museum Library. Subsequently, after some of the research institutes branched out, the number of libraries reached eight.

At the beginning, there were no librarians in the institute libraries. A researcher or another institute staff member would oversee the library. Therefore, for a lengthy period, library documents continued to be recorded and catalogued at the central library and then delivered, together with their catalogue cards, to the institute library.

In 1960, the Library of the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi, took over the collections of the Romanian-Soviet Studies Department, that is 25,270 book titles, 417 serials titles and, in 1963, 31,000 translations. By and by, the library received another transfer from the Academy Library in Bucharest. As a result, the library holdings in 1963 reached 119,413 items in all, 104,563 books and 14,850 serials.

Stack rooms (Cristofor Simionescu archive, Special Collections)

When the Mihăileană Academy building was demolished in 1963, the residence of the Iaşi Branch of the Romanian Academy moved into one of the buildings of the former University, currently the Medical and Pharmaceutical Studies University building, 16, Universităţii street. The move seems to have been beneficial to the library, considering the more generous and adequate space provided.

A balance sheet at the end of 1965 shows improvement in all areas. With respect to the holdings, there were at least 150,045 book titles and 4,217 serial titles. Part of them was housed in the central library, the remaining part in the research institutes libraries. Extensive publications exchanges with 956 partners brought into the library hundreds of specialized literature books, and a new systematic catalogue came into use.

The year 1970 represented a terrible milestone in the history of the Library of the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi. Following a governmental decision, the research institutes of the Romanian Academy, together with their libraries, were transferred to the Education Ministry, the Social Science Academy and the Medical Science Academy. This led to a complete change in the structure of the library, with all institute libraries and their holdings alienated. The division and transfer of the library holdings was a laborious process that took several years. It implied that each book be assigned a new inventory number, therefore dozens of registers were modified page by page and librarians handled hundreds of thousands of books.

In 1982, the Library of the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi, moved into its current location, the Elias Foundation building, 8, Carol I avenue. It was a new beginning for the library. The modern building, with its large stack rooms and its 250-seat reading rooms, brought about a novel approach in library services. There were more library users, such as students and PhD candidates, which called for an improved library services system, a higher professional expertise with respect to the selection, recording and circulation of library documents. A lot was done there-upon. The library catalogues system was completed, as alphabetic and systematic for books, alphabetic, systematic and geographic for serials. A selection of valuable dictionaries, encyclopedias, and atlases was placed into the reading room to initiate a reference work collection easily accessible for patrons.

This particularly fruitful period in the life of the Library of the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi, was confirmed by numerous signals in bibliographic works the library contributed to: *Catalogul cărţilor străine intrate în bibliotecile din R.S. România*, edited by the State Central Library, *Repertoriul periodicelor străine, abonamente şi schimb internaţional*, edited by the State Central Library, *Buletinul cărţilor străine intrate în bibliotecile din oraşul Iaşi*, edited by the University Central Library in Iaşi, and *Repertoriul revistelor străine intrate în bibliotecile din oraşul Iaşi*, edited by the University Central Library in Iaşi.

The elegant new location of the library made it possible for scientific and cultural events to be organized in the reading room. Over the years, they elevated the library to the highest rank, together with the Iaşi Branch of the Romanian Academy.

After the fall of communism in 1989, the research institutes that formerly appertained to the Romanian Academy were transferred back to it, with everything they owned. In Iaşi, this process was not symmetrical: some institutes were either not transferred at all or they were transferred, but with a different composition. As for the libraries, they continued to be part of the research institutes and were never reunited with the Library of the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi.

The Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi (1980s)
(Cristofor Simionescu archive, Special Collections)

Nowadays, the mission of the Library of the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi, is to organize, preserve, enhance the value and promote the national heritage it holds. Together with the academic libraries in Cluj and Timişoara, it is part of the Romanian Academy Library. Its functions, according to national legislation and internal set of regulations, include:

• To collect, organize, and enhance the value of the specific collections it holds;

• To provide the Romanian Academy members and research staff with scientific literature and documentation;

• To conduct international exchange for the publications of the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi ("Cellulose Chemistry and Technology" and "Memoirs of the Scientific Sections");

• To coordinate methodologically the activity of the research institute libraries;

• To contribute to the elaboration of *Catalogul colectiv al cărţilor străine intrate în bibliotecile din România* and *Repertoriul colectiv al periodicelor străine intrate în bibliotecile din România*;

• To support the academic life by means of scientific and cultural events (book launches, exhibitions, symposia, round tables);

• To execute other specific projects set up by the Board of the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi, or adopted in the Statute of the library.

The holdings of the Romanian Academy Library, Branch of Iaşi, were organized and have constantly grown through acquisitions, donations, international and domestic publication exchange, transfer, sponsorship, digitizing. The documents the library holds include books, serials, manuscripts, audio-visual documents, electronic documents, photographs, archive documents. Today, the total of holdings reaches 300,000 items. There are distinct library departments that handle diverse types of library documents.

The **Special Collections** department includes old and rare Romanian books[1], old and rare foreign books, manuscripts, photographs, 11,630 valuable items in total. The **Current Books and Electronic Documents** department includes documents on all fields of knowledge. Approximately 30,000 of these are arranged in the reading room. The **Periodicals** department includes over 2,800 titles and almost 100,000 items.

At the end of 1977, the Board of the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi, decided to start up a Special Collections department. Valuable items in the stacks of the library were identified and organized as a distinct collection. At the time, recorded patrimony items were scarce in all libraries in the country and the need to implement such collections was imperative. Members of the Board and members of the Romanian Academy in Iaşi endorsed and facilitated the transfer of an important number of old and rare Romanian books from the Library of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest. There were also transfers and donations from the Moldova and Bucovina Metropolitan Church, from the Ardeal Metropolitan Church, from the National Archives in Iaşi. Outstanding scientists and cultural personalities in Iaşi contributed to the development of the special collections through personal donations. As a result, the growth of this department during a relatively short timeframe was spectacular, as compared to other long-lived institutions. Here are some of the most valuable books in the collections of the department:

Cartea românească de învăţătură or *Cazania lui Varlaam*, printed in Iaşi, in 1643, at the Trei Ierarhi Monastery Printing House, under the patronage of ruler Vasile Lupu. The two items are the oldest Romanian books in our library. In terms of cultural significance, this book is similar to the Luther Bible in German culture.
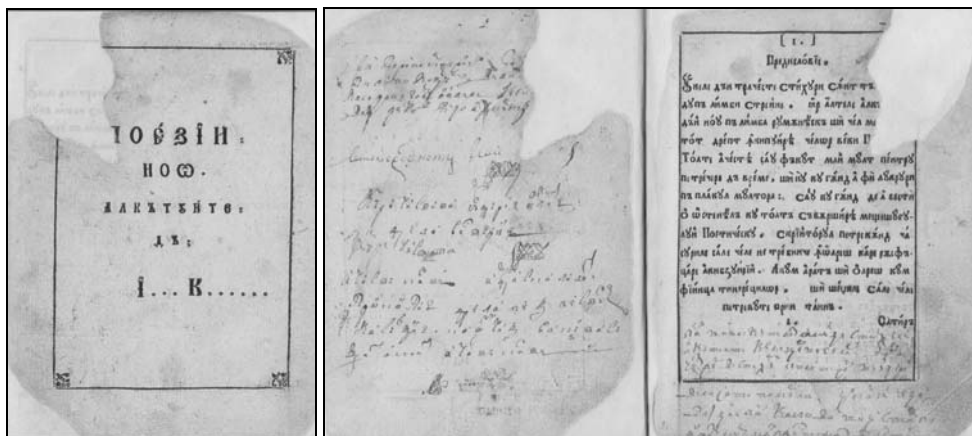

Cartea românească de învăţătură

---

[1] Over 4,600 items.

Biblia de la Bucureşti (Biblia lui Şerban Cantacuzino) was printed in 1688 by mythropolite Theodosie, under the patronage of ruler Şerban Cantacuzino. It is considered a literary and linguistic monument due to the unity resulted from processing three Romanian vernaculars. It is also an unparalleled printing event. The item in our library is very well preserved and philologists in Iaşi, together with colleagues in Freiburg, used it to publish a new edition.

Biblia de la Bucureşti

The most valuable literary work is *Poezii noo*, a poetry book written by Ion Cantacuzino. It is considered the first Romanian poetry book printed in Romanian that survived.

Poezii noo

A number of religious books can be enumerated chronologically: *Evanghelie învăţătoare* (The Dealul Monastery, 1644), *Noul Testament* (Bălgrad, 1648), *Acatistul Născătoarei de Dumnezeu* (1673), *Psaltirea în versuri* (1673), *Viaţa şi petreacerea sfinţilor* (1682). Some of these were translated and adapted by mythropolite Dosoftei himself. Apart from such old books with very limited surviving items, the library holds numerous old religious books that most important libraries in the country and abroad also possess.

The special collections of the library include miscellaneous documents printed in Romania and abroad, books with autographs, collections of documents and translations from classical Greek and Latin literature, various bibliographic rarities. The library owns a number of Elsevier antiquarian titles, printed and spread all over Europe one hundred and fifty years after the introduction of printing.

The value and documentary significance of the special collections is enhanced by manuscripts. They reinforce not only the merit of the institution that holds them, but also the distinction of national culture and civilization. Alexandru Philippide, Gheorghe Ivănescu, Iuliu Niţulescu, Vsevlad Carmazin Cacovschi, Petru P. Năsturel, and Cristofor I. Simionescu are some of the personalities that donated their manuscripts to our library, either typewritten or handwritten.

The photographs collection includes over 1,000 pictures of significant scientists and cultural personalities (121 writers, 102 doctors, 75 actors and directors, 64 composers, musicologists and conducters, 57 historians, 57 engineers, 55 biologists, 53 teachers and pedagogists, 47 painters and graphic artists, 44 linguists and philologists, 41 mathematicians, 35 chemists, 31 politicians, 25 jurists, 25 theologists, 21 physicists, 21 geographers, 18 economists, 14 folklorists and museologists). The pictures are black and white or sepia, originals and copies, single or multiple items.

The Serials Department of the Romanian Academy Library, Branch of Iaşi was initially organized with donations from the Romanian Academy Library in Bucharest, with private donations and [with] publications edited by the research institutes of the Romanian Academy.

Later on, the department made subscriptions with Romanian and foreign serial publications, purchased antiquarian serial documents, stated up the international publications exchange with *Cellulose Chemistry and Technology* and *Memories of the Scientific Sections*, published by the Romanaian Academy, Branch of Iaşi. This exchange brought into the library up-to-date scientific serial publications highly requested by library patrons: "Polymer Journal" (Japan), "Polymers for Advanced Technology" (Great Britain), "Canadian Journal of Chemistry" (Canada), "Chemical Society Reviews" (Great Britain) or "Quimica Nova" (Brazil), "Mathematical Reviews" and "Bulletin of the American Society" (USA), "NEC – Journal of Advanced Technology" (Japan), "Health Bulletin" (Great Britain), "Knitting Technology" (Germany). Our library holds 60% foreign serials and 40% Romanian serials.

The current books collections are housed in two stack rooms; they are organized based on format. Reference works and other significant documents are housed in the reading room. Our library owns an important collection of titles published at the Romanian Academy Publishing House, up-to-date scientific publications received

through international exchange, most of which cannot be found in other Romanian libraries, and a distinct collection of almost 15,000 items of valuable interwar publications. Academy members and Academy researchers also make donations of prominent scientific works.

Serial publications stacks

The reading room of the library houses a valuable reference works collection, systematic collections organized in several work cabinets and private donations that constitute representative specialized collections: Gheorghe Ivănescu, Ştefan Procopiu, Gheorghe Platon, Alexandru Husar, Dumitru Irimia, N.A. Ursu, Alexandru Dobrescu, Emilia Pavel.

Reference works collection

The most notable recent collections the library organized include publications purchased for EU funding projects. They are the latest editorial issues in fields such as anthropology, arts, culture and civilization, archaeology, demography, sociology, law, administrative science, philosophy, history, linguistics, psychology, communication, political science.
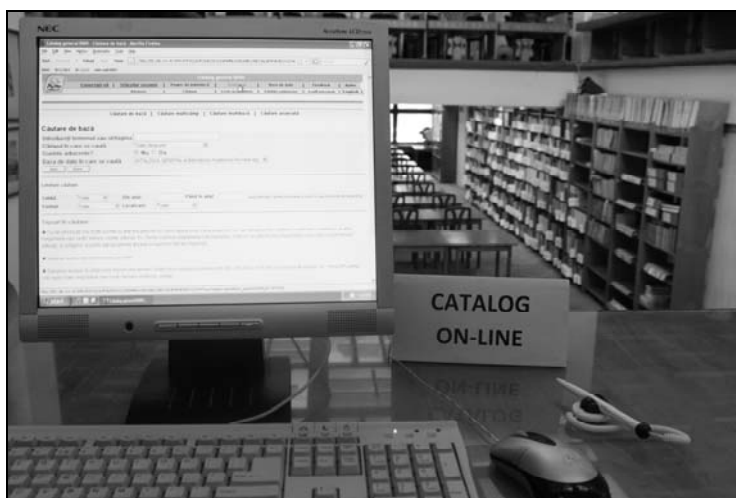

EU funding projects collections

Through the years, all these collections have been handled by skilled librarians. The long and laborious process that includes material selection and acquisition, recording, cataloging, classification, indexing, and shelving makes it possible for patrons to get accurate and facile information. In the early years, traditional alphabetic and systematic catalogues for books, traditional alphabetic, systematic and geographic catalogues for serials and traditional alphabetic catalogue for special collections were developed. They continued with local databases and turned into on-line catalogues.

The Romanian Academy Library, Branch of Iaşi, was furnished with computers in 1995. They were donated by the Soros Foundation. In terms of software, the library used at the beginning a free version of CDS/ISIS DOS from UNESCO to create its first database. At the same time, a LOAN module was created to register and monitor circulation activities. In the following years, the Windows version of CDS/ISIS, called WinISIS, was used. It had a more friendly interface for both librarians and users who could perform searches on a computer in the reading-room. In 2010, a proper process of cybernation takes place. As a result of an European-funding project, "Societatea Bazată pe Cunoaştere – cercetări, dezbateri, perspective," the integrated library softaware ALEPH500 v.18.01 was purchased. It came with 5 modules (cataloguing, acquisition, circulation, ILL, admin), WebOPAC, ADAM,

GUI staff and RFID license. The existing databases were converted from WinISIS both for the Romanian Academy Library, Branch of Iaşi, and the library of the Archaeology Institute. Moreover, the central library was digitally united with the libraries of the Romanian Philology Institute "A. Philippide," the History Institute "A.D. Xenopol," the Economic and Social Research Institute "Gh. Zane", and the Archaeology Institute. The result was a single WebOPAC catalogue. A wireless connection to the Internet was set up in the reading room and a domanin was purchased, *acadiasi.ro*.

Workstation in the reading room

The WebOPAC catalogue of the Romanian Academy Library, Branch of Iaşi, was integrated in RoLineST, Romanian Library Network Science & Technology, a Romanian collective virtual catalogue.

The library site, *www.bib.acadiasi.ro*, was launched in 2012. It includes a link to the WebOPAC ALEPH catalogue.

The Romanian Academy Library, Branch of Iaşi, is the place where the past preserved in stacks reaches the hearts and minds of nowadays readers, where culture meets science, where local personalities find and exchange ideas. It is the place where events such as book launches, round tables, conferences, and symposia bring together people, books and knowledge, by virtue of the diligent and professional effort of people who work for and with the library. Academy member Cristofor I. Simionescu's testimony says: "For the time I managed the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi, both as President (23 years) and as member of the Board (38 years), the library developed continuously. Even during more difficult times, when the Branch downsized, the library expanded its collections. Scientific events and Romanian and foreign book exhibitions were organized. The library staff participated in

scientific events in the most significant university cities in Romania. The international book exchange with the two serials edited by the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi ("Cellulose Chemistry and Technology" and "Memories of the Scientific Sections") brought the latest and most prestigious publications in the world into the library.

No period in the life of the Romanian Academy, Branch of Iaşi, can be accounted without taking into the consideration the library. I remember the superhuman efforts during the time the present location was built, the contribution of the entire library staff in the relocation of the holdings, their expertise in strategizing new workflows. It was not easy, but the library found the right means to accomplish its mission flawlessly: a continuous preoccupation in adapting resources to the requests of current scientific research and meticulous care of the great values it holds." [2]

Professor Simionescu's words also stand proof of his continuous and passionate involvement in the destiny of the library. His pathbreaking management catalyzed an unprecedented development of the library and his love of books and devotion for research always kept him immersed in the outgrowth of the institution he fostered. To paraphrase his words, the history of the library cannot be told without acknowledging professor Simionescu as its advocate.

The exponential development of technologies in the new millennium comes with unprecedented challenges. Concepts such as on line libraries, digital libraries, virtual culture, and cyberspace communication force an alert adaptation. The most imperative responsibility in terms of providing the user with the best structured and most detailed information is to continue the cybernation of library services.

The digital and information age comes with information overload, with the risk of useful information being contaminated with inaccurate data, with ever-increasing amounts of information to dig through and the implied risk of misinformation. Libraries will always constitute a reliable source of scholarly information, will make organized and quality information tangible, will hold and celebrate books as one of the oldest symbols of power in the world.

---

[2] Ignat, Mariana (coord.), *Istoricul Bibliotecii Filialei Iaşi a Academiei Române*, Iaşi, Stef Publishing House, 2006, p. 9.