

Bibliography. Methodology of Bibliographic Research

A Historical Approach of the Romanian Bibliography

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Abstract

The autonomy, imposed by the knowledge accumulated in time, progressively at the beginning, exponentially afterwards, in the infinite memory of mankind has challenged the need for systematizing the information. In the Romanian society the call for bibliographies has grown perpetually from the first manifestations through theory and standardizations, following the ever-increasing flow of documents and the degree of complexity and diversity of the interests in having a better understanding of man and society.

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The appearance and the evolution of bibliographies in our country until a proper bibliographic system was structured, mirrored the historical and cultural context of the epoch.

Older researches as well as contemporary ones regarding the history of the Romanian culture have emphasized the existence of a book patrimony, acquired and preserved along the centuries in the Romanian libraries. Thus, „*the global structure of the old representative libraries at the beginning of storing the human wisdom in the collective memory is highlighted by the collections of scholars like: Luca Stroici, Petru*

Șchiopu, Grigore Ureche, Udriște Năsturel, Miron Costin, Constantin Cantacuzino, Dimitrie Cantemir, Constantin Brâncoveanu, Constantin Mavrocordat, etc.” (1)

With reference to „the patriarchal period of our culture” (2), Nicolae Georgescu -Tistu introduces us in the atmosphere „of the oral or folklore library which stands for the prototype of an ancient library, prior to the well-known ones nearby monasteries” (3)

In the context of the mediaeval culture, the image of the libraries present in the Romanian countries was created by those belonging to bishoprics, monasteries and the prince’s, developed near the monasteries of Mărgineni, Cozia, Polovraci, Hurez (4), Bistrița, Văcărești as well as by the bishoprics of Argeș and Râmnic.

From the perspective of the conceptual definition, the bibliography signified in its beginnings lists, inventories, catalogues or repertories of books with a prevailing character of recording and registration of books. These structures are convergent with the European ones „in the history of the Romanian civilization we can find a synchronic evolution with the European one as to the appearance of bibliographies. Thus, incipient forms of bibliographies are represented by the catalogues of libraries, typographies and bookshops.” (5)

The 17th century marks the issue of the catalogues made up by librarians, scholars, experts in bibliographies in a period of an obvious cultural effervescence.

The impressive private collection belonging to Constantin Cantacuzino benefitted of the elaboration of the first library catalogue in Romanian, in 1667, registrating the books bought by the stolnic in Italy, while he studied in Padova. Afterwards he added a supplement in Italian: *Summario delli miei libri*. (6)

The catalogue of Constantin Cantacuzino’s library (7) in Mărgineni, made up by Nicolae de Porta, reflects the collections of the publications which formed the documentary patrimony of the prince for his preoccupations with history, religion, philosophy, archaeology, politics.

Constantin Brâncoveanu’s library catalogue from Hurez, achieved by I. Eliade in his work „Constantin Braâncoveanu’s Library from Hurez” – discovered by Al. Odobescu and investigated by N. Iorga –, was considered as a symbol of a true “cultural monarchy” (8). The work contained “a catalogue made up by the school inspector of the Vâlcea district, I. Eliade, on May, 1st, 1865. and included 425 volumes (manuscripts and printed books) in Greek, Latin, Italian, Arabic, Georgian” (9)

It is highly remarkable for the XIXth century the existence of catalogues of representative libraries having a configuration specific to a bibliographic typology.

Thus, The Catalogue of the Library of the Saint Sava College, 1836, attributed to Petrache Poenaru, completed after the inventory of the funds of the Metropolitan Library in Bucharest, bears the characteristics of a general bibliography.

The Catalogue of The Academia Mihăileană Library („*Catalogue des livres de lecture de la bibliothèque de l'Académie*”) (10), elaborated by Dimitrie Gusti in 1841, the first librarian of this Academy in Jassy, through complete descriptions of the works and their organization on fields, accomplishes the attributes of a specialized bibliography.

We enumerate them in a chronological succession: The Catalogue of Completing the Library of Jassy by B. P. Hasdeu; The Catalogue of the Astra Library by Nicolae Toganu in 1895; The Alphabetic Catalogue of the Books in the Central Library by Ion C. Gârleanu The catalogue of the books A O. by Alexandru Odobescu, The Catalogue of the Academy Library etc.

Mentioning and presenting a few of the library catalogues at the beginning of the Romanian library science – a period of indubitable cultural emulation – accompanied by various considerations support and bring arguments for the idea that “the appearance of the bibliography is closely tied to the first library catalogues as they represent mainly lists of books organized on several criteria with the aim at mirroring the fund, of informing, communicating and highlighting the collections” (11)

In the context of the analysis of the multiple representations of the catalogues as incipient forms, the catalogues of bookshops and typographies are to be mentioned. The bookshop catalogues, in spite of their trade destination and aspect, contain significant elements of bibliographic communication. In fact, they form important bibliographic sources of research and elaboration of a work about the Romanian culture and civilization.

Professor Nicolae Georgescu-Tistu, in his Romanian Literary Bibliography (12) undertook an analytical study of the bookshop catalogues.

The enumeration and brief presentation of some of the most representative bookshop catalogues reveal the fact that they cumulate the characteristics of a bibliography: they signal and describe books according to the methodological norms of the moment and they are conceived thematically.

They offered the structure and the informational quantity of some specialized bibliographies using classifying criteria still actual, such as: the alphabetical, the chronological and the systematical one.

Conclusively, we can say that this type of catalogues was a preliminary form of the bibliographies. Their role was that of a current signalling of printed books becoming, in time, retrospective informational sources.

The catalogues of libraries, typographies, bookshops represent the poligenesis of the Romanian bibliography and the premisses of the apparition of the first structures meant to provide bibliographical information.

We can thus consider that the evolution of the bibliography, from the perspective of making, elaborating and evaluating it, is in a permanent interdependence with the social and economic environment, trying to constantly meet the expectations of researchers and readers in various fields.

In the Romanian world there is a consensus regarding the investigations of specialty which asserts that the first Romanian bibliographical works belong to Vasilie Popp, Dimitrie Iarcu, Alexandru Pop and Gheorghe Popescu.

Following his work „Dissertation about the Romanian Typographies in Transylvania and the Neighbouring Countries from their Beginning to our Times” (1838), printed in Sibiu by Doctor Vasilie Popp considered as the father of the Romanian bibliography, as well as that of the great scholar from Blaj, Timotei Cipariu, entitled „Crestomacy or Literary Analects Extracted from the Older and the more Recent Books, Printed and in Manuscript, Starting from the XVIth Century until the XIXth Century” (1858) which contained a list of books known to him, Dimitrie Iarcu’s „Annals of the Romanian Bibliography” was published, which, in Ioachim Crăciun’s opinion (13), meant that, although he had as a model the works of two forerunners, he couldn’t rise above them both in accuracy and in the scientific approach.

We should specify that Ion Muşlea and, later, Barbu Theodorescu took the same critical position as Ioachim Crăciun, unlike others, like Nicolae Georgescu-Tistu, who refused this merit to Vasilie Popp attributing it to Dimitrie Iarcu.

Therefore, in some of the Romanian treaties of bibliology, Vasilie Popp is considered the first Romanian bibliographer while other treaties consider Dimitrie Iarcu as a father of the Romanian bibliography with his “Romanian Bibliographic Annals”

Timotei Cipariu’s „Crestomacy or Literary Analects Extracted from the Older and the more Recent Books, Printed and in Manuscript, Starting

from the XVIth Century until the XIXth Century” Blaj, 1858, is closely connected to the work mentioned before, as Popp had used some remarks made by Cipariu about his work and Cipariu analyzed Popp’s work in his turn. Popp’s merit as a pioneer cannot be denied and Cipariu brought a special homage to his rigorousness in systematization of the informational content of the publications and, to the accuracy of his descriptive comments, as Vasilie Popp’s bibliographical knowledge was inferior to that of the scholar of Blaj.

Although Cipariu (15) achieved an analytical bibliography of the Romanian literature containing ample excerpts extracted from the books studied by the scholar in Blaj, *The Crestomacy* is a work with a disputed typology as it is considered either a bibliographical work or an anthology.

In 1865, Dimitrie Iarcu (16) published, in Bucharest, „The Annals of the Romanian Bibliography. A Chronological Repertory or a General Catalogue of the Romanian Books Printed in the Country between 1550/1865” (Bucharest, Imprimeria Statului, 120 pages). The motivation and aim of this bibliography are explained by Dimitrie Iarcu in his „Foreword”, confessing that the idea of making up a bibliography was inspired to him by his predecessors Timotei Cipariu and Vasilie Popp. Although he took advantage of such a rich material, he couldn’t surpass their working method.

Iarcu’s follower, Gheorghe Popescu (17), a literary historian wrote a book entitled „Three Years of Romanian literature. Bibliographical Index of the Books Romanian Published in Romania or by Romanians between 1874, 1875, 1876, Preceded by Bibliographical Sketches of the Romanian Literates of Macedonia (Bucharest, Noua Tipografie a Laboratorilor Români, 1877), followed by “Six Years of Romanian Literature. A General Catalogue of the Romanian Books Published in the Country and Abroad from January 1, 1874 until July, 1879” (Bucharest, 1879, 76 pages) represented the accomplishment of the author of achieving special selective bibliographies meant to signal and recommend Romanian literature.

Gheorghe Petrescu introduces the word „Românica” which would be used scientifically in *The Old Romanian Bibliography*. The titles mentioned contain bibliographical sketches of the writers which confer them the idea of bibliography.

We must mention the first special bibliography elaborated in Romania, bearing the title „The Bibliography of Serial Publications or of Those Published in Foreign Languages in Romania or by Romanians Abroad: 1817–1887” (Bucharest, 1889, 161 pages) written by Alexandru Pop.

The bibliographies mentioned and presented above were among the first bibliographical works, which can excuse the numerous lacks and errors, incomplete bibliographic descriptions and an obvious unbalance between the intention and the actual possibility – in this incipient phase – of using bibliographical methods and techniques in practice. They have a great significance for the beginning of the Romanian bibliography.

In the evolution of the Romanian bibliography the tendency of making special bibliographies as well as Romanian literature bibliographies started with “The Crestomacy or the Literary Annalects in the Older or more Recent Romanian Books” (Blaj, 1858), by Timotei Cipariu, an idea continued in “Contribution to the Romanian Bibliography. The History of the Romanian Literature. Texts and Authors, 1500–1925” (Bucharest, 1928) and “Bibliographical Indications for The Romanian Literature from the Oldest Works till 1913” (Bucharest, 1914) belonging to professor Gheorghe Adamescu, who, by means of a vast and detailed bibliological investigation and a relevant structure, conceived and elaborated a biobibliography of the “Old and Modern Romanian Literature” (18), as he envisaged to mirror the whole history of the Romanian literature from 1500 up to 1920.

Mention should be made that, in the evolution of the Romanian bibliographies, analytical bibliographies and review indexes appeared as special typologies and became more and more pregnant besides the general bibliographies.

The Romanian bibliographies were formed and developed due to the interest manifested by the Romanian scholars in the profound studies and researches who identified essential bibliographical sources for the Romanian history, culture and civilization using a multitude of types and methods of elaboration of bibliographies marked sometimes by inherent „failures” specific to any beginning.

At present, the huge quantity of information looked upon, first, as an accumulation of data, doesn’t seem to worry mankind more than the rapid access to the information already issued, its easy finding as a result of the systematization.

Information sources, primary ones particularly, have become extremely varied in this fundamentally informational epoch. The most modern, of the internet type, correctly used after screening the insignificant and redundant information, can be of a real help. Perceived as „traditionalist” and even old-fashioned, the specialized reading should have a special place in the professional education, if we want performance for our experts, still remaining the most widely spread and used source of information.

Even if the informational supports – both for the primary documents and for the secondary ones, bibliographies mainly – can be both traditional and completely up-to-date, the information offered, if delivered in due time and exploited adequately, can be considered extremely effective.

The overwhelming number of the sources of information, the interest of the users for certain subjects, the necessity of obtaining information in a short span of time, on the one hand and, on the other hand, the appearance of the electronic informational systems – which have extended the possibilities of a rapid finding and obtaining of the necessary information by the user, up to an integral text, from many libraries – confirm the idea that the future of the libraries resides not only in accumulating as many funds as possible but also in ensuring the access to an increased quantity of information similar to the virtual library pattern.

The exponential development of informatics, the new technologies of information and communication have facilitated a modern way of transmitting information which has been added to the classical one. The main modalities of communication belonging to the traditional system have been influenced by the development of the networks, the internet above all, at various levels, according to the field.

Libraries, as basic repository and supplier of information of the society stocking and disseminating information at micro and macrolevel, cannot control this informational assembly and satisfy, at the same time, a rapid and efficient access to the information required in a real and potential manner. Faced with this informational explosion, libraries are challenged by a diminishing of budget because of the discrepancy between the exponential increase of the number of documents to be acquired and the allowance for funds designed to this purpose.

To the greatest extent, the university libraries unfold their role in guiding studies and researches, of providing bibliographical and documentary signals. The attendants are students, professors, researchers and the informational solicitations depend on the degree of specialization of each category of readers. Students of the first university level ask primarily reference works like: encyclopedias, dictionaries, guides for bibliographical information, study works as important treaties, collective syntheses, handbooks, literary texts, serials of special and general interest and, undoubtedly, the information specific to the fields under study.

The requirement of information is multiple and the library should be apt to supply any user the information needed, in the form needed.

The specialized library comes to the acute and permanent bibliographical information. We can assert that this library represents a structured collection of documents which serve directly and effectively a certain segment of readers from the perspective of their research interests.

Thus, the beneficiary acquires confidence in the guidance of his/her investigation. Therefore, the information should prove pertinent and competitive in a framework corresponding to the most recent requirements of the informational world nowadays.

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