

THE EARTH SCIENCE LIBRARIES: A NATIONAL OUTLINE

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The note shows the first results of the census of the Earth Science Libraries active in the national territory. On the occasion of the 6th Forum of the Italian Earth Science Federation (FIST) we took in consideration the libraries which operate in research structures, university departments, associations and other institutes which specifically belong to the Earth Sciences (Geology, Palaeontology and Geophysics Department-University of Padova; Earth and Geological-Environmental Sciences Department-University of Bologna) and the libraries that, even if involved in a wider or smaller area of interest, work in the field of the Earth Sciences and are usually hosted by well-known scientific structures (ICRAM Central Institute for the Scientific Research on the Sea, CNR National Research Council).

The list of the institutions and scientific structures that established a library exchange program with the APAT Library has been considered as primary source of information to realize the census. The exchange program has been inherited from the former library of the Geological Survey of Italy. The list has been updated with a specific reorganization and finally the exchange program has been renewed during the 2006 with about 300 scientific organizations and institutions in Italy and in the foreign countries.

Through an accurate and detailed analysis using the web and its available search engines other libraries of interest have been detected.

At the present day about one hundred libraries active in the national territory within universities, scientific structures, observatories and museums have been found.

We examined their websites to identify general and particular features: location, opening time, user characteristics, services (loan, interlibrary loan, document delivery, consulting), library-owned documents (serials, monographs, grey literature, multimedia material, databases, aerial photos, maps), employee features (librarians, help-librarians, geologists, computer experts, technical/administrative staff), users per year, specific projects realized or still in progress.

The note provides a qualitative evaluation based on the analysis of the documentation and the information acquired through the libraries websites and completed in some cases by telephone interview. To assess the specific structures that operate in the Earth Science and Environmental domains we referred to the library best known to the authors, the APAT Library, which has been included in the census and described in his features.

The purpose of the census is to update the consistency and typology of the owned materials, the services offered and the development perspectives of the libraries of this specific sector. Moreover to increase contacts and promote meetings among library operators in order to make a permanent and stable Earth Science libraries network with the aim of sharing information and improving services.