

Virgil Vătășianu and the University Library in Cluj (1925-1947)

Stelian MÂNDRUȚ

Researcher

Institute of History, Cluj-Napoca

Keywords: alphabetic, bibliological, bibliographical, topographical catalogue; decimal classification; multi-facets of an intellectual

Abstract

The paper follows the activity of the librarian – doctor in art history and philosophy – Virgil Vătășianu at the Cluj University Library. He took part in various activities from physical work in the deposit to merit-based endeavors as the rearrangement of the subject catalogue. The years productively spent in Cluj and Rome display the activity of the intellectual constantly concerned about his own situation around books and culture.

E-mail: SMandrut@hotmail.com

As an important scientific and cultural institution both in the country and abroad, a repository of valuable written evidence of the past, and also as an “auxiliary” public institution of the University in the process of education and learning – supported by the State with augmented budget, especially at the beginning of the 1920’s, for the endowment of the necessary number of books and periodicals by acquisitions, donations, inter-library exchange (internal and external), or legal deposit –, the University Library functioned on the basis of private “Regulations” (1923)¹ in all aspects of its specific activities. Thus, from an organizational point of view, there were four departments: scientific, administrative, technical, and support. The first and most important one in the institutional structure comprised a variable number of “scientific functionaries” headed by a General Director (Eugen Barbul, 1920-1935), 2-3 head-librarians, 6-7 librarians, an archivist, 3 assistant librarians, and

¹ *Regulamentul Bibliotecii Universitare din Cluj*. (The regulations of the University Library in Cluj), Bucharest, 1923.; E. Barbul, *Biblioteca Universității Regele Ferdinand I. din Cluj* (The library of the Ferdinand I. University in Cluj). Cluj, 1925, p. 15, 33, 35, 36, 38.

5-6 indexers;¹ each of them having their characteristic obligations and remuneration, different systems of grading, assimilated to the procedure used at the University. Thus for example the remuneration could have increased by 25% every five years of continuous activity in one's function. The salary of an assistant-librarian was 2600 lei, and a librarian's 3900 lei. In 1925, for instance, 12 librarians were employed, having a modest financial situation, specific to the first period of the institution. However, they also enjoyed certain useful advantages, among which the possibility of research, stipulated also in the regulations, and the large amount of spare time, especially during the summer holidays (6 weeks). The primary condition announced in the applications for employment/appointment/promotion was the possession of all necessary scientific degrees, and works published in the field. The logistics used in recruiting the scientific personnel considered that all the four traditional faculties of the University must be equally represented in the Library.²

According to the internal hierarchical structure, the general director was responsible for administration and discipline, having a decisive role in budget administration, and the external representation of the institution. The tasks of the first head-librarian (usually the one who had the longest period of work in the field) were: recording of the newly received books, inventory (which could also be done by a librarian!) and the management of the cataloguing team, for each field, consisting initially of three librarians who had other duties as well. The following head-librarian automatically became the secretary of the University Library Committee, and he was in charge of ordering, recording, cataloguing, and binding foreign periodicals.

Of the 4 to 7 librarians, confined to various functions, the oldest one coordinated the elaboration of the two alphabetical catalogues, together with the administrative staff appointed for it. The next one was in charge of the subject catalogue, of the recording, cataloguing, numbering, and binding of old Romanian books and periodicals; another one was running the office of legal deposit (1923-), while yet another librarian, assisted by the second assistant librarian, was in charge of book loans and the administration of special collections exhibited in the Sion Room.

¹ *Regulamentul...*, op. cit., p. 21, 22. I. Muşlea, "Biblioteca Universităţii din Cluj" (The University Library in Cluj), in *Boabe de grâu* (Grains of wheat), I., 1930, nr. 5., p. 304.; E. Barbul, op. cit., p. 61.

² *Idem* p. 64-65.

The first assistant librarian kept the accounts, took care of international exchange and the numbering of books. The other, aided by one of the laboratory assistants, recorded the periodical publications, cataloguing, numbering, and binding them. Finally, 6 indexers completed the alphabetical catalogue and worked as custodians in the library's reading rooms.¹

An important element of influence in the internal life of the library, and implicitly in the life of the librarians, was the collective organism called the University Library Committee. It consisted of 6 members: the Rector of the University as the president, 4 representatives, one for each of the faculties, appointed for two years, and re-eligible, the general director, and the secretary, appointed by the Committee from the librarians. The Committee controlled the activity of the management and the library, even if the disciplinary power belonged to the University Senate. The Committee proposed all the measures to be adopted, and its preliminary approval was necessary for all internal tasks: budget projects, the examination or phasing of ordinary/extraordinary credits, subscriptions for foreign periodicals, and the acquisition of publications required by the faculties of the University.²

I have considered this descriptive outline proper as a preface, in order to easier understand the merit-based endeavors undertaken in time and space by Virgil Vătășianu. He was a graduate of the Faculty of Law, employed at the beginning in an administrative job as first clerk (in May 1925), later a doctor in philosophy; gradually he climbed, according to his merits, his work, and the factor called luck, to the highest rank of head-librarian of the University Library by the end of the 1940's, after the war.

But what was the stage of the internal actions continuously developing within the University Library in decades three and four in the period between the two world wars, when the central figure of this account was engaging in the work of the institution?

The publications (books and periodicals) acquired by purchase, donations, or in other ways were initially registered in the Record of Reception, and then passed on to inventory and cataloguing, followed by numbering, stamping, and placement on the shelves in the deposits. The instruments of operation consisted of two complete alphabetical catalogues and one subject catalogue then still in progress. The cataloguing technique meant the creation of a reference file with three

¹ *Idem* p. 63-64.

² *Idem* p. 62.

corresponding cards with bibliographic description for the main alphabetical catalogue, for the similar public catalogue, and the compulsory one for the subject catalogue.

In parallel with the physical activity of rearranging the books and renumbering the periodicals (newspapers, reviews), intensified in the summer of 1926 by a new expansion of the space available, the “scientific staff” had to solve the persistent “inheritance” until the year 1918-1919: a main alphabetic record on cards, according to the decimal system, printed in five volumes until the year 1898, followed by another one until 1902, as well as a strictly topographical catalogue which later evolved into an alphabetical one. In the year 1923 the new reference records began to be prepared (“the sorting of the cards”), in a number of approximately 117397, which required an unpaid supplementary effort of 4-5 hours daily, and completed for weeks by the entire staff. The rearrangement of the current subject catalogue started in 1925 by the copying of the old cards, resulting by 1930 in a number of 180000 records (including the entire material after 1898, except for the “Transylvanian Museum” collection.) The task was continued in 1932, for an even more thorough classification of the collections. The work stagnated, intermittently, because of objective (lack of funding) or subjective (changing staff) reasons, but also because of the lack of an adequate manual of decimal classification, which was only published in 1933 in its complete form by the International Institute of Bibliography.¹

Several recent works on the life and activity of the art historian Virgil Vătășianu² have preceded our attempt to complete and correct certain inadequately presented moments about the time he spent as a librarian beginning with the year 1925. It should be remembered that all this was being done while Vătășianu, a graduate of law, attended the courses of art history at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in Cluj, continuing and completing them at the analogous faculty at the University of Vienna.

¹ I. Mușlea, op. cit., p. 304-305.; E. Barbul, op. cit., p. 75-76.

² C. Simon, *Artă și identitate națională în opera lui Virgil Vătășianu* (Art and national identity in the work of Virgil Vătășianu), Cluj Napoca, 2002, p. 20-21; see also the contributions in the anniversary volume *Sub zodia Vătășianu. Studii de istoria artei* (Under the Vătășianu sign. Studies in art history), Cluj Napoca, 2002; I. Opreș, “Virgil Vătășianu sub ochii Securității” (Virgil Vătășianu under the eyes of the Security Office), in *Artă. Istorie. Cultură. Studii în onoarea lui Marius Porumb* (Art. History. Culture. Studies in the honor of Marius Porumb), Cluj Napoca, 2003, p. 405-406.

It is nothing surprising that the beginning of his attempts to be employed at the University Library as member of the scientific staff inevitably depended on the existence and activity of his colleague Ioan Muşlea, also a candidate for assistant-librarian, a position officially announced for application in March 1925. His personal commitment for a “cultural apostolate” temporarily failed both because of objective reasons (V. Vătăşianu did not belong to any political grouping), and subjective ones, I. Muşlea being effectively supported by the members of the University Library Committee. This was due to the fact that he had spent three years in a branch library, and he had the chance of completing a course of bibliography and library service at the *École des Chartes* (Paris).¹ In an address to the members of the University Library Committee, dated May 1, 1925, General Director Eugen Barbul advanced the request of Virgil Vătăşianu, a graduate of law, to be appointed to the vacant position of a library clerk. The address mentioned that the pretender failed at the exam for the position of an assistant librarian, which took place on April 17, 1925, the job being offered to I. Muşlea, a graduate of modern philology. Consequently V. Vătăşianu was reinforced in his position on May 22, 1925, and he continued his duties as a “daily paid extra-budgetary functionary” until October 10, 1925, taking in the meantime the oaths for his function. We have no precise information about his activities at that time, but the fact that he was the second on the previously mentioned exam favored his appointment, together with his “rival”, I. Muşlea, to one of the two legal budgetary positions of assistant librarian.²

¹ National Library, Correspondence stock G. 32.: B. 64.: V. Bogrea to N. Georgescu-Tistu, Cluj, April 25, 1925: “...How is Mr. Muşlea? Tell him, please, that on my proposal, the University Library Committee unanimously accepted his request of being appointed a librarian...”; see also S. Mândruţ, “Ion Muşlea, începuturi bibliotecăreşti (1925)” (Ion Muşlea, beginnings as a librarian), in *Biblioteca și Cercetarea* (Library and Research), XV, 1991, p. 117-118; *Arhiva Fundației Virgil Vătăşianu* (The Virgil Vătăşianu Foundation Archive, AFVV), mss. Retrospectiva ... (Retrospective), f. 3 recto; *Idem*, folder Autobiografie (Autobiography), f. 1. [AFVV]

² *Idem*, folder Acte personale (Personal papers): Individual file, Cluj, December 30, 1946; *Idem*, folder Autobiografie, f. 1.; *Idem*, f. 3.: No. 1239/1925, Cluj, October 8, 1925, address by I. Valaori to E. Barbul; “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library (BCULB), Archive of Central University Library (ABCUL) stock, No. 706/1925: Cluj, May 1 1925; *Idem*, No. 833/1925: Cluj, May 22 1925; *Idem*, No. 909/1925: Cluj, June 6 1925; *Anuarul Universității din Cluj de anul*

In his position of first clerk and assistant librarian (until August 15, 1928), and later also as a 3rd degree librarian (August 16, 1928 – November 30, 1933), which implied other concrete tasks as well, and also because of his diligence proved by his studies in Cluj and Vienna (including his doctoral degree), Vătășianu took part in various activities. These included physical work in the deposits for the rearrangement of books (doubles, prints), renumbering of periodicals (collections of newspapers and reviews), as well as the effective work on the elaboration of the current subject register with an initial stock estimated to approximately 150000 Dewey cards (between letter O in 1927-28 and W in 1928-29). Certain ill-fated circumstances, because of the economical crisis and the inflation of the national currency, led to the increase of the price of foreign publications, thus seriously hindering the institution's internal evolution, much reduced in comparison with its original state in 1921. However, it is certain that this diligent worker also played a part in the organization of the anniversary exhibition at Alba Iulia on the occasion of the celebration of the Union, where the University Library presented old documents, illustrations, and stamps about the age of Mihai Viteazul. The insufficient budget funding, marked by a substantial decrease of 10 to 20%, seriously affected, though did not completely stop, the process of completing and development of the catalogues of books and periodicals, like the alphabetical one completed with 67 boxes, and the subject catalogue, completed with Dewey decimal cards to the letter Z (1929-30).¹

Other details from the Virgil Vătășianu personal archive and the archive in the University Library confirm distinct moments of his daily existence in the period of the continuation and completion of his university studies (the frequently requested unpaid leaves, and the due replacements are suggestive!), of the preparation and defense of his doctoral thesis in Vienna (1926 fall – 1927 spring), as well as the fulfillment of his obligatory military service at the School of Reserve Officers in Craiova, in artillery, in the period between 1927-28, which he

școlar 1924-1925 (The Annual of the University of Cluj for academic year 1924-1925), Cluj, 1926, p. 172.

¹ *Anuarul...1927-1928*, Cluj, 1928, p. 234-235: the last two librarians of the seven mentioned: dr. I. Mușlea and dr. V. Vătășianu; *Idem*, 1928-1929, Cluj, 1929, p. 245-248; *Idem*, 1929-1930, Cluj, 1930, p. 264-266; I. Mușlea, op. cit., p. 300, 304, 305.

graduated with a degree of sub-lieutenant.¹ The report about the occupation of the vacant position of a librarian, issued on February 13, 1928 is also suggestive. Of the five candidates who applied for the position, V. Vătășianu was mentioned because of the fact that he was on legal leave for the completion of his military service. The General Director of the library, Eugen Barbul, in an address to the Rector of the University, motivated the fact that the named applicant could still participate in the exam by his being proposed and supported for advancement in function by professor Emil Racoviță.²

In the period between 1925-1930, his engagement as a “scientific” clerk of the Library and his official leave for ten months for his studies at the Romanian School in Rome (November 1, 1930 – August 30, 1931), the librarian V. Vătășianu, already a Doctor in Philosophy, experienced some disappointment because of the failure of the principle of merit, contrary to his idealist convictions, and visibly proved by the ups and downs of the course of internal promotions. These promotions were very slow and disparaging for the polyglot librarian, who could not make good use of all of his legal, philosophical, and art historical knowledge, yet made no compromises to the circumstances and rightfully accused “political” protectiveness enjoyed by many of his colleagues, some even inferior in their professional training.

His personal request about his participation in the planned application for a vacant position of a head-librarian in the fall of 1929, also meeting the necessary “logistical” requirements, is still significant today. All the available professional and technical departments were logically and clearly presented, justifying his eagerness to succeed in his endeavor. Most certainly, his failure must be corroborated with his other failure due to the cancellation of the application exam for the vacant position at the Department of Art History at the University of Bucharest, where two young specialists, V. Vătășianu and I. D. Ștefănescu had to face the success of G. Oprescu, favored by the historian N. Iorga. The acute general financial crisis which brought about the drastic decrease of

¹ BCULB, ABCU stock, No. 687/1926: Cluj, November 10, 1926, request for temporary resignation because of studies abroad; AFVV, *Autobiografie* folder, f. 2.; *Idem*, *Acte personale* folder, No. 79442: Bucharest, August 24, 1928; No. 826/1928, Cluj, September 1, 1928: officially appointed a librarian beginning with April 1, 1928; *Idem*, Copy. Ministry of War. 40th Regiment of Artillery. Card no. 84 of reserve officer Virgil Ioan Vătășianu.

² BCULB, ABCU stock, No. 648/1928: Cluj, February 13, 1928, and Cluj, June 2, 1928.

budget investments compared to the preceding years (1920 and 1925, amounts of over 1 million lei!) also influenced his failure at the University Library. This also meant the uncontrolled increase of many arrears in the payment of salaries, and accordingly the halt of internal promotions and regrading, both in the University and in the Library, forced to survive only on their own income.¹

If we were to quantify Vătășianu's first period in the University Library between the years 1925-1930, we could establish a relative balance between his preoccupations peculiar to his job at the institution and those peculiar to his professional training. The latter ones were generously facilitated by the leaves he obtained from the collective management under the official title of "placement in temporal availability, without payment!" (often emphasized in his requests addressed to the General Director, Eugen Barbul!), as well as other kinds of legal temporal leaves (university studies, doctoral studies, military service), together with the necessary replacements undertaken as an assistant librarian and a librarian.

Effective working time: 1 May–30 September 1925, first class clerk (350 lei); 1 October–31 December 1925, assistant librarian (1000 lei); 1 January–14 March 1926, assistant librarian (1000 lei); 16 July–26 November 1926, assistant librarian (1000 lei); 1 April–15 August 1927, assistant librarian (1000 lei); 16 August–31 December 1928, librarian III (1600 lei); 1 January–31 December 1929, librarian III (9950 lei); 1 January–31 October 1930, librarian III (9950 lei).

Legal leaves (for studies and military service): 15 March–15 July 1926, assistant librarian; 25 November–31 December 1926, assistant librarian; 16 August 1927–15 August 1928, assistant librarian.²

By his three-fold preoccupations during this period, as a librarian of the University Library, a student in letters and philosophy at the University of Cluj and in art history at the University of Vienna, and later as a doctoral student, V. Vătășianu had the moral obligation, due both to the institution of the library and the requirements of academic life, to write articles and studies in a professional field and in the field of scholarly research.

¹ *Anuarul... 1928-29*, Cluj, 1929, p. 248: a single head-librarian is mentioned; *Idem... 1929-30*, Cluj, 1930, p. 266: 3 head-librarians (1 vacant position); *Idem... 1930-31*, Cluj, 1931, p. 278: 2 head-librarians (A. Valentiny and N. Ferenczi); E. Barbul, op. cit., p. 60, 87, 89; C. Simon, op. cit., p. 21.

² AFVV, Personal documents folder, Retirement file, f. 1-5.

The librarian, also a doctor in art history, published in just a few years conceptually and methodologically daring studies in the field of Romanian and foreign art, valid at the same time by the objectivity of comparative interpretation and the lucidity of an innovating discourse, as a perfectionist concerned about a documentary-thematic consistency, as also remarked by the literature of the field. His scholarly discipline and rigor were apparent especially in his thesis, later extended in a Romanian version, about the mural paintings of religious monuments in the “Hațeg Country” area (1929-1930). In accordance with the legal terms of application for the candidates proposed yearly for study at the two Romanian Schools abroad (Paris and Rome), this moral and scholarly accomplishment led to V. Vătășianu’s application for the preliminary exam in June 1930. Fulfilling all the requirements, the Professors’ Council of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Cluj approved, with a unanimity of votes, his scholarship in Rome for the period 1930-1931. However, Vătășianu as a librarian of the University Library continued his work at the institution until he officially obtained his legal leave for 10 months, beginning with 1 November 1930, being replaced by his colleague Tullia Găvruş, assistant professor and a former attendant of the courses of the Sorbonne Summer University (1929).

At the beginning of the 1930s, Rome offered an adequate framework for the professional achievements of a young, specializing scholar with its old monuments, important cultural institutions, the network of archives and libraries, and also the foreign schools and famous specialists of art history. The fruitful intertwining of tradition and innovation had a positive influence on Vătășianu’s professional formation. Along with other scholarship holders from the other four Romanian university centers, he enjoyed a well balanced study plan, proved also by the free attendance of lectures and seminars; the theoretical training was followed by the completion of two compulsory studies and a field trip within the city of Rome and the confines of the peninsula. Being interested in monuments of religious art in Transylvania, V. Vătășianu most certainly used this period for a thorough documentation in the literature of the field. He also gathered information in dialogues with Italian and foreign specialists on the latest methodological results in the field, or in the colloquiums housed by the library of the Romanian School. Many of his studies, on which he had been working especially during the period spent at the University Library, were now continued and completed, and published in specialized reviews. As a librarian, on the suggestion of Prof. E. Panaitescu, Director

of the Romanian School, he organized the section of several thousands of printings (books and periodicals) at the Library of the Romanian School as an especially useful task, resulting in the foundation of a unitarily organized model-collection, according to his own epistolary evidence.¹

Returning to the University Library on September 1, 1931 in the same function, V. Vătășianu joined, intellectually and mentally, the group of fellow-librarians who also studied abroad (three of them in Paris: E. Armeanca, O. Boitoș, I. Mușlea), and who profited of the 1 or 2 years of intense specialized training and significantly contributed to various fields of scholarly activity (art, history, literature).

The beginning of the 1930s marked for the University Library the consequences of the economic crisis, and it significantly influenced the course of life and activity of the 3rd degree librarian V. Vătășianu, often mentioned together with his colleague I. Mușlea in the group of seven scientific functionaries in the list of the institution. The annual budget, always diminishing with the payment of the wages and having serious arrears of up to 10 months until the middle of the 1930s, showed a somber situation (comparative figures: 1930: 950000 lei; 1932: 327000 lei; 1934: 72000 lei; 1935: 62000 lei) about securing the necessary minimum of subsistence for librarians, who were always concerned with the chance of promotion according to legal norms. In this context Vătășianu, who gave up the possibility of continuing his studies in Rome in order not to “abuse” the facilities offered by the management of the library, where he obtained the highest degree (January 17, 1931), was forced to put up with the rigors of the age. He had to take the trouble of working in various fields, and to fight, personally or together with other colleagues equally motivated professionally (especially I. Mușlea), for imposing his point of view about the remuneration being matched with the work effectively done in cataloguing and classification. The memorials written together by I. Mușlea and V. Vătășianu in February and March 1932 about the difficult problem of employment and promotion were successively postponed because of objective reasons. However, they still caused a gap in the hierarchy of the institution by I.

¹ AFVV, Varia personal stock: Venezia, July 28, 1931: “... I only regret that the library has set me back so much in my work. But I turned the most disorganized library I have ever seen into a model library. This is my only comfort...”; I. Mușlea, *Biblioteca Universității Clujene în anii 1919-1940* (The Library of the University of Cluj between the years 1919-1940), Sibiu, 1945, p. 9. It cites the presence of V. Vătășianu as a scholarship holder in Rome.

Muşlea's appointment as Secretary of the University Library Committee, replaced in case of absence by his fellow-petitioner V. Vătăşianu.¹

The actual work undertaken now was the extension of the subject catalogue in the Dewey system, which was started in 1925, with cards copied until 1930, but which was stagnating because of the lack of a manual of orientation. The classification work, intensified in 1932, were hindered by the lack of a group of specialists, thus the whole operation was proceeding with difficulties, and only with the help of collaborators from other services, especially the administration. The problems connected to the alphabetical catalogue, the topographical catalogue cards, alphabetically ordered for the readers, or to the reference cards, which were started in 1929 (with approximately 70000 finished by September 1932) mainly by overtime work, and completed between September and December 1933 by a team of four specialists (A. Valentiny, S. Mureşanu, I. Muşlea, V. Vătăşianu) were reflected in two reports of the "Librarian Virgil Vătăşianu", in March and May 1933, about the whole scope of difficulties connected to the completion of the project. Even if the Dewey system of decimal classification failed to be applied due to objective reasons, the universal decimal classification system seemed much more flexible because of its continental origin and because it included a great number of subdivisions. The technical data presented by the author of the report proved the rapid adoption of the UDC system shortly after the first edition in 1927, because the generalization of the card transcription for the new catalogue, initiated as a preliminary phase, had already been completed by 1930. Thus, in accordance with the general thesis of the annual reports of University Library, during those three years the entire systematic catalogue was recopied with the aim of forming a subject catalogue. V. Vătăşianu rightfully insisted on the shortcomings in form and matter, due to the lack of a competent staff and a concept of alphabetical index which could have been applied in practice. The problem was also worsened by the uncertainty in the understanding of UDC principles, the wrong general or particular classification of notions, or by the necessity of precise and rapid access to bibliographic information. There was also a frequently emphasized matter, namely, that the index as a vital classification tool had never been translated into Romanian. It is notable nevertheless, and the author of the report did not fail to insist on it, that more than 14036

¹ AFVV, *Autobiografie* folder, f. 2-3.; *Idem*, mss. *Retrospectiva...* f. 5 recto; *Idem*, *Acte personale* folder: Cluj, June 6, 1932; BCULB, *ABCU* stock, No. 138-1932: Cluj, March 15, 1932 and No. 277/1932: Bucharest, March 24, 1932.

cards were ordered into a regular catalogue, without a specialized team in classification and based only on the work of four librarians, a catalogue which still exists today in a perfect working order in the Reference Room of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library in Cluj-Napoca.¹

The hard work of alphabetic cataloguing continued in the year 1934 as well with an estimated number of 117869 reference cards, arranged and revised in alphabetic order. The effort of working on the subject catalogue in the years 1934-1935 was repeatedly interrupted both by V. Vătășianu’s delegation as Permanent Secretary at the Romanian School in Rome, and by I. Mușlea’s appointment as temporary Director of the University Library. Two activity reports, personally written by V. Vătășianu, addressed to the management of the institution, on April 2 and June 30, 1934, contain interesting statistical data about the quantitative contribution of the triad of A. Valentiny, I. Mușlea, head-librarians, and V. Vătășianu, first degree librarian: the 1487 cards, classified in March 1934, were divided thus: 354, 529, and 604, and the 1958 distributed cards presented as follows: 354, 900, 604. Of the 1554 cards classified in June 1934, the division was the following: 353, 501, 700, while the 1053 revised cards were shown thus: 353, A. Valentiny and 700, V. Vătășianu. It is also significant that, on the basis of the applications of all the librarians in the course of their professional-scientific affirmation, chance caused that in the fall of the year 1933, after repeated requests of promotion, I. Mușlea became head-librarian, and V. Vătășianu occupied the vacant position of first degree librarian, but without a raise in his wages (December 1, 1933). This official measure was successively reinforced by the management of the University Library (January 1 and May 1, 1934), in the situation of acute budgetary deficiencies.² This fact justified the place of Vătășianu as a first degree librarian in the social hierarchy of the institution, in connection with his own professional-scientific ambitions, validated in time.

¹ BCULB, ABC stock, no. 370/1934: Cluj, April 2, 1934; *Idem*, no. 666/1934: Cluj: June 30, 1934; see also the *Anuarul... 1932-1933*. Cluj, 1933, p. 306-307; *Idem... 1933-1934*. Cluj, 1934, p. 322. I hereby wish to thank Ms Monica Lazăr, Head of the Classification-Indexation Service of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library in Cluj-Napoca for her collegial help.

² BCULB, ABC stock, No. 577/1933: Cluj, June 15, 1933; *Idem*, No. 957/1933: Bucharest, December 11, 1933; *Idem*, No. 988/1933: Bucharest: November 29, 1933, and Cluj, December 5, 1933; *Idem*, No. 498/1934: Bucharest, May 8, 1934; AFVV, Acte personale folder, No. 20764: Bucharest, February 7, 1934; see also *Anuarul... 1933-1934*, Cluj, 1934, p. 319.

V. Vătășianu as a professional librarian incisively criticized certain statements which were wrongly circulated in a study about “Hungarian library science” (1933). The author of the study from Budapest sententiously referred to the comparative statistics of Hungarian books completed before 1919, and to the Hungarian libraries catalogued in 1929. In a thoroughly documented and concise analytic-comparative study, V. Vătășianu revealed the biased nature of the work and took apart certain partial theses about the premeditated official destruction of the Hungarian libraries and books in Transylvania, arguing with the very case of the University Library as a model. The flagrant attempts at calumny and scientific falsification were revealed precisely by the organization and logical enumeration of the facts, presented by the criteria of various types of printings, libraries, and other cultural associations/societies. The final suggestion was an attempt of precisely and thoroughly outlining the system of majority and minority libraries, by up-to-date technical landmarks. Vătășianu proved now a new conceptual-methodological knowledge about Romanian and foreign library science, due especially to his daily work of cataloguing and classification, but also to his specialized readings for his continuous professional training.¹

A series of objective and subjective factors caused that the fate of the first degree librarian V. Vătășianu turned into a new direction, the *Accademia di Romania* in Rome. The former scholarship holder’s qualities as a specialist in library science and a scholar of art history, and also his abilities to express himself in classical languages and several foreign languages had a good influence on Prof. E. Panaitescu. He intended Vătășianu to be appointed to the vacant position of Permanent Secretary, and to finish his work of organization in the library of the institution. Being reinforced in his position of Director of the Romanian School, Panaitescu also contributed to Vătășianu’s permanent enforcement in his position by ministerial decision and the modality of being transferred without payment but keeping his basic position at the University Library. The task which Vătășianu undertook for two years, after prolonging his mandate originally held for one civil year in the fall of 1935, officially motivated by his “irreproachable services in the organization of the library”, consisted of solving all the problems

¹ “O statistică maghiară a bibliotecilor din Ardeal” (Hungarian statistics of Transylvanian libraries), in *Gând Românesc* (Romanian thinking), I., 1933, no. 4., p. 223-229; “Despre bisericile de piatră din județul Hunedoara” (On the stone churches in Hunedoara county), in *Idem*, II., 1934, no. 12., p. 663-666; see also E. Barbul, op. cit., p. 68.

connected to administration, regulated by the law, in the management of the library and the scientific coordination of the art section of the cultural institution.¹

Even if he was involved in the complex activities implied by the Romanian School in Rome, Vătășianu as Permanent Secretary maintained his unaltered relationship with his colleagues at the University Library in Cluj because of various reasons, determined both by his own work of reorganization of the printed stock (books and periodicals) at the *Accademia di Romania*, and his needs of continuous professional formation in the field of Romanian art history. Influenced by the spirit of the criterion of personal merits, characteristic to the age, the librarian was notified, probably by correspondence, of the changes which occurred in the internal life of the institution after the retirement, at age-limit, of General Director Eugen Barbul (September 1935). At the same time, the leading position was occupied by I. Mușlea (October 1935), who then became officially nominated beginning with April 1, 1936. The coincidence with the fact that Vătășianu, transferred to the capital of Italy, was about to obtain the second degree, even if, finally, by the modification of the law of internal organization, the modality of “promotion” in function replaced the above possibility, made Vătășianu intensify his correspondence with the new director about this problem and his prospective options, which was only solved after the common intervention of those responsible for it.

The letter dated April 10, 1936 reflected precisely I. Mușlea’s state of mind, eager to answer concretely the questions addressed by his colleague, officially transferred to Rome. Confessing their long relationship and a mutual affection towards each other – proved by the reading and recognition of the value of Vătășianu’s monograph on Smigelschi – Mușlea’s answer described the tensed atmosphere within the library over the matter of recommendations for promotions, the important role of the members of the University Library Committee, and also his own wish for Vătășianu’s success. The temporary hindrance caused by Vătășianu’s being abroad, and the oncoming extension of his function was amicably treated by the letter-writer, pointing at the same time at his urgent and definitive return to the country in order to validate

¹ AFVV, *Roma...* (Rome) folder, f. 15: No. 117518: Bucharest, July 28, 1934 and No. 2456: Cluj, August 2, 1934. *Idem*, *Roma...* folder, No. 378/1935: July 4, 1935; *Idem*, *Acte personale* folder, No. 148784: Bucharest, September 20, 1935; see also the *Anuarul... 1934-1935*. Cluj, 1935, p. 365, 368; *Idem... 1935-1936*. Cluj, 1937, p. 298; E. Barbul, op. cit., p. 68.

his appointed position of head-librarian or first degree librarian. Everything was planned in the context of serious decrease of the budget, which however did not influence the University Library's investments and achievements, as apparent in the final part of I. Muşlea's presentation. The wish now expressed was in concordance with the detailed thesis edited only a few days later (April 16, 1936) by V. Vătăşianu, O. Boitoş, and T. Mitrofanovici in a collective memorial about the controversial system of promotions. This had to be solved by a factual, material, and not only nominal, appointment obsessively recorded in various official papers and never applied in practice.¹

One of the following messages, dated June 6, 1936, revealed from the start the intense correspondence of the two partners about Vătăşianu's decision to apply, as the most eligible of all applicants, to the vacant position of head-librarian, with the condition of his unconditioned return to the University Library beginning with the fall. With all the transformations deriving from the temporary cessation and new chance of promotion, V. Vătăşianu was assured of the personal support of the Director I. Muşlea and the members of the Committee. The author continued to insist, logically, upon the organizational problems which could have occurred after Vătăşianu's resignation in Rome and his return to Cluj, in case of failure, due to objective or subjective reasons, either in his appointment to the desired position or in obtaining higher wages for a superior class level. I think that Vătăşianu's gesture to take advantage of the circumstances and ascend in the hierarchy of the University Library was equally rushed by his permanent overexertion at the Romanian School in Rome, and by his decision to calmly finish his scholarly works, among which the first volume of the *History of Romanian Art*. It is a fact however, that on his return, initially stipulated for the end of August 1936, his technical card contained a modified salary with advance payment, for a first degree librarian, of 12100 lei/month.²

Having returned to the University Library after two productive years spent in Rome, Vătăşianu gradually restarted the organization of the alphabetical, subject, and topographical catalogue, both by his daily physical work of card management, and theoretically, as a member of the small team of four librarian specialists who edited the special index

¹ BCULB, ABCU stock, No. 374-1936: Cluj, April 16, 1936; see also the *Anuarul... 1935-1936*. Cluj, 1937, p. 298; AFVV, Roma... folder, Rome, December 6, 1945: address requesting the third degree.

² *Idem*, Autobiografie folder, f. 3.; *Idem*, Acte personale folder, Retirement card, f. 2-3.; see also the *Anuarul... 1935-1936*, Cluj, 1937, p. 296, 304.

instructions. Appointed as secretary of the Library Committee on the suggestion of I. Muşlea, his task was to take down the minutes of 4 work meetings during the academic years 1936-1937 (October 13, 1936, January 30, April 3, and June 30, 1937) and other 5 professional meetings in 1937-1938 (October 18, November 16, December 16, 1937, and February 8, 1938).¹

His activity in the University Library had thus a double meaning, bibliological and bibliographical, both in finishing the topographical catalogue and revising the alphabetical one, and the control and completion of the systematic subject catalogue, by the committee named to elaborate a practical guide (1938). Vătăşianu also collaborated in the organization of exhibitions in 1937 and 1938, all of them enjoying a special echo, on various topics connected to *Romanian books in Transylvania* and *Gazettes and reviews in Transylvania*, in the period between 1831 and 1918. Undoubtedly, Vătăşianu managed to turn the results of his research in Rome to the best account and to impose himself to the attention of specialized criticism. It is highly probable that Vătăşianu's failure in 1938, when he felt at a disadvantage in the competition of applying for the position of head-librarian, because of his not being affiliated with the liberals, who were governing then, might have contributed to the fact that Vătăşianu, on the insistence of the Director E. Panaitescu, and thanks to the vacancy of the Permanent Secretary position, accepted his transfer to Rome beginning with September 1, 1938, being replaced in the University Library by Ştefan Pascu, a graduate of the Faculty of Letters.²

His former work as an "administrative and scientific functionary" in a professional sense was now turning to the *Accademia di Romania*, where he was always busy with the organization of the specialized library, the activities connected to the guidance of young scholarship holders, or the preparation of conferences and artistic

¹ AFVV, Acte personale folder, No. 2206/192718: Cluj, June 1, 1938; see also the *Anuarul... 1936-1937*. Cluj, 1938, p. 440, 443-445; *Idem... 1937-1938*. Cluj, 1939, p. 326, 328-329; *Idem... 1938-1939*, Cluj, 1939, p. 361.

² BCULB, ABCULB stock, no. 666/1938: Bucharest, August 24, 1938; AFVV, Acte personale folder, No. 181788: Bucharest, November 15, 1938; *Idem*, mss. Retrospectiva..., f. 5 verso; *Idem*, Varia personal folder, the letter from Rome, on June 18, 1941, on the role of Prof. C. Marinescu in the abdication of the application exam because of political interests!; *Idem*, Acte personale folder, Retirement file, f. 2.: salary of 12100 lei; see also the *Anuarul... 1937-1938*, Cluj, 1939, p. 327.; *Idem... 1938-1939*, Cluj, 1939, p. 358; *Idem... 1941-1942*. Sibiu, 1943, p. 372.; I. Muşlea, op. cit., 1945, p. 17.

exhibitions. Vătășianu showed changing attitudes towards the fate of the institution, even if he was in refuge in Sibiu since September 1940, and the correspondence with those left at home (friends and relatives), as well as the rare visits in the country during the holidays, allowed for some references on the perspective of his return "... to the University Library, with the condition, of course, of being left alone...". His friendly terms with the colleague I. Mușlea, still director, remained unchanged even in the unpleasant situation caused by certain constraints about his own status abroad. Vătășianu's problem as a first degree head-secretary paid from the budget of the School was to try to equalize his salary and obtain the third degree, which had been due since 1938, when the law of organization of the University Library was newly modified. As the right to promotion was gained back, even in the position of V. Vătășianu, who was officially transferred to Rome, this drawback was solved only beginning with April 1, 1943.¹

His individual file illustrates a public functionary's course of existence, being continuously employed in budgetary jobs at the University Library, as well as all his three temporary transfers, first as a scholarship holder, and then as Permanent Secretary at the academic institution in Rome. The decisions dated April 1 and September 1, 1944, regarding the reemployment of the management and specialized staff of the University Library in Cluj with different wage classes also influenced V. Vătășianu's position as head-librarian, equalized in his position with that of "chief clerk of works" ("șef de lucrări") at the University (20600 lei). The difficult circumstances formed at the Romanian School in Rome during the years of the war led to the Secretary's permanent critical and personal requests – the last one dated July 26, 1946, pointing to private and general causes –, claiming his definitive return to the University Library. This only happened later (in December 1946), but not affecting at all the amount of time he legally spent in his profession (21 years and 8 months!).

His return home, to an ill-fated internal context, consciously assumed after refusing certain recognized scientific positions in Italy and abroad, aimed just as much at the continuation of his scholarly work on his monographic synthesis in progress, as especially at his preparation for application to the Department of Art History at the University of Cluj, after the death of Prof. C. Petranu (July 1945). The application exam was successfully passed in April 1947, followed by his definitive employment

¹ AFVV, Varia personal folder, letter, Rome, December 7, 1940; *Idem*, Roma... folder, memorials, Rome, February 23, 1943 and December 6, 1945.

in the fall of the same year. Until this time, Vătășianu remained within the structural framework of the University Library, being transferred, beginning with January 1, 1947, to the Institute of Classical Studies in order to assist with the reorganization of the section of medieval and modern art. Thus, beginning with April 1, 1947, while still active, he was placed into another wage class, according to his position of head-librarian, until the finalization of the ambiguous formalities for the employment to the Department of Art History at the University of Cluj (October 1, 1947.)¹

If one should illustrate the professional–scientific gains during the period of formation of the librarian and art historian Dr. Virgil Vătășianu, namely the years 1931-1947, then one could emphasize that the relative balance between his specialized work in the University Library in successive phases (1931-1934, 1936-1938, 1947), completed by his private research published in articles or studies, and his administrative-scholarly activity at the Romanian School in Rome (1934-1936, 1938-1946), fostered by the continuous progress in his concerns of Romanian art history, was largely maintained.

Effective working time: September 1, 1931 – December 31, 1931, 1st gr. (12950 lei); January 1, 1932 – December 31, 1932 (12950 lei); January 1, 1933 – December 31, 1933 (allowance/corrections: 8750-7825-7900 lei); January 1, 1934 – August 31, 1934 (7900 lei); September 1, 1936 – December 31, 1936 (12100 lei); September 1, 1937 – December 31, 1937 (allowance/corrections: 10600 lei); January 1, 1938 – August 31, 1938 (10600 lei).

Transfers to Rome: September 1, 1934 – August 31, 1936 (9100 lei); September 1, 1938 – December 31, 1946 (12100 lei).²

Virgil Vătășianu demonstrated thus, during a period of over two decades in time and at an age favorable for gathering knowledge and for his formation as man and scholar, regardless of his field of activity accidentally imposed by the context of the period between the two world-wars, the multi-facets of an intellectual constantly concerned about his own situation around books and culture, whether with the institutional

¹ AFVV, Acte personale, No. 177314/1944: Sibiu, February 21, 1945; *Idem*, Roma... folder, message, Rome, November 19, 1946; *Idem*, Acte personale folder, No. 51/1947: Cluj, January 14, 1947; *Idem*, f. 18.: No. 2204/1947, Cluj, May 20, 1947; *Idem*, f. 19.: No. 192607, Bucharest, July 7, 1947; *Idem*, Cluj, May 6, 1969: address to the Rector's Office of the University of Cluj; *Idem*, Autobiografie folder, f. 3.; *Idem*, mss. Retrospectiva..., f. 7 recto.

² *Idem*, Acte personale folder, Retirement file, f. 1-5.

background of the University Library in Cluj, or the *Accademia di Romania* in Rome. His propensity for the extensive, though, for many, “limited”, field of Romanian and foreign art history, and his desire to become a thorough exegete of its secrets is significant. The years productively spent in Cluj and Rome established and strengthened this feeling, and the post-war period, despite the unfavorable individual and collective transformations, favored, at the end of that “obsessive decade”, the well-deserved recognition of the author of the monumental synthesis on *The History of Feudal Art in the Romanian Principalities* (1959).