



# Journal of Cultural Heritage

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Letter to the Editor

## An archive of researchers and enterprises on cultural heritage in Italy

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### 1. What the database is for

Our cultural heritage is the testimony to the course of our civilisation, and its protection and upkeep are essential for an understanding of our cultural identity.

With regard to these latter, we can ask the following questions. Which and how many companies operate in the cultural heritage sector in Italy and Europe? What quality of service do they offer, and how professional are they? What are their relationships with the European Union, and consequently how quickly can they be ready to participate in European Union Cultural Heritage projects?

The database deals with small or medium-sized companies that work wholly or partly in the field of cultural heritage. In identifying and classifying these companies, we have used the widest possible definition of 'cultural heritage', encompassing works of art, archaeological finds and sites, buildings of historical interest, paper heritage, the biological and ethno-anthropological archive, folk traditions, etc.

This interpretation of cultural heritage means that a greater diversity of activities carried out by enterprises and researchers is included. There are large, complex operations that deal with entire archaeological or monumental sites and which involve groups of companies working together, and then there are other, highly specialised projects that concentrate their attention on single objects which are

often very delicate, rare or unique. These are carried out by very small companies with few employees, but with a high level of professionalism.

Thus, the database is enriched by the inclusion of both large companies, very few of which work exclusively in the cultural heritage sector, and small and micro companies, highly specialised and often with a very high quality of craftsmanship.

### 2. Five hundred keywords

The database has three main aims.

The first aim is to identify the companies and researchers working in the cultural heritage sector, discover their distribution over the national territory, and group them according to the work that they carry out. At the moment the database contains 11 601 files, of which 9 959 deal with companies and the other 2 002 with researchers.

The database's search engine was created on Microsoft Software Access and the programme for its use is available in five languages (Italian, English, French, German and Spanish) and is programmed to take into account the territorial and administrative subdivisions of the European Union.

The database has a vocabulary of around 500 keywords which are organised on a branching structure, and which refer to the service or work carried out by the company or researcher. These keywords are an effective tool for a standard classification of

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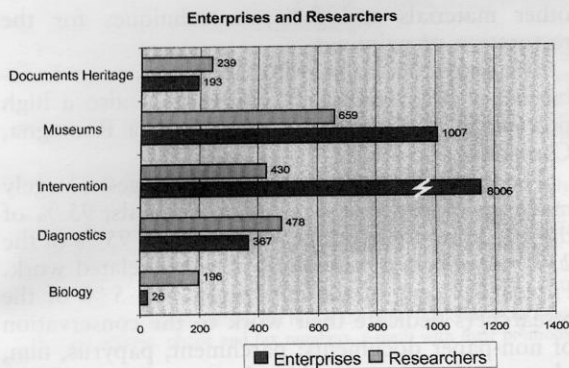


Figure 1. Enterprises and researchers.

the operators and their work, both when carrying out research on the database, and when entering new data.

The branches of keywords are subdivided into six principal categories: archaeology, diagnostics, restoration work, paper heritage, the biological ethno-anthropological heritage, and museums. These six are then subdivided further, as is shown in figures 1–4. These ‘branches’ of keywords do not constitute a rigid structure into which the complexity of a company’s activity must be squeezed, but rather offer a dynamic link between the fields of restoration and the real presence of operators involved in that precise segment of cultural heritage activity. The ‘branches’ can be enriched with further ‘branches’ provided that each new keyword corresponds to at least one company or researcher.

The second aim is that of supplying the ‘operators’ in the sector with a flexible instrument that allows them to rapidly identify the company or researchers that can best carry out a project and guarantee its quality and results. It should be spe-

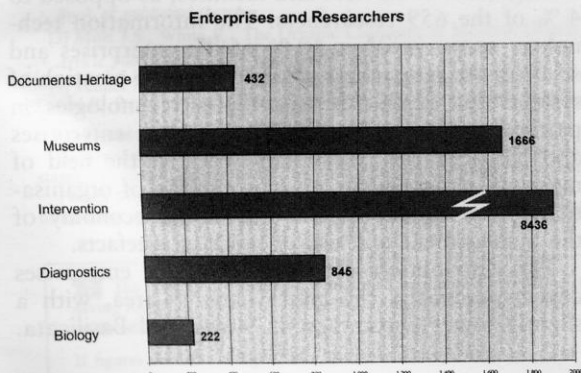


Figure 2. Enterprises and researchers.

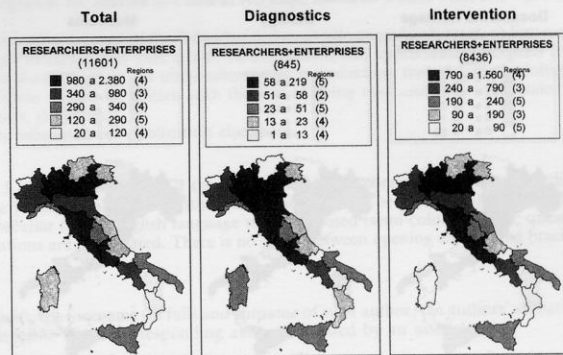


Figure 3. Total, diagnostics, intervention.

cified that when we speak about database users we are also referring to the local, regional, provincial and municipal bodies.

The third aim of the database is to encourage the development of this type of model of organisation and consultation throughout Europe.

With this in mind we are carrying out a concentrated awareness-raising campaign, and the database has been successfully presented at several international congresses.

For the future, we believe that it is necessary:

- to open a database web site on the Internet in five languages;
- to create a web portal on the Internet which operates on several levels and meets the demands of intensive use, by public administration, companies, research enterprises, universities, tourism enterprises, etc. The objective is to supply an efficient instrument to aid in the development of the cultural heritage-related activities market, both in Italy and in Europe.

### 3. The distribution of enterprises: Italy is uneven

What information does the database contain?

A first glance shows an interesting imbalance in the distribution of operators in each different type of activity. Generally speaking, the operators are more densely concentrated in Lazio, Toscana, Emilia Romagna and Lombardia, with a smaller presence in Veneto, Piemonte, Campania and Sicily.

In the diagnostics field, 367 companies have been included; their activities are almost always connected to archaeological digs (78 %) and only a minimal percentage deals with non-destructive analysis (15 %) or destructive analysis (7 %). The 478



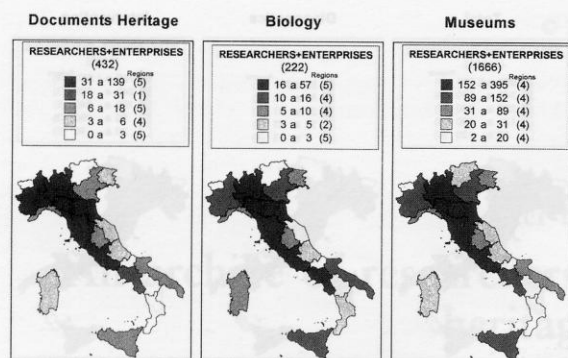


Figure 4. Documents heritage, biology, museums.

researchers in the same sector are divided differently, 39 % of them dealing with non-destructive analysis and 35 % with destructive analysis. Another notable number (26 %) deal with problems related to archaeological digs.

The techniques utilised in this sector are dedicated to the analysis of territory and artefacts, geophysical and mechanical prospecting, territorial information systems, chronological dating techniques and the determination of the origin and use of artefacts. The analyses deal with the chemical and physical characteristics of the materials, the new methodologies and the new protection techniques available.

The territorial distribution of Italian enterprises working in the diagnostics field reflects the overall distribution of companies and researchers shown by the database, namely a higher concentration in Lazio, Toscana, Emilia Romagna and Lombardia. There is also a smaller presence in Piemonte, Veneto, Campania and Umbria, whilst Sicily has the highest amount of researchers.

The restoration section contains the larger part of the companies included in the database, 8 006: 83 % of the activity of these companies deals with stone and lithic materials. The masonry and stonework sector is the one that carries out the restoration work on constructed objects; from marble sculptures, through the façades of historically valuable buildings and monuments, to the historical centres of entire cities. Eleven per cent of the companies work with materials other than stone and 6 % deal with the restoration of paintings. Seventy-two per cent of the 430 researchers in the database are occupied with research on lithic materials, 23 % on

other materials and 5 % on techniques for the restoration of paintings.

The largest percentage of enterprises is in Lombardia, Veneto and Lazio, and there is also a high percentage in Piemonte, Liguria, Emilia Romagna, Campania and Sicily.

The paper heritage is, as its name suggests, largely made up of paper or paper-like materials; 95 % of the 193 enterprises on the database and 95 % of the 239 researchers are involved in paper-related work. Fifteen per cent of the enterprises and 5 % of the researchers dedicate their work to the conservation of non-paper documents: parchment, papyrus, film, photographs, photographic plates, audio-visual materials, etc.

The researchers in this field are fairly evenly distributed over Italy, with the exception of Valle d'Aosta, Trentino, Marche, Molise and Basilicata, while the enterprises are less common in Valle d'Aosta, Molise, Calabria and Sardegna.

In the biology section of the database there are many more researchers (196) than enterprises (26). Twenty-seven per cent of the companies, often laboratories, and 45 % of the researchers deal with palaeontology, particularly the conservation, classification and interpretation of ethno-anthropological heritage. Fifty-six per cent of the companies and 17 % of the researchers are involved in genetic heritage, and the analysis and conservation of biological, anthropological, zoological and botanical diversity. The remaining 17 % of the enterprises and 38 % of the researchers deal with human ecosystems and geanthropic outlines.

The map of their distribution shows a regular distribution over all Italy, with the usual concentration on the Rome–Milan axis.

In the museums sector, 83 % of the 1 007 companies involved deal with the creation, installation and management of services and facilities, as opposed to 4 % of the 659 researchers. The information technology sector involves 10 % of the enterprises and 45 % of the researchers, dealing with the creation of systems that exploit the new digital technologies, in particular multimedia. Only 7 % of the enterprises and 51 % of the researchers work in the field of museum management, on new models of organisation, on cultural projects, and on the economy of the management and use of museum artefacts.

The distribution of researchers and enterprises covers practically the entire national area, with a slightly lower percentage in Molise and Basilicata.