

Italian university collections: managing the artistic heritage of the university's ivory tower

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ABSTRACT

The management of university museums and collections has been an issue for decades as they have played a crucial role in supporting the three missions of the higher education system: research, teaching and making academia's resources available for public use. In this paper, we focus on the Italian case, where the enhancement, management and accessibility of university collections are all part of the evaluation system for universities. Our aim in this work is to propose a reconnaissance of university art collections in Italy and investigate the three managerial challenges defined by the Council of Europe: accessibility, financial sustainability and communication of university collections. The findings show that Italian universities hold an enormous cultural heritage, mainly undervalued, both in terms of number of artworks and in terms of the artworks' economic value. In addition, Italian managerial approaches show significant critical issues regarding the three managerial challenges.

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Introduction

The word “university” comes from the Latin *universitas*, “the whole,” or in late Latin, “society, guild”, derived from *universus*¹. The term suggests that universities should be places of culture and learning, but more importantly, the wholeness of a university – its societal role – should include wide public accessibility. Only in the last decades have universities begun to reflect that meaning, abandoning their metaphorically inaccessible ivory towers (Tirrell, 2000) to become more accountable to their various stakeholders, demonstrating their impact on society (Trencher et al, 2013). In this changing environment, the role of university collections is strategic for not only teaching and research but also disseminating knowledge into society (also known as a university’s *3rd mission*). This paper contributes to the international topic of recognising and managing university collections because an important part of Italian artistic heritage – among the largest and richest in the world – belongs to Italian universities, which must protect, enhance and disseminate the value of their artworks. For these reasons, Italy is an interesting case for the management of artistic heritage part of university collections.

This article is structured in four sections. The first section briefly outlines the history of how universities have formed art collections, before detailing the contributions of artistic heritage towards the 3rd mission of universities. These contributions are the main challenges to better management of art collections. The second section situates the Italian case study, describing the state of the art of artistic heritage management in the Italian higher education system. The third section shows the findings of a survey on the artistic heritage of Italian universities, offering a reconnaissance of university art collections and investigating the three managerial challenges faced by universities: accessibility, financial sustainability and communication. The last section highlights the main problems that Italian universities are experiencing in the management of art collections, proposing some solutions. Therefore, the paper not only contributes to the international literature on the topic of university collections but also provides useful indicators for the difficult task of managing a university’s artistic heritage efficiently and effectively.

University collections and the 3rd mission

Genesis and organisation of university collections

Universities hold a cultural heritage ancient in origin and historically embodied, with a strategic role in research and teaching (Murphy, 2003). For older universities, the significance and scale of their collections have become a symbol of their role and prestige in national and international cultural scenes. Newer universities are making art collections of their own and developing them as a symbol of their entry into the establishment (Kelly, 2001). The scope of each collection differs, from teaching materials and research instruments to the actual artefacts and antiquities. Despite the fact that scientific collections dominate European academic debates (Giacobini, 2010; Pugnali, 2003; Kelly, 2001; Capanna, Malerba & Vomero, 2011) the heritage belonging to universities includes paintings, documents, sculptures and decorative objects. In accordance with Hamilton’s (1995) model, the multitude of items that belong to universities can be grouped into four main categories:

- ceremonial objects such as maces and furniture;
- commemorative objects such as plaques, portraits and artworks given in memoriam;
- decorative objects such as artworks acquired to hang in the university’s public or private spaces;
- didactic objects such as artworks, artefacts or natural history materials acquired for research demonstrations and teaching.

University collections have evolved over time and not always due to acquisitions – e.g. scientific collections beginning as departmental materials (Bragança Gil, 2002). In the case of artistic heritage, the collection formation follows a disconnected route, being slowly enriched through the acquisition of different works over time. External entities might donate their private collections, and the universities might develop collections through an ongoing series of gifts and loans (Kelly, 2001).

Although the academic debate has traditionally associated university collections with university museums, the two linked terms are not interchangeable. Collections are part of the tangible heritage that belongs to universities, while museums are only one venue through which universities display and manage their assets.

University collections are organised under various arrangements, which can be grouped into three main profiles:

1 As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, available online at: <http://www.oed.com/>.

1) Departmental collections or "laboratory collections" integral to the school, faculty or department. These collections are not always perceived as a core activity in a university's strategic plan. They are mainly used for teaching purposes, often lack an institutional identity, and are not necessarily known or accessible to the general public (Giacobini, 2010;). As teaching and research priorities change over time, the perceived value of the collection, among academics and students, will fluctuate, leading to instability between use and preservation (Hamilton, 1995).

2) University museums with clearer institutional identities that are still part of the university's wider administrative structure (King, 1980). The operational models of this profile are more structured than those of the first profile, and the models usually include dedicated personnel who have day-to-day responsibilities and disclosure requirements. The museums are still financially dependent on their parent organisations (Klamer, 1996), but the role of the collection is different from that of the first profile. The first profile is an internal academic resource, whereas the second is open to the public and has additional civic responsibility to help produce and disseminate knowledge (Giacobini, 2010). Museums, if truly accessible, become effective: the university can communicate to the wider world while serving their educational mission.

3) The network of an independent monumental complex structured within a museum system. This system aims to promote the creation of museum centres by streamlining resources and sharing activities. Different museums are coordinated from an "umbrella entity" (museum coordination centre) which promotes consistent and profitable cooperation, providing an opportunity to focus on the university's heritage resources while promoting alliances and effective communication with the stakeholders.

Despite the potential of university museums, only in the last 20 years has there been a growing concern over their conditions, resources and safety, as well as the general future of their collections. The formal recognition of university collections by the International Council of Museums only occurred in 2001 with the foundation of the University Museum and Collections Alliance (UMAC). One year later, UNIVERSEUM was created – a European network with the aim to facilitate university heritage and to define and interpret cultural identity.

An international alliance was necessary after the crisis that university museums underwent in the 1980s

due to profound changes in their management, the reduction of public funding and the rise of different research interests (Warhust, 1986; Willet, 1986, Stansbury, 2003). UMAC began with the aim to provide a forum to identify partnership opportunities; enhance access to the collections; formulate policies to assist curators, managers and other stakeholders; and, when requested, advise university management (Bragança Gil, 2002). The Council of Europe (2005) went further, putting into effect a series of recommendations (Rec 13/2005)², on the governance and management of university heritage, to overcome the ongoing difficulties and to provide international standards.

Support of cultural heritage for universities' 3rd mission

In the last few decades, universities have worked to change the perception of their organisations: from inaccessible ivory towers to places of culture and learning widely accessible to the public (Tirrell, 2000). Within this redefinition of the higher education system, universities are required to become more accountable to their various stakeholders and to demonstrate their impact on society (Trencher et al, 2013). In this changing environment, university collections and museums find themselves at a crossroads when fulfilling all three missions: responding to educational functions and departmental requirements while being custodians of the national heritage, a vital space for the wider public (Weber, 2012).

Indeed, besides the two traditional university missions – teaching and research – the 3rd mission has provoked debate. A university's 3rd mission is a concept born in the United States in the 1960s. It supports the two main missions of the higher education system – the production and transmission of knowledge – by making available the resources of the academic institution for public benefit; it highlights the complex economic and social activities that universities institute to transfer academic knowledge to the economy, territory and civil society. Third mission activities are therefore concerned with the generation, use, application and exploitation of knowledge and other university capabilities beyond the academic environment. In other words, the 3rd mission facilitates interaction between universities and the rest of society (Boffo & Moscati, 2015; Laredo, 2007). This interaction spans three areas: technology transfer, continuous education and public engagement.

Technology transfer is based on entrepreneurial logic and a functional integration between university research, the state and various firms (Etzkowitz et al, 2000). Thus, a logic of service to the community prevails. Continuous education is the development of university activities of a cultural, social, educational

2 The 2013 UMAC Resolution followed this, with special attention paid to evaluation guidelines for eventual disposition and protection.

“THE APPROACH UNIVERSITIES FOLLOW TO MANAGE AND ORGANISE THEIR ARTISTIC COLLECTIONS IS CRUCIAL TO ACHIEVE THE 3RD MISSION’S GOALS, IN PARTICULAR THOSE RELATED TO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT”

or civil content capable of enhancing and multiplying collective resources (Binetti & Cinque, 2015). Public engagement activities largely concern cultural and scientific communication policies (Scamuzzi & De Bortoli, 2013), including the management of cultural assets, the organisation of cultural events, and the dissemination of scientific knowledge. In this context, the higher education system must make its cultural and artistic heritage available and accessible, open to the public and embedded within the territory.

The approach universities follow to manage and organise their artistic collections is crucial to achieve the 3rd mission’s goals, in particular those related to public engagement.

Building good practices through three management guidelines

To encourage good practices for artistic heritage management, the Council of Europe (Rec 13/2005) recommended three guidelines: accessibility, financial sustainability and clear communication to stakeholders. Accessibility means that university museums are not only custodians of heritage but also venues to encourage public accessibility, with reasonable opening hours and lifelong learning opportunities for academia and the public. Accessibility can be established through appropriate governance, management and organisational choices. The goal of financial sustainability is to protect the university collections through the diversification of revenue streams, the provision of dedicated funds in the university budget and an increase in additional funding from external private sources. Remaining independent from parent institutions while maintaining accessible prices is important for universities’ artistic heritage management. Universities should be encouraged to use appropriate communication systems, raising public awareness of their unique heritage and making their goals and values clear.

Although the recommendations were sufficiently general to embrace the variety of heritage collections (scientific, artistic, archaeological and demo-anthropological) at universities, the main discussion refers to the scientific collections.

Considering that cultural heritage is subject to national legislation, the guidelines – created as tools at the European level – do not consider national peculiarities and contingent problems. The Council

of Europe recommendations have already identified this limit: “In some countries, higher education legislation may contain provisions that are also relevant to university heritage, but there is little or no synergy between these two [universities and cultural categories of laws]” (Rec 13/2005: 27).

The Italian scenario

Italian cultural heritage is widespread, differentiated and strongly ingrained within the history of the territory (Settis, 2005; Donato & Gilli, 2011). Italian university heritage reflects this scenario. The Italian higher education system is among the oldest in the world; its collections and museums represent an important but submerged part of Italian cultural heritage, being undervalued and still poorly studied in all their complexities (Corradini & Campanella, 2013; Martino, 2014; Martino & Lombardi, 2014). Although university collections represent a relevant dimension in Italian heritage management, the debate on their role and function started late (Capanna, Malerba & Vomero, 2011). The first attempt to discuss this topic occurred in 1999 with the Conference of Italian University Chancellors (CRUI). The CRUI decided to examine the situation of Italian university museums, to assess their problems and to formulate proposals for their protection, enhancement, use and promotion. The conference committee comprised representatives of almost all Italian universities. The conference goals were to map the scientific university museums and collections (Favaretto, 2005) and to define the standards for cataloguing technical-scientific assets within the framework of a national cataloguing system. This committee was dissolved in 2002, and its work has covered only part of the cultural heritage and scientific collections of Italian universities. Nevertheless, it was an important initiative for reflection on this topic.

Increasing interest in the cultural heritage of Italian universities correlates with the National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research System (ANVUR, *Agenzia Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca*) introducing the 3rd mission into the mechanisms to evaluate universities. Founded in 2006 to achieve quality certification for the Italian university system, ANVUR has introduced evaluation parameters for the quality of teaching, research and the 3rd mission of each university. Thus, ANVUR (2012) has placed

the management of university collections among 3rd mission activities capable of producing positive results outside university communities. Additionally, ANVUR has asked Italian universities to perform a self-assessment process to determine the existence of museums, the management of cultural heritage and historical buildings and the presence of cultural activities that involve the non-academic public. In this framework, the role of accessibility is key to obtain a positive evaluation. Accessibility requires organization, services, communication and dedicated resources (funds and personnel) to be financially sustainable. This is in line with the recommendations of the Council of Europe (Rec 13/2005).

State of the art

Over the last two decades, the challenges the Italian higher education system face with regard to university heritage management led to a wide debate. The two main problems involve mapping assets, sometimes unknown, even to the university itself, and highlighting the characteristics and managerial issues related to the enhancement and communication of heritage. Since 2012, many projects have begun responding to these issues – e.g. the Portal of Italian University Museums (POMUI), based on research undertaken at the University of Modena and Reggio (UNIMORE). Twelve universities, coordinated by UNIMORE, have monitored their scientific collections for a project directly financed by the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research to create a real and virtual network (Corradini, 2016). The main objectives of the project's first phase were as follows (Corradini & Campanella 2013):

- to make an inventory of the most significant findings;
- to represent the main themes to which the network has devoted attention: the regional landscape and the biographies of important teachers for the history of the evolution of scientific instruments, and
- to create a website to raise awareness and to promote their scientific heritage.

The project has evolved to develop educational programmes dedicated to schools that aim to disseminate scientific culture (Corradini, 2017).

Another project, conducted by the Sapienza University of Rome, examined secondary data and analysed 198 university museums and 44 university collections to determine the general profile of each museum and collection in reference to the main features: name, scientific field, presence on

the Internet and possible affiliation with a central coordinating structure (Martino, 2016). The research shows a very complex system of collections and museums, distributed throughout the Italian territory; 80% of them are scientific and only 20% are definable as art collections (largely affiliated with an internal coordination structure). The universities with the most museums and collections have a formal autonomous coordination centre organised as a specific business unit with the primary aims to obtain dedicated funds, manage their assets strategically, maintain an autonomous perspective and promote internal synergies (Giacobini, 2010; Martino, 2016). The organisational model clearly relates to the economic sustainability of the university collection and museum system. Ultimately, although ANVUR values the university's 3rd mission and its cultural activities, the funding system of Italian public universities does not provide any dedicated transfer of money for 3rd mission activities. Italian universities have to self-finance public engagement activities or find new revenue streams.

An exploratory study of Italian universities' artistic heritage

In this paper, we focus on university art collections in Italy. Other studies that present this topic refer specifically to scientific museums and outline an initial map of this type of university heritage (CRUI, 2000; Corradini, 2017). Furthermore, these studies show different estimates and quantifications, providing no clear idea of how the universities' heritage is relevant to the art collections and museums. Therefore, there is an increasing need to explore 1) university art collections – i.e. the number of artworks and their economic value, as well as 2) current management approaches to this heritage, identifying strengths and weaknesses while suggesting suitable solutions. The second issue is significant to evaluate universities in their entire relationship with the public.

Research design and methodology

For this study, university collections concern not only real museums but also minor exhibition structures that do not necessarily have a systematic order or continuous public access. Hence, the operational model and mission of minor exhibition structures are only partly analogous to those of a real museum. We also consider as "artistic heritage" the following items: collections and archives of art and artists; as well as ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary

visual artworks – e.g. paintings, sculptures, drawings, engravings, photographs, designs, and video art. Excluded are properties, furnishings, libraries, ethnographic museums, museums of natural history, scientific and technical equipment, and everything else that does not fit into the aforementioned categories.

Taking into consideration the purpose of this paper, which is to map the artistic heritage of Italian universities and to investigate the management of university collections, the research team has conducted an empirical analysis through a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed in collaboration with the students of the master's programme in Economics and Management of the Arts and Cultural Heritage at the Sole 24 Ore Business School. The questionnaire defined three macro-areas of investigation:

1. *The collection of general information about the university:* whether it is public or private, the number of students (which indicates its dimension), the geographical area (northern, central or southern Italy), and the founding year. These characteristics were used to check for any potential correlations and to determine different approaches to the management of university collections.

2. *Artistic heritage, quantifying the number and value of artistic assets and classifying them in four historical periods:* ancient (before the 4th century), medieval (4th-14th century), modern (15th-mid-19th century) and contemporary (after the mid-19th century) art. This area also defined the type of artistic assets studied: paintings, drawings, sculptures, photographs, items of fashion or design, archaeological finds or others (not specified). Additional data in this area had been directly collected from university websites and information in the main disciplinary inventories, such as UMAC or UNIVERSEUM³.

3. *Managerial choices made for some critical challenges among university collections.* Three topics from the Council of Europe recommendations (Rec 13/2005) were investigated: 1) a university's ability to make its artistic heritage available, 2) the financial sustainability of the management of the university collections, and 3) the external communication and promotion of the university collections.

Table 1 shows the Council of Europe recommendations (Rec 13/2005) that underline these three macro-areas of investigation and how the questionnaire addresses the issues.

In a subsequent phase, additional information about managerial issues were collected through direct contact with the universities. The questionnaire was sent by email to all Italian universities (N = 71). All recipients of the questionnaire were identified as the museum services manager. However, it was not always easy to identify a possible respondent. In many cases, prior to emailing the questionnaire to the universities, it was necessary to contact the university to identify the most suitable person to provide answers. Responses were collected over a four-month period (September-December 2015).

3 See <http://publicus.culture.hu-berlin.de/umac/>, or <http://universeum.it>, respectively.

Topic	Council of Europe recommendations	Questionnaire
Accessibility	<p>"21. As far as is compatible with the main missions of the university and with international and national standards of ethical practice, universities should be encouraged to make their heritage accessible to members of the academic community and/or the general public, as appropriate".</p> <p>"22. (...) [I]nstitutions should be encouraged to make every effort to achieve a reasonable balance between heritage conservation needs, the needs of research and teaching and the desirability of providing wide access for the general public".</p> <p>"23. Institutions should be encouraged to give access to their university heritage for members of the general public at affordable prices and within reasonable opening hours".</p>	<p><i>How can you benefit from the university's artistic heritage?</i> In no way / Archives reserved for researchers / Archives with consultations open to the public / Temporary exhibitions / Permanent exhibitions</p> <p><i>What are the days and hours open to the public?</i></p>
Financial sustainability	<p>"17. (...) The institutions should in their turn be encouraged to make provision for the financing of their heritage policies within their own budget, whether publicly or privately funded, and seek to obtain additional funding from external sources".</p> <p>"18. Higher education institutions and bodies should be encouraged to provide and maintain suitable physical accommodation for their heritage and to provide balanced and reasonable funding for its protection and enhancement".</p> <p>"19. To the extent that the upkeep and protection of university heritage is financed through the general university budget rather than through earmarked provisions from public or other sources, higher education institutions should be encouraged to set up the budget in such a way as to make it possible to identify the appropriations for heritage purposes".</p> <p>"20. Where required, institutions should be encouraged to seek supplementary external funds to enhance their heritage and implement their heritage policies".</p>	<p><i>Do you usually lend artworks to external subjects?</i> No / Yes, mostly free of charge / Yes, mostly at a set price</p> <p><i>Which of these services are present?</i> Museum services (teaching, guided tours, ticket office) / Shop / Guestroom / Restaurant or bar / Other (specify)</p> <p><i>For each service, please specify who manages it.</i> Not applicable / University / External manager</p> <p><i>How does the financing of artistic heritage management take place? (Specify a percentage for each source)</i> University's own resources (%) / Fundraising and private donations (%) / Ticket sales (%) / Other (specify) (%)</p>
Communication	<p>"6. (...) [I]nstitutions could make explicit their understanding, preservation and enhancement of their heritage and the goals for its conservation and for raising awareness of it, as well as specify the structure, instruments and means with which the institution intends to implement these policies, including its decision-making structures and a clear planning process".</p> <p>"12. Higher education institutions should be encouraged to make their goals and policies for the university heritage explicit, for example through the adoption of a heritage charter for the institution or a specific heritage plan".</p> <p>"25. As far as possible and in accordance with their general heritage policies, universities should be encouraged to take appropriate measures and develop methods for the promotion of the value, nature and interest of this heritage today".</p>	<p><i>How are activities and services related to artistic heritage communicated externally?</i> In no way / Ad hoc website / University website</p> <p><i>Are activities and services communicated externally through social media?</i> Yes / No</p>

TABLE 1. MANAGERIAL TOPICS FOR THE UNIVERSITY COLLECTIONS

Source: Authors's own elaboration.

Results

Description of the sample

At the end of the four-month period, we collected 43 questionnaires from 71 universities (60.5%). Some universities said that they did not have an art collection (27.9%). For the aims of this research, we excluded these universities from the sample. Therefore, we focused on the 31 responding universities that have an art collection (72.1%). Most of these universities are located in northern Italy (48.4%); some are central (38.7%), and a few are southern (12.9%).

The sample has an average of 27,700 students per university, but with a high standard deviation (21,400 students). Nevertheless, we can classify universities according to three groups: "small" (<15,000 students), "medium" (15,000-30,000 students) and "large" (30,000 students or more). In our sample, a 25.8% of universities are small; a 41.9% are medium, and a 32.3% are large.

Table 2 shows our sample, highlighting each university's founding year, geographical location, dimensions (the number of students in the academic year 2014-2015), and public or private status.

University	Founding year	Location	Dimension	Private or public
Sapienza University of Rome	1303	central	100,020	public
University of Bologna	1088	northern	76,840	public
University of Milan (Apice)	1924	northern	61,119	public
University of Florence	1321	central	49,897	public
University of Catania	1434	southern	49,621	public
University of Pisa	1343	central	45,001	public
University of Palermo	1805	southern	42,438	public
Polytechnic of Milan	1863	northern	41,280	public
Polytechnic of Turin	1859	northern	30,853	public
Bicocca University of Milan	1998	northern	30,257	public
University of Chieti-Pescara	1965	central	27,533	public
University of Cagliari	1620	southern	26,439	public
University of L'Aquila	1596	central	23,926	public
University of Parma	962	northern	23,320	public
University of Perugia	1308	central	22,327	public
University of Pavia	1361	northern	21,470	public
University of Venice	1868	northern	19,210	public
University of Salento	1955	southern	18,000	public
University of Siena	1240	central	15,676	public
University of Ferrara	1391	northern	15,634	public
University of Trieste	1924	northern	15,386	public
University of Udine	1978	northern	15,182	public
University of Trieste	1877	northern	14,750	public
University of Urbino	1506	central	14,136	public
Bocconi University of Milan	1902	northern	13,137	private
University of Macerata	1290	central	9,623	public
University of Varese-Como	1998	northern	9,144	public
University of Cassino	1979	central	8,554	public
University of Tuscia, Rieti	1979	central	7,749	public
University of Molise	1982	central	7,237	public
IUAV of Venice	1962	northern	4,379	private

TABLE 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Source: Authors's own elaboration.

Profile of Italian universities' artistic heritage

The second section of the questionnaire showed that Italian universities owned more than 12 million artworks overall; the value of these works is roughly 356 million euros. These numbers give an idea of the relevance of Italian universities' heritage and therefore of the importance of managing these artistic assets efficaciously. However, the amount is probably strongly underestimated. Indeed, the universities have provided this amount from their inventories. From the interviews carried out with collection staff, two problems emerged in relation to the values registered in the inventories. One critical issue was how to determine correctly the value of the artworks. This is difficult because universities do not have the financial resources to obtain an expert report/evaluation. Thus, many artworks are inventoried only with a symbolic value – e.g. 1 euro. The other critical issue is linked to archival accuracy. In Italy, with the donation of an entire archive collection, it is possible to record the collection as a *unique corpus* (as a single item) without taking into account the number of individual units and their singularised values. This latter issue can be overcome when items are not only listed in an internal index but also catalogued and counted according to the number of pieces.

This archival accuracy problem is reflected in the data collected through our questionnaire. Only 51.6% of the universities sampled listed their artworks in an internal index (catalogue), whereas 35.5% only had an inventory and 12.9% had neither an inventory nor a catalogue. Moreover, although an internal index may accurately list the number of artworks, it does not mean that a clear financial estimation of the collection has been completed.

Considering that the sample mostly comprised public universities, their university collections are part of the public cultural heritage, though only partially known for fair value and content. The correct evaluation of artworks could be important for the universities, and in general for the public cultural system, for at least three reasons:

1) The fair representation of the assets' value in the university's financial statements. To carry out any analysis of the financial statement data, it is necessary that assets are correctly evaluated.

2) Conservation and awareness. To allocate the correct financial resources for the conservation of artworks, it is fundamental to know their exact value.

3) Communication and dissemination. Knowing the correct value of artworks is also important in terms of transparency towards external stakeholders. Accountability is in fact one of the most important issues for artistic heritage, which must be communicated and disseminated externally in a clear and precise way (Hooper, Kearins & Green, 2005).

With reference to the classification of artworks based on historical period, we discovered that most belong to the contemporary period (approximately 12 million artworks valued at 103 million euros). Roughly 6,500 artworks belong to the ancient period (valued at almost one million euros) and about 4,000 artworks belong to the modern period (valued at 250,000,000 euros); only 10 works of art belong to the medieval period.

Table 3 shows the collections' periodisation and the relative economic value of all artworks from a given period.

This composition of the artistic heritage is in accordance with previous studies. Martino (2016: 5) states: "It is also interesting to note an emerging exhibition genre dedicated to contemporary art: this sector presents great expressive potential and affinity with the languages of communication and also allows institutions without a historical patrimony to form a collection *ex novo*". Examples of this in Italy include the Bocconi Art Gallery, the Laboratory Museum of Contemporary Art – Sapienza University of Rome, the Contemporary Art Network – University of Tuscia, and the permanent exhibition of the Mediterranean Picture

Historical period	Number of artworks	Total value (€)
Ancient period	6,415	1,000,000
Medieval period	10	N/A
Modern period	3,886	251,211,177
Contemporary period	12,006,895	103,882,837

TABLE 3. UNIVERSITY COLLECTIONS ORGANISED BY HISTORICAL PERIOD

Source: Authors's own elaboration.

Gallery – University of Palermo. It should be noted, however, that some sampled universities declared that they possess numerous artworks from the ancient or medieval periods but which are not organised into collections. These artworks are singular pieces not included in our survey.

Regarding the types of artworks in the sample, more than 80% are photographs, and 18.2% are drawings. The remainder includes paintings, sculptures, items of fashion or design, archaeological finds and other objects.

Table 4 shows all the data in detail, including the economic value of the artworks.

age and the number of artworks in its collection. This data led us to reflect on the effects that large universities have on the territory: large universities have a greater impact on the territory than small universities do and therefore a greater ability to attract donations (Kelly, 2001).

It is interesting that 75.9% of artworks are the result of donations to universities. Universities rarely buy artworks for their collections (only three universities stated that most of their collections derived from purchases). This relates to the genesis of artistic collections as stated in the first part of this paper.

Type of artwork	Number of artworks	Total value (€)
Paintings	4,294	48,532,830
Drawings	2,022,687	8,062,184
Sculptures	667	13,391,817
Photographs	9,003,141	3,000,520
Items of fashion or design	60,300	2,000,000
Archaeological finds	9,809	2,450,000
Other	3,042	279,008,019

TABLE 4. UNIVERSITY COLLECTIONS BY ARTWORK TYPE

Source: Authors's own elaboration.

An in-depth analysis of the data shows that there are only two photographic archives – at the University of Parma (CSAC, Study Centre and Archive of Communication) and at the Torvergata University of Rome. CSAC holds the largest university collection of photographs in Italy. There are two reasons for the high concentration of photographic archives in just two universities. The one is that photographic donations or acquisitions concern entire collections and not single pieces, the latter being the case with other artworks. The other is that for conservation and reproduction purposes, large investments are required in photographic laboratories and equipment; therefore, not every university can afford it. Most of the photographic artworks are located in northern Italy (99.7%), followed by central Italy (0.2%) and southern Italy (0.1%).

In the classification of universities by dimension, a link emerged between the number of students and the number of artworks, as confirmed by the Pearson correlation coefficient (Pearson's r : 0.278; p -value: ≤ 0.05). On average, large universities have about 5,000 artworks, medium universities have about 1,200 artworks and small universities have about 160 artworks. No links are evident between a university's

Management of university collections

As described in the previous sections, Italian universities possess an enormous cultural heritage, both in terms of artworks and in terms of economic value. This heritage can contribute to reaching the 3rd mission of universities, as mentioned previously. Thus, it is crucial for universities to manage correctly their cultural heritage and artistic collections. However, data collected from the 3rd section of the questionnaire shows that many improvements in the management of collections could occur to meet the Council of Europe recommendations. Below are the results of the three managerial issues investigated: accessibility, financial sustainability and communication.

In Italy, the accessibility of university collections is particularly important because ANVUR has defined accessibility as a 3rd mission evaluation criterion of universities. The indicators measured in this area are *musealisation*, availability to the public and the presence of additional services, particularly related to the dissemination of artistic heritage. Thus, a specific question on the questionnaire asked how the university makes its art collection available. Surprisingly,

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seven universities (22.6%) declared that their artistic heritage is not accessible; if we add this number to the four universities that reserve the consultation of artworks to researchers and scholars only, this figure rises to 35.5%. The data consequently shows that for many universities there is great difficulty in sharing this important heritage with a wide audience. The main critical issues faced by the universities are the scarcity of financial resources, adequate space, dedicated personnel and specialised skills. The remaining 64.5% of universities facilitate public access to their art collections. Most of these (15 universities) display this art through a museum (or museums); the other universities do so through other university spaces. In addition, 10 universities provide for a public consultation of the collections, and 12 universities organise temporary exhibitions. It is interesting to note that the oldest and the medium-large universities make their artistic heritage more available, compared to the newest and smallest universities. It is equally important to investigate *how* universities make their art collections accessible to the public. In this area, the data shows great potential for improvement. For most universities (75%), the accessibility to their art collections is limited to the university's opening hours. Only five universities have planned openings on weekends.

To conclude, no links exist between an organisational model of collections management and accessibility to the collections themselves. However, the data shows a general tendency among universities to organise the management of the art collections through a museum system (38.7%) or museum (9.6%), followed by a single departmental (32.2%) or autonomous (16.1%) research centre and then an archive (12.9%). Autonomous entities, such as museums or museum systems, ensure formal recognition of the collection. In the past, for reasons related to departmental necessity – e.g. to create space for research and teaching, the collections fell into degradation, with improper interventions, transfers and break-ups in the collections. This was mainly due to lack of human, financial and spatial resources, as well as an institution's inadequate attention.

Financial sustainability strongly relates to the accessibility of a university's artistic heritage. Universities are encouraged to increase and diversify their funding sources. However, 84.7% of the resources dedicated to the management and maintenance of artistic heritage are from the university itself. In fact, half of the universities stated that 100% of the

resources dedicated to the management of their artistic heritage are internal resources. Across the entire sample, only 4.8% of resources derive from private donations, 3.4% from ticket sales and the remaining 6.8% from transfers from other national or international public entities. Thus, only six universities have received private donations and only five have applied ticket prices to visit the collections. Universities could and should activate strategies to increase and diversify their financial resources for a more efficient and effective management of artistic collections. For example, fundraising and crowdfunding activities can help universities improve their financial sustainability (Donelli, Fanelli & Mozzoni, 2017). To develop these strategies successfully, it is necessary to invest in employees who have the right skills in this sector.

It is also interesting to note that 51.6% of universities do not usually lend their artworks to external venues; even among those that do lend their artworks, 41.9% of them do so free of charge. The lending activity for a charging fee could therefore represent a simple and convenient way to increase and facilitate financial sustainability. A final way to increase universities' financial resources is to offer facilities related to the management of art collections. This would also allow for the achievement of a twofold objective: increasing available financial resources and offering a comfortable and stimulating place for the public to interact positively with the artistic heritage. Ultimately, although many universities (87.1%), as ANVUR recommends, offer basic museum services (such as educational tours), only eight offer additional services such as shops, guestrooms, bars and restaurants. In the 75% of cases, these services are managed by third parties, as said parties are more competent and have dedicated personnel for these activities. However, as already mentioned, universities can benefit from these partnerships with private individuals to offer a full experience of their artistic heritage.

The last managerial challenge is the external communication of activities and services related to a university's artistic heritage, which includes the promotion of their cultural products to a wide audience. Good communication can also support the first managerial challenge: making universities' artistic heritage more widely available. The presence of ad hoc websites for a university's artistic heritage could be an effective means of external communication. Only 48.4% of universities in the sample have a specific website for their art collections, and only

“THE CONSERVATION AND ACCESSIBILITY OF ART COLLECTIONS GENERATE PERSONNEL, SERVICES, INSURANCE AND SAFETY COSTS. THESE BURDENS WEIGH DIRECTLY ON THE UNIVERSITIES, AND NO PUBLIC FUNDING IS DEDICATED TO CULTURAL ACTIVITIES OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT”

about 32% of universities use their own institutional sites to communicate activities and services related to their artistic heritage. It is a cause of concern that six universities in the sample do not use any communication channels to promote their artistic heritage externally.

Today, social media can make the Internet a powerful tool. Data on the use of social networks is slightly more encouraging than that of website usage; 54.8% of universities use these innovative communication tools. However, there are still many ways to improve external communication, including building websites and social media as platforms to announce events and activities. To conclude, it behoves universities, in the interests of transparency, accessibility and scholarship, to follow the lead of major museums, such as the British Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and place their collections online.

Conclusion

In Italy, the enhancement of university collections is a criterion for the evaluation of public engagement – i.e. the 3rd mission, but the great potential of the region's artistic heritage has not been well realised. Two trends emerge at the organisational and managerial levels: the *musealisation* of art collections and the centralisation of management via the museum system. Therefore, attempts have been made to overcome the departmental basis for art collections at universities, with their restricted access and limited storage facilities. Nevertheless, accessibility is still a very complex subject to address. The universities involved in this research have described accessibility issues: exhibition spaces are often insufficient in size and unsuitable for conservation and for public reception. They consequently need investments that universities cannot usually provide with their limited dedicated financial resources.

Financial sustainability is essential. The conservation and accessibility of art collections generate personnel, services, insurance and safety costs. These burdens weigh directly on the universities, and no public funding is dedicated to cultural activities of public engagement. Indeed, while the first two university missions receive financial support from the state when institutions achieve specific goals, ANVUR evaluates the 3rd mission and no financial resources

are linked to this assessment. Furthermore, the Italian higher education system has not yet been able to raise private funds to ensure reasonable opening hours and public access to its assets. Linked to the lack of funds is the scarcity of dedicated and prepared personnel. The interviewed managers often mentioned the lack of personnel as an issue in terms of recruitment – e.g. university employment contracts that set constraints on timetables and working days.

In general, our research shows a difficult coexistence between the management needs of Italian universities and the needs of museums. In this sense, new technologies can provide a valid support system for the process of granting public access to the collections. The UNIMORE example is a possible scenario, where the collections are virtually accessible through an online platform. This would overcome problems related to space and the costs of opening actual collections to the public. The POMUI project also demonstrates how the use of ICT can help to create virtual lifelong learning paths in concordance with other local actors.

The last issues of this complex scenario are external communication and the involvement of stakeholders. One limit to this study was not addressing the complex scenarios of external communication and the involvement of stakeholders. Future research on the Italian case study will need to include these topics.

Universities must seek innovative solutions and employ a systematic managerial effort to accomplish their 3rd mission. The innovations are still a prerogative of isolated independent cases that are considered best practices.

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