

The private library of Calouste Gulbenkian: an example of virtual access to a personal book collection

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Abstract

This paper presents a project whose purpose is to stress the importance of the private book collection of the founder of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Different phases of development included identification of items preservation and conservation actions as well as bibliographic control of the collection. The most visible product is a website that provides virtual access and a deeper insight into Calouste Gulbenkian's personal book collection. The bibliographic information of the library catalogue was articulated to the one presented in the site - Collection highlights - in order to reach a wider audience having different needs and interests.

I Part

1.1. Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian: life fragments of an art collector

During the beginning of the 20th century many private art collections were assembled by men with different origins and with unique aesthetic taste, like Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919), John Pierpont Morgan (1837-1913), Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919), Andrew Mellon (1855-1937) and Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian (1869-1955), who shared the common quality of having great fortunes due to their hard work and business talent. Calouste Gulbenkian was born in 1869, son of a prosperous family of the Armenian community of the Turkish capital. After his first education in Istanbul he was sent to Marseille to perfect his French and after he went to the prestigious King's College in London where he graduated in Engineering and Applied Sciences with distinction in 1887. In 1890, encouraged by his father, Calouste Gulbenkian traveled to the Caucasus region as award for his brilliant studies as well as to get acquainted with the family's oil business. From this journey – the first among the many he made along his lifetime to different destinations and with different purposes - resulted the book *La Transcaucasie et la Péninsule d'Apchéron: souvenirs de voyage (1890)*, published in Paris in 1891. In 1897, Gulbenkian decided to settle in London and in 1902 he became British Citizen. Meanwhile he began his professional life in the petroleum industry which was in development in the Middle East. He took an important role in the negotiations at world level these years namely the setting up of the Turkish Oil Company, which stock was

latter divided among the Anglo-Persian oil company, the Royal Dutch Shell and the Deutsche Bank. 5% of the total went for the benefit of the negotiator, Calouste Gulbenkian who was still at the centre of the negotiations in 1928, when the stock of the Turkish Oil was redistributed and he got once more 5% and became known as “Mr. Five Percent”.

Cosmopolitan and refined Gulbenkian moved to Paris in 1923 to one of the city most fashionable and chic districts and to a building that belonged to the art collector Rudolph Kahn. According to a design plan approved by himself the building interiors were transformed into the first museum of his art objects which he tenderly called as “*mes enfants*”. Eclectic but exigent - “only the best suits me” - Calouste Gulbenkian became one of the most remarkable art collectors of the 20th century and his art collection reflects his Oriental origins as well as his European education and lifestyle. In 1942, Calouste Gulbenkian arrived in Lisbon, leaving behind Vichy where he temporarily lived after Paris’ Nazi occupation. He lived the last 13 years installed at the luxurious Hotel Aviz where he died in July 20th. By his will he created the *Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation* established in 1956 whose statutory aims are in the fields of arts, charity, education and science. Since 1969 is housing the art collection and the private library of the Founder.

1.2. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Art Library

The Art Library was created in 1968 with the aim of gathering the collections of the Foundation. Initially its holdings supported the collection and activities of the *Gulbenkian Museum* and included the private library of the Founder. In the 1990s the Art Library was restructured and the services provided were renewed and since then the catalogue is online and externally accessible on the Internet. Actually, the Art Library is a non-circulating research one containing over 190.000 volumes, around 190 titles of current periodicals, multimedia documents and slide collections on the art works of Portuguese contemporary artists. Since its creation the Art Library holds 180 special collections that have been enriched by donation or by acquisition of private libraries of books and periodicals, private archives of Portuguese artists and architects and photograph archives. (www.biblarte.gulbenkian.pt).

1.3. Calouste Gulbenkian’s personal Library

Books were always Calouste Gulbenkian’s lifetime companions, which he cherished

with the dedication of a true bibliophile. He divided his collection in two sections: one composed by antiquarian books from the 12th century to the mid-20th century which is part of the Gulbenkian Museum; and another section named "Documentation" used by Gulbenkian to support his art collecting activities and his love for study and intellectual curiosity.

This section has three different provenances - London, Paris and Lisbon – and has about 3.000 titles in different subject fields and is a part of the Art Library. Some art subjects are at the origin of the actual library's subject organization. This personal library not only conveys a sense of the *Zeitgeist* but also reflects the eclectic personality traits and intellectual curiosity of its owner.

Calouste Gulbenkian personally supervised acquisition, cataloguing and storing activities. Some books have marks of his personal involvement like "File", "Documentation", "A Garder".

Doc. typologies	Total	%
Monographs	2244	87%
Auction/Sales cat.	214	8%
Periodicals (titles)	137	5%
Photo albuns	1	0,04%

Century	Titles	%	Items	%
16th	2	0,08	2	0,04
17th	9	0,37	10	0,20
18th	43	1,77	64	1,28
19th	556	23	1.646	32,93
20th	1788	74	3257	65,17
S.d.	18	0,74	18	0,36

II Part

2.1. The Calouste Gulbenkian's personal library project

Calouste Gulbenkian's personal library was a project conceived and developed by the Art Library as a part of the festivities of the 50th anniversary of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. This project aims to foster and encourage multiple perspectives on its grand patrimonial and cultural value within the broad scope of the Founder's legacy.

2.1.1. Duration of the project and teams involved

The project began in January 2005 and was officially closed in April 2007 with the public presentation of the website *Calouste Gulbenkian's Personal Library*. Teams involved were both internal (*collection management; bibliographic control; information system*) and external to the Art Library (*photography; conservation and preservation; cataloguing old books*). These Gulbenkian Foundation departments – Museum, Armenian Communities and Archives – were also involved.

2.2. Preservation and conservation

Calouste Gulbenkian used his books for study and research. Some are pocket editions with the traces and marks of frequent use. Others are special and/or restricted editions which reveal Gulbenkian as a bibliophile: books from the 16th to the 18th centuries, special bindings by the renowned binders, numbered editions with etchings and/or watercolors, dedications and ex-libris, etc. In general the books were in reasonable state of conservation.

Journals and periodicals include some complete collections, such as *The Studio*, and active titles as *The Burlington Magazine*. In these cases the analysis of conservation status was on the issues published during Gulbenkian's life. Some also have luxury binding covers.



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2.2.1. Diagnosis of the conservation status

Firstly, the collection general conservation status was analyzed to identify existing causes of deterioration. Document typologies were registered as well as the number of volumes, chronological and thematic scope, occurrence of unstable or damaged documents and the main needs of preservation and conservation, including packaging and storage. This procedure helped to outline an organization and treatment plan with the estimate cost, duration and number of people necessary. Next step each item was visual examined to fill a “*diagnosis of the state of conservation*” form (sometimes with a photographic record) with previous restorations and need to package.

The result was a list with most common binding deterioration and paper problems to decide the operations, future organization and treatment plan. The major pathologies detected were deteriorated bindings, books with partially or completely detached boards (covers) and/or spines, tears, holes and gaps, dirty surfaces and acids adhesives, yellowing of the paper, acidity, foxing, dirt surfaces, pages folds or creases and acid glues which oxidation.

Some sales catalogs were mutilated with inside missing parts and pencil handwritten notes on the cover and paragraphs underlined. Most periodicals were bounded in leather and its pathologies resulted mainly of its large size and handling: covers and spine with broken corners, distorted to the head and foot. The five photo-albums presented diverse pathologies (structure, paper and photographs) requiring a combination of different conservation techniques. In general the conservation status was reasonable.

2.2.2 Planning p&c actions

The preservation measures and the conservation and restoration procedures were planned according to document characteristics and pathologies observed. All p&c actions were carried out using chemically stable products with archival quality compatible with the original materials. The large number of volumes and the short time available for the project development added difficulties to intervention planning.

The collection was divided by p&c typology intervention. For reasons relating to the workload and workflow as well as security issues, some p&c operations took place in-house by national specialized technicians. The most complex ones were made outside by national and international specialized technicians and firms.

Firstly all the items with dirty marks in covers, bindings and paper were mechanically cleaned and binding actions consisted mainly on the conservation of the existing materials. Original signatures and sewing were preserved in fragile and special items. However due to deterioration some were re sewn. Wherever required the books were stored in tailored boxes. Rebacking was the appropriate procedure for books with partially or completely detached boards (covers) and/or spines.

Paper operations carried out: surface or dry cleaning, mending and guarding, renewing, filling areas with Japanese paper or with paper pulp. For items with special aesthetic value the solution was inlaying with a paper matching the original one in weight, texture, and color, flattening, removal of old repairs and sometimes separation of prints with Japanese paper or polyester to prevent the acidity transferring. Finally, control phase had critical importance to maintain high quality in the final product having each item been verified.

2.2.3. Storage & Shelving

The selected storage process for the most sensitive and fragile documents considered their material features. The packaging controlled air pollutants, pests actions, temperature variations and relative humidity. The materials used - polyester and acid free paper/cardboard produced with high cellulose levels - took into account their adaptability to items, their cost and the ease in handling and carrying. Incomplete serials issues were also stored in customer boxes. Single copies were stored in document preservation folders with Buckram covers. Books

with bindings of historic or aesthetic value were retained as much as possible in their present conditions; damaged books and photo-albums rarely consulted were boxed. The heaviest one was stored in a book display box according to its handling, exhibition and reading needs.

The Art Library current subject organization is closely linked to Calouste Gulbenkian personal interests. Storing a special collection along with current copies raises problems of preservation. Some larger documents were transferred to special shelves and the most fragile ones are stored horizontally which protects small sized documents from the pressure caused by the proximity of larger and heavier documents.

The collection is being regularly controlled by monitoring relative humidity, temperature and air quality as well as checked in order to detect degradation's signs.

2.3. Bibliographic Control

Although the Art Library catalog included already bibliographic records for the collection the information registered did not reflect documents specificities. Works had been catalogued and indexed according to general criteria and policies and there was no indication of provenance.

Once the Art Library was created from the private collection of Calouste Gulbenkian the first documents for each thematic section had belonged to the Founder. Some monographs had the original inventory number registered a mark that identified their possession. The same was applied to titles of periodicals but not all copies of each title had a mark of provenance

The first phase of bibliographic processing consisted thus in identifying and/or confirming the items collected by Calouste Gulbenkian while he was living consulting the following information sources:

Direct sources

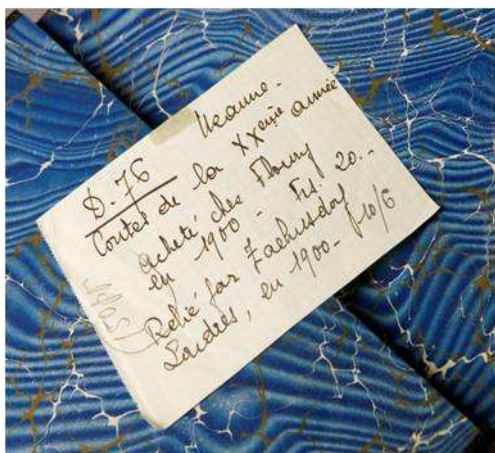
- Inventory list of the Private Library from the Paris years (numbers preceded by letter D)

- Inventory books of the acquisitions made during London period (numbers preceded by letter L) and from Lisbon (numbers preceded by letter A referring to the Hotel Aviz, where Calouste Gulbenkian lived)
- Invoices stating purchase of books and subscription of periodicals
- Gulbenkian's correspondence with collectors, auctioneers, publishers and booksellers
- Loose material inside the works: invitations, letters, newspaper cuttings, etc.
- Dedications
- Handwritten aesthetic impressions registered on museum guides and art books
- Handwritten notes in auction sales catalogs evidencing Gulbenkian's art collection assembling process
- Signatures and initials identified as belonging to Gulbenkian, to members of his family or direct employees
- Direct messages to employees
- Copies printed specifically for the Founder

Indirect sources

- Scope and theme of the collection
- Suitability to Gulbenkian's professional activities and personal interests
- Chronology of Gulbenkian's life (publications acquired till 1995, year of his death)
- Provenance of books and magazines (other collectors, auction houses, booksellers, publishers, binders)
- Private correspondence and diaries
- Biographies and bibliography published about Gulbenkian
- Bibliographic catalogs published by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation referring to books and magazines
- Physical traces including bookbinding styles and binding features
- Sites of antique dealers, auctioneers and antiquarian booksellers
- Other libraries catalogs namely the BNF, LC and V & A
- Research on authors of dedications and identification of ex-libris
- Information on rare editions for collectors

- Publications of the main bibliophile associations contemporary of Calouste Gulbenkian



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2.3.1. Redefining bibliographic control criteria

Formerly, bibliographic processing criteria had followed the general principles of bibliographic control in the Library: specificity was set according to the relevance of subjects considering the Art Library goals and users' interests. Information was provided following a more specific treatment and a narrower approach to the resources covering History of art, Visual arts and Architecture and a broader description for the remainder subjects.

The bibliographic control of a private valuable collection necessarily conducts to the evaluation and eventually to the redefinition of the criteria for adequate description. Once these criteria are applied bibliographic records will reflect more clearly the intrinsic value of information their contents as well as physical characteristics of the resources emphasizing the intentions of the person who gathered the collection over time.

Bibliographic control had been carried out in different periods; most records had been registered in the online catalogue transcribing information directly from the traditional bibliographic card catalogue set up over forty years of the library existence and as such following different description rules or even without any standard procedures. Information had been poorly controlled and was frequently incomplete, showing also deficient terminology control. On the other hand, the whole collection had not been processed.

Revising records and finishing bibliographic control followed the current cataloguing principles and practice in use at the Art Library namely in what

concerns the sources of information adopted: cataloguing is based on RPC - Portuguese rules for monographs and periodicals, on AACR2 and on ISBDs (ISBD (A), ISBD (M) and ISBD (S) by the time the project was developed. The classification system used is UDC. Indexing practice is pre-coordinated and the main source for terminology is the AAT online produced by The J. Paul Getty Trust with terms translated into Portuguese. For the remainder areas indexing is more generic using the UNESCO Thesaurus.

The Library software system is Horizon 7.3 and the data bibliographic format is UNIMARC.

2.3.2 Applying bibliographic control criteria

Information registered in the item records

The specificity of each item belonging to the collection was pointed out for its patrimonial value and above all for having belonged to the Founder, representing his interests, evidencing his activities or testifying the creation of its art collection. Accordingly, some procedures have been defined and the following information was registered in the item records:

- Specific code for the collection stating provenance of each copy
- Numbers of the inventory books and lists transcribed to the registration field
- Provenance of each copy - Paris (D), London (L) and Lisbon (A)
- Reserved status restricting access to all items

Information registered in the bibliographic records

- Special editions, numbered copies - emphasizing the collection uniqueness and providing information on the act of collecting
- Dedications – emphasizing the collector's universe of relations
- Handwritten notes and marks - testifying the collector study methods and instructions to employees
- Ex-libris – identified wherever possible highlighting different provenances proving the purchase of that work by the bibliophile
- Cuttings of auction catalogues entries glued in front guards of books - testifying interest in many acquisitions
- Works autographed or signed indicating the author if identified
- Special bindings - adding value to the contents of the collection

- Signature of binders - showing concern for quality for having “*only the best*” a motto for the art collector

UNIMARC optional fields more used

Usually the Art Library uses the intermediate description level.

Bibliographic control stressed the physical properties of each document whenever appropriate, besides its information content. The mostly used fields of the notes block were:

- Field 304 - Notes pertaining to title and statement of responsibility
- Field 305 - Notes pertaining to edition and bibliographic history
- Field 306 - Notes pertaining to publication, distribution, etc.
- Field 312 – Notes pertaining to related titles
- Field 316 - Note relating to the copy in hand
- Field 317 – Provenance note
- Field 320 – Internal bibliographies/indexes note
- Field 327 – Contents note

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LDR: 01415cam 2200349 4500
001: 178754
100: $a20041012d1876 k y0pory0103 ba
101: 0 $afre
102: $aFR
200: 1 $aCatalogue d'aquarelles et dessins par Hervier$f[ed. lit.] Hotel Drouot
210: 1 $aParis$cHotel Drouot,$d1876
215: $a[42] p.$cil. color.$d27 cm
300: $aCatálogo do leilão realizado no Hotel Drouot, Paris (França) em 26 de Fev. de 1876
300: $aContém dados biográficos manuscritos do artista representado
316: $aContém recorte da notícia do catálogo do leilão em que a obra foi adquirida
316: $aEx. com notas manuscritas de Burty
316: $aContém 6 aquarelas de Hervier, com vistas de Saint-Germain e de Montmartre, cenas populares, etc., 4 desenhos a pena e 4 gravuras a água-forte, 2 cartas autografadas de Champfleury H. Beraldi e H. Hamel
316: $aEnc. em marroquim verde escuro, ex-libris gravado a ouro no centro das pastas, 5 nervos, casas com ex-libris, autor na 2a, tít. na 3a, data no pé: seixas douradas, corte dourado à cabeça
316: $aEnc. assin. por Pierson
317: $aColeção Calouste Gulbenkian - Documentação
517: 1 $aAquarelles et dessins
600: 0$92$aHervier,$f1821-1879
606: $aPintura$xAquarela$yFrança$zSéc. 19
606: $aDesenho$yFrança$zSéc. 19
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606:	\$aPintura\$xLeilões\$yParis (França)\$z1876\$x[Catálogos]
606:	\$aDesenho\$xLeilões\$yParis (França)\$z1876\$x[Catálogos]
675:	\$a7.075(44)"19"
675:	\$a75(44)"18"
702:	1\$4040\$aHervier,\$b1821-1879?
702:	1\$4110\$aPierson,\$bHamilton,\$f1817-1888
712:	02\$aHôtel Drouot\$c(Paris, França)\$4340
901:	\$aDB\$aFB\$cEnc.\$dEnc.\$b3 imagens assinaladas
966:	1 \$IFCGBGA\$sP 12367
999:	\$abga-jpf\$b20041013\$cbga-mf\$d20060605\$cbga-jpf\$d20060621\$cbga-cr\$d20061106

Bibliographic control was completed through a final revision to ensure information consistency of:

- Access points for authors
- Access point for subjects
- Access points for UDC entries
- Physical description area
- Notes pertaining to physical description
- Notes relating to the copy in hand namely for special book binding

The options for processing this collection sought therefore to emphasize its provenance how it was formed its peculiarities, specifications and its value stressing the bibliophile taste of the collector as well as the origin and history of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and its Art Library.

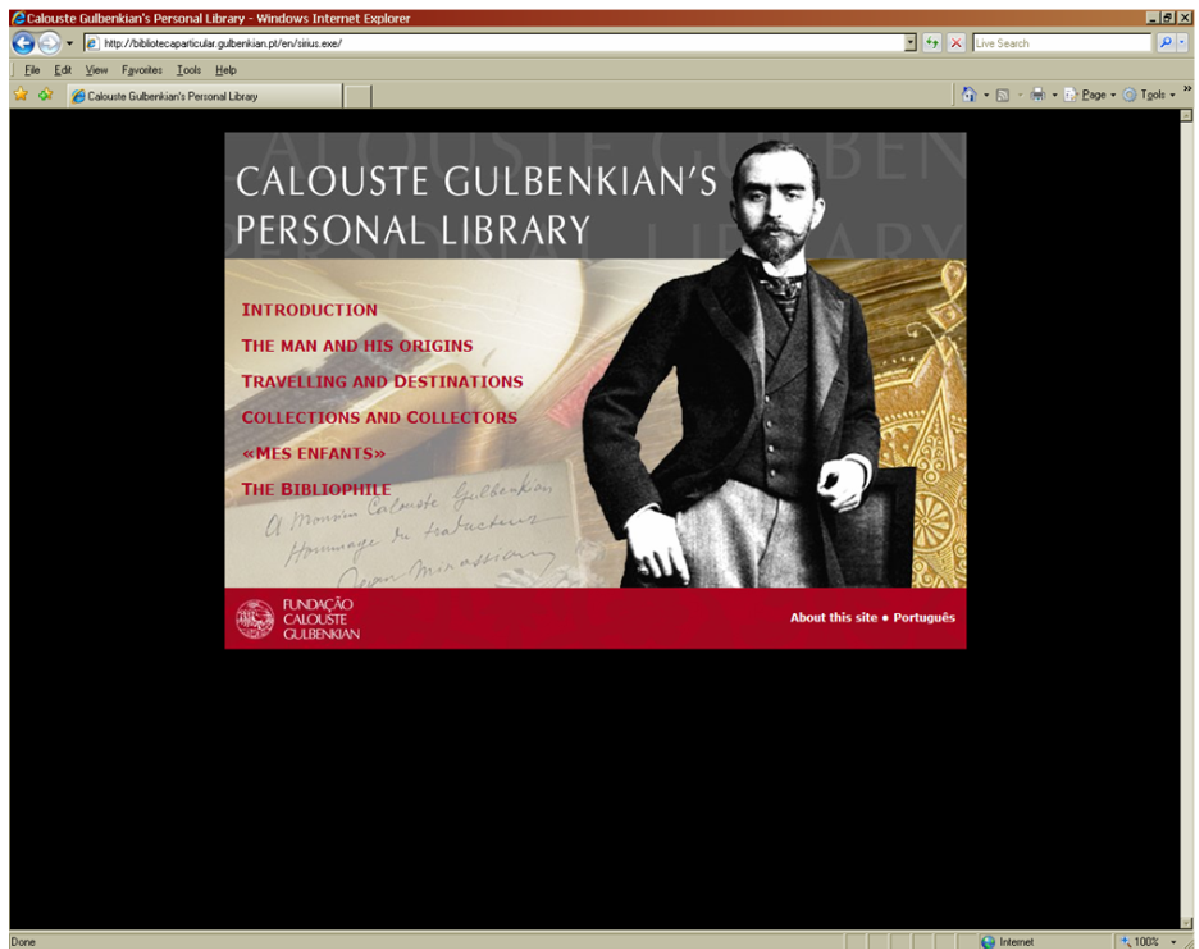
2.4. WWW.BIBLIOTECAPARTICULAR.GULBENKIAN.PT/en

Calouste Gulbenkian's personal library represents a testimony of the Founder's reading preferences along his life. By choosing the documents held in the Collector's personal library to develop this project the Art Library aims to make evident numerous aspects related to the life and work of Calouste Gulbenkian. These include possible correlations between the Collector's aesthetic tastes and the cultural life of his time the variety of his personal interests as well as signs of his opinions and reasoning evidenced by visible reading marks.

In this sense instead of privileging specific fields of interest or highlighting specific books the approach chosen was to select different sections of the collection which allowed establishing links between specific stages of Calouste Gulbenkian's

life and some known features of his character. Thus the several topics and sub-topics that have been chosen are directly or indirectly related to particular sections of the library collection i.e. linked to specific sets of works

The final result of the project is a website the best way for information dissemination nowadays. By providing a wide range of access to Calouste Gulbenkian's personal library the Art Library reaches to publics having different interests and needs in these subject matters. The website shows some peculiarities of the collection and conveys different search approaches in an easy and attractive way.



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