

## Before the first pedagogical museum: The educational collection of the Royal Industrial Museum of Turin in 1862

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### Abstract

The article aims to bring to light a recent discovery with respect to the history of Italian pedagogical museums: 12 years before the official opening of what is recognized as the first. Since 1862 in Turin a section of the Royal Industrial Museum was dedicated to the collection of books and teaching materials dedicated to primary and secondary school. This collection was a direct expression of the London Universal Exhibition of 1861 from which the Royal Commissioners returned with the idea of copying the South Kensington Museum. The article reconstructs the history of the collection and its exposure, following its evolution until its disappearance. The aim of this article is to offer a significant piece of the history of the historical-educational heritage in Italy and its musealization.

L'articolo intende portare in luce una recente scoperta rispetto alla storia dei musei pedagogici italiani: ben 12 anni prima dell'apertura ufficiale di quello che è riconosciuto come il primo, fin dal 1862 a Torino una sezione del Regio Museo Industriale era dedicata alla raccolta di libri e sussidi didattici dedicati alla scuola primaria e secondaria. Tale collezione era espressione diretta dell'Esposizione Universale di Londra del 1861 da cui i Regi Commissari tornarono con l'idea di copiare il South Kensington Museum. L'articolo ricostruisce la storia della collezione e la sua esposizione, seguendone l'evoluzione fino alla sua scomparsa. L'obiettivo è quello di offrire un significativo tassello della storia del patrimonio storico-educativo in Italia e della sua musealizzazione.

**Keywords:** pedagogical museum; educational objects; South Kensington Museum; Universal Exhibition; primary school

**Parole chiave:** museo pedagogico; oggetti didattici; South Kensington Museum; Esposizioni universali; scuola elementare

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## 1. Introduction

In Italy the first pedagogical museum is considered the Royal *Museum of Education and Education* opened in 1874 in Rome (Dal Pane, 1961; Laeng, 1993; Covato, 2010; Cantatore, 2019; Sanzo, 2020). However, it has recently come to light that there is a previous large educational collection on display to the public to show progress in education and education internationally.

The research has in fact brought to light how even Italy has had its South Kensington Museum or rather, a museum inspired directly by the London model, show the public not only the most innovative tools related to science and technology but also education, just as it had happened through the Educational Section of the English museum. If this model is now considered as the forerunner of pedagogical museums (Boyer, 2009; Benito & Hernández Díaz, 2002; Nuzzaci, 2002; Cossetto, 2002), then we can say that Italy immediately after the national unity occurred in 1861 had its pedagogical museum. It was located in Turin (then capital of Italy) at the Royal Industrial Museum, founded in 1862<sup>i</sup> by Giuseppe Devincenzi<sup>ii</sup> and Gustavo di Cavour<sup>iii</sup> on their return from the Great Exposition in London the previous year, in which they had participated as “Regi Commissari” of the Kingdom of Italy.

In fact, on their return from the Exhibition Devincenzi and Cavour bring with them 700 crates full of materials of various kinds (Giacomelli, 2010, p. 117), among which we will see an educational collection consisting of volumes dedicated to elementary education and objects donated by various international exhibitors. The explicit intention was to propose in Italy the model of the South Kensington Museum, visited several times by Devincenzi and that in his opinion had known:

“to disseminate among all classes some necessary knowledge and to prepare young people from primary school to the Technical Institutes, to find all the systems gathered in a special department of the Museum, methods, apparatus and books related to industrial education at any age of the young. To all those who give or want to give work to education in general and to technical education in particular, a study that in a short time can come to do in the Museum, and especially in this department, must return very advantageous” (Devincenzi, 1865, p. 11).

The reference is specifically the Educational Section of the London Museum, opened in 1857, and how the founders of the Turin Museum intended to create an institution equally capable of supporting education from its earliest degrees. On the other hand, the fact that the Royal Industrial Museum of Turin could be considered, at least with respect to part of its collections, the first Italian pedagogical museum is also recognized by the future Education Minister Ruggero Bonghi who, in founding in Rome in 1874 what until now was studied as the first Italian pedagogical museum, explicit as in reality his was not the first educational-pedagogy collection on the territory:

“The idea to open a Museum of Education and to welcome everything related to the school is not new in Italy. The London Exhibition of 1862 has already given it a first opportunity; since a collection of books and objects such as the one mentioned here is part of the more comprehensive and generic one of the Industrial Museum of Turin” («Giornale del Museo d’istruzione e di educazione», I, 1, 1875, p. 5).

The story of this Italian reality so early, dedicated to the exhibition of teaching materials has recently come to light thanks to the rediscovery in the warehouses of the Library of the Department of Education Sciences of a historical library dedicated to the learning of reading and writing and manuals elementary school that still bears the stamp of the Royal Industrial Museum of Turin. This fund together with Bonghi's statements have stimulated the start of a research - which is part of the study aimed at investigating the relationship between the Universal Expositions and the birth of pedagogical museums and national collections (Lawn, 2009; Lawn & Grosvenor Escolano, 2009; Escolano Benito, 2012) - aimed at reconstructing this hitherto unknown reality.

## 2. The formation of the collections of the Royal Industrial Museum

On his return from the London Exposition of 1862, Devincenzi and Cavour brought with them, as anticipated, as many as 700 cases full of various materials (Giacomelli, 2010, p. 117). These boxes had remained closed, waiting for the final arrangement that will be found only in 1869 when the Royal Industrial Museum occupy the large building in the center of Turin left empty by the move from the headquarters of the Ministry of War (in the meantime, the role of capital of Italy had in fact passed to Florence and then definitively to Rome). In the absence of an inventory that allows us to understand the contents of that material reported in Italy, there are two sources that help us to reconstruct the original nucleus of the museum and to understand how since the establishment of the initial collection great attention was paid to school material. The first sources are the memories of Devincenzi about the first moments of collection of objects and the motivations that led him to make it. The second source is the catalog of the educational collection printed right in the year when the contents of the crates were exposed for the first time and whose pages are therefore faithful expression of the first original collection. In this and the next section we will reconstruct the contents of the collection, studying respectively the two types of sources mentioned.

Devincenzi, who remained after the death of Gustavo di Cavour in 1864 the only direct witness of this operation to create the collection that constituted the founding nucleus of the Royal Industrial Museum, had been appointed Director. In his memoirs he recalls how "I had considered it my duty to do everything to take advantage of that great opportunity" and felt the responsibility to be part of that Royal Commission that had sent a delegation of 43 men to London in order to "research how to promote in Italy the individual industries and some branches of education and public education" (Devincenzi, 1865, p. 21). Industrial development and public education were seen as elements not only parallel but also intrinsically linked since the establishment of the Commission, which was charged with applying this dual gaze. All were convinced that "there is no political stability that does not support economic prosperity" (Comitato Reale, 1863, p. 11) and that, as a natural syllogism in nineteenth-century society, a way to support such economic development is to strengthen the education and training system.

Devincenzi studies the solutions adopted by other countries: "The comparative study of the products of all nations led all governments to reflect on how development passes through industrial education [...]. The result was the construction of a large Industrial Museum, that of Kensington in London, which became the basis on which gradually arose and was established that wonderful system of industrial education in England" (ibidem). He decides to "import" the solution that in his eyes seemed more convincing and fruitful and that is to replicate the South Kensington Museum in Turin. It is clear the role that Devincenzi wants the Museum to have towards all levels of education in our country and how it intends to replicate activities and purposes of the Educational Section of London reality, whose contribution to the dissemination of education, including primary education, continues to be praised:

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“This department in the Museum of Kensington has been the one that has contributed so much in England to spread in the smallest villages the best methods and systems of teaching, an infinity of small apparatuses, great number of diagrams, that they easily put before the eyes things that otherwise would be impossible or very difficult to understand” (Devincenzi, 1865, p. 14).

In addition to declaring the model he is inspired by and the objectives with which he wished to promote the Industrial Museum, Devincenzi in his report allows us to understand how he was able to create the initial collection: He did not want to ask the Government to establish a Museum but *he* relied on what he calls sympathy that he saw in the British towards Italy:

“Having thus reason with many of my English friends, eminent men or by politics, by science or by the exercise of industries, and all of very great authority, of my desire to establish in Italy a Museum similar to that of Kensington and of the way I intended to build it with spontaneous contributions, I received from all approval and encouragement and promises to willingly attend their valuable cooperation, who then did [...]. Therefore, putting myself to work with a circular, in which I expressed almost the same concepts already approved by those friends of mine and perhaps more of our country, I turned to the primary industrialists, whose products were mainly admired in the Exhibition. The only condition I posed was that I would not accept contributions other than objects awarded in that great Exhibition, not having to serve only for comparisons and studies in an Italian Industrial Museum to be established on the basis of that of Kensington” (ibid., p. 15).

The offers were so numerous that, according to the promoter of the Turin initiative, he found himself having to refuse many materials and others sent him once he returned to Italy. Without having spent anything, except for shipping, the economic value of the collection exceeded the million Lire<sup>iv</sup>. Devincenzi is aware of the exceptionality of the thing: “similar favorable opportunity will present us more never” (ibidem). The small shipping costs were met through the fund for representation expenses of the Commissioners-General. Compared to the total fund of Lire 1,368,807 “assigned to provide that Exhibition”, thanks to this system of *gentlemen’s agreements* had been made savings and so the Minister himself suggests to allocate Lire 259,000 from savings to “complete and definitively establish this Industrial Museum” (ibidem).

Beyond the explications of the intentions of Devincenzi that well make us understand the absolute interest in the establishment of a collection of educational-didactic attentive to all school orders, it would, however, be difficult to imagine with a good margin of certainty which materials contained this initial collection collected in London if we did not investigate the actual tasks carried out in London by the members of the delegation and in particular by the two promoters of the new Italian Industrial Museum. In this reconstruction it should be noted that for the first time at the 1862 Exhibition a class of its own was dedicated to “works and methods related to education” (International Exhibition, 1862). It was in turn divided into three subclasses, respectively dedicated to: publishers; displays of objects and appliances related to education; exhibitors of toys and games. The Marquis Gustavo di Cavour was appointed juror for the part of didactic objects and also assumed the Presidency of the Italian section of the entire class XXIX dedicated to education and public education in general (Cavour & Devincenzi, 1862).

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In this role not only Gustavo Cavour has the opportunity to deepen very closely the knowledge of materials and teaching objects exhibited by other countries but certainly had the opportunity to forge links with the Presidents of other countries appointed for this class exhibition, expressly dedicated to education, didactic and its subsidies. It is therefore quite plausible that, returning Cavour from London with the already well-developed idea of creating a museum, he worked to bring in Italy as part of the constituent collection materials from the educational exhibition.

In their report to the Minister with the reporting of their work in London, In fact, Devincenzi and Cavour are keen to specify that they are very committed during their trip to London to collect as many objects as possible to then expose to the Italian public: "We believe we have fulfilled our duty by laying the foundations of an Industrial Museum with the collection in the Exhibition and outside a huge number of objects and collections" (ibidem). This declared commitment, and in some way claimed, can certainly be lavished precisely within the class XXIX of the Exhibition in which Cavour had worked most, bringing in Italy part of those didactic objects present in that exhibition class. That these were in particular objects (and not only books) also emerges from the following sentence that explains how in the ideas of Cavour and Devincenzi had to complete the initial collection with books: "To the objects already collected by combining the books purchased for the studies of the Special Commissioners we will have what is necessary to start an Industrial Museum" (ibid., p. 27). Summarizing what emerged, it is clear that the Industrial Museum of Turin was designed from its embryonic stages as a reality in which a part of the collection and exhibition had to perform the functions that in the future will be attributed to the pedagogical museums.

### 3. The educational collection of the Turin Museum

The materials in the possession of the Royal Industrial Museum were organized according to a subdivision whereby the instruments related to the laboratories of a teaching course provided to the museum (which also played the role of training school for future engineers) were taken care of by the respective professors while the "different collections" were curated by a Conservator. One of the writings of this Conservator, Guglielmo Jervis, reveals to us the nature of these collections not linked to the courses of study: in 1869, in fact, he decided to print the catalogues of these materials starting from what he calls "Educational Collection". This paper testifies very well that the Royal Industrial Museum did not include in its collections only texts and objects related strictly to vocational education, as you might imagine, but extended its competences to the entire field of education, ranging from elementary to secondary, with a large library of subsidiaries and teaching materials and also dealing with statistics on the population who knew how to read and write, municipalities with elementary schools on their territory, in the presence of kindergartens, evening and Sunday schools, popular libraries circulating and much more. From the cover of his book he states that it is "School and pedagogical books, as well as for premium use, teaching reports, hints related to elementary and secondary education" (Jervis, 1869) by not making any direct reference to the technical-professional education that the nature of the Museum would suggest, but rather by expressly mentioning primary and secondary education.

These are the same words of Jervis that confirm us that the nucleus that in its publication includes as Educational Collection is part of that material that from the initial design phase was part of the project: "was brought back to Turin by the Royal Commissioner comm. Devincenzi a very rich collection of raw and manufactured products, together with a library of technical works and instruction books, which together formed the nucleus of the *Regio Museo industriale italiano*" (ibid., p. 4). Also, in his publication he shows us how the Museum

took charge of knowing, monitoring and disseminating through studies and statistics the situation of basic education in Italy.

On the other hand, Jervis sees the educational collection of the R. Museo Industriale as a separate section, with the dignity of being independent: "among the Collections of which the R. Museo Industriale Italiano is rich, there is the one on public and private education, elementary and secondary, distinct from the Industrial Library" (ibid., p. VI).

This collection dedicated to education consists of "a collection of educational books and means to facilitate and support the teachings, which are currently in use in the most civilized countries" (ibid.). Jervis goes further by expressly comparing the Didactic section of the Royal Italian Industrial Museum of Turin to the same Didactic section of the South Kensington Museum: "This collection is almost unique in the analogous established at the R. Industrial Museum of South Kensington in London, which [...] constitutes a permanent international exposition of the care and solicitude placed in the various countries to promote, facilitate and spread education" (ibid., p. VII).

The preface of the Director Devincenzi to the publication of Jervis offers some information on the Teaching Section:

"Although in the beginning, the existing educational collection at this Museum, it already acquired such importance to attract the attention of distinguished and competent members of the Pedagogical Congress, held this autumn in Turin [...]. On that occasion the conservative cav. Jervis, who had so much love for the said collection and so much work in collecting and ordering it, advised, in agreement with the Management, to begin from it the illustration of the collections of the Museum, and properly from that part that includes the educational books, excluding those relating to scientific, technical or special higher education" (ibid., p. VIII).

The analysis of the contents of the publication confirms that the materials considered to be part of the "Didactic Collection" are totally dedicated to primary and secondary education, deliberately leaving out of this collection volumes and materials relating instead to the courses of engineering specialization held by the Museum. The publication is dedicated exclusively to "Italian books" showing how it is "of this nature the richest collection in the Kingdom" (ibid.). In other words, Director Devincenzi claims without fear of denial that the educational-pedagogical collection owned by his museum is the largest and most representative of Italy. The fact that this educational collection is defined "in the bud" suggests a desire for future expansion of the same.

The publication also lists all the donors who have allowed the creation of this Italian part of the Educational Collection, allowing us to reconstruct the relationships of the Royal Industrial Museum with the different realities. At the institutional level, in addition to the Ministry of Education, the Naples Subcommittee at the International Exhibition of the Year 1862 are listed as donors; the Directorate of the R. Institute of the deaf-dumb in Milan and the same institution in Turin; the Direction of the Asian College in Naples; the Direction of the Collegio degli Artigianelli Valdesi in Turin; the Military Imprisonment of Gaeta and that of Savona and the Waldensian Table of Torre Pellice (Turin).

In addition to the numerical consistency of the educational collection, the following is also the subdivision into the various categories proposed by the conservative Jervis himself, interesting to understand the variety of volumes and themes, but also the internal organization that the Museum had wanted to establish for its educational collection:

- Syllables: 33

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- Reading books: 71 to which are added 8 books of reading to use as a prize
- Holy Scriptures: 10
- Books of religion: 40 to which are added 7 hymns and songs
- Moral books: 11
- Grammars: 31
- Composition: 14
- Italian language: 10
- Anthology: 9
- Poetry: 2
- Literature: 13
- Rhetoric: 1
- Philosophy: 3
- Mnemotecnica: 1
- Latin grammars: 9
- Latin language: 6
- Latin fairy tales: 1
- Latin classics: 11
- Holy Scriptures: 1
- Greek grammars: 4
- Greek classics: 1
- German grammar: 1
- Arabic grammar: 1
- French readings: 3
- French grammars: 5
- French anthology: 1
- French classics: 2
- Mythology: 1
- Universal History: 7
- Sacred History: 14
- Modern History: 1
- Greek History: 3
- History of Europe: 2
- Country History: 14
- History of England: 2
- History of Germany: 2
- History of Holland and Belgium: 1
- Biography: 15 to which a further 24 are added for use of prizes and for reading at home
- Cosmography: 7
- Geography: 28
- Sacred geography: 1
- Geographical Atlases: 2
- Arithmetic: 40
- Accounting: 2

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- Geometry: 9
- Algebra: 2
- Trigonometry: 1
- Mechanical engineering: 1
- Drawing: 10
- Scientific knowledge: 1
- Natural sciences: 2
- Physics: 1
- Chemistry: 9
- Natural History: 13 to which add up 3 volumes as prize books
- Anthropology: 1
- Geology: 1
- Agriculture: 2
- Theory of Music: 5
- Instrumentalist music: guitar 2; piano 11; violin 1
- Chant: 6
- Gymnastics: 1
- Hygiene: 2
- Educational periodicals: 4
- Pedagogical periodicals: 3
- Teaching and pedagogy: 38
- Reports and documents on education: 25
- Statistics on primary and secondary education: 6.

The impression that we get from this list of almost 700 volumes is that it is not a corpus intentionally prior defined but, on the contrary, a collection created in some way autonomous, whose classification was created after. It seems to be understood that, on the basis of the gifts freely received by publishers and authors, the collection has been built up, which in our eyes is not heterogeneous and, in some respects, incomplete or unbalanced. Jervis allows to rebuild the complete network of donors thanks to the fact that under each specific volume from whom it has been received (but does not specify the date of donation).

In fact, research carried out at the Academy of Sciences in Turin has allowed us to verify how of this catalogue of the educational collection of the Royal Industrial Museum created by Jervis in 1869 there are three different versions, all published in the same year, by the same publisher. In addition to the version that we have analyzed dedicated to the Italian section of the collection, a second one lists all the educational books owned by the Royal Industrial Museum in whatever language they are published and in whatever country they are published; while the third is only a brief summary in which not all the titles of the volumes are reported, as is the case in the two previous cases.

The complete edition of the entire educational collection including national and international texts exceeds the 300 pages within which a large space is occupied by the collection of Italian volumes that takes over in full precisely the contents of the edition that we have seen. The subtitle is slightly different: "school and pedagogical books as well as for premium use. Reports related to teaching. Notes on education in individual countries" instead of "hints on primary and secondary education" in the final part. In this case too, the publication allows us to reconstruct the network of relationships woven by the Royal Industrial Museum, with the list of donors who

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had contributed to the creation of the Teaching Section. Among these we can count some Commissions of representatives of different countries at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1867: it is the Austrian, Romanian, Saxon Commission. Then there are the National Education Commissions of Ireland in Dublin, the Director of the Department of Public Education of the canton of Zurich, the Ministry of Education of Prussia in Berlin. The specificity of these donors shows that even in 1867 the clear desire to nurture the educational collection dedicated to public education is considered in all its grades.

In addition to these government representations, there are active exchanges of materials and relations with some Moral Bodies represented by the Council of Education of the Congregational Church in Homerton (London), by the British and foreign Biblical Society in London, the Ibernic Biblical Society of Dublin, the Biblical Society of France of Paris, the Society of Religious Books of Toulouse, the Society of Religious Treaties in London and finally the Society promoting Christian knowledge in London.

To these names are added foreign publishers: Union of Sunday Schools of London, Adam and Charles Black of Edinburgh, Giorgio Bridel of Lausanne, Butler of St-Louis in America, Chabers of Edinburgh, Delachaux of Neuchatel, Jules Delalain and son of Paris, Gall in Inglis of Edinburgh, James Gordon of Edinburgh, Jarrold and sons of London, Librairie agricole Bixio and C. of Paris, Longman Green and Roberts of London, Macmillan and C. of Cambridge, Oliver and Boyd of Edinburgh, George Routledge and sons of London; Simpkin, Marshall and C. of London and Weal of London. Some private citizens, including tutors and shopkeepers, appear among the donors, as it turns out that some volumes of teaching have been donated directly in a personal capacity by the curator of the collections of the South Kensington Museum in London in the person of Philip Cuncliffe Owen. Overall, the library collection dedicated to teaching exceeds 2300 units.

#### **4. The exhibition of educational objects at the Royal Industrial Museum**

To obtain further information on the educational collection and in particular on the didactic objects of the Royal Industrial Museum, we must wait for the following year, the 1870, when the new director Codazza - succeeded to Devincenzi after his resignation in the same 1870 in contrast with the decree of 1869 which reduced the role of the Museum (Marchis, 1984, p. 23) - decided to start printing *Annali*. In fact, they were divided into original publications, industrial rights, scientific and industrial news, leaving no room for teaching. Nevertheless, just at the opening of these *Annals* report the map of the exhibition part of the museum and from this is obtained as on the first floor in room 7 there was what is called from Collections of means of teaching (*Annals*, 1870, p. 83). The subsequent monograph created by Codazza at the invitation of the Ministry to present the Industrial Museum at the World Exhibition in Vienna in 1873 confirms that this "collection of means of teaching" was dedicated to teaching from the pre-elementary, going then to represent that "Educational Section" of the Museum or rather that collection that represented a real Museum of Education, as the Devincenzi had so desired from the beginning.

In his text Codazza refers to the museum as "Educational Establishment" and wants to specify that

“While the Ministry of Education was working to improve the practical higher education of Engineers with the creation of the schools of application and the Higher Technical Institute of Milan, the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, interpreting the most felt needs of the country, dedicated care and studies to promote, disseminate, improve not only higher technical

education with the favour of this Industrial Museum [...] but also the primary and secondary” (Codazza, 1873, p. 4).

The new Director therefore wishes to present his museum recalling from the initial pages his commitment to primary and secondary education, stressing at the same time that this part of the collection had been planned from the first founding moments of the museum itself. In this writing Codazza specifies that in addition to the collections of each laboratory, there are “the Collections proper of the Museum”. Among these, with respect to our specific study interests, emerges what is described as a collection of industrial products designed to facilitate and promote primary and secondary education, diagrams and books related to it.

In the following pages of the monograph each of these collections is presented: under the title Objects related to elementary and secondary education (ibid., p. 55) we find a list that allows us to reconstruct the type and quantity of this collection of “pedagogical museum in Turin”. They were part of the collection of the year 1873 relating to primary and secondary school:

- School supplies: 8
- Educational toys: 7
- Painted wall tables for primary education: 48
- Teaching aids for reading: 80
- Teaching aids for writing and related materials: 146
- Geography and astronomy: 200
- Demonstration collections for teaching natural history: about 3500
- Maps, diagrams related to natural history: 65
- Elementary drawing: 381
- Geometry and solid bodies for use in primary and secondary schools: 441
- Mechanical, educational toys and models of machine elements: 89
- Wall diagrams: 348
- National and foreign public education books in all languages: 2348
- Teaching and employment equipment for the blind: 71
- Printed books for the blind: 75
- Special teaching books for deaf-mutes: 28
- Photographs of primary and secondary schools and other matters relating to public education: 20
- Topographical model of Monte Cenisio (an Italian mountain): 1.

In total, therefore, the Royal Industrial Museum has 8.057 materials (including books) dedicated to primary and secondary education.

According to the Director, all the material in these collections is a direct expression of the initial endowment obtained as a gift as a result of the relations undertaken during the London Exhibition of 1862, to which were added those of the Paris Exposition of 1867 and the Maritime Exposition of Naples of 1871.

Since we do not have a more detailed description of this collection and since there is no trace of it at the Historical Archives of the City of Turin, we cannot derive precise information on individual objects or trace back to producer, year, author. However, we are certain that the Collection of Teaching Materials was exposed to the public thanks to the Regulations for the collections of the Royal Industrial Museum that specified how the purpose of the collections was “to offer a historical and progressive exhibition of scientifically ordered objects” (art.1). Is a Guide to the city of Turin to allow us to ideally reconstruct the entire tour of the museum and in

particular the Didactic Section (Borbonese, 1884). From this source it is in fact obtained that the collections were exhibited on two of the three floors that constituted the large palace that housed the museum, a former convent of 4400 square meters built in 1677. The museum's collections were open every day, free of charge. The visit began on the first floor of the section dedicated to inorganic products: here, to occupy 12 halls in addition to the exhibition halls there was the Educational Collection.

In the first two rooms, 28 and 29, and in the corridor, there was "the very important library, which is accessible to all teachers" (ibid., p. 307). It contained books in Italian, French, English, German, Dutch and other languages "divided by languages and classified by subject". Next to them were "furniture for primary schools from various countries" and a "collection of drawings and photographs of school buildings in Italy". It followed a large topographical model in relief of the mountains of northern Italy. The next room is devoted to school records, instructive toys, materials for kindergartens and for teaching elementary gymnastics, tables of nomenclature.

Continuing on, in room 31 it was possible to appreciate the collection of methods for teaching reading, illustrated children's books and music and singing tables. In room 32 there were materials for teaching arithmetic, calligraphy notebooks, blackboards and metal writing boards, various inks and pens. Beside them were placed globes, diagrams and atlases of astronomy, relief maps, a series of relief models for the teaching of geography, mute maps and tables and atlases of physical, political and historical geography.

The next three rooms were devoted to teaching natural history. In the one dedicated to the Mineral Kingdom were exhibited graduated collections arranged in boxes, "used in the schools of the various countries or for prize" and a chronological series of rocks. Compared to the plant kingdom, tables were on display for the teaching of economic botany, plant organography; drawings of poisonous plants; herbariums of cheap dyeing, medicinal and forage plants; collection of seeds of large-crop plants in Italy.

Compared to the animal kingdom were Exodus "diagrams of types of invertebrate animals, zoological Atlases, corals of the main types, economic shells" (ibidem). The room was completed by a section dedicated to objective teaching with small product collections for use by schools and a showcase containing the material recommended for the organization of school museums, "gift from Mr. W. Twining, founder of the Twickenham Economic Museum".

Room 36 was dedicated to drawing and housed notebooks and albums for drawings and watercolors, small models, pencils, brushes, color, stripes, palettes, as well as diagrams and physical appliances "attendants to the various classes of lower schools". The next was devoted to descriptive geometry tables, solid bodies, crystal models and construction models. Room 38, on the other hand, dealt with the education of the blind and contained

"Several reading and writing machines, maps and a series of works of all kinds carried out in the blind institutes of many countries, including those in Amsterdam, donated by Mr J. J. Majer and those in Turin, Copenhagen and Vienna. All accompanied by a rich collection of documents and photographs, referring to the education of the blind. About 650 publications printed in relief with different characters, including those in Roman characters in dots, from Stuttgart and publications above each branch of instruction, performed in Brighton by Dr. Moon, himself blind and from the same gift to the Museum and the music in Braille character of the Institute of Copenhagen." (ibid., p. 308)

The last room of the exhibition section related to Teaching received materials for the teaching of history and works of pupils with a collection of school exams from various countries. The exhibition was completed by the

surface of the corridor in which there are maps and wall diagrams: "there are numerous wall maps for the use of schools; maps of cosmography, geography, geology, including the best of Paravia, Scioldo, etc., and diagrams illustrating the excavations of Nineveh, Egypt, Pompeii, and the catacombs of Rome, as well as an infinity of others" (ibidem).

After concluding the detailed account of the various collections of the Royal Industrial Museum of Turin, the author of the book can only conclude by saying: "From this brief review of the R. Museo Industriale Italiano it clearly appears as many are the purposes and great utility. [...] And it is not worth discussing how beneficial the Section of Teaching is for all teachers in primary and secondary schools, and for those who wish to extend their knowledge in any language" (ibid., p. 311).

Far from minimal or secondary, the section dedicated to the exhibition of teaching materials appears from this reconstruction, showing how that desire of the founder to create in Turin the same Museum of Education as in the South Kensington Museum had become reality.

## 5. Development of the teaching section of the Royal Industrial Museum

As soon as the experience of publishing the Annals of the Museum had ended and over the years the Royal Industrial Museum had not printed catalogues of its collections, are always the Guides of the city of Turin that allow us in the following years to capture some information about the exhibition part of the museum and consequently also the life of the Teaching Section. Thanks to one of these publications we know that in 1898 the museum was open and open, always in the same location, and that the Didactic Section maintained the same space on the first floor always occupying 12 rooms and the exhibition part of the corridors (only the room numbering seems to have changed from the previous description):

*Didactic section.* This very important collection is arranged for subjects in the rooms from n. XXIX to XL and in the nearby galleries. Includes textbooks for school use. Teaching and scientific material for teaching. Illustrated books for awards. Collections of mineralogy, botany, zoology. Teaching materials for the blind. School relations (Borbonese, 1898, p. 112).

Only four years later, however, when the official publication was made on the occasion of the first forty years of the life of the museum institution, the Educational-Didactic Section passed mostly under silence (Regio Museo Industriale, 1902).

In 1906 the Regio Politecnico di Torino was founded by the merger of the Regio Museo Industriale and the Regia Scuola di Applicazione per gli Ingegneri (Ferraresi, 2001, p. XIX). It therefore takes on a double seat, occupying both the Savoy residence of Valentino, which since the establishment of the School of Application in 1859 was sold to them, and the palace in which the Industrial Museum was housed. After the approval of the regulation of the new institution, in 1908 the Board of Directors of the Polytechnic University of Technology decided to reorganize, catalogue and place the material relating to the collections inherited. In 1911 these collections were transferred to the Valentino premises in Turin, where they were opened to the public, always presented as two distinct collections in relation to the origin of the materials and then as an Industrial Museum and as a Museum of Geology and Mineralogy (Paravia, 1917). In reality, this reorganization of the Industrial Museum has few traces and, unlike the Museum of Geology and Mineralogy, which is also advertised in the city's museum guides, it is not mentioned.

The bombings that hit Turin hard during the Second World War completely destroyed - so much so that it was never rebuilt and today the space is occupied by a square - the building that had housed the Royal Industrial Museum. In that sad episode it seems that much of the teaching material of the Museum had been lost

(Annuario delle biblioteche italiane, 1956, p. 79). The part of the books that survived, given the lack of space due to the loss of the premises, was donated to the Academy of Sciences. Here "the volumes remained packaged without inventory" (Burzio, 2001, p. 53) and at the end of the seventies of the twentieth century were donated by the Academy of Sciences to the Department of Education of the University of Turin "because they are recognized as being relevant to the studies conducted by the Department and therefore considered to be of greater interest for the latter" (ibidem).

Today, therefore, the Library of Educational Sciences of the Department of Philosophy and Educational Sciences of the University of Turin is in some way the heir of the Educational Section of the Royal Italian Industrial Museum founded in 1862. In fact, it preserves all that has been saved of this section. The volumes rescued and now belonging to the University Library are 1,507.

Studying the collection of the Royal Industrial Museum currently conserved in the Library, one can clearly see the direct links with that educational collection that Jarvis had ordered and whose catalogue he had published. The collection consists of books published in many different countries and in various languages: English, French, Dutch, German, Polish, Swedish, Hungarian, Welsh, Hawaiian, as well as Italian. They represent various genres: to be more precise, since the book collection deriving from the Royal Industrial Museum retains stamp and original tag affixed on the inner cover by the conservator Jarvis, it is now possible to identify for each volume exactly the classification originally attributed to each of them, used to describe the collection in the publication of 1869: The volumes now included in the Library of Education represent 107 genres. Within each of them, as has been said, there are volumes in different languages and coming from different countries. They were published in a period between 1790 and 1898 of which 387 are part of that initial corpus collected between 1862 and 1869. Another 329 texts were published in the twenty years between 1872 and 1892, a clear sign of a continuation in the increase of texts dedicated to education. The most recent text relating to this fund dates back to 1898 and therefore allows us to reconstruct how until that date the Educational Collection of the Royal Industrial Museum was implemented. In all probability between the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century the Teaching Section had finished to be implemented, parallel to a progressive loss of centrality with respect to the new objectives of the Museum hired with the directors who succeeded each other after Devincenzi. The death, however, of the faithful conservator Jarvis, who died in 1906 also marked the end of the figure who had arranged to reorganize, preserve and enhance the Teaching Section itself, in perfect harmony with the founder of the Museum itself. After him, however, the figure of the conservative is no longer foreseen and therefore there is no staff dedicated to the conservation of this fund.

The surviving library, once arrived at the Library of the Department of Philosophy and Education at the end of the seventies of the twentieth century, was studied in 2000 on the occasion of a thesis, coordinated by Professor Giorgio Chiosso and produced by Emanuela Burzio, who wanted to catalogue the volumes themselves. They are currently located in the basement of the Library at the headquarters of the Department in Via Gaudenzio Ferraris, not visible to the public.

As for the part of didactic objects that was part of the Didactic Collection, the total dispersion occurred during the 1942 air raids on Turin seems to be confirmed also by the fact that the current MAP-Museo Archivio Politecnico that collects materials and documents on the history of the Politecnico di Torino, while dedicating several publications to the history of the collections of the Regio Museo Industriale (De Benedetto, 1995; Marchis, 2009) has not traced any material from the educational object collection.

## 6. Final considerations

The history of the Royal Industrial Museum of Turin until now had been studied with respect to the reconstruction of its contribution to technical training or scientific collecting (Ferraresi, 1979; Daprà, 1986; Olmo, 1995; Accornero & Della Piana, 2001; Giacomelli, 2010) but never the attention had been placed on its strongly didactic and educational intent aimed at all levels of education. Just as there had not yet emerged this early desire to show teachers and the general public a large educational collection able to be inspired directly by the first experiences in this regard made abroad. This significant exposure for over 30 years accompanied the history of Italian education but had been forgotten.

This reconstruction wanted to show how in the polymorphism of the Industrial Museum of Turin, typical of the great positivist museums of the nineteenth century, one of its identities was certainly that of the Museum of Education. With this essay we hope to have helped to reconstruct, at least in part, the history of this reality, thus offering a contribution to that stimulating strand of studies related to materiality that for thirty years has successfully engaged the international scientific community (Gaspar da Silva, Meda & de Souza, 2021). It is also hoped to have stressed that Italy could have had a real national educational collection since 1862, twelve years before the opening of what is recognized as the first Italian museum dedicated to education and education.

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<sup>i</sup> Royal Decree No. 1001 of 23 November 1862 signed by Minister Pepoli marks the official creation of this new institution, of national importance and placed under the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade.

<sup>ii</sup> Giuseppe Devincenzi (1814-1903), after having participated in the uprisings of 1848 and being elected to the Neapolitan Parliament, upon the return to power of the Bourbons he was forced into exile. The decision to repair first in Geneva, then in Paris and London, allows him to establish international relations. He returned to Italy, in 1861 he was elected deputy and in 1868 senator. He held the position of Minister of Public Works under several governments.

<sup>iii</sup> Gustavo di Cavour (1806-1864), graduated in law and passionate about political economy, religion and philosophy, in 1861 it is aggregated to the faculty of letters and philosophy of the University of Turin and the following year it is appointed President of the Royal Italian Central Committee for the International Exhibition of London of 1862 and - together as has been said to Devincenzi - Royal Commissioner General of the Kingdom of Italy.

<sup>iv</sup> “Lire” was the name of the Italian money in that period.

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