



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



# *65 years of the FAO Library 1952–2017*

FAO's treasures on display: incunabula and rare books



# Treasures of the FAO Library

## Incunabula & rare books

Some of the most remarkable treasures of the library are 400 volumes of rare books and 32 incunabula from the Marquise Raffaele Cappelli, second President of the IIA. Incunabula are books that were printed in Europe during the earliest period of typography.

The term is applied most commonly to books printed from Gutenberg's Bible in 1454 to 1501.

The collection includes rare editions by Virgil, Columella and Aristotle among others.

☛ 1490 edition in Italian of the first printed book on agriculture *Ruralia commoda* by Crescenzi, covering all aspects of husbandry and estate management, including hunting, fishing, winemaking, cereal cultivation, trees and plants, the medicinal use of plants and how to treat animal illnesses.



☛ The library's manuscript with miniatures and works by Vergilius, Calphurnius, Columella and Hesiodus from the fifteenth century is one of the most precious assets of the library.

☛ The FAO Library has a very rare edition of the *Hortus Romanus* published, as fewer than 300 copies were believed to have been published between 1772 and 1793. Of these, only a limited number were hand-painted in the bold, exuberant style of the eighteenth century. It is an eight-volume folio-size set with stunning botanical prints.





☛ Cover of the second volume of the *Kangxi Yuzhi Gengzhi Tushi* adorned with silk brocade.



☛ Close-up of the intricate and rich covering case adorned with silk that encloses all albums with a tree-like design.



## Valuable Chinese books

The library has esteemed Chinese books on agriculture. The works are of exceptional rarity and a splendid example of Chinese typographic art.

Particularly noteworthy among these is a rare work on agriculture and silk-culture, the *Kangxi Yuzhi Gengzhi Tushi*, published during the reign of the Emperor Kangxi in the eighteenth century, and several classics works that include *Nongzheng Quanshu*, *Qinding Shoushi Tongkao*, and *Zhiwu Mingshi Tukao*.



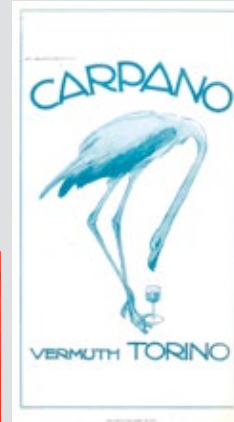
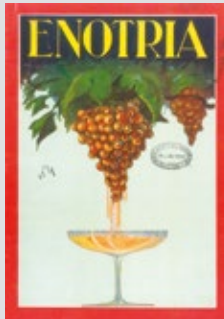
☛ Picture of the first part of the book on agriculture, with the corresponding verses.



## Scholars' donations

Over the years, the Library has received a number of important book donations from scholars, heads of state and international organizations that have enhanced its standing as a unique, global and specialized agricultural library. Of particular interest is the donation of the extensive collection from Arturo Marescalchi (1869–1955) – renowned politician, author and editor on the subject of wine – that comprises books, pamphlets, bulletins and journals on the various aspects of viniculture.

Two works beautifully edited by Ulrico Hoepli (Tuttwil, 1847– Milano, 1935).



Edition of the *Annuario vinicolo* (1921–1942) with advertisements from the era, from the Unione Italiana Vini based in Milan.

*Enotria* (1928–1932) was an Italian wine magazine edited by Marescalchi.



Illustration from *Die Riesen der Pflanzenwelt* (1863) by E. Mielck.

## The Centre International de Silviculture

The FAO Library collection contains 11 000 books and journals on forestry that were saved from the original Centre International de Silviculture (CIS) collection, showing the beginnings of forestry as a science from the early 18th century to the start of the 20th century.



## *The origins of the FAO Library*

In 1952 the FAO Library was officially opened in Rome and named the David Lubin Memorial Library in recognition of David Lubin who ideated the foundation of the International Institute of Agriculture (IIA), the first permanent international organization in the field of agriculture. The IIA was founded in 1905 and opened its library in 1908 which turned into one of the most important agricultural collections in the world. When FAO was founded in 1945, it became the custodian of the IIA, inheriting a collection of half a million volumes. On top of this inheritance, the FAO Library began accumulating its own collection, preserving each and every FAO document ever published, reaching an impressive one million volumes by the beginning of the twenty-first century.



☛ David Lubin's archives, bureau and armchair are kept inside the FAO Library together with a bust portraying Lubin.



☛ One and half million publications stored in the basement of building A of FAO headquarters equals 15 kilometres of bookshelves. The Rare Book Room keeps the treasures of the Library at a controlled temperature of 21 °C and a relative humidity of 50 percent.





## The FAO Library today

At the beginning of the 21st century, the FAO Library was entirely renovated, providing dynamic spaces for staff to meet and discuss. Since 2010, the Library has become fully immersed in the Digital Age, exploring and implementing new technologies and computerizing services. The Library has also made huge efforts and progress in digitalizing FAO publications, making them accessible from any location in the world. The goal is to have all FAO publications available in a digital format in the document repository of FAO.



### The book

~~€38.00~~ **€19.00** (50% discount for staff)

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