

THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE OF GEOGRAPHY: THE COLLECTIONS OF THE PADOVA MUSEUM OF GEOGRAPHY

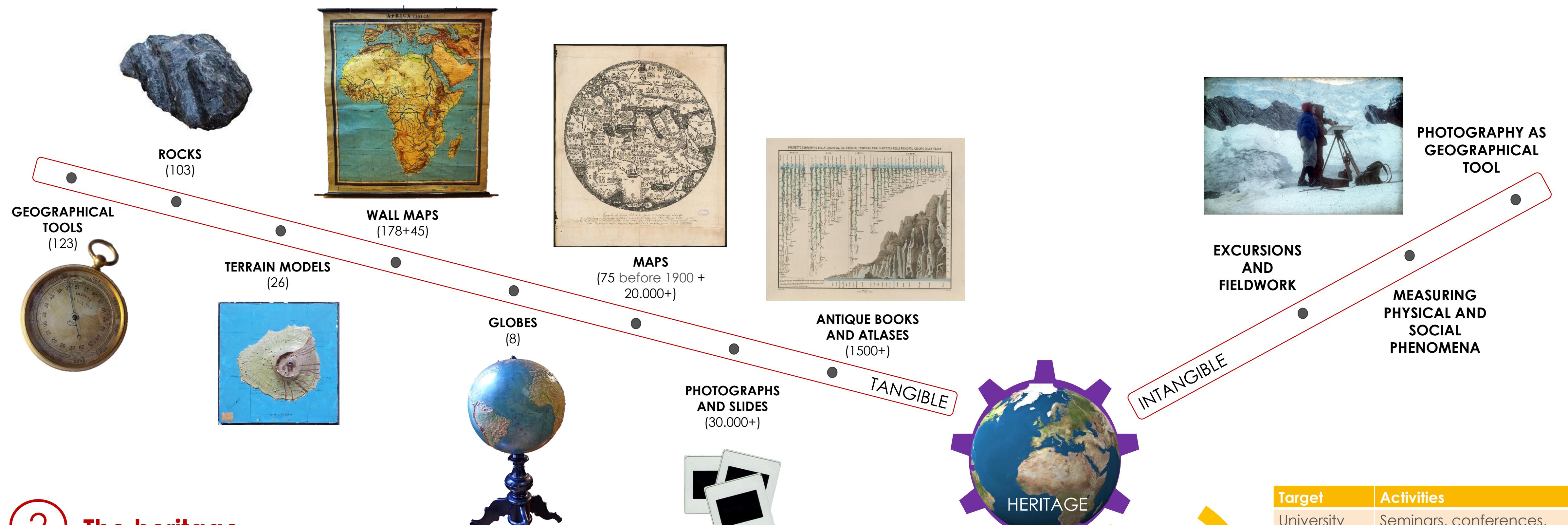
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1 A brief history of geography at the University of Padova

The Cabinet of Geography at the University of Padova, at the time of its establishment in 1873, represented the doorway to modern geography in Italy. In the XVIII century geography made its appearance at the University of Padova as a minor part of the course in Astronomy and Meteorology. Between 1746 and 1749 the new Chair of Nautical Science and Geography was assigned to **Gian Rinaldo Carli Rubbi** (Almagià 1912, p.488); then, in 1764, the word "geography" appeared in the title of the course *Ad lecturam Astronomiae, Geographiae et Meteororum* (Lorenzi 1922, p.464). At the beginning of the XIX century, when the discipline was little more than an inventory of names and statistical data, it disappeared from the University of Padova until 1855, when a lectureship in geography was given to Francesco Nardi (Lorenzi 1922, p.465). In 1867, after his studies in Vienna, **Giuseppe Dalla Vedova** started teaching in Padova where he introduced Ritter and Von Humboldt's new approaches to geography, making Padova a leading centre for geography in Italy. Five years later he was given the Chair of Ancient and modern geography within the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy and thanks to him, in 1873 the Cabinet of Geography was established. The same chair, after him, was held by eminent professors such as **G. Marinelli, G. Pennesi, R. Amalgià, A. Lorenzi, G. Morandini**. In 1904, at the Faculty of Science, the Institute of Physical Geography was created under the direction of **Luigi De Marchi**, where **Bruno Castiglioni** and **Francesco Vercelli** also worked until its fusion with the Institute of Geodetics and Geophysics in 1942. In this context, **Giuseppe Morandini**, who from 1946 taught physical geography was also assigned the seat of geography at the Faculty of Letters in 1948, finding himself in an emblematic situation, reflecting what became his life's work: the uniting of all geographical institutions into one single department. This came about in 1984, at Palazzo Wollemborg where courses in both geography and physical geography were held from 1972 (Bondesan 1922, p.6). The Department of Geography was the first and only one of its kind in Italy until 2012. Here, didactic and scientific integration has always operated among the geographical sectors of the humanistic faculties and the Faculty of Science, gaining wide acknowledgement on national and international levels.



2 The heritage

Over the years in Padova, geographical research and teaching has built up a unique set of material objects, including books, atlases, maps, wall maps, terrain models, globes, instruments and photographs, as well as intangible contributions consisting of research practices which have become a characteristic of the school having been constantly applied over the years and of the related anecdotal evidence. An intense reconnaissance activity carried out during the three-year period 2013-2015 has made it possible to put into practice the quantification and cataloguing (via ArtinXML) of the material patrimony which already in 1996 had been acknowledged as a "collection" by the University Museum Centre.

3 Mission, aims, target and activities

The idea of a Museum of Geography in Padova came from Lorena Rocca in 2011 with the double purpose of preserving and promoting the heritage accumulated in 140 years of research and teaching and of creating new perspectives for the education and dissemination activities currently in practice, involving every year around 2000 university students and 700 pupils of the pre-schools, primary and secondary schools.

The Museum of Geography is an absolute novelty on a national level. The project, approved by the Department of Historical and Geographic Sciences and the Ancient World on 7th March 2015, intends to **revitalize the relationship between Universities and civil society** by combining enhancing procedures with the promotion of those aspects of geography made up of engaging practices and pressing topical themes. The project proposes to extend the involvement of visitors beyond the museum tour, by providing preparatory steps (via a web portal, social network, on-line catalogues) and follow-up initiatives (engagement and visitor retention projects, packets or proposals for further in-depth study).

The objective is for the Museum to act as an "incubator" of the **Third Mission of the University**, an innovative hub capable of creating communication and aiding reciprocal legitimization of the three university functions: scientific research, education and social responsibility (E3M, 2012; ANVUR, 2015).

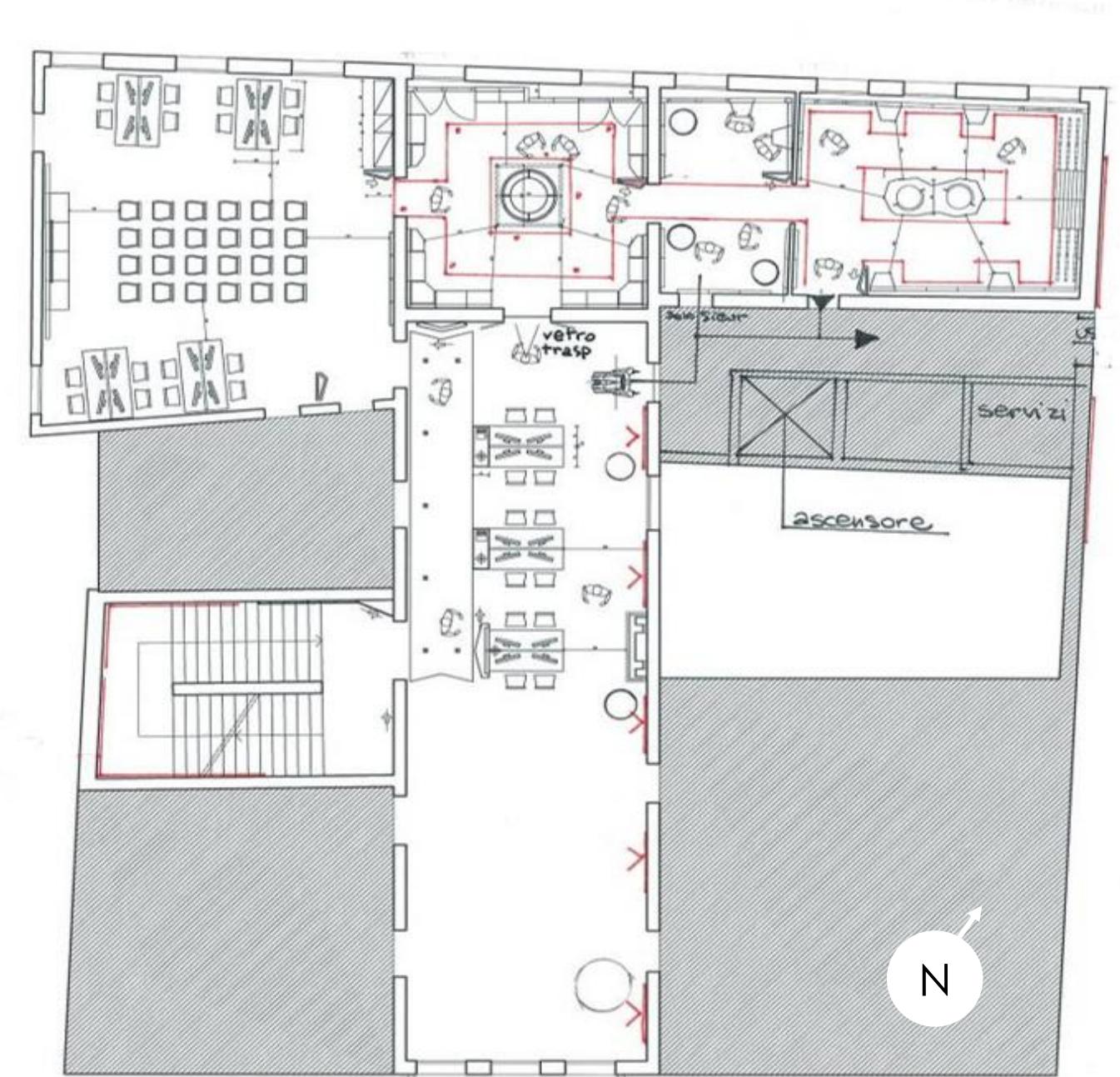
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4 Museum's spaces

The Museum will be housed in **Wollemborg Palace**, in Via del Santo, 26 in Padova, within the area (four rooms, amounting to 160 m²) which have been reserved for it by the Section of Geography of the DiSSGeA. It will be closely related to the areas and activities of the Section itself as well as of the Geography Library and the Periodical Section linked to the Social Science Pole of the University Library Centre (CAB). According to the museographical issues and the logistic situation, an initial setup project has been sketched: the intention is for it to be simple but dynamic, able to adapt to exhibit variations.



Plan of the first floor of Wollemborg Palace, where the Museum of Geography will be housed.