

Medicina Antiqua

1. The Construction of a Collection



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Cover illustration

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *graecus* 2179, f. 4 verso
9th century [?], Syria [?]

Medicina Antiqua is a collection focused on the texts that report the knowledge and practice of medicine around the Mediterranean from the remotest antiquity to the dawn of modern medicine, with a particular interest in Greek medicine. It comprises a library, archives, images, digital files, and research programmes developed for a relevant understanding of these texts and structured in a meaningful and integrated way across the disciplines. It owes its originality and uniqueness to its trans-disciplinarity and the possibility it offers to have at hand, in the same environment, a broad range of material usually found in different units across institutions, when it is not in different institutions across town.

At the core of the *Medicina Antiqua* collection is the medical literature of the ancient Mediterranean world, with a particular focus on Greek and the standard and earlier critical editions of a great many texts. However complete this library of texts might be, it represents only a fraction of the ancient legacy. Numerous texts attested in manuscripts preserved in libraries across the world have been overlooked in the historiography of ancient medicine, and many more are still unknown. The *Medicina Antiqua* collection compensates for this shortcoming thanks to its programme on Greek medical manuscripts aimed to trace, collect, and adequately study all the written witnesses of ancient medicine.

In this view, catalogues of manuscripts provide its foundations to the *Medicina Antiqua* programme. The library contains a substantial collection from major works of classical scholarship as the catalogues of the Vatican library to items from small libraries difficult to access that can be acquired only during on-site visits, to PDF copies of old catalogues no longer available on the market or present only on the antiquarian market at high prices, and early or recent catalogues in articles of erudition to be found in highly specialized scientific journals. The systematic collecting and screening of these catalogues complemented by *in-situ* visits in libraries all over the world has allowed to identify hundreds of relevant manuscripts with medical contents that had escaped notice until recently. In 2016 Alain Touwaide has published a census of these manuscripts which, according to the *Foreword* by the specialist of Greek manuscripts Mgr Paul Canart (1927-2017), increased the number of known items by over 75%.

An archive of the collection is devoted to all these manuscripts. A folder is devoted to each manuscript, with information collected from previous literature and autoptic analysis by Alain Touwaide. This material provides the basis for the compilation of a full catalogue of Greek medical manuscripts aimed to bring to light and sum up all the extant Greek medical literature. This documentary and analytical archive is complemented by a collection of images that allow to read the text of the manuscripts. Facsimiles of some rare manuscripts, print-out and microfilms acquired in the past, and digital images made *in-loco* or available on the Internet and accessible in open access contribute to a comprehensive collection that forms *a library of libraries*.

The history of these manuscripts and, more generally, the history of the book are a major component of the *Medicina Antiqua* collection. Physical autoptic analysis of the manuscripts (codicology) and of their writing (palaeography) allows for possibly determining the period/year and place of production of manuscripts when these elements are not explicitly stated in the codices. Codicology with all its techniques makes a substantial part of the library with both books and offprints, from the analysis of the medium (parchment and paper, including dictionaries of watermarks for the latter) to binding, marginal annotations, marks of ownership, trade, and collecting. A particular attention has been devoted to albums of palaeography with reproductions of the writing of known copyists, dated manuscripts, and typical writing styles chronologically and geographically circumscribed.

Since many of these manuscripts contain colour representations of the plants used as medicines, book illustration has been the object of much research and collection, with not only bibliophilic and scholarly replica facsimile reproductions of entire manuscripts and images of both manuscripts and printed books on different media, but also analytical studies of iconographic genres and themes with their tradition from antiquity to the Renaissance. The transformation of image-making in the Renaissance through printing was of paramount importance. It justifies the presence of scholarly replica facsimiles of printed herbals in the library, and also inventories of Renaissance illustrated books, in addition to studies of the technique of printing illustrations, its impact on plant representation, and the epistemological transformation it generated in the way of observing the natural world.

The history of Byzantine, medieval and Renaissance collections and libraries allows to closely reconstruct the ancient and recent itineraries of the manuscripts under study once they entered a known collection. History of collections now dispersed and of libraries with their catalogues make a substantial portion of the history of the book sections of the *Medicina Antiqua* collections, often with large-size and lavishly illustrated volumes, and also with specialized studies that reconstruct the holdings of dismembered collections, the items of which are now scattered in libraries all over the world.

In recent times some such items appeared on the antiquarian market. This has been particularly the case until a very recently of the celebrated Phillipps collection once preserved at Cheltenham. Such items can be traced through the catalogues of antiquarians and auction houses, many of which are present in the book collection, particularly the catalogues of Christie's and Sotheby's. Some antiquarians raised to fame on the international manuscript and early-printed book market, as Hand Peter Kraus (1907-1988) in New York, for example. Such dealers became the object of historiographical studies, and their collections were offered on sale with catalogues that are now bibliographical rarities, in addition to being reference works. All such publications can be found in the *Medicina Antiqua* library, along with many auction and sales catalogues.

The tradition and history of the texts contained in the manuscripts is of equal importance in the library, particularly (but far from only) botanico-medical treatises in Greek, Latin, and Arabic. This section of the library opens with the 19th-an 20th-century methodological reflection on the methods to be developed to reconstruct textual histories. The result of such research is often expressed in the form of a *stemma codicum* that indicates the manuscript(s) considered to be the best witnesses of the original form of the texts under study, the source of all the subsequent tradition, and also the basis for a critical edition. Although the tradition of medical texts makes the most of this part of the library, it is by no means the only one as the collection also contains erudite studies on the transmission of major textual *corpora*, from Aristotle's opera to the Greek playwrights, to the Bible, to Michael Psellos, for possible comparative study across genres.

The study of transmission of ancient texts requires specialized inventories of manuscripts and printed editions, particularly medical here, but also, and for instance, astrological and astronomical since codices often contained texts different in nature. All such catalogues are present, together with those of manuscripts by libraries. With regard to inventories, earlier scholarly literature is of paramount importance, to know the questions raised by the texts, the solution that were proposed, and the problems remained unsolved. Bibliography from the early 19th century to current production makes a small, though important section of the library that is constantly updated through the lists of current production and reviews in relevant journals, be they *Scriptorium*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, or the *Journal of the History of Medicine*. Similarly, the history of the classical scholarship from the Renaissance to present day is required for a right understanding of available literature, as is also the bio-bibliographical analysis of the production of scholars in the field, not only 19th-century but also Renaissance ones. Whereas 19th-century scholars had a profound impact onto current knowledge, their Renaissance predecessors were no less important, particularly because their editions have been often credited with the same value as manuscripts. All this production has been collected and constitutes a sort of introduction to the many critical editions in the library.

A special field in the history of textual scholarship and textual tradition is that of Renaissance printers. A section of the library is devoted to the inventory and description of their production, and, for the botanico-medical texts, the identification of their manuscript sources, in addition to the biography and reconstruction of the activity of the printers themselves. A sub-field of this section is about the incunabula, with their specific bibliographic catalogues.

The analysis of books (as physical objects) and texts (as vehicles of information) converge in critical editions. The library contains most of the modern printed critical editions of medical texts, ancient Greek and Latin, Byzantine, early- and late-medieval, with also a certain amount of Arabic texts. These are not only the standard editions currently in use (often with facing translation in English and French according to the series), but also previous editions, mostly dating back to the 19th century, the latter of which have often been the basis of 20th century analytical and interpretative studies. These critical editions are grouped by ancient authors and, for each of them, by treatises. This whole series of editions is organized according to the chronological sequence of the ancient authors, from Mesopotamian/Babylonian medicine and the papyrus Ebers (ca 1550 BC) to Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564), and later with the Greek medical notebooks of the Ottoman period and later, the so-called *iatrosophia*.

For each author, the library has a specific section, further divided in sub-sections as appropriate: bibliography, biography, editions (in chronological order), lexica, modern translations (mostly English, French, Italian and Spanish, also Russian, for example, in some cases), and analytical studies by works and/or topics (for example, for Galen, from “Anatomy” to “Young patients”). Both the sections devoted to each of the authors for whom texts and fragments have been preserved and their possible sub-sections are clearly marked by an intercalary identifier allowing for immediate location of any topic of interest. All such sections contain books and offprints, in addition to original unpublished material compiled by Alain Touwaide.

The systematic presence of word lexica is a strong point of the collection. All such available works have been purchased, whatever their lexicological form, concordance or word index, lemmatized or not for the latter. All the relevant volumes of the series *Alpha-Omega* published by Olms Verlag have been purchased (e.g. the 6-volume concordance of the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, the 7-volumes equivalent of Pliny’s *Naturalis Historia*, the 2-volumes inventory of plants in the Pre-Salernitan medical literature, and the late-antique medico-botanical texts), together with other similar volumes sometimes produced by less known publishers.

The collection of editions is complemented by multiple Byzantine botanico-medical texts transcribed from manuscripts by Alain Touwaide, including multilingual lexica of plant names. These texts were not previously available in any other form than manuscript. Their transcription is a first-aid to be possibly transformed in an *editio minor* for circulation among the scholarly community. In the meantime, they have been printed and shelved where appropriate so as to be consulted by the users of the collection. Some extracts have been published on the Website of the *Institute for the Preservation of Medical Traditions* and in three other dedicated Websites of the *Institute: GreekMed*, covering the whole Greek medicine, *DigitalHippocrates*, specifically devoted to the *Father of Medicine*, and *ByzantineMedicine* for the later Greek period.

The plants mentioned in the texts under study and the medical conditions for the treatment of which they were prescribed make the second most important focus of the collections. An abundant body of material has been collected in three major directions: inventory, identification, and interpretation.

The botanical species mentioned in the major ancient Greek and Latin botanico-medical texts (Dioscorides and Pliny, respectively) have been inventoried as early as the Renaissance, in editions of these texts many of which also comprise commentaries on the text and a translation (mostly in Latin, but sometimes also in the vernacular). The collection *Medicina Antiqua* contains many such Renaissance works in different forms: scholarly replica facsimiles, microfilms, and digital images. The full text of the most significant of such works has been fully digitized: the commentaries on Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, in Italian by Pietro Andrea Mattioli and in Spanish by Andres Laguna, and Giorgio Valla's Latin translation of Galen, *On Simple Medicines*. Their indices of plants have been databased.

Regarding the identification of the plants, all the Post-Linnean literature on the topic has been collected, from the pioneering work by the Oxford professor of Botany John Sibthorp (1858-1796) published in the 19th century to contemporary literature. Research of this type peaked in the first decades of the 20th century, with several articles published in specialized periodicals of classical erudition and German scientific journals of pharmaco-chemistry, and also the edition of John Goodyer's English translation of Dioscorides (1655) published in 1930 by the English historian of science Robert Gunther (1869-1940), which remained a classic until not so long ago. More recently, there have been a great many new attempts, particularly by the members of the so-called *American School of the History of Pharmacy*, John Scarborough and John Riddle, and the author of the recent French edition of Theophrastus, Suzanne Amigues. The data of all such publications have been compiled by Alain Touwaide in a unique database which comprises all plant identifications according to modern taxonomy and the botanical family of the taxa.

To assess these identifications relevant scientific literature has been collected, particularly the flora of the countries around the Mediterranean, from Spain to Turkey, to Egypt, and to Morocco, according to a clockwise tour of the Mediterranean. The floras of the regions behind the Circum-Mediterranean world are also present in the *Medicina Antiqua* library, central Europe, the Black Sea, Georgia, Armenia, and Iran, in addition to some of the far-east countries from which plants and plant products were introduced and traded to the ancient Mediterranean World. All these floras are not limited to the most recent ones, but include earlier works by such botanists and plant collectors as the Swiss Pierre-Edmond Boissier (1810-1885), author of a monumental flora of what was called the *oriental world* in the 19th century. Floras are complemented by studies on the native distribution of plants from the classical systems of the Russian botanists Nikolai Vavilov (1887-1943) and Armen Takhtajan (1910-2009) to the most advanced plant phylogenetics, and, more than anything, by archaeobotanical data which attest to the actual presence of the species mentioned in the texts.

Together with botanical illustrations in manuscripts and early printed herbals, as well as artistic representations of plants in mosaics and frescos, all this material allows for a correct identification of the plants. The book collection holds reproductions of manuscripts in different forms, and abundant publications of archaeological remains, particularly with plant motifs, with photos of works of art in several forms and on different media. A special part of this section is devoted to Pompeii and all the works of the founder of Pompeiian archaeobotany, Wilhelmina Jashemski (1910-2007), from her first large volume, which is now a bibliophilic rarity, to her most recent synthesis on all the macroscopic material retrieved from Pompeii up to the end of the 20th century.

The part of the library on plants is completed with agriculture, including the display in gardens. Editions of texts (with translation, word index, and analysis) in the collection of critical editions, are mainly in Latin since most of the Greek production is lost with the exception of the later *Geoponika*. They are accompanied by studies on the agricultural history of the ancient and medieval Mediterranean (including the techniques and instruments), horticulture, the landscaping and the transformation(s) of environment (with such topic as deforestation, for example), the art of gardens and garden architecture, with a particular emphasis on Rome and the Arabic World, and the plants and flowers of the Western Middle Ages. All data extracted on plant species in this material are collected by taxon in the many folders of the plant archive, which allows for monographic studies of any botanical species attested in the Mediterranean world, and provides the substance of the *Flora of Classical Antiquity* in preparation.

The study of the data on plants mostly focuses on the uses of plants through history with two different, yet complementary lines of investigation: medico-pharmaceutical, and ethnobotanical and ethnopharmacological analysis.

The medico-pharmaceutical literature makes up a large segment of the library collection. It can be divided into two major parts, with the medico-therapeutic analysis *stricto sensu*, and the history of medicine and pharmacy. On the former, the library includes numerous modern treatises of pharmacognosy until the last synthesis on the topic, the epoch-making manual *Pharmacographia* by Friedrich A. Flückiger (1828-1894) and Daniel Hanbury (1825-1875), first published in 1874 in an edition now become a bibliophilic rarity that is present in the library. In the late 19th century, this body of literature rooted in the past was shortly made obsolete by the nascent pharmacology with the birth of modern pharmacology, of which the library owns several treatises, manuals, and handbooks as the now classic *Goodman and Gilman*, present in the collection with several editions from the first (1941) to the ninth (1996). These works can be found side by side with the pharmacopoeias of several countries in the form of both original copies and scholarly facsimile editions, and treatises of phytotherapy from the pioneering 20th-century articles and manuals of the French physician Henri Leclerc (1870-1955) to the most recent contributions and general compilations by such authorities as James Duke (1929-2017), John Crellin and Jane Philpott, and the Lewis (Memory and Walter), for example. In addition to these comprehensive publications, the collection holds monographs devoted to classes of agents such as the psycho-tropics, and plant remedies by medical conditions (on the latter, mostly articles in contemporary scientific periodicals).

As a complement, a section is devoted to homeopathy, bodily hygiene (including perfumes), natural medicine of all types, thermalism and spas, what is now defined as *alternative medicines*, crystallo- and mineralo-therapy, and other forms of treatment based on the use of natural substances (especially plants), in addition to acupuncture.

The other major part of the collection devoted to the interpretation of medical literature is made of analytical studies of the history of medicine from the remotest times to present day. After a methodological and epistemological section, general syntheses of the history of medicine through the centuries, the history of medicine by countries, biographies, and the history of medicine of specific periods and areas (Antiquity, Greece and Rome, Byzantium, and the Arabic World, for instance), this section is organized by topics. Items on any topic are grouped with both books and offprints together, and all topics are organized in sub-sections ordered by the alphabetical order of the topic names from *Abortion* to *Zootherapy*.

The history of pharmacy completes the section of the library devoted to the analysis of ancient texts. This part deals with the art of transforming natural substances into remedies, with pharmaceutical forms, instruments, the legal framework of the profession, images of pharmacists in the exercise of their activity, and also the archaeology of pharmaceutical instruments, which are mostly about balsamaria, Arabic and Renaissance drug containers (albarelli), and mortars of a later age. In the last decades of the 20th century antiquarianism of this kind was particularly active. Multiple art books lavishly illustrated can be found in the collection, with catalogues of antiquarians and auction houses, principally Christie's and Sotheby's. This section also includes general histories of pharmacy, as well as the history of pharmacy by countries, and monographs on other relevant topics.

Besides these resources for the medico-pharmaceutical analysis of ancient texts, the collection is rich in compilations and focused analyses on the traditional uses of plants among the Mediterranean populations. Just like the floras, these volumes are shelved clockwise from Spain to Turkey, to Egypt, and to Morocco. We find here many such syntheses compiled from the last decades of the 20th century on the basis of expeditions in the field, together with such a classical and now rare work dating to the 1950s as the so-called *Kavvadas* about Greek botanico-medical traditions (in 9 volumes). For comparative purposes this section is complemented with recent ethnobotanical and ethnopharmacological monographic studies, compendia and articles devoted to the practices and uses of other populations. The library has many publications on the newly emerged fields of *ethnomedicine*, *ethnobotany* and *ethnopharmacology*. The populations under consideration are as diverse as the Canadian First Nations, the Native Americans, the Central and Southern American populations, and any local population whose traditions have preserved by an oral tradition collected through field work. Items on this topics are both general compilations devoted to an entire population or an area (mainly in the form of major books), and monographic studies (in most cases in the form of articles in specialized periodicals). Most articles are about the uses of a specific plant by a population, the plant remedies prescribed for the treatment of a specific medical condition in a determined area, the persistence of a historically attested method of treatment in present-day practice, or any other specific aspect of contemporary medico-therapeutic tradition characterized by the use of natural substances.

A special case in this field is the traditional medicine of Aboriginal populations in Australia. This topic is particularly investigated by Emanuela Appetiti. The library contains a focused collection on Australian Aboriginal medicine, with books on both general and specific topics. General topics deal with the physical geography of Australia and its recent history, from the British expeditions to the reclaiming of their territory by Aboriginal populations. They are also about a great many topics from contemporary medical questions as the state of health and the typical epidemiology of Aboriginal populations, and the more recent recognition of their practice by the main-stream, Western medicine, to the botany of Aboriginal populations, the management of natural resources by Aborigines (including fire management), Bush food, and the preservation of medical traditions. Typically enough, many such works have been compiled by ethnobotanists in collaboration with Aboriginal healers, many of which have been acquired *in-loco* as they are published with a limited circulation. A section of this library is devoted to Aboriginal art books lavishly illustrated with colour representations of paintings that translate millennia-old oral traditions into visual terms.

Besides the therapeutic uses, the alimentary uses of plants provide the substance of a significant part of the library. Many relevant texts are present among the critical editions, from the famous late-antique Apicius to late-Byzantine monastic dietary rules and recipe books, most of which with translation and commentary, and possibly also a word index. Shelved

closely to the section on the pharmaceutical uses of natural substances, this collection contains historical investigations on food habits and culinary traditions by periods and areas (from Mesopotamia to the Renaissance), as well as analytical studies of classes of foodstuffs (dairy products, meat, for example), scientific articles on the dietary properties and health benefits of specific plant species, modern cookbooks of the Mediterranean countries, and anthropological studies on food consumption, in addition to analyses of anorexia and fasting, the latter among other in monastic communities.

On both therapeutic and nutritional uses of plants, the collection has recently expanded toward other traditions, chiefly China, Tibet, India (Ayurveda), the Mayan World, and Africa. This new section contains inventories of primary sources, editions of foundational texts with translation into English or only English translations, introductory manuals and, conversely, specific analyses, studies of the tradition of the ancient knowledge and practice and its present-day persistence, and scientific assessment. Ancient traditional Indian and Chinese medicines, particularly, have been more closely scrutinized as the investigation of Greek texts revealed the presence of Asian plants in the Greek world in a much earlier time than previously thought.

The information of ancient texts cannot be properly understood if it is not interpreted in function of contemporary science. The collections contain a great deal of material for contextualization purposes from the history *stricto sensu* of the areas and periods of the texts under consideration to their epistemological frame and belief systems.

History with all its components makes up a large part of the library, with mostly monographs, but also offprints. After general epistemological and methodological essays and general studies on the physical environment of the ancient Mediterranean World and its climate with its possible changes, items are organized by major periods and regions from the birth of Humankind and nomadism to Mesopotamia and Egypt, to Greece and Rome, to Byzantium and the Middle Ages, to the Arabic World and Andalusia, and to the Ottoman Empire. Geo-political and military history is present together with economic and social history, prosopography, and biographies of major and minor figures, Pericles, Alexander the Great, Caesar, Constantine the Great or Justinian, to mention a few. A special attention in assembling the library collection has been devoted to material and intellectual history. Material history is about the daily life and its objects, pots and dishes for food preservation and preparation, containers and instruments (including of medicine and pharmacy), clothing and bathing, bodily care and hygiene (balsamaria, mirrors, and boxes for cosmetics), houses and their furniture, roads and travels, sport and entertainment, sailing and economics.

A special topic is the exchange of goods, which can be identified as *international trade* and was not limited to goods, but was also about books and their texts through translations, theological polemics, and religious conflicts, and, more globally, the circulation of ideas, theories, and thinking. Whereas such exchanges have usually been approached on the basis of a centrifugal paradigm of transfer characterized by a mono-directional diffusion from a center to a periphery, thanks to the diversity of the material in the collections they are better perceived as multi-directional processes of exchanges possibly best represented by the Silk Road(s) as a channel for the circulation of goods, plants and also illnesses that went both from and to China and the Mediterranean. The same multiplicity is reflected by the abundant studies on translation in the collections: instead of a linear transmission from Byzantium to the Syriacs and to the Arabic World with a similar movement to the West, there was a whole set of exchanges from the Arabic and Persian worlds to Byzantium, from Sicily to Constantinople, from the Crusaders to the Byzantines, and from Latin to Greek.

The physical context of past societies is represented by environment, urbanism, architecture and techniques (among others hydraulics, which was fundamental for agriculture), and the figurative arts (sculptures and major pieces of art for display). In matter of technology, several parts of the collections are devoted to such *minor arts* and techniques as book production, colours (among others with natural dyeing substances, especially plants), and the field traditionally identified as *economic botany*, that is the use of plants for energy (fuel), arts and crafts (use of fiber, for example for basketry), and pre-industrial production.

Catalogues of museums and temporary exhibitions on relevant topics allow for visualization of archaeological material, besides being a source for the identification and location of pieces of interest. Many catalogues are of small, yet significant museums with specialized collections, often in remote areas not easily accessible or frequented, whereas most of the exhibition catalogues are major works lavishly illustrated and finely produced on the occasion of exhibitions on topics rarely treated in historical research that are truly unique events, as for example the scholar in ancient art.

With regard to intellectual history, several sections of the collections are devoted to the history of the science at the time of the texts under consideration, with medicine and all its components from *loci* to instruments, biology, and also botany as a theoretical system, agronomy, land management, and metrology for exact dosage of medicines, for instance. The other natural kingdoms (mineral and animal) are well represented in the library as they, too, provided substances for the preparation of medicines. Animal materia medica goes together with veterinary medicine and the management of cattle and, sometimes also, the transmission of diseases from the animal to the human world. Chemistry is present in the collections from its early alchemical form to Lavoisier and its development into a modern discipline. Comput and calendars are important components of the library, just as astronomy and cosmology, as all of them were believed to impact upon health. Cartography and maps are no less significant, with the discovery of the world and its natural resources.

Focused analyses of ancient science as above may be framed by comprehensive and regionally or geographically circumscribed histories of science from the beginnings to the 21st century, epistemological analysis of scientific systems, philosophy of science and of the history of science, biographies of scientists, and, for the recent period, the history of scientific institutions and scientific publications.

The section on the world of beliefs of the ancient and medieval Mediterranean is comprehensive, from Greek religion and the gods of the Homeric time to astrology and magics as an operative system, with a significant collection on Christianity, its texts, and the history of its development in the East and the West, including monasticism, and acts of foundations of Byzantine monasteries. Other religions and worlds are present, Islam, the Jewish World, Hinduism, and Buddhism, all with their texts and their history.

The library is particularly rich in critical editions of literary texts, Greek and Latin, Byzantine, medieval, and of Renaissance period, traditional and less known, published, among others, in the Loeb collection, Oxford Classical Texts, and the Collection des universités de France. Similarly, it has many classical studies on the history of Greek philosophy, literary culture and genres, scholars and scholarship, including the two volumes *Black Athena* (1987 and 1991) by Martin Bernal (1937-2013), with the polemic they have been the object of, Bernal's reply (2001), and more recent assessments of Bernal's work. This part is complemented by studies on literacy, encyclopedism, translation, exchanges of knowledge,

intellectual tradition, schooling, history of universities and medical schools, book collectors, collections and libraries, and history of libraries.

Intellectual traditions bring the *Medicina Antiqua* back to its starting point, with its major focus on manuscripts and the texts they have transmitted through the centuries. It adequately closes the presentation of fifty years of search for books and offprints all over the world in a unique story which might be best reconstructed through the collection of catalogues of large and small museums in the library, and the cards of the many research centers and libraries where both Alain Touwaide and Emanuela Appetiti have been doing research, trying to capture the knowledge and experience of the ancient medicine in a life-time odyssey of knowledge.

Medicina Antiqua comprises four collections defined by their medium and object, alone or in combination: the library, with books and offprints; archives; images on several media; and digital files. The core of *Medicina Antiqua* is the library, which is integrated by the other three collections. The library is organized according to a conceptual architecture that reflects the intellectual itinerary presented here. At its center are the primary sources, which are framed by manuscript studies on the one hand and interpretative material on the other. These three major parts are divided in scholarly and scientific disciplines, and those disciplines are further divided in sections defined according to the discipline. Within each such division, books and offprints are shelved together so as to constitute comprehensive units on each topic, and each unit is clearly identified by specific labels, allowing for immediate location.

