

Chapter 6

The Ansaldo Foundation: Archives, Training and Culture

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Claudia Orlando was born in Genoa on 15th November 1982 and graduated in July 2005 from the University of Genoa with a degree in Foreign Languages and a specialization in English and French. In March 2008 she completed her Master's Degree in Foreign Languages and Cultures for International Communication. Since 2004, she has been teaching English and French extramural courses at Genoa University and for several private schools. She is a free-lance translator and has been working for the Ansaldo Foundation since 2006, where she is the web-editor, liaison for relations with the ICA/SBL and part of the editorial staff of the online magazine *Cultura e Impresa*.

Ansaldo Foundation (Italy)

The Ansaldo Foundation is one of Europe's most creative and dynamic institutions dedicated to business culture. It was set up in 2000 by Finmeccanica S.p.A., the Genoa City Council, the Province of Genoa and the Liguria Region after the transformation of the Ansaldo Historical Archives. The Foundation is a nonprofit incorporated institution that promotes scientific research; technical and professional training; cultural events; and the valorization of its historical and archival patrimony, formed by large collections of records, films, pictures and artifacts coming from many different Genoese and Ligurian private companies and other economic players. In fact, at its headquarters, the Foundation provides access to over 15 kilometers of corporate records dating back to the middle of the 19th century including accounting, administrative and technical documents. The large patrimony of the Foundation, constantly updated through new acquisitions and donations, was declared of high historical interest by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Assets.

The Foundation is also a certified operation center for professional training activities.



Image 1 – Exterior of the Ansaldo Foundation

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Introduction

The Ansaldo Company, an Italian engineering company founded in 1853 and engaged in railway component construction and repair, shipbuilding, and aircraft design and manufacturing, celebrated its 125th anniversary in 1978. To celebrate the anniversary, the director of public relations decided to organize a historical exhibition and collected 50 thousand records and 2 thousand photographs to that end. These records became the core of the Ansaldo Historical Archives, the first regional archives in Italy. It is important to point out that, at the time in Italy, archives were not considered a cultural asset and therefore companies were not obliged by law to preserve records or entrust them to dedicated institutions. On the contrary, records were considered a burden and their preservation an additional cost to be avoided. This is why the Ansaldo Historical Archives had such remarkable success when they asked companies directly for records. The number of records grew after the opening of the Archives to the public and again after extensive research conducted by the Archives of the company and its personnel. They continued to grow as business enterprises, even those with no link to Ansaldo, and private citizens started donating records to protect them from the risk of dispersion and destruction.

In 2000 the Ansaldo Historical Archives were turned into the Ansaldo Foundation through the cooperation of Finmeccanica with three levels of government: the Genoa City Council, the Province of Genoa and the Liguria Region. The Finmeccanica Group is an extremely important business group in Italy and abroad with a focus on aerospace, defense, and security. Their involvement in the newly created Ansaldo Foundation ensures the involvement of the many companies of its Group, but other private companies in the Liguria Region, as well as important organizations such as the Italian Ministry of Cultural Assets, the University of Genoa, the Genoa Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Genoa section of the General Association of Italian Industry also provide institutional and financial contributions.

In general, the Foundation is dedicated to issues of economic, business, and labor culture. In particular, it promotes research, events, and professional training, and is involved in the preservation and utilization of the archival heritage generated by private companies as well as other economic players.

1) Villa Cattaneo dell'Olmo

The Foundation has its headquarters in the seventeenth-century Villa Cattaneo dell'Olmo, a successful example of the reutilization and reclamation of a historic suburban Genoese house. The land was originally owned by one of the most important Genoese noble families, the Grimaldis, who obtained the land in the second half of the 15th century and built a villa there a century later. In the 17th century, after the property had changed hands several times, another important noble family, the Cattaneos, rebuilt it, creating the house as we know it today. In 1978, the villa was purchased and completely restored by Ansaldo. It currently belongs to Finmeccanica S.p.A.

The layout of the interior of the villa shows the separation between the first floor, with the private chapel and other communal spaces, and the second floor, with private spaces such as private rooms and the banquet hall. The interior of the villa is painted with frescoes dating back to the 18th century, in particular to the neoclassical period. Restoration of the internal and external spaces was carried out using techniques that preserved the original structure and frescoes and made it possible to use this extraordinary building for the headquarters of the Foundation.

Image 2 – Entrance Hall of the Ansaldo Foundation



The building now contains offices, laboratories, repositories, IT rooms, large halls, auditoriums and study rooms. It is equipped with state-of-the-art technology including: ISDN and ADSL videoconferencing systems, digital systems for linear and nonlinear audio-video elaboration, touch screen interactive blackboards, and 16 and 35 mm film editing machines.

2) Archival Heritage, Cultural Activities and Research

The Ansaldo Foundation provides access to over 15 kilometers of corporate, accounting, administrative and technical records dating back to the middle of the 19th century.

The Photographic Archives preserve around four hundred thousand original images from the late 19th century onwards that document technological transformations, industrial landscapes and the connections between business culture and social communication. The Film Archives preserve about five thousand original films showing many important Italian industries and various aspects of the economic, social and cultural life of Genoa and Liguria from the 1920s to the present day. In particular, the collection includes institutional documentaries, educational films, newsreels and promotional and fictional films. In February 2011, the Foundation gave life to the project “Cinema and Industry,” an initiative to safeguard and valorize industrial film records, restoring and digitalizing more than one thousand films preserved in its film archives.

Image 3 – Film Archives, Ansaldo Foundation



In addition to these collections, the Foundation has a considerable collection of vintage artifacts, memorabilia, scale models and other objects from industrial society. Moreover, we preserve a large collection of oral histories, technical drawings, periodicals, stock certificates and naval registers.

The preservation and provision of access to archival materials carried out by the Foundation is currently done so in cooperation with the General Direction for Archives of the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities, which declared the archives to be of high historical importance. In addition, we are part of many other archival institutions such as the Italian Association for Industrial Archaeological Heritage, the Italian Archival Association, the European Conference on Archives, and the International Council on Archives, and cooperate with a number of labor and business museums.

Image 4 – Ansaldo Foundation Study Room



Our archives is open to the public every day. Use of materials in our collections, however, requires an appointment and submission of prospective research intent as there is only one archivist responsible for the Records and Photographic Archives and another archivist for the Film Archives.

In particular, our institution is interested in researching business history and culture as well as the features and evolution of policies in industrial systems and markets. To help us

achieve our research goals, a Scientific Commission was established in 2008 and three main research projects were started, all with the support of Finmeccanica and various Italian universities. The projects focus on economic changes in Italy, the role of the state in large companies and the technological evolution of Italian companies.

In addition to these activities, the Foundation also supports the research of others, welcoming numerous scholars and students every year to conduct research in our archival collections for academic theses, scientific research and to gather images and videos for the production of documentaries and films. An outstanding example of the results of this research is the film “La Bocca Del Lupo” which was created using numerous clips taken from the Film Archives of the Ansaldo Foundation and which won, among other prizes, the Turin Film Festival in 2009, the Teddy Award at the Berlin Film Festival and the 2010 David di Donatello for best documentary film.

Our archival collections, therefore, support researchers but are also used in the organization of cultural programs such as publications and exhibitions. Among the Foundation’s most important programs, an outstanding example demonstrating the use of our collections to support Finmeccanica S.p.A., is the photographic exhibition “A Legacy to the Future” held in 2008 to celebrate Finmeccanica’s 60th anniversary. The exhibition comprised 170 photographs from antique pictures of ships and foundries to modern photographs of trains, power plants, airplanes, laboratories, radars, helicopters, control centers and satellites. These images illustrate the stages of development in the process of Italian industrialization and the present role of Finmeccanica in Italy and around the world. The exhibition was accompanied by a bilingual catalogue, edited by Fondazione Ansaldo Editore, and by a video covering the history of Finmeccanica from 1948 to 2008.

We are constantly contacted by the most important companies in Genoa and Liguria to provide materials for exhibitions. Examples include materials provided for the visit of the President of the Italian Republic to the Ansaldo Energia plant and for other smaller, but nevertheless interesting, events that promote business culture. This year, our collections have been used by many institutions, companies, trade unions, schools and universities who organized exhibitions, events and publications to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Italian Republic.

In 2008 the Ansaldo Foundation established its own publishing house and published a biography of one of the most important Genoese managers, Enrico Albareto, and a catalogue of the exhibition “A Legacy to the Future.” Publishing continued in 2009 with inventories of the three main fonds in our collections.

3) Training

The Foundation aims to be a center of excellence for professional, managerial and technological training and its headquarters has been recognized by the Liguria Region as an accredited institution for advanced and permanent professional training. In particular, under the patronage of the Central Human Resources Department of Finmeccanica, the Foundation has acquired all the necessary organizational and methodological tools to operate in this field.

At the Foundation we host courses and master's degrees organized by Finmeccanica and other companies of its Group. One example is the first session of the Master's degree Fhink, organized by Finmeccanica for graduate students from around the world with the objective of preparing them to analyze complex international economic scenarios. In addition, the Foundation supports the organization of training activities by other institutions and companies. We were directly involved in the organization of a Master's degree in "International Business Leadership" together with the University of Genoa and other local companies and organizations. This master's program ended in June 2010 and was completed by 20 middle managers working in high-technology-profile companies who wished to develop their managerial skills so as to better operate in international markets.

Looking to the future, we are currently studying and planning new training initiatives aiming to increase and strengthen the cooperation between companies (such as Finmeccanica) and their main suppliers.

Through all these different but equally important activities, the Foundation creates new resources and makes information available to the scientific community while contributing to the promotion of the image of Italy as a country of solid know-how in the industrial field. Business culture is therefore a way to add value to the entrepreneurial system and the world of labor.