

INTERACTIVE PLATFORM FOR THE FRUITION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COLLECTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE (DARCH-UNIPA)

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INTRODUCTION

The **Scientific Collections of the Department of Architecture (DARCH)** of the University of Palermo preserve, to date, 22 funds, among which are numerous historical-documentary materials related to the design activity of more or less known personalities linked to the School of Architecture of Palermo and whose legacy - in particular the results of the work of architects Gian Battista Filippo Basile and Ernesto Basile - still characterizes the urban and cultural reality of the city. Since, given the particularity and preciousness of these materials, the knowledge and fruition of the collections is limited to detailed requests for consultation, it is appropriate to make them accessible and visible in

the widest way, first and foremost to the city community, as a tool for knowledge and awareness of its own history. For this reason, the activity conducted under the Samothrace project, is aimed at reconfiguring the experience - analog and digital - of the archival heritage, starting with the realization of a **digital archive of the DARCH Collections**, characterized by a **modular information structure** capable of facilitating **access to the preserved heritage** and providing **new research opportunities** through **interactive and personalizable research tools**.

DEVELOPMENT

An **information architecture model** was developed (Fig.1) that can adapt to the needs of **different categories of users**, identified in relation to possible information search strategies. In particular, advanced search functions have been defined for those who already know what to search for within the archive (e.g., experienced researchers, students, professionals) as well as thematic sections that together with

graphical-interactive elements enable a more exploratory search even for the less experienced user (e.g., citizens and/or tourists). Thus, while the targeted search by fund, author or work makes it possible to quickly reach the desired content, the availability of navigational tools such as **timeline, map and thematic insights** offers new possibilities for knowledge and further elaboration of archival content (Fig.2).

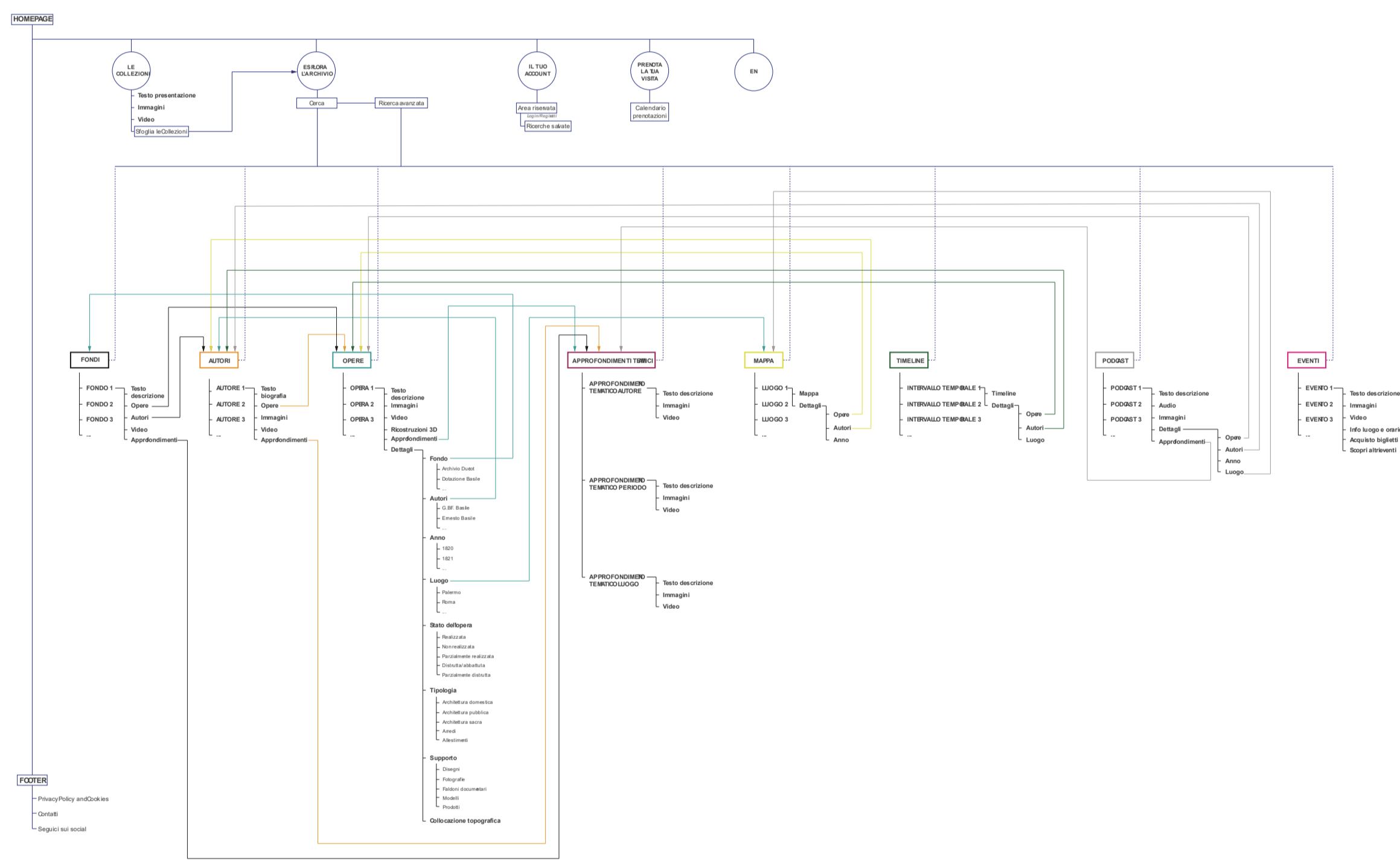


Fig.1 DARCH Scientific Collections - Information architecture model

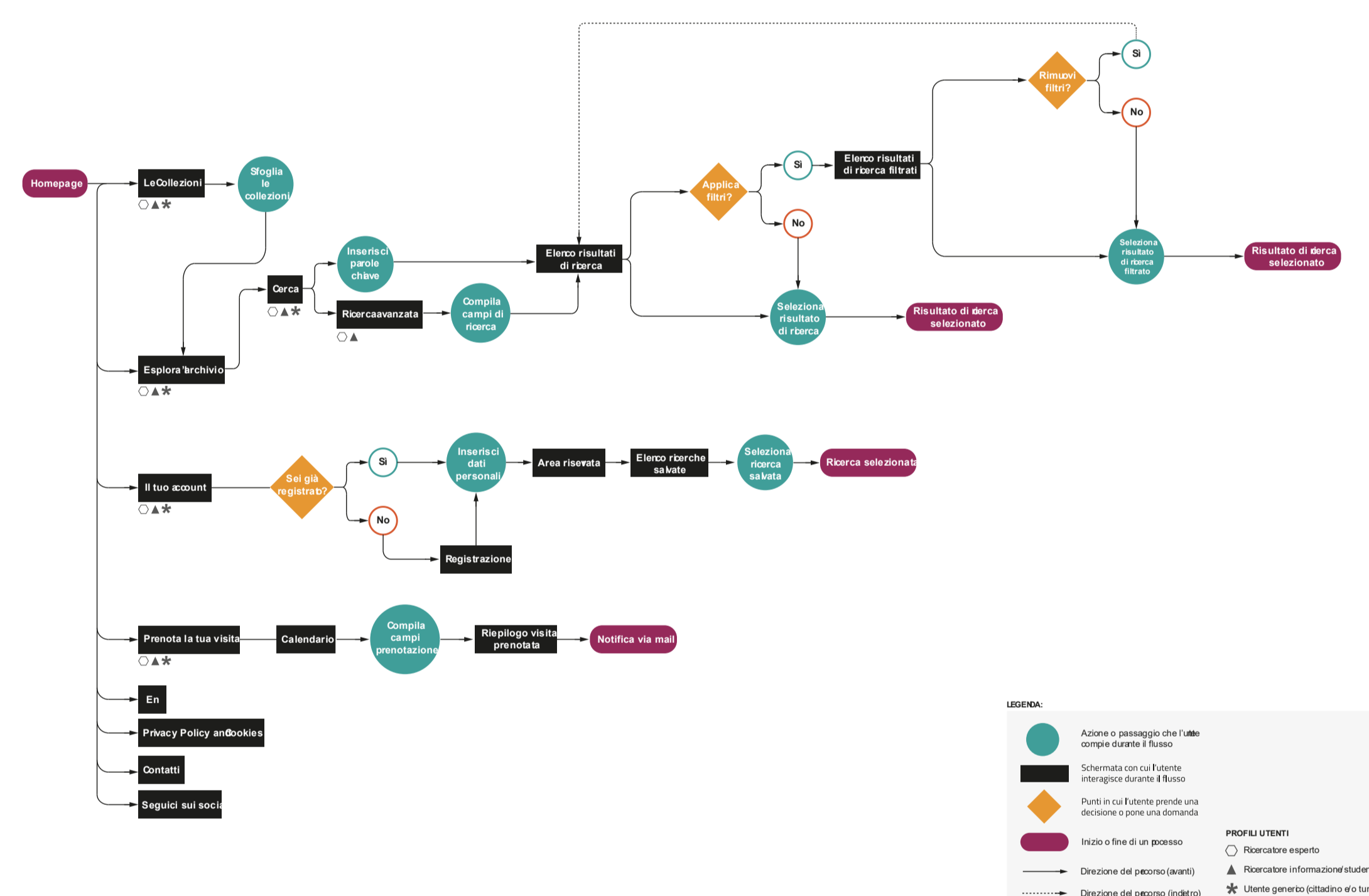


Fig.2 DARCH Scientific Collections - User Flow Chart

In addition, the collaboration initiated with the M2D Technologies team not only enabled the company's development of the back-end model related to the organizational structure of the archival data, but also led to the decision to include among the ways of exploring the digital archive the possibility of **performing AI-supported searches**.

This is for the dual purpose of **simplifying the process of investigating** and delving into the archive materials through the generation of information content that is easily accessible even to a less experienced user, and **discovering intersection points** that have been so far ignored through the interpolation of data from different sources.



Fig. 3 Prototype of the digital archive for DARCH Scientific Collections

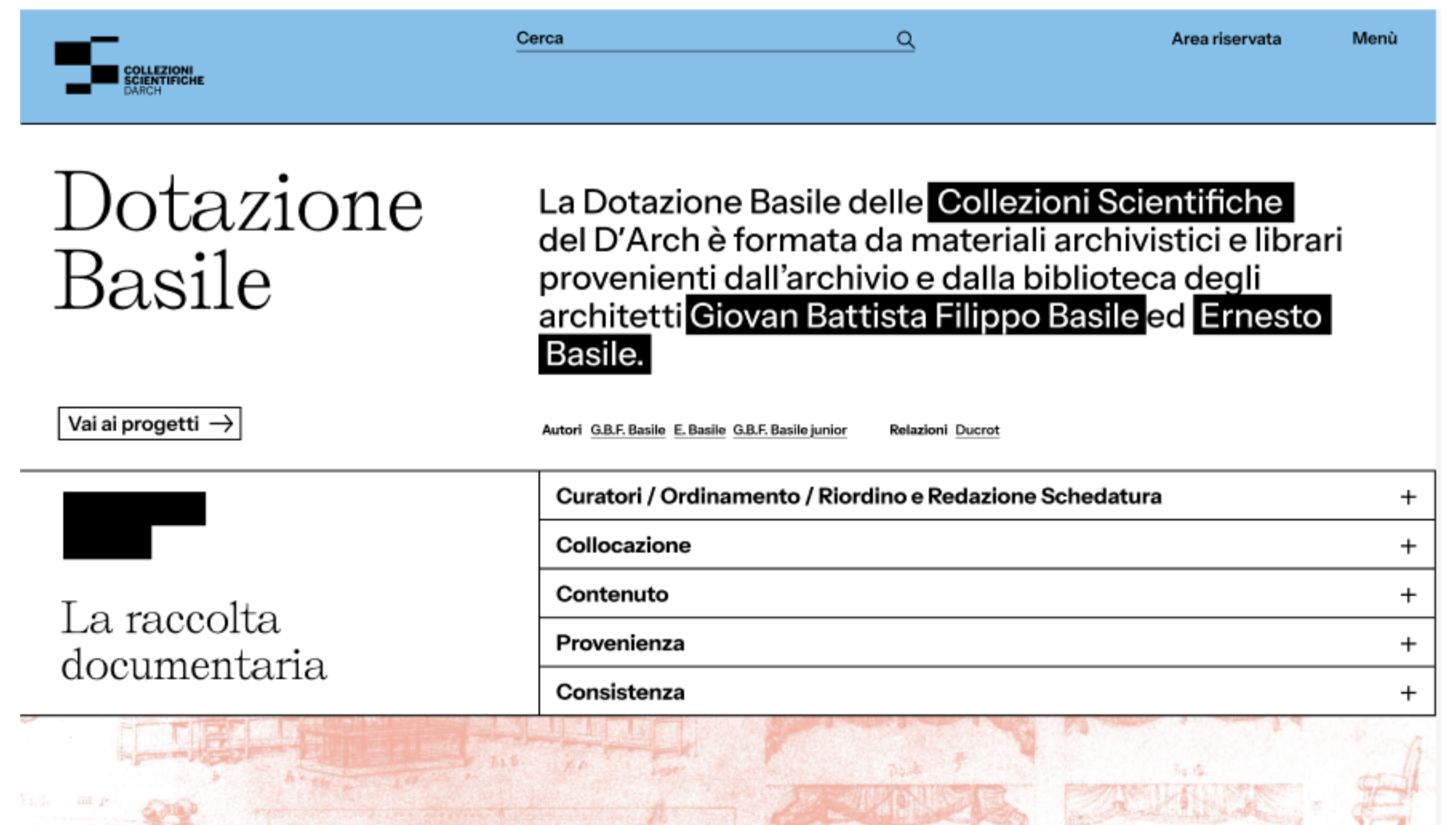


Fig. 4 Prototype of the digital archive for DARCH Scientific Collections

CONCLUSIONS

The results produced as part of the research activity conducted so far are the outcome of an interpretation of **the archive as a source and research tool** for the rediscovery of a **cultural memory** capable of activating **collective identity processes**. In fact, the analytical features conceived for the digital, as well as digitized, archive of DARCH

Scientific Collection are aimed at activating the **opening of still little explored areas of research** and the development of **new processes of cultural production**, enhancing the prefigurative potential hidden among the archived fragments.