

Local history and “sporting library”: how amateur resources collections can reveal local identities.

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Translated by: Paul Sagnimorte, Université Claude Bernard Lyon I, Villeurbanne, France. The text of this document has been translated into english and differences from the original text may occur. This translation is provided for reference purposes only.

Paul Sagnimorte

Université Claude Bernard, Villeurbanne, France.
paulsagnimorte@hotmail.com



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Abstract:

To analyze history of the local communities the researcher can usually resort to traditional documents he consults in professionally institutes managed with substantial resources like public libraries, local archives, etc. Therefore, we can ask why refer to others collections held by “sporting library” (often amateur) can reveal sense of history and local culture?

Indeed, sport associations may be regarded as minor resources. Based on the example of sport associations in Lyon (and more specifically alpine and hiking sections) we will see, unlike common stereotypes, that they offer library resources with easy access (many of which are free and open to the public), beyond the original approach, bring benefits in the study of local communities. The researcher can find diversity of historical material through books, yearbooks, topoguide, maps, manuscripts, pictures, etc. that traditional institutes don't offer.

Beyond traditional data (socio-demographic, etc.), these documents contain much information for the researcher who tackle differently the local history through the leisure culture. The purpose of this approach is not to oppose traditional resources and institutes but to show the originality and especially the complementarity. So this approach make it possible another way to study local history and explain how local identities was builded.

In the first section of this paper we review how sporting libraries are born but also how their resources are build and what it offers. Next, we describe the features of collection and what information you can find. Finally, we describe, through the alpine club in Lyon the case of migrant communities.

Keywords: Lyon, local community, sporting library, french alpine club.

Introduction :

To analyze the local story of a researcher community (genealogist, University, etc.) traditionally appealed to recognized institutions from which it considers to be able to find the information he needs. Thus apply to institutions such as archives, libraries, etc. commonly any classical sum approach which provides maximization is searching for information directly related to the obvious features of these structures. Indeed, archives (whatever their territorial scale¹) retain quantity of documents², rich in information regarding for example data from the registry, cadastral maps, voter surveys, etc. May be thus acts of birth, marriage and death concerning a locality that will, in theory, information that will be one of materials analysis of the researcher in the understanding of local history.

Libraries, whether they are municipal, University, specialising in genealogy and some departments of the National Library of France are also important resources documentary with e.g. information keys contained in family monographs, villages, heritage, etc. that would support the reflection of the researcher.

Before such an offer of informational abundance it might therefore ask what to refer to sports libraries can also contribute to understanding the local culture as well as reveal the sense of history? How the Fund documentary of these libraries, which may offer another approach, characterized it? How can an "entry" by leisure be relevant?

A sports library, the two terms are not mutually exclusive, may seem at first devoid of interest because if sports are practised effectively on the ground that can be found on these shelves. Taking the example of the French Alpine Club (FAC) and its section of Lyon - Villeurbanne, we will see that beyond prejudices these institutions offer resource materials that may be relevant for the study of local communities.

The goal of this approach is not to oppose the resources and institutions traditional but to show originality and especially the complementarity of such an approach. For this we will briefly present the library from the section of Lyon - Villeurbanne: its characteristics, its collections and services to users, etc. Then we will study the information from documents that give meaning to the understanding of the local culture and we will finally conclude by one example of local history through the case of a community of migrants Swiss hiking enthusiasts.

I - Presentation of the library and its organization :

In this part we will briefly present the library, its collections and the outline of its operation and services offered to users.

A library specialized on the mountain :

The library was established in 1875, the same year as the Lyons section of the FAC (one year after the Foundation of the FAC) with as ambition to "spread the knowledge of the mountains. She makes today available more than 3 500 volumes with the mountain theme

¹ We can distinguish three territorial levels for the archives: national, departmental and municipal.

² Each institution of archive have general and specific funds. Beyond to list all these documents useful to the researcher can apply with the selected institution. Today these structures have an internet site through which one can cognize the peculiarities of selected funds.

that are organized according to an own internal classification: type documents and geographical space. It is, indeed, one of the most documented of the region and appears as a key player in the landscape of French Alpine libraries³.

The goal of this library, which incorporates inter alia certain characteristics developed by Mount (1995), is to put at the disposal of all, essential information such as support of preparation to access the mountain and its sporting activities. In addition to this practical and functional dimension, the library fits in one approach heritage (Bertrand, 2011) insofar as it claims a mission of conservation of rare editions⁴ as well as the publications of the FAC.

Collections:

The library offers more than 3 000 monographs, old and new, with both general but also very specialized structures. The wealth of documentary Fund is reflected in the diversity of the themes covered and types of printed matter. Indeed, there is that beyond the exclusively technical approach, with works like topos, other writings, for example, more literary style share the shelves of the library (table 1).

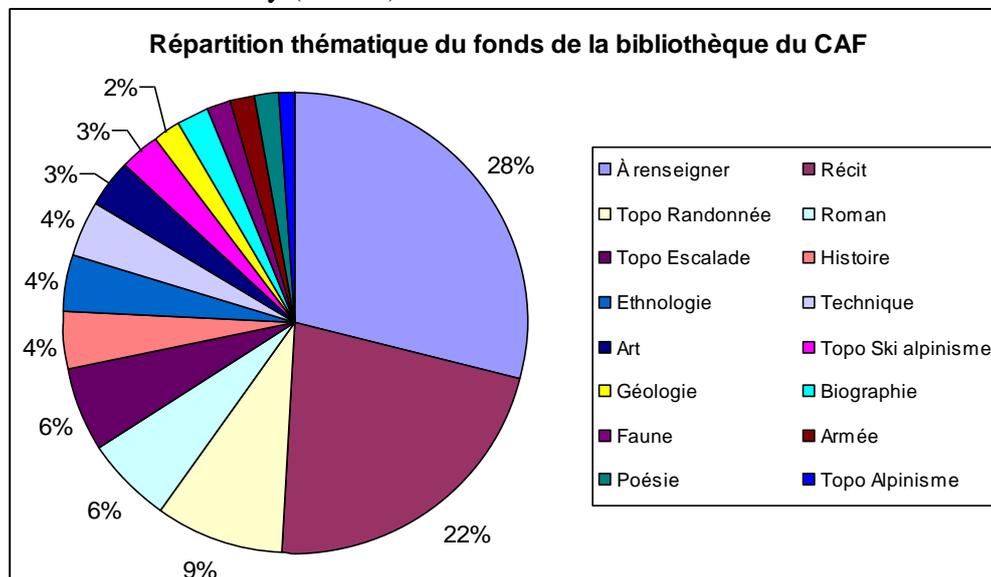


Table 1 : The analysis of the thematic distribution of the Fund of the library of the FAC in Lyon may surprise. Indeed, a large proportion (about one third) of documents is not yet referenced: a potential which remains to be tapped.

Works at practical vocation can empower members and increase their autonomy in the activity found, for example, through different types of documents such as manuals dedicated to security, sports techniques (climbing, orientation, etc.), maps (geological, topographic, etc.), guides, topo-guides⁵, etc. Other works, literary dominated, as novels, tales of races, biographies, etc. are also listed. Finally scientific writings specialized in Humanities and social sciences (history, Ethnology, etc.), natural sciences (geography, geology, etc.) this more that never varied collection. Reports of scientific events (congresses, workshops, etc.), race books, books of Chronicles will also add to this list of documents.

³ Other libraries of local sections of the FAC as Grenoble, Marseille - Provence or at the national level, the National Documentation Centre Lucien Devies of Paris are also institutions of reference in France.

⁴ It is original reporting the exploits of famous mountaineering names such as Saussure, Whymper, etc.

⁵ The topo-guide is a book which provided many useful information as well as detailed descriptions regarding routes. Its role is to inform the hiker on the routes of walks, the presence of guides and local organizations.

In addition to these works, nearly 300 journals and periodicals in hard copy⁶ are available to readers⁷. We can distinguish among all these titles mainstream periodicals⁸, journals of foreign Alpine clubs and internal reviews of the FAC (which come also at the local level).

Indeed, to satisfy his wishful thinking of "propagate the knowledge of the mountains and to develop the practice of alpinism", FAC has since its creation of two regular periodical publications entitled the *Yearbook* and the *Bulletin* (1876):

- the *Yearbook*, edited by year end, is a large⁹ collection of articles and information which is a true reflection of "scholarly, tourist and elitist" orientation of the association;
- the *Bulletin* is a complementary print that appears more frequently¹⁰ and is devoted mainly to the life internal section where are notified, inter alia, the administrative and practical information.

Acquisition policy : donations and purchases

The library is enriched with books that come from purchases, donations from publishers and especially gifts of members¹¹. The budget of the library is limited (resources and are allocated by the association), procurement policy is also based on Exchange of journals with other sections of province and foreign clubs.

Concerning heritage collections this is the library that preserves historically documents published by the central management of the FAC and especially at the local level. This work of archiving is done by volunteers¹² who manage the library as they wish, in connection with the Steering Committee of the club.

Functional and physical organization service to users :

The library is located on the same premises as the seat of the section. From a hardware point of view, tables and chairs are arranged near the shelves that run along a section of wall. A photocopier and a computer connected to the internet¹³ are also made available to members but this material is accessible in self-service and is not exclusively reserved for readers. The computer provides an electronic, searchable catalog also remotely, to the limited functionality (access to the records by a system of keywords to a single entry).

⁶ Some titles have been digitized and are now available online: this is particularly the case of the first editions of the *Yearbook* of the FAC (available on www.archive.org) and the magazine *The Mountain* (available on the website www.ghm-alpinisme.fr).

⁷ All journals, modern and old, are directly available in bookshelf.

⁸ These journals (composed mainly of magazines) are identical to those of the trade : *Mountain magazine*, *Trek magazine*, etc. are some of the proposed titles.

⁹ It contains hundreds of pages (up to 800) and is rarely shown. The *Yearbook* get an idea of the evolution of the conceptions of mountaineering and his techniques.

¹⁰ Became monthly in 1882.

¹¹ Some authors are often members of the FAC.

¹² Composed of a commission of rare enthusiasts, most retirees, these members are first and foremost practitioners of alpine sports. Their privileged field of action remains mountain sports and not necessarily the practices of librarianship or information science. Only the head of the library appears as the most competent in the area but without necessarily having had a similar experience.

¹³ The library don't offer Wifi connection.

The loan is reserved for the members of the section but the consultation of documents is free, no venue for common and other structures common available in bookshelf, during the opening hours of the afternoon of the week club. The oldest documents (1775) are stored in reserve and can be consulted upon a request made with the person in charge who holds a permanence once per week.

The simplicity in the service of conservation :

We therefore find that the library has a substantial amount of documents collected since its inception at the end of the 19th century. This vocation to preserve documents, including those published by the section, shows the importance it attaches to maintaining the memory of the life of the club.

The services and material conditions available to readers are reduced to their simplest expression : Basic (Quereux - Sbai, 2010). Supervised by the Steering Committee of the club, the library has to promote the members access to information on the mountain, whole mountain. Thus, we can qualify the library as a structure where the simplicity and versatility prevail.

II - The library of the FAC in Lyon : a special fund

In this part we are going back on the specifics of the documentary resources offered by the library of the FAC. What interests offer these documents in the understanding of local history?

The researcher and documentary sources :

As mentioned earlier, the researcher maximizes its information search in addressing institutions dedicated to this practice: territorial archives, libraries, etc. Managed by the State (or territorial communities), these structures have human, financial, material and regulatory resources consistent. This traditional approach allows to collect extensive information and direct any further research to other documentary sources and/or other institutions. Nevertheless sometimes information expected to be provided by these institutions are missing¹⁴ or incorrect. This informational deficiency¹⁵ can lead the researcher to circumvent this difficulty, or to cut these data with other sources, in investigating such a sports library and its specific documents (in our case it is the Lyons section of the FAC). Through different media such as the book of course but also the race book, journals (*Bulletin* and *Yearbook*), the Guidebook, map, photographs, etc. we see that these “other” materials can participate in the understanding of a local history.

So, what are the specifics of the documents referenced as the publications of the central Committee of the FAC but also those edited by locals? The idea is not to analyse in detail the editorial of the FAC as Lejeune work (1988) but briefly to certain types of information illustrating our example in the third part.

¹⁴ For example, the parish records no longer exist or notarial archives have disappeared, etc.

¹⁵ Conversely, it is also conceivable that the information collected in the documents of the library of the FAC is missing or incorrect. The idea develop here is not to confront and to highlight the shortcomings of this or that institution but to demonstrate the complementarity of research of this kind.

We are interested therefore more specifically to one of the two publications that accompanied the FAC since its inception until 1904¹⁶ : the *Yearbook* which is the echo of the main decisions of the headquarters instances containing the essential information of the quarterly bulletins and the *Bulletin* which describes, in detail, the life internal local.

An example of information-rich internal publication : the *Bulletin*

The *Bulletin* contains communications read during the monthly meetings of the section. With a higher frequency (quarterly or even monthly) than *Annuaire* (annual or biannual) this document provides a better monitoring of the timeliness of the section. As a reminder the first issue of the “*Alpine Review*”, the section of Lyon (1895):

“Even more than the directory of the FAC [...] appearing as all two years, was necessarily closed to the daily news, to information of all kinds, bibliographical journals, in a Word to the Chronicle.” (*Alpine Review*, 1895, p. 3)

It is “everyday” life in the section monitoring which is highlighted in this document. The collection of facts, which translates articles on varied topics, including allows to give, in accordance with the initial ambition of the magazine, “information practices a broadest possible place”. It is thanks to this tool, as claimed in the journal, the excursion of the Mountaineer will be facilitated. Thus rubric “Alpine Chronicle” gives an account of stories of racing focusing, inter alia, on the functional dimension with descriptions of the routes borrowed, amenities for the means of transport used, comments regarding shelters (custodians, operation) or the new hostels, the Census of accidents, etc. all stages of the output are discussed.

These writings are therefore not only focused on athletic performance and this is one of their qualifications to address other issues as elements of cartography, a bibliography or even the latest accidents, etc. In the same vein, these articles also fear other times, before and after the tour, which are an integral part of the practice and who appear as rich in lessons. The other topic entitled “Chronicle of the section” returns, in detail, on the meetings of the Steering Committee and all meetings¹⁷ of the club in which members participate more generally. These accounts of meetings appear as the unique imprint of oral exchanges of the section and are, in the same way as the books and articles, the memory of the club.

So let's take the example of content for type information demographic as the name, first name, age, profession, address, etc. Through the numerous lists and personal references cited in various articles of the *Alpine Review*, the researcher can establish genealogical links in comparing, supplementing and/or corroborating data collected in classic documents such as the register of civil status (refer to a traditional institution such as the municipal archives). Our second example is the case of absence of sources when the cadastre survey of an area is unavailable. The spatio-temporal markings on a topographical map allow, then, to find spaces of “leisure” of his ancestors, to identify the roads travelled by the immigrant populations, to find the existence of particularly characteristic buildings in the mountain : parishes, castles, churches, etc. Oser (2005) example shows all the interest of the card, combined with a system of geographical information for genealogical research. A final example is based on reports of

¹⁶ Over the years these publications editorial content evolves, both on the bottom form, punctuated by various drafting officials (Hoibian, 2004): “*La Montagne*” brings in 1905 the *Yearbook* and the *Bulletin* of the FAC. Then comes the creation of a specialized journal “*L'alpinisme*” in 1926 and finally the merger of these tracks since 1955, with “*La Montagne & Alpinisme*”.

¹⁷ Annual reports, the work of commissions, etc. recorded therein methodically.

a commission for the construction of a shelter where there is over the transcribed oral sessions, various (sometimes conflicting) section internal relations but also those maintained with administrative services, local businesses, the other protagonists involved, etc. and the issues raised by such a project.

A varied content :

The information contained in the library's collections, and more specifically the internal publications, rich sporting and administrative information. The variety of articles¹⁸, care and quality to these publications reflect the scientific rigor of the FAC (legacy of the pioneers), reflect the alpine culture of the moment.

Through different addressed Chronicles, and beyond the sociodemographic and spatio-temporal data, the *Alpine Review* reflects social life section that should be studied to understand the consistency of local history. Thanks to this tool, the researcher can take knowledge of representative facts, at the local level, which have particularly marked section. It should therefore not, as recalls Zuanon (2009) limited to a superficial reading of these journals and affirm "that these publications [those from the *Yearbook*] are perfectly neutral and dedicated to the technical world".

III - The migration of alpine sports community : the example of the Swiss

We previously mentioned that another look at resources allow to the local history of a migrant community. In this part we will return briefly to a community of migrants Swiss who attended the section of the FAC of Lyon for the period end 19th - early 20th century.

Lyon and its region : land of migration

The work of Schweitzer et al. (2009) on the Rhône - Alpes region during this period indicate that this territory has a strong tradition of migration. Indeed, the development of the region is marked by strong industrialization (mines, railways, metallurgy, textile) which "mixes nationalities" job search mostly unqualified often provided by immigrants. These movements occur especially within urban prefectures, including Lyon, which "concentrate the highest proportions" of foreigners. The author recalls the original very diverse immigrant populations and insists on the fact that the movement of nationals of a border country like the Switzerland are particularly significant during this period (1789-1914)¹⁹.

FAC of Lyon and the Swiss community :

In the reading of certain documents of the library, in particular the internal review, it seems that we find some tracks of this Swiss community. We saw previously that the first copy of the *Alpine Review* had been born in 1895 and that this review reported regularly the life of the section. The study of the numbers published during this period indicates us various information, more or less explicit, susceptible to help us in our method. It is the case for example lists of names of the members that are regularly updated and which clarify.

Knowing that the members of FAC belong mainly, for this period, to the high society (bourgeoisie and aristocracy), the Swiss immigrants who join the section of Lyons "escapes"

¹⁸ Articles address all facets of the mountain that are plural: both sporting, cultural, scientific, artistic, literary, etc.

¹⁹ "Native of bordering countries, the Swiss (the second nationality the best represented to 1920s). (Schweitzer et al., 2009, p. 32).

the secondary market of the employment as far as they practice collectively within the liberal occupations (intellectual careers) and the commercial sectors (bank and silk).

In the course of the columns we can also observe which is the implication of these newcomers within the framework of a structure of leisure, what notably sends back to the process of socialization of this community. The responsibilities within the club (members of the office, the committee, etc.), the sports performances (concerned activities, selected places, etc.), the implication in the projects (construction of a chalet, an organization of a demonstration, etc.), “the ways of life” (Michon, Terret, 2004) are so many relevant indications which participate, actually, in a better understanding of the local history.

The study of a resource documentary as the *Alpine Review* thus allows to reconstitute, partially, the history of this Swiss foreign community, in the intense sociability, by approaching its social manners through notably its various reports in time, to the others, in spaces, etc.

Conclusion :

As we evoked it, the researcher can study the local history by means of traditional historic documents (register of state-civilian, parochial, etc.) which establish(constitute) one of prerequisite in the genealogical research. However to interfere in the detail of the local life and “seize” all the subtleties with it we can also find the other indications to perfect the analysis. We so modestly showed that an approach of the local history by the leisure activities was thus possible and that the appeal to the documentary fund of a sports library, as that of FAC of Lyon, contributed to clear up the understanding of the local communities.

To approach well the local history it is necessary to have access to the accumulated knowledge and it is in the sense that the library of FAC maintains this role of memory and transmission of the alpine sports patrimony. Indeed, it publishes, diffuses and preserves affectedly of the information around the subject of the mountain since about 140 years favour, among others, to these voluntary members. This mission of transmission of the documentary capital, inherited from the previous generations, singularise this specialized establishment. The library appears as an inescapable element of the collective identity of the section of Lyon and more generally of FAC. Its presence is moreover claimed, ostentatiously, by the section of Lyon.

We also saw that beyond the alpine theme topics were varied and brought added value to the documentary Fund in dealing not only with sports performance (multidisciplinary publications but also very specific). Indeed, if the substantive articles of the journals allow to get an idea of the evolution of the conceptions of mountaineering and its culture, the other writings (as the transcripts of the moments of the life of the club : assemblies, meetings, conferences, congresses, banquets, etc.) testify accurately from the daily concerns of the section but the interactions between members of the club and outside (local institutions, etc.). Many of these details appear as valuable and fundamental elements in order to reconstruct the cultural environment of the time. The quality and quantity of this information to clarify the history of the local communities in the light of the documents held by the library.

Limits, perspectives and openings :

The library offers an interesting documentary background which may nevertheless be difficult “exploitable” today. In order to improve further its potential and its attractiveness²⁰ to the researcher (and a wider audience), volunteers will need to perform an important work of classification of old books (a third party documents, nearly 900 printed, is not yet referenced) and provide a more powerful information retrieval tool that inevitably passes through the improvement of the integrated library management system. The other axis of progress concerns the dissemination of resources because, as pointed out by librarians and archivists conscientious, a book that no one can see it is a book that does not exist. At a time where other foreign Alpine clubs reviews are available online, the library evolves in a digital context marked²¹ and its Heritage Fund remains little valued (Mouren, 2007). Report, communicate, highlight the documents are key initiatives, whose implementation benefits from the recognized expertise of the professionals in traditional institutions. We focus here on the paradox of resources amateurs managed by the goodwill of members and ways of the club with the aspirations of the researcher.

We have therefore shown that the information provided by the library of the FAC may participate in the understanding of local history. The approach by recreation (here, alpine sports) competed to improve the knowledge of the local culture and presents itself as a complement, or even an alternative to traditional research. So we can probably take the same approach centered on 'leisure' for nearby territories of the mountains with other associations of hikers as the “Club Vosgien” (1872), “Society of the tourists of the Dauphiné” (1875), “Society of excursionists Marseillais” (1897), etc. which maintain this attachment internal journals and conservation of documents.

However, under this approach by recreation, it would be appropriate to consider these same sports libraries in other geographic areas which have seen the growth of different sporting activities. Indeed, the editorial activity of the FAC, which dates back to its origins, enrolled as such in its DNA²² and is a strong marker for its identity. Is there so this culture information and document if we were studying another sporting activity?

Finally we must keep in mind that this “sporting” approach is only one Observatory among others and that it fully reveals its potential in addition to a classical approach.

²⁰ Collaborations with other institutions would legitimize the quality of the work performed (Faletar, 2008).

²¹ Part of the collection of directories and the national gazettes is digitized and accessible via the internet (request for some numbers). For local publications such as the *Alpine Review* dissemination of its local funds represents the future challenge.

²² Article 1 of the FAC statutes is particularly explicit on the subject : “the french alpine club has aimed to facilitate and to propagate the exact knowledge of the mountains of the France and neighbouring countries by the publication of scientific, literary or artistic works and information in order to direct tourists”.

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