

## Introductory notes by the Editors

The extension of the concept of "Cultural Heritage" to include the biology of prehistoric populations, the understanding of their culture, survival strategies and interaction with the environment, is a relatively recent acquisition. This extension suggests that the information regarding ancient populations constitutes a precious source of knowledge, to be added to and conserved.

Within this context, the "Catalogue of Italian Fossil Human Remains from the Palaeolithic to the Mesolithic" was developed within the framework of "Targeted Project - Cultural Heritage" of the *Italian National Research Council*. In the Catalogue, information of the most diverse nature (anthropological, geo-chronological, paleo-environmental) concerning sites and human remains has been gathered together, in order to create a source of knowledge which is essential for the valorisation and conservation of such "Cultural Assets".

In 1953, Vallois and Movius recognized the need for a catalogue of European sites and human remains "d'age certainement pléistocène", asserting that information about these remains could be sometimes found in excellent monographs, sometimes in magazine articles or journals, in editions that were difficult to find, or even in the form of simple citations.

The heterogeneous nature of such material depended not only on the different types of publication but also on their origin: sometimes systematic archaeological excavations, sometimes casual finds.

When analysing the state of information regarding Italian human fossil remains, the same needs that were recognized in 1953 are still urgently needed today.

Information concerning Italian human skeletal remains from the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic is not available from a single text, deriving as it does from discoveries made over a long period of time and from studies made using non-standardized and often dissimilar methodologies.

Recognition of these needs is at the origin of the project to create the "Catalogue of Italian fossil human remains from the Palaeolithic to the Mesolithic" developed within the framework of "Targeted Project- Cultural Heritage" of the *Italian National Research Council*.

The need to guarantee the highest level of access and diffusion of the collected information led to the development of the project using advanced technology for a multimedia stand-alone and networking presentation.

Information about Italian fossil human remains is available mainly in the following catalogues:

- "Catalogue des Hommes Fossiles" edited by Prof. H.V. Vallois and H.L. Movius in 1953, Italian section by C. Blanc e S. Sergi;
- "Catalogue of Fossil Hominids - Europe" published in 1971 by K.P. Oakley, B.G. Campbell and T.I. Molleson, Italian fossil remains are listed by S. Sergi, L. Cardini e P. Leonardi;
- "Hominid Remains - an up-date", published by R. Orban in 1988, Italian section by P.F. Fabbri, G. Giacobini and F. Mallegni.
- "The Skeletal Remains of Mesolithic Man in Western Europe: an Evaluative Catalogue", edited by R.R. Newell, T.S. Constandse-Westermann and C. Meiklejohn in 1979.

The first census was carried out by collating the index cards mentioned in the above catalogues and reviewing them for necessary up-dates and editorial standardization. This first census was completed with the inclusion of new sites and finds. The up-dating, standardization and indexing was performed by Italian specialists active in the field: G. Alciati, A. Ascenzi, S.M. Borgognini Tarli, A. Canci, V. Formicola, G. Giacobini, F. Mallegni, G. Manzi, V. Pesce Delfino and E. Vacca.

The definition of indexing criteria was performed making reference mainly to the catalogue by Oakley. 15 points per index card were identified, according to a criteria of easy consultation and agility. Illustrations were added to some points.



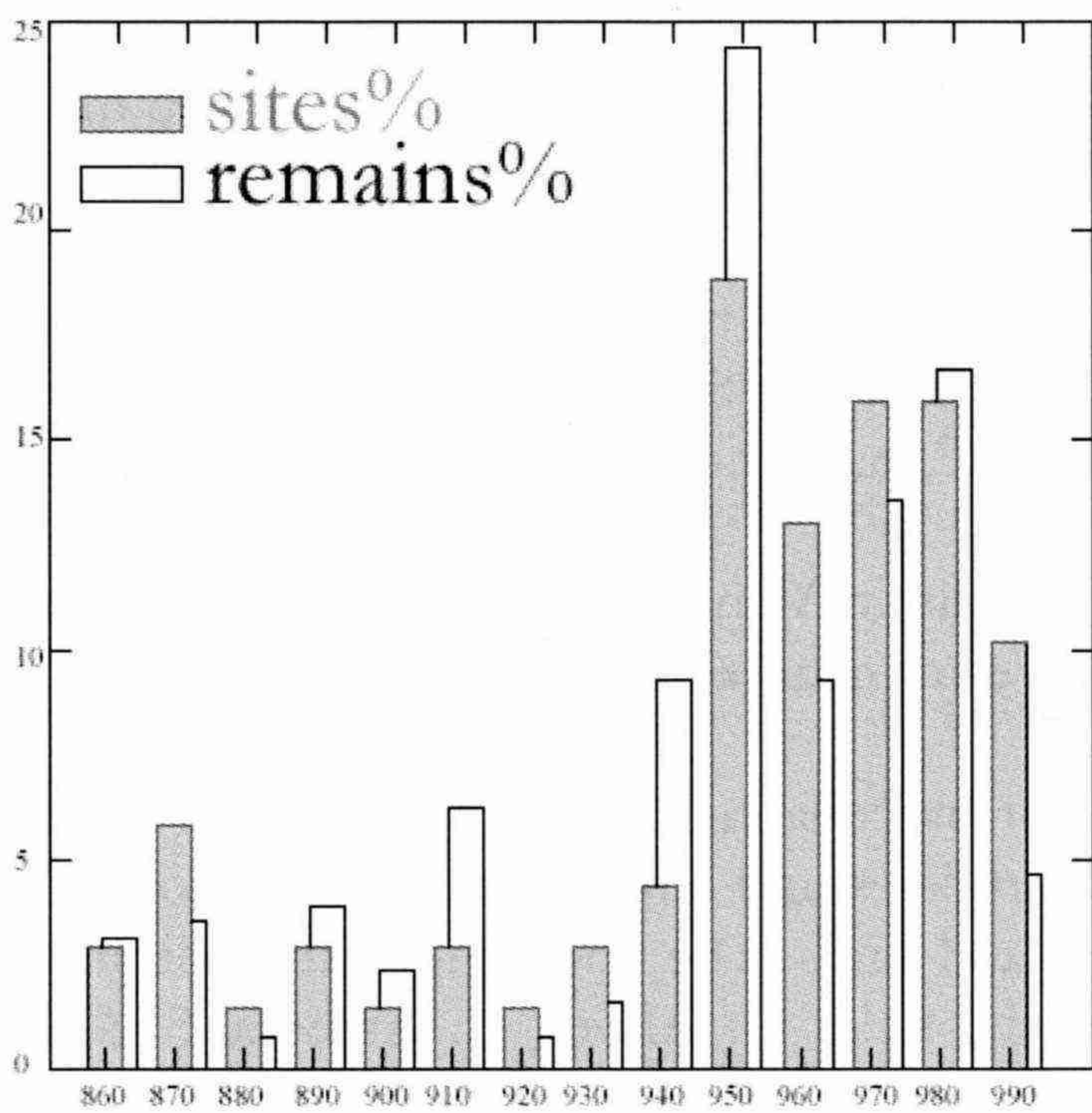
The index card (appendix 1), is composed of essential information items which: - identify and collocate the site geographically (name, geographical location); - give information about the circumstances of the discovery (discoverer and date of the discovery); - give information about the relative archaeological and palaentological context (burials, stratigraphical age, archaeological context, palaentological context, dating); - supply multiple points about the human remains (human remains: name, sex, age, inventory and conditions, teeth, pathologies); - give information about leading anthropological publications (anthropological description and relevant illustrations); - describe the collocation of the remains and, if existing, casts (repository of the fossil and mould for casts). Related bibliography is reported at the end of the card.

78 different sites were catalogued (69 sites have their index card, for 4 sites a double index card was written, differentiated on a stratigraphical basis, 9 sites are reported in the Notes) (appendix 2), deriving from studies and finds that, from 1860 to the present day, include human remains belonging to a time period of more than 800.000 years.

About 258 human remains are catalogued and include both whole burials and single skeletal remains. Considering the number of remains found from 1860, the following distribution is observed (fig. 1): after a long period characterized by a low number of findings, in the 50s the number of found sites raises significantly. A high rate of discoveries characterizes the 60s, 70s and 80s, most likely because of increasing building activity and road construction, among other causes; in the 90s the number of discoveries lessens.

Considering the distribution of the finds per region (figs. 2 and 3), the higher number of sites was found in Lazio; the higher number of remains was found in Puglia and Liguria. The reason is that in the latter two regions many remains and burials of the Upper Palaeolithic were found, while from Lazio come isolated remains deemed older.

The geographical distribution of human remains and lithic industry may confirm Broglio's suggestion regarding the penetration in Europe along the routes of the Morocco-Iberic peninsula and the Tunisia-Sicily-Italian peninsula (Broglio, 1991), even if, according to the same author "the paleogeographical aspects of the period are still to be fully understood".



**Fig. 1 - Findings (sites and remains excluding those reported as Notes), indexed in the catalogue; the sites are reported in percentage per decade, beginning in 1860; the remains are referred to the sites, but not always the date of the discovery and the date of the site are the same.**



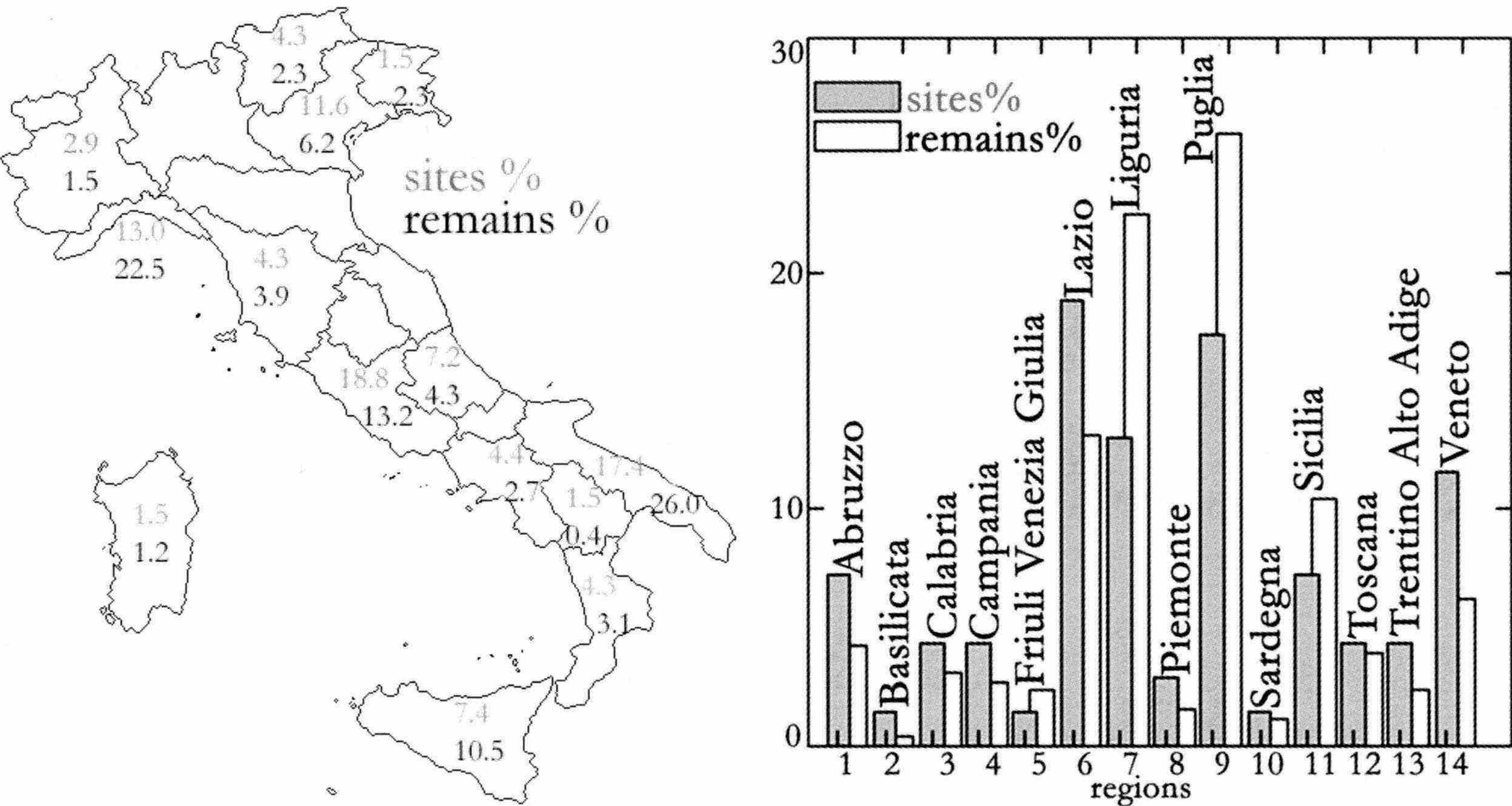
## Summary and comparison with previous Catalogues

- Readers are referred to the following sources:
- in the above mentioned “Catalogue des Hommes Fossiles” (Vallois and Movius, 1953), in the section dedicated to Italy, listed by C. Blanc and S. Sergi, 9 sites are reported (13 if the various caves of Balzi Rossi are separately listed), with a total of approximately 50 human remains;
  - in the “Catalogue of Fossil Hominids - Europe” (Oakley, Campbell and Molleson, 1971) 31 sites with a total of about 90 human remains are presented for Italy by S. Sergi, L. Cardini and P. Leonardi;
  - in the 1988 up-date (Hominid Remains) edited by R. Orban, 26 new sites and about 80 human remains are presented for Italy by P.F. Fabbri, G. Giacobini and F. Mallegni;
  - in the final version of the Catalogue, developed as part of the present project, 78 sites (including 9 sites reported in the Notes) and a total of about 258 human remains, are presented.

The Catalogue is not, in itself, a complete guide on the populations of Italian prehistory. However, it represents, an important reference work and, we hope, an useful tool for the definition of the phenomena that, beginning from the most ancient human presence in the peninsula, makes it possible to sketch an outline of the way ancient human beings distributed according to territory and geo-climatic changes.

## The Multimedia Catalogue

The need to guarantee the best diffusion and fruition of the information collected, suggested the realization of a multimedia version of the Catalogue to be released both stand-alone and on the Web. The development modalities adopted have made it possible to obtain some extra, functional results, such as immediate access in Internet without the necessity of adjustments or reconfiguration; this characteristic makes it a true on-line multi-platform tool.



**Fig. 2 - Geographical distribution (percentage values) of the sites and of the remains per region (excluding those reported as Notes).**





**Fig. 3 - Geographical distribution of the sites.**



There is a database associated to the Catalogue, whose records are in the form of cards of the palaeontological materials. Access to the cards is possible through indexes, but it is also possible to sort the information into geographical areas and time periods. It is also possible to search for keywords (place, name, age, sex, skeletal element). The query page, using a research engine, elaborates a dynamic results page using active links pointing to the requested index cards (fig. 4). For each point, active links point to the related bibliographical data given in full at the end of each index card. In the same way, the illustrations (when present) are available. The database associated to the Catalogue is up-datable, and allows the creation of new indexes and new cards automatically (using a client/server configuration). The development of a multimedia catalogue that can be up-dated adds, to the intrinsic value of the project, a unifying approach to the study of the biology of skeletons from the period, making it an essential instrument for the interpretation of the evolutionary phenomena which characterized the ancient populations of the Italian peninsula.

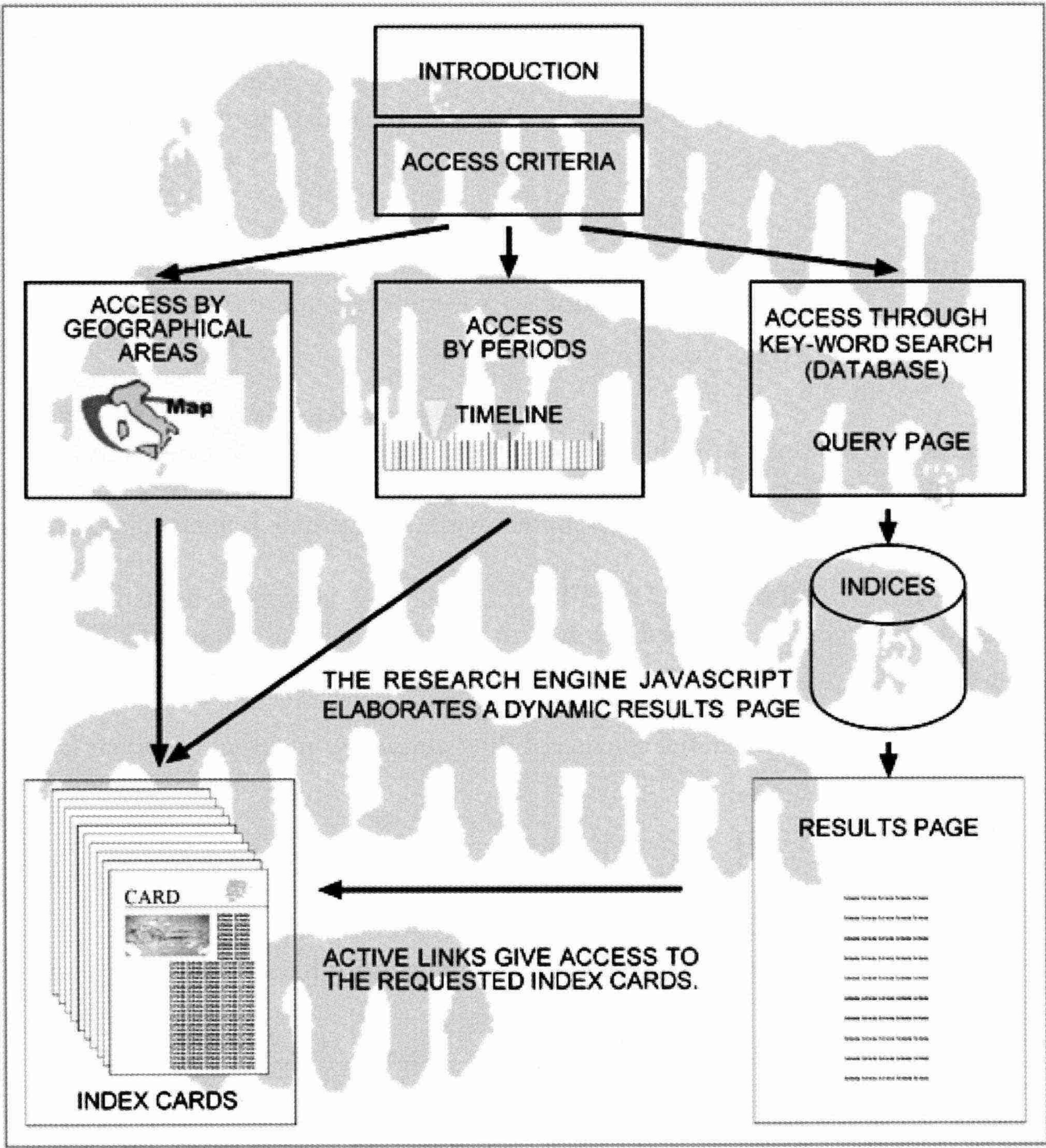


Fig. 4 - General architecture of the multi-media catalogue.



## References

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