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Editorial

This is the second of the annual Bulletins of the Italian Studies Library Group.. It contains articles by Anna Beasley (Reading University Library) and Denis Reidy (the British Library), and is intended to complement our other channels of communication, namely our meetings, our mailing list and our website:

<http://www.bl.uk/collections/wider/italian/italstulib.html>

This is also an opportunity to encourage you to join and use the JISCMail mailing list which we have just established for internal communication among the membership:

islg@jiscmail.ac.uk

To join, see the JISCMail website

<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk>

or contact Anna Beasley (a.j.beasley@reading.ac.uk)

We continue to be interested in knowing your views on the Group and its future, now that it has been established for two years.

On behalf of everyone in our Group, may I also offer warm and sincere thanks to Jane Gibbs for all her hard and devoted work, both as Secretary of ISLG and as editor of the first two issues of this Bulletin.

William Pine-Coffin

University of Warwick Library (Chair, ISLG)

Italian Studies and collections at Reading University

The teaching of Italian at the University of Reading was inaugurated in 1948 by the well-known Italian writer Luigi Meneghello, who taught here until 1980. Today the Department is one of the largest in the UK. It has a distinguished record in research and scholarship and the quality of teaching. From the start the Department has always had a multi-disciplinary character with emphasis placed not only on the Italian language and literature but also on Italian art and cinema, history, politics, philosophy, linguistics, dialectology and women's studies.

The Italian Department is home to two research centres: Centre for Modern Italian History concerned with the various aspects of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Italian history and politics and Centre for Italian Women's Studies whose interests are not only women's writing but also history in its broadest sense, covering periods from the earliest to the present day.

The Library collections in Italian Studies have been built up over the years to reflect the research and teaching interests within the Department. The Library has an extensive collection on Dante and early Italian literature, modern Italian history and history of women and women's writing. There is also a good and representative collection of 20th century Italian literature.

In addition, the Library has several specialist collections, the most important of which relate to the 19th and 20th century Italian history. The most significant collection is the library of Capitano Giuseppe Rubeo (d.1968) of over 5000 books published in Italy between 1920 and 1960, covering areas such as contemporary literature and criticism (including material on the Futurist movement), history, politics, current affairs and philosophy. The collection includes several hundreds of volumes relating to Italian fascism published during the fascist period, many of them of considerable rarity because such items were disposed of or destroyed at the end of the war and are extremely difficult to find, even in Italy. Other archival collections of interest to Italian historians are:

Documents from the Salò Republic (1943-1945) containing materials from different administrative departments.

Papers of the Italian Refugees' Relief Committee (1927-1930), which was a non-political humanitarian organisation set up to help those who had to flee Mussolini's fascist regime.

Papers of Marion Rawson, a notable member of the above mentioned Committee and anti-fascist campaigner in Britain.

Sprigge Collection - books and papers of Cecil Jackson Squire Sprigge and his wife Sylvia, both journalists specialising in Italian affairs in the 1930-50s.

These collections are still largely un-catalogued, although recently collection level descriptions have been produced and the Department is planning to seek funds to further catalogue and preserve these collections. More detailed descriptions of each of our special collections and access details can be found at:

Anna Beasley, Reading University Library

" What the British Library can do for Italianists "

Colleagues and fellow Italianists, in this paper I intend to show how the very considerable resources of the British Library can be of benefit to Italianists.

The greatest single resource and one of the greatest assets the British Library can immediately offer Italianists, is its Italian Collections *tout court*. The British Library's Italian Collections are very extensive and are generally considered to be one of the finest collections of Italian printed books in the world. It has been calculated that there are approximately 450,000 to 500,000 Italian printed books at the British Library of which the vast majority, 422,475 books to be precise, are Humanities and Social Science books, the principal area of interest to most Italianists. This latter figure can be broken down approximately as follows: 35,000 fifteenth and sixteenth-century books of which 4,460 are fifteenth-century books or incunables or incunabula, that is to say, books printed before 1501.

The British Library's collection of 4,460 Italian incunabula is simply the largest and the finest collection of Italian incunabula in the world and represents 43 % of all the Library's incunable holdings. Of these, no fewer than 94 of the British Library's Italian incunables are unique. One book of particular interest to Italianists is the rare complete text of Boiardo's *Sonetti e Canzone* printed by Franciscus de Mazalibus in Reggio Emilia in 1499. Although not an "unicum", only two other copies of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, printed at Naples by Francesco del Tuppo in 1478 (G.11348.) exist. Our copy, beautifully illuminated for the Ginori family of Florence by a contemporary artist, contains their coat-of-arms illustrated in turquoise, green, and gold leaf.

There is probably no finer library anywhere for the Italianist to consult the first editions of classical, patristic, theological and Humanist authors, indispensable for Italianists working on Mediaeval and Humanist literature. Our holdings of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, to name only a few of the

greatest authors, are second to none. The first editions of most Humanist authors and scholars from Poggio Bracciolini to Pico della Mirandola, from the celebrated Aldine incunable first editions to almost the complete output of Savonarola's oeuvre, all can be consulted in our Rare Books Reading Room. The remaining 31,525 sixteenth-century books have been described by Professor Conor Fahy as simply the best and the richest collection of Italian sixteenth-century books anywhere.

Clearly our holdings of Italian books at the British Library are not as numerous as those held by the Biblioteca Nazionale in Rome or Florence or the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice, but what we may lack in number, we more than make up for in quality and richness. Not many libraries could produce all the first editions of most if not all major sixteenth-century authors, and few could produce books of this period (and incunabula for that matter) in finer condition. We principally have Sir Anthony Panizzi (1797-1879) the Italian patriot, exile, scholar and Principal Librarian and Director of The British Museum- it was he who was principally responsible for the creation of the famous Round Reading Room- and The Honourable Thomas Grenville (1755-1846) to thank for this, because it was Panizzi who persuaded Grenville the Whig politician, First Lord of the Admiralty and Chief Justice in Eyre south of the Trent to bequeath his superb personal library of 20,240 volumes, many of which were exquisite Italian books, in pristine condition, to the British Museum in 1847.(2) Nor should we forget the splendid King's Library formed by King George III which contains a very high proportion of Italian books which were bequeathed to a grateful nation by George IV, in 1828.

Nor could many other libraries present their readers with Isabella D'Este's personal copy of her Aldine Petrarch adorned with her coat-of-arms, a copy of Vittoria Colonna's Rime owned by Michelangelo Buonarroti and bearing his signature of ownership ("Michelangelo Schultore," sic. at pressmark C.28.a.10) which may well have been personally donated by Colonna to Michelangelo. Even if this were not the case it would certainly indicate that Michelangelo was very probably influenced by Vittoria Colonna's poetry in general and her Rime in particular, when he came to write his own poetry.

How many other libraries possess all the editions of Tasso's works plus a copy of the 1581 edition of Tasso's Rime published by Aldo Manuzio the younger, together with manuscript corrections to the text, in the printer's own hand, the whole, moreover, kept in a box which contains a fragment of wood, which, legend has it, is supposed to have come from the prison door of Tasso's cell when he was imprisoned in Ferrara? I cite these few rarities and association copies merely to illustrate the richness of the British Library's Italian collections. That so many of the Italian sixteenth-century books at the British Library are from Venice is no surprise because it has been calculated that no fewer than 61% of all books printed in the Italian peninsula in the sixteenth century were printed in Venice.

As one would expect after a decline in the fortunes of the Venetian Republic as a major printing centre, the figure for our seventeenth-century Italian holdings dips to 19,500 reflecting also the decline in book production in Italy in that century when printing was transferred and expanded in printing centres north of the Alps, principally at Basle, Paris, Amsterdam and Antwerp. Our holdings for this period are still very impressive and all the first editions of seventeenth-century authors are present from Campanella to Vico together with most if not all the principal seventeenth-century editions of major works. The British Library has approximately 17,500 eighteenth-century books including what may well be an unrecorded sonnet by Goldoni, the first editions of Galvani's and Volta's scientific experiments with their manuscript dedication to Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society (who bequeathed all his books to the British Museum), manuscript annotations by Cardinal Vitaliano Borromeo, a descendant of Saint Charles Borromeo, in tracts published in the Romagna, and last, but by no means least, a recently acquired copy of Lorenzo Lippi's *Il Malmantile racquistato* owned by Giuseppe Baretti and very heavily annotated by him. This latter work is extremely interesting since it sheds a considerable amount of light on Baretti's linguistic theories. In my view this copy would make an ideal research project and a splendid scholarly edition for some enterprising Italianist.

Some of you I know, are aware that my colleagues Dennis Rhodes, Chris Michaelides, Stephen Parkin and I have been busy compiling a catalogue of the British Library's eighteenth-century Italian holdings for several years now. This catalogue will hopefully contain considerably more information than our very useful Italian Short Title Catalogues of Fifteenth to Seventeenth-Century Italian Books. Not only will the title of a work be given in full, but there will be a full author and imprint statement, printers' index, place of printing index, and all association copies, dedications and provenances will be recorded. The catalogue which is being produced on a main-frame computer, will also contain an index of engravers, artists and illustrators and will be a major resource for research into the eighteenth century in general, and into literary, social and art history of the period. It could also form the basis of a future cumulative catalogue of Italian eighteenth-century books. We may even consider publishing this catalogue as a CD ROM, thereby making it a much more versatile bibliographical and scholarly tool. As far as we are aware, no major programme for cataloguing of eighteenth-century Italian books is being undertaken in any other institution elsewhere.

Turning to the nineteenth century, it has been calculated that our Italian books printed in this period number some 150,000 to 200,000 items. Our Risorgimento holdings are particularly strong and contain some very rare Jacobin items, including the very rare pamphlet *Il pappagallo romano* of which only one other copy has been located, plus very extensive and complete runs of important, and in some cases, quite rare, Italian newspapers and periodicals of the period. We are constantly being told that our collections of this latter material are much more complete and very often

better preserved than similar material available in Italian libraries. Our holdings of Foscolo, Leopardi, Verga, and Capuana and items by Monti printed at Lugano, to name but a few are particularly fine. Reference to Lugano prompts me to point out that we also purchase modern books printed in Italian speaking Switzerland. We have very extensive collections of Swiss Italian books printed in the Ticino, and since the total production runs to only a few hundred monographs annually, we can afford to continue purchasing virtually everything of research value printed in Italian speaking Switzerland each year.

Our holdings of twentieth-century Italian books number about 150,000 to 200,000 items and are added to at the rate of 3,000 to 4,000 monographs per year as funds permit. We have particularly fine examples of books printed in the Fascist period, especially very rare books printed in the Italian Colonies in Africa, many rare works by the Italian futurists, including dedication copies signed by Marinetti, Russolo, Mazza, and splendid copies of fine printing and "livres d'artiste" illustrated by De Chirico, Morandi, and Manzù and many others. We also have most first editions of most major and minor Italian twentieth-century authors. It should also be pointed out that each year we receive many hundreds of donations of books from the Italian Government, from Italian publishers, University Departments and from Italian academics who deem it a great honour to have their works deposited and held here. Indeed a few important Italian novelists have even decided to deposit all their works and translations of their works at the British Library so that the "official archive" of their oeuvre can be held here. One such celebrated writer is Luigi Meneghello who, apart from being a celebrated contemporary Italian novelist, also held one of the Chairs of Italian at Reading University. Publishers have responded very favourably to this idea and have co-operated by depositing all translations and editions of a novelist's work with us.

Nor should we overlook another extremely valuable resource for the Italianist, no fewer than 375 Italian newspapers some of which are extremely rare. My colleagues Ed King and Stephen Lester from our Newspaper Library at Colindale and I have produced a print-out of these newspapers and it is available for consultation at the British Library. It is intended to transfer this information to a database and to make this information available electronically.

We should also recall the resources of the National Sound Archive with its recorded speeches of modern celebrated poets, the speeches of Mussolini, Hitler and others, the Map and Music Libraries with their wealth of printed Italian Maps and Music, and last, but by no means least, our Manuscript holdings. Some of the gems in this collection include The Sforza Hours, Leonardo Da Vinci's Codex Arundel, manuscripts by Machiavelli, Leopardi, Foscolo, Mazzini and others and one of the earliest detailed vellum manuscript maps of Italy showing all the fortifications on the peninsula, probably made expressly for King Henry VIII.

To this list must be added 2,000 State Papers, official government publications and periodicals in the Humanities and the Social Sciences. So much for the statistics of the BL's holdings. I have endeavoured to capture the flavour and give you the briefest insight into the richness and extent of these collections by citing some of our more notable items. In the limited confines of this article I have only been able to scratch the surface.

There can be little doubt that our collections are our principal resource, and these can be consulted either in London or in our Reading Room at Boston Spa in Yorkshire. Many universities in the Midlands and from farther afield, provide a regular bus service for their academic staff to consult books at our Document Supply Centre in Yorkshire. Our collections can be consulted electronically on line, on CD ROM and on the very versatile and user-friendly computer terminals, the OPACS, in all our reading rooms. Many of you also make full use of our Document Supply Centre in Yorkshire in order to track down that elusive article and often request a photocopy or microfilm of the item you require from our reprographic service.

The Document Supply Centre also provides another very useful service enabling you to order a book of your choice for acquisition by the British Library which in turn can be consulted (almost as if it were on approval as it were) since the very same book can be consulted in your own university or public library. It is interesting and gratifying to see that the requests for Italian material have been rising steadily during the nineties and over the first few years of the new Millennium from both the Higher Education and the Public Library Sectors thereby confirming the high use of Italian and Italianate material and the ever increasing demand for material and information on Italian civilisation by the ever expanding adult learning programmes throughout the British Isles. Both these important facts send out very strong messages to our political masters.

How many of you however, know of and use our information service which exists to help scholars with their bibliographical queries? When you have a bibliographical problem or need a last minute reference so that you can meet your publisher's deadline, why not think of us? we will be only too happy to help. Not many of you will be aware that we have recently spent £18,000 to purchase the complete set of the Archivio Biografico Italiano, a truly superb biographical resource on microfiche which appears to contain details about every major and minor Italian, even the most obscure, from the year dot to the present day. We have acquired this work so that it can be of benefit to all Italianists so why not try contacting us with your queries? Not all of you appear to be aware that readers at the British Library or in other institutions can suggest books or periodicals for purchase by the Library, so the next time you see a rare item in a catalogue and you feel that there should be a copy of the work in the British Isles, please do not hesitate to contact me. You have my assurance that I give the highest priority to readers' suggestions for acquisition.

We have a very good exhibitions programme and we welcome suggestions for themes for exhibitions. The last very successful exhibition we arranged and sponsored was *Women writers in the Italian Renaissance*. We have also held exhibitions on Tasso, Boccaccio, Dante, The Italian Book, The Officina Bodoni, Sir Anthony Panizzi, Aldus Manutius, and Virgil, to name but a few recent exhibitions of interest to Italianists.

In my view one of the most serious problems facing Departments of Italian in British Universities is that of under funding, particularly funding for the purchase of Italian books and particularly periodicals at undergraduate and postgraduate level. One immediate solution has been to update the Guide to Italian Periodicals in British Universities which was originally compiled by Brian Cainen and is now available online as IPCAT at: <http://www.ipcat.leeds.ac.uk>

In summary, the British Library is a very rich and an invaluable resource for Italianists in general, and for British Italianists in particular. Many other Italianists from Italy, and indeed from all over the world, come to use our Italian holdings on a regular basis, thus ensuring that Italian is the third most heavily used foreign language at The British Library, following books in French and German.

I know many of you make full use of the British Library, but I am particularly addressing my invitation to those of you who might not have used us in the past. Come and visit us by all means, and remember that the British Library is your National Library so please do come, and above all, do make use of its many services too.

Denis Reidy, British Library

(1) This article is based on the text of a paper delivered at the Society of Italian Studies Biennial Conference, held at the University of Glasgow on 17-19 April 1997.

(2) For further information on Sir Anthony Panizzi and the Honourable Thomas Grenville and a detailed description of the relationship between the two men which led to the bequest of the Grenville Library to the British Museum, see :- Denis V. Reidy "Panizzi, Grenville and the Grenville Library" in The British Library Journal, Volume 23, Number 2, Autumn 1997, pp. 115 - 130.

ISLG Committee elections (May 2003)

The results of the elections were as follows

William Pine-Coffin (Warwick) ----- Chair

Suzanne Oakes (Leeds) ----- Secretary

Chris Michaelides (British Library) E-communications Secretary

Denis Reidy (British Library) ----- Treasurer

Anna Beasley (Reading)

Vernon King (Cambridge UL)

All the votes were unanimous. Jane Gibbs (Warwick) has now stepped down as Secretary, and Chris Taylor (National Library of Scotland) has stepped down for health reasons.