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It might sound rather repetitive and not unlike the commercial for a well known French motor car, but without wishing neither to appear complacent nor to be “resting on our laurels”, the Italian Studies Library Group, which is now in its seventh year, “continues to grow, from strength to strength”. The ISLG has a lot to be proud of. Membership has increased considerably and we now number several senior academics as well as professional librarians and Italianists in the ISLG fold. The ISLG was the first to organise Workshops for new entrants to the library profession and to address topics such as the problems in ordering serials, special Workshops on the acquisition of material on Art and Art History, Language and Literature, History, Dialects and Linguistics etc., which proved to be very successful indeed judging by how well each workshop was attended, especially by members from the other Language Groups. We were also one of the first Language Groups to publish our minutes electronically and our Bulletin in hard copy.

The Bulletin has continued to attract good scholarly articles of a high academic standard and we are pleased to announce that the Bulletin has now been accorded considerable “kudos” in that it has obtained an International Standard Serial Number (an ISSN) assigned by the British Library which now requires us to donate a copy to each of the six copyright libraries in the British Isles. This will make the Bulletin widely known to a much wider audience and to a greater number of potential members. The Committee’s sincere thanks are due to Anna Beasley and Andrea Del Cornò for organising this. Moreover, our Committee’s grateful thanks are also due to The London Library for allowing us to use their premises as an “accommodation” address, required in the imprint statement, since the ISLG Bulletin is technically, “published” in London, in the offices of The London Library.

This year has been one of sustained growth. The number of our members continues to increase and it is very encouraging to see former members who are now in retirement, for example Vernon King, still attending our AGM, or others in part-time work, towards eventual full retirement, intending to be present at next year's AGM, as Suzanne Oakes intends to do.

The Committee extends a very warm welcome to all members both past and present and it is a great pleasure to see similarly minded souls, some even travelling as far as Dublin in Professor Corinna Salvadori Lonergan's case, meeting in a relaxed and an informal atmosphere. It would appear that the initiative of inviting a scholar with an international reputation to speak to us on an Italian or Italianate Humanities subject, followed by a drinks reception, is proving very popular indeed. This year's AGM was particularly well attended and the annual lecture given by Professor Iain Fenlon of King's College, Cambridge, on *Italia in Iberia: Renaissance Music for the Spanish Market* which was enhanced with superb illustrations and recordings, was deemed to be an outstanding success by all forty-five people who attended. The Committee is considering the proposal to publish in the Bulletin the lectures delivered to the ISLG. Next Year's AGM and lecture will be given by John Woodhouse, Emeritus Fiat-Serena Professor of Italian in the University of Oxford, who will give an illustrated lecture on Gabriele D'Annunzio, the proposed title being *The Poet as a Pirate: D'Annunzio at Fiume and on Garda* - the AGM and Lecture will be held at the British Library on Tuesday 23 June, so please put the date down in your diaries.

The Committee has also discussed the possibility of making the annual lectures a more permanent event by naming them the "Dr Mario Casalini Memorial Lectures" to commemorate the passing of Dr Mario Casalini the founder of Casalini Libri. Mario Casalini was a first-class scholar in his own right with an international scholarly reputation who specialised in palaeography - numerous learned journals devoted obituaries to him as did the Universities of Harvard and Yale. We have approached the Casalini Family and they have expressed considerable pleasure in commemorating Mario in this way.

We have decided to publish the Bulletin a little later this year to allow for the inclusion of the report by William Pine Coffin of the very successful WESLINE Conference which was held at the British Library from 1-2 September. Next Year's WESLINE Conference is due to be held at the University of Durham from 2-5 September so another date for your diary.

The Committee has asked me to remind all members that we are open to suggestions regarding new topics for Workshops, proposals to host them, and more importantly, to organise and give them, and for possible new venues where we can hold further meetings in case members were to become a little "jaded" with London, although the consensus is that meetings in London appear to suit most. We are also looking for new members of our Committee and we feel that anyone wishing to serve on the Committee should serve on it informally for a year in the first instance, to see what is involved before making up their mind - anyone wishing to serve should contact me initially, on denis.reidy@bl.uk

All that remains for me to do is to thank you all for your continued support and membership and for me to take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues on the Committee: Anna Beasley, Hélène Fernandes, Bettina Rex, Andrea Del Cornò, Chris Michaelides and William Pine-Coffin for their sterling work on the Committee on your behalf, over the last year their input and commitment has been magnificent. It is a great privilege and an equal pleasure to serve you all with such a dedicated, friendly and professional team.

Denis V. Reidy
ISLG Chair

Report of the Annual General Meeting of the Italian Studies Library Group, 24 June 2008, British Library

Bettina Rex

Cambridge University Library

The 2008 Annual General Meeting followed the pattern of the previous two years, in concluding with an open lecture. This year, the lecture was given by Professor Iain Fenlon of King's College, Cambridge University, and was entitled *Italia in Iberia: Renaissance music for the Spanish market*. The lecture, like the meeting, was held at the British Library and was well attended and much appreciated by everyone present. Beautifully illustrated with slides and music, it was splendidly delivered and thoroughly enjoyed. Professor Fenlon was subsequently thanked and offered life membership of the Italian Studies Library Group.

Earlier in the day, eleven members of the Group had attended the Annual General Meeting, held from 11.30 until 16.00. Present were Denis Reidy (Chair), Christine Anderson, Anna Beasley, Andrea Del Cornò, Hélène Fernandes, Doris Fletcher, Zara Frenkiel, Vernon King, Chris Michaelides, Bettina Rex and Corinna Salvadori Lonergan. The following report gives some idea of the most significant matters discussed at the meeting.

Arrangements for Iain Fenlon's lecture, to be held later that day, were discussed at some length. Over forty people were expected and the lecture was to be followed by a reception. This year it had been decided that the ISLG was not going to ask Casalini to sponsor the reception. Instead, a proposal was made by the Chair that in future the lectures be named the Mario Casalini Memorial Lectures, in memory of the founder of Casalini Libri, the late Dr Mario Casalini, a scholar with an international reputation in his own right. The Committee agreed that this would be a fitting way to commemorate him and that approval for this should be sought from Casalini, with the proviso that the link with the firm should remain of a scholarly, not commercial, nature.

The Treasurer reported that the Group's finances were very healthy at present. Funds were in excess of £1,300 with some subscriptions still due.

There was some discussion concerning the Bulletin. The date of issue has been changed to September, so as to include news of the WESLINE Conference.

Members of the Group present volunteered news of their institutions. At the University of London, Senate House Library is undergoing a fundamental review of special research funding, commissioned by HEFCE. Although the research (S.A.S.) libraries are to be largely unaffected, together with some subjects at SHL, several subjects and the staff who are responsible for them, are considered to be at risk.

At the University of Warwick, Italian is undergoing a major renewal and growth in research interest on Renaissance thought and writing, reflected in library stock. In Cambridge, the University Library is attempting to fill significant gaps in holdings. At the British Library, help and encouragement for postgraduates continues, with a successful open day held in December 2007. At the London Library, a generous donation has been presented for the purpose of cataloguing existing holdings of books printed prior to 1600 (circa 2,500 items). These are at present being added to the online catalogue. At the Natural History Museum, funding is static, with many journal subscriptions being switched to electronic formats.

The Group's plans for 2008/9 were discussed. There was lively debate and discussion about whom to invite to deliver next year's lecture. Several names were put forward, and it was agreed that a literary theme would be appropriate this time. John Woodhouse, Emeritus Fiat-Serena Professor of Italian at Oxford, was one of the names mentioned, and proved the most popular amongst those members present. It was agreed that he would be approached.

The lecture and AGM for next year will be held on 23 June 2009, with a Committee meeting in December 2008. There was some discussion as to whether to hold a workshop in conjunction with WESLINE, and it was suggested that they be approached on this matter.

The meeting ended with my being co-opted on to the Committee. The Committee is keen to stress that anyone else who wishes to join is very welcome and should let us know.

Avant-garde Italy, 1900-1937

Chris Michaelides
The British Library

The exhibition *Breaking the rules: the printed face of the European avant-garde, 1900-1937* held at the British Library between 9 November 2007 and 30 March 2008, was an ambitious and wide-ranging display of mostly printed material related to the various European avant-garde movements that changed the face of modern art and culture during the first half of the twentieth century up to the year of the Degenerate Art exhibition in Munich. Cubism, Expressionism, Futurism, Dadaism, Suprematism, Constructivism, Surrealism and other movements were represented, and there were sections on some thirty European cities which were major centres of avant-garde activity, from Brussels to Vitebsk. Three Italian cities were included – Milan, Florence, and Rome.

The Italian input, one of the most substantial in the exhibition, focused on Futurism, with examples appearing in most of the thematic sections, and the three Italian cities, all major centres of Futurist activity, had individual display cases.¹

¹ The richness of material and the breadth of the exhibition made it necessary to omit certain aspects of avant-garde activity, even some key figures. Giorgio De Chirico and Alberto Savinio were notable omissions as were the “return to order” tendencies of the inter-war years. These were, however, discussed in the Milan, Florence, and Rome chapters of the book accompanying the exhibition which contains more detailed descriptions of the artistic scene in the three cities. See: *Breaking the rules: the printed face of the European avant garde, 1900-1937* (ed. Stephen Bury), London: British Library, 2007.

Manifestos played a key role in the dissemination of avant-garde ideas and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the founder and indefatigable promoter of Futurism, was a skilful advocate of the medium. The collection of Futurist manifestos shown at the exhibition spanned the period between 1909 and 1926 and included some of the key texts from the so-called “heroic” period of the movement (from its inception in 1909 to Italy’s entry into the First World War in 1915). Among those were Marinetti’s first Futurist manifesto (in both its French and Italian versions, published immediately after the appearance of the manifesto in *Le Figaro* on 20 February 1909), his *Abbasso il Tango e Parsifal* (*Down with Tango and Parsifal*) and the manifesto against English art he co-authored with Christopher Nevinson. Also included were manifestos on Futurist music (Francesco Balilla Pratella), sculpture (Umberto Boccioni), and on the Futurist reconstruction of the Universe (Giacomo Balla and Fortunato Depero). The post-war period was represented by manifestos on Aeropainting (Fedele Azari) and Mechanical Art (Enrico Prampolini and Ivo Pannaggi).² One of the most important manifestos was Apollinaire’s *L’Antitradizione futurista* (July 1913).³ The poet’s championship of the Cubists meant that his reactions to Futurism had at times been somewhat harsh, and this gesture of friendship was not without its ambiguities and ironies as in its “significant dating” which is a sly reference to Marinetti’s habit of publishing on the eleventh of the month. Apollinaire’s “merde” and “rose” categories (i.e. pro or against Futurism) were adopted by the Vorticists, becoming “blast” and “bless”, in the first issue of *Blast* in 1914, displayed in a case nearby.

² Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Fondazione e Manifesto del Futurismo* (1909); Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Manifeste du Futurisme* (1909); Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Abbasso il Tango e Parsifal* (1914); Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Christopher Richard Nevinson, *Contre l’art anglais. Manifeste futuriste* (1914); Francesco Balilla Pratella, *Manifeste des Musiciens Futuristes* (1911); Umberto Boccioni, *Manifeste technique de la sculpture futuriste* (1912); Giacomo Balla, Fortunato Depero, *Ricostruzione futurista dell’universo* (1915); Fedele Azari, *Le théâtre aérien futuriste* (1919); [Enrico Prampolini, Ivo Pannaggi, Vinicio Paladini] *L’Art Mécanique. Manifeste futuriste* (1926 – originally published in 1923).

³ Guillaume Apollinaire, *L’Antitradition futuriste* (1913). This was the fourteenth Futurist manifesto published by Marinetti, in French and Italian versions, the latter also appearing in *Lacerba* on 15 September.

Visual poetry, i.e. the interplay between word and image, making the graphic layout part of the work, was an important element in avant-garde publishing and the Futurist contribution was fundamental. Marinetti's "words-in-freedom", like Apollinaire's *calligrammes*, combined words into expressive shapes in an attempt to liberate poetry from the restrictions of grammar and syntax. In his *Zang tumb tuuum* (Milan, 1914), a poem-reportage on the Siege of Adrianople by Bulgarian troops during the first Balkan War, Marinetti outlined his theories about "words-in-freedom", which he had previously expounded in various manifestos, using onomatopoeic words, mathematical symbols instead of conjunctions, and words recreating the noises of modern warfare.⁴ The Neapolitan poet and painter Francesco Cangiullo was one of the most original creators of "words-in-freedom" contributing various poems to journals like *Lacerba*, *Italia futurista* and the dadaist *Cabaret Voltaire*. Like Balla, who was a strong influence, he appeared in the Futurist performances organised by the Galleria Sprovieri in Rome and Naples. His *Poesia pentagrammata* (Naples, 1923), is a collection of poems the verses of which are written, like musical notes, on a staff. The cover design of the book, by Prampolini, is in the spirit of the work. The same inventiveness was also apparent in his *Caffe Concerto: alfabeto a sorpresa* (Milan, 1919), a spirited album representing a music hall performance in which the various performers are represented by combinations of numerals and letter forms.

A similar experimentation is shown in Gino Severini's first "dipinto parolibero" ("free-word painting"), a new type of literary and artistic expression.

⁴ Marinetti's recitation of a passage from the book, a description of the night bombardment of Adrianople, recorded in 1924, was part of the sound recordings that could be heard at the exhibition. Marinetti often performed this passage which attempts to recreate the ferocity and noise of the battle - with its cannon blasts, machine gun fire, its chaos and confusion - histrionically delivering at breakneck speed its numerous onomatopoeic words. A recording of Marinetti's reading of his *Definizione di Futurismo* could also be accessed; it was recorded in 1924, at a time when Futurism was in danger of being marginalised. Here Marinetti gives a typically robust account of fifteen years of Futurist activity describing the movement's love of danger and its dislike of academism, bureaucracy and tradition. He is careful to underline the Futurist movement's patriotism and its role as a precursor of Fascism.

Its original title was *Danzatrice=Mare* (*Dancer=Sea*) and its combination of forms and words were meant to suggest analogies between a dancer's movement, a whirring propeller, and a flying bullet. When the drawing was published in *Lacerba* on 1 July 1914 (shown at the exhibition) its title was changed into *Danza serpentina*, a reference to Loie Fuller's famous dance, a title Severini never accepted.⁵ The work influenced Carlo Carrà's collage *Festa patriottica*, another notable example of a free-word painting, also published in *Lacerba* (1 August 1914).

The exhibition showed the importance of travel in the diffusion and cross-fertilisation of ideas. Here again the Futurists played a prominent role. The formation of the Futurist painters' group in 1910 was followed by a major touring exhibition which started at the Berheim-Jeune gallery in Paris in February 1912 and then, after its London showing in March, moved on to Berlin, Brussels and other European cities. In London the exhibition was shown at the Sackville Gallery and included thirty-four works by Boccioni, Carrà, Russolo and Severini. It aroused considerable interest and received extensive press coverage, including a remarkable colour supplement of *The Sketch* which reproduced "by natural-colour photography" six paintings that have since become icons of early Futurism.⁶ Marinetti also gave a lecture at the Bechstein Hall (now Wigmore Hall) which, according to *The Times* reviewer, was read "... in French with such an impassioned torrent of words that some of his audience begged for mercy".⁷ Marinetti's careful planning of his campaigns was also shown in two letters he wrote to Sydney Schiff shortly before the second Futurist exhibition in

⁵ The composition of this work predated by some six weeks Apollinaire's *Lettre-océan* (the first *calligramme*) which, however, was published a fortnight earlier, on 15 June 1914.

⁶ Curiously, only works by Boccioni and Severini were reproduced. They were: Boccioni's *Idolo moderno* (Estorick Collection, London), *Visioni simultanee* (Van der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal), and *La risata* (Museum of Modern Art, New York); and Severini's *Le Boulevard* (Estorick Collection, London), *Souvenirs de voyage* (private collection), and *La danse du Pan-Pan au 'Monico'* (this was later destroyed in Germany and a replica painted by Boccioni in 1959-60 is now in the Centre Pompidou, Paris). All six works were painted in 1911.

⁷ *The aims of Futurism, at the Bechstein Hall, The Times* 21 March, 1912.

London in 1914.⁸ They anticipate Marinetti's forthcoming lecture delivered at the Doré Gallery in New Bond Street on 28 May 1914, one of a series of lectures he gave during the run of the exhibition. In the letter dated 16 May 1914, Marinetti informs Schiff that he will send him several invitations to his talk and that he is relying on Schiff's indefatigable power of propaganda.

During the same visit to London Marinetti also took part in a series of concerts given by Luigi Russolo at the London Coliseum (then a music hall) in June 1914. Russolo, one of the signatories of the Manifesto of the Futurist Painters in 1910, abandoned painting in 1913 in order to study the musical implications of noise. He designed the "intonarumori" (noise intoners), musical instruments that produced new timbres imitating the noises of the modern city. They included howlers, exploders, boomers, cracklers, scrapers, and gurglers.⁹ The London performances received a hostile reception. On 16 June *The Times* reported that:

"Signor Marinetti rather mistook his audience yesterday afternoon when he tried to deliver an academic exposition of Futurist principles at the Coliseum, and he had, in consequence, to put up with a rude reception from a gallery which seemed fully qualified to give him a lesson in his own 'Art of Noises'. He faced his interruption with exemplary courage however, and continued his speech to its end, after which the curtain rose upon an orchestra of weird funnel-shaped instruments directed by Signor Luigi Russolo. It is impossible to say that the first of the 'noise-spirals' performed, 'The Awakening of a Great City', was as exhilarating as Futurist art usually is; on the contrary, it rather resembled the sounds heard in the rigging of a Channel-steamer during a bad crossing, and it was, perhaps, unwise of the players – or should we call them 'noisicians'? – to proceed with

⁸ Schiff (who wrote using the pseudonym Peter Hudson) was a novelist, translator, and a notable patron of avant-garde artists and writers in London, both before and after the First World War. Marinetti's letters to Schiff are in the British Library collection: Add. MS 52923, ff. 90b-108b. The two letters shown at the exhibition were ff.101 & 102.

⁹ The results of Russolo's researches were published in a manifesto and, in an expanded form, in *L'arte dei rumori* (Milan, 1916) where he also describes the early reactions to the concerts he conducted using the instruments.

their second piece, ‘A Meeting of Motor-cars and Aeroplanes’ after the pathetic cries of ‘No More!’ which greeted them from all the excited quarters of the auditorium.”

The piece mentioned in this article, *Dalla rete dei rumori: Risveglio di una città* (*From the web of noises: the Awakening of a city*) was published in *Lacerba* on 1 March 1914 for an orchestra consisting of eight intonarumori, together with an article in which Russolo introduced a new style of musical notation. It was one of several music items at the exhibition which also included the sounds produced by some other intonarumori – the Gorgogliatore (Gurgler), the Ululatore (Howler), the Ronzatore (Buzzer or Low Hummer), and the Crepitatore (Crackler).¹⁰

The exhibition also presented examples of the music of two other Futurist composers, Francesco Balilla Pratella and Aldo Giuntini. Pratella wrote three Futurist manifestos and his compositions include opera (*L’Aviatore Dro*), songs and orchestral works. In 1913 he composed *La Guerra*, three dances for orchestra evoking pre-battle expectation, the battle itself, and victory. In the second of these movements, *La Battaglia*, which could be heard at the exhibition, Pratella uses a traditional French folk song, *Nos lauriers sont à couper*, also used by Debussy, though the rhythmic ferocity of Pratella’s work is reminiscent of early Prokofiev. Marinetti was also involved in the last of the Futurist compositions heard at the exhibition. In a recording made in 1931 he introduces short *Musical Futuristic Syntheses* by Aldo Giuntini – *The Infinite*, *The Feast of the Engines*, *Flying Lovers*, *Simultaneous Battle of Earth, Sea, and Sky* and the two pieces heard in the exhibition – *Machines* and *The Sea*. According to Marinetti, the brevity of these compositions (they are approximately one-minute long) precludes any thematic development and they capture, instead, the pure essence of music.

¹⁰ All these musical extracts were taken from: *Musica Futurista: The Art of Noises*. On Russolo see: *Luigi Russolo: vita e opere di un futurista*, Milano: Skira, 2006.

Milan, Florence, Rome.

Thanks to Marinetti, Milan became the epicentre of Futurism, especially in the early years of the movement.¹¹ Marinetti took up residence in Milan in 1898 and, until his move to Rome in 1925, he conducted his publishing activities first from his paternal home in Via Senato and later from his apartment in Corso Venezia. From 1907 his publications had the imprint Edizioni di “Poesia” and from 1910 Edizioni futuriste di “Poesia”.

The Milan display included works spanning nearly three decades of Futurist activity, from Marinetti’s *Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna* (1911) to Alfredo Casella’s *Il deserto tentato* (1937). The first text, originally published in 1909 in *Poesia* (the literary journal published by Marinetti between 1905 and 1909), is an excellent example of Marinettian purple prose, a cosmic allegory in which an army of Futurists, accompanied by the liberated inmates of an asylum and wild beasts, wage war against the cities of Paralysis and Podagra (Gout), the symbols of tradition and bourgeois mediocrity. Alfredo Casella’s composition is a one-act mystery, written in praise of Mussolini’s Abyssinian Campaign, with a libretto by Corrado Pavolini; it was premiered at the “Maggio musicale fiorentino” in 1937, three years after the publication of the *Manifesto futurista di aeromusica* (signed by Marinetti and Giuntini). The voice parts include Aviators, the Earth, the roar of aeroplanes, and a Euphorbia. Casella had a long association with Futurism. In 1917 he composed his first Futurist work, the *Trois pièces pour pianola* and the following year he conducted Depero’s *Balli plastici* at the “Teatro dei Piccoli” in Rome for which he wrote an arrangement of his *Pupazzetti*, an earlier chamber piece.

The display also included one of the milestones in Futurist book production, Fortunato Depero’s *Depero futurista, 1913-1927*, also known as “the bolted book”, published in Milan in 1927.

¹¹ It features in such key works like Umberto Boccioni’s *Officine a Porta Romana* (1909), which shows the industrial expansion of Milan, *La Città sale* (1910), and *Rissa in Galleria* (1910), which shows civic unrest erupting in the fashionable centre of the city. Civic unrest is also depicted in Carlo Carrà’s *I funerali dell’anarchico Galli* (1910).

It is a celebration of the work of Depero and an advertisement for Dinamo-Azari, the Milanese publishing house of Fedele Azari who commissioned it. Azari was a fellow Futurist painter and writer of various manifestos. A keen aviator, he co-authored with Marinetti *Il primo dizionario aereo italiano* (1929). The display also included Nelson Morpurgo's collection of highly inventive "words-in-freedom" *Il Fuoco delle Piramidi* (1923). Like Marinetti, Morpurgo (1899-1978) was born in Egypt. By 1915 he was in Milan where he became involved in various Futurist activities. On the advice of Marinetti he returned to Egypt in 1920 where he continued to promote Futurism until the late 1930s. *Il Fuoco delle Piramidi* is the most important among the numerous works he published either in Egypt or in Italy.

The prominence of Florence as a centre of the avant-garde is largely due to the publication there of *Lacerba* and *Italia futurista*, two of the most important and typographically adventurous journals in Europe. *Lacerba* (1913-1915) was the creation of Ardengo Soffici and Giovanni Papini, though not initially a Futurist publication (in fact the two men were critical of the Milanese Futurists and Marinetti's bombastic style, the "marinettismo"). Nevertheless Soffici and Papini joined in the Futurist fray and there was collaboration between the Milanese and Florentine Futurists in the issues of the Journal published between 15 March 1913 and August 1914.

There were contributions from all Futurist artists (with the exception of Balla) which included several intricate and imaginatively designed "words-in-freedom" by Cangiullo, Severini and Carrà, manifestos and music scores. Marinetti contributed articles in most issues and, thanks to Soffici's extensive contacts,¹² there were numerous pieces by distinguished writers and artists from abroad, including drawings by Picasso and Archipenko and texts by Max Jacob, Ambroise Vollard and Apollinaire.

¹² Soffici was, like Gino Severini, an important link between the French and Italian avant-garde. He had lived in Paris between 1900 and 1907 where he befriended artists and men of letters.

The variety of the magazine's contents could be seen in the opening from the issue of 15 October 1913 which included one of Umberto Boccioni's studies for the painting *Dynamism of a cyclist*, a text by Carlo Carrà and a chapter from Max Jacob's novel *Saint Matorel*.¹³

The work of Soffici as a poet and artist was also shown in this section. Between 1914 and 1915 Soffici completed some fifty still life paintings, half of which were collages. On 14 February 1915 *Lacerba* reproduced one of his compositions made up entirely from newspaper cuttings on which are stamped the names of liqueurs like FCB (Ferro China Bisleri) and Strega, the names of months, restaurants, and the shapes of bottles.¹⁴ The work is redolent of Russian Cubo-Futurism, the imagery of commercial posters and the cubist collages of Picasso.

Soffici's experiments with collage painting could also be seen in the cover of *BİFŞZF+18. Simultaneità e Chimismi lirici*, a collection of poems he published in 1915, shortly after the demise of *Lacerba*. The title is a random combination of typographic characters from a printer's table and the boldly coloured cover design is, appropriately, a typographic collage suggesting overlapping title pages and indicating author, title, subtitle, publisher, and price in different styles. This folio first edition is the masterpiece of Florentine futurism and is also extremely rare as many of the three-hundred copies printed were destroyed in the Florence flood of 1966. A second edition of the work was published in 1919 but in octavo format and without the impressive cover of the original, though it retained some of its typography, re-using the same typeface for the main title, which is again printed in red. The work consists of two poetry collections: *Simultaneità*, in mood and technique close to Apollinaire's *Alcools* (1913), and *Chimismi lirici* which contains several imaginative "words-in-freedom".

¹³ The three volumes of Jacob's *Matorel* trilogy, published by Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler between 1911 and 1914, and illustrated with etchings by Picasso (vols. 1 and 3) and woodcuts by Derain (vol. 2) were also shown in a case nearby (Paris display).

¹⁴ The same issue of *Lacerba* includes the article *Futurismo e Marinettismo* signed by Palazzeschi, Papini, and Soffici which marked the end of the Journal's collaboration with Marinetti's group.

Rome, the third of the Italian cities featured in the exhibition, was also one of the major centres of avant-garde activity, especially during the inter-war years when opposing avant-garde and “return to order” movements were active in the city. On the eve of the outbreak of the First World War it became the lively theatre of Futurist manifestations, beginning on 11 February 1913 with an exhibition of paintings in the foyer of Teatro Costanzi (now Teatro dell’Opera) accompanied by two Futurist evenings which included the premiere of Balilla Pratella’s *Musica futurista per orchestra* and a reading by Papini of his *Discorso di Roma* denouncing the city as a symbol of passéism. 1913 also saw the opening of the Galleria Sprovieri which became the focus of avant-garde activities in Rome until Italy’s entry into the War. It presented poetry readings by Marinetti and Cangiullo, concerts by Russolo and Balilla Pratella and an International Futurist Exhibition showing works by English, Belgian, American, Ukranian and Russian artists. After the War the focus shifted to the Casa d’arte Bragaglia (first in Via Condotti and later in Via degli Avignonesi). Its driving force was Anton Giulio Bragaglia, a cultural impresario, theatre director, experimental filmmaker and photographer who, between 1918 and 1930, organised some one-hundred and sixty exhibitions and mounted theatrical events.¹⁵

Several important avant-garde journals were published in Rome during this period;¹⁶ two of them were included in the exhibition:

Noi: rivista d’arte futurista (1917-1920; 1923-1925), an international review of avant-garde art, founded, edited and designed by Enrico Prampolini. Its coverage included all the major avant-garde movements of the period and contributors ranged from the Futurists and De Chirico to Tristan Tzara, Pierre Reverdy, Igor Stravinsky and Lord Berners. Displayed was a special issue of the Journal, dedicated to the work of Balla, Depero, and Prampolini who, in 1925, represented Italy at the Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs in Paris.

¹⁵ Both galleries had performing spaces on their premises – the one in Via Condotti had a cabaret, the “Gallina a tre zampe”, while the establishment in Via degli Avignonesi had its own theatre, the “Teatro degli Indipendenti”, which was decorated by Balla, Depero and Prampolini.

¹⁶ *Roma futurista* (20 September 1918-May 1920); *Valori plastici* (1918-1922); *Futurismo* (1932-1934, from 1933 renamed *Sant’Elia*).

Broom (November 1921-January 1924) was the creation of Harold E. Loeb and Alfred Kreymborg. Their aim was to publish little-known or unappreciated authors, European or American, with a preference for experimental writing. During the Rome period of the Journal (which lasted from its inception until November 1922 when it moved to Berlin) Giuseppe Prezzolini was an associate editor. The choice of Rome was determined by low production costs and by the excellence of the typographical work produced there. Contributors included John Dos Passos, E.E. Cummings, Jean Cocteau, Luigi Pirandello and Gertrude Stein and there were reproductions of works by André Derain, Juan Gris and Jacques Lipchitz. The two issues on display (vol. 1, no. 3 and vol. 2, no. 3, 1922) had covers by Fernand Léger and Ladislav Medges.

The Rome section also paid tribute to Marinetti's tireless campaigns for the cause of Futurism, an important part of which was the promotion of work by new Futurist poets. *I Nuovi poeti futuristi*, published in Rome in 1925, the year of Marinetti's move to the city, is an anthology introducing the work of a new generation of poets.¹⁷ Marinetti presents the work of fourteen poets, eight of whom contribute "words-in-freedom" poetry. Both volumes contain poetry by Marinetti himself. Other poets included are: Fillia (with whom Marinetti later wrote *La Cucina futurista*),¹⁸ Bruno G. Sanzin, Farfa and Cesare Simonetti whose poem *Treno in corsa*, an effective example of visual and sound concrete poetry, was on display.

¹⁷ In a similar anthology, *I Poeti futuristi* (1912), Marinetti had introduced the work of twelve poets. Unlike the second anthology this volume does not include "words-in-freedom".

¹⁸ *La Cucina futurista* (1932) was displayed in the Gesamtkunstwerk section of the exhibition because it proposes food as a total work of art as it stimulates all the senses. The work provides various recipes such as "Aerovivanda" ("Aerofood"), "Bocconi simultanei" ("Simultaneous morsels"), "Garofani allo spiedo" ("Carnations on a spit"), "Costolette tennis" ("Tennis cutlets"), and "Pollo d'acciaio" ("Steel chicken"). The volume also gives an account of various futurist banquets using recipes devised by Prampolini, Fillia, and other Futurists. These followed the publication, in 1930, of Marinetti's manifesto of futurist cuisine in which he attacked bourgeois cooking and provocatively suggested the abolition of pasta.

Narnia and Narni: an intriguing parallel

Giuseppe Fortunati

Narnia is the imaginary name bestowed by C.S. Lewis on the enchanted land where his famous stories – *The Chronicles of Narnia* – take place. Although *The Chronicles of Narnia* developed at the whim of C.S. Lewis, unexpectedly some parts find their roots in Italy and Italian culture. It is less widely known that Narnia is in fact the Latin name of an Italian town, known today as Narni. C.S. Lewis's creative imagination found inspiration with "real" things or places. Aslan, the roaring lion of the *Chronicles* and creator of the world of Narnia, derives from the Turkish language. Furthermore, the name of the character the Prince Caspian is clearly inspired by a real location, the Caspian Sea. Narnia refers to Narni in Umbria, one of the central regions of Italy. Narnia, originally known as Nequinium, was named by the conquering Romans, in 299 B.C., after the River Nar, today Nera, a tributary of the Tiber. The strategic position – being seated on a hilltop - made Narnia an important stronghold on the Via Flaminia, one of the Roman consular roads, linking Rome to the Adriatic coast. Across the River Nar the Romans built the majestic "Bridge of Augustus". Its ruins – which during the Grand Tour attracted many visitors and travellers – can still be admired today. The inspiration from the bridge – which originally spanned for 160 meters in length and 35 in height – was captured in several works of arts, amongst them the painting of the French impressionist Jean Baptiste Camille Corot (1796-1875).

C.S. Lewis was a fine scholar with a profound knowledge of Latin and Latin literature. Additionally, he had a deep understanding of Italian culture and as a Fellow at Oxford and later Professor at Cambridge he was ideally placed to further his classical studies. His teacher, Kirkpatrick, had read many Greek and Latin classics with the young Lewis and later said that: "Lewis read more classic books than any other boy I taught". C.S. Lewis's correspondence with Don Calabria, during the years 1947-1954, was maintained rigorously in Latin. Over the course of his youth and during his studies Lewis read several classic Latin authors: Livy, Tacitus, Pliny the Elder, and Pliny the Younger. It is most likely that through their writings he came across the name Narnia. For example, Pliny the Younger in a letter addressed

to his mother-in-law, praises her villa located in Narnia, the comforts it provides and the splendour of its baths. Several references to Narnia can be found in Livy's *Ab urbe condita* which recounts the Roman military campaigns against the Etruscans and other Italic tribes at the end of the fourth century B.C. Interestingly, in his *Naturalis Historia*, Pliny the Elder refers to the vagaries of the climate around the Narnia area. This may have found an echo in C.S. Lewis's Narnia "where it was always winter but never Christmas".

Walter Hooper, leading biographer of the Belfast-born writer, has substantiated this account of events. C.S. Lewis left him a map of Italy taken from the *Murray's small classical atlas*, published in 1904. In this atlas C.S. Lewis had underlined or circled several towns, one of which was Narnia. C.S. Lewis had also confided to Walter Hooper that it was from that map he had found the inspiration to christen his magical land. The name of this Umbrian town, some miles north of Rome, has inadvertently become familiar to children and adults worldwide. The Walt Disney film version of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* – a faithful rendition of the book – and its sequel *Prince Caspian* on recent release, have certainly contributed to the revival of C.S. Lewis's fame as a children's author. Many children dream of stumbling across an old and dusty wardrobe forgotten in a spare room and being catapulted into their own parallel world, into their very own Narnia.

Interestingly, Narni presents a historical link to the City of Gloucester, in the west of England. In 97 A.D. Gloucester was granted the status of *colonia* by the Emperor Marcus Cocceius Nerva, native of Narni. Gloucester's citizens were to have equal rights with those of Rome. An equestrian statue was unveiled in 2002 to commemorate the Roman Emperor and his gesture. Narni too is considering commissioning a similar statue and contacts have been made with the Gloucester Civic Trust.

Narnia has also inspired an ambitious educational project: started in 2002 it aims to bring together students from around the world, encouraging them to share their experiences and activities. Primarily intended for high schools students, the Narnia Project has seen the involvement of junior schools too.

The venture, which promotes the reading of C.S. Lewis's works and other children's books, has established a collaboration with the international iEARN Project. *The Chronicles of Narnia* have been the inspiration for school exhibitions, theatrical plays and even the setting up of an international book club. The Narnia Project is growing steadily – more and more schools worldwide have joined its activities – echoing the final assertion of Professor Kirke to the Pevensie siblings in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*: “Yes, of course you'll get back to Narnia again some day” this is “only the beginning of the adventures of Narnia”.

Giuseppe Fortunati is the author of the book “Narnia e Narni: dalla storia al fantastico” and editor of the Narnia website: <http://www.narnia.it/>

Giuseppe Mazzini and his English “sisters”

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Giuseppe Mazzini arrived in London in January 1837. Until his final departure, in February 1871, he would live there, apart from short periods, for nearly 30 years. Mazzini was born in Genoa, Italy, in 1805, but it was in London that, as a political exile, he would spend most of his life. London was crucial to the development of Mazzini's personality and activities and England would become his *patria costitutiva*. Following his first three years in the city, during which he found it difficult to adapt, Mazzini obstinately improved his knowledge of English and cultivated several friendships which were to prove most helpful. The corpus of correspondence left by Mazzini and his female acquaintances reveals the importance of these connections and casts a light on both the exiled Italian patriot and those devoted and adoring women – all well-educated and intellectually endowed – whom Mazzini enjoyed referring to as his “sisters”. The exact nature of Mazzini's relationships with some of these women remains unclear and ambiguous.

The affectionate terms, transcending poetical tenderness, sensitivity and delicate attentiveness, which Mazzini employed in addressing these “sisters”, might lead the reader to question the real depth of the feelings which inspired them. The letters and personal notes from Mazzini’s female acquaintances clearly reveal their devotion to the leader of the Italian unity cause. The testimony of Mazzini’s friends and others, not necessarily close to him, consistently reveal a man different from the hieratic figure the *vulgata storica* appears to suggest. They all concur on his having an extraordinary charisma, a sense of humour, a “hypnotic” power in his gaze, a special warmth in his voice and a dazzling smile. In her introduction to *Letters to an English family* E.F. Richards, one of the descendants of the Mazzini’s entourage in England, emphasises once again the fascination Mazzini was capable of exerting on those to whom he spoke and attributes it to his faultless courtesy, his goodwill, his great culture, his extraordinary memory and, furthermore, his profoundness of feeling, tolerance and steadfastness. It is not surprising that Mazzini excited a torrent of feeling amongst his female acquaintances and many became infatuated. No doubt his adventurous life and the ideals he fought for were fascinating and these women did not hesitate to get involved, with their creativity and enthusiasm, and offer their assistance. These “sisters” provided Mazzini not only with attentive and affectionate care, but also the concrete help he needed to further his political and social aims. It was certainly not a question of dramatic actions but rather one of countless small gestures, the lending of a helping hand, without which Mazzini’s work would probably have developed to a different extent. His “sisters” were his “helpers” to whom he knew he could turn to find funds for the poor children’s free school in Holborn; to organise the school’s annual party; to help Italian exiles in London obtain private English tuition. They assisted him in furthering the cause of Italian unity by finding new subscribers for the various newspapers Mazzini was editor of, safely circulating them, and by despatching his private correspondence.

In London, more than anywhere else, Mazzini's female friends played an important role. Unfailingly at his side even at the most difficult times when Mazzini was socially isolated and lacked any family connections, they sustained his morale and often supported him financially, unfalteringly maintaining their loyalty. Sarah Nathan, the Ashursts, Jane Carlyle and Jessie White Mario, were among the "sisters" whose assistance and influence were so important in the life and work of Mazzini.

Sarah Nathan, Italian by birth, had married a wealthy Anglo-Jewish banker. She was at Mazzini's side, from his arrival in London, through his first three years of hardship, penury and loneliness, right to his final days. Without any hesitation she put her sizeable fortune at his service. The entire Nathan family devoted themselves, as Sarah had done, to protect and support Mazzini. They also assisted him in completing numerous journeys to the Continent. It was at Pisa, in the house of Sarah's daughter, Janet Rosselli, that Mazzini found shelter when he fell ill and died on 10 March 1872.

Jane Carlyle, spouse of the famous Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle, like her husband did not share Mazzini's convictions but it is quite likely that she fell in love with him. Mazzini, in a letter to his mother, wrote that he cared for her "like a sister [...] for her tender heart, for the love she has for my country and my ideas, for her devotion to my well being, for her affection toward my friends and those I hold dear". Their relationship began in 1840 and it was during many long walks together that Mazzini discovered London and began to appreciate it. It was again with Jane that the most deprived areas of the city were revealed to him and he became aware of the sufferings of the humble Italian immigrants and street children whose welfare concerned him deeply. In 1841 Mazzini founded a free primary school which opened on 10 November that year.

This relationship, however, suffered from Jane's jealousy and her resentment toward other women Mazzini met, who persistently sought his company. She accused him of exploiting their affection in order to gain admittance to high circles of society. While the relationship with Jane was withering, Mazzini started to get close to members of another English family, the Ashursts, who, according to Jane, "worshipped him slavishly".

They were to become Mazzini's adoptive family to the point that, after the death of his mother, Mazzini would call Mrs. Ashurst his "second mother". The head of the family, William Henry Ashurst, was a lawyer and a political activist, one of his many causes being the emancipation of women. He was also the founder, in 1851-1852, of the "Friends of Italy". The personalities and individual achievements of his offspring show how deeply this free thinker and pioneer of feminism succeeded in passing on his values to his children.

William Henry Junior was a fervent believer in Mazzini's philosophy and became the Treasurer of the Garibaldi Special Fund, whilst his four daughters, Elise, Mathilde, Caroline and Emilie, were to Mazzini, as he himself wrote to his mother, "sisters and loving sisters". Elise was the first to meet Mazzini and, as evidences suggest, she fell in love with him. An admirer of George Sand and her translator, Elise made a stand for her independence by marrying a French workman, against the wishes of her family. She died giving birth in Paris in 1850. Mazzini's relationship with Mathilde, married to Joseph Biggs, was far less significant. Caroline, married to a rich brewer, James Stansfeld, also a friend of Mazzini, was an equally ardent supporter of the Italian cause. The tone employed by Mazzini in his letters to her indicates that he felt more than just a simple platonic friendship. Emilie was the most active, devoted and steadiest of the four Ashurst sisters. She married first a London lawyer, Sydney Hawkes, from whom she divorced. In 1861 she married an Italian émigré, Carlo Venturi, previously an officer under Giuseppe Garibaldi. On becoming a widow soon after this marriage, she devoted her life to the Italian cause, to the translation and dissemination of Mazzini's work, and to the campaign for the emancipation of women and their right to vote.

In London Mazzini met regularly with other leading figures of the feminist movement, such as the journalists Margaret Fuller and Harriet Martineau. These relationships and the correspondence which was maintained between them are certainly factors justifying Mazzini's enduring reputation as one of the early advocates of the feminism movement. Other female acquaintances in London deserve mention – although Mazzini did not count them amongst his "sisters". They belonged to a small circle of English friends who prompted the Italian exile to state that, if Italy was his native country, his real family were to be found in London.

Among these women was one of the most prominent personalities in London's high society of the time, Madame Arethusa Milner Gibson, whose husband was a Member of Parliament and a personal friend of Benjamin Disraeli, first Earl of Beaconsfield. Madame Arethusa exploited her position and resources to support the cause of Italian unity and give assistance to those Italian political émigrés who found refuge in England. She was one of the most fervent pro-Italian supporters in England, going so far as to make a daring appearance at the theatre in Genoa dressed in a green, white and red garment. Her home was open to exiles from all countries and to those who fought for freedom. Her "salon", which welcomed several *avant-garde* personalities, offered Mazzini the opportunity to make useful contacts for his cause.

Another influential woman was Clementia Taylor, who, to the end of Mazzini's life, belonged to "the select circle of those [women] in England [Mazzini] loved". Although the Taylors did not share Mazzini's political views, they were at his side in the campaign for the rights of Italian immigrants. Intelligent and cultured, Clementia worked untiringly organising all the anniversary celebrations of the free school and the charity fundraising events held in support of Mazzini's "protégés". Peter Taylor, her husband, had no hesitation in offering financial support and was one of the foremost figures in various movements, such as the *Italian Refugee Fund*, which was set up to assist the Italian population in London.

An exceptional figure, Jessica White Mario, nicknamed by Mazzini as the "Joan of Arc" of the Italian cause, stands out amongst his other friends. She was indeed a real heroine of the Risorgimento. She devoted herself, unflaggingly, to promoting Mazzini's views and, like her husband Alberto Mario – a patriot, writer and a friend of Mazzini – had an adventurous life. More discreet but always loyal and appreciated were Henrietta Hamilton King, Giorgina Craufurd, who would become Madame Aurelio Saffi, and her sister, "*la buona, devota e tacita*" Kate, whom Mazzini regarded as "one of the best Italians that ever was".

He knew he could rely on each of them. Mazzini's female entourage certainly did not conform to the conventional notion of a "court". It was actually more like an army.

And when Mazzini took up the battle cry, it was his English “sisters” who were mobilised. These women, by their actions and support, had – alongside their leader – strengthened a fine relationship between England and Italy. In entrusting these ladies, Mazzini revealed his conception and attitude toward women and, for this reason, he has been hailed as one of the pioneers in the struggle for gender equality.

History of a most eclectic institution: the missed vocations of the “Biblioteca Romana” of the Capitoline Archive

Vincenzo Frustaci

Biblioteca Romana Archivio Storico Capitolino

Despite the vaguely philosophical tone of the title, this article will focus on the history and present state of an important Roman library, following the historical events and ideas that contributed to its creation and later transformations. The Biblioteca Romana, as it is known today, has lived through unique historical vicissitudes and can be seen as a final stage in a process of stratification, not only in terms of bibliographic collections but also ideals and intentions rooted in the cultural and institutional history of the municipality of Rome.

The very idea of a public library for the city of Rome goes back a long way. In the 16th century, under the pontificate of Hadrian VI, the last non-Italian pontiff to precede John Paul II, the municipal authority Camera Capitolina issued an ordinance entrusting a member of a noble Roman family with the task of creating a library on the Capitol, located at the Archive of the Camera Capitolina.¹

¹ “*Eodem die mense indictione anno et pontificatu et in huiusmodi consilio supra libraria fienda per virum nobilem dominum Evangelista de Magdalenis lectorem palatii. Ex eodem senatus consulto decretum existit quod dominus Evangelista faciat e facere debeat librariam in mansionibus seu locis existentibus super lovio palatii et illius archivio*” Archivio Storico Capitolino, Camera Capitolina, credenzzone I, tomo 15, carta 109r, 26 marzo 1523.

The Library, in accordance with the terminology of the time, was named the “Library of the Roman People”. In truth however, the Roman people were not involved at all. During the following centuries, the Library did nothing more but collected works donated to its keepers, the *Conservatori* or to the *Senatore*, as transpires from contemporary inventories and catalogues.

No further development took place until 1870, which saw Rome annexed to Italy and becoming its capital. Only a year after the capitulation of Porta Pia (20 September 1870), the municipal committee reached an important decision in the history of the Library: “An administrative municipal library shall be established – as stated in the resolution no. 30 of 2 November 1871 – for the benefit of offices of the Municipality, its direction being assigned to one of the substitute councillors, office of which is now bestowed upon marquis Francesco Vitelleschi”.²

This was a pivotal decision. Although Rome’s political and cultural situation had become “Italian”, at the end of the nineteenth century it remained strongly influenced by its Papal past. This is well described by Armando Petrucci:

“In an overarching picture of the Italian libraries and archives system, Rome, long before 1870, represented a peculiar case from an institutional-juridical perspective of the single institutions and, equally, for the variety and complexity of the material collected. [...] This richness, variety and complexity of books and documents belonging to the Roman patrimony, was a direct result of the very high number of collections which were part of it – the majority being inaccessible to the public and open to a few in exceptional circumstances only – and therefore of their differentiated and often specific juridical nature and administrative dependence. [...] All of them, however, in addition to the many others not mentioned here, were well-established [...],

² The resolution is available in the collection preserved at the Biblioteca Romana, *ad annum*.

and were sought by scholars, especially foreign ones, not for being useful research, study and reference tools, [...] but, rather as rich, though in varying degrees, repositories of manuscripts and document collections”.³

Similar thoughts, perhaps of a more general tone, are presented by Alberto Asor Rosa:

“The lack [following the unification of Italy] of a unifying cultural centre worsened the existing situation [the regional and “localized” state of Italian culture]: Rome had not the potential to provide for this need, since, beyond the myth, Rome was a city disheartened and exhausted by centuries-old idleness; and since its role, as assigned by the ruling class following the unification – that of becoming the bureaucratic administrative centre of the Kingdom – was not intended to reinvigorate more genuine and productive energies”.⁴

As mentioned previously, the city administrators attempted to create an administrative library, modelled on the “Bibliothèque administrative” of Paris, to suit the Italian capital’s new status. They did not succeed in matching this model.⁵

In 1887 the private library of Giovanni Vico, sometime librarian at the Ministry of the Interior, was acquired in order to strengthen the newly founded institution, and provide a more robust core to the existing collection of the “Library of the Roman People”. As a matter of fact, in 1879 the Library – by this time referred to as “Capitolina” – was annexed to the Capitoline Archive, with which it was merged. The role of Librarian within the municipal administration was excised and the ideal of a municipal library as an independent institution was abolished.

³ Petrucci, Armando (1977) *I luoghi della ricerca: archive e biblioteche*, Archivio della società romana di storia patria, n. 100, p. 177 ss.

⁴ Asor Rosa, Alberto (1975) *La cultura*, Storia d’Italia, IV, 2, Torino: Einaudi.

⁵ For one of those “vagaries of history” the Bibliothèque in 1871, at the time a leading example of an administrative library, burnt down almost to its ashes in the destruction of the Hotel de la Ville on 24th May that year.

The idea of a leading civic library was equally dismissed. Instead, a support library would be created, which could serve the administrators, officials, and researchers studying documents – at the time scattered in different locations – at the Capitoline Archive, without any regard to its importance. The question of providing a modern service remained remote from the unchangeable, one might say “antiquarian”, spirit which influenced the Capitoline administrators. The concept of a historical cultural institution living in the present, appeared unthinkable.

It was not until the 1920s that the Biblioteca Romana took its final shape and obtained an appropriate location, alongside the Archivio Storico Capitolino in the Palazzo Borromini, where it remains to this day. The existing collection of the original Capitoline Library was enriched by the private library of a Roman prelate, Antonio Marini, which contained a sizeable number of works on Rome and was therefore of special value. This enhanced the Biblioteca Romana’s reputation as the most comprehensive collection of works on Rome and the nearby areas, focussing on the “progress of the knowledge of Rome in every aspect of its life”,⁶ meaning its history, traditions, customs, the institutions of Rome and of the Lazio region, from antiquity to the present day. The Library however - despite its essential role of being a core centre for preserving the historical memory of the city - has never moved towards the more precise concept of a civic library.

In practice not much has changed in the institutional structure of the Roman Library since the 1920s. The Library has retained its name and is still the main repository of documents on Rome and its history. Later bureaucratic interventions have simply reinforced its role. What has changed, however, is the concept of the library itself, following the technological revolution, which could not have been foreseen by the founders or succeeding librarians. Ready access to information and digitisation at the beginning of the 1990s, has had an affect on the Biblioteca Romana too.

⁶ Testa, V. (1930) *Istituzione e ordinamento della Biblioteca romana*, Capitolium, VI, 9, pp. 464-466.

It has changed from being an “antiquarian” and almost inaccessible library, dedicated to researchers of archival documents, to one of the leading institutions within the national library system and of major importance to Rome and the surrounding region.

This progressive opening process has contributed to the emergence of the riches and inner value of the collection far beyond the aspirations of its founders.

The Biblioteca Romana retains its eclecticism and perhaps now, in a virtual environment, has an opportunity to fulfil the ideal of a civic library, capable of unifying different forms of knowledge (documents, images, printed and digital material), and accomplishing the ancient maxim *e pluribus unum*, reflecting the complexity, depth and importance of the history of Rome, *caput mundi*.

The WESLINE Conference at the British Library, 1 & 2 September 2008

William Pine-Coffin
University of Warwick

Each year’s WESLINE Conference demonstrates that the continuing strengths and interests of the language groups remain very evident and encouraging: a good attendance, people with similar responsibilities, and a stimulating and varied programme of talks, visits and dinners. At present there is also an underlying recurrent theme related to the declining proportion of modern language teaching in British schools and universities, and this was articulated by Professor Martin Swales of the British Academy, whose “Languages Matter” working group is compiling a picture of the present situation and providing a detailed view of the advantages – intellectual, cultural and economic - offered by graduates in languages.

The 2008 WESLINE Conference attracted over fifty participants: the theme was the social sciences, to reflect the additional attention now being devoted to this area by the British Library, and in one session we were shown how the Social Sciences Collections and Research team is

gauging the interests of its users and engaging with them with a view to increasing awareness of the British Library's vast resources. We also heard a description by Sarah Wenzel of the University of Chicago Library of the Center for Research Libraries and the Global Resources Network. The CRL was formed in 1949 by thirteen libraries in the U.S. Mid-West as a repository for under-used materials and is now the central hub of a scheme bringing together two-hundred and thirty member libraries, with several additional networks which developed subsequently, the latest being CIFNAL (Collaborative Initiative for French & North America Libraries), which concentrates on Francophone materials and includes participants in Europe and the developing world.

Particularly interesting were four presentations from academics on the second day on selected political topics: Basque nationalism, the extreme right in Europe, political corruption in Germany. The fourth presentation was by Dr Simon Parker of the University of York on *Italy: a European paradox*, in which he highlighted some of the essential characteristics and contradictions that have marked Italian politics since the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of the republic after the Second World War. Significant factors have been the difference in political behaviour between the prosperous north and the less developed south, and the mutual suspicion between the right (the Christian Democratic Party and their successors) and the left in its various manifestations.

Some participants toured the LSE Library whilst other visited the depths of the British Library. The LSE tour was very informative and stimulating. The library is clearly heavily used, though quieter in early September when we saw it.

Although for many of us the social science element in our modern language collections is relatively limited, the efforts made by libraries are far from negligible. Anne Worden of the University of Portsmouth Library explained the high level of instruction offered to their language

students, and Heather Dawson of the LSE, who is a contributor to Intute in the field of politics and European studies, showed that the foreign language element in providing information about material for research is both essential and substantial, and pointed to several examples of articles about President Sarkozy of France.

Next September's conference is already being planned and will take place at the University of Durham.

The ISLG mailing list is based at JISCmail; to join the list go to: **www.jiscmail.ac.uk** or contact Anna Beasley at a.j.beasley@rdg.ac.uk.

ISLG website is hosted by the British Library and can be found at: **www.bl.uk/collections/wider/italian/italstulib.html**
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