



The Library of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana

The Library of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei and Corsiniana owes its double name to the origin of its book collections. The Corsiniana Library was bequeathed to the Accademia by Prince Tommaso Corsini in 1883, when the Italian State bought the family Palace in Via della Lungara, in order to turn it into the new seat of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei.

Only later the Library would accommodate the books and archival collections of the first (XVIIth Century) Accademia.

The Library had an essential role in the cultural aims of the Accademia, as Federico Cesi had formulated them in 1603. Actually, it formed, together with the Museum, the central core of the “Lyceum”, conceived as a place where scholars of various disciplines could meet and converse.

The Library mirrored the manifold scientific interests of the members of the early Accademia: among others, there were books on philosophy, mathematics, architecture, astronomy, geography, history, philology and literature, but also orientalist, astrological, alchemical and hermetic texts that bear witness to the variety and richness of the research carried out in the early Academy, whose aim was to “read this great, veritable and universal book of the world” (G. Galilei), following the scientific method of observation and experimentation.

In 1630, after Cesi’s untimely death, Cassiano dal Pozzo, an early member of the Accademia, acquired the greatest part of the Library. In 1714, his heirs sold the Library to Cardinal Alessandro Albani. The book collection, sacked during the revolutionary uprisings of 1798, was auctioned in 1857; many volumes were lost in the wreck of the ship that was carrying them to the Imperial Library in Berlin, for which they had been purchased.

On the other hand, the Library of the Corsini family reflects the trend in book collecting between the 18th and 19th century, when the Tuscan Family built up an outstanding collection of manuscripts (among which some superb illuminated prayer-books stand out), incunabula (among which the first edition of Vitruvius’ *De architectura*, embellished by Giovanni Battista da Sangallo’s drawings and marginal notes, has to be mentioned), sixteenth-century books, drawings and prints: a collection whose encyclopaedic goal was to document all the fields of knowledge.

Therefore, the Library of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei and Corsiniana is not merely the result of heterogeneous materials that have piled up during the centuries, but a complex array of books, as well as of archival documents and records, which today allow the history of culture and scientific research in Italy and Europe to be better appreciated.



The Library’s reading room

The Library today

The Library is divided into three main departments: the Corsiniana Library; the Academic Library, which contains what still survives of the original Library of Federico Cesi, along with the Historical Archive of the Accademia and the volumes that the Accademia has received either by legacy, donation or purchase; the Oriental Collection, set up in 1924 when the orientalist scholar Leone Caetani presented the Accademia with his private Library, which was added to Michele Amari’s book collection, already acquired in 1889.

Among the highlights of the Academic Library, the Verginelli-Rota collection stands out (mostly consisting in alchemical and hermetic manuscripts and ancient books), which follows in the footsteps of the broad interests of the early Accademia, as documented in its original Library. Also worth mentioning, among the various book collections kept in the Library, are the Ersilia Caetani Lovatelli (1840-1925) collection (modern and ancient books on Rome, arts and European literature), the volumes that once belonged to the Accademia d’Italia (1926-1944) and the Library of the Roman poet Cesare Pascarella (1858-1940), besides the hefty correspondence of some of the major Italian scientists of the last century, such as Guglielmo Marconi, Vito Volterra and Tullio Levi-Civita.

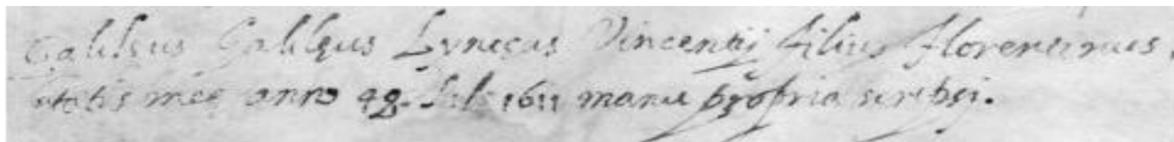


Alchemical image taken from the Clavis Artis by Zoroaster, Jena, 17th century

Melissographia



Rome, 1625



Manuscript "Archivio Linceo" 4. Galileo Galilei's signature as one of the earliest members of the Accademia

A short description of all the funds owned by the Library is available on the Academy's website (www.lincci.it).

Thanks to the work of its highly qualified staff, the Library promotes a conscientious policy of conservation, enlargement and promotion of its book collections, and has launched a wide digitization campaign of old catalogues, manuscripts, ancient books and correspondences; furthermore, the Library has teamed up, among others, with the Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana for the issue of some facsimile editions of manuscripts and ancient books from its collections.

Lately, the Library has also hosted some exhibitions, whose constant aim is to promote the cultural heritage of the Accademia.

The Library supports the Project "Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro" [School-Job alternation]. Recently, it has also promoted some new cultural initiatives: the "Lecture corsiniane" [Corsini lectures] (conferences on humanistic and scientific topics, followed by guided tours of the Library and related temporary Exhibitions), and some special openings to the public on the first Sunday of each month.

Services

The Library is open to the public and guided tours are also available. The Library not only offers reference, reproduction and document delivery services but also provides a local, national and international library loan service.

The Library participates in the *on-line* catalogue of manuscripts of the Italian Libraries network (<http://manus.iccu.sbn.it/>), in the *on-line* catalogue of sixteenth-century Italian books (http://edit16.iccu.sbn.it/web_iccu/ihome.htm), as well as in the Italian National Library Service (<http://www.sbn.it/opacsbn/opac/iccu/free.jsp>).

Numerous other historical catalogues have been digitalized and are now available on the website of the Accademia (www.lincci.it). The collection of periodicals has been almost entirely put on the *on-line* "Catalogo italiano dei periodici" [Italian periodicals Catalogue] (ACNP), available on this site: <http://acnp.unibo.it/cgi-ser/start/it/cnr/fp.html>

More records concerning periodicals are also now available on the National Library Service website (<http://www.sbn.it/opacsbn/opac/iccu/free.jsp>).

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Opening hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 9 am to 1 pm

Tuesday, Thursday: 9 am to 5 pm

The Library is closed on Saturday and in August.