

A Recent Look At University Libraries in Italy

By ROBERT VOSPER

HAPPILY IN RECENT YEARS a thin line of contact between American and Italian libraries has been re-established. In the 1920's when William Warner Bishop and others had a generous hand in modernizing the catalogs of the Vatican Library, under Carnegie Corporation auspices, there was apparently a fair amount of communication, but pressing international events intervened. The story of the destruction of Italian libraries during the war and their subsequent reconstruction is a tragic one, and any review of the current Italian library scene must recall the pressing cost, in funds and in human effort, and the recency of that experience.¹

Intensive American aid was, however, slow to appear on the scene; we were apparently far more prompt and generous in Japan and Germany. Once the major task of physical restoration was under way, Italian librarians felt an increasing interest in bringing their practice of librarianship into line with modern developments elsewhere; at this point, through United States Information Service and Fulbright auspices, we began to offer assistance. In 1951/52, for example, Anne V. Marinelli was in Italy on a Fulbright research grant and, among other services, arranged fruitful seminars in Florence, Rome, and Naples. During the succeeding few years several Italian librarians were enabled to visit the United States. More recently Vernon

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Tate spent three months of the early spring of 1956 meeting with librarians at several points in Italy and helping select a group of eleven librarians who then spent four months of the summer and fall of 1956 in the United States pursuing a well-organized program of seminars and visits to libraries. Stanley West, who had met with this group in the United States, then went to Italy in the spring of 1957 as a Fulbright grantee and participated in a series of regional seminars arranged through USIS, as a follow-up on the 1956 American tour.

My special charge, as a Fulbright lecturer during the three months March through May 1960, was to seek some contact with the Italian university libraries. Of the group that came to the United States in 1956 only one was at the time a university librarian. There was, on the one hand, some thought that the recent experiences of American university libraries would be of interest to the Italians, and, on the other hand, it was quite clear that most of us in the United States have been quite ignorant of the present status of Italian university libraries. We know something of important developments in the several national libraries of Italy, especially the national central libraries of Florence and Rome. For example, in 1957 Florence began to publish in monthly fascicles the *Bibliografia Nazionale Italiana*, very much on the pattern of the *British National Biblio-*

¹ Reported in detail in *La Ricostruzione delle Biblioteche Italiane dopo la Guerra 1940-45*, (Rome: Direzione General delle Accademie e Biblioteche, 1947-53, 2 vols.). See also: *Dieci Anni di Vita delle Biblioteche Italiane*, issued by the same body and covering the years 1945-1955. Volume I (1957) treats of "Le Biblioteche di Stato"; a second volume on non-state libraries is yet to appear.

graphy, and concurrently to issue printed cards. I am confident that many of us receive this efficient new national bibliography. Soon we will hear a good deal, I hope, about the plans for a new building for the National Central Library in Rome, to replace the old building that was condemned and closed to public use a year or more ago. I had the special pleasure in Rome of seeing the detailed plans, selected in March 1960 after a national competition, and it is clear that this, the first major national library building to be built in modern times, will be a handsome, generously proportioned, receptive, and effective structure.²

But for me at least, as well as for most of the people I talked with in the United States, the university libraries of modern Italy have been an unknown quantity. Thus during my stay I read as much as I could lay hands on, talked with specialists at the Ministry of Public Instruction in Rome, and visited as many libraries as I could reach. Along the way, of course, I talked as best I could with students and professors, both Italian and American, about their experiences with Italian libraries.

During National Library Week I was able to participate in programs in Trieste and Padua, including special seminar sessions at the two university libraries. Subsequently during my stay three major regional conferences on university libraries were arranged in Milan, Naples, and Rome by the Ministry of Public Instruction (the Division for Higher Education and the Division for Academies and Libraries), by USIS-Italy, and by the Italian Library Association (AIB). At the Naples session, for example, librarians and professors came in from all of southern Italy and Sicily for a two-day session that involved visits to selected local libraries; my introductory talk on certain historical trends in American and British

university libraries; a viewing of "Bibliodynamics,"³ the rather good film on the MIT library; an illuminating series of speeches by Italian university professors and librarians; and a concluding discussion session presided over by Dr. Guerriera Guerrieri, the very able directress of the Neapolitan National Library. The lively Milan sessions were conducted by the wise and courtly President-General of AIB, Dr. Aristide Calderini, emeritus professor of papyrology in Milan's Catholic University. The meetings in Rome were attended by ministerial officials and by an official representative of the Italian equivalent of the AAUP. In addition to visiting university libraries in the cities already mentioned, I was able also to have detailed tours of the universities of Modena, Bologna, Pavia, and Florence.

Everywhere it was clear that I had the special advantage of being on the scene at a significant time. The universities of Italy, like our own, are facing rising numbers of students and some demands for changes in traditional patterns. The pre-war attendance figure for universities is quoted as 16.6 per 10,000 population; the current equivalent figure is 31.3. Particularly pressing is the relative increase in the number of students actually "in residence." At the same time, understandably, there is much strong criticism, by librarians and professors, of some deep-seated library problems in the universities, and this occurs in a general atmosphere of optimistic library development in Italy.

The Italian universities themselves have been described usefully in two fairly recent articles and one particularly illuminating pamphlet.⁴ Briefly, there are twenty-four state (that is, national) uni-

³ There is an urgent need for more recent, sophisticated films and slides on American libraries, especially college and university libraries, for display abroad.

⁴ H. K. Newburn, "The Organization and Administration of Universities in France, Italy, and Great Britain," *Educational Record*, XXXIV (1953, 245-274; R. C. Simonini, Jr., "The Universities of Italy," *AAUP Bulletin*, XL (1955), 563-592; Frederic C. Mosher, *The Administrative Science Program at Bologna* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Administration, 1959).

² A resumé of the several competing plans appeared in *L'Architettura* V (1960), nos. 10 and 11, whole nos. 52 and 53.

versities responsible to the Ministry of Public Instruction for slightly over 50 per cent of their funds as well as for considerable legalistic administrative control; three 'free' universities that receive no financial support from the Ministry but must be officially recognized by it; and several specialized institutions of higher education. I was concerned particularly with the state universities. They range in size from Macerata with but one faculty (in the European sense of the term) and less than five hundred students, to Rome with about thirty-five thousand fully enrolled students in an extremely complex and scattered institution. In age they range from a galaxy of the world's earliest universities (Bologna, Padua, Modena, Parma, etc.) to Bari founded in 1924 and Trieste in 1938.

It is important to note, in considering their libraries, that administratively, at the local level, the Italian universities are centrifugal. To be sure, on a national basis through the Ministry, they have, as do the French, a far higher degree of uniformity and centralization than do American or British universities, but the individual Italian university has virtually no center. Physically the buildings tend to be scattered throughout the city, with no campus in the American sense. Rectors and deans generally rotate in office every three years and permanent administrative officers are at a minimum. These are common aspects of European universities. In Italy though there is the further fact that the individual institutes and faculties (e.g. the faculty of letters and philosophy, the faculty of mathematics and physical sciences) have great autonomous powers within the "loosely-knit" universities. Moreover, as one critic has observed, "There is no homogeneity within the individual faculties; faculty strength lies wholly in the individual professors, who often have little or no personal contact with their colleagues." Additionally, the professors, who are not numerous, often have little contact with

their students beyond formal lectures, which are regularly mimeographed and distributed. One continually hears complaints from students, especially those who have studied abroad, about the disability this situation poses for them. Not infrequently the professor does not even live in the city where he teaches; for example I met a Messina University professor who lives in Naples. To top this all, professors move frequently from one university to another, so that there is, in the final analysis, little sense of loyalty to a particular institution. This is not to overlook the problems the professors face. Their numbers are small, although in recent years there have been increases in the statutory number of docents and assistants, and the learned professor is tempted by many outside opportunities to amplify his income, and thus to slight his students and colleagues. Behind all this however is the medieval concept of the professor and the university which persists to a remarkable degree.

These factors, then, and others, build up to an uncommon degree of local decentralization, which perhaps explains why the concept of "the university library" as we know it hardly exists in Italy. In this regard it must also be recalled that the Italian student specializes rigidly throughout his career in a particular subject, often a very narrow one.

Within the Ministry of Public Instruction, the universities come under the Directorate-General of Higher Education. A coordinate office, the Directorate-General of Academies and Libraries, has supervision over thirty-three of Italy's greatest research libraries, called state public libraries.⁵ This group includes the several national libraries; such eminent and ancient installations as the Marciana in Venice, the Medicea-Laurenziana in Florence, and the Casanatense in Rome; a few major specialized libraries, such as the state medical library in Rome (in-

⁵ Anne V. Marinelli, "The State Public Libraries of Italy," *Library Quarterly*, XXVI (1955), 163-170.

volved also is the pioneering Istituto di Patologia del Libro in Rome); and twelve state, or public, university libraries (Bologna, Cagliari, Catania, Genoa, Messina, Modena, Naples, Padua, Pavia, Pisa, Rome, and Sassari).

These twelve state, or public, university libraries are situated in university communities, often in university buildings, and in fact their major, but not their sole, function is service to a university clientele. They have, however, no direct administrative connection with the universities, depending as they do from a different section of the ministry, and, except in an isolated case or two, they receive no regularly budgeted funds from the universities. As one shrewd Italian university librarian has pointed out, each of these libraries is carefully called a "university library" (*biblioteca universitaria*) rather than "the library of the university" (*biblioteca dell'università*).⁶ With very few exceptions, these twelve are the largest and best organized, and almost the only central, or general, university libraries in the country. Chronologically they are nothing so old as the related universities; most of them are mid-to-late eighteenth-century developments, and Padua claims that its central library, founded in 1629, is the oldest Italian university library. It should be noted that a few, notably in Sicily, appear to have earlier, rather confused, monastic antecedents. Rome and Naples, each claiming about 750,000 volumes, are the two giants. Bologna has 500,000; Cagliari and Padua about 400,000 each; Pavia and Pisa about 350,000; Genoa, 300,000; and each of the other four, 200,000 or less.

There are other libraries in the university communities, in fact a great many, but I will deal with them later, concentrating now on the twelve state university libraries. Because of their common administrative tie with the Directorate-

General of Academies and Libraries, a most enlightened and forward-looking office in modern times, these libraries have not been isolated from the main stream of library development in Italy and elsewhere. They have been able to participate in a common effort, which they have shared with Italy's other national research libraries, that is the state public libraries. The lively Italian Library Association has provided another avenue for cooperative or coordinated activity. This is in marked contrast, it might be noted here, to the situation in almost all of the other libraries within the universities, where a cloistered tradition presses heavily. The twelve operate under uniform statutes which, among other things, assure that they serve generously a broader clientele than any of the libraries administered solely by the universities. This public service function may, in fact, explain the legislation which originally brought these libraries, together with others, under national rather than local control. The senior staffing is handled centrally through the Directorate-General; the result is uniform salary scales and an open, competitive procedure for filling positions. Moreover, this permits the librarians to move not only from one university to another, but readily among the whole group of the country's thirty-three top research libraries, with fair assurance of rich and varied experience. On the other hand, one hears that this administrative pattern prevents the twelve libraries from being sensitive to the needs of the universities. This is an obvious criticism, but a hard-headed look at those libraries which universities do operate directly can produce only skepticism, except in a few isolated cases, that the universities could do anything like so well. What is true, as will become clear, is that the sharp separation of the twelve from the innumerable, generally specialized, libraries operated by the universities, together with the sullenly isolationist spirit prevailing among the latter

⁶ Silvano Gerevini, *Una delle Più Gloriose Istituzioni Pavesi, la Biblioteca Universitaria* (Pavia, 1959).

group, is seriously hampering the full-scale development of Italy's research library program. This, specifically, is the central problem I was to investigate and which, happily, we were able finally to discuss publicly and pointedly in the three regional conferences.

Immediately after the war most Italian libraries faced the difficult task of reconstructing buildings as well as reconstructing collections, many of which were bombed and all of which became dormant. Now that the most critical of that work has been finished, the twelve university libraries have been able to put energy into new projects. Most striking is the work on cataloging. All of the twelve have been saddled with cumbersome, often imperfect, complicated, and varied cataloging patterns. Fixed location systems often survived well into an age when the growth of collections made them grossly anachronistic, and manuscript cards endured beyond the time when an elegant script could be expected of every clerk, even into the age of Olivetti. Since 1956, however, a standard author entry code for cataloging has been available,⁷ and there is now much interest in developing efficient subject catalogs. More recently the issuance of printed cards, for Italian books only it should be noted, by the National Central Library in Florence has had a heartening effect on libraries throughout the country, despite some complications that might well be expected in so young a system. These printed cards, as well as typed cards of the international standard size, have been widely adopted. Some libraries have been encouraged thereby to begin systematically recataloging older collections and dealing with uncataloged arrears. Involved in this is the gradual development of a central national union catalog. Where appropriate, attention is being given to classification.

⁷ *Regole per la Compilazione del Catalogo Alfabetico per Autori nelle Biblioteche Italiane*, (Rome: Direzione Generale delle Accademie e Biblioteche, 1956).

The newly developed public reference collection at Modena has been classed in Dewey, and Padua is shifting from Brunet to Dewey. Many stack collections are shelved in order of accession, but this economical procedure is only logical because they are generally open only to library staff.

Everywhere libraries have finally come into the age of Olivetti, Fiat, and Necchi. Electric typewriters are a common sight, microfilm readers are on hand, and libraries are experimenting with a variety of interesting procedures for the mechanical duplication of cards, particularly for non-Italian books. It should be made clear that these optimistic developments are not limited to the twelve state university libraries; most of the thirty-three state public libraries are involved, as well as a few other far-sighted institutions. It should also be recalled that the Italian libraries have a long tradition of producing scholarly printed catalogs of special collections, especially for early printed books and manuscripts. In this regard they have done a better job than most American libraries, and this important work continues alongside more modern developments.

In acquisitions work rigorous attention has been given to periodicals and to reference works and bibliographies. The problem of filling wartime gaps in journal files is an enduring one, and to this has been added the universal problem posed by the rapidly increasing number of scholarly journals. Increased intake of current periodicals is the most striking change in the post-war acquisitions pattern of the Italian university libraries. Between 1950 and 1958 reports, the list at Rome increased by one-third and Genoa's doubled. Among the thirty-three state public libraries the number of currently received periodicals titles rose from 20,000 in 1945 to 32,000 in 1948 and to 55,000 in 1957. This has posed serious problems for the university libraries because funds continue to be severely

limited. Rome and Bologna, each receiving about 4,500 periodical titles currently, far outclass the others. According to latest information (1956 figures) Cagliari receives about 1,300, Padua and Pavia each 800, Genoa 700, and Naples 350.

Total annual book accessions figures are equally spare. Current figures are difficult to secure, but the average annual intake of volumes (regular volumes plus pamphlets) during the decade 1945-55 would appear to be as follows: Rome 9,200; Cagliari 3,700; Genoa 3,500; Bologna 3,200; Padua 3,100; Pisa 2,100; and the others even less. I was told that the present annual average at Rome is about 10,000 volumes and at Pavia about 2,000, figures that are in line with the 1945-55 statistics.⁸

Several, if not all, of the twelve state university libraries receive by statutory deposit those books and journals published in their local province. Furthermore many of them are increasingly able to acquire materials through publications exchange. Thus it is obvious that acquisitions funds, which come directly from the ministry, are very meager indeed. At Rome there are in addition some regularly budgeted funds from two of the university faculties (letters and philosophy, and law) because by a wise and uncommon formal agreement the state university library, known as the "Alessandrina," became the official library for the two faculties and the repository for their accumulated books; this arrangement was made in 1935 when the university moved to University City where the Alessandrina is housed in the same central building with the two faculties. At Modena the state university library is wisely

⁸ There are useful statistics in *Dieci Anni di Vita delle Biblioteche Italiane*. Other useful sources are *Annuario Statistico Italiano* (the 1958 edition, giving 1956 figures, is the latest I have seen), issued by the Istituto Centrale di Statistica, and the annual *Compendio Statistico Italiano*, issued by the same office; volume I of *Statistiche Culturali*, issued by the same office (Rome, 1954-57, 3 vols.), gives extensive 1950 data on libraries; *Annuario delle Biblioteche Italiane*, issued by the Direzione Generale delle Accademie e Biblioteche (2d ed., Rome, 1956-60, 3 vols.).

administered and housed in conjunction with the great Estense Library, wealthy in early printed books and manuscripts (as well as the extensive manuscripts of its great early eighteenth-century librarian, Lodovico Muratori), but the director has less than \$3,000 in annual acquisitions funds from his two libraries. Occasionally, if the working relationships are adequate, as at Pavia, the university has assisted with special non-recurring grants to acquire essential library materials, but some university libraries have apparently never experienced such generosity. Ministerial budgets have indeed increased in recent years, but only slightly and apparently not enough to offset rising costs and the postwar devaluation of Italian currency.⁹

In the face of this financial stringency the university librarians have perforce concentrated on collections of basic source material and reference works. Modena has opened a new public reference room, housing a well-developed and modern collection of over twelve thousand volumes on open shelves. The collection at Padua is equally impressive, scholarly and up-to-date. These reference rooms are a heartening sight because many American scholars have complained about their general lack, suggesting that it is difficult to complete research in Italian libraries once the basic source material has been located.

Clearly this appalling shortage of acquisitions funds is a primary problem, and it is so recognized by the library directors, by many enlightened professors, and by the ministerial officials in Rome. While I was there the government was considering a major financial bill that would, among other benefits, provide generous special acquisitions grants to be spread over a ten-year period.

With financing of this sort it is obvious

⁹ See Gerevini, *op. cit.* The most recent financial information I have seen, presumably for 1959-60, indicates that the University of Padua Library had L. 2,950,000 (ca. \$4800) for acquisitions, the University of Genoa Library L. 1,968,550 and the University of Bologna Library L. 1,400,000.

also that currently the Italian university libraries are not acquiring remarkable bookish riches; they are hardly keeping afloat on the tide of modern publishing. An occasional windfall does come along, as at Genoa where a special ministerial grant recently supported the purchase of a four-thousand-volume private library of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Italian culture, and as at Padua where an important eight-thousand-volume collection of early medicine was deposited by the university's Institute of Medical Pathology (Padua is one of the early homes of medical teaching), but these are rare cases. Moreover, their relative youth and poverty and the small size of the total collections will suggest what is true, that the Italian university libraries are in general not great repositories of bookish wealth; one looks elsewhere in Italy for extensive rare book collections. There are exceptions to be sure: Bologna has eminent and large accumulations of early manuscripts, incunabula, and sixteenth-century books, notably in the natural sciences because here is the private library of Aldrovandus; Modena has ready access to, as I have indicated, although it does not legally own, the incomparable Estense Library; Pavia is wealthy in complete runs of early European periodicals, and its original foundation collection, well cared for in a handsome special room, is strong in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century books.

Staffing presents another serious problem, although in view of the small number of books now being acquired and the fairly limited public service hours the situation is probably not critical for current operation. The shortage of staff does, however, prejudice any attempt to improve or extend public service functions. Again current figures are not readily available, but one analyst¹⁰ has cleverly publicized the fact that in all of the 33 state public libraries of Italy there are

only 753 full-time staff members whereas in the French Bibliothèque Nationale alone there are 630 and in the British Museum Library 680. Figures for 1950 reported for Rome 52 staff members (19 men and 33 women), of whom 23 were professional, 22 clerical, and 7 volunteer (generally recent students seeking experience and hoping that positions may open up). In the same year Naples had 35, of whom 19 were professional, 15 clerical, and 1 volunteer; Bologna a total of 21, of whom 13 were professional and 8 clerical; Padua 19, of whom 11 were professional and 8 clerical; and Pavia 15, of whom 9 were professional and 6 clerical.

With such crippling limitations of staff and of books and journals, the university librarians have been trying to deal with increasing numbers of readers and at the same time to offer somewhat better services. During 1936 the 33 state public libraries reported 986,000 readers in seats; in 1948 this figure was 1,321,000; and in 1957 it had risen to 2,038,435. Much of the increase apparently resulted from the rising numbers of university students. According to figures reported in 1950 Rome's Alessandrina served 87,262 readers in seats; in 1958 the figure was 198,671. For Genoa the comparable figures were 25,410 and 79,833; for Bologna 35,536 and 108,775. The numbers of local loans rose in proportion. I can certainly testify to completely overcrowded reading rooms in libraries I visited during academic session and an acute disparity between the number of available seats and the students to be served. The situation at the Alessandrina in Rome is especially serious, with only 250 seats available, now that the National Central Library is closed; an average of 3,000 readers enter the building each day.

There has been little opportunity or money for increasing the size of buildings, although here and there an extra room or corridor has been somehow allocated for readers, and there are apparently no major building programs in

¹⁰ *Il Segnalibro* (Modena), IV, (1960), 2.

prospect for any of the twelve state university libraries. Available funds have necessarily gone into restoring war damage. Furthermore several of the libraries inhabit difficult buildings: Rome's Alessandrina is in the cold, monumental style of the Mussolini period and affords no opportunity for expansion unless the university undertakes a major revision of its site plans; Padua's building is reminiscent of a crowded and dowdy American Carnegie public library, although the remodelled reference room has a certain charm; both Bologna and Naples must struggle with dingy, rambling, palazzo-type structures, neither attractive nor efficient. The most appealing building that I saw, housing incidentally the best ordered and most vigorous of the older university libraries, is at Pavia where the library occupies a portion of the original university structure, soft yellow buildings forming a series of quadrangles surrounding quiet courtyards with arcaded walks.

I have indicated that the twelve libraries do not unduly restrict access to their collections. They give particular attention to students who may, with certain limitations, withdraw books for home use. The reference collections and displays of current journals are generally on open shelves in rooms accessible to students and outside users, as well as to professors. These simple opportunities, it will be noted, do not regularly prevail in other academic libraries. I have already mentioned the new public reference room at Modena, one of the handsomest I have seen anywhere, employing attractive modern Italian furniture, which like the Scandinavian is often far less staid and institutional than most American library furniture. Pavia has recently opened a comfortable and well-stocked ready-reference room intended especially for students, and the same library proudly displays a popular rental library which for a small annual fee provides current novels and travel books that the library

could not justify on its limited budget. This is a surprising and charming phenomenon in the traditional Italian academic atmosphere. Some, but not all, of the twelve have even abandoned the officious "bidello" (beadle) who traditionally sits at the door of Italian public buildings, like the "portiere" in an apartment building, to question your right to enter. Stack collections are generally closed to all readers.

By American standards the public service hours are sharply limited. The Alessandrina in Rome offers probably the most generous schedule, from 9 A.M. to 7 P.M. every day except Sunday. Evening hours beyond 5 or 6 or 7 P.M. are quite unknown, as are Sunday hours. Several of the university libraries, particularly those in smaller towns, observe the traditional long lunch hour, closing from 12 to 2:30 P.M. or from 1 to 3 P.M. thus fitting into the rhythm of Italian life. But the lack of evening access, in a society accustomed to very late and lively evening activity, is unfortunate and only accentuates the over-crowding of reading rooms. The hours indicated are those for use of the reading rooms; the hours for loan service are much less generous, often two hours morning and afternoon. One understands of course the budgeting problem involved in longer hours. And at this point European libraries in general lack the advantage we have in the working university student, whose services often are essential to long schedules. Italian students, unlike the British, are not well endowed with state scholarships, but many librarians expressed skepticism about trusting them with responsible tasks. This is the same attitude which, in many traditional Italian libraries, doubts that students, not to speak of the general public, can be trusted with any sort of open-access book collection. The lot of the Italian student, it might be noted, is not a rosy one.

In an earnest effort to increase service to their readers most of the twelve uni-

versity libraries, which are centers for inter-library loan activity, have recently entered on an attempt at local union catalog records so that they may know what periodicals and perhaps what books are available within the university precincts, but here they run head on against the crucial library problem of the universities.

As for the libraries financed and administered directly by the twenty-four state universities, the typical situation, both in the twelve that have access to a state university library and in those which do not, is that of a great variety of jealously autonomous, uncoordinated, and selfishly parochial faculty and institute libraries. The simplest facts about these libraries are almost impossible to secure, for most of them report no information to any national office and apparently to no one locally. At the University of Rome, for example, information on holdings was gathered, at great effort, from eighty-three libraries within the university for the *Union List of American Periodicals in Italy*, compiled by Olga Pinto (Rome: USIS, 1958), the most extensive listing I could find of these intra-university libraries. However I was informed by staff members of the Alessandrina that there are probably more than two hundred libraries within the University of Rome, although no one could be very specific. At our conference in Naples a professor of economic history, in preparing a vigorously critical paper yet to be published,¹¹ had spent some weeks seeking facts about the finances, personnel, and collections of the libraries within his own university; the results were admittedly fragmentary but significant. Apparently there are over one hundred twenty libraries in the University of Naples, of which 66 reported to the *Union List of American Periodicals*.

¹¹ Domenico Demarco: "Le Biblioteche Universitarie Napoletane: Critiche e Proposte," *Studi Economici* (Univ. di Napoli), XV (1960), 202-211. The Italian Library Association intends to publish the complete proceedings of our three conferences.

At the University of Bologna I was told by a rather harassed American visiting professor that after a year of searching out books and journals necessary for himself and his students, he was aware of 99 faculty and institute libraries; 48 had reported to the *Union List*. Trieste with 2,500 students has about 50 libraries I was told locally. Since my information about the other universities is based on the *Union List of American Periodicals*, it is probable that my figures can be multiplied by two. In any event, the University of Cagliari with less than 3,000 students and 150 teachers (50 professors) has at least 23 libraries. Ferrara with four faculties and slightly over one thousand students has at least 15. Modena with 3,500 students has at least 30. Padua with 81 professors (420 teachers) and 11,000 students has at least 62. Siena with 1,500 students and eight faculties and advanced schools has at least 25. The University of Perugia with less than 3,000 students has 43 professors according to one source and forty-three libraries reporting to the *Union List of American Periodicals*. This Perugia situation, with its one-to-one ratio, whether precise or not, is at least neatly suggestive of the tendency, perhaps of a kind of ideal for many professors, including some American ones.

At the ancient University of Florence the Library of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, founded in 1659, has well over a million and a quarter volumes, is thus the largest academic library in Italy, and is a very special institution in many ways. Three of four other specialized libraries at Florence have as many as 70,000 volumes, but the others are all smaller. At the University of Turin, also a medieval installation, three of the 30 or more libraries have about 50,000 volumes. Milan, a twentieth century university, has a quarter of a million volumes in the combined Library of the Faculties of Letters and Jurisprudence, but the others are in the 25,000 volume class or smaller. At Padua I was told

that there are perhaps as many as a million volumes in the 60 or so specialized libraries. At Trieste, a very special case, there are perhaps 170,000 volumes in the specialized libraries. Elsewhere no one would even guess, but it is apparent in general that the institute and faculty libraries are quite specialized and small, consisting of a very few thousand volumes.

Access and use in almost all cases is limited to the teachers in the particular institute or faculty and, on a kind of sufferance, their own students, who are seldom allowed to withdraw books. Outsiders, particularly students from another faculty, are not welcome. A point can perhaps be made from one visit I made to some of the law libraries at one great university. I was taken by a rather apologetic member of the local state university library staff to see the libraries of the institutes of the history of law, comparative law, and Roman law. Along the way we passed several other law institute libraries, but I could not discover how many there were altogether. Each of the three I saw served only its own group, each had its own separate collection, generally small, generally incomplete, generally duplicative of the others. Each had its own manuscript card catalog of sorts, and none of the holdings were recorded in any kind of central catalog.

At the University of Rome I visited several of the institute libraries of its Faculty of Letters, all of them in a recent extension of the building which houses the Alessandrina, and all of them quite new; in each case all of the books were behind locked grill doors, available only on special request. This is not atypical of the situation in the libraries, central or specialized, large or small, new or old, that are operated by the universities themselves. Frequently all reference books in the main reading room and even current issues of periodicals are kept in locked cases so that a would-be reader must ask the attendant, often a

formidable and uniformed functionary, to secure the dictionary, encyclopedia volume, or journal issue to be consulted. The libraries are generally operated by secretaries or teaching assistants as a part-time chore, or by low level clerks who have no training, little experience with libraries, and little interest in them. The catalogs and the state of the collections reflect this situation. Hours of access are varied and tend to be meager, as from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. Books are seldom allowed out on loan, except to the privileged professors, and not even out on inter-library loan, although the responsible professors are not loath to borrow on inter-library loan for their own purposes. Book selection often reflects the special needs or vagaries of the senior professor, with no recognition of other libraries within the university, no matter how close by. There is no overall surveillance, not even any coordination or cooperation. What is more there is precious little machinery for securing any because of the very nature of the universities: there are few permanent officials, the senate is not a broadly representative forum as we know it, and professorial advisory or administrative committees seem quite unknown.

These strictures are not entirely my own; they reflect the opinions and experiences of almost all the Italian librarians whom I met as well as of a considerable number of Italian university professors, especially those who have worked abroad. The problem presented by these scattered, uncoordinated, and duplicative libraries in the universities—the impossibility of securing central information about their holdings and the consistent frustration involved in trying to use them—has reached almost a neurosis level in the minds of many Italian librarians. It rises immediately in any conversation about library matters. The librarians who are struggling to improve facilities and services in general are aware of the overall shortage of modern library resources in Italy and are aware of the ad-

vantages that have come in other countries through cooperative efforts and rationalized acquisitions programs. At Modena, Rome, Padua, and elsewhere, as I have indicated, the directors of the state university libraries have tried to develop so simple and useful a tool as a local union list of periodicals, and they have been thwarted by much inertia and disinterest as well as some outright suspicion and jealous opposition. Such information as they have put together reveals extensive and expensive duplication of journals, not only between widely scattered university buildings, but commonly within one building. This is tragic of course, when total funds are so short and resources so limited. The Alessandrina two years ago embarked on a systematic venture of developing a union catalog of books in the institute libraries of law and letters. There are twenty-three such libraries in the same building as the Alessandrina which acts as the central library for the two faculties but not for the institutes within the faculties. Over seventy thousand cards have been accumulated already, but this is a slow and difficult task because of the state of the local catalogs.

In opening our conference in Milan Professor Calderini stated that he had discussed these problems before, but always as a *vox clamantis in deserto*. Professor Demarco's paper and others, as well as comments from the floor during discussion, made it evident that many vigorous professors have found their research and teaching crippled by the existing situation. The special virtue of our conference was the public airing of the point of view of these men, who may represent a minority but yet an able and now vocal one. They understand the historical and psychological factors behind the fractionated pattern; these institute libraries are a kind of symbol of the independent rights of the individual professor, part of his medieval inheritance. Yet it is also clear that this library

pattern falls short of serving much of modern research. The sheer numbers of modern books and journals, and their cost, make it impossible for any of these libraries, except for a very few that have uncommon financing, to develop to a level of modern efficiency.¹² To be sure there are a few isolated exceptions, institute libraries well supported and run with imagination and efficiency. But even the wealthiest American university would be hard pressed to support effectively the number of libraries that many of the Italian universities are faced with, and the Italian universities are certainly far from wealthy. It was pointed out in our discussions that much of the success that the Americans have had with academic libraries has come from our relative success in concentrating our resources of books, funds, and staff and our relative success at cooperative library efforts.

In those universities that lack a state university library there is occasionally, as at Palermo, a kind of embryonic library of the university (*Biblioteca dell'università*) but generally a very small and weak institution. Trieste, however, the youngest university of all, presents a very special exception, made possible no doubt by its very youth. Here the university's library is vigorous and modern. Although most of the books are in a large number of institute libraries, the central library by statute must maintain an inventory, which means a union catalog. There is still, to be sure, some tension between the center and the outlying libraries, but this is a step forward. In some other cases, notably Milan and Florence, the Library of the Faculty of Letters, serving as it does a numerous and bookish clientele, tends in a way to serve as a central library, but still without union catalogs and without any coordination with the

¹² The only financial figures I could secure were those in Professor Demarco's paper which indicated that in 1957/58 the University of Naples spent about \$125,000 on books and journals for its 120 or more faculty and institute libraries, far more than the local state university library had available. Such a sum if concentrated could produce one significant library, but much of it disappears into duplicative, uncoordinated buying.

other local libraries. In other cases there is no evidence of any sort of central library.

The Library of the Faculty of Letters at Florence, relatively wealthy in books and book funds, although not in staff, is another kind of exception because in very recent years it has been run with some recognition of modern needs. Since the great National Central Library nearby receives all Italian books by deposit, the Library of the Faculty of Letters spends almost all of its funds on foreign books and journals, one of the few planned and coordinated acquisitions programs that I came across, and a particularly significant one because whereas the need for foreign literature is very great in Italian research yet its cost, notably of American publications, is so oppressive that few libraries can afford to buy it. A recent rector supported this venture in Florence, for when the new librarian began to issue a bulletin listing current acquisitions¹³ the rector's introductory statement deplored the increasing fractionation of university life, the increasing separation into autonomous and isolated institutes, with a consequent loss, for both teachers and students, of any sense of being part of a greater organism. He hoped the library could help provide a sense of unity and center. He also and wisely hoped that the new bulletin would facilitate a coordinated acquisitions program within the university and even among the several libraries in the city of Florence. The future of Italian academic librarianship hinges on a wider acceptance of Rector Lamanna's spirit.

The Italian universities can observe one other forward-looking library pattern in their own midst. Milan's great

Catholic University, a "free" or "private" university, founded as recently as 1920, operates its library rather on the pattern we know at Johns Hopkins. The institute or seminary libraries are mostly in the same building as the central library which is responsible for all of the university's books, with full catalog and loan records for the several institute libraries which are in turn manned by central library staff.

Thus the picture is not entirely a gloomy one. There is an increasing interest in change, among an able group of enlightened librarians as well as an influential number of professors. The ministry is also concerned; in addition to the financial bill already mentioned, the government is considering legislation to establish, and require, professional positions for librarians in at least the largest faculty and institute libraries. There are also some excellent and successful examples to be observed on the Italian scene, as well as abroad. In this regard, the forceful and successful program recently developed at the Royal University Library of Oslo to coordinate the institute libraries is especially timely and pertinent, because that library, which functions also as the national library, has a basic relationship to its university rather analogous to that of the twelve Italian state university libraries.¹⁴ The problems in Italy, however, are so numerous and so ancient as to give pause to any brash American who would presume to be critical. He would surely end up, as I did, admiring the courage and the professional ability and idealism of his Italian colleagues. He might also end up increasingly proud of the universal scope of modern librarianship.

¹³ Università degli Studi di Firenze. *Bollettino delle Pubblicazioni Acquistate dalla Biblioteca della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia*, no. 1, Jan.-March, 1958.

¹⁴ H. Tvesterås. "The University Library and the Institute Libraries, a System of Co-operation," *Libri*, IX (1959), 1-8.