

THE VATICAN APOSTOLIC LIBRARY AND PHILANTHROPY

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Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican State

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1. Introduction

The history of the Vatican Library, the "pope's library," is as long as the history of the papacy itself. Its stacks and deposits preserve more than two millennia of the history of human knowledge in documents and artifacts from every corner of the planet, in the various languages and alphabets known to man.

Throughout the papal Library's modern history, beginning with Nicholas V (1447-1455) (Figure 1), it has always pursued its founding principle with intense activity *pro communi doctorum virorum commodo*, for the common (that is, public) benefit of learned men¹. It has been and continues to be a research library open to all those who love knowledge and the search for truth. As a "house of science, culture and humanity, the Library opens its doors to scholars who come from all parts of the world, without distinction of origin, religion and culture," in the words of Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013), while also rendering "a singular service to the Church and, in a special way, to the Pope" [1].



Figure 1. Image of Pope Nicholas V.

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The activity of the Vatican Library is eminently philanthropic. By definition, philanthropy is that "disposition of mind and spiritual attitude of man's sympathy and love for his fellow man, out of a feeling of human solidarity and charity inclined to promote the happiness and well-being of men and to bring about new social relations," and is manifested in the acts that one performs, since *amor si renuit operari amor non est*. This "disposition" is quite naturally associated with the Apostolic Library, which has exercised it since its foundation, in keeping with the charity practiced by the Church and according to the teaching of St. Paul [2].

Considering the history and mission of the Vatican Library (Figure 2) we cannot fail to recognize its loyalty to this definition. It has promoted the welfare of the people through culture for centuries, freely making available to scholars its whole heritage, collected over time and preserved with great commitment from generation to generation. With this contribution we wish to share some particular moments from the recent history of the Apostolic Library relating to a journey which started about a century ago. To accomplish its mission of protecting, safeguarding and sharing the heritage it preserves in the best possible way, the Library began to look outside the Vatican for support in its activity.



Figure 2. The current location of the Vatican Library - facade of the Sistine Building.

2. The Vatican Apostolic Library

Over time, the Vatican Apostolic Library has developed into a multifaceted structure that currently includes three Departments (Manuscripts, Printed Books and Numismatic – coins, medals, etc.). In addition, there are several subsections: within the Departments of Manuscripts and that of Printed Books: Archives, Reading Rooms and Stacks, Accessions, Catalogue, Antique Books, Prints Cabinet), Offices

(Secretariat and Bursar's Office). In 2017, the Office of Institutional Advancement was added. Services include the Conservation and Restoration Workshop and the Photographic Laboratory, the IT Center, Publishing, the School of Library Science, Exhibitions, and the Coordination of Information Services.

The Library's permanent staff totals about ninety people. The papal Library holds the richest collection of manuscripts in Western culture. The total number of manuscripts amounts to about 80,000; its collections of printed works to about two million volumes, more than half of which are listed in the online catalog and includes 8,250 incunabula (works published from c. 1450 to 1500). Its extremely rich Numismatic Cabinet consists of 300,000 pieces.

The collection of graphic arts exceeds 150,000 items. This patrimony is enhanced by an archive of considerable importance for the history of Rome and beyond, with several tens of thousands of documents. The Vatican Library's impressive collections include documents that have been acquired mainly through purchases, but also donations and bequests. The Library's main tasks as "an institute dedicated both to conservation and research" formally enshrined in modern times, are:

- To guard and preserve with utmost care the cultural treasures entrusted to them.
- To increase the collections of manuscripts, printed books and objects by purchases, exchanges and gifts, according to the subjects represented in the collections and the purposes of the Institution.
- To carry out the study and promote the knowledge of this material by ordinary and adjunct staff members and through publications.
- To make available to qualified scholars from all over the world both the originals and reproductions in various forms of the relics preserved there (with the necessary precautions), providing all possible and appropriate scholarly and technical assistance for research, and constantly updating the tools and aids necessary or useful to carry out this work [3].

The Vatican Library's publications cover studies and research on institutional history, collections, individual documents, and people who have worked here and left a mark in its history. In addition to institutional activities, the Library offers teaching through the Vatican School of Library Science. It showcases its works both in situ and abroad, lending them to exhibitions in many countries around the world and collaborating with international entities at various levels. The Library also participates and organizes conferences. The Library has a regular budget which, for the most part, covers personnel costs and little else. Income from the sale of publications and photographic reproductions that are requested serves, at least in part, to cover publishing costs. In order to activate projects that are made necessary due to contemporary needs, from digitizing manuscripts to structural interventions, from setting up exhibitions to organizing conferences, it must necessarily turn to institutions and benefactors in different countries. The following reconstructs and shares the "history" of sponsorship that a philanthropic institution, such as the one discussed in this paper, has received.

3. The American Project for a modern catalog (1927-1947)

In its desire to make available what was already preserved and the collections which were continuously being added to, the Vatican Library was not always able to

offer the most adequate services. This was because, given the increasing number of acquisitions that were made, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries, when entire book collections with many tens of thousands of volumes arrived at the Vatican Library, it was, simultaneously, unable to produce catalogs to locate works easily. Hence, though having multiple directories compiled at different times and differing from each other, due to the lack of suitable bibliographical descriptions, the first philanthropic project in favor of the Vatican Library was developed in the second half of the 1920s. Since the end of the nineteenth century there had been an increasing number of scholars from America, where libraries were very active and well organized as a result of their orientation to serve communities². As early as 1876 in the United States, an association of librarians (American Library Association -A.L.A.-) had been founded, while a set of rules derived from the creation of the first public card catalog in the same year produced a useful cataloging manual [4]. An accomplished code of consistent, detailed cataloguing standards for producing consistent and standardized descriptions was printed by the association in 1908 [5]. It was the American scholars, accustomed to quick reference filing cabinets, who suggested that the philanthropic society *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, founded in the United States by the Scotsman Andrew Carnegie, help the papal library make a filing cabinet of its entire bibliographic holdings following the American model. With the approval of the Pope's librarian, Achille Ratti, Pius XI (1922-1939), the first major joint project between two institutions involving the Vatican Library, was born. In the initial stages, the Vatican Library also collaborated with the Library of Congress (LoC) which offered fundamental "technical" support. Two representatives³ from our Library collaborated with the Library of Congress, in order to help the latter become more specialized in the subject matter relating to religious and theological subjects. Some experienced cataloguers from the LoC in Washington came to Rome to begin a new process for cataloguing works in the papal library; meanwhile, two other young Vatican cataloguers were in the United States to study librarianship⁴ (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Gerardo Bruni, Enrico Benedetti, Carmelo Scalia and Iginio Giordani just arrived in the United States.

The project lasted about twenty years and involved not only the cataloguing of printed books, but also that of manuscripts, for which a card index was compiled for quick reference. The work undertaken necessitated the reorganization of existing spaces and the acquisition of new areas, which were strategic for the growth of the Vatican Library. According to the teaching of the old librarians, a library has only two possibilities, to grow or to die; accordingly, its workers must work unceasingly so that it can offer an efficient service. The "American" endeavor was a great undertaking, unique and unrepeatable. Institutions so far apart were thus united by the same purpose, to be at the service of study and research to the best of their ability, and they worked together to achieve it, according to the teaching of the apostle Luke, *give and it shall be given to you* [6]. Thanks to this experience, the Vatican Library was able to begin a season of profound renewal⁵.

4. From a movable card catalog to a computerized catalog (1980s-1990s)

The international-format movable card catalog, which started in 1927, continued to grow until 1985 (Figure 4), when the computerized cataloging of printed materials was studied and undertaken in 1986.

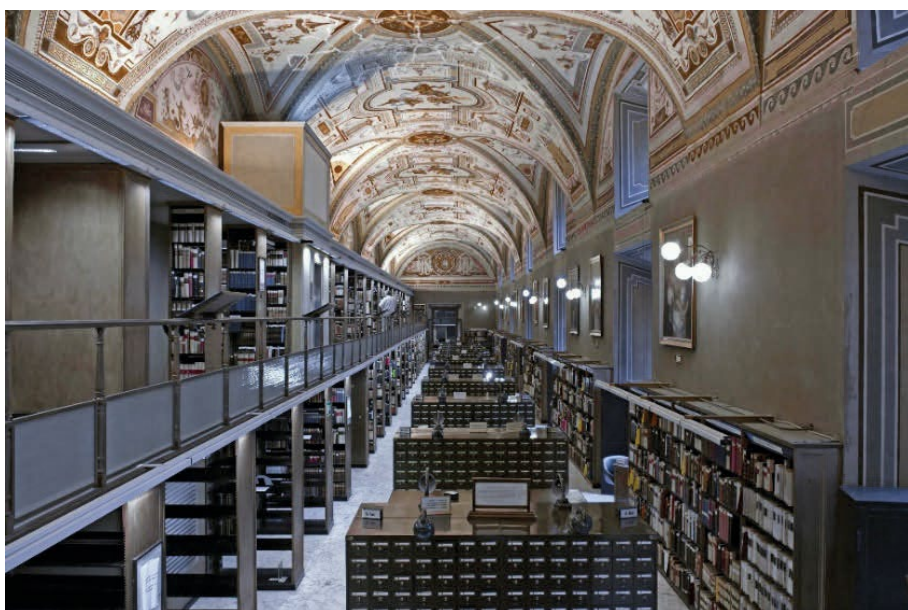


Figure 4. Card catalog of printed books.

The Prefect at the time (1984-1997), Irish Dominican Leonard E. Boyle (1923-1999), who had arrived from Canada in September 1984, had brought with him a generous contribution from a Belgian-Canadian benefactor, Joseph Pope (1921-2010). It was a substantial sum to be used in the automation of the Apostolic Library, the first institution in the Vatican to adopt computer technology. Thanks to those grants, the specialized training of the technical staff, which also took place abroad,

was organized. The computer company Geac was involved, and the recording of new acquisitions in electronic format began, first, in an experimental phase, with in-house staff, and then with the help of young staff members who were paid thanks to sponsorships that the prefect received from new benefactors. Soon afterwards, other services began to be carried out in various departments of the Library using information technology⁶.

A decade or so later, when the transition to electronic modes in several areas of the Library was well established and technology companies were expanding, the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) offered the Vatican Library what was needed to defray the costs of transferring data from the paper files to the computerized catalog. At the same time, the company acquired the images of 20,000 pages from several Vatican manuscripts to create an online digital image reference tool, in which IBM was particularly interested. This was a pilot project, which did not bring the hoped-for results and was not continued. However, it paved the way for projects that would be developed later and which are currently underway. Nevertheless, IBM's initiative was meritorious: from 1994 to 1996, the collaboration of a large group of workers made it possible to manually transfer much of the information recorded in the approximately 500,000 paper files to electronic format. These files, stored in 1,680 metal drawers still present in the Consultation Room today, make up a "dictionary-like" filing cabinet organized alphabetically by names, titles, and subjects of the works. This operation was called "retrospective conversion".

The shelfmarks or location of the works, "a book's personal details" one might say, had to be entered later as part of the ordinary work, as did all data comprising the headings used subsequent to its initial one, consisting of titles, additional responsibilities, the subject of the works (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Online catalogs in the 1990s.

This was not pure philanthropy, as can be understood, since the company had acquired images to manage, but new frontiers were being opened for fundraising in certain areas of the Vatican Library that had become strategic from other points of view.

With the advent of information technology, which imposed new ways of working, first by interacting with the operators who used it, then by proposing increasingly advanced tools that were not always in line with users' needs, in the space of three years, much changed in the Library's physiognomy and in the way its mission was carried out. Innovation has also meant making new, major economic investments.

5. Interventions in the museum spaces of the Library (1990s)

To fulfil its duties and carry out its work, the institution had to intervene on its spaces and facilities. The opportunity to do so arose in the 1990s, thanks to the generous sponsorship of two well-known companies, Floor Gres, of Fiorano Modenese, and Mapei, of Milan, to redo the floors in twelve of the seventeen Galleries and Halls of the museum area of the Library, the Christian Museum and the Profane Museum, and the long Gallery which connects the Vatican Museums to the Sistine Chapel, by replacing the somewhat worn linoleum with ceramic material. The renovation proved to be highly appreciated and gave prestige to those who had worked hard to accomplish it. One thousand seven hundred and fifty square meters of flooring were redone, on which, twelve thousand to eighteen thousand visitors a day passed⁷. The work was completed in a little over two months, and in 1995, soon after the project was completed, it was presented to the press in a publication by the sponsors. "This publication is intended to be a testimony to an event of profound cultural significance, which surpasses the essential functional aspects and exemplary technological content because of the historical prestige of the place in which it was carried out, the authority of the client, and the size and timing of the work. The commitment of the two major Italian companies, Floor Gres and Mapei, has renewed the charm and fascination of the rooms that crown the Sistine Hall of the Vatican Library, which is not only known for the preciousness of its collections, but also for the decorative richness of its rooms that constitute its original and oldest complex" [7]. The coat of arms of Pope John Paul II was placed at either end of the Gallery.

The circumstance that led to the idea for the project and consequent meetings was the opening of an exhibition held in the Sistine Hall in 1993, entitled "L'Istoriato - Printed Books and Italian Majolica of the Sixteenth Century." So, it happens that from sometimes casual and not so casual discussions, ideas arise for accomplishing good things, since *anything good needs to be done well*. Certain occasions turn out to be fruitful for initiating a dialogue, a relationship that goes beyond sponsoring a project; it is built with what one has in common or from a common vision, sharing each other's specialized knowledge in order to accomplish a good objective well, and to achieve results that gratify all those involved. The Christian and Profane Museums of the Apostolic Library were entrusted to the management of the Vatican Museums on October 1, 1999; today, their floors are trodden by millions of visitors (Figure 6).

6. American Friends of the Vatican Library for publications

In 1981 the establishment of the *American Friends of the Vatican Library* was formally approved by a letter from the Secretary of State, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, dated October 9. The headquarters of the *American Friends* was in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. The idea of establishing this institution was formulated and promoted by Cardinal Edmund Szoka. The association had about 1,500 members in 1992 and for several years has been actively raising funds to finance some of the Library's projects, mainly related to publications (Figure 7). It took several years to produce the four-volume catalog of the Vatican Library's incunabula, edited by Father William J. Sheehan, C.S.B. (1937-2018), which was funded by the association beginning in 1987 and was finally printed in 1997, shortly before Leonard Boyle, at the time Prefect of the Vatican Library, left office [8]. In his preface, he emphasized the importance of the undertaking: "Over the past century there have been various attempts of varying quality to dominate the scattered if not unruly mass of incunabula.



Figure 6. The Gallery with the new flooring.

It is now a matter of much rejoicing that at last a catalogue to crown these endeavors is available here in print. It is also with much pleasure that one records the indebtedness of the Vatican Library and Fr. William Sheehan to the American Friends of the Vatican Library, and particularly to their Founder-President, Monsignor Francis Xavier Canfield of Grosse Pointe, Michigan, for his valiant, indeed indispensable, support over the past eight years since Fr. Sheehan happily came on the scene".

This provided an important opportunity for the Vatican Library to enhance its holdings further. For example, Figure 8 shows one of the two Vatican copies of the Gutenberg Bible, the first printed book, or first incunable.

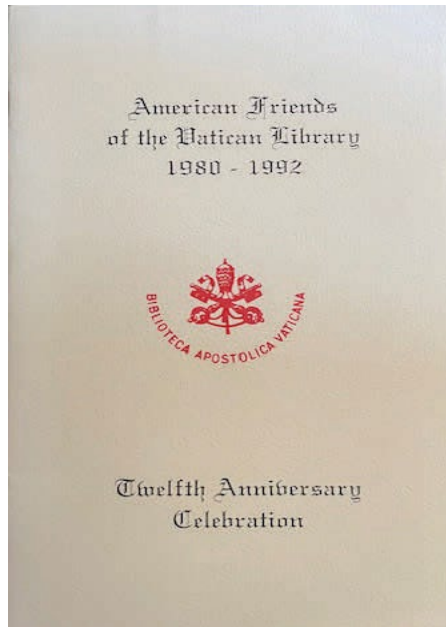


Figure 7. Brochure produced on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the founding of the American Friends of the Vatican Library.



Figure 8. Gutenberg Bible printed on parchment (Barb. AAA. IV. 16, f. 1r).

7. Sponsorships for the computerized catalog of incunabula and "Aldine" at the dawn of the third millennium

In 2008, the computerized cataloguing of the incunabula was initiated and completed in 2016. The project was carried out in three phases: the initial one, called VISTC (*Vatican Incunabula Short-title Catalogue*), saw the computerized entry of the cards in *short-title* format; the second phase, BAVIC (*Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae Incunabulorum Catalogus*), involved the analytical cataloguing of more than 8,000 specimens; and the third phase, VID (*Vatican Incunabula Digitization*), involved the digitization of more than 600 specimens. The work was accomplished with the support of Georg Wilhelm Gustav Von Mallinckrodt, Åke Bonnier, Bishop of Skara; and Jürgen Christian Regge c/o Fritz Thyssen Stiftung. More than 6,000 editions (comprising over 8,000 copies) are now searchable through the Library's *opac*. At the conclusion of the project, between 2017 and 2019 the same team of specialists completed BAV-Aldus, an initiative that involved the analytical cataloguing of the "aldine," the editions printed in the workshop of the Manuzio family during the 16th century. The program of work involved about 2,000 editions, numbering about 3,000 copies, distributed in the *Aldine* and *Aldine.A* collections. The contribution of Swedish bishop Åke Bonnier, a lover of ancient books and a friend of the Vatican Library, helped to carry out a project on editions from the Vatican historical collections.

8. The construction of new sections: the Periodicals Room, Accessions, Catalogue, the School of Library Science, CED, the Manuscript Stacks (1970s-1980s)

The bibliographic collections housed in the Sistine Library, built between 1587 and 1589, had to "be moved" only a few years after its completion, as new collections, particularly those of printed books, were gradually added to it.

The space was found by shifting the pre-existing collections to other rooms in the Apostolic Palace, such that by the second decade of the nineteenth century, they occupied the entire Borgia Apartment, where Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503) had lived. The problem of finding space has been an almost constant challenge over the centuries for the Vatican Library. Rooms were added or restored through various structural interventions, particularly since the end of the nineteenth century when the Library lost the rooms of the Borgia Apartment, where printed books had been housed for more than sixty years.

Those rooms became part of the itinerary of the Vatican Museums; in exchange, the Library acquired the Armory, the floor below the Sistine Hall, where in 1892, after a series of major works, the Reading Room of Printed Books was opened (Figure 9). The ground floor of the Sistine building was also acquired; the headquarters of the School of Library Science would later be built in those rooms, as well as the administrative and computer departments and the headquarters of the Exhibitions Office.

Structural work was then carried out thanks to internal funding and patronage of the pontiff. This continued to be the case for several decades until the 1970s, when it became necessary to pursue external funding in order to obtain the subsidies needed to carry out major structural work.

In order to carry out the building renovations, which started with the prefecture (1971-1984) of Alfons Maria Stickler, SDB (1910-2007), who later became Archivist and Librarian of Holy Roman Church, the German Bishops' Conference allocated the necessary sums and thus gave great impetus to the work.



Figure 9. Reading Room of Printed Books.

Thanks to substantial external funding, major work was begun to create a Periodicals Room on the first floor of the building (Figure 10), which until then had been occupied by the staff of the Catalog of Printed Books and Accessions. However, this project was interrupted several times and the Periodicals Room was opened only in 2002.



Figure 10. Periodicals Reading Room.

The new headquarters for the School of Library Science, founded in 1934, was set up on the ground floor of the Sistine Building and opened in 1977.

A new building was constructed between 1982 and 1983 in the space adjacent to the Bramante Corridor, above the tunnel leading to the Galea fountain, with offices for *scriptores*, the New Catalog and Accessions.

Later, those spaces also housed the Library's Data Processing Center, which was set up in 1985 and remained there until the new rooms on the ground floor were built. In 1982 a project was approved for the construction of a new concrete storage facility for manuscripts. About 700 square meters under the Library Courtyard were equipped with ten kilometers of shelving and the facilities to control the parameters for the proper preservation of the artifacts.

In the same period, thanks to aid from the German Bishops' Conference, a major campaign to produce facsimiles of manuscripts preserved in the Vatican Library also began in co-edition with the Belser publishing company in Stuttgart.

9. Three-year closure of the Library for a major renovation (2007-2010)

After an in-depth study of the institution's needs and available space, major new works were inaugurated in 2007 that led to the closure of the Library for a three-year period. Such works included the renovation of several rooms and the upgrading of many others; it was still necessary to resort to the support of benefactors, since the Vatican State, the smallest country in the world, was unable to support such an undertaking on its own.

The then Prefect (1997-2007), Raffaele Farina, SDB, wrote in *L'Osservatore Romano*, "The Library's current problems are determined by the age of the building that houses it, the lack of essential space for library materials and staff, the sharing of vital spaces with adjoining institutions, the configuration of spaces and anomalous superstructures that do not conform to what is tradition and library regulations"⁸.

The planned work involved the consolidation, renovation, and air conditioning of the rooms used as the Restoration Laboratory, Photographic and Digital Laboratory, and Photographic Archive. Added to this was the project to open a large entrance to allow the passage of goods from the part of the building facing the Post Office, at the level of the street leading to the Galea, with an armored space for packing and unpacking and temporary storage of manuscripts destined for exhibitions or otherwise intended to leave the Vatican Library. The main entrance to the Library was modified with the construction of a small tunnel to facilitate the movement of people with disabilities and allow them to reach the elevator more easily (Figure 11).

In the Library's inner Courtyard, a turret was constructed against the building housing the Reading Room, with a large elevator and stairs to connect the Manuscript Depository, the Reading Room, and the Restoration and Photographic Laboratories, and to facilitate the movement of items to the various rooms (Figure 12).

The Photographic Laboratory was moved to the upper floor, under the terrace of the prefect's apartment, formerly occupied by collections of printed books needing to be catalogued. The Laboratory was divided into sections, one for its historical archives (in the room below) with adaptations for the proper preservation of different types of documents, and another for archives in use, where photographic reproductions are made based on requests for images from all over the world and those for the digitization project, which will be discussed later.



Figure 11. The entrance to the Vatican Library (left) before and after the renovation (right).



Figure 12. The Manuscript Tower which houses a lift and stairs.

Expansion work was also done in the Restoration Laboratory, which was able to acquire the space once used by the Photographic Laboratory. During the construc-

tion, the laboratories were housed in Reading Rooms; the Photographic Laboratory in the Manuscript Reading Room and the Restoration Laboratory in the Reading Room of Printed Books (Figure 13).



Figure 13. Photographic and Restoration Laboratories housed in the Reading Rooms during the work.

The office of the Librarian of the Holy Roman Church was moved to the first floor of the Sistine building, to the premises that used to house the Bursar's Office, while the former office became a hallway and the Office of Institutional Advancement was set up on the mezzanine where the Librarian's Chapel was located. The Bursar's Office was relocated to the ground floor, as were the CED and the Exhibitions Office, while the School of Library Science gained a new location on Via Della Conciliazione (Figure 14).



Figure 14. The School's current location on Via della Conciliazione, Rome.

The structure of the Periodicals stacks (formerly "Carrozze"), located in the right wing of the Belvedere Courtyard, had been built between 1963 and 1978 with four floors of shelves, the first three resting exclusively on girders, the fourth on a floor; these were demolished. The ground floor was used as a storage space for the Bursar's Office and the movement of incoming and outgoing goods with access to the "Grottone" and a gate in the Belvedere Courtyard. By reusing and reinforcing the girders, two floors were built on special pillars to support the structure of mobile shelves for the periodicals. The Library's Numismatic Cabinet, one of the richest in the world, located in the vast apartment once occupied by the Guardia Nobile above the Lapidary Gallery since 1975 was enlarged when part of the space used for the "Indirizzi dei Pontefici" (gifts of different kinds, but in particular photographic albums), a collection which had been growing since the pontificate of Pius IX, was acquired. After being renovated in 1987, recent major acquisitions and future acquisitions made it necessary to expand the area by rationalizing the use of its existing spaces and those adjacent to it (Figure 15).

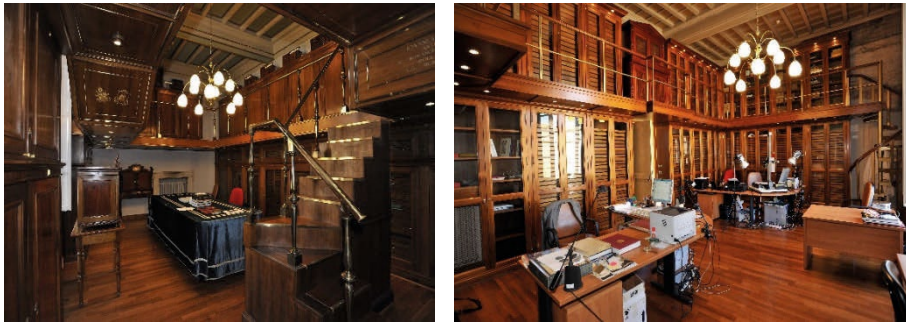


Figure 15. A view of two rooms in the Numismatic Cabinet (or Vatican Medagliere).

The Manuscript vault, which, as previously stated, was built below the Library Courtyard in the period 1982-1983, houses all of the Vatican Library's manuscripts except the archival ones. An emergency exit was put in there and the air conditioning system was renewed taking into account the needs of paper and parchment materials, which are different from those of papyrus documents, for which a separate room was built. The electrical system was made compliant with legal standards and new security systems were installed. The flooring was redone using dirtproof and dustproof material. For the employees who worked in a small room at the entrance to the vault, a new workspace was created behind the Reading Room. Other minor but necessary interventions for the daily life of the Library and its staff, included a new employee entrance to the side of the main door, and the opening of an entrance to the stacks for smaller goods. In addition, the elevators in the Prefecture wing and in the Printed Books stacks were renovated and a video surveillance system was integrated into the Library's internal network. In addition, about 400,000 volumes were transferred to the premises on Via della Conciliazione which the Holy See had made available to the Library, of which 100,000 constituted the depository of the Library's publishing house. The buildings on Via della Conciliazione were then equipped to house a second branch of the Vatican Library, where a Reading Room was also built. A Data Center was installed in the same building, an essential prerequisite to prepare for the project of digitizing the manuscript collections.

Concluding his article, Prefect Farina added, "If there is anyone among those who are reading this who would be willing to provide support for the onerous expenses arising from the work we are about to begin, it would make the undertaking much easier for us, and we could face it gladly, as is proper with any good and worthwhile undertaking." At that time, Don Raffaele Farina, who had been bishop of Oderzo since November 2006, was ending his term as prefect. On June 25, 2007, during his visit to the Library shortly before work started, Pope Benedict XVI announced the appointment of the then Archivist and Librarian of the Holy Roman Church, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran (1943-2018), as president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and appointed Raffaele Farina, Archivist and Librarian, elevating him to the dignity of Archbishop. The prefecture of the Library (2007-2023) was entrusted to Monsignor Cesare Pasini, former vice-prefect of the Ambrosiana Library. In the consistory of November 24, 2007, Monsignor Farina was made Cardinal. The solicited aid arrived; without the benefactors who had supported the Library at that time, it would not have been possible to finish the work in three years, as was promised at the time of closure. The institution had fulfilled its promise by reopening the halls to scholars in September 2010. To celebrate the reopening of the Library, an exhibition entitled "Getting to know the Vatican Library: a history open to the future" was organized and inaugurated on November 10⁹; a conference entitled "The Vatican Library as a place of research and as an institution at the service of scholars," which accompanied the inauguration, was held from November 11-13. The proceedings of the conference were published by Marco Buonocore and Ambrogio M. Piazzoni [9]. The message Pope Benedict had sent to Cardinal Farina on the occasion of the reopening of the Library was included in the Introduction of the volume¹⁰. The intervention of the *Italcementi Foundation Cav. Lav. Carlo Pesenti* was crucial for the project. Italcementi is a company that has been supplying building materials since 1864 and Giampiero Pesenti represented it after the passing of his father Carlo in 1984. It was Italcementi who built the turret - known as the "manuscript tower" - in the Library's courtyard and funded much of the structural work on the project¹¹. That unusual and very industrious three-year period, when the Library was closed for study, was also an opportunity to initiate a project to reach scholars in every part of the world so that they could consult the manuscripts at a distance: the digitization and online publication of reproductions of the codices. The balance between use and preservation is crucial in a library like the Vatican Library; digitization, which offers the possibility of carrying out preliminary studies remotely, makes a valuable contribution to preservation (Figure 16).

10. The Sanctuary of Culture Foundation, a great support for the Vatican Apostolic Library

The Sanctuary of Culture Foundation was established following the major renovation of the Vatican Apostolic Library under the leadership of Prefect Farina.

Pope Benedict XVI had personally asked Monsignor Laurence J. Spiteri to establish a Foundation located in the United States. The latter did so with the avid support of the Librarian, Cardinal Farina. The Foundation was established in 2012, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. Its purpose was to provide financial support for the Vatican Apostolic Library's many programs and projects¹². Over the years, the foundation has become a landmark of great importance for the papal library. As part of the 2007-2010 work, the foundation provided for the cost of the furniture (tables, chairs, shelves) made for the Sistine Hall designed by architect Paolo Portoghesi (1931-2023), which had recently been returned by the Vatican Museums after being entrusted-

ed to them, along with the museum section of the Library, in 1999. A new reading room was thus set up in the Hall (Figure 17).

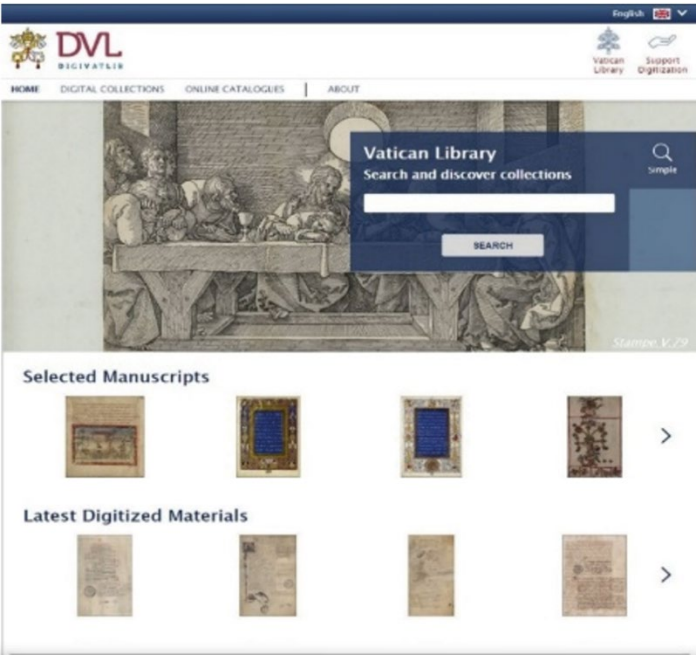


Figure 16. Digital library login page.



Figure 17. Sistine Hall.

Many other projects have involved the significant participation of *The Sanctuary of Culture Foundation*, beginning with the preservation of artifacts, with major grants bestowed for the restoration work carried out by collaborators who assist the conservation and preservation staff. The foundation has also supported a number of initiatives of the School of Library Science and given a large, generous and irreplaceable boost to its work on digitization.

11. "New" manuscripts in the Vatican Library

Thanks to the generosity of a number of benefactors, it has also recently been possible to make some very important acquisitions of manuscripts, starting with the extraordinary *Hanna Papyrus*, which Frank J. Hanna III purchased and presented as a gift to Pope Benedict in January 2007 for preservation in the papal library. Copied between 180 and 220 A.D., this papyrus is the oldest manuscript in the Vatican Library. It contains the texts of the Gospels of Luke and John, with the first version of Luke's *Pater noster* (Figure 18).

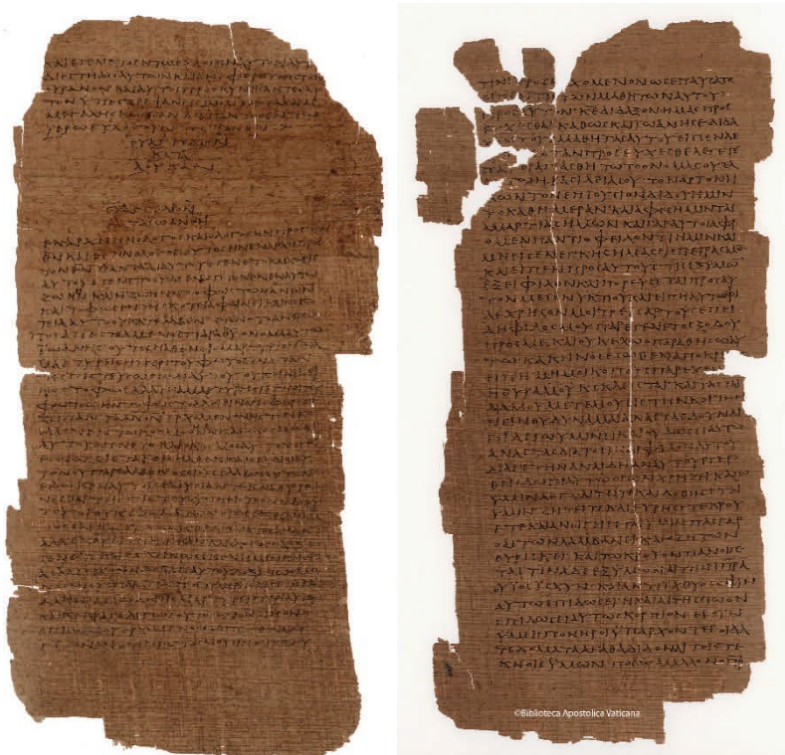


Figure 18. *Pap. Hanna. 1 (Mater Verbi), ff. 2v; 8r.*

Another acquisition of particular interest was added, thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Scott and Lannette Turicchi who, in 2018, purchased a valuable autograph of St. Bernadine

of Siena with the texts of his homilies, the *Itinerarium anni*, from a Swiss collector who had put it up for sale some time earlier. Mr. and Mrs. Turicchi had offered to purchase a manuscript for the Library from a selection of five that were for sale at the time, and which had been chosen according to the order of their importance to the Vatican collections. The manuscript purchased was the first on the list. Designated as *Vat. lat.* 15495, it enriched the collection of the Saint's autographs preserved in the Vatican Library, which now number four (Figure 19). The *Vaticani Latini* collection was further increased, when a rare manuscript containing sermons by the same saint, the *Quadragesimale Seraphim*, arrived in the spring of 2021, offered by the *Gaudium Magnum Foundation - Maria e João Cortez de Lobão*, now *Vat. lat.* 15504 (Figure 20). The Library on its own would not have been able to acquire these valuable documents, which are now available to scholars both on site and online.



Figure 19. St. Bernardine of Siena, "*Itinerarium anni*" (*Vat. lat.* 15495).



Figure 20. "*Quadragesimale Seraphim*" (*Vat. lat.* 15504).

12. Digitization of manuscripts, a project of vast proportions

"Digitization is not part of the Library's duties", said Prefect Boyle in the 1990s; our duty is mainly aimed at caring for and assisting scholars who come to the library. "The main function (of the library) is to serve the readers who are there. Putting it on-line for others is a function, but not a main function. We didn't want to do it. It was people from outside who wanted us to be on-line. There's no particular reason to be on-line. It's a research library that is self-sufficient" [10]. The activity was undertaken in order to meet demands, the requirements of "outside" scholars, which the Vatican Library could not fail to acknowledge; it is an initiative that also aims to better preserve the originals. The task undertaken by the Vatican Apostolic Library to make its manuscripts available online is a titanic one; it involves and affects every aspect of institutional life. Reproducing and publishing 80,000 manuscripts online, of the most diverse age, provenance, workmanship, texture and state of preservation, is a decades-long undertaking. The work began with a pilot project carried out from about 2010 to 2012, a period in which an elaborate workflow was put in place, and soon afterwards processing began "manually," due to the delicacy of the materials. The enterprise also relied on the help of outside firms as well as the coordination of the Manuscripts Department, the constant assistance of the two Laboratories, Photographic and Restoration, plus the support of the Bursar's Office, the staff of the Reading Rooms, the Data Processing Center and the Coordination of Information Services. The latter two departments also helped to work out a method of long-term preservation for digital reproductions. The task of digitization involves a rather complex and labor-intensive organization, which has so far enabled some 30,000 manuscripts to be made available online free of charge¹³. The digital reproduction process was able to be launched with an initial grant made available by Pope Benedict XVI, who at the same time suggested to Cardinal Farina that he seek funds outside the State, given that the latter was already burdened with managing ordinary and special activities, and urgent philanthropic works. To help raise the necessary funds to carry out the projects, in 2017, by the directive of the Secretary of State, a special office dedicated to promotion and institutional development was established, as mentioned above, which works through contacts with people and entities. The office also organizes guided tours of the Library for benefactors and potential donors and works in synergy with the different Library departments, *The Sanctuary of Culture* foundation and other associations. *The Sanctuary of Culture Foundation* and its Board determined to support the digitization of the manuscripts shortly after the project began; one-third of the reproductions published to date in the digital library are the result of the Foundation's activities and the many American supporters who have offered and continue to offer their contributions. In the context of digitization between 2012 and 2017, the Vatican Library initiated a joint project with the Bodleian Libraries of Oxford University. Thanks to the support of the *Polonsky Foundation*, the institutions were able to make 1,500,000 pages belonging to their collections accessible online. The project mainly involved three groups of texts: Hebrew manuscripts, Greek manuscripts and incunabula, selected from the most significant in the field of studies. Over the past decade, the Library has received numerous grants, large and small, from institutions, associations, businesses, families and individuals. The Japanese company, NTT Data, has provided and continues to provide valuable help; it has promoted, among other things, the creation of the site that hosts the digital library (digi.vatlib.it) and collaborates in the tasks of digitizing the manuscripts. The Government of the Republic of Korea, through the Korean Bishops' Conference, has granted funds for a four-year project (2019-2023) involving not only digitization, but also the restoration and description of manuscripts from Korea and the rest of Asia, as well as other documents considered world heritage. The manuscripts

belonging to Queen Christina of Sweden (1625-1689), which were purchased in 1689 by Cardinal Pietro Vito Ottoboni (1610-1691), who shortly after became Pope Alexander VIII, and number about 2,200, were almost entirely digitized between 2021 and 2023, thanks to Swedish supporters: *The Wallenberg Foundation* and the Swedish Academy (Figure 21).



Figure 21. Peter Wallenberg, Library authorities and Swedish ambassadors Cecilia Björner and Fredrik Vahlquist (left) and Vat. lat. 8171 (right).

Aid of various other types has come from many other places to support the digitization project, which regularly involves preservation and restoration before and after reproduction (Figure 22); they include *Avita Novare*, which operates under the *Fondation de Luxembourg*, the Washington Museum of the Bible, which has supported restoration work on some biblical manuscripts, and the association *Fonds des Amis de la Bibliothèque Vaticane*, which has helped restore a group of important musical manuscripts in the *Sistine Chapel* collection.



Figure 22. Vat. gr. 1941, f. 220r (left), and the Archives Section (right).

A new, very important acquisition was recently made thanks to the honorable gesture of an American family. Last summer, the world's largest private collection of classical vocal music (operatic, liturgical, etc.) on long-playing records, the *Durbeck Archive*, arrived at the Library. The collection comprises some 60,000 records, and documents of the entire vinyl era from 1950 to 1990. In addition, a select collection of printed works related to the study of the record collection (more than 5,000 volumes) and other materials relating to music were donated to the Vatican Library by Mrs. Klara Durbeck Castagna. The collection belonged to Edward F. Durbeck III (1934-2021), who was assisted by Klara. Klara Durbeck and Frank Castagna also provided for the expense of transporting the boxes of documents from California to the Vatican. The records were deposited on the premises of the Pontifical Roman Major Seminary, which the Library is allowed to use owing to a pontifical provision of Oct. 29, 2024, and in the future intends to establish a center for musical studies there.

13. New initiatives

Other initiatives in recent times have been able to come to fruition thanks to sponsorships, such as the Kirk Kerkorian Exhibition Hall, built with contributions from American benefactors donated to *The Sanctuary of Culture Foundation*. Inaugurated by Pope Francis in December 2021, the Kerkorian Hall houses important documents during the exhibitions organized by the Library. The 2025 Jubilee coin, a reproduction of the "picciolo" which was issued in Rome for the 1450 Jubilee, was also created through *The Sanctuary of Culture*, specifically with contributions from Michael and Laura Hayde and Steve and Suzanne Cameron. Several new projects are underway, such as the renovation of the Archives Section (Figure 23), which overlooks the Courtyard of the Triangle, built in the 1970s as a temporary solution pending a more suitable arrangement for the archival collections housed there. It contains documents from various noble families, Vatican institutions, convents, and other similar items. Until now, it had not been possible to find the necessary resources for such an initiative, but an entity based in Great Britain will now support the undertaking, while the architect Sir David Alan Chipperfield and his staff from the Milan office are drawing up an articulate plan that will allow for the best possible accommodation of the archival fonds and the Section's staff.

A newly formed association, the *Patrons of the Vatican Library*, based in London, has just initiated activities in support of the Library and promoted the project.



Figure 23. Archives Section.

New projects are also being developed in the field of conservation with the support of benefactors of different nationalities.

An agreement has just been signed with the King Hamad Digital Library of Bahrain to carry out conservation work on a group of Arabic manuscripts and create a database relating to the interventions made over time by the Library's Restoration Laboratory on the various artifacts. Another project will focus on small and large conservation interventions carried out on about two-thirds of the codices that belonged to Fulvio Orsini (1529-1600), a collection that includes 416 manuscripts (Figure 24); the initiative, promoted by the *Comité International des Amis de la Bibliothèque Vaticane*, will be supported by the *Domenico Napoleone Orsini & Martine Bernheim Orsini Foundation*.

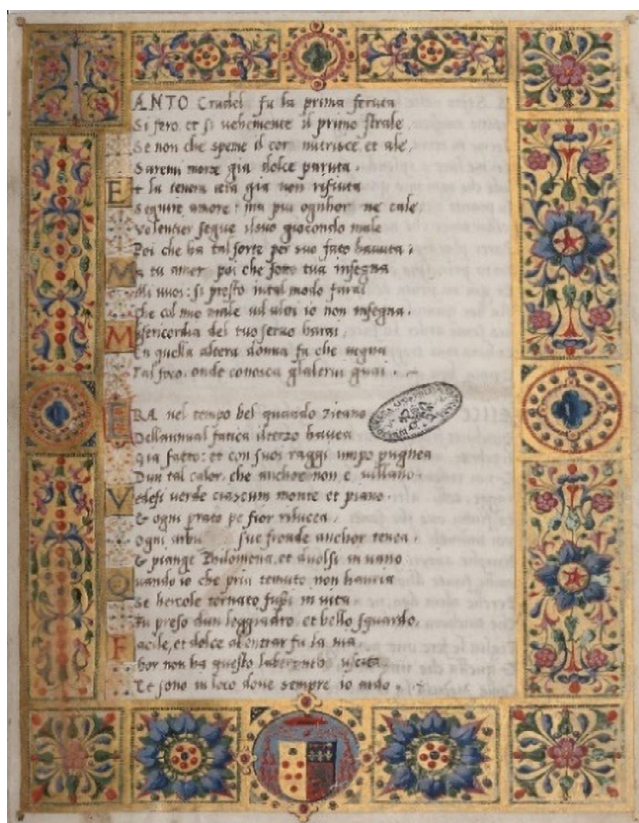


Figure 24. One of the codices that belonged to Fulvio Orsini, Vat. lat. 3219, f. 1r.

A project has recently been accepted that will involve a series of archival manuscripts from the *Barberini Archives*, approximately seventy codices, and documents of a commercial and financial nature, which are in a precarious state of preservation. The project, promoted by the *Comité International des Amis de la Bibliothèque Vaticane*, and sponsored by Jean-Philippe Hottinguer and his family, will include conservation treatments, the study of documentation of the same typology, a publication with the outcomes of the project and the results of the study.

14. Conclusions

As we have shown, with the passage of time there has been, and there will continue to be, an increasing need to rely on the support of external benefactors so that institutions such as the Vatican Library, which preserve and promote culture without real profit, can continue to carry out their task and offer a service which is fundamental to humanistic studies and must become increasingly diversified and widespread. Much energy needs to be given to promotion and development to make the mission and potential of the Vatican Library known.

As much as it has been possible to do over the years, here too we wish to express the gratitude of the entire Vatican Library to those who have supported and continue to support its initiatives, in the hope that they will wish to continue to give their support, that its initiatives will be given new vitality in order to conserve, enhance and make all the patrimony that the papal institution safeguards fully accessible online from anywhere, for the benefit of present and future generations. The word "philanthropy" derives from the two Greek words that respectively mean a love of friendship and human existence: in this perspective, one can well understand the profound relational and bidirectional experience of receiving a gift in reciprocity, also - if not especially - in the field of culture: by respectively making a gift of what one is to the other, it is not only the receiving but also the giving that enriches and enhances one's humanity.

Notes

¹ For the history of the Vatican Library, see, among the many publications available, *Storia della Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*. Vatican City: Vatican Apostolic Library, 2010-<2020>, vols. 1-<5>. Cf. also: Piazzoni, A. M., Manfredi, A., Frascarelli, D., Zuccari, A., Vian, P. (2012). *La Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, Milan, Jaca Book, also published in English and French editions.

² "One has only to [...] walk through the door of an American library to realize at once that one is in everybody's home, in the finest house that a community, as such, has been able to erect for itself. The whole outward detail of the American library generally consists in the grandeur of the building, in the conveniences which it largely offers to every kind of reader, in the freedom with which people can circulate there, in the high sense of civilized and human equality which everyone breathes there." Bruni, G. (1928). *Libraries in America*, in: *Life and Thought*, pp. 154-163: 154. Gerardo Bruni (1896-1975) was hired at the Vatican Library in 1928, along with Igino Giordani (1894-1980), to participate in the project, and spent a training period in America with Giordani and two other Library employees, Monsignor Enrico Benedetti (1874-1946) and Monsignor Carmelo Scalia (1886-1936).

³ The previously mentioned Monsignors Benedetti and Scalia.

⁴ Igino Giordani and Gerardo Bruni spent two semesters in the United States to take courses in Library Science, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and at Columbia University in New York. Later, other catalogers attended courses in librarianship in America and were hired by the Library: Giuseppe Graglia (1902-1981), Riccardo Matta (1902-1981) and Nello Vian (1907-2000).

⁵ For more on that season, see: Mattioli Háy, N. (2009). *The Vatican Library and the Carnegie Endowment for international peace: the history, impact, and influence of their collaboration (1927-1947)*, Vatican City, Vatican Library.

⁶ For the automation of the Vatican Library, see: Ammenti, L. (2020). *Per litteras ad astra. Storia dell'automazione della Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana dalla carta al digitale*, Rome, Aracne.

⁷ The Vatican Museums are currently visited by about 27,000 people a day.

⁸ The announcement of the closure of the prestigious institution for three years starting July 16, 2007, was published in *L'Osservatore Romano* on June 13, 2007, pp. 14-15: 14.

⁹ The exhibition, which was organized in the Braccio Carlo Magno (St. Peter's Square) with the support of several sponsors, was open from November 11, 2010 to January 31, 2011; the exhibition catalog, edited by A. M. Piazzoni and B. Jatta, was published in 2010.

¹⁰ "An eminent place of the historical memory of the universal Church, in which venerable testimonies of the manuscript tradition of the Bible are preserved, the Vatican Library has, however, another reason for being the object of the care and concern of the Popes. Since the time of its origins, it has preserved the unmistakable, truly "catholic," universal openness to everything beautiful, good, noble, worthy (cf. *Phil.* 4:8) that humanity has produced over the centuries; of that breadth with which over time it has gathered the highest fruits of human thought and culture, from antiquity to the Middle Ages, from the modern era to the 20th century. Nothing that is truly human is foreign to the Church, which for this reason has always sought, collected, and preserved, with a continuity that has few comparisons, the best results of men's efforts to rise above pure materiality toward the search, conscious or unconscious, for Truth." The letter bears the date November 9, 2010. Vatican Apostolic Library (2011), *La Biblioteca Vaticana luogo di ricerca al servizio degli studi. Atti del convegno*, Roma, 11-13 novembre 2010, cit., pp. vii-xiii: viii-ix.

¹¹ For the realization of this building body, see: Guala, G. (2011). *La torre dei manoscritti*, in: *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Libri e luoghi all'inizio del terzo millennio*. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana - Fondazione Italcementi Cav. Lav. Carlo Pesenti, pp. 142-167.

¹² The Sanctuary of Culture Foundation, Inc. "is dedicated to the restoration, collection, study, preservation, research, and promotion of significant aspects of knowledge, culture, inter-religious exchange, and humanity, especially those related to the venerable institution of the Vatican Apostolic Library—an institution that belongs to the reigning Roman Pontiff (pope) and houses the world's greatest collection of ancient, important, and rare manuscripts, books, incunabula, prints and drawings, and medallions and coins." From <http://sanctuaryofculture.org/>, accessed January 2, 2025.

¹³ As a result of the experience, a specific publication was produced: Piazzoni, A. M. (2018) *The Process for the Digitization of Manuscripts in the Vatican Library*, Vatican City, Vatican Apostolic Library.

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Biographical notes

Luigina Orlandi is responsible for the Office of Institutional Advancement at the Vatican Apostolic Library. She began at the Cataloguing Department in 1991, where she worked until 1998. Next, she served as the personal assistant to the Prefect of the same Institution from 1998 to 2004, when she was appointed as the director of the Cataloguing Section in the Department of printed books. After twelve years in this position, she had a brief period as the reference librarian, before being appointed to her current position in 2017.

Mauro Mantovani is the current Prefect of the Vatican Library. A Salesian Catholic priest, he is a Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the Salesian Pontifical University, Rome, where he was Dean of the Faculties of Philosophy and of Social Communication Sciences, and Rector Magnificus (2015-2021). His research and publications mainly focus on borderline issues between philosophy, theology and science. He is a Councilor of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas and Member of many other Pontifical Commissions and Scientific and Academic Committees.

Summary

This article, accompanied by more than 30 images, presents certain philanthropic experiences that have been in place at the Vatican Library since the 1920s. The Library has always been at the service of studying thanks to the generosity and support of the Holy See, which over the centuries has collected and guarded a wealth of documents of great value and interest. In order to carry out some major projects aimed at improving the spaces of the building it has occupied since the end of the 16th century, and the services it offers, the Vatican Library has welcomed the generous support of organizations, companies and individual benefactors. These have made it possible and continue to make it possible to carry out the renovations and reorganization of the available spaces, and to conserve the treasures entrusted to it in the best possible way, while at the same time making them increasingly accessible through technological tools, not only to the public of specialists, but to everyone. For this reason, we express our deepest gratitude to each and every one of them.

Riassunto

Questo articolo, corredato da oltre 30 immagini, presenta alcune esperienze filantropiche che hanno avuto luogo presso la Biblioteca Vaticana a partire dagli anni Venti del Novecento. La Biblioteca è sempre stata al servizio degli studi grazie alla generosità e al sostegno della Santa Sede, che nel corso dei secoli ha raccolto e custodito un patrimonio documentario di grande valore e interesse. Per realizzare alcuni importanti progetti volti a migliorare gli spazi dell'edificio che occupa dalla fine del XVI secolo e i servizi che offre, la Biblioteca Vaticana ha accolto il generoso sostegno di enti, aziende e singoli benefattori. Questi hanno reso possibile e continuano a rendere possibile attivare i lavori di ristrutturazione e riorganizzazione degli spazi disponibili e conservare al meglio i tesori ad essa affidati, rendendoli al contempo sempre più accessibili attraverso gli strumenti tecnologici, non solo al pubblico degli specialisti, ma a tutti. Per questo esprimiamo a ciascuno di loro la nostra più profonda gratitudine.