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ATTI E MEMORIE DELL'ATENEIO VENETO

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BOOK MUSEUM OR SCHOLARLY LIBRARY?
THE “LIBRERIA DI SAN MARCO” IN A REPUBLICAN CONTEXT

The 1581 edition of Francesco Sansovino's *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*, a sort of a guide to the city's treasures, could not have missed pointing out the spreading humanistic phenomenon of libraries. Indeed, under the section “Fabbriche pubbliche” (Public buildings), Sansovino described the *Libreria di San Marco* as “famous as any other in every part of Italy”¹. Yet, his description was that of the building and its rich decoration. The book collection was hardly mentioned: Sansovino informed his readers of Petrarch's intention to donate his collection to the Republic and of the project's failure. Furthermore, he observed that Bessarion had left in 1473 his books “that in those times were the most beautiful and famous that Europe had ever had”².

In the same section of “Public buildings” Sansovino described also the most famous private libraries. For instance, he detailed the kind of books Giacomo Contarini di San Samuele had had in his possession (“he collected all universal as well as Venetian history books in manuscript and in print, as well as other sorts of books, and many other scientific ones”)³, and the same goes for Luigi Balbi's library, “where, apart from theological, historical and law books, [one is] facilitated by indexes and repertories in each field”⁴.

The idea a Sansovino's reader had is that the *Libreria di San Marco* was worth visiting for its sumptuous building, whereas if one desired

¹ «notabile quanta altra si voglia in qualunque parte d'Italia». FRANCESCO SANSOVINO, *Venetia città nobilissima, et singolare, descritta già in XIII libri*, In Venetia, appresso Iacomo Sansovino, 1581, p. 112.

² «che in quei tempi furono i più belli & famosi che avesse Europa». *Ibid.*, p. 113.

³ «ha posto insieme quasi tutte le historie stampate & le scritte a penna, non pure universali, ma particolari della città, con diversi altri libri & in gran copia nelle scienze». *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁴ «nella quale, oltre i libri teologici, storici, & di leggi, ridotti a facilità con sommari & repertorij in ogni materia, si nota una singolarissima sfera fatta con maraviglioso artificio». *Ivi*.

to consult books, he should have better sought a private library. And yet, the Venetian Republic clearly stated that the *Libreria di San Marco* was public in character. The question is not what it meant by “public”, but the idea contemporaries had of “*Libreria pubblica*”.

Book circulation, either in manuscript or printed form, was enhanced by the appearance of court libraries in mid-Quattrocento, such as the library of Federico da Montefeltro Duke of Urbino (1422-1482)⁵, or that of the Sforza court of Galeazzo Maria and especially of Ludovico il Moro, in the last decades of the fifteenth century⁶. These libraries clearly contributed to the shaping of a new approach toward the use and consultation of books. Moreover, their owners clearly distinguished between “private” and “public”: as example may serve the Quattrocento Este family of Ferrara with its two libraries. The first, of Nicolò III (inventory in 1436), was considered the *bibliotheca privata secretave*, i.e. private, of texts chosen by a single scholar for his own use, and the second, of Ercole I (1495), the *publica et familiaris*, was more that of the family or the dynasty, with numerous titles and open to the public. Two different types that determined also different rules of management, acquisition, use and conservation⁷.

We must remember though that those were still family libraries, linked to the owner’s fate or will, and even a State like the Papacy was subject to the changing moods of popes: the books diligently collected by Niccolò V, witnessed his successor’s indifference (Callisto III) and were about to be dispersed⁸.

The *Libreria di San Marco* was conceived in a different context. It was first Petrarch that wished to leave his library to the Venetian

⁵ MARIA MORANTI, *Organizzazione della biblioteca di Federico da Montefeltro*, in *Federico da Montefeltro. La cultura*, Roma 1986, pp. 19-49.

⁶ ANNA GIULIA CAVAGNA, *Libri in Lombardia e alla corte sforzesca tra Quattro e Cinquecento*, in *Il libro a corte*, a cura di Amedeo Quondam, Roma 1994, pp. 89-137.

⁷ AMEDEO QUONDAM, *Le biblioteche della corte estense*, in *Il libro a corte*, Roma 1994, pp. 7-38.

⁸ MARINO ZORZI, *La Libreria di San Marco. Libri, lettori, società nella Venezia dei Dogi*, Milano 1987, p. 81; JEANNE BIGNAMI-ODIER, *La bibliothèque Vaticane de Sixte IV à Pie XI. Recherches sur l'histoire des collections de manuscrits*, Città del Vaticano 1973, p. 12; ANTONIO MANFREDI, *I codici latini di Niccolò V: edizione degli inventari e identificazione dei manoscritti*, Città del Vaticano 1994.

Republic in 1362, in the understanding that it would be a “*bibliotheca publica*”⁹. The project failed and the Republic had to wait more than a hundred years to receive another important donation – that of Cardinal Bessarion. Naturally, I will not enumerate the reasons that led Bessarion to make his decision; Marino Zorzi has already done it in his numerous studies dedicated to the theme¹⁰. What I would like to underline here is the Venetian Republic’s reasoning and its interpretation of the concept “public library”. It is clear that Bessarion wished his library to be treated as a whole, as testifies his previous donation to the Monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore (revocated in 1467), where he specified his conditions: the books were to be consulted by those who wished to do so, they could not have been either sold, alienated or lent, because the idea behind the donation was that “the books will be public and serve posterity”¹¹. The same went for the Venetian Republic. Bessarion left the Procurators of Saint Mark the decision of a future location for the library and was satisfied in stating his hope that his books could be preserved and managed with care by the Procurators.¹² Elsewhere he stated that “he could establish a big library of both languages either in Rome or in Florence, or even in Venice for public use”¹³. Now he

⁹ *La Biblioteca Marciana nella sua nuova sede*, Venezia 1906, p. 7, for the text of the Senate’s deliberation concerning Petrarch’s donation (originally in VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Senato-Secreta, reg. 26, c. 85, September 4, 1362). On the library see MANLIO PASTORE STOCCHI, *La biblioteca del Petrarca*, in *Storia della cultura veneta*, 2: *Il Trecento*, Vicenza 1976, pp. 536-565.

¹⁰ M. ZORZI, *La libreria di San Marco*, pp. 74-85; *Cenni sulla vita e sulla figura di Bessarione*, in *Bessarione e l’Umanesimo*, Catalogo della mostra tenuta nella Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana nel maggio-giugno 1994, a cura di Gianfranco Fiaccadori, Napoli 1994, pp. 1-20; *Bessarione e Venezia*, in *Bessarione e l’Umanesimo*, pp. 197-228; *Il cardinale Bessarione e la sua biblioteca*, in *I luoghi della memoria scritta. Manoscritti, incunaboli, libri a stampa di Biblioteche Statali Italiane*, a cura di Guglielmo Cavallo, Roma 1994, pp. 391-410; *Bessarione e i codici greci*, in *L’eredità greca e l’ellenismo veneziano*, a cura di Gino Benzoni, Firenze 2002, pp. 93-121; *Bessarion and the defence of the Greek world*, in *Nürnberg und das Griechentum: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, a cura di Evangelos Konstantinou, Frankfurt am Main 2003, pp. 50-63.

¹¹ «libros publicos fore et posteritati servire» M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 80. Cfr. GIORGIO RAVEGNANI, *Le biblioteche del Monastero di S. Giorgio Maggiore*, Firenze 1976, p. 26.

¹² «per eosdem Procuratores diligentius et securius conservari poterunt et teneri», M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 81.

¹³ «bibliothecam grandem utriusque linguae est aut Romae, aut Florentiae, aut potius Venetiis ad usum publicum dimissurus». GASPARO DA VERONA and MICHELE CANENSIS, *Le vite di Paolo II*, ed. Giuseppe Zippel, Città del Castello 1904, p. 34 in M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 77.

specifically asked to let public access for all those who would like to “study and read” his manuscripts¹⁴. The Senate’s response dated March 23, 1468, apart from thanking the cardinal and enumerating the library’s contents (around 900 manuscripts) along with its value, resonated enthusiastic to the idea, yet without any clear project in mind¹⁵: it left the Collegio the decision on future location and merely decided on the library’s name – *Bibliotheca Sancti Marci*. Alarmed by a possible Church reaction to the revocation of Bessarion’s previous donation, the Senate in his decision of May 2, 1468, and upon the Collegio’s recommendation, decided to locate the library “in the new hall of our Palace”¹⁶.

What emerges clearly from the Petrarch and Bessarion cases here is the changing attitude toward the notion of public library: it is created for posterity, in order to preserve the memory of a culture, either of a nation (Hellenic) or a movement (humanistic). Petrarch and Bessarion’s collections were left to the Venetian State in the understanding that they would be kept as a monument and as consulting tools sufficient in themselves, as stated by the Senate upon receiving Bessarion’s donation: the library “will be considered one of the most admirable and famous in our city, with immortal praise and fame of your venerable power, and of public utility”¹⁷. In 1474, when the manuscripts’ inventory was completed, its preface underlined that the library was to be “of utility to all scholars, and most famous for the decor and ornament of this city”¹⁸. Venice, following other Italian

¹⁴ «studere aut legere», LOTTE LABOWSKY, *Bessarion’s Library and the Bibliotheca Marciana. Six Early Inventories*, Roma 1979, p. 154 in “Instrumentum donationis Librorum”.

¹⁵ The original text is in VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Senato Terra, reg. VI, c. 14v, published by GIUSEPPE VALENTINELLI, *Bibliotheca manuscripta ad S. Marci venetiarum*, Venetiis 1868, I, p. 14; GIAMBATTISTA LORENZI, *Monumenti per servire alla storia del palazzo ducale di Venezia*, Venezia 1868, p. 110, doc A; HENRI OMONT, *Inventaire des manuscrits grecs et latins donnés à Saint-Marc de Venise par le cardinal Bessarion (1468)*, «Revue des bibliothèques», IV(1894), pp. 129-187 (pp. 132-135); L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion’s Library*, p. 124, doc. I.

¹⁶ “in sala novissima palatii nostri”. VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Senato Terra, reg. VI, c. 19, in L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion’s Library* p. 125, doc. II.

¹⁷ «interque illustria civitatis nostrae spectacula, cum immortalī laude et gloria Vestrae Reverendissimae Dominationis, ac publica utilitate, habebitur», L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion’s Library*, pp. 136-137, doc. XVI.

¹⁸ «pro communi studentium utilitate ac decoro et ornamento urbis huius celeberrime», L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion’s Library*, p. 191 (preface to the 1474 inventory).

princely courts could finally boast a known collection of manuscripts, a scholarly monument capable of drawing known academic figures to consult them which in turn increased the glory of the Republic¹⁹. In fact, the Venetians understood the donation exactly in this sense of self glorification. The 1515 decree regarding the building of a new library was very explicit on its future role: the library had to be a monument for posterity, as the collection “had become the mirror and light of all Italy”, and its location had to be in the heart of Venice, Saint Mark’s square, near the offices of the Procurators of Saint Mark²⁰.

The trouble with the Saint Mark’s library was that its owner (i.e., the Republic) did not evolve with time. The Republic’s concentration on cultural glorification through the Library impeded its mental evolution toward the notion of “public”, not as opposed to “private”, but in the humanistic sense of “res publica” – open to all²¹. Library science began to develop as soon as the second half of the sixteenth century, yet the Serenissima was way behind scholarly novelties in the field which sought to favor the public and to improve services destined to library readers. If we could sum up what Cinquecento and Seicento required from a public library, following the Jesuit scholar Claude Clement (1596-1643) in his book dedicated to libraries, we can enumerate four important factors (which naturally follow the requirement for proper building and collections): prepared staff; easy access to the library and its collections; ongoing

¹⁹ The access to scholars was an important issue. Indeed, the Venetian ambassador Pietro Morosini persuaded Bessarion to revoke his donation to the San Giorgio Maggiore convent, on the grounds that consultation would have been difficult on the island, whereas Saint Mark’s square was central, L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion’s Library*, pp. 24-25; G. RAVEGNANI, *Le biblioteche*, p. 26.

²⁰ «toti Italiae speculum et lumen allatura sit». VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Senato Terra, reg. XIX, cc. 33v-34, May 5, 1515, in L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion’s Library*, p. 131, doc. X. Cfr. M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 165. To reinforce our conjecture that the Republic still considered after the opening of the new library, this institute as a mirror of its glory and treated it as a museum, is also the project presented in 1586 by the Patriarch of Aquileia, Giovanni Grimani, concerning the family donation of its collection of statues. He proposed to locate it in a public place so that everyone would be able to see it. If at first the place destined for the Grimani museum should have been the Library itself, in 1590 the Collegio indicated the Library’s hall as the proper place. M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 166.

²¹ On humanistic notions of “public” regarding libraries, L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion’s Library*, pp. 26-27.

development of collections; and library management, i.e. the creation of bibliographical tools that will enable the consultation of the book collections²².

Let us then have a quick look at the state of things of the *Libreria di San Marco* according to these four elements.

Librarians

Before the opening of the library, the tendency was to nominate the official historian to administer the institution: in 1501 the scholar Marcantonio Coccio, nicknamed il Sabellico²³, in 1515 Andrea Navagero and in 1530 Pietro Bembo, were appointed as “gubernator” (governor). No specific charge was formulated for the time being, nor the qualifications the librarian should have; his role was limited to the care of the already existing books²⁴. Yet, the collection had still not been destined to a suitable location. Clearly the political situation was

²² CLAUDE CLEMENT, *Musei, siue Bibliothecae tam priuatae quam publicae extractio, instructio, cura, vsus. Libri 4. Accessit accurata descriptio Regiae Bibliothecae S. Laurentii Escurialis ... Auctor P. Claudius Clemens ...*, Lugduni, sumptibus Iacobi Prost, 1635, especially Book III. On the book: MATHILDE V. ROVELSTAD, *Claude Clement's Pictorial Catalog: A Seventeenth-Century Proposal for Physical Access and Literature Evaluation*, «The Library Quarterly», Vol. 61, No. 2 (Apr. 1991), pp. 174-187.

²³ M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, 96-97, In fact, already after Marco Barbarigo's death, in 1486, the Collegio recognized his “History of Venice” as a sort of an official history (“by public decree”), and probably nominated him at a certain point, in charge of the library. This detail is known from the appointment of his successor, Andrea Navagero in 1515, to be the Venetian official historian, a nomination which included the care of Bessarion's library: «habia insuper, come al prenominato Sabellico fo imposto, el cargo della Biblioteca Nicena, quando la sarà erecta». FELIX GILBERT, *Biondo, Sabellico and the beginning of Venetian official historiography*, in *Florilegium Historiale*, essays presented to Wallace K. Ferguson, eds., J.G. Rowe and W.H. Stockdale, Toronto 1971, p. 290, n. 34.

²⁴ MARCO FOSCARINI, *Della letteratura veneziana ed altri scritti intorno ad essa*, Venezia, co' tipi di Teresa Gattei editrice, 1854, p. 82, nota 1. This uncertainty also explains the Signory's inconsistency of nominations. Sabellico's nomination was due to his being a professor of latin literature in the Saint Mark's school or official historian? If the first hypothesis is correct, then either Marco Musuro, nominated in 1512 by the Council of Ten as professor in the Saint Mark's school or his colleague Gregorio Amaseo, should have been appointed in charge of the library (as in fact suggested to the Collegio by Zorzi Emo on May 5, 1515). If we accept the latter hypothesis, then it is clear why Andrea Navagero, and his successor Pietro Bembo, were appointed both as official historians and in charge of the library. Navagero was also nominated *Revisore delle stampe*. See the nomination in PAPIPIO PENNATO, *Nuove notizie intorno ad Andrea Navagero e Daniele Barbaro*, in «Archivio Veneto», III (1872), pt. I, pp. 255-261 (the document is at pp. 256-257; VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Consiglio dei Dieci, Misti, n. XXXIX, p. 39 (seconda numerazione), January 3, 1515 mv). Cfr. M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 100 for patrician opinions re-

one of the reasons for the delay on that crucial decision. Yet, it may be that the patrician class was divided on the question of the real destination of the books: a part said they would better be placed under the care of the Saint Mark's school, in Fontego della Farina, yet others sustained it was "the saddest place in the world"²⁵ and that a more brilliant solution should be found, namely a building entirely dedicated to the library (the idea was promoted by Bartolomeo d'Alviano)²⁶.

In the meantime, Navagero and Bembo's frequent absence because of their diplomatic activity²⁷, left the real administration in the hands of the Procurators of Saint Mark, who nominated the "Gastaldi" (guardians) to administer the registry of book laws²⁸.

garding Navagero's appointment. From mid-sixteenth century and until 1630', the appointed "governors" were scholars but not official historians: Bernardino Loredan, Alvise Gradenigo who succeeded him in 1575 until 1582, Alvise Pesaro (1582-1586), Benetto Zorzi (1588-1601), Niccolò Morosini (1601-1602), Zuanne Querini (1611-1623), and the "custode" Giovanni Sozomeno from Cyprus (1610-1633). *Ibid.*, pp. 159, 176-181, 205-207.

²⁵ "il più tristo luogo di questa terra", MARINO SANUDO, *I diarii*, Venezia 1887, vol. XIX, col. 424, February 7, 1514 m.v.

²⁶ M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 98. The idea was again reiterated in 1532 by the Procurator Vettor Grimani who solicited the construction of a «bibliotheca seu libraria pro reponendis libris graecis et latinis qui fuerunt quondam Reverendissimi Domini Cardinalis Nizeni», L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion's Library*, p. 132, doc. XII.

²⁷ M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 105 On September 26, 1530 the Council of Ten, upon recommendation of the Collegio, assigned Pietro Bembo the title of official historian «e habia in super, come al prefato Sabellico, et al quondam Nobel Homo Andrea Navaier fu imposto, la cura della Bibliotheca Nicena, dando ogni opera sua in ricuperar li libri lassati dal predicto Rev.mo Cardinal alla Signoria nostra». JACOPO MORELLI, preface to PIETRO BEMBO, *Della Istoria viniziana di m. Pietro Bembo cardinale da lui volgarizzata libri dodici. Ora per la prima volta secondo l'originale publicati*, Venezia, per Antonio Zatta, 1790, pp. VIII-XI, republished by CARLO LAGOMAGGIORE, *L'Istoria Viniziana di M. Pietro Bembo. Saggio critico con appendice di documenti*, Venezia 1905, p. 220, originally in «Nuovo Archivio Veneto», n.s, VII(1904), pp. 5-31, 334-372; VIII(1904), pp. 162-180, 317-346; IX(1905), pp. 33-113, 308-340. Again, we note the Republic's view regarding the future library: no incrementation of the collection, only conservation of the donation. Bembo's frequent sojourns in Padua induced him to ask Giovanni Battista Ramusio, the Senate's Secretary, for help in surveillance of laws, yet without any official nomination. See Ramusio's letter to Benedetto Ramberti on August 21, 1543, telling him of his useless efforts to locate "lost" Bessarion manuscripts. L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion's Library*, pp. 142-144, doc. XIX.2, citing from Cod. Marc. Lat. XIV, 17 (=4236), c. 26.

²⁸ The decree regarding the building of a new library, dated May 5, 1515, underlined the election of a «Adstans sive Gubernator cum eo stipendio quod videbitur, qui libros ipsos gubernare teneatur». VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Senato Terra, reg. XIX, c. 33v-34r; in L. Labowsky, *Bessarion's Library*, pp. 130-131, doc. X.

Undoubtedly, Bembo understood his role as “librarian” (the term is never referred to as such) and his management permitted the circulation of the Bessarion’s texts, to the extent that many editions were published, the library was visited by illustrious scholars and many copies were made of the manuscripts. After Bembo’s death, there was an interim of two Cancellieri Grandi: Andrea Franceschi and Lorenzo Rocca who, with the approval of the Riformatori dello Studio di Padova, were in charge of the access to the premises²⁹.

It is only in 1558 that the Riformatori proceeded to nominate Bernardino Loredan to take care of the library. His mission was to see to the “care and good management of the said library” and especially arrange “the Greek books, and also the Latin ones in order and [fastened] to chains in their place, and match their presence with the inventory”, while the Cancelliere Grande had the keys in custody³⁰. In fact, Loredan was not nominated librarian. The Riformatori did not refer to any title, but to his mission: “[keep] the said books in order”³¹.

Finally in 1626 the Senate established the functions of the library’s personnel: the librarian, the “custode” (guardian) and the “fante” (valet). The librarian, upon the Senate’s election, was to be one of the Procurators of Saint Mark and his appointment was for life. The “custode”, a scholar in ancient studies, with perfect proficiency in Greek and Latin, such as Giovanni Sozomeno from Cyprus (1610-1633), was to have the keys, administer the library, receive all books and draw up an inventory. The “fante”, elected by the Procurators of Saint Mark was to keep the library proper³². In 1650 the election of Alvisè Contarini, and from 1659 until 1678 that of Battista Nani, see official historians again as librarians. Yet, this

²⁹ Franceschi did not enjoy the title either of “custode” or “bibliotecario”. Passed away in 1552, his successor both in the Cancellierato and in the library was Lorenzo Rocca, who further restricted lawn and access conditions, M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 116.

³⁰ «cura et buon governo della libreria predetta»; «li libri grechi et così li latini ordinariamente in cathena nelli luoghi suoi, et incontrandoli coll’inventario». VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Collegio, Notatorio, reg. 32, cc. 30r-30v. Text in M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, pp. 550-551. Cfr. VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Procuratori di San Marco di Supra, b. 68, fasc. 1, c. 37, processo 151, September 26, 1554, in L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion’s Library*, p. 134, doc. XIV.

³¹ «[tenere] ben regolati detti libri». M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 173.

³² M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 211.

was the end of the double appointment. After Battista Nani one of the Procurators of Saint Mark would be appointed to the charge and as of the second half of the eighteenth century, the appointment would have the duration of three years³³. Indeed, one cannot overlook the fact that while at the first half of the eighteenth century scholars such as Antonio Magliabechi in Florence, Lodovico Antonio Muratori in Modena and Wilhelm Gottfried Leibniz in Wolfenbüttel were appointed librarians, the Venetian library continued with its policy of nominating Venetian patricians, learned indeed yet invested with other political charges³⁴. The first real librarian, and perhaps the most famous one, was Jacopo Morelli, who, as “custode”, then “prefetto”, succeeded in navigating the library in the turbulent times of French, then of Austrian occupation³⁵.

Development and acquisition

The library's appeal decreased as soon as Bessarion's donation had been made, as testified by the patrician Domenico Malipiero in his *Annali*: “... and it was decided to give 400 ducats to the courier that had brought them [the books], even if it will not be long until their value diminishes, after being given to print”³⁶. The fear of losing the cultural advantage gained by the Cardinal's collection due to possible future printed editions of these rare texts clearly demonstrates that the donation was intended for image promotion rather than for public use. The Venetian State was way behind Italian and Venetian owners of courtly or private libraries who as of 1480' started including printed books in their collections, sometimes treating them indistinctly³⁷. A rapid look at Venetian testaments reveals that as of 1478, Venetians welcomed printed books in their libraries (as did the

³³ *Ibid.*, 218.

³⁴ For Cinquecento and Seicento, see note 34. For the eighteenth century M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, pp. 243-283, 292-318.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 285-292 e 349-371.

³⁶ «è stà preso de donar 400 ducati al messo che i ha portati; se ben dapuo' i val poco, per trovarse in stampa». DOMENICO MALIPIERO, *Annali Veneti dall'anno 1457 al 1500 ordinati e abbreviati dal Senatore Francesco Longo*, ed. a cura di Agostino Sagredo, in «Archivio Storico Italiano», tomo VII, pts. I-II (1843-1844), p. 655.

³⁷ BRIAN RICHARDSON, *Stampatori, autori e lettori nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, Milano 2003, p. 180, refers to the fact that the printed books in a 1480' private library could arrive to 20% of the collection, while in 1490' they could even reach 40-50%. See examples such as the flo-

Cardinal himself, who included 22 incunables in his collection)³⁸. Naturally one cannot expect that before the library's opening, in 1553, a development policy could have been exercised. Yet, in the course of twenty years, from the opening until the drawing up of a new inventory in 1575, only one book was added to the library: Pietro Giustinian's *Historia Rerum Venetarum ad urbe condita*. Naturally, it was not a printed edition³⁹. Printed books, it seems, were believed to diminish the collection's prestige.

Apart from sporadic (although important) donations to the library (by Melchiorre Guilandino and by Giacomo Contarini)⁴⁰, one

rentine law professor, Giovanni Buongirolami, who owned in 1494 62 printed books and 40 manuscripts. *Ibid.*, p. 175 citing from ARMANDO F. VERDE, *Lo Studio fiorentino 1473-1503: ricerche e documenti*, Firenze, 1973-85, vol. II, pp. 328-335. Other example is the 1495 library inventory of the ferrarese ruler Ercole I d'Este, who owned 202 printed books and other 310 manuscripts. A. QUONDAM, *Le biblioteche della corte estense*, pp. 22-23. A third example is the court of the milanese Sforza when already in 1470 the ducal preceptor suggested to buy a printed roman edition of Plutarch's lives in order to understand the validity of the printed book, ANNA GIULIA CAVAGNA, *Libri in Lombardia e alla corte sforzesca tra Quattro e Cinquecento*, in *Il libro a corte*, p. 96.

³⁸ See the inventory of Antonio di Sambrino, chaplain of San Gregorio (July 22, 1478) who possessed six printed books out of twelve titles. SUSAN CONNELL, *Books and their Owners in Venice, 1345-1480*. «Journal of the Warburg at Courtauld Institutes», 31 (1972), pp. 182-183, and the 1480 testament of father Lorenzo of Santa Sofia. *Ibid.*, p. 184. Also on p. 185, the 1480 testament of the Venetian patrician Bartolomeo Bragadin, who had a book by Petrarch "in stampa ligado". For Bessarion's incunables, L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion's Library*, pp. 17-18, 481-482.

³⁹ See L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion's Library*, p. 426, no. 790: «Historia Petri Iustiniani rerum Venetarum ab urbe condita, in bombycino». It may be that as soon as the book was printed, in 1560, the original was deposited in the Library. See *Petri Iustiniani patritii Veneti Aloysii F. Rerum Venetarum ab urbe condita historia*, Venetiis, apud Cominum de Tridino Montisferrati, 1560.

⁴⁰ On Melchiorre Guilandino's 1589 donation (he was professor of Botany in the University of Padua) which amounted to 2200 books, R. TREVISAN, "Melchiorre Guilandino", in *Orto botanico di Padova 1545-1995*, Venezia 1995, pp. 59-62; GIORGIO EMANUELE FERRARI, *Le opere a stampa del Guilandino. Per un paragrafo dell'editoria scientifica padovana del pieno Cinquecento*, in *Libri e stampatori a Padova. Miscellanea di studi in onore di Mons. G. Bellini, tipografo editore libraio*, Padova 1959, pp. 377-463; M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, pp. 182-184. On Giacomo Contarini (1536-1595), of San Samuele, a scholar and influential politician, PAUL LAWRENCE ROSE, *Jacomo Contarini (1536-1595). A Venetian Patron and Collector of Mathematical Instruments and Books*. «Physis», XVII (1976) 2, pp. 117-130; MICHEL HOCHMANN, *La collection de Giacomo Contarini*. «Mélanges de l'École française de Rome, Moyen Age», 99 (1987) p. 456 (447-489), M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, pp. 184-187, DORIT RAINES, *Dall'inventario "short-title" al catalogo bibliografico: un excursus tipologico delle biblioteche private nella Venezia cinque-settecentesca*, in *Le biblioteche private come paradigma bibliografico, Convegno Internazionale, Roma, 10-12 ottobre 2007*, a cura di Fiammetta Sabba, Roma 2008, pp. 79-95 (90-92).

cannot detect any development policy in the course of the second Cinquecento. An important collection of manuscripts and printed books, a testimony of the flourishing Venetian printing press and of one of its most influential promoters, Aldo Manuzio, was for sale in 1597, year of Aldo il Giovane's death. The collection ended up in the Vatican Library. The Venetian Republic did not even try to secure the precious material, as it was persuaded that the Bessarion's manuscripts were sufficient in themselves for the library's renown⁴¹.

A sort of a revolution came about in the seventeenth century. First, in 1603 the Venetian authorities promulgated the legal deposit act. That should have increased the library's collections significantly, as Venice was one of the biggest printing centres, but its effect on collections' increase was not immediately perceived⁴². In addition, a new trend in collections' development began with the donations of Venetian citizens of their private libraries. In 1619, the physician and professor at the Paduan University, Girolamo Fabricio d'Acquapendente left 13 volumes of anatomic designs⁴³. In 1624 – Giacomo Gallicio donated his collection of Greek manuscripts. Some time after, the citizen Giorgio Morali donated his collection of Plato and Aristotle printed books in Greek and Latin – the library accepted the Aristotelian ones, and the Platonic part already being in the collection, was given to the Teatine library. In 1657, the Chioggia citizen Antonio de' Vescovi left both his manuscript and printed books. The manuscript part, being of political nature, was transferred to the Secret archives whereas the printed material entered the library collection. In 1663 the jurist Gaspare Lonigo left his precious law

⁴¹ On this episode and Jacopo Morelli's lamentation of a lack of attention on the Republic's part to Aldo's wish to leave it to the Libreria, see SUSY MARCON, *La formazione della raccolta aldina*, in *Aldo Manuzio e l'ambiente veneziano, 1494-1515*, a cura di Susy Marcon e Marino Zorzi, Venezia 1994, p. 183.

⁴² The second catalogue, drawn by the custode Sozomeno and terminated in 1622, enumerated 828 Bessarion manuscripts, then seventy others in Latin, Greek and Italian. As for printed books, the Libreria had at that time 2250 books. If we take into account that the Guilandino's donation amounted to 2200 books, we can conclude that in 19 years from the promulgation of the legal deposit act, only 50 books made their way to the library.

⁴³ On Girolamo Fabricio d'Acquapendente and the Marciana: *Il teatro dei corpi: le pitture colorate d'anatomia di Girolamo Fabrici d'Acquapendente*, a cura di Maurizio Ripa Bonati e Jose Pardo-Tomas, Milano 2004.

book collection to the library. Indeed, the 1679 catalogue enumerated an increase of nearly 3000 new entries⁴⁴.

So, until here, we saw two important decrees that should have contributed to make the *Libreria di San Marco* a scholarly haven: the 1603 legal deposit law and the 1626 decree that established the role of the library's personnel. In 1650, the Venetian Senate meditated for the first time a more affirmed cultural policy regarding the library. It ordered the Procurators of Saint Mark to allocate every year a sum to purchase "some piles of the most renown books in all sciences". The Senate also invited the Procurators to supervise the legal deposit act⁴⁵. Both recommendations were not followed. The Procurators, a magistracy used to deal with investments and increase of property's value, was more interested in spending money on the building itself rather than on updating the stock.

The eighteenth century witnessed a flow of donations (Giambattista Recanati, Tommaso Farsetti, Amadeo Svajer, Jacopo Nani, Giulio Ascanio Giustinian, to mention the most important ones)⁴⁶ and

⁴⁴ M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, pp. 208, 219-220, 229. On Lonigo, ANTONELLA BARZAZI, *Consultori in iure e feudalità nella prima metà del Seicento: l'opera di Gasparo Lonigo*, in *Stato, società e giustizia nella Repubblica veneta (sec. XV-XVIII)*, a cura di G. Cozzi, vol. II, Roma 1985, pp. 221-251.

⁴⁵ «qualche balla de' libri più esquisite in tutte le scienze». M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 220.

⁴⁶ M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, pp. 303-315. On Recanati, SIMONETTA PELUSI, *Novum Testamentum Bosniacum Marcianum: Cod. Or. 227 (= 168)*, Padova 1991, pp. 37-50; su Farsetti, PAOLO PRETO, *ad vocem*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 45 (1995), pp. 184-186; on Svajer, STEFANO FERRARI, *Amadeo Svajer (1727-1791): Un mercante erudito nella Venezia del Settecento*, in *I buoni ingegni della patria: l'Accademia, la cultura e la città nelle biografie di alcuni Agiati tra Settecento e Novecento*, a cura di Marcello Bonazza, Rovereto 2002, pp. 51-85; GIORGIA FILAGRANA, *La corrispondenza fra Amadeo Svajer e Giuseppe Valeriano Vannetti (1756-1764)*, in "Navigare nei mari dell'umano sapere". *Biblioteche e circolazione libraria nel Trentino e nell'Italia del XVIII secolo. Atti del convegno di studio (Rovereto, 25-17 ottobre 2007)*, a cura di Giancarlo Petrella, Trento 2008, pp. 183-198; on Nani, PIERO DEL NEGRO, *Giacomo Nani e l'Università di Padova nel 1781. Per una storia delle relazioni culturali tra il patriziato veneziano e i professori dello Studio durante il XVIII secolo*. «Quaderni per la storia dell'Università di Padova», vol. 13 (1980), pp. 77-114; su Giustinian, vedi gli accenni fatti da EMMANUELE ANTONIO CICOGNA nella biografia dedicata al padre: *Cenno intorno a Girolamo Ascanio Giustiniani Patrizio Veneto*, Venezia 1835. Vedi inoltre GIROLAMO DANDOLO, *La caduta della Repubblica di Venezia ed i suoi ultimi cinquant'anni*, Venezia 1855, I, p. 131; M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, pp. 291-304; DORIT RAINES, *Prodromi neo-classici. Anticomania, natura e l'idea del progresso nella cultura libraria settecentesca del patriziato veneziano*, in *Committenti, mecenati e collezionisti di Canova, I, Atti della VI settimana di Studi Canoviani, Bassano del Grappa, 26-29 ottobre 2004*, a cura di Giuliana Eriani e Fernando Mazzocca, Bassano del Grappa 2008, pp. 47-68.

a stricter control of the legal deposit act. With the election of Lorenzo Tiepolo in 1735 and the nomination of the scholar Anton Maria Zanetti as custode the library underwent a thorough revision and for the first time one can detect a clear cultural policy: the preparation of a modern catalogue, attention to conservation of the collections and their incrementation⁴⁷. Curiously, the library will become after the fall of the Republic richer in material regarding Venetian history and wider cultural themes with the dissolution of monastic libraries⁴⁸. By the nineteenth century the *Libreria di San Marco* will become due to this massive material a depository of Venetian identity and memory.

Bibliographical instruments

From Bessarion's donation and until the opening in 1553, the Procurators systematically asked the librarians the preparation of inventories, treating the library stock as if the question was of property rather than a cultural one⁴⁹. In 1544, the Council of Ten decided that a new office: the Riformatori dello Studio di Padova would take care of the library. Their mission was to make an inventory of the existing books and "take any measure they would consider helpful for the preservation of the said library"⁵⁰. The only addition was the original manuscript of Bembo's *Historia Veneta*. The new inventory or rather an "index librorum" (1545) was in itself a novelty: it was made in an alphabetical order of authors and titles.

⁴⁷ M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 252-270.

⁴⁸ PIETRO LA CUTE, *Le vicende delle biblioteche monastiche veneziane dopo la soppressione napoleonica*, snt., estratto dalla «Rivista di Venezia» 10 (october 1929), pp. 1-45; M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, pp. 349-363.

⁴⁹ The 1468 inventory merely divided the manuscripts into Greek and Latin ones, annotating author name, title, seldom the format, and the type of material (papyrus, parchment, etc.). L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion's Library*, pp. 157-188. The 1474 inventory was more topographical in nature, as the manuscripts were placed in numerous cases, each assigned with a letter. The manuscript description was similar to the precedent inventory. *Ibid.*, pp. 191-243. The 1524 inventory, although topographical in nature, and reiterating the same descriptive elements, is divided into Greek and Latin manuscripts with a completely different order of the manuscripts. *Ibid.*, pp. 245-290. The 1543 inventory was also topographical in nature, but this time the volumes were ordered by "banchi" and by shelves. *Ibid.*, pp. 291-325.

⁵⁰ «far ogni provizione che esistimerano espediente per conservatione della ditta libreria». VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Consiglio dei Dieci, Parti Comuni, reg. 16, c. 63, December 30, 1544 in L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion's Library*, pp. 132-133, doc. XIII.

Moreover, the books were placed in bookcases and banks, and the Latin texts were separated from the Greek ones, according to the common use in other libraries⁵¹. In 1575 when Loredan's successor, Alvise Gradenigo, arrived, a new list, a "catalogus librorum", was drawn. The distribution of books was in 38 "scamna" (banchi), each containing 25 volumes, divided between Greek and Latin and arranged according to arguments⁵².

In 1606 the Jesuit scholar Antonio Possevino published a catalogue of a number of Bessarion Greek manuscripts, to be used as an instrument for the study of the question of one faith (uniting Catholic and Greek Orthodox versions). Although the order was alphabetical, the description was brief and not complete⁵³.

The Sozomeno catalogue, drawn in 1622 and prepared for publishing, was the first real catalogue after the Cinquecento inventories. However, neither author's name nor typographical information regarding the printer were given (except for Aldine editions)⁵⁴. Sozomeno's successor, Santo Damiani, compiled in 1636, a new catalogue of titles, made of two parts: the first regarded the chained manuscripts in the *plutei*, and the second – the printed books on shelves with place and year of printing. In 1679, the new catalogue still reported only place and year of printing, but more care was given to a rapid retrieval of books, as we learn that charts were placed on the shelves to indicate the subject matter. Finally, in 1749 the Greek manuscripts catalogue as well as the Latin, Italian and French manuscripts one were completed by Anton Maria Zanetti. The library had now a modern catalogue which described in detail the precious collections⁵⁵.

Public access

As we recall, until 1531, the Bessarion collection was confined to cases placed in the Doge's palace in the hall where the Quarantia

⁵¹L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion's Library*, pp. 327-397. The catalogue tried to confront the titles with previous inventories and distinguish between those mentioned in the original inventory and others, whose origin was in doubt.

⁵²L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion's Library*, pp. 399-427.

⁵³M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, pp. 208.

⁵⁴S. MARCON, *La formazione della raccolta aldina*, pp. 184-185.

⁵⁵M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, pp. 264-270.

Civil used to hold its meetings⁵⁶. The situation was intolerable for scholars. Desperate calls such as those of the official historiographer and librarian Sabellico to doge Agostino Barbarigo in 1488 to gain immortality opening the “Ducal Library publicly, [as] promised us many times”⁵⁷, or the 1490 Senate decree asking for an immediate solution, resulted in indifference on the part of the ruling elite⁵⁸. Unable to study the manuscripts in the library, scholars and princes asked to copy or to lend them; in some rare cases the Republic consented the copy, in more others, they were lent but sometimes not given back, to the extent that the Collegio decided in 1506 to prohibit the lending of the manuscripts and more importantly, their consultation⁵⁹. Possibly Sabellico’s death in 1506, enhanced the Collegio’s conviction that it was better to keep the collection momentarily locked away and not allocate other means to it.

Aldo Manuzio contributed to the sensation that the library was no longer a fertile ground of study, rendering useless its consultation while better texts were now available in print: “those copies given to the printers [...] were destined to be torn and perish like a viper who gives birth”, so that the texts would arrive to the public in a correct edition⁶⁰. The printed book, especially the Aldine editions, some of

⁵⁶ The decision was taken as early as 1485 by the Collegio. See L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion’s Library*, p. 127, doc. VI, citing from VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Collegio, Notatorio, XIII, c. 99v, November 21, 1485.

⁵⁷ «Ducariae Bibliothecae publicatio, nobis totiens promissa», MARCI ANTONII SABELLICI *De venetis magistratibus Liber unicus*, Venetiis, per Antonium de Strata Cremonensem, 1488, c. II.

⁵⁸ VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Senato Terra, reg. XI, c. 9 and M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 89.

⁵⁹ «Che per autorità di questo Collegio sia ordinà e statui che de cetero per i procuratori nostri di San Marco prestar non se possi per modo alcuno alcun libro de quelli hanno del quondam Rev.mo Cardinal Niceno, non cum pagar né senza pagar, sotto pena de ducati 500 ad cadaun che li prestasse [...] Sia etiam deliberà che in futurum li libri prefati non si possin monstrare ad alcuna persona senza ballotation de questo Collegio, per i tre quarti de quello». VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Collegio, Notatorio, XIII, c. 164v, June 26, 1506, in L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion’s Library*, p. 130, doc. IX.

⁶⁰ «quegli esemplari che venivano dati agli stampatori [...] erano destinati ad essere stracciati e a perire come vipera che partorisce». Aldo Manuzio editore, *dediche, prefazioni, note ai testi. Testo latino con traduzione e note a cura di Giovanni Orlandi*, Milano 1975, I, p. 16; II, p. 206. Lowry hypothesizes the influence on Aldo by the bishop of Aleria, Gianandrea de Bussi, editor of the Sweynheim and Pannartz publications. MARTIN LOWRY, *Il mondo di Aldo Manuzio. Affari e cultura nella Venezia del Rinascimento*, Roma 1984, pp. 37-42, 283-287, 302.

which were based on the Bessarion's manuscripts, and the lack of updated editions that would reflect the ongoing humanistic philological work rendered the Bessarion's library obsolete, a monument to past glory, but certainly not an experimental laboratory, such as the cardinal wished it to be. It could be assumed that the treatment reserved for the library and the lack of a proper location and access had convinced cardinal Domenico Grimani to leave in 1523 his library to his nephew Marino Grimani and to the monastery Sant'Antonio di Castello⁶¹.

Under Bembo's management the circulation of the Bessarion's texts finally increased. Yet, in the course of the following years, lawn and access conditions were further restricted⁶². The lawn registries for 1545-1559 tell us that most requests came either from scholars or high-rank people and that only one request was made by someone from a different social class.

After the official opening of the library, Ferigo Badoer, founder of the Accademia della Fama, requested in 1560 the transfer of the Academy's conferences to the Public Library⁶³. The Procurators allowed

⁶¹ MARTIN LOWRY, *Two great Venetian libraries in the age of Aldus Manutius*. «Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester», 57 (1974), pp. 147-149; PIO PASCHINI, *Domenico Grimani cardinale di S. Marco (+1523)*, Roma 1943. The scholar and archbishop Marco Musuro told Andrea Navagero he had been behind the idea of Grimani's donation to the library. Yet, as Musuro himself testified, a number of manuscripts were for sale in Venice, stolen from the Library by the Cancelliere Grande Francesco Fasiol's nephew. L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion's Library*, pp. 139-141, doc. XIX.1, citing from a letter dated May 8, 1517 in Cod. Marc. Lat. XIV, 17 (=4236), cc. 25-26.

⁶² VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Procuratori di San Marco, b. 68, fasc. 1, c. 36 dated January 23, 1548 mv, edited in LAURA PITTONI, *La Libreria di San Marco. Cenni storici*, Pistoia 1903, p. 26.

⁶³ Established in Venice in 1558 by the patricians Federico Badoer, Domenico Venier and Girolamo Molin, the Accademia della Fama used Paolo Manuzio as its printer. In 1560 the Council of Ten authorized the Academy to publish all decrees and laws of the Venetian government. But a year later, the Academy was closed down. A.-A. RÉNOUARD, *Annales de l'imprimerie des Aldes ou histoire des trois Manuce et de leurs éditions*, Paris 1825, t. II, p. 237, n. 31: «Si dichiara per la presente scrittura, come quelli, li quali sono per haver sopra di se cosi il carico, et spesa, come il pro, et utile de la compagnia, de la stamparia, et Libreria de la Fama saranno li sottoscritti di sua propria mano a questo presente scritto». On the circumstances of its closure, following the financial bankruptcy of Badoer. PAUL L. ROSE, *The Accademia Venetiana. Science and Culture in Renaissance Venice*. «Studi Veneziani», XI (1969), pp. 212-214 e LINA BOLZONI, *L'Accademia Veneziana: splendore e decadenza di una utopia enciclopedica*, in *Università, Accademie e Società scientifiche in Italia e in Germania dal Cinquecento al Settecento*, a cura di L. Boehm e E. Raimondi, Bologna 1981, pp. 159-161.

it “for the benefit that the public, and especially the nobility, would draw eternally [from it]”⁶⁴. They designated the *antisala*, destined to host conferences of the School of Saint Mark, as the proper place for the Academy’s activities⁶⁵. Moreover, Badoer offered the Academy’s services to Bernardino Loredan, in arranging the books “so that it would be possible to get acquainted through the eye with things that are only understood by the intellect”⁶⁶. His idea was that in one place “all sciences and arts would be located, and in another, languages, and with this division it would be possible to understand things worthy of praise, and others, that by some flaw would need some improvement”⁶⁷. This was the first critical approach to the library, considering it as an evolving depository of human knowledge and as a launching pad for the cultural preparation of the Venetian patriciate. In fact, the Badoer’s vision went far beyond the Bessarion’s collection. The Academy’s members (among others future doge Alvise Mocenigo, Marcantonio da Mula and Badoer, as well as the Secretary Ottaviano Maggi, author of an ambassador’s manual)⁶⁸, most of whom came from the diplomatic corps, saw in the education of the governing elite a priority. As a result, they privileged relevant publications in “lingua volgare”⁶⁹ and regarded the acquisition

⁶⁴ «per el beneficio et ornamento che ne riceverà il publico et particolarmente la Nobiltà», VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato*, Procuratori di San Marco, reg. 68, fasc. 3, July 12, 1560, published in P. L. ROSE, *The Accademia Venetiana*, p. 234.

⁶⁵ F. SANSONO, *Venetia città nobilissima*, 1581, p. 112: «la Libreria, la cui antisala serve come per Studio publico a lettori salariati dal Senato, che insegnano alla gioventù le lettere greche & latine». Cfr. M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 163.

⁶⁶ «accioché visibilmente se intendano le cose che sono dall’intelletto solo comprese», M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 159.

⁶⁷ «vengano collocate tutte le scienze et arti, et dall’altra le lingue, con la qual distintione verranno per se stesse a scuoprirsi et le cose degne di lode et quelle che per qualche difetto avranno di miglioramento bisogno», *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ On Maggi and his manual: DOUGLAS BLOW, *Doctors, Ambassadors, Secretaries: Humanism and Professions in Renaissance Italy*, Chicago 2002, pp. 106-107; DORIT RAINES, *La dogressa erudita. Loredana Marcello Mocenigo tra sapere e potere*, in *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento*, Atti del convegno Internazionale tenuto il 29 novembre-2 dicembre 2006 all’Università di Milano-Società ‘Lombardia nel Rinascimento’, a cura di Letizia Arcangeli e Susanna Peyronnel, Roma 2009, pp. 375-404 (400-402).

⁶⁹ The Accademia della Fama had a very ambitious political project in mind: it aimed at the preparation of the governing elite to power and correct administration. Federico Badoer himself confessed in a preface of a guide book dedicated to «tutte le istruzioni di tutte le provincie di quali si voglia stato di Europa, dui a quelli dell’Asia, et dui a quelli dell’Africa», that this book should have been the «Thesoro» of ambassadors and politicians in their relationship

of the Greek language no longer necessary for political governors⁷⁰. However, Badoer encountered financial troubles and the Academy's project was abandoned, officially for heavy debts⁷¹.

The Bessarion's collection was still the heart of the library as stated in 1558 by the Riformatori who considered the Bessarion's books "such a great ornament to this city's interests"⁷². In fact, the book collection of Tommaso Giannotti of Ravenna, alias Tommaso Rangone, a famous physician who left in 1577 all his books and other collections to the Republic with the request to establish a public library in the Mercerie, open all year around, is, I think, an indicator of the Republic's attitude. His will was not respected and the book collection was donated to the Capuchin order in the Giudecca⁷³.

A real revolution came about with the 1626 Senate decree which established that the library was to be open three mornings: Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Under Sozomeno (1610-1633) many scholars

with other states. BARBARA MARX, *Die Stadt als Buch. Anmerkungen zur Accademia Venetiana und zu Francesco Sansovino*, in *Venedig und Oberdeutschland in der Renaissance: Beziehungen zwischen Kunst und Wirtschaft*, a cura di B. Roeck, K. Bergdoldt, A.J. Martin, Sigmaringen 1993, pp. 237-239. The outcome of the project was the publications *Le istituzioni dell'imperio contenute nella Bolla d'oro, nuovamente dalla latina nella volgar lingua tradotte* nell'Accademia Venetiana, 1559 (see RÉNOUARD, *Annales de l'imprimerie des Aldes*, p. 274, n. 17) and *I dieci circoli dell'Imperio, con l'entrate de Principi, & de gli stati della Germania...* Nell'Accademia Venetiana, 1558 (*Ibid.*, p. 273, n. 16). Bernardo Tasso's testimony in June 1559 on the activity of the Academy further sustains its commitment to the preparation of young patricians to power: «si continuerà la lettura degli altri, e non solo delle scienze e arti, ma delle cose de' Stati, delle Provincie e de' Regni, cosa della quale niuna a' nobili giovani di questa eccelsa Repubblica dovrebbe esser più grata, né maggior giovamento potrebbe portare». L. BOLZONI, *L'Accademia Veneziana*, p. 126.

⁷⁰ On the prevalence of the "lingua volgare" see P. L. ROSE, *The Accademia Venetiana*, p. 223. On the Greek language see the sarcastic observation of Federigo Badoer to Andrea Lippomano in a letter written from Augusta: «Della greca non ne fo mentione perche io sono sempre stato di questo parere, che a gl'huomini dati alli maneggi di stati ella non sia necessaria, et che quanto di opere si pone nello studio di quella, tanto si tolga alle cose necessarie di sapere [...] le dico alla libera, che ho conosciuto de quelli che sono di rara dottrina stimati nella greca lingua che di lei leggono di continuo le tradottioni de loro auttori, o nella latina o nella nostra trasportati, dando però voce di fare i loro studi nei propri auttori; e in aperto tengono ambiziosoamente i loro libri sopra le tavole et le loro traduzioni nelle cassette chiuse». *Ibid.*, p. 238.

⁷¹ Cozzi believed that Badoer's imprisonment was due to his project or juridical reform. GAETANO. COZZI, *La politica del diritto nella Repubblica di Venezia, in Repubblica di Venezia e Stati Italiani. Politica e Giustizia dal secolo XVI al secolo XVIII*, Torino 1982, p. 312.

⁷² «si grande ornamento alle cose di questa città», L. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion's Library*, p. 134, doc. XIV.

⁷³ M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, pp. 331-332. On Tommaso Rangone, F. BACCHELLI, *ad vocem*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 54, Roma 2000, pp. 535-541.

were allowed to use the library (such as the librarian of cardinal Mazarin – Jacques Gaffarel, or the scholar Thomas van Erpen or others), yet, others were denied access (Constantin Huygens, for example)⁷⁴. His successor, the “custode” Santo Damiani (1633-1658), was not keen on letting scholars enter the library: the dutch scholar Nikolaes Heinsius and Isaac Vossius, son of the famous Gerard, wrote to colleagues of their vain efforts to convince Damiani to let them access⁷⁵. The French librarian Gabriel Naudé testified in his 1622 famous bestseller *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque*, that apart from the Oxford Bodeleian, the Milan Ambrosiana library and the Augustinian library in Rome, libraries such as the Vatican, the Medicean in Florence and the Saint Mark’s library, among others “are all beautiful and admirable, but not that accessible and open to everyone”⁷⁶. The result was that scholars kept away from the library and had a vague notion of what it contained apart from the Bessarion collection. Thus, the 1680 edition of *De Bibliothecis* of the Dutch scholar Johannes Lomeier, reputed the Library of Saint Mark one of the most important European libraries, adding that “In Venice, Moneta and Pallas [...] reside together [...] In one place money is coined and guarded; in another one visits the library, filled full of Latin and Greek volumes”⁷⁷. Others were not as generous: the *Encyclopédie* sentenced that “La Bibliothèque de S. Marc est impénétrable”⁷⁸.

The republican mentality may have contributed to the absence of a clear cultural policy in the Cinquecento. First, it was believed that every governing elite’s family should administer its own cultural and educational resources. The spread of private patrician and citizen

⁷⁴ M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, p. 209.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁷⁶ GABRIEL NAUDÉ, *Avvertenze per la costituzione di una biblioteca*, introduzione, traduzione e note di Vittoria Lacchini, Bologna 1992, pp. 105-106: «sono tutte belle e mirabili, non così accessibili, e aperte a tutti, e a ingresso libero».

⁷⁷ JOHANNES LOMEIER, *A seventeenth century view of European libraries: Lomeier’s De bibliothecis, chapter X*, translated, with an introduction and notes by John Warwick Montgomery, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1962, p. 13.

⁷⁸ *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une Société des gens de lettres. Mis en ordre & publié par M. Diderot; & quant a la partie mathématique, par M. D’Alembert*, A Lausanne et a Berne, chez les Sociétés typographiques, 1781, vol. 36, p. 754.

libraries, coupled with the growth in number of academies came from the ruling elite's belief in culture as a matter of exchange between scholars rather than a set of clear civic rules. As the republican ideology slowly changed to State ideology in the beginning of the Seicento, and with the conviction that a sort of control should be made on published matter and its circulation, the governing elite tended to consider the library a place of local book collection and local printed matter depository. The increase in the number of libraries dislocated in every part of the city enhanced the feeling that all manuscripts and books, either in a monastic, private or public library, were part of the Venetian identity and heritage. The concept of "public library" and "public service", as already expressed in 1622 by the French librarian Gabriel Naudé drawing on the Milanese Ambrosian Library: "everyone can enter at whatever hour it suits him, or almost, and stay as long as he likes, consult, read, search for the desired author, have all instruments and comfort to do so, either in public or privately, and without any effort have a seat at whatever day and hour he chooses, ask for books the librarian or his well paid and treated three deputies who take care of the library's management, as well as the service of all those who everyday come there to study", was strange to Venetian ears⁷⁹. The Venetian Republic had still to make a long way before it could reach the comprehension that a public library not only reflected the glory of its prince by conserving precious book collections, but that its prime goal was to produce culture by creating a stimulating environment for a certain type of public defined by Naudé as "all scholars" ("tutti gli uomini di lettere")⁸⁰. The Bessarion collection, so crucial to Quattro-Cinquecento humanists, did not suffice in the following centuries.

⁷⁹ G. NAUDÉ, *Avvertenze per la costituzione di una biblioteca*, p. 106: «chiunque vi possa entrare a qualunque ora preferisca, o quasi, rimanervi tutto il tempo che gli piaccia, vedere, leggere, estrarre l'autore che desidera, avere tutti i mezzi e le comodità per farlo, sia in pubblico che in privato, e ciò senza altra fatica che recarvisi in giorni e ore normali, prender posto in sedie destinate a questo scopo, chiedere i libri che si vogliono consultare al bibliotecario o a uno dei suoi tre servitori, che sono molto ben pagati e trattati sia per le funzioni di biblioteca che per servire coloro che ogni giorno vengono lì a studiare».

⁸⁰ The allusion is to the public in Ancient Rome. Ivi, p. 104.