Dear Friends,

I hope you enjoy this second edition of OWL. We are still in the beginning stages of what we hope will become the tradition of publishing this newsletter, and yet we have already received some important feedback from our readers. Your interest and appreciation for the first newsletter proved a great comfort to us, and encourages us to make this edition, and future ones, even better. Our readers constitute a large family, whose members are widely diverse, but united in their contact with the Vatican Apostolic Library. This “being in contact” can be expressed in a number of different ways; for example, the interest or curiosity of those who want to know more about the steps that our Institution is taking and the decisions that are being made, those who want to be updated on our current and future projects, those who want to know more about the needs that the Library is facing, those who share our mission in the world of culture, or even those who seek our help in their own scientific research.

Through the publication of OWL, we hope to be able to respond to the many enquiries that this “family” might have wanted make to us, and perhaps even to anticipate them, by reaching out to all our friends who consider the Vatican Apostolic Library an important institution at the service of culture throughout the world, while simultaneously meeting the demands of scholars and researchers who have frequented our institution in the past, or who make use of it today. To one and all we hope to offer you the possibility of coming to know us better. We are very happy to make you a participant and include you among our supporters, and we hope that you enjoy reading this newsletter.

Gratefully yours,

Msgr. Cesare Pasini
Prefect
The Vatican Apostolic Library harbors many hidden treasures; but this does not mean, as some legends would have it, that documents have been tucked away for some mysterious reason. The only type of document in the Library not available to researchers, in fact, is that one in such a poor state of conservation that its consultation cannot be permitted. However, the “real” hidden treasures, to which we now refer, are the codices with more than one overlapping layer of texts written on the parchment leaves.

In the medieval period, when the texts of many ancient parchment codices were considered obsolete, they were “scraped clean” or “washed off” in order to be used for new texts. The elimination of texts which were considered unimportant, or barely legible, was seen as a way of recycling parchment, which was particularly expensive. These re-written codices, in which the more ancient texts can still be deciphered today through the use of appropriate “reading” instruments, have come to be called palimpsests (derived from the Greek compound word meaning, “scraped again”). The Vatican Apostolic Library boasts one of the largest (if not the largest) collection of palimpsests, with nearly 450 shelfmarks of manuscripts identified as holders of palimpsests; while new ones remain to be discovered.

In 1772, a lost portion of the work of Titus Livy was rediscovered in the Pal. Lat. 24, which hides, as later turned out, the fragments of ten different Latin and Greek texts not only from Livy, but also from Cicero, Fronto and others. Angelo Mai (1782-1854; from 1819 to 1833 the custodian of the Library, created cardinal in 1838) conducted a systematic study of palimpsests, discovering fragments of Cicero’s De re publica (Vat. Lat. 5757) as well as some fragments of the collection of letters by Fronto (Vat. Lat. 5750). In 1906, the latter became the first palimpsest ever to be published in its entirety in a facsimile edition. The initiative, promoted by Franz Ehrle (1845-1934; Prefect of the Library from 1895-1914), was conservative: he aimed at conserving a fixed visual record of the manuscript before further degradation left it in an illegible condition in order to make it available to all scholars (the urgency was heightened by the risk incurred by the chemicals in use at the time of Cardinal Mai to read the palimpsests).

In 2003, a very important palimpsest containing the fragment (nearly 200 verses) of an unknown comedy of Menander was discovered in Vat. Sir. 623, pt. 2, which is now being edited and prepared for publication. In this case, as in many others, the palimpsest leaves reveal three layers of writings from various historical periods. Other unique texts, which have only recently been deciphered in Vatican palimpsests, include fragments from a Byzantine collection of historical works copied in the 10th century (Vat. Gr. 73).
New palimpsests continue to be discovered, especially as the project of digitalizing the Library’s manuscript collections progresses.

In 2005, Vatican Library launched the “Cicero” Project, named after the author of its most famous palimpsest, the De re publica. This project, dedicated to the digitalization of the palimpsests, originated out of the urgent need to preserve the documents, and necessitated the postponement of the scientific interpretation of the recovered texts. The Library generally produces two different scans of each palimpsest page: one in natural light, and one with ultraviolet fluorescent light. The double images of palimpsests as part of their holder manuscript then go online. This process enables the conservation and preservation of the documents, at least in their current state, while at the same time it brings to light the scriptio inferior. The arrangement makes them easily available to scholars who can then use handy computer technology to enhance the ability to read each digital image. The Library produces these digital images by the use of special scanners developed by the Japanese company Toppan. In addition, the Photographic Laboratory of the Library uses cameras with infrared and ultraviolet filters to take multispectral images of documents that have specific requirements.

“Washed” parchment leaves normally allow an easier reestablishment of the removed ancient text with respect to those that were scraped clean (using pumice stone or with a razer).

An important opportunity for the study of palimpsests is a new mode for consulting documents called IIIF (International Image Interoperability Framework, created at Stanford University in 2012), which allows one to simultaneously examine several digitalized documents of different manuscripts conserved in different institutions. The Vatican Library has wanted to become an active member of the world of sharing and integration by applying the protocols of interoperability to its digital library (http://digivatlib.it) and joining the International Consortium of IIIF; which has over forty members of research libraries. This is a very useful technology for the reconstruction of texts through images, enabling the discovery of relationships between them, and providing the occasion for a good collaboration among the institutions which conserve these precious documents. In this regard, the Vatican Library finds itself on the frontline, offering the IIIF staff, with whom it collaborates directly, reflection points and soliciting opportune interventions to improve the reading instruments for the benefit of all member institutions. To the digital images, metadata and other easy-to-use technology have been added to further research. This year’s annual meeting of the consortium took place at the Patristic Institute Augustinianum in Rome, from June 5-9. Adopting the potentials offered by the IIIF, the Vatican Library, in its well-established tradition, continues to unearth its own treasures, especially those which are the most hidden.

On the left, an image taken with natural light: the text cannot be read because of the chemical agents used which has effaced the scriptio superior. On the right, an image taken with infrared light: by means of this technology, scholars are able to read texts which previously were illegible. The detail is taken from the collection of the historical texts of the Emperor Constantine VII (905-959); it is a fragment of the History of the Successors of Alexander written by the Athenian historian Dexippus (3rd century), a text which survives only in this manuscript.
The Dialogue of the Vatican Apostolic Library with Artists

On the afternoon of June 22, 2017, in the Sala Barberini, the Library hosted a conference entitled *The Vatican Apostolic Library in Dialogue with Artists: the Genesis of Three Graphic Works*. These works are the prints created by the Library’s Cabinet of Graphic Arts.

The first, the *Forma Urbis Romae*, was printed on the occasion of the Great Jubilee of 2000, during the pontificate of St. John Paul II, according to an age-old tradition of the celebration of jubilee years. Designed by Riccardo Tommasi Ferroni (1934-2000), it was engraved by Patrizio Di Sciullo (born in 1965) and Giuseppe Greco (born in 1970) and hand-printed by Antonio Sannino (1943-2012), according to the traditional method of carving.

The second, the *Civitas Vaticana*, was designed by Pierluigi Isola (born in 1958) in 2007 during the pontificate of Benedict XVI, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Pope Pius XI’s birth (May 31, 1857). Pius played a decisive role in the creation of the modern Vatican City State, which celebrated its 80th anniversary (1929-2009) in that year.

The third, the *Misericordiae Vultus*, was designed on the occasion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of the Year of Mercy in 2015, promulgated by Pope Francis. Also designed by Pierluigi Isola, it was engraved by Patrizio di Sciullo. The collaboration with these artists of proven ability was constantly renewed and strengthened with each of these three projects.

The initiative was an integral part of the workshop entitled, *Graphic Arts in Dialogue* which the very active Cultural Association “Ars Graphica” organized in Rome from June 21-24, 2017. Through the contribution and support of this association it will be possible to restore a valuable *View of the Temple of the Sibyl in Tivoli* by G. B. Piranesi (1720-1778), which belongs to the Ashby collection.

Msgr. Cesare Pasini, Prefect of the Vatican Library, Barbara Jatta, Director of the Vatican Museum and former Curator of the Prints Cabinet of the Vatican Library, Simona De Cresenzo, Curator of the Graphic Arts Cabinet, and the artists Pierluigi Isola and Patrizio di Sciullo, discussed the genesis, progress of the stages of each project, and meaning before an audience that filled the Sala. The three works of art published by the Vatican Library constitute a successful example of dialogue between a library and the artists who designed and produced them, as well as three very significant moments in the history of the Institution and of the Vatican City State.
ninety years ago, on August 24, 1927, four intrepid librarians, two cataloguers and two aspiring cataloguers from the Vatican Apostolic Library set sail for the United States on the “Paris,” which left from Le Havre. They reached New York a week later, whereupon they parted ways to go to their respective destinations in order to assimilate the latest cataloging techniques then in use in the United States. Msgr. Enrico Benedetti (1874-1941) and Msgr. Carmelo Scalia (1885-1936) spent a semester at the Library of Congress primarily to work on creating the subject categories, the norms of which were then in the process of development in America. “Our” representatives offered their particular expertise in the less examined areas on the other side of the ocean: theology, liturgy, and biblical texts, etc., thus exchanging services with their American colleagues.

The young scholars, Igino Giordani (1894-1980) and Gerardo Bruni (1896-1975), who had been promised jobs in the Library upon completion of their formation in the United States, spent two semesters studying library science at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and at Columbia University in New York.

The expedition came about through proposal from William Warner Bishop (1871-1955), the librarian at the University of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and was funded by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The project comprised three distinct initiatives of a catalogographic nature concerning all the Vatican Library’s patrimony: its manuscripts, incunabula and general collection of printed books. The four delegates would have been occupied mostly by the collection of printed books, resetting the catalogue codification and producing adequate bibliographic descriptions for the entire collection, which had greatly increased in the previous decades. In those years, the Vatican Library had added the Barberini collection of 36,000 printed volumes (1902), the Chigi collection of 30,000 printed volumes (1923) and the Ferrajoli collection of 40,000 printed volumes (1926). As for the manuscripts, Mr. Bishop devised an inventory index, whose norms were to be invented by the Vatican Library. In order to accomplish this, several scholars and young paleographers worked on the project from 1928 until 1945, achieving one part of the complex work of identifying the works, their authors, and the period of their date of fabrication.

As for the incunabula, the acclaimed Swedish incunabulist Isak Collijn (1875-1949) assisted in the study of the appropriate rules. Tommaso Accurti (1862-1946) also worked on this project with some assistants. The project could not be completed within the period it enjoyed the support of the Carnegie Foundation, but rather was finished through the assistance of another American, William Sheehan, C.S.B. (born in 1937).

The four delegates returned to Italy full of enthusiasm, and immediately began to apply what they had learned with the assistance of some expert American cataloguers, who were spending some time in Rome in the Spring of 1928 to undertake the cataloging of the print collection. It became clear that the American norms of 1908 (*Catalog rules: author and title entries*) and the Italian norms promulgated in 1922 (*Regole per la compilazione del catalogo alfabetico*) were not sufficient to meet the needs of the Vatican Library.

Work thus began on drafting a new set of norms which would better suit the conditions of the institution. In 1931 the *Norme per il catalogo degli stampati* were published, which were subsequently revised in 1939 and 1949. These norms were observed until the 1980s, when the Library decided to use the American, or *Anglo-American cataloging rules*, while maintaining some peculiarities of the Vatican system.

The experience of the four librarians in America was particularly positive as it obliged the Library to extend its views with new perspectives. In the same period of history, the Library’s public and operative work spaces were also reorganized. The Library’s initiatives at that time became a model for many other European institutions, which came to the Vatican to see its achievements firsthand, such as the new deposits made of metal shelving brought from New Jersey or the catalogues of metal movable drawers, such as those in use in the Library of Congress at that time. Paper index cards continued to be produced until the advent of the computerized catalogue, which was begun in 1985.
The President of Latvia, Raimonds Vējonis, and his wife, Iveta, visited the Vatican Apostolic Library on June 2, 2017. The occasion of the visit may be linked to the presence in the Library of the beautiful volume, *Terra Mariana: 1186-1886*, printed in Riga in 1888, a unique copy hand-painted with watercolors and given to Pope Leo XIII on the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. At the time, this gesture of the Latvian people was meant to illustrate their long-standing and profound adherence to Christianity and their special devotion to the Virgin Mary. The gesture was also meant to help foster closer relations with the Church of Rome.

In 2004, the Ministry of Culture and Culture Heritage of the Republic of Latvia asked permission from the Vatican to create a facsimile of the work. The project came to fruition in the following years, thanks to the research that went into publishing a commentary on the volume, with the contributions of many scholars; in the end one thousand and twelve copies were produced. The opportunity to collaborate on this project provided the occasion to strengthen the bonds of friendship between Latvia and the Vatican Apostolic Library, as the presence of the President of Latvia demonstrated, and is expected to pave the way for future collaborations.

«The first impression of those who cross the threshold of the Library, which is the same for those who work there, is admiration: so many treasures, so many feats, so many things to see and to discover (as in a virgin forest), and so much yet to explore and to visit! Such admiration is the best tribute that can be paid to the Vatican Library. The second impression is that of veneration and homage to the Library for all that it has collected and preserved. It is not a cemetery, because everything within it speaks, comes to life, and seems to palpitate when scholarship allows for the resonance of this immense inheritance of human expression, of history, of culture, of the life of the past, which resumes its dialogue with those who are able to grasp and to understand its mysterious voices. And then there is the feeling which the Pope believes to be the most common one among his listeners: a feeling of interest and of concern to continue renovating the Library, to modernize, restore and repair it, because here we find we find ourselves in a domain where perfection in all its aspects, that is, in the preservation, classification, and diffusion of its collections, becomes the profession, commitment and daily duty».

Excerpt from the speech given by Pope Bl. Paul VI during his first visit to the Vatican Library on June 8, 1964.
Their Royal Majesties King Willem-Alexander van Orange-Nassau and wife, Queen Maxima visited the Vatican Apostolic Library on the morning of June 22, 2017. The visit, held during the royal couple’s four-day sojourn in Rome, was the occasion for the symbolic return of the royal military baton of Willem van Orange, the pater patriae of the Netherlands, who had undertaken the long war that won their independence from Spain (1568-1648).

The baton was discovered in a Jesuit residence at Sant Cugat del Vallès, north of Barcelona. It was probably taken by the Spaniards after their victory in the Battle of Mookerheide on April 14, 1574. The object has a distinctly symbolic meaning for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which is still governed by the Orange dynasty, and was handed over by the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr. Arturo Sosa Abascal, during the visit of the Royal family to the Vatican. The brief ceremony took place in the Salone Sistino of the Library. His Majesty King Willem-Alexander handed the baton over to Mrs. Hedwig Saam, Director of the Dutch National Military Museum, which will feature the precious object in an exhibition on Willem van Orange to take place in the following year. His Majesty Willem-Alexander asked her «to take great care» of it.

As the Prefect of the Vatican Apostolic Library, Msgr. Cesare Pasini, emphasized, «an object which historically reminds us of a bloody war between the Netherlands and Spain, and also a painful situation of religious conflict, is now a witness to reconciliation and a significant symbol of mutual respect and the promotion of peace at the very center of catholicity and more precisely in our Library. Moreover, we are conscious that the Vatican Library as a place of culture and at the service of culture, stands as a place of dialogue and mutual understanding among peoples. Thus, our hosting the event gave it an even deeper meaning». On the occasion of the visit, some precious documents kept in the Library were shown to the royals, including a 15th century Dutch Book of the Hours, with very fine miniatures, made in the city of Utrecht (Rossiano 70).
An Encounter with Russian Librarians

On May 18, 2017, a group of librarians from the Russian National Library and the University of St. Petersburg spent the day at the historical site of the Vatican Apostolic Library and at its extra moenia sites. The purpose of the visit was to enable them to observe closely the information technology used for the dissemination of the Library’s patrimony, including the processes for digitalizing documents, the storage of these files, and their publication on the Library’s website. Organized by Mr. Gian Piero De Martino, Mr. Roeland Dillen and Mr. Alexander Bryuzgin (with the technical assistance of Mr. Daniele Tordin) of the Panduit Corporation, a U.S. company with which the Vatican Library has been collaborating for a long time, the event also included the welcome participation of the Dell-EMC and PIQL companies, which are also involved in the digitalization project of the Library’s manuscripts in the fields of imaging and data storage. The group was able to visit the historic site where the Library first opened; then, they continued to an encounter in the Sala Barberini, where the Library’s IT staff, together with the organizers of the event, presented the work in progress of the digitalization of the Library’s manuscripts. The IT staff offered a particular emphasis on the more technical aspects of the work.

Afterwards, the guests visited the new Data Center on the ground floor of the historical Sistine Palace in order to see the equipment used in the imaging, the collection of data, and the publication of digital documents online. They also visited the Photographic Laboratory 2 on the Via della Conciliazione. Guests were able to ask questions and obtain useful information from the Library’s specialists and the companies’ representatives.

The digitalization project of the Library, unique because of the number of documents involved (some 80,000 manuscripts), and the methods used to achieve the projects goals, were of particular interest to the guests, who expressed their desire to replicate the project in their own libraries. During the mutual exchange of expressions of gratitude for the fruitful day spent together, the desire to begin collaboration between the Russian institutions and the Vatican Apostolic Library was likewise expressed.

A similar event with another Russian delegation focusing on computer technology took place on July 24, 2017. The group that visited was specialized in both the cultural and financial backgrounds. The operative direction of the Philips lighting joined the professional groups.
Numerous benefactors have generously contributed to the financing of the important and onerous building works in the Vatican Library, the acquisition of new and important documents, the restoration of manuscripts and books, the cataloguing projects and other initiatives. The Vatican Library wishes to thank the following persons and Institutions explicitly:

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