A world yet to be explored: The Archival Section of the Apostolic Library

With the hundreds of thousands of archival units that comprise the twenty-two collections and fill two thousand linear meters of shelving, the Archival Section of the Vatican Apostolic Library possesses an extraordinary treasure of European culture that spans a period from the 10th century to the present day.

At the end of the 19th century, and throughout the following one, the Apostolic Library acquired important archival collections coming from noble Roman families, that for various reasons had been involved with the government and affairs of the Church: the Barberini, the Chigi, the Ottoboni, the Colonna, the Colonna di Sciarra and the Salviati. In the Barberini Archive, besides the documents related to the history of the family, there are others associated with the numerous abbeys which the Barberini cardinals held as benefices in commendam, as well as volumes of the Monastery of the Incarnation of Rome (belonging to the religious sisters called Barberine), and lastly archives of families closely associated with the Barberini, either by marriage or inheritance. The latter include documents such as those of the Salviati and the Colonna di Sciarra, an excerpt from the Colonna (which complements the Colonna Archive of the Paliano branch, today found in Subiaco), and the accounting ledgers of Cardinal Ottoboni junior (d. 1740).
The Barberini Archive also includes 31 series of documents which are still not catalogued for the most part, and therefore not accessible to scholars. The documentation is most substantially linked to the branch of the family to which Maffeo (1568-1644, later Pope Urban VIII 1623-1644) belonged, and attests to the great artistic and cultural patronage, and hence political influence, which characterized this family in Rome and in the Roman Curia, especially during the baroque period.

In 1940, the Archive of the Chapter of St Peter was transferred from the Vatican Basilica to the Library. This treasure constitutes one of the most important documentary collections for the vastness of the subjects it comprehends, providing historical references for the culture, religion, art buildings of Rome. The archive contains 78 capsae, archival units in the form of booklets, made mostly of parchment and paper. The collection features documents from the 10th century on, including the famous papal bull of Boniface VIII promulgating the first Jubilee Year in 1300. It also contains series all related to the management of the patrimony of properties owned and administered by the Canonical Institute.

In 1944 the Chigi Archive was added to the collections of the Library, an archive associated above all to the activities of Alexander VII (Fabio Chigi, 1599-1667), and replete with some 25,000 units datable to the period covering the 12th and the 20th centuries. This archive includes a collection of drawings made by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. The archive and the drawings came from the Palazzo Baronale of the Chigi Family in Ariccia (a region in the montaneous outskirts of Rome) where they were brought in 1918 from the Palazzo Chigi in Rome, after this building was sold to the Italian government.

This section also possesses other archives (in part or in their entirety) from some of the Roman churches and basilicas.

Another noteworthy collection is that of the Notai d’Orange, which contains documents dating from 1311 and 1557, the ancient archive of the registers of notaries of the Principality of Orange. The notaries issued their judicial acts originating from the papal archives of Avignon in various locations of County Venaissin (Avignon, Carpentras, Couy-thézon, Piolenc), simultaneously.

Of great interest is the multifarious Collezione Patetta, which takes its name from its original owner, Federico Patetta (1867-1945), a historian of Italian law who collected a vast quantity of original documents, manuscripts, parchments and printed books. While parts of the collection went different ways upon his death, Patetta himself had already donated the largest part to the Vatican Library, one that included autographs, manuscripts and parchments.

At the end of the 1970s, so as to better preserve and manage its documents, the Library created a new section of the Manuscript Department exclusively intended for the archival collections in the building known as the Braccio di Giulio II, adapting pre-existing structures that had been in poor condition on four floors.

The resources available to scholars (indices, inventories, catalogues) cover only a mere portion of the massive documentary material conserved therein. The task of reconstructing and organizing these collections according to their original purpose and intention, and then of providing a correct description of these archival series and units, will constitute an enormous undertaking.
Over the past few years, the personnel of this Section (though made up of very few members) have succeeded in publishing the results of critical enquires regarding different portions of some of these collections. We hope to be able to do more for this Section in the near future, beginning with the installation of air-conditioning in the physical locales, in order to conserve its materials correctly. An even more challenging task will be the reorganization of the Section's areas and the addition of new spaces, whenever possible, in order to accommodate both the materials and the people adequately, as to then to make progress in producing descriptions of the precious documents.

Most high, all powerful, all good Lord!
All praise is Yours, all glory, all honor, and all blessing.
To You, alone, Most High, do they belong.
No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your name.
Be praised, my Lord, through all Your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and You give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor!
Of You, Most High, he bears the likeness.
Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars; in the heavens You have made them bright, precious and beautiful.
Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, and clouds and storms, and all the weather, through which You give Your creatures sustenance.
Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Water; she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.
Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom You brighten the night. He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.
Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth, who feeds us and rules us, and produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.
Be praised, my Lord, through those who forgive for love of You; through those who endure sickness and trial.
Happy those who endure in peace, for by You, Most High, they will be crowned.
Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Bodily Death, from whose embrace no living person can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin!
Happy those she finds doing Your most holy will. The second death can do no harm to them.
Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks, and serve Him with great humility.
On September 20th, the 150th anniversary of the birth of Federico Patteta, the distinguished scholar of juridical sources, and professor of the history of Italian Law, Roman Law and Canon Law, was celebrated through a conference of scholars organized in his birthplace of Cairo Montenotte (Savona). Two representatives of the Archival Section of the Vatican Library participated in and presented lectures at this important event.

Over the course of his life, Prof. Patetta gathered a vast number of original documents, autographs, manuscripts and parchments, which he bequeathed to the Vatican Library, and were received in 1946. It is a unique collection, both for the sheer quantity of documents that cover such a range of topics as to provide material for forty different categories, as well as for the kinds of documents it contains.

The work of organizing the collection, was undertaken in 1962. The documents were distributed in 1,720 folders and divided into three collections: the Patetta Manuscripts (containing 4,688 articles); the Patetta Autographs and Documents, covering a chronological period from the 15th to the 19th centuries; and the Patetta Parchments (containing 1,163 catalogued documents ranging from the 12th to the 19th centuries).

In 2006, the Patetta Collection (containing 746 units) was created for the documents not included in these series and allocated in the room named after him “Sala Patetta”. As this is still in the process of being organized, it is not yet accessible to researchers.

Among the most important series of this extraordinary collection are the House of Prussia, the Casa Savoia, the Portefeuille de Fouché (which contains documents related to the activities of Joseph Fouché, Minister of Police in Paris in 1799); Masonry (with diploma cards, notes, documents, and registries dating from the 17th to the 19th centuries); Popes (with bulls, briefs, letters, printed portraits); the Daugnon Collection (documents related to François Foucault de Saint-Germain-Beaupré, Count of Daugnon: 1836-1920); The Kingdom of Sardegna, Risorgimento (documents related to the war of 1848-1849), the Papal States; and Typographies.

The active interest that has grown out of the activities related to the Patetta gives us hope that young scholars might undertake new studies using this documentary collection preserved in the Vatican Library.

Cardinal O’Malley visits the Apostolic Library

His Eminence Cardinal Sean Patrick O’Malley, O.F.M.Cap., Archbishop of Boston since 2003, and member of the group of nine cardinals convoked to counsel the Holy Father on the governance of the Church, recently came to Rome for the Plenary Session of the Commission for the Protection of Minors, of which he is the president.

The distinguished cardinal is also a member of the Board of Directors for the Sanctuary of Culture, a foundation created in the United States to promote the activities of the Apostolic Library by raising funds to finance its projects. He thus desired to visit the secular institution and see its historical places.

The cardinal visited the Library on September 19th, accompanied by His Excellency the Most Rev. Donald Francis Lippert, O.F.M.Cap., of Mendi, Papua New Guinea, and by a group of priests of his archdiocese.

The afternoon included a visit to the Salone Sistino, a hall named after its founder Pope Sixtus V. The hall was opened as a reading room to researchers on October 9th, thanks to the support of the foundation that Cardinal O’Malley serves as a member of the Board. The very welcome guest was also able to appreciate two ancient insular manuscripts from the 8th century that are preserved in the Library; given that the Cardinal is of Irish descent, the insular manuscripts were of particular interest to him.
Metal gall ink, the enemy of paper: the letters of Clement IX in the process of conservation

Three codices with the original letters of Camillo Rospigliosi (1601-1670), dated from 1624 to 1642, and of his brother Giulio (1600-1666, Clement IX 1667-1669) dated from 1630 to 1641, belonging to the Vaticani Latini Collection, are currently undergoing conservatory treatment, thanks to the generosity of a benefactor. The donation, originally offered to pay for the digitization of three manuscripts, ended up covering the cost of both operations.

The state of conservation of such documents is precarious due to the use of metal gall ink (often called iron gall ink) which has corroded the texts of the missives, leaving the paper in a very fragile state. Such documents cannot be digitized without a careful conservation process which would consist in reinforcing the paper.

The campaign to digitize the 80,000 manuscripts contained in the stacks of the Apostolic Library has been undertaken in order to guarantee a better preservation of the originals, and the work is progressing, despite all objective difficulties. This noble initiative, which seeks to make the documents accessible, even to those who are far from Rome, also intends to reduce the consultation of the original documents in situ in order to diminish the risk of further damages.

A significant amount of the manuscripts from the 17th and 18th centuries, like those mentioned above, cannot be digitized due to the precarious state of their conservation. These manuscripts are too damaged to be subjected to the procedures for their digitization and, therefore, cannot be consulted by scholars either. Thus, there is an urgency that measures be taken to be able to digitize them.

Metal gall ink is created from a solution of water base and pulverized nutgall, with the addition of vitriol and Arabic gum. It is of a brown or black color, and for centuries was used in the West because it took well to parchment and paper. The chemical process of the formation of the ink is complex and requires several steps. Unfortunately, this kind of ink can have an oxidizing effect and/or acid hydrolysis on the material where it has been written.

In unfavorable environmental conditions, this corrosive process damages that material, and over the time, the damage is often irreversible.

We can count thousands of manuscripts made of paper that have been severely damaged by the metallic components of this ink: works on philosophy, science, art, literature, writings of diverse faiths, documents collected by the pontiffs, or from important families and individuals. The Conservation Department of the Library is very committed to the delicate work of recovering and conserving these documents so that they can be used again.
Last June the Roman artist and art historian Francesco Parisi donated a *libro d’artista* to the Apostolic Library. An “artist book” is an artistic work created in the form of a book, often of limited circulation, and thus a unique object. His work, entitled *Fuoco nero su fuoco bianco: Xilografie* (Black fire on White Fire: Woodcuts), was published by the Tipoteca Italiana Fondazione di Cornuda (Treviso) in 2016. The volume was fabricated in an elegant, costly way, and only fifty copies were printed, in which the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet are represented and accompanied by a depiction of their original symbolism.

Parisi engraved the images on Armenian wood and printed them in black ink on Biblios Magnani paper. A short, but intensely poetic text composed by the artist introduces the woodcuts by illustrating the genesis of the work. The entire book, including the text, was printed by hand.

Citing the words of the artist: “The color black was used because the Torah was given to Israel like ‘a black fire on white fire,’ as Zohar once taught. The black fire, that is, the letters of the Semitic consonants, are similar to the dark part of the flame that adheres to the wood as it burns, to the twisted thread of the wick. But the letters of Revelation, in order to resound in the voice that pronounces them and in the heart which contemplates them, must be drawn out, and almost immersed, in the white flame of the page – the stone tablet of Sinai, the sheet made from the skin of a sacrificed animal, the sheet produced from an excorticated tree – which, with its apparent absence and negativity, creates the designs in the blanks spaces between the consonants and the words, between the verses and the lines, or the margins. It is properly speaking in these blanks spaces, or in the margins, made by white fire which is the subtlest and highest aspect of the visible flame, manifestation of the white mercy of God, that the commentary flourishes in the essence of the text. This commentary is produced by the daily renewal of the text, and the breath of the man who meditates and studies the flesh and bones of the Scriptures.”

Parisi gave the Library four of his most important woodcuts which belong to a series entitled, *Shir Hashirim* (Canticle of Canticles). The woodcuts were hand-printed on diverse kinds of paper and printed in different manners, between 2014 and 2016. He also gave a splendid woodcut that he crafted in 2004 from two pieces of wood entitled *Aceldama*, or *Il giardino di Judas* (The Garden of Judas), with gold and black ink printed on Japanese blue paper.
On October 3rd, the Vatican Library hosted participants in the International Project Digital Cicognara Library, which will make some 5,000 printed volumes of the collection of Count Leopoldo, listed in the Catalogo ragionato dei libri d’arte e d’antichità posseduti dal Conte Cicognara (1921), available to researchers online. The Catalogue is an invaluable bibliographic tool in the fields of art and archaeology, both for the number and quality of the documents listed therein.

The Vatican Library acquired the collection of the Count in 1824 and grouped it together with other graphic works, given that the volumes of the Cicognara collection were meant to improve the study of such works.

In 1988, upon the initiative of the University of Illinois, and with the support of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, a campaign was undertaken to create microfilm of the Cicognara Collection, so that microfiches could be distributed to institutions that ordered a subscription.

The most recent initiative concerning the collection consists in creating online digital versions of the works present in the Catalogue which are owned by the diverse partners. Members participating in the project include: the Columbia University Library, the Frick Art Reference Library, the Getty Research Institute, the Harvard University Library, the Heidelberg University Library, the National Gallery of Art Library, the Princeton University Library, and the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign Library (through the support of the Kress Foundation). The Vatican Library also participates to the project with the microfiches it produced.

During the three days of meetings (3-5 October) which took place at the Vatican Library, at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, at the American Academy, and at American University of Rome, experts and art historians worked together and gave technical and historical presentations. This fruitful exchange of opinions stimulated discussion and led the way to making resources more useful to interested scholars.

The website of the project will display all the “unique” exemplars of the works with their stamps and annotations, all of the signa present in the volumes, and much more for study and discovery.

These eventful days offered the occasion to deepen a reciprocal understanding among the partners and to strengthen collaborations, which certainly will lead to more fruitful developments in the future.
There was a time when trades were learned only in the shop. So too the art of conservation was not learned in university, but in the workshop, alongside other maestri, or accomplished curators. The Vatican Library was one of the first in the world to create its own internal department active since 1898, with stable personnel to repair codices damaged by time and use.

Those who aspired to become conservators were adolescents who learned how to use their hands for such work while they were still young. Thus, over the years, many young men began to work in the area set up for this work, arranged by Jesuit Franz Ehrle (1845-1934), where the Conservation Department of the codices of the Vatican Library is still located, although enlarged and expanded to its present form.

Arnaldo Mampieri, from Olevano Romano, was among the many young men formed over the years at the workbenches of the Department, admiss parchments and glue, buckles and covers, Japanese paper and end-bands. He began to work at the Vatican Library on 1 April 1963, and is the last representative of the period in which young apprentices were taught the art of conservation in the Department.

Having already worked for the Photographic Department, upon finishing his military service, he became part of the conservation team, where professionals dressed in white overcoats “attended to” deteriorated ancient codices. At that time, there was a subdivision of work in the Department: among those who were particularly adept at working on bindings, those who were better at working on the conservation of parchments, or those who best knew how to work with paper; some workers relished tasks involving monastic bindings and others preferred large-sized codices, and still others who, notwithstanding the large size of their hands, were particularly good at working on miniatures.

The young person learned something from each of his older colleagues, beginning with reinforcing the hinges and lining the pages with tissue. For the closing part on bindings, he learned to use metals which were taken from the mechanical office. Only then was he entrusted with a small paper manuscript to restore. Then, over time, he worked on many others before becoming a “master conservator”, who in turn taught others. From 2004 to 2010, Mampieri was the head of the Conservation Department of the Vatican Library.

In the 90’s, when the Dominican Leonard F. Boyle was Prefect (1984-1997), the Conservation Department “went out” of the Vatican to showcase its work and interact with the academic world, which had already been preparing young generations in the art of library conservation for quite some time. Mampieri represented the Department for those who wanted to learn more about the use of metals.

New approaches, brought by young people trained Academic Institutions were joined to more traditional techniques from hands-on experience, forming a fruitful synthesis in the Conservation Department of the Vatican Library, and Mampieri striving to unite the two worlds together, working until 2010. His great commitment, his affectionate dedication and his innate good humor are now dedicated to his grandchildren, Marta and Francesco, and to his “city”, Olevano Romano, immortalized by many European artists in the 19th century, of which Mampieri may consider himself a distinguished citizen.
The Gems of the Vatican Medal Collection

The Vatican Medal Collection is one of the treasures of the Apostolic Library. Like the Papal Library, and with its own distinction, it contains a set of composites, a collection of collections, whose purpose is to offer both the scholar and the inquisitive person what has been produced as a means of exchange and communication throughout the centuries, long before the birth of Christ. The coins represented originate from East to West: ranging from Punic, Chinese, Carthaginian, Roman, Italian and European coins, to modern conii. There is also a series of precious medal collections in splendid form, and in particular the papal one.

It is not widely known that besides the collections of coins and medals, lead medals, plaques, seals and engraved stones, the Vatican Medal Collection also includes collections of casts that have been preserved. Particularly noteworthy is the group crafted by the Roman engraver of Austrian descent, Luigi Pichler (1773-1854), who worked on casts during the period from 1819 to 1820 for the Emperor of Austria, Francis I, who intended to offer it as a gift for Pope Pius VII.

In 1795, as he began a trip to Vienna, Pichler was able to carry out a series of works for the nobility of the city. He returned to Florence in 1808 and, with a letter of presentation written by the sculptor Antonio Canova (1757-1822), proceeded to Prince Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), who was already familiar with some works of the engraver and appreciated it. On his second trip to Austria, he was able to meet the emperor and was appointed member of the Fine Arts Academy of Vienna; the same honor would be granted to him a few years later by the Academy of San Luca (1812) and later by the Academies of Florence (1831), Milan (1839) and Venice (1844).

The emperor had hoped that the artist would remain in Vienna, but Pichler decided to return to Rome. In 1818, when Prince Klemens von Metternich (1773-1859) asked him to move to Vienna on behalf of the emperor himself, Pichler could not refuse. In the Austrian capital, Pichler created reproductions of the cameos and gems of the Imperial Museum using sulfur and glass, which turned out to have exactly the same appearance as the originals, even down to the color streaks. He himself brought the mahogany cabinet containing replicas of the 595 precious and famous works to Rome, and then returned to Vienna where he taught his own art to students eager to learn from the famous master.

Gregory XVI awarded him the title of Knight of St. Gregory the Great in 1839, and in 1842, that of the Order of Saint Nicholas. By his own request, he was then able to return to Rome, for he wanted “to close his eyes, where he had for the first time opened them to the light.” He arrived in 1850.

Other casts of the Viennese collection had been made earlier, but with less precious materials than those donated to Pius VII. This collection proves particularly valuable in that it is unique: the molds were destroyed to prevent other copies from being made, and many of the originals that had been preserved in Vienna were destroyed during World War II.

Over time, Pichler’s work, which was in part experimental, has been damaged by atmospheric agents and environmental conditions that have not been favorable to preservation, some irreparably so. Recently there was a restoration of some of his works whose settings in gold metal showed a blue-greenish oxidation that put the reproductions at risk. Thanks to the contribution of Alan Baron of Numismatica Genevensis, the Forlenza company of Rome has carried out projects of conservation for 64 settings chosen from the ones in the worst conditions. Since the oxidizing process of the metal continues to develop, we hope that the other settings will also be able to be restored in the near future, at best, through new and spirited efforts.

Artist: Luigi Pichler
Number of items in the collection: 595
Date of production: 1819-1820
Material: sulfur and glass; metal frames

Items to be treated: 171
State of conservation: blue-greenish oxidation damages
Conservation treatments: removal of the gems from the frames; degreasing with ultrasound or, vapour; electric and iron oxid brushing; welding when necessary and repositioning of the gems in the frames; goldening of the frames
Cost: 8,800 USD
Cataloging the “Vaticani latini”

The vaults of the Vatican Apostolic Library contain many collections or libraries, which arrived at the Vatican in the form of gifts or purchases, beginning from the 17th century onward. For instance, the Palatine Collection (1622-1623) arrived from Heidelberg; the Urbino Collection (1657), the library of Duke Federico di Montefeltro, arrived from Urbino; the Reginense Collection (1690) is the library that belonged to Christine, Queen of Sweden. Most of the “libraries” carry the names of the previous owners, such as Chigiani, Barberini, Rossiani, Ottoboniani, Borghesiani, Boncompagni, Ferrajoli, and many others.

The oldest and largest collection of manuscripts in the Vatican Apostolic Library is the Vaticani Collection, whose contents are identified according to the alphabets or languages in which the documents are written: Latin, Greek, Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, Arabic, Hebrew, Ethiopic, Indian, Persian, Slavic, Turkish, and others. There is also the Vaticani musicali, a collection of musical manuscripts.

Printed inventories and catalogues of the collections have been published over the years, but many manuscripts are still without full descriptions. Cataloguing the manuscripts is a rigorous task which requires a long period of time accomplish properly. Many codices contain several texts, sometimes in different languages or written over different periods of time. Small portions of them are normally selected and described in order to have up-to-date repertories available to the scholars. Within the collection of the Vaticani latini (made up of almost 16,000 manuscripts) are large portions of manuscripts that remain to be described. This unique work of description requires many specific types of expertise as well as abundant patience from the scriptores, the scholarly staff of the Library qualified to carry out such a demanding task.

The scholarly staff of the Vatican Apostolic Library is made up of very few people who are involved in many activities. They publish catalogues from time, which normally take years to be completed. This work can become faster and easier if temporary collaborators help the scholarly staff in carrying out this task.

A scriptor has undertaken the study and the cataloguing of a group of Vaticani latini from Vat. lat. 4261 to Vat. lat. 4330. Presently about 30% of this work is about to be finished; 30% is ready to be carried out, and the rest has yet to be undertaken. These manuscripts belong mostly to the Medieval and Humanistic periods (in addition to a few from the 16th century). From the study that has already been accomplished, we have gained much new information. There has been the discovery of some ancient autographs and some unknown ancient text, such as a comment on the Song of Songs dating back to the beginning of the 11th century, and of some unknown copies of manuscripts, in particular those from the Patristic era. The time has arrived to give a definitive form to the work so as to produce a printed edition of the catalogue.

The Vatican Apostolic Library would like a well prepared young scholar coming from the Vatican School to be involved in the project. The work consists in checking and completing the extant records, so that, under the guidance of the scriptor, the person may complete the rest of the descriptions and add them to the manuscript database. The completed work will then be published in the Series Maior of the printed catalogues of the Library. Moreover, the project could be particularly significant from another point of view in that it would provide a young researcher trained in the fields of codicology, philology and Latin paleography, the opportunity to learn from experienced staff, advance in his knowledge of research tasks, and make a descriptive synthesis of the manuscripts.

We are now seeking grants for this initial project which we hope will be followed by others, as to make the manuscripts of the Vatican Apostolic Library more accessible for study and dissemination of knowledge.
The “Avvisi”, a unique group within the manuscript collections

The Vatican Apostolic Library possesses many “Avvisi” or “Communications” among its collections. These documents are brief news reports on what took place in a specific place, and are grouped together in the form of “menanti” (“leading news”) or “novellanti” (“news-tellers”) which served agents to prepare dispatches to the courts or to important persons interested in knowing what was happening in the major European cities.

According to the Venetian ambassador Michele Soriano (16th cent.), the word “menanti” essentially referred to agents who collected the local gossip going around cities regarding the current political, economic, cultural and social life. Sometimes the agents worked together in a small “drafting room” and then sent their reports to personal clients. On the other hand, the “Avvisi” were printed and sold to several people. For this reason, the “Avvisi” are considered to be one of the first expressions of journalism, and the first attempts to create public opinion. This journalistic devise served powerful political leaders to control the spreading of gossip or bad news, as the “menanti” would try to gain the support of their often powerful customers.

It seems that the Fugger family was the first to use the system of the “Avvisi” in Italy. They collected news about Venice from 1562 and 1572 and then communicated it to Augsburg. An affinity to a similar Medieval approach may be seen here.

The use of this system spread from Venice to Rome, where it was employed by the agents of the dukes of Urbino to counteract the “menanti” news broadcasted to their customers. Thus were created the “Avvisi di Roma”, “Avvisi di Venezia” and so on. The network of information grew to a continental scale, thereby including the major European libraries (Hamburg, Amsterdam, Paris, Wien, Barcelona, Bruxelles, Antwerpen, Avignon, etc.). The “Avvisi” provide a faithful representation of daily life from the religious, political, diplomatic, economic, and artistic sectors of society in most important European cities between the 16th and 18th centuries. Unlike the diplomatic reports, like the famous ones from the Venetian ambassadors, the “Avvisi” present a daily and almost “popular” perspective on facts, as there is a great attention to the small and overlooked news and to details not considered by other observers.

The biggest and best known collection of “Avvisi” in the Vatican Apostolic Library is that of the dukes of Urbino (Urb. lat. 1038-1117, 1704, 1727). The collection arrived at the Vatican Apostolic Library with the Urbino Library in 1657. In addition, “Avvisi” are also found in other collections in the Library, often coming from families such as the Barberini, Chigi, Ottoboni, i.e., codices Barb. lat. 3520-3525, 3538, 3573, 6341, 6343-6345, 6373-6374, 6376, 6380-6381, 6383-6386, 6388-6389, 6417, 7053, 9837-9838; Cappon. 29; Chig. O.III.35-O.III.37; Ott. lat. 2445, 2449-2450, 2458-2459, 3337-3363. To date, there is not yet a comprehensive list.

The “Avvisi”, especially the Roman ones, have been largely used over the years by many scholars. But, it is quite conceivable that most of the rich information of those documents is far from being adequately utilized.

The project “Avvisi” aims to procure that the “Avvisi”, documents that are in the Vatican manuscript collections be digitized and posted on the web, starting with the Urbino collection. Because these manuscripts often have serious conservation problems, mostly due to the metal gall ink used in the documents, the digitization has to be accompanied or preceded by a conservation program.

The first step will include treatment of the the group of manuscripts, Urb. lat. 1038-1117, 1704, 1727.

Work to be done:
Conservation treatment and digitization on the manuscripts (the number of folios of each manuscript varies from 500 to 800)

Work phases:
- Conservation treatment of the manuscripts reinforcing the damaged pages
  Cost: 175,000 USD
- Digitization of the manuscripts
  Cost: 625,000 USD

Total cost: 800,000 USD