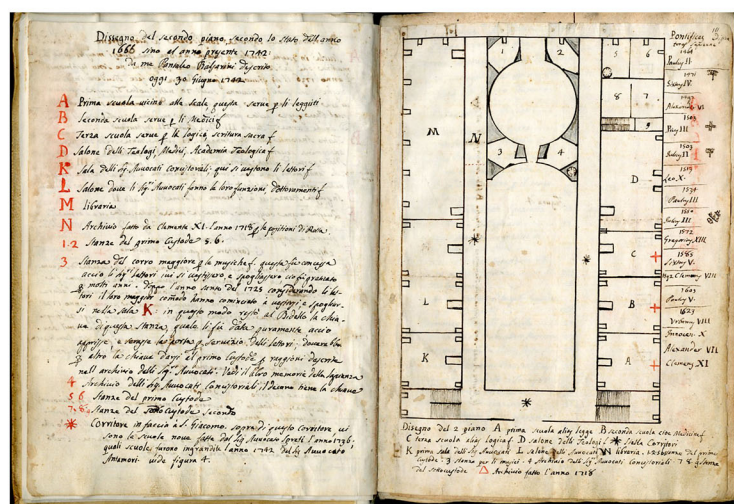


A brief history

The idea of founding a university library first arose in 1658, stimulated by an ongoing crisis faced by the Studium urbis. Considering this, Pope Alessandro VII Chigi gave enthusiastic approval to an important proposal from the Concistorial Advocates, aimed at raising the university to new levels of splendour, transforming it into a domus Sapientiae: a scientific and cultural reference for the entire modern Christian world.

The pontiff applied all the temporal and spiritual authority at his avail for the appropriation of any pre-existing collections of books, in order to develop the new library. The structure itself was to be designed by Francesco Borromini. Carlo Cartari, dean of the Concistorial Advocates, began the register for the Biblioteca Alessandrina in October of 1659.



Ms. Alessandrino n. 64

Methodology

The objective of our project was to identify and catalogue the books donated to the Alessandrina Library by the Chigi family. The methods required direct examination of both the book collections and archival documentation. Through examination of the books we were able to identify the presence of manuscript annotations and specific provenance marks, which were used to reconstruct the "genealogy" of the items. The project also required development of a database, from which we were able to produce a catalogue adhering to International Standard Bibliographic Description ISBD(A) requirements, to standards of the Regole Italiane di Catalogazione per Autori (REICAT), and to the Guida alla catalogazione del libro antico in SBN (Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale). We catalogued all items bearing the manuscript annotations "Donum S.D.N. Alexandri VII" o "Semptimi" or "Donum Em.mi S.R.C. Card. Flavij Chisij", found either on the frontispiece or in some other part of the volume.

"Duplicates" from the Chigi Library

On 9 December 1664, Cardinal Flavio Chigi, nephew of Pope Alessandro VII, donated a number of "duplicate" books originating from the Biblioteca Chigiana. The cardinal donated a total of 27 works, often in multiple copies, composing a total of 87 volumes. They dealt with matters fundamental to the culture of the times, including Church history, criminal law, philosophy, hagiography and ecclesiastical matters. One of the important observations of the Chigian volumes concerned the presence of certain bindings, showing the arms of both Pope Alessandro VII and Cardinal Flavio Chigi. These bindings were traced to the workshop of the Andreoli brothers, who were binders, booksellers and publishers active at Rome beginning in the second half of the 1600s.

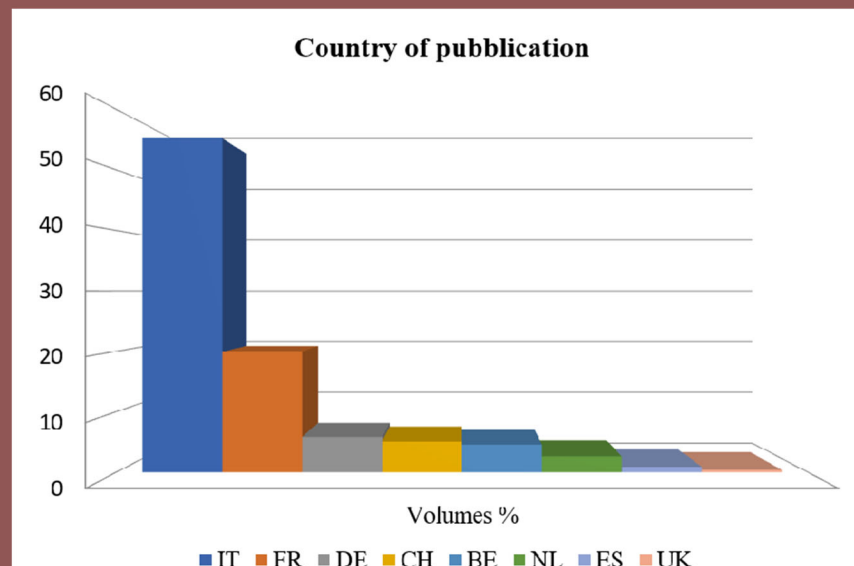
Donum Emin^{mi} Flavij S.R.C. Card. Chisij.



Annales Cardinalis Baronij Roma 1607
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Results and conclusions

Our project led to the identification and cataloguing of 393 works in 530 volumes. The common denominator among all these specimens is the presence of a manuscript annotation that permits reconstruction of a donation to the Alessandrina Library through the act or order of a member of the Chigi family. Compared to the original inventory of duplicates from the Chigian Library, we found that 33 volumes were missing. Similarly, referring to the relative documents, we found that 168 of the Vatican duplicates are not present, as well as 468 volumes from the original Preti holdings and 456 from those of Uterlusci.

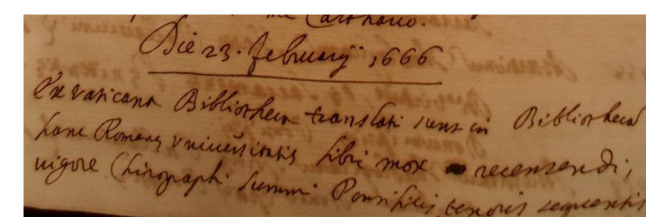


The dates of publication for the Chigi collection cover a span from 1509 to 1664. The largest share, at 67.6%, are 17th century editions, compared to 32% from the 1500s and two undated volumes. We are able to gain an understanding of the countries of publication for the books circulating in Rome in the 1600s, since the materials derive from the union of a number of library collections originally developed in different contexts. The cataloguing project, also allows us to examine the cultural interests of the contemporary Italian intellectual elite.

Donum Sancti Domini Nostri Alexandri VII

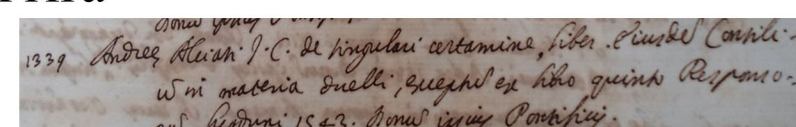
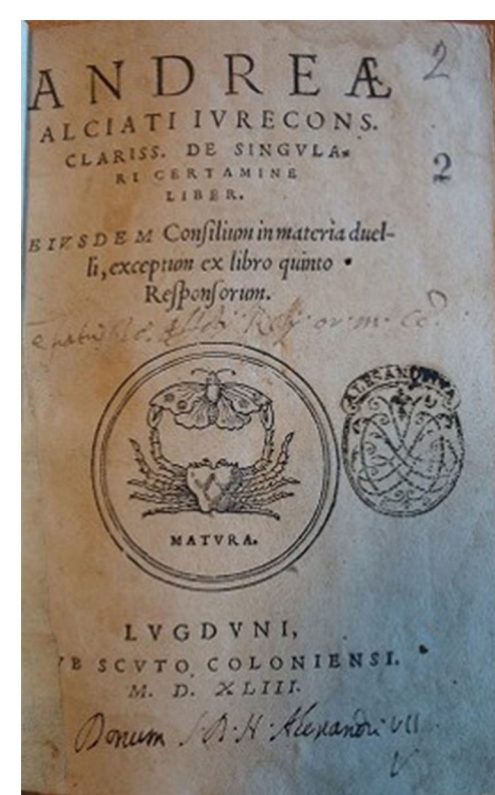
The analyses of the Chigian duplicates provided the key to the comprehension of the substantial numbers of items with a frontispiece bearing the provenance mark of Pope Alessandro VII. The cataloguing examinations revealed a marked discrepancy: a first concern was the lack of any notitia librorum for the latter books in the register compiled by Cartari. This led us to ask why, unlike all the other accessions, the list of books donated by the pontiff – the library founder – would be missing, and for what reason the duplicates with provenance from the Chigian Library would bear the name of both individuals.

From the analysis of the Cartari register we were able to deduce that the books with provenance mark *Donum S.D.N. Alexandri VII* were in fact not duplicates from the Chigi collection, but from the Vatican Library. The volumes were transferred on 23 February of the same year, as indicated by the wording «*ex Vaticana Bibliotheca traslati sunt in Bibliotheca Romanae Universitatis*».



The archival document closes each bibliographic listing with the words «*Donum ipsius Pontificij*».

What we are given to understand is that, since the Vatican Library is the library of the pontiffs, the gift of these works by Alessandro VII conveys a tangible indication of his own generosity in regards to the new, self-named library. The examination of the materials deriving from the Vatican Library shows that they cover various issues, from ecclesiastical history and canonical law to dogmatic controversies, theology, hagiography, liturgy, philosophy and astronomy. What is surprising is the frequent inclusion of prohibited or expurgated books. It seems that the development of the Alessandrina Library somehow escaped the criteria of the Counter-reform, thus permitting circulation



Books from Vincenzo Preti and Giovanni Uterlusci

The analysis of the books in the cataloguing stage also revealed ownership inscriptions and provenance marks traced to the Dominican inquisitor Vincenzo Preti, and to Giovanni Uterlusci, condemned for heresy. During the Chigi pontificate the library often benefited from practices under canon law, in particular the diritto di spoglio, under which the Apostolic Camera could confiscate the property of an ecclesiastic at their death. The case of the library of Vincenzo Preti, consisting of 760 volumes, offers precisely such an example. Only a part of the Preti collection is now held in the Alessandrina Library, however within the archival listing, as was also seen for the Vatican examples, we find the wording «*Donum ipsius Pontificij*»: once again to stress that it was at the pontiff's explicit order that the acquisition had been possible. The frontispiece annotations common to all these exemplars are "Donum S.D.N. Alexandri VII" and "Ad usum fr(at)is. Vincenti Preti à Seraualle Commisarij G(e)n(era)lis S(ancti). Officij in Vrbe". The books of Giovanni Uterlusci, condemned to death and confiscation of all his property, entered the Alessandrina collection subsequent to 21 December 1666. The acquisition consisted of 230 works in 347 volumes. Unlike the Preti collection, the books from Uterlusci show no owner's marks, instead bearing only the wording:



“*Ex bibliotheca Jo: Uterlusci dono data ad Alex.(andr)o Vij*”.

