The Spinelli Archive

The Beinecke Library's recent purchase of the Spinelli archive gives the university early modern Italian materials unequalled in this country. The Spinelli were one of the leading mercantile and banking families of Florence from the 15th century to the 18th. They held important offices in the Florentine state, patronized the churches and artists of Renaissance Florence, and conducted banking and business (primarily in silk and wool) on an international scale with branches in Rome, Venice, Barcelona, Lyons, and London.

In its size, scope, and importance the Spinelli archive is unparalleled by any collection of Italian documents now, or ever likely to be, in this country. Among family (as opposed to public) archives, the Spinelli archive ranks among the most extensive anywhere. Since the material is completely new to the scholarly world, its research potential is enormous.

Comprising 180 linear feet of manuscript material, the archive is conservatively estimated to contain more than 100,000 documents. Among them are some 375 parchment documents dating from the 14th century to the 16th, including papal bulls, real estate contracts, marriage agreements, wills, passports, and important correspondence with popes, cardinals, and princes.

The most prominent members of the family in the 15th and 16th centuries were Tommaso (1398?–1471), banker to Popes Eugenius IV, Callixtus III and Paul II; Leonardo (d. 1542?), nuncio to the court of Henry VIII; and a second Tommaso (d. 1521), who was a continental spy for Henry VII and served as Henry VIII's resident ambassador to the Netherlands. The business and banking interests of the family brought them into contact with the civil and ecclesiastical leaders of the period—the Medici, Bardi, Borromei, Strozzi, Este, and Borgia. The Spinelli palace, in the Santa Croce quarter of Florence, testifies to a glorious past.

The archive documents the fortunes of the Spinelli through four centuries. It contains family records (wills, marriages, legal cases), accounts of household expenses and income, real estate records, inventories of the palace and villas, accounts of business transactions, banking records (including loans from the Spinelli bank to popes and to cardinals and archbishops from several countries), correspondence and journals.

Through marriage and as executors of estates, the Spinelli dynasty brought the records of other families into their own archive. Dozens of families are represented, including the Lapi, Peri, Petrucci, Favilla, della Fioraia, Botteghes, Vasari, and Cavalcanti; the Baldocc, Guardi, and Buonguglielmi provided the three largest additions. Represented on a smaller scale are the Squarcialupi, Arrighetti, Bind, Castelli, Serragli, Salvucci, Lambardi, Arcangioi, Lapini, Palazzischi, Neri, Del Mena, Serristor, Della Gherardesca, Pazzi, Gaddi, Antinori, Bergotti, Morelli and many others.

Although the archive is rich in Renaissance materials, the documents from the 17th and 18th centuries will be of exceptional interest, as these long-neglected periods in Italian literature and history are now attracting attention in Italian studies. Archival records relate in the most direct way to the principal Italian literary genres of the time (memoirs, autobiography, diaries).
For any period, the greatest strength of the collection is in social and economic history: there is extensive material on family life (housing, furnishings), marriage, slavery, inheritance, domestic labor, private wealth and capital, and patronage of charitable organizations; also well documented are banking activities, international trade and finance, the relation between private wealth and political or ecclesiastical power, and the operations of craft guilds. The records of the silk guild in the archive constitute valuable resources for political history, since guilds controlled political power in Florence and dictated the Florentine role in foreign affairs. Of particular interest for ecclesiastical and diplomatic history will be the large number of papal bulls and the documentation of papal finances.

The most spectacular single document is a Liber taxarum of about 1440 A.D., which was Tommaso's record of the amounts owed to the Papal See by all the dioceses and abbeys of the world. This is the earliest known book of this sort. On 107 parchment leaves, this elegant illuminated manuscript codifies the state of the church under Pope Eugenius IV (1431–1447), whose coat-of-arms stands next to Tommaso's on the first page.

Documents relating to prominent Renaissance humanists—important to literary and intellectual history—appear throughout the archive. In addition to records of the construction of the Spinelli palace and of patronage of churches and abbeys in Florence and Rome, the art historian will find a significant amount of material relating to the Renaissance writer, architect, and painter Giorgio Vasari, author of Lives of the Painters. Included are the inventory of Vasari's own art collection and his correspondence with Cosimo de Medici.

While documents from the Italian Renaissance are of enduring value regardless of the scholarly interests of a particular generation, the types of research enabled by this archive are at the center of current scholarly activity. Inquiry into the personal, financial, and social forces affecting political and intellectual developments constitutes one of the dominant areas of recent Renaissance studies.

The Spinelli archive remained in Florence in family hands through the 1920s, leaving Italy—and apparently family hands—at least thirty years ago, probably in the 1930s. When Yale acquired the archive, it was still in private hands. Now for the first time it will be available to scholars for study. To support research in this rich collection, Sterling Library is undertaking a major effort to strengthen its Italian holdings, primarily in local history.

Although extraordinary acquisitions like the Spinelli archive come infrequently, Yale has responded boldly to them. The James Boswell papers (purchased in 1949 and thereafter) are at the formative core of our eighteenth-century British resources. The Ezra Pound archive (purchased in the 1970s, followed by the Marinetti archive and the Dial papers) set Yale at the forefront of the study of modernism in art and literature. The Spinelli archive, the preeminent acquisition of the 1980s, establishes Yale as an international center for the study of the Italian Renaissance. It is fitting that this acquisition would be made during the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. — RGB

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**Boolean* Operators Used in Searching Orbis**

In the searches below, the shaded areas represent the search results.

**OR** Expands the search results: either term or both terms appear in the same bibliographic record. One can ask Orbis to find books about: "Popes OR papacy"

**AND** Limits the search results: both terms appear in the same bibliographic record. One can request Orbis to find books about: "Shakespeare AND women"

**NOT** Limits the search results: the first term but not the second appears in the bibliographic record. One can ask Orbis to find books about: "Autism NOT child"

* After English mathematician and logician George Boole (1815–1864).
What’s in a Database?

Orbis, the Library’s new computerized or “on-line” public catalog, offers a wide range of improvements over the card catalog. When the test version is available to the public this semester, Orbis will contain 780,000 records representing material cataloged between 1977 and October 1987. This initial collection of bibliographic information, which is structured to permit retrieval of catalog records by a variety of elements (e.g., author, title, subject, or date), is known as a database. It will include material in all formats from all major libraries at Yale. The accompanying chart lists the contents and important features of the Orbis database and compares the new computer system to the traditional card catalog housed in the nave of Sterling Library.

The advantages of Orbis are important. Musical scores, sound recordings, maps, and other material not represented in the card catalog will appear in Orbis. With Boolean logic operators (see diagram at left) sophisticated searching, difficult to perform in the card catalog, is possible. For example, one can link several searches to retrieve German works on Shakespeare’s Hamlet or books dealing with both poetry and art in the Renaissance.

Local subject headings permit enhanced access to special collections such as those in Beinecke and British Art. One can locate, for instance, books annotated by a major author, books illustrated by a particular individual or books with wood engravings.

Another valuable feature is better access to material in school and department libraries. The Sterling card catalog contains only main entry (primary author) cards for much of this material. Orbis allows researchers to locate books in school and department libraries by title, subject, or contributing author. In addition, medical works are indexed by two subject heading schemes (Library of Congress and National Library of Medicine).

The quality of the records in the Orbis database is very high and constantly improving. The complex process of transferring Yale’s catalog records from the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) to the Orbis on-line catalog goes on in four stages. Each has significantly improved the record. Still, a few quirks remain to be corrected. There are, for example, a few
books shelved at the Seeley Mudd library whose location is not correctly represented. Overall, however, 95% of the records in the database are fully accurate. The Library Systems Office and the newly created Database Management Department have already made plans to correct inaccuracies as they are discovered.

Three future developments will greatly increase the utility of the on-line catalog. Conversion of the card catalogs into machine readable records will provide the greatest benefit of all. Currently only one sixth of the Library collection is represented on Orbis, and none of the detailed holdings for serial titles are present. This process, known as retrospective conversion, will be accomplished both by an in-house team and through grant-funded efforts. Although the magnitude of the conversion project will challenge the ingenuity and resourcefulness of Library staff for many years, new technological developments and perseverance will ultimately result in a unified and complete on-line database.

Anticipated software refinements to be provided by NOTIS Systems Incorporated (the supplier of the system) will introduce a variety of new functions in the on-line catalog. In the future, for example, a redesigned indexing system will display cross references and “see also” references for author, title, and subject searching. As additional parts of the system are introduced to different departments in the Library, new information will begin to appear in Orbis: in-process data (book on order, book in cataloging, etc.), detailed information about serials (volumes held), newly received issues of periodicals, circulation records (charged to a reader, out to bindery), and reserve book information (professor and course). When all of these elements are implemented, Library patrons will experience the dramatic impact of a fully integrated library system. — FMM

New Home for Microforms

In January, the Library opened a new Microform Reading Room situated on the lower level of Sterling Library. The new facility will serve our patrons better and provide better environmental conditions for the collection. Vastly improved lighting, comfortable study carrels and chairs, and new microform reading equipment will make use of microforms more agreeable while a system for temperature and humidity control will protect our collection more effectively.

The renovations allow major changes in the services provided and there are new locations for materials. Most obvious is that the new facility will operate as a self-service unit; patrons will be encouraged to retrieve all microforms except microprint. This will free the staff to devote more time to instructing patrons in the use of the microform readers and reader/printers, assuring the order of the collection, and improving the physical condition of our microforms through cleaning, relabelling, reboxing, and splicing. Of course, anyone who needs assistance locating an item will receive help.

Another change involves the location of guides to major microform collections. In addition to newspapers in microform and Yale's preservation microfilm collection, the Microform Reading Room has custody over an impressive number of major microform collections including, among others, American periodicals, 1741-1900, Early English newspapers, French revolutionary pamphlets, German Baroque literature, and Spanish drama of the Golden Age. The guides to these and other collections, newspaper indexes, and microform-related reference material were previously stored in the Newspaper/Microtext Room. These guides are being transferred to the Main Reading Room and will be separately shelved in index cases near the center of the room. The reference staff hopes to make these collections better known to our patrons by preparing a guide to major microform collections in the Microform Reading Room.

A small reference collection will be maintained in the Microform Reading Room composed of reel guides, part of the New York Times Index, and a few other titles. New reference titles may be added as patrons' needs in the new facility become apparent.

The Newspaper Room will continue to house current domestic and foreign newspapers. However, there will be no staff member on duty except to shelve and weed the collection during certain hours of the day. Back issues of hardcopy newspapers not found in the room may be requested through the Microform Reading Room. A telephone will be placed on the service desk for that purpose. — ACS

The new Microtext Reading Room in Sterling Memorial Library

ACS
Summer Interns in the Library

During the summers of 1987 and 1988, a grant from the Council for Library Resources enabled the Library to sponsor several internships. The only program of its type in the United States, it was devised to interest talented and motivated young people in research librarianship by giving them experience in the Yale Library. Three Yale students were chosen as interns in 1987 and five in 1988.

The program was designed so that each intern worked directly under a senior librarian and mentor. This past summer, interns worked in the Collection Development, Reference, Systems, and Preservation departments in Sterling and at the Beinecke Rare Book Library. The interns frequently came together for meetings, seminars and field trips. This aspect of the internship assured that interns would get an overview of the library along with some specific training in various departments.

Their experiences were far from those of ordinary summer student workers; the interns were given tasks or projects to introduce them to their department's most important issues. Thus, Jonathan Warren in Preservation drafted a grant proposal requesting funds to help preserve some of Yale's vast but crumbling body of nineteenth-century books; James Cowie in the Systems Office helped implement Orbis, Yale's new on-line catalog, and solve some of its problems. In Collection Development, Sarah Burns investigated the cost of scientific journals in the face of the declining U.S. dollar, while Jennifer Barrett in the Beinecke Library examined issues of archival indexing and rare book collecting. Conrad Jacoby in the Reference Department helped to draft a training manual for Knowledge Index, an on-line bibliographic searching service, and helped review a policy for acquiring and using an expanding number of electronic research aids.

Interns visited other libraries in order to see different approaches to similar problems. At Harvard's Widener Library, the New York Public Library, the Homer Babbidge Library at the University of Connecticut at Storrs, and Yale's own Lewis Walpole Library, librarians explained their perceptions of problems facing their own institutions as well as all libraries and answered interns' questions. The seminars dealt with aspects of library management, such as the Business Office operations, not encountered in departmental operations. The interns also visited a rare book dealer and a publishing house in New York in order to understand businesses integral to library work.

The five students found the internship experience interesting and helpful for their career plans. "Prior to the Yale Library Internship, I had been aware of only a fraction of the career possibilities that exist in the field of librarianship — even after working in Sterling library for two years!" commented Conrad Jacoby. The interns gained a much clearer picture of the challenges and problems facing libraries in the coming years. — ssb and cjj

One of three drawings by Peter Newell (1862-1924) illustrating an article by humorist and essayist Carolyn Wells, entitled "The Re-Echo Club" and published in Harper's Monthly Magazine (July 1917). Currently on display in Sterling Library, all three show Newell's ability to caricature great writers, in this case, Poe, Chaucer and Dickens. Well over a thousand of Newell's drawings and watercolors are in the Beinecke Library.
Calendar of Exhibits

BEINECKE LIBRARY
through mid-March
Lives and Works of Two Polish Poets: Czeslaw Milosz and Aleksander Wat
mid-March through mid-April

DIVINITY LIBRARY
Missionaries, Social Scientists, and Reformers in China
through July

INTERNATIONAL LAW LIBRARY
Development of the Law Merchant
through April 15
Making Human Rights Research Humane
through April 15

MEDICAL LIBRARY
Care for the Underprivileged: Problems and Solutions
through June

STERLING MEMORIAL LIBRARY
Peter Newell: American Artist, Humorist, and Creator
through June 15

Nota Bene is published during the academic year to acquaint faculty, staff, and other users with the resources of the Yale libraries. Please direct comments and questions to Susanne Roberts, Editor, Bibliography Department, Sterling Memorial Library (432-1762).

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