Ancient Books and Special Collections in the Italian Joint Parliamentary Library: The Transition to Digital
Special Collections in the Italian Joint Parliamentary Library/1

The Chamber Library: several valuable collections

Some examples

• The Ancient Books Collection
• The Kissner Collection
• Old Italian States Legislation Collection
Special Collections in the Italian Joint Parliamentary Library/2

The Senate Library: strong specialisation in this area

12 Special Collections

- around 1,000 manuscripts (dating back to 1250)
- 80 incunabula (15th-century books produced with moveable type)
- 2,000 16th-century editions
- 30,000 ancient editions (17th-19th century)
- 2,000 autograph documents (19th-early 20th century)
The Ancient Collections of the Senate Library

• Great bibliological and codicological value
  – Parchments
  – First Editions
  – Miniatures
  – Engravings
  – Original Bindings

• Unique historical and documentary value
  – Sources and documents on all the local political entities existing in Italy before Unification in 1861
  – The political, institutional and juridical history of Italy from Middle Ages to the 19th century
Three Main Subject Areas

• Constitutions and Statutes of Communes and Old Italian States (sources)
  – Constitutions and Statutes of Communes and Professional Guilds from the Middle Ages to the 18th Century
  – L.A.S. (Legislation of Ancient States)
  – Marinuzzi Collection (Ancient Sicilian Legislation)

• Italian Local History and Historiography
  – Ancient Collection of Local History
  – Early editions of local history

• Ius Commune (European Civil and Canon Law)
  – Filippo Vassalli Collection
  – Ennio Cortese Collection
  – Ius Commune Collection
Enhancement and Promotion of Ancient Collections/1: Paper Tools

- Enhancement policy since the 1940s
  - The Political Committee overseeing the Library (3 Senators)
  - Librarians
- Special catalogues
  - Constitutions and Statutes
  - L.A.S.
  - Marinuzzi
- Specialised Bibliographies
  - *Bibliografia statutaria italiana*
- Exhibitions and exhibition catalogues
Enhancement and Promotion of Ancient Collections/2: 1996, first usage of IT tools

- A bibliographic database: *Il Comune e la Storia*
  - Monographs and specialised journal index
  - Developed in house
  - Accessible on the Intranet and Internet
  - Still being implemented

- Email box: storialocale@senato.it
  - Remote reference (1st example in the Senate Library)
  - Different levels of research
  - Information dissemination
  - Feedback and interaction
  - Large number and variety of users
Enhancement and Promotion of Ancient Collections/3: Going Digital

Background:
• 2002 Budget, art. 52(38) funded free Internet access to parliamentary documentation, parliamentary records, and material held by parliamentary libraries and archives
• 2003: The Senate Library opens to the general public
• 2003: The Senate library builds its own web site as part of the Senate site

Economic resources and professional capacities are allocated to the digital enhancement of Historical Collections

Ancient collections pioneer digitisation in the Senate Library

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Going digital

• 3 separate digital archives (scanned jpegs)
  – Constitutions and Statutes
  – Ancient Collection of Local History
  – Catalogue of Constitutions and Statutes

• Further integration of
  – *Il Comune e la storia*
  – Update of the Catalogue of Constitutions and Statutes
La storia dei Comuni italiani nella Biblioteca del Senato

- Integrated search of the five databases:
Ancient Collections: the Current Situation

Strengths

- Improved access
- Searchability
- New services: document delivery
- Conservation through digital means

Weakness

- Still limited access: some special catalogues only on paper (e.g. Vassalli)
- Lack of integration with the OPAC and use of different software
Next Steps and Priorities

• All bibliographic databases on our OPAC
• Integrated management system for our OPAC and digital collections
• Preservation strategies
• Developing partnerships and cooperation
Favourable Background

- Transition to the new ILS (Aleph 500) completed
- Well developed library web site
- Global digital strategy of the Senate
- Strong and supportive IT department
- The Joint Parliamentary Library
The Senate Library in Ancient Times (from the *Storia Locale* database)