

The Italian Academies 1525-1700: the first intellectual networks of early modern Europe

A collaborative research project between the British Library, Royal Holloway University of London and the University of Reading, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

Interdisciplinary one-day conference London - Monday June 27th 2011

Science, learning and censorship

A one-day conference on this theme will be held on Monday June 27th 2011 in the central London premises of Royal Holloway University of London (11 Bedford Square).

The conference forms part of the AHRC funded research project *The Italian Academies 1525-1700: the first intellectual networks of early modern Europe*. This conference will build on the successful workshop *Cultural Institutions in Early Modern Italy and Europe* held in Reading in July 2008.

Academies represent a vital and characteristic dimension of early modern culture. There were ca. 600 Academies in Italy in the period 1525-1700. Frequently international in membership, and in correspondence with scholars across Europe, they were fundamental to the development of the intellectual networks later defined as the 'République des Lettres', and to the dissemination of ideas in early modern Europe. Their membership included pioneering scientists, writers, artists, political thinkers, and representatives of both sexes and all social classes. The interests of the Academies ranged from the humanities, to the figurative and performance arts, natural sciences and medicine; many were interdisciplinary in their outlook and activities. However, the social and cultural phenomenon of the Italian Academies has hitherto attracted relatively little research due in part to the wide range of their interests and difficulties in accessing relevant information.

Following the successful development of the Italian Academies Themed Collection database (<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/ItalianAcademies/>), which covered academies in the cities of Padua, Bologna, Naples and Siena, the new phase of the project is now incorporating information on academies in Rome, Venice, Mantua, Ferrara and Sicily. Alongside this continuing development, we are promoting the development and dissemination of new research on the Italian learned Academies in the early modern period.

The one-day conference aims to explore research questions raised by the activities of Academies in this period, in particular those relating to links between the developments of science, broadly understood, and book production and circulation in early modern Europe (to ca 1700).

Among the most cogent research questions raised by the activities of Academies in this period and in these cities are:

- What is the place of Academies in counter-reformation culture?
- Did the Academies play a role in protecting 'sensitive' texts and authors 'at risk' from the censors?
- What role did academies play in the development of secular and scientific culture in the seventeenth century? How did they contribute to the development of international intellectual networks?
- How far was print publication used by Academies or Academicians to disseminate scientific developments?

Proposals for papers (20 minutes in length) addressing these and similar topics relating to the publishing of scientific discoveries and experiments, the operation of censorship in early modern Italy, and the impact of this on the development of science and intellectual endeavour in the period are now invited. Please send proposals together with a short abstract by Monday January 31st 2011.

The keynote lecture will be given by Professor Paula Findlen, Ubaldo Pierotti Professor in Italian History, University of Stanford, CA. The workshop will conclude with a round table discussion hosted by Professor Brian Richardson, Professor of Italian Language, University of Leeds.

A limited number of bursaries are available for postgraduate students.

For further information and to submit proposals for papers (title and abstract) please contact Professor Jane E. Everson - email: jeverson@bl.uk