

FEDERICO BOTANA

THE CARD INDEX OF LEO S. OLSCHKI. THE INNER
WORKINGS OF AN ANTIQUARIAN BOOK BUSINESS

ESTRATTO

da

(LA) BIBLIOFILIA

Rivista di Storia del Libro e di Bibliografia

2021/1 ~ (CXXIII)

“Affioramenti”

Novità e scoperte per il libro italiano del Quattro e Cinquecento

Prima parte. A cura di Edoardo Barbieri



Leo S. Olschki Editore
Firenze

2021, anno CXXIII n. 1

La Bibliofilia

Rivista di storia del libro
e di bibliografia

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Direttore: EDOARDO BARBIERI

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LEO S. OLSCHKI EDITORE
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ABBREVIAZIONI BIBLIOGRAFICHE

- ADAMS = HERBERT M. ADAMS, *Catalogue of Books printed on the continent of Europe, 1501-1600*, in *Cambridge Libraries*, 2 voll., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- BMC = *Catalogue of books printed in the XVth century now in the British Museum*, 13 voll., London, The Trustees of the British Museum, 1908-2007.
- Bod-Inc. = *A catalogue of books printed in the fifteenth century now in the Bodleian Library*, by Alan Coates et alii, 6 voll., Oxford, University Press, 2005.
- BSB Ink = *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Inkunabelkatalog*, 7 voll., Wiesbaden, L. Reichert, 1988-2009.
- C = WALTER A. COPINGER, *Supplement to Hain's Repertorium bibliographicum*, 4 voll., London, H. Sotheran and Co., 1895-1902 (Berlin, J. Altmann, 1926).
- CIBN = *Catalogue des incunables*, 2 volumi in 8 tomi, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1981-2014.
- CLIO = *Catalogo dei libri italiani dell'Ottocento (1801-1900)*, 19 voll., Milano, Editrice Bibliografica, 1991.
- DBI = *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 100 voll., Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960-2020.
- EDIT16 = *Le edizioni italiane del XVI secolo: censimento nazionale*, 6 voll. (A-F), Roma, ICCU, 1985-.
- EDIT16 on line = <http://edit16.iccu.sbn.it>
- ESSLING = VICTOR MASSÉNA PRINCE D'ESSLING, *Les Livres à figures vénitiens de la fin du XV^e siècle et du commencement du XVI^e*, 3 voll. in 6, Firenze-Paris, Olschki-Leclerc, 1907-1914.
- GOFF = *Incunabula in American Libraries. A third census of fifteenth-century Books recorded in North American Collections*, reproduced from the annotated copy maintained by F.R. Goff, Millwood (New York), Kraus reprint, 1973.
- GW = *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*, voll. I-XI, Leipzig, K.W. Hiersemann, 1925-.
- GW on line = *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke* (<http://www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de/>).
- H = LUDWIG F.T. HAIN, *Repertorium bibliographicum in quo libri omnes ab arte typographica inventa usque ad annum MD typis expressi ordine alphabetico vel simpliciter enumerantur vel adcuratius recensentur*, 4 voll., Stuttgartiae-Lutetiae Parisiorum, J.G. Cotta, 1826-38 (Berlin, J. Altmann, 1925).
- IGI = *Indice generale degli incunaboli delle biblioteche d'Italia*, 6 voll., Roma, Istituto poligrafico dello Stato-Libreria dello Stato, 1943-1981.
- ISTC = *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue* (<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc>).
- MEI = *Material Evidence in Incunabula* (<http://data.cerl.org/mei/>).
- PELLECHET [-POLAIN] = MARIE PELLECHET [-MARIE-LOUIS POLAIN], *Catalogue général des incunables des bibliothèques publiques de France*, 26 voll., Nendeln, Kraus-Thompson, 1970.
- POLAIN = MARIE-LOUIS POLAIN, *Catalogue des livres imprimés au quinzième siècle des bibliothèques de Belgique*, 4 voll., Bruxelles, Société des Bibliophiles & Iconophiles de Belgique, 1932 (*Supplément*, Bruxelles, Tulkens, 1978).
- PROCTOR = ROBERT G. COLLIER PROCTOR, *An index to the early printed books in the British Museum from the invention of printing to the year 1500 with notes of those in the Bodleian Library*, London, K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1898-1903 (London, The Holland Press, 1960).
- R = DIETRICH REICHLING, *Appendices ad Hainii-Copingeri Repertorium bibliographicum, additiones et emendationes*, 2 voll., Monachii, Sumptibus I. Rosenthal, 1905-1911 (Milano, Görlich, 1953).
- RAVA = CARLO E. RAVA, *Le livre à figures italien depuis 1467 jusqu'à 1530. Supplément*, Milan, U. Hoepli, 1969.
- SANDER = MAX SANDER, *Le livre à figures italien depuis 1467 jusqu'à 1530*, 6 voll., Milan, U. Hoepli, 1942-43 (= Nendeln, Kraus Reprint, 1969).
- STC Fr. = *Short-Title Catalogue of books printed in France and of French books printed in other countries from 1470 to 1600 now in the British Museum*, London, Trustees of the British Museum, 1966 (*Supplement*, London, The British Library, 1986).
- STC Germ. = *Short-Title catalogue of books printed in the German-speaking countries and German books printed in other countries from 1455 to 1600 now in the British Museum*, London, Trustees of the British Museum, 1962 (*Supplement*, London, The British Library, 1990).
- STC In. = *A Short-Title catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English books printed abroad, 1475-1640*, first compiled by A.W. Pollard & G.R. Redgrave, 2. ed. rev. & enlarged begun by W.A. Jackson & F.S. Ferguson, completed by Katharine F. Pentzer, London, The Bibliographical Society, 1976-1991.
- STC It. = *Short-Title Catalogue of books printed in Italy and of Italian books printed in other countries from 1465 to 1600 now in the British Museum*, London, Trustees of the British Museum, 1958 (*Supplement*, London, The British Library, 1988).
- STC Neth. = *Short-Title Catalogue of books printed in the Netherlands and Belgium and of Dutch and Flemish Books printed in other countries from 1470 to 1600 now in the British Museum*, London, Trustees of the British Museum, 1965.
- STC Sp. = *Catalogue of books printed in Spain and of other Spanish books printed elsewhere in Europe before 1601 now in the British Library*, 2nd edition, ed. Dennis E. Rhodes, London, British Library, 1989.
- USTC = *Universal Short Title Catalogue* (<http://www.ustc.ac.uk>).
- VD16 = *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart, Hiersemann, 1983-1995.
- VD16 on line = *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts* (<http://www.vd16.de/>).
- VD17 on line = *Das Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts* (<http://www.vd17.de/>).

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Federico Botana*

The Card Index of Leo S. Olschki: The Inner Workings of an Antiquarian Book Business**



In a dimly lit hallway in the Palazzo Boboli in Florence (headquarters of the Dipartimento Istruzione e Cultura della Regione Toscana), stand three old wooden filing cabinets. As pieces of furniture, they are quite ordinary; however, they preserve a treasure: the card index of Leo S. Olschki, containing records of books and manuscripts traded by his firm from its foundation in 1886.¹ With the card indexes of Ulrico Hoepli and Giuseppe Martini, Olschki's card index is one of three to have survived from the golden age of the Italian *antiquariato librario*.² Hoepli's index consists of clippings from catalogues published by his firm, whereas Martini's cards contain detailed descriptions of manuscripts and books, and bibliographical references, all written by himself. In contrast, Olschki's cards show more variety, as they were created by different individuals over more than five decades. They are also far richer in terms of information. The reason for this is probably that in his youth Olschki was apprenticed in Berlin: we learn in a manual for German-speaking bookdealers published in 1908 (*Lehrbuch des Deutschen Buchhandels*) that when a book enters the firm, a detailed description should

* federico.botana@sas.ac.uk

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¹ Firenze, Giunta Regionale Toscana, Schedario Olschki (hereafter GRT, SO).

² GIANCARLO PETRELLA, *Fra le carte dell'archivio di Giuseppe Martini, librario e bibliografo. Primi carotaggi*, in *Da Lucca a New York a Lugano. Giuseppe Martini libraio tra Otto e Novecento. Atti del Convegno di Lucca, 17-18 ottobre 2014*, a cura di Edoardo Barbieri, Firenze, Olschki, 2017, pp. 167-190; EDOARDO BARBIERI, *Gli schedari dei grandi librai antiquari d'Italia*, «ALAI. Rivista di cultura del libro», VI, 2019, pp. 20-26.

be recorded on an individual card, as well as the book's accession number, storage place and sale price; moreover, a blank space is to be left on the card for updating information on commercial matters.³

Until now, the card indexes of the *librai antiquari* have received little scholarly attention (with the exception of the contributions by Giancarlo Petrella and Edoardo Barbieri).⁴ As demonstrated in this article, Olschki's card index is a precious tool for investigating the trade in the early twentieth century of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, not just in Italy but throughout Europe with a growing trade in north America. Leo S. Olschki, better known today as the founder of his publishing house, was one of the most successful manuscript dealers of his time – as well, of course, as a trader of incunabula, which are beyond the scope of this article. Public libraries on both sides of the Atlantic have in their collections important manuscripts that were traded by Olschki at some point or another. Wealthy American collectors were amongst his most enthusiastic clients: J.P. Morgan purchased at least fifty manuscripts from him, and Henry Walters more than 250.⁵ Archival sources, however, can be surprisingly patchy on commercial transactions of manuscripts, and old sale catalogues are often difficult to find. Nevertheless, as I show in this article, the card index can tell us whether and when a particular manuscript passed through Olschki's hands; furthermore, it can reveal how much he paid for it, how long it took him to sell it, and to whom and for how much he sold it. Yet perhaps the greatest revelation is that some of the cards provide a few insights into the inner workings of the business and show how Olschki and his employees worked together preparing catalogue entries.

Leo S. Olschki and manuscript trade c. 1900

Most readers of «La Bibliofilia», founded in 1899 by Leo Samuel Olschki, will be familiar with the life of this erudite bookdealer, publisher and scholar.⁶ Therefore, just a few key facts suffice to put the card index into context. When he opened his antiquarian bookshop in Verona in 1886, the circumstances could not be more propitious. The law passed in 1866 had given

³ MAX PASCHKE – PHILIPP RATH, *Lehrbuch des Deutschen Buchhandels*, 2 vols., Leipzig, Verlag des Borsenvereins der Deutschen Buchhändler, 1908, II, pp. 246-269.

⁴ See n. 2, above.

⁵ Source: Schoenberg Database of Manuscripts, <<https://sdbm.library.upenn.edu>>.

⁶ On Olschki's life, see BERNARD ROSENTHAL, *Cartello, clan o dinastia? Gli Olschki e i Rosenthal 1859-1976*, «La Bibliofilia», CXIV, 2012, pp. 39-60: 45-52; CRISTINA TAGLIAFERRI – STEFANO DE ROSA, *Olschki. Un secolo di editoria*, 2 vols., I, *La Libreria Antiquaria Editrice Leo S. Olschki (1886-1945)*; II, *La Casa Editrice Leo S. Olschki (1946-1986)*, Firenze, Olschki, 1982, I, pp. 13-45; ALESSANDRO OLSCHKI, *Centotredici anni. Catalogo storico della mostra. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale 22 aprile-23 maggio 1999*, Firenze, Olschki, 1999, pp. 8-17.

Italian public libraries and museums the powers to obtain every manuscript and incunabulum from the libraries of suppressed religious congregations; to this must be added the still ongoing dispersion of libraries of aristocratic families.⁷ Public institutions could neither afford nor accommodate such volume of material, and this benefitted bookdealers and private collectors. Foreign magnates, many of whom regarded Italy merely as a giant antique shop, could pay astronomical sums for a Manutius or an illuminated Book of Hours.⁸ As Verona soon became – in his own words – «too small» for Leo Olschki, in 1890 he moved his headquarters to Venice, and in 1897 to Florence, which attracted affluent foreigners in greater numbers than Venice.⁹ By 1900, he had already a branch in Rome; and by 1919 he was also operating in Geneva, where he lived during the First World War and returned in 1938 to escape the *Leggi razziali* of Mussolini's government.

Olschki's beginnings as a publisher go back to 1886. In addition to the scholarly journals and books that earned him an international reputation, he produced outstanding sale catalogues.¹⁰ In the 1892-1893 «Transactions of the Bibliographical Society», Walter Arthur Copinger referred to Olschki's latest catalogue as «remarkable», not only because of the number and the quality of the merchandise, but also for the «careful way in which the descriptions and collations of the books catalogued have been given».¹¹ Olschki introduced to Italian sale catalogues the bibliographical rigour he learned as an apprentice bookdealer in Berlin.¹² In addition to sale catalogues, in 1892, he started publishing the «Bulletin mensuel des derniers achats de la Librairie Leo S. Olschki», a monthly bulletin listing new acquisitions.¹³ Olschki also commissioned eminent scholars in

⁷ C. TAGLIAFERRI – S. DE ROSA, *Olschki*, I, p. 20; for dispersed libraries, see GIANNA DEL BONO, *Storia delle biblioteche fra Settecento e Novecento. Saggio bibliografico. I cataloghi di biblioteca della collezione Diomede Bonamici (Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Firenze)*, Manziana, Vecchiarelli, 2007.

⁸ See C. TAGLIAFERRI – S. DE ROSA, *Olschki*, I, pp. 87-89; LUCIO RICCETTI, *Alessandro Imbert, J. Pierpont Morgan, e il collezionismo della majolica italiana fino al 1914*, Firenze, Polistampa, 2017, pp. 19-35; and the future publications of the CULTIVATE Project.

⁹ C. TAGLIAFERRI – S. DE ROSA, *Olschki*, I, pp. 35-50; A. OLSCHKI, *Centotredici anni*, p. 10. In 1900, the front page of the «Bulletin mensuel» includes a mention of a Roman branch; it is also listed in the 1902 edition of the *Adressbuch für den deutschsprachigen Buchhandel*, Leipzig, Bösenverein der Deutschen Buchhändler, 1902, p. 431.

¹⁰ See EDOARDO BARBIERI, *Leo Samuel Olschki «auteur du mouvement des études sur l'origine de l'imprimerie»*. I. I cataloghi di vendita, in *Incunabula. Printing, Trading, Collecting, Cataloguing. Atti del convegno internazionale, Milano, 10-12 settembre 2013*, a cura di Alessandro Ledda, «La Bibliofilia», CXVI, 2014, pp. 281-304; for the list, C. TAGLIAFERRI – S. DE ROSA, *Olschki*, I, pp. 410-417.

¹¹ WALTER A. COPINGER, *Riche et precieuse collection d'incunables soigneusement decrits et mis en vente par Leo S. Olschki*, «Transactions of the Bibliographical Society», I, 1892-1893, pp. 214-215.

¹² See LUCA RIVALI, *Giuseppe Martini bibliografo e bibliologo*, in *Da Lucca a New York a Lugano*, pp. 81-106: 81-84; FRÉDÉRIC BARBIER, *La librairie ancienne en Allemagne*, «Bulletin du bibliophile», 1984, 4, pp. 543-556.

¹³ See C. TAGLIAFERRI – S. DE ROSA, *Olschki*, I, pp. 109-117; E. BARBIERI, *Leo Samuel Olschki «auteur du mouvement des études sur l'origine de l'imprimerie»*, pp. 281-304.

the pertinent fields to write articles for «La Bibliofilia» on manuscripts he had for sale – notably Léopold Delisle on Jean Mansel's *Fleur des histoires* and Giuseppe Boffito on Macrobius' *Somnium Scipionis*.¹⁴ From 1908 onwards, «La Bibliofilia» published *Quelques Manuscrits fort précieux* (later *très précieux*), a regular feature signed by Leo S. Olschki showcasing his manuscripts.¹⁵ As I shall demonstrate, the functions of the cards have much to do with Olschki's publications.

The card index

The three wooden cabinets containing the index are about 1.70 m. high.¹⁶ In the 1980's they were acquired with their contents by the Soprintendenza ai Beni Librari della Regione Toscana, and are now the property of the Consiglio Regionale della Toscana.¹⁷ Together, the three cabinets contain eighty-one drawers filled with, according to Barbieri, about 100,000 cards.¹⁸ The cards were used to record information on books and manuscripts traded by Olschki, as well as on the publications of the firm. So far, I have examined twenty-eight drawers containing 236 entries on manuscripts.¹⁹ From this preliminary research, it would seem that the index, even though its drawers are completely full, does not hold a card for every manuscript sold by Olschki – since the firm's headquarters and two Florentine shops were severely damaged in 1944, it would not be surprising if a large portion of cards were destroyed.²⁰

The cards are arranged alphabetically into sections by author, and sections are subdivided by titles. In the absence of a known author, they are filed by just title or typology – *trattato*, *horae*, *biblia*, etc. Most of the cards are made of Bristol paper and measure about 100 by 120 mm. – the *Lehrbuch* recommends «durable» paper and postcard size.²¹ The number of cards used for each entry depends on the amount of information recorded. When more than one card was necessary, double cards were folded

¹⁴ LÉOPOLD DELISLE, *Un nouveau manuscrit de la Fleur des Histoires de JEAN MANSEL possédé per M. Olschki*, «La Bibliofilia», V, 1903-1904, pp. 269-75; GIUSEPPE BOFFITO, *Di un codice miniato di Macrobio appartenente al sec. XV*, «La Bibliofilia», IX, 1907-1908, pp. 321-326.

¹⁵ LEO S. OLSCHKI, *Quelques Manuscrits fort précieux*, «La Bibliofilia», X, 1908-1909, pp. 78-87.

¹⁶ Their widths are different: the first corresponds to three drawers; the second to two; the third to four.

¹⁷ E. BARBIERI, *Gli schedari*, p. 14.

¹⁸ E. BARBIERI, *Gli schedari*, p. 14.

¹⁹ Ten manuscripts have two entries, but they are not duplicates as their content is different.

²⁰ At least ninety Books of Hours are missing, and the section on Dante does not include any manuscripts. On the damages suffered by the firm during World War II, see C. TAGLIAFERRI – S. DE ROSA, *Olschki*, II, pp. 1-9.

²¹ M. PASCHKE – P. RATH, *Lehrbuch*, II, p. 246.

and pinned together, forming a gathering or booklet. Of the 236 entries I studied, 184 are handwritten, thirty are typewritten, and twenty-two consist of clippings pasted on cards, either from Olschki's or other dealers' catalogues.²² Like Olschki's catalogues, most entries are written in French; Italian and English seem to have been used more frequently after 1930.

The amount of detail included in each entry varies greatly: in some instances, there are just two sentences on the *recto* of a card; in others, densely written cards form booklets of up to eight pages. The contents of each card may be divided into main text and marginal annotations. The main text contains basic information such as title, date, place of origin, material, book size and number of leaves. More detailed entries may include descriptions of the binding, decoration and illustrations; transcriptions of incipits, chapter headings, and notes by readers; and names of previous owners and bibliographical references.²³ Longer entries are divided into three sections: an introduction with basic information, the most remarkable characteristics of the manuscript and a description of the binding; followed by a detailed description of the contents, and concluding with information on provenance, bibliographical references and a statement on the importance of the manuscript – for example «ce manuscrit de premier ordre est digne de figurer dans une collection publique».²⁴ In summary, the information on the cards follows the catalogue entry structure recommended in the *Lehrbuch*.²⁵

Accession numbers

Amid the marginal annotations we discover accession numbers, sometimes starting with a capital letter, and usually (but not always) in the hand of the same person who wrote the main text. Accession numbers serve to reveal, at least approximately, when Olschki purchased the manuscript. For accession numbers without letters, I have established the following chronology based on the higher accession numbers in catalogues, the «Bulletin mensuel», «La Bibliofilia» and invoices:

²² Typewritten cards were introduced in the 1920s; they were probably typed on the same typewriters used for the letters sent by Olschki to the Wellcome Library in 1928-1935; London, Wellcome Archive, HMM/Co/Chr.E.28, O 1928, and HMM/Co/Sub./36, Booksellers, foreign 1932-1962, L-P.

²³ Examples: GRT, SO, Justinianus, *Codicis libri IX*, 43945; Dati, *Sfera*, 25474.

²⁴ GRT, SO, Horae, 34826.

²⁵ M. PASCHKE – P. RATH, *Lehrbuch*, II, pp. 246-250.

<i>year</i>	<i>acc. no.</i>
1900	23000+ ²⁶
1902	25000+ ²⁷
1907	29000+ ²⁸
1908	30000+ ²⁹
1910	32000+ ³⁰
1914	36000+ ³¹
1922	39000+ ³²
1926	42000+ ³³
1929	44000+ ³⁴
1938	46000+ ³⁵

The resulting sequence suggests that by 1930 the annual number of acquisitions had considerably diminished. This would not be surprising, given the financial crisis of 1929. Meanwhile in cards from that time there appears to be an increase in the use of numbers preceded by capital letters. In two instances the letters referred to the cities where the manuscripts were traded, undoubtedly for the branch in Geneva, and almost certainly for the Roman branch.³⁶ The numbers for Geneva are easy to recognise by the use of the letter G: an issue of the «Bulletin mensuel» published in 1930 includes the mention «tous les ouvrages décrits dans ce Bulletin se trouvent à la librairie Leo S. Olschki de Genève» and the books listed in this issue include accession numbers preceded by a

²⁶ «Bulletin mensuel», XIV/33.

²⁷ «Bulletin mensuel», XVII/41.

²⁸ *Catalogue LXI. Choix de livres anciens, rares et curieux*, Firenze, Olschki, 1907.

²⁹ *Catalogue LXVI. Musique*, Firenze, Olschki, 1908.

³⁰ *Catalogue LXXIV. Manuscrits sur vélin*, Firenze, Olschki, 1910.

³¹ LEO S. OLSCHKI, *Manuscrits très précieux*, «La Bibliofilia», XVI, 1914-1915, pp. 276-277.

³² St Augustine, *Confessions*, bought by Olschki in 1922 from Quaritch and sold later to Charles A. Baldwin (acc. no. 39305 on the invoice); see SEYMOUR DE RICCI – WILLIAM J. WILSON, *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada*, 2 vols., New York, The H.W. Wilson Company, 1935-1937, I, p. 149, n. 2.

³³ «Bulletin mensuel», XLI/84.

³⁴ «Bulletin mensuel», XLV/91.

³⁵ «Bulletin mensuel», LII/110.

³⁶ On a few cards from the early 1900s, accession numbers appear with another number preceded by an «R», probably referring to Rome (e.g.: GRT, SO, Cicero, *Officiis*, 25966/R.1949). On cards for manuscripts acquired in the 1930s, «R» numbers appear on their own (e.g.: GRT, SO, Missale, R.11990).

«G».³⁷ In the late 1920s, Olschki seems to have increasingly focused his attention on the Geneva branch – not surprisingly, given the potential danger represented by a Fascist government for Jewish businessmen. In 1927, Olschki registered his company in the *Chambre de Commerce* of Geneva as a *société anonyme*, and in 1928 his son Cesare was appointed director.³⁸ In the cards, some accession numbers were crossed out and replaced by a new number beginning with a «G», suggesting that the manuscripts were taken to Geneva.³⁹ Of these original numbers, the highest I have found so far is 44096 indicating a manuscript acquired c. 1929, so when the «G» numbers were probably adopted.⁴⁰ In summary, the replacement «G» numbers can reveal how long a manuscript had lingered unsold before 1929.

Places

I have decoded several annotations in the margins used to record locations and storage places. An obvious one, «C.F.», almost certainly meant *cassa forte* (safe), where the most valuable manuscripts must have been kept.⁴¹ Another recurring annotation is «Cors.», which refers to the shop on the Lungarno Corsini, opened in 1926 – Olschki kept his first Florentine shop, on the Lungarno Acciajoli, until 1933.⁴² «Cors.» was usually added in pencil, so it could be erased when the manuscript was moved to somewhere else, like other annotations indicating places. But sometimes these annotations were not erased. In the cards for *Antiphonarium* 36243, we read: «al Lung. Cors. in cassa», a bit further «libreria», and lastly «sopra l'armadio studio». So this manuscript was at some point kept in the safe in the Lungarno Corsini shop, another time in one of the bookshops (either Corsini or Acciajoli), and eventually on top of a cupboard in a study. On the card for *Antiphonarium* 23999 is written in pencil «leggio salone», suggesting that it was displayed on a lectern in a reception room, perhaps in Olschki's villa in Via Vanini, built in 1911 and which included a sumptuous library.⁴³ Some cards are annotated in pencil with a «V.» preceding a three-digit number, and others

³⁷ «Bulletin mensuel», XLVI/99, p. 1.

³⁸ Archives d'État de Genève, Commerce, L, 10, fol. 217, and L, 38, fol. 143. My gratitude to Angéline Rais for sharing these documents.

³⁹ Examples: GRT, SO, Biblia, ~~35352~~ = G.1159, ~~43368~~ = G.792; Horae, ~~41986~~ = G.1142.

⁴⁰ GRT, SO, Biblia, ~~44096~~ = G.975.

⁴¹ Examples: GRT, SO, Biblia, 43073, 34828, Horae, 29009, Psalterium, 29086, 41998, 42510.

⁴² Examples: GRT, SO, Antiphonaria, BGC.3762, 36242, 36243; Horae, B.414, 34831, 41392, 54826; Missale, 26019. On the shops, see A. OLSCHKI, *Centotredici anni*, p. 10; C. TAGLIAFERRI – S. DE ROSA, *Olschki*, I, pp. 250-251.

⁴³ C. TAGLIAFERRI – S. DE ROSA, *Olschki*, I, p. 67, A. OLSCHKI, *Centotredici anni*, pp. 10-12.

with «villa».⁴⁴ «Villa» occurs either with «C.F.» or with «esposizione».⁴⁵ Book exhibitions were regularly organised in the villa, the first time in 1915.⁴⁶

As with accession numbers, references to places can help shed light on how long a manuscript remained unsold. For instance, a card for a missal with the accession number 26019, indicating that it was bought before 1905, was annotated «Cors.»), revealing that it had not been sold in 1926. In other instances, annotations may reveal that a manuscript was sold and bought back later. For example, a manuscript of Petrarca's *Sonetti e Trionfi*, with the number 35778, thus acquired by Olschki circa 1913, was with Tammaro De Marinis when he sold his stock to Ulrico Hoepli in 1924.⁴⁷ On the card we discover written in pencil «ora nostro» («now ours») and below that the date «ott. 1941».⁴⁸

Prices

As one may expect, cards were annotated with sale prices, usually in pencil. Like in the catalogues, before World War I prices were recorded in French francs, and afterwards in gold lire and Swiss francs.⁴⁹ In most cases, the figures correspond to the prices published in catalogues and the «Bulletin mensuel» for the same manuscripts. In a few cases, however, they do not. Moreover, some cards are annotated with several prices, sometimes in different currencies. For example, the card for a manuscript of Peraldus' *Summa*, which was advertised in the «Bulletin mensuel» in 1901 for 150 fr, is annotated 400 (francs) and \$ 80, roughly the same amount in 1901.⁵⁰ This may suggest that it was sold to an American collector for a higher price than it was first advertised for. A similar example is a Book of Hours sold to the American collector Herbert Strauss about

⁴⁴ Examples of «V»: GRT, SO, Aquinas, *Contra impugnantes*, 15516 V.121, *De Veritate Fidei*, 4410 V.120.

⁴⁵ For «C.F.»: GRT, SO, Cicero, *Timaeus*, 34821, Egidio Romano, *De regimine*, 41451, Aristotelis, *In libris Ethicorum*, 34816; for «esposizione»: Horae, 41392; Petrarca, *Sonetti e Trionfi*, 34778.

⁴⁶ C. TAGLIAFERRI – S. DE ROSA, *Olschki*, I, pp. 222 and 286-290.

⁴⁷ *Vendita all'asta della preziosa collezione proveniente dalla cessata Libreria De Marinis, 6-9 maggio 1925*, Milano, Libreria Antiquaria Ulrico Hoepli, 1925, n. 287. On the acquisition of De Marinis' stock by Hoepli, see LUCA MONTAGNER, *L'antiquariato Hoepli. Una prima ricognizione tra i documenti e i cataloghi*, Milano, EDUCatt, 2017, p. 75.

⁴⁸ The manuscript in Hoepli's catalogue is now Boston Public Library MS q. Med. 13. No doubt it is the same manuscript described in the cards: both include the same number of folios, same decoration, a shield with Strozzi arms and a folio torn in half.

⁴⁹ Belgian, French and Swiss francs and lire were paired one-to-one: the Latin Monetary Union, starting in 1867 and lasting officially until 1927; in reality, it was over by 1915, but the parity continued in the 1920s between gold lire and Swiss francs.

⁵⁰ «Bulletin mensuel», XVI/37, n. 743; GRT, SO, *Tractatus*, 23971.

1930.⁵¹ The card has the accession number 40641, indicating that the manuscript was bought about 1925, and is annotated with the figures 32,000, 50,000 and \$4000. There is no reason to think that first two figures are the same price in different currencies, but much more likely they were each a different price expressed in either Swiss francs or Italian gold lire (the two currencies were paired one-to-one at the time).⁵² One dollar could then buy five Swiss francs, which leads us to assume that Strauss paid at least 35% more, if not the double, of the price in Swiss francs.

But different prices may also be the result of inflation. An example is a fifteenth century Missale without any decoration or provenance. The accession number, 26019, suggests it was bought before 1905; the card includes two prices: 200 (crossed out) and L. 1000. It was also annotated «Cors.», indicating that it had not been sold by 1926. In 1905, the equivalent of 200 francs was £8, and in 1926 the equivalent of 1000 lire was £10. Thus, there can be little doubt, the price of this manuscript was adjusted for inflation.

ZUVERSICHT

Only a few cards are annotated with purchase prices using numbers – for instance, we discover that around 1907 Olschki paid 2800 lire for a Psalter and 7050 lire for a Bible.⁵³ The corresponding cards were annotated «UCTT» and «ITRT», respectively. Such annotations, consisting of sequences of capital letters, appear in many cards. They are, in fact, purchase prices written in code. It was custom and practice amongst bookdealers and collectors to use codes to keep secret records of the prices they paid for their books.⁵⁴ These codes were often based on words, usually ten-letters long, that had a particular meaning for the possessors – for example «SAFELYBIND», the compound word used by the English collector John Rowlands Abbey.⁵⁵ Olschki's code was based on the German noun *Zu-*

⁵¹ Produced in Cambrai c. 1500, now New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.1013.

⁵² Prices in two different currencies would be proportionally impossible. In the front page of the «Bulletin mensuel» (XLV/91, 1929) rates are listed as follows: 1 gold lira = 1 Swiss franc = \$0.20 = 10 pence = 0.80 mark = 4.90 French fr. = 3.65 paper lire.

⁵³ GRT, SO, Psalterium, 29086, Biblia, 29117. The Psalter, now Berkeley, University of California, Bancroft Library, BANC MS UCB 028, was advertised in 1898 by Quaritch for £300; 2800 lire were at the time the equivalent of about £ 110. See BERNARD QUARITCH, *Catalogue of Rare & Valuable Books and Choice Illuminated Manuscripts from the Libraries of the late Earl of Ashburnham, the Wilbraham Family, Sir Thomas Phillipps and the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Morley*, London, Bernard Quaritch, 1898, lot. 46.

⁵⁴ See PETER KIDD, *The Use of Price-Codes (and Associated Marks) in Provenance Research*, in *Chamberpot & Motherfuck: The Price-Codes of the Book Trade*, edited by EXHUMATION [Ian Jackson], Berkley CA, Ian Jackson, 2010, pp. 61-95.

⁵⁵ See P. KIDD, *The Use of Price-Codes*, in *Chamberpot & Motherfuck*, pp. 85-90. The words in

versicht.⁵⁶ For those who are familiar with Leo S. Olschki's personality, the choice is obvious: *Zuversicht* can be translated as confidence that something or someone shall achieve success in the future.⁵⁷ His favourite motto was «NIL DIFFICILE VOLENTI», which can be translated as «nothing is difficult for the one who is determined». We find this motto in the ex-libris designed for him in 1902, and also in the 1886-1939 register of clients' names.⁵⁸

Z U V E R S I C H T

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

With the code deciphered, we can now calculate the profits made by Olschki on each manuscript. From the cards I have studied, the average profit appears to have been somewhere between 100% and 200% (thus a profit margin of 50-66%). Yet his profits could be sometimes 400%: an Antiphonarium bought around 1900 for «UT» (= 20 fr.) was advertised that year in the «Bulletin mensuel» for 100 fr.; a manuscript of Horatius' *Satyrae* bought around 1908 for «ZTT» (100 fr.), was marked 500 fr. – it was sold to Henry Walters sometime before 1912.⁵⁹ Moreover, in a few instances profits can be up to six times the purchase price: a Bible bought around 1908 for «ITT» (700 fr.) was advertised in a catalogue in 1910 for 5000 fr.⁶⁰ Yet Olschki was not always infallible: a *Trattato di mascalcia* bought in the late 1890s for «Z-/-», so for £1 (the slashes and lines indicate the places for shillings and pence), then the equivalent of about 25 fr., was advertised in the «Bulletin mensuel» for 20 fr. in 1900.⁶¹

Prices were evidently adjusted for inflation to maintain a profit margin: a fifteenth-century manuscript containing a moral treatise for women, bought c. 1907 for «HT» (90 fr.), marked on its card 600 fr., was sold in 1929 for 2400 lire to the Biblioteca Laurenziana.⁶² In 1929, 2400 lire were worth about £25, the same as 600 fr. in 1907.⁶³ It is important to note at this point

the title were used, respectively, by the writer Thomas A. Larremore and the Scottish dealer R. & J. Balding.

⁵⁶ I deciphered the code with Peter Kidd, who saw the annotations during my seminar (see acknowledgments, above) and realised they were prices in code.

⁵⁷ My gratitude to Nigel Crossan, German translator, for checking this.

⁵⁸ A. OLSCHKI, *Centotredici anni*, p. 14; C. TAGLIAFERRI – S. DE ROSA, *Olschki*, I, p. 159.

⁵⁹ GRT SO, *Antiphonarium*, 21045 (see «Bulletin mensuel», XIV/33, n. 27); Horatius, *Satyrae*, 29234 (see S. DE RICCI – W.J. WILSON, *Census*, I, p. 831, no. 436).

⁶⁰ GRT, SO, *Biblia*, 29193; *Manuscripts sur vélin*, n. 9.

⁶¹ GRT, SO, *Trattato*, 19049, «Bulletin mensuel», XIV/30, n. 1298.

⁶² GRT, SO, *Tractatus*, 28834, now BMLF Acq. e Doni MS 342; for the price, see BMLF, *Registro cronologico di entrata*, 8, f. 13v; see also SOTHEBY, WILKINSON & HODGE, *Catalogue of the Portion of the Famous Collection of Manuscripts: The Property of the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Ashburnham known as the Barrois Collection*, London, Dryden Press, J. Davy and Sons, 1901, n. 577.

⁶³ Leo Olschki, apparently, fixed the prices of this manuscripts in relation to the prices of gold; see C. TAGLIAFERRI – S. DE ROSA, *Olschki*, I, p. 80.

that the selling price and the prevailing perception of intrinsic value of the item are closely related; the inflated price of a manuscript may reflect an increased interest in particular subject, author, period or illumination school; in the case of this anonymous treatise without any decoration but with a Barrois-Ashburnham provenance, the unchanged price seems consistent with an unaltered perception of its philological and historical value.

Sellers and buyers

Provenance, when prestigious, is mentioned in the card's main text – for example, a manuscript of Alfraganus' *Sphaera*, last owned by count Giacomo Manzoni, a Psalter from the collection of the Earl of Kilmorey, and not surprisingly several manuscripts from the famous library of Sir Thomas Phillipps.⁶⁴ In some instances, cards may reveal the identity of a previous owner without directly naming him or her; for example, the mention of an «ex-libris anglais avec le dire: “la vertu est la seule noblesse”» in a manuscript containing the *Satyrae* and *Arte poetica* by Horatius reveals that it was owned by Frederick North, Earl of Guilford (1766-1827), whose motto that was.⁶⁵

But the cards are silent as the tomb when it comes to sellers' names. In the period before World War I, as demonstrated by Laura Cleaver, Leo Olschki purchased many manuscripts from dealers in London, especially from Leighton; and as shown by Angéline Rais, for decades Olschki obtained manuscripts from his friend Jacques Rosenthal.⁶⁶ Yet their names never appear in the cards. Also Olschki regularly attended auctions at Sotheby's, as attested by annotated catalogues and provenance chains in the Schoenberg Database. Again, this is never recorded in writing on the cards, but of course revealed by pasted clippings from Sotheby's catalogues.⁶⁷ The index also includes clippings from catalogues in Italian – and once their sources are established, we will identify the sellers.⁶⁸ Manuscripts with consecutive accession numbers may indicate a common source, es-

⁶⁴ GRT, SO, Alfraganus, *Spera*, 14121, Psalterium, 29086. From the collection of Sir Thomas Phillipps (1792-1872): Bruni, *De bello italico*, 43992, Egidio Romano, *De regimine principum*, 33875.

⁶⁵ GRT, SO, Horatius, *Satyrae*, 29234; ROBERT HARDING EVANS, *Catalogue of the Extraordinary, Curious, and Extensive Collection of Manuscripts of the Late Earl of Guilford*, London, W. Nicol, 1830, n. 309.

⁶⁶ For London, see Schoenberg Database: SDBM_261603, SDBM_259778, SDBM_259786, SDBM_35073, SDBM_261619; for Rosenthal: SDBM_15840, SDBM_38802, SDBM_15870, SDBM_11577.

⁶⁷ The following cards include clippings that match annotated entries in SOTHEBY & Co., *Catalogue of a Collection of Very Important Illuminated Manuscripts and Fine Printed Horae (4 May 1926)*, London, J. Davy & Sons, 1926: GRT, SO, Horae, 42500 (lot 33), 42501 (lot 41), 42502 (lot 46), 42503 (lot 47), 42504 (lot 75); Psalterium, 42510 (lot 187).

⁶⁸ Examples: GRT, SO, Evangelia, 26716, Miscellanea, 26719, Psalterium, 26718.

pecially if they were purchased for the same price, suggesting the same seller.⁶⁹

On the other hand, names of buyers are sometimes noted on the cards, but only for purchases after 1920: on the card for a valuable German Book of Hours we read «Mettler 20.III.24» (presumably the collector Arnold Mettler) and on that for another Book of Hours «Valerius Ragooczy», «Nov. 38», and the address of this wealthy Danish industrialist's summer villa.⁷⁰ Similarly for manuscripts sold to public collections, notably the Biblioteca Laurenziana: the card for a manuscript of Cicero's *De Inventione* is annotated «Laurenziana 6/33», one for Egidio Romano's *Regimine principum* «Laur.VI.42», and in the card for a vernacular manuscript of Valerius Maximus' *Facta et dicta* we read «In esame Laurenziana 8/VI/33» (it was finally bought by the Laurenziana in 1941).⁷¹ The same for American institutions; for instance, on the card for Justinianus' *Institutiones* we read «12/VIII/48 Congr.» – this manuscript was purchased by the Library of Congress in 1948.⁷²

The function(s) of the cards

We may assume that the main function of the cards was to record information that could be easily accessed when needed. Cards were updated when new information on the manuscript itself was obtained (for instance, a new publication or a discovery on its provenance), and as shown above, when a manuscript was moved, sold, or its price was changed.

In the handwritten cards, the main text often corresponds verbatim to entries in Olschki's catalogues and the «Bulletin mensuel», and descriptions of the same manuscripts in «La Bibliofilia». Initially this led me to suppose that cards were actually copied from publications. This was not the case, however. As implied in the *Lehrbuch*, one of the main functions of the cards was to prepare catalogue entries – the *Lehrbuch* even recommends having two sets of cards: one to serve as a general index, the other to be used for drafts of catalogue entries.⁷³

Corrections can often be seen on cards, which were integrated into the printed versions. Indeed, cards were used as drafts for entries in Olschki's

⁶⁹ For consecutive accession numbers, see no. 68, above. An example of three Books of Hours with consecutive numbers all paid 750 fr.: GRT, SO, Horae, 34830-32.

⁷⁰ GRT, SO, Horae, 33789, 41392.

⁷¹ GRT, SO, Cicero, *De inventione*, 43066; Egidio Romano, *De regimine*, 41451, Valerius Maximus, *De fatti e detti degni de memoria*, G.1173; see BMLF, *Inventario Acquisti e Doni*, 1, MSS 346, 381, 418.

⁷² GRT, SO, Justinianus, *Institutiones*, 34801; Washington DC, Library of Congress, Law, Office MS 17; see Schoenberg Database, SDBM_259974.

⁷³ M. PACHTE – P. RATH, *Lehrbuch*, II, p. 265.

catalogues and articles in «La Bibliofilia». An interesting example of this is provided by the cards describing a fifteenth-century manuscript of Federigo da Venezia's *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, sold to Henry Walters sometime before 1931.⁷⁴ The text was published in «La Bibliofilia» in 1914.⁷⁵ Particularly revealing is the description of the miniature representing Christ as the Judge of the Nations. He is represented with a sword in his mouth, following a well-established iconographic tradition. In the cards was first written «dans la bouche, la glaive» (literally «in the mouth, the sword»); «dans» was then crossed out and replaced with «à travers» (so «across the mouth, the sword»). The resulting wording is more visually evocative than the initial version – we may even infer that the writer looked at the miniature before introducing changes to the text. Thus, in this case, the description that was recorded in the cards when the manuscript was acquired (as recommended in the *Lehrbuch*) was probably refined before publication.

Cards pasted with clippings from printed catalogues were also used to draft new catalogue entries. An example is the card for a *Traité vétérinaire*, consisting of a clipping from Olschki's catalogue LVI, published sometime before 1905.⁷⁶ In the card, the title was changed into *Tractatus veterinarius*; «non si stampa» («not to be printed») was written adjacent to two excerpts from the manuscript, and a new description was added by hand to replace the excerpts. We discover the edited version in catalogue LXXIV, published more than five years after catalogue LVI.⁷⁷ Like the example referred to above, this one suggests that cards changed, and probably were replaced, along with the edition of catalogues.

One particular group of cards reveals that drafting catalogue entries could be a collaborative enterprise, at least to some extent.⁷⁸ In these cards, the manuscript described is an early sixteenth-century Flemish Book of Hours with illustrations in grisaille; it was advertised in catalogues LXXIII and LXXIV, both published in 1910, and was sold to Henry Walters in 1912.⁷⁹ The text is exactly the same in both catalogues. The cards, which served to draft the catalogue entries, have numerous corrections, all by the same hand that wrote the text (Fig. 1). When we compare the cards with the published version, we discover that further corrections were made before printing; for instance, «les numéros un et trois sont très bien executés en grisaille» was replaced by the more elegant «le premier et le dernier sujet sont en grisaille

⁷⁴ GRT, SO, *Apocalypsis*, 35393; S. DE RICCI – W.J. WILSON, *Census*, I, p. 820, n. 386.

⁷⁵ LEO S. OLSCHKI, *Manuscrits très précieux*, «La Bibliofilia», XVI, 1916, pp. 48-50: 49-50.

⁷⁶ GRT, SO, *Tractatus*, 23005; *Choix des livres anciens, rares et curieux (seconde partie)*, n. 381a.

⁷⁷ *Manuscrits sur vélin*, n. 62.

⁷⁸ GRT, SO, *Horae*, 31351.

⁷⁹ *Choix de livres anciens, rares et curieux. Onzième partie: Liturgie*, Firenze, Olschki, 1910, n. 3309; *Manuscrits sur vélin*, n. 22; Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.431.

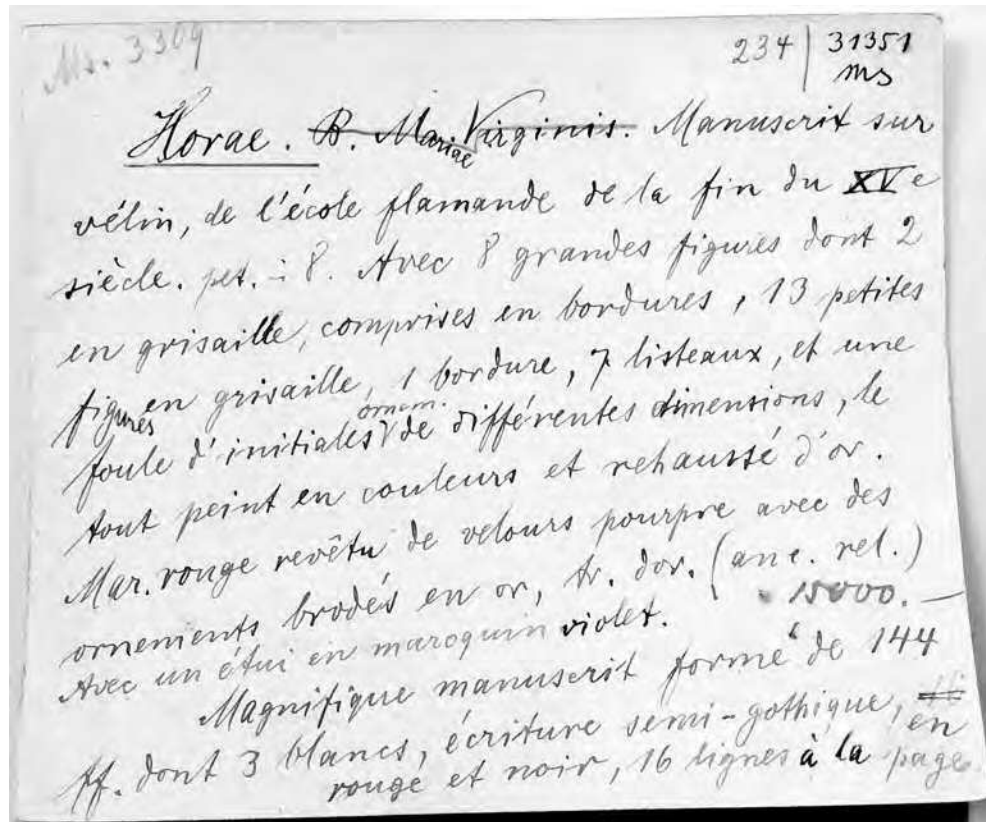


Fig. 1. Firenze, Giunta Regionale Toscana, Schedario Olschki, Horae, 31351, f. 1r, Hand O3.

et d'une exécution très soignée». On the *recto* of the last card, between the last two sentences, was written «voltare» («turn over») by the same person who wrote text and the corrections. However, as we turn the card over, we discover that a long text was added by a second hand, which is undoubtedly the source of the last paragraph of the catalogue entries (Fig. 2). The first hand also made corrections to the addition by the second hand, replacing «miniatures» by «grisailles». Moreover, several additional corrections were made to improve the use of French before printing.⁸⁰

The text on the verso of the last card was written by Leo Olschki himself, as we discover when we juxtapose the card to a letter written in 1909 by him to Henri Omont, then curator of manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Fig. 3).⁸¹ Thus, somebody else appears to have corrected Olschki's work, first on the card, and then possibly at the last moment in the printing press, as often happened in those days.

⁸⁰ For instance: «examples» was changed into «analogues» and «valeur artistique très considérable» into «grande valeur artistique».

⁸¹ BnF, Archives Modernes, 527, Leo S. Olschki to Henri Omont (3 February 1909).

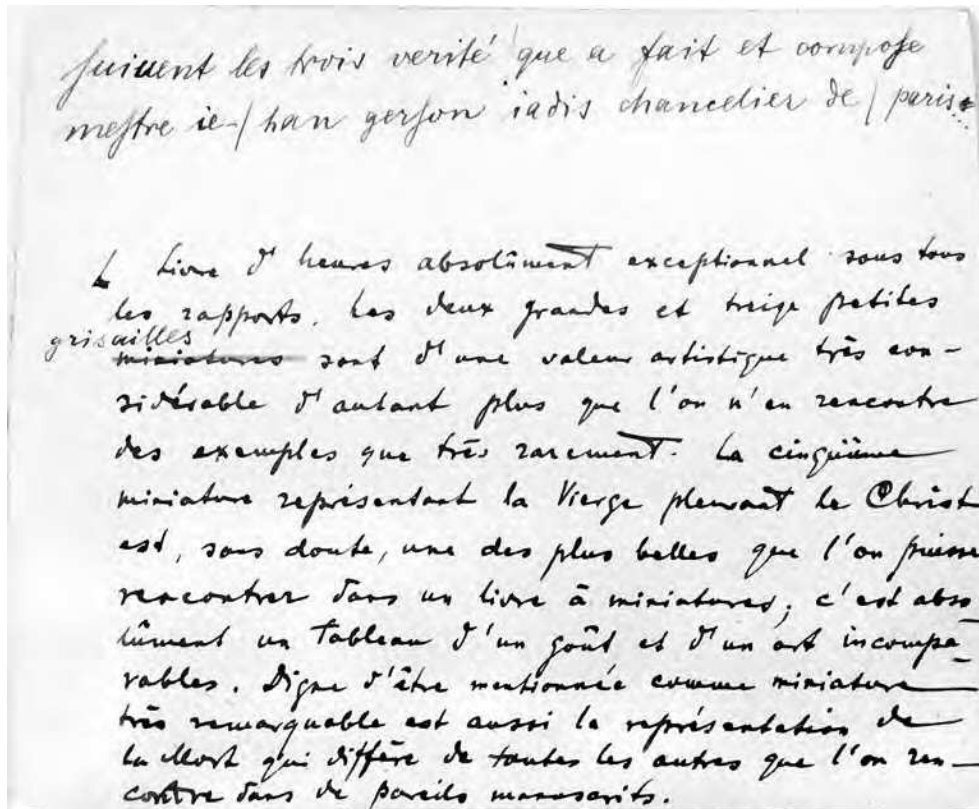


Fig. 2. Firenze, Giunta Regionale Toscana, Schedario Olschki, Horae, 31351, f. 2v, Hand O3 and Leo S. Olschki.

Olschki's hands

In the index, as well as Leo Olschki's hand, I have identified twelve different hands, which I have named Hand O1, Hand O2 and so forth. Olschki's handwriting can be recognised in annotations and additions to several cards (including that mentioned above), and so far, I have discovered just one card written only by him.⁸² The periods of activity of the various Hands O can be established by the accession numbers on their cards. I shall now focus on the earlier hands (O1, O2, O3), who were also the most prolific: they produced 146 of the 184 handwritten entries I have studied.⁸³

The lowest accession number occurring in a card written by Hand O1 is 11580 and the highest is 24434, thus corresponding to a period starting in the early or mid 1890s and finishing c. 1901.⁸⁴ For Hand O2, the lowest

⁸² GRT, SO, Miscellanea, 26719.

⁸³ The other hands are distributed as follows: O4: 2 entries; O5: 1 entry; O6: 3 entries; O7: 1 entry; O8: 1 entry; O9: 7 entries; O10: 2 entries; O11: 3 entries; O12: 1 entry.

⁸⁴ GRT, SO, Virgilius, *Bucolica*, 11580, Horae, 24434.

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Monsieur,

Je vous remercie de votre aimable lettre du 1^{er} cour. en réponse à laquelle je m'empresse de vous dire que j'ai payé, moi-même, 750 livres pour les quatre chartes de Messine. Certainement vous êtes plus compétent que moi pour juger la valeur de ces pièces d'autant plus que vous en possédez un grand nombre: elles m'ont fait une impression profonde, puisque je n'en ai pas encore possédés d'autres de ce genre, d'une date si reculée. Et je n'ai pas hésité de les acquiescer pour ne me les laisser pas échapper. Désireux de vous entretenir et d'enrichir votre collection si importante de ces quatre chartes intéressantes, je vous réduis mon prix à Fr. 800.- et me contenter d'un bénéfice de 50 Fr. nets. Je serais heureux de recevoir votre travail sur la collection de ces chartes pour le publier dans ma Revue > La Bibliophilie; il sera lu avec beaucoup d'intérêt par les abonnés. Vous me dites de ne pas avoir lu ma Revue depuis longtemps ce qui m'est incompréhensible puisque d'ici on vous l'envoie régulièrement.

Le dernier cahier qui vient de paraître et que je vous adresse sous bande, contient un article de T. Boffito sur un manuscrit en partie inédit du XIV^e siècle, qui vous intéressera, comme je crois, beaucoup. Le manuscrit appartient à moi et je pourrais vous le céder au prix de 2500 Francs. Si vous désirez le voir, je serais disposé à vous l'adresser en communication.

Je me permets de joindre au cahier mon dernier catalogue d'Insuperables et je vous serais reconnaissant si vous vouliez y attirer l'attention de M. votre collègue de département des Imprimeries.

En attendant vos bonnes nouvelles, je vous prie de vouloir bien agréer, Monsieur Omont, mes salutations les plus respectueuses.

L. Olschki

Fig. 3. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Archives Modernes, 527, Leo S. Olschki to Henri Omont (3 February 1909).

number I have found is 18923, occurring on a card describing a moral treatise advertised in the «Bulletin mensuel» in 1901, and the highest is 26672, which suggests a date before 1905.⁸⁵ As to Hand O3, the lowest accession number is 21044 and the highest 44946, thus covering a period from the late 1890s to c. 1930.⁸⁶

Hand O1, who wrote twenty-eight cards in my sample, has a distinct calligraphic style, with very round minuscules and waving ascenders and descenders, which gives the whole a vague air of Art Nouveau (Fig. 4). Information about Olschki's employees in the 1890s is scarce and secondary sources are usually silent on the subject. Only one name has been put forward so far: Fritz Milcke, whose death was reported in an obituary in «La Bibliofilia» in 1915.⁸⁷ According to Aldo Olschki – who learned the rudiments of the Chinese language from Milcke – he collaborated with his father in

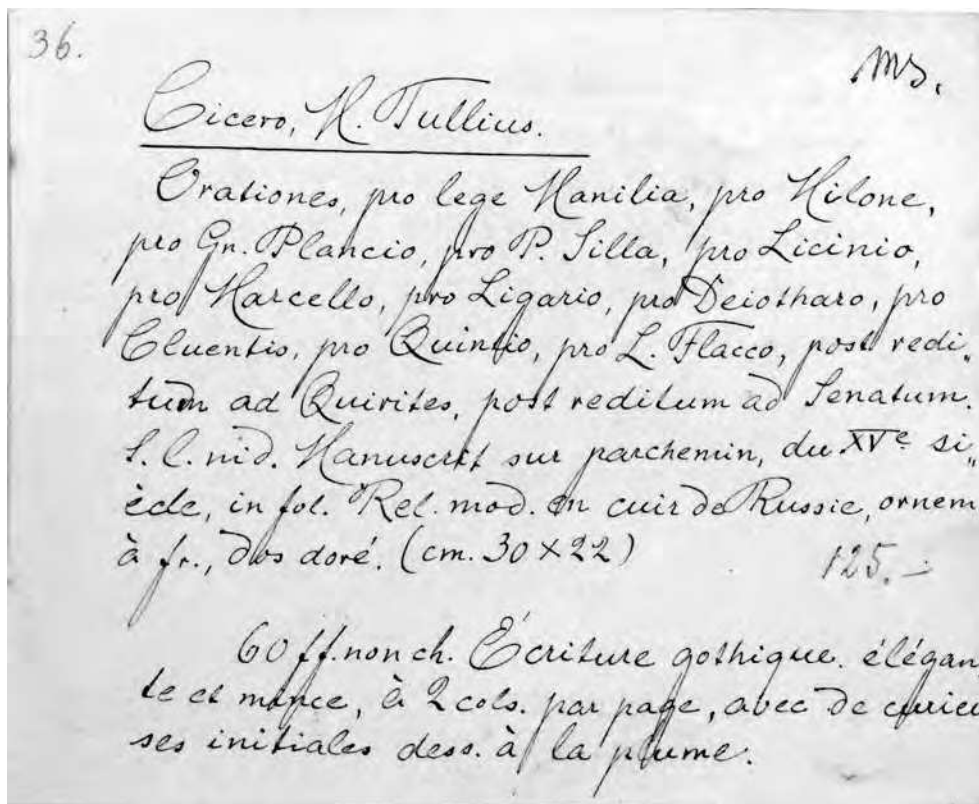


Fig. 4. Firenze, Giunta Regionale Toscana, Schedario Olschki, Cicero, *Orationes*, 13219, f. 1r; Hand O1 (Fritz Milcke?).

⁸⁵ GRT, SO, Tractatus, 18923; «Bulletin mensuel», XVI/35, 1900, n. 482; GRT, SO, Horae, 26672.

⁸⁶ GR, SO, Breviarium, 21044, Horae, 44946.

⁸⁷ «La Bibliofilia», XVII, 1915, p. 396.

compiling catalogues.⁸⁸ He worked with Olschki in Venice (so in the 1890s) and continued doing so in Florence after 1897. The last catalogue credited to Milcke, XLIII, was published in 1899.⁸⁹ Barbieri has already suggested that Milcke is one of the scribes of the index; I shall take a step further to propose that Milcke was Hand O1, since the accession numbers on the cards written by this hand correspond to Milcke's known period of employment.⁹⁰

Compared to the cards by Hand O1, those written by Hand O2 (seventeen in total) are full of scribbles and corrections (Fig. 5). This hand can be given a name without hesitation: Tammaro De Marinis, the famous Neapolitan scholar and book dealer who worked at Olschki's between 1900 and 1904, before establishing his own business.⁹¹ The accession numbers fit perfectly within those years, and the comparison of a card by Hand O2 with a sample of De Marinis' handwriting leaves no doubt – I have chosen a draft of his catalogue of Countess Sofia Coronini Fagan's collection of musical books, published in 1919 (Fig. 6).⁹²

Hand O3 was the most prolific; out of 184 entries, 101 were written by him – or her? This is hardly surprising, given that Hand O3 seems to have collaborated with Olschki for more than thirty years. Hand O3 is far less calligraphic than O1; it can be described as the polite handwriting of a well educated person of the time (Fig. 1). In addition to French, Hand O3 seems to have been fluent in Italian, and also knew German, which could

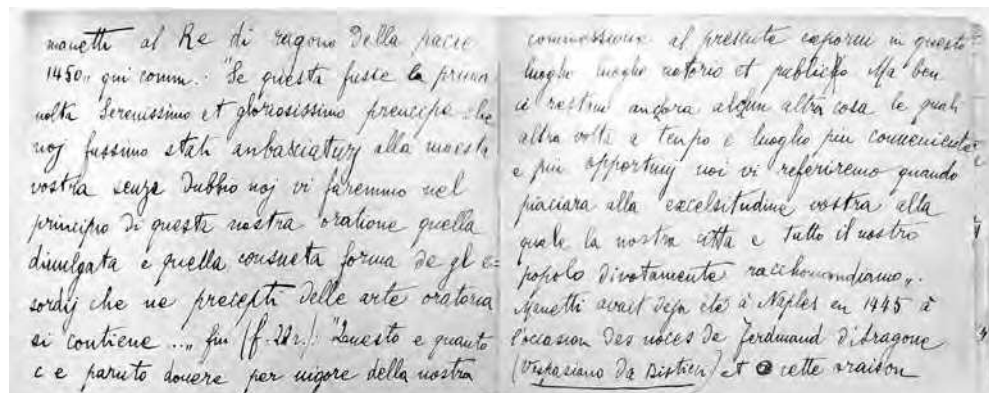


Fig. 5. Firenze, Giunta Regionale Toscana, Schedario Olschki, Dati, Sfera, 25474, ff. 3v-4r, Hand O2 (Tammaro de Marinis).

⁸⁸ C. TAGLIAFERRI – S. DE ROSA, *Olschki*, I, p. 80.

⁸⁹ FRITZ MILCKE (comp.), *Incunabula Medica: collection d'ouvrages de médecine imprimés au XV^e siècle*, Firenze, Landi, 1899.

⁹⁰ E. BARBIERI, *Gli Schedari*, p. 289.

⁹¹ See ROMEO DE MAIO, *Tammaro de Marinis*, in *Studi di bibliografia e di storia in onore di Tammaro de Marinis*, a cura di Romeo De Maio, 4 vols., Verona, Mardersteig, 1964, I, pp. ix-xxix: xv.

⁹² TAMMARO DE MARINIS, *I libri di musica della contessa Sofia Coronini Fagan salvati a Gorizia nel settembre 1916*, Milano, Bertieri e Vanzetti, 1919.

Tra i libri posti in salvo a forijia della villa dei
 conti coronini in L'ingrap¹¹ è notevole la piccola
 raccolta di lettere turca musicale messa insieme
 dalla contessa Sofia coronini Trouberg nata
 De Fagan. Di famiglia inglese dimorante
 in francia Mlle. De Fagan conobbe il conte
 Michele coronini a Parigi ^{doce} questi
 era andato in qualità di "cavalier
 d'ambassade", all'ambasciata d'Austria.
 Il matrimonio fu celebrato il 26 ottobre
 1812 e tra i testimoni comparvero il conte
Otto de Mosloy ambassadeur de france, Clement
Wenceslas conte de Metternich, il principe Charles
de Rohan, il principe Charles de Brog, Louard
von Riefendorf, le Marechal Prince de Sique,

Fig. 6. Firenze, Archivio di Stato, Acquisti e Doni, 445. Tammaro De Marinis, *I libri di musica della contessa Sofia Coronini Fagan*, f. 1r.

have been his or her native language.⁹³ All the annotations in German that I have so far discovered on the cards are by Hand O3; some of these notes were probably reminders, not intended to be communicated to clients: «13. 1 weisse Echte ist mit Papier angesetzt» («1 corner [of fol.?] 13 has been attached [replaced?] with white paper»); «miniaturen gewöhnlich» («miniatures ordinary»)⁹⁴ Although this individual has yet to be identified, they clearly played an important part in the business.

⁹³ In Italian: GRT, SO, Cecco d'Ascoli, Acerba, 19554.

⁹⁴ GRT, SO, Breviarium, 29240, Horae, 34832.

Conclusion

The cards with lower accession numbers written by Hand O3 have relatively little information, and those that follow are often full of corrections – in one instance, this scribe copied the corrected text onto a new clean card.⁹⁵ It is reasonable to assume that completing cards was part of the training of employees at Olschki's, and that those with more experience provided guidance to those with less – in fact, Hands O1 and O3 several times wrote on the same card, but it is impossible to know whether they did so in the same period. Several cards show that Leo Olschki participated in the writing of catalogues entries, but they do not provide evidence as to exactly how this happened. We may assume that clerks, under some form of supervision, wrote descriptions on cards as manuscripts entered the firm and that Olschki dictated changes as catalogues were compiled. On the other hand, someone like De Marinis, who by 1900 had already published several scholarly articles, probably needed little supervision, and the mysterious Hand O3 seems to have been capable of correcting Olschki's French.⁹⁶ These are probably not the only questions raised by Olschki's card index that remain to be answered.

Nevertheless, as shown in this article, the index can provide answers to many questions. It can be used for finding information on manuscripts traded by Olschki that may not be found in catalogues, and even less in archives. The accession numbers help us establish, with a small margin of error, when was a manuscript acquired by Olschki and, sometimes, how long it remained in his possession. From pencil annotations we can discover the places where manuscripts were stored and occasionally, as with accession numbers, how long they remained unsold. In addition to sale prices, cards are often annotated with purchase prices in code; with the code deciphered, we can estimate gross profit margins for each manuscript. And, of course, some cards are annotated with the names of buyers and the dates of the sale. Yet, for me, the most fascinating is that small window through which to see the drafting of catalogue entries, even though we will never be able to recreate the full picture.

Much more may be drawn from those old pieces of Bristol paper. Selling manuscripts was only a small part of a much larger enterprise. With regard to economics, expenditure and earnings in the antiquarian sector can be studied in relation to those in Olschki's publishing business. The number of manuscripts traded by Olschki was small compared to early printed books; the index contains far more cards on incunabula than on manuscripts, and even more on recent publications. The index is in itself

⁹⁵ GRT, SO, Biblia, 30787.

⁹⁶ For De Marinis' bibliography, see R. DE MAIO, *Tammaro De Marinis*, pp. xxxi-xxxviii.

an object of interest: it can help us making connections, not only between its contents, but also between people. It is therefore an exceptional testimony to the cultural life of early twentieth-century Florence, and the increasingly global book trade.

ABSTRACT

L'articolo indaga su come lo schedario cartaceo dell'antiquariato Olschki (ora patrimonio della Regione Toscana) possa essere utilizzato per lo studio del commercio dei libri antichi nella prima metà del XX secolo, ponendo particolare attenzione ai manoscritti medievali e rinascimentali. Viene dimostrato come lo schedario possa fornire dati importanti sulla provenienza, sugli acquirenti, sui prezzi di acquisto e vendita e su altri aspetti del commercio librario come addirittura la stesura delle varie descrizioni per i cataloghi.

EDOARDO BARBIERI, Direttore Responsabile

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Casella postale 66, 50123 Firenze • Viuzzo del Pozzetto 8, 50126 Firenze
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