

ARLIS/NA IRC Study Trip - Florence, Italy

October 22 – 28, 2023

Scholarship recipients: Annalise Welte and Jen Thomas

October was the perfect time of year to plan a study trip to Florence — the crowds of tourists, while still present, seemed to be diminishing and we were eager to see the city beyond the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, aka The Duomo. The weather was crisp with a few rain showers that always seemed to happen while we were inside, safely touring library spaces! We were also surrounded by art—medieval to modern—everywhere we went. This study trip offered both Annalise and Jen the opportunity to expand upon prior research developed through visits to libraries and cultural institutions in central and northern Italy in the summer of 2023 and this was Jen's first ever visit to Florence.

The first evening there was an optional reception for those who had already arrived. While some of us were powering through the jet lag it was a great opportunity to start to meet each other. There was a lovely aperitivo with our wonderful hosts, Isotta Poggi and Margherita Naim. Old friends reconnected and new study tour attendees got to know each other over a negroni or a glass of wine at the famous [Caffè Rivoire](#) with its stunning views of the Palazzo Vecchio a few meters away.

Monday, October 23

The following day began bright and early with a twenty-minute walk to the beautiful [Uffizi Art Library](#). Since the library was closed to the public on the day of our visit, we had the whole place to ourselves. We learned about the history of the library space, the collections, and some of the key players in the founding of the library, formerly the Magliabechiana Library, which officially opened to the public in 1747. Though no photos were allowed, we took in expansive frescoes depicting ethics and culture, while Uffizi librarians shared rare books from their collection, several of which showcased gorgeous engravings.

Following lunch on our own time we came back together to make our way to visit the [Casalini Libri](#) Administrative Headquarters, a supplier of southern European publications to libraries and institutions worldwide. We enjoyed a lovely presentation on the history of the company and a behind-the-scenes tour of the offices from Barbara Casalini and Patricia O'Loughlin, Head of Sales and Bibliographic Services. We saw the inner workings of the entire operation, from cataloging to shipping to approval plans. After our extensive tour, we hopped back on the bus and were driven up to the Casalini Libri Historical Headquarters at Villa La Torrossa and treated to a reception sponsored by Casalini Libri. Barbara Casalini even opened the tower rooftop for us to see the spectacular views of Florence below, which included the brightly lit stadium of ACF Fiorentina, Florence's soccer club, before their evening match.

Tuesday, October 24

Tuesday morning we boarded the bus again to visit the incredible [I Tatti Harvard University for Italian Renaissance Studies](#) located just minutes away from the Casalini Libri Historical Headquarters in Fiesole. We were greeted by Michael Rocke, Nicky Mariano Librarian, Director

of the Biblioteca Berenson and had a tour of the stepped gardens and library. Following a quick coffee reception, they organized a selection of photos, documents, and books from their collection for us to view and we learned about I Tatti digitization and archiving projects through presentations from Lukas Klic, Head of Digital Humanities Research and Manager of Information Services & Digital Initiatives, Marta Binazzi, Photograph Archivist, and Ilaria Della Monica, Head Archivist. We refueled with an incredible lunch sponsored by ARLIS/NA at Fattoria di Maiano featuring olive oil and honey made on the property.

We spent the afternoon at the [Historical Archives of the European Union](#) at the European University Institute's Villa Salviati and learned about the holdings from archivists Juan Fernandez and Catherine Previti. They also curated several items for us to view, including posters, architectural drawings, correspondence, and original printing plates. It was truly an incomparable experience to see and handle these materials from both the I Tatti and European Union's Historical Archives.

Wednesday, October 25

On Wednesday morning we all met at the [Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze \(National Central Library\)](#) for a tour of the library, including staff areas. The ground floor also featured a beautiful exhibition of their historic *Pinocchio* book collection on display. Librarians presented their work on cataloging the collection and we noted the differences between their Dewey records and Library of Congress Subject Headings indexing used in our own libraries, as well as the challenges of bridging information without a shared indexing language.

After lunch on our own, we all met at [Polimoda Library](#) to learn more about their collections, collection development focus areas, and the needs of their students. It was fascinating to learn about one of their most utilized resources, the Fashion Magazine Library, which keeps students informed about past and present trends in the fashion industry with over one hundred current subscriptions and a historic archive. They also have a reference library filled with photo books organized by general subject areas for students to page through for design inspiration. It was wonderful to see the library filled with students seeking inspiration from many different resources.

Thursday, Oct. 26

On Thursday morning we were shuttled to the restoration workshops of Opificio delle Pietre Dure for an exclusive tour of their painting, sculpture, book, and paper restoration facilities. We saw the painstaking work required to restore and stabilize historic paintings, including the construction of complex wood supports for each piece. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime learning experience to see a Raphael (among many other famous works) being brought back to life. At the end of our tour, students in the restoration program shared their restoration treatments of materials ranging from negatives to Mucha posters.

We had lunch at Dulcinea, generously sponsored by ARLIS/NA, and split into two groups to tour the [Fondazione Alinari per la Fotografia](#) (Alinari photo archives) stored in a nearby warehouse operated by Art Defender. Once again photos were not allowed due to the heightened security

of the storage facility, but we saw many examples of the Alinari archive, including negatives, photos, albumen prints, tintypes, photo albums, and historic cameras. An Alinari archivist also walked us through her digitization process of a newly acquired collection of photography by the Wulz sisters of Trieste, Italy. We were taken back into the center of Florence for an ARLIS/NA-sponsored reception at Caffè del Verone where we recapped the phenomenal day of tours with our colleagues.

Friday, Oct. 27

On Friday morning we began the day with a short walk to the [Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz](#) (KHI) library, one of the oldest public art history research libraries. Library Head, Jan Simane, gave us an overview of KHI's history, the library collection, and a tour of the stacks. The tour culminated with a small exhibition of Aby Warburg's art historical studies and his influence in not only Florence, but the Western art world.

After the morning tour, we walked to the Palazzo Grifoni Budini Gattai, home of the [Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Photothek and Fotobibliothek](#), which holds over 630,000 photographs that document Italian art. Costanza Caraffa, Head of Phototek, introduced us to the collection and shared many examples from their archives. Margarita Naim concluded our tour with an introduction to the library, an overview of her collection strategies, and their holdings.

We had a quick lunch at Casa Zuccari sponsored by KHI and prepared for the afternoon symposium at Palazzo Grifoni Budini Gattai. The symposium, *Building Bridges: Art Libraries' Synergies and Strategies Between Florence and North America*, was a collaboration between the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut & Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) and organized by Margherita Naim (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz) and Isotta Poggi (Getty Research Institute). In addition to hearing from our colleagues on the tours, the symposium also featured keynote speakers Roberto Ferrari, Director, Galileo Museum, and Josep Torn Poch, Library Director, European University Institute.

It was wonderful to see the range of projects and initiatives being undertaken by our ARLIS/NA colleagues and envision how they can connect to our counterparts in Florence, building bridges between our institutions. We then gathered to celebrate with a reception at Palazzo Grifoni Budini Gattai Loggia (generously sponsored by the Budini Gattai Family, Facsimile Finder, and ARLIS/NA).

On Saturday there was an optional trip to Villa La Petraia with art historian Andrea Ghiottonelli. After a lunch at Piccolo Trianon those who joined ventured on to the Center for Contemporary Art Luigi Pecci, Prato.

A huge thank you to all who participated and generously sponsored activities during our week in Florence. And we extend special thanks to Isotta Poggi and Margherita Naim for the months of time and effort they put into planning and executing such a successful study trip. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to tour these institutions and learn about the incredible work being done by our peers at institutions across Italy and North America.