
The world of Leonardo scholarship rests upon three pillars, all of them libraries. The oldest is the Biblioteca Comunale Leonardiana in the city of Vinci. Officially inaugurated in 1928, the Leonardiana actually boasts a pedigree dating back several decades earlier. Initially intended to house the many publications donated to the city by such remarkable nineteenth century specialists as Gerolamo Calvi, Charles Ravaisson-Mollien, Theodor Sabachnikoff and Gustavo Uzielli, the library quickly became one of the primary centers for the study of Leonardo. The Leonardiana played a key role in the 1952 celebrations of the quincentennial of the artist's birth, and it has hosted the annual Lettura Vinciana — an invited lecture by a distinguished scholar, delivered on Leonardo's birthday, April 15 — since 1960. A comprehensive collection of Vinciana, the Leonardiana has especially extensive holdings in twentieth century materials.

The next oldest library devoted to Leonardo is the Ente Raccolta Vinciana, founded by bequest of Luca Beltrami in 1905. Originally housed along with the
Archivio Storico of Milan in the Castello Sforzesco, during World War II the Raccolta was annexed to the Biblioteca d’Arte within the same complex. With a virtually complete collection of Vinciana for the period prior to 1950, the Raccolta’s holdings effectively complement those of the Leonardiana, the two collections having approximately a 60% overlap in holdings. The Raccolta has also lent its name to the important periodical, Raccolta Vinciana (vol. 1, 1905- vol. 24, 1992); long the only scholarly journal devoted to the artist, the Raccolta has recently been joined by Academia Leonardi Vinci, published annually since 1988.

The latest but not least of the great libraries devoted to Leonardo is the Elmer Belt Library of Vinciana, founded in 1948 and donated in 1961 to the University of California at Los Angeles (see this writer’s ‘The Elmer Belt Library of Vinciana,’ The Book Collector 38 no. 3 Autumn 1989 p.321-342). In addition to a comprehensive collection of monographs on Leonardo, the Belt Library also offers a complete collection of the artist’s manuscripts in facsimile, a collection of rare books of interest to the Leonardo scholar, a large offprint file and a support collection of secondary materials on the Italian Renaissance and its influence.

Leonardo has been fortunate in his libraries. He has been equally fortunate in his bibliographers, not a few of whom have been keepers of these distinguished collections. The greatest among them was unquestionably Ettore Verga (1867-1930). Director of the Milanese archives, Verga also served as the first director of the Raccolta Vinciana and edited its journal through twenty five formative years. If the Raccolta’s bibliographies have always been among its most noteworthy features, that simply reflects Verga’s conception of the journal’s proper contribution to Leonardo studies. Verga himself is best remembered as the author of the posthumously published Bibliografia Vinciana, 1493-1930 (2 vols., Bologna: Santicelli, 1931; reprinted, New York: Burton Franklin, 1970), which the eminent Leonardo scholar, Carlo Pedretti, has recently described as ‘in spite of omissions and inaccuracies . . . still an unsurpassed tool’ (Academia Leonardi Vinci no. 4, 1991 p.214 no. 2). ‘Verga’ – as the work is universally known – remains the standard bibliography of Vinciana.

If Verga was the moving spirit behind the Raccolta Vinciana, the presiding genius of the Elmer Belt Library was the remarkable Kate Traumann Steinitz (1889-1975). Steinitz’s most lasting contribution to Leonardo studies was her still standard bibliography of Leonardo’s Treatise on Painting (Leonardo da Vinci’s Trittatto della Pittura. Treatise on Painting: A Bibliography [Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1958]).

The Biblioteca Leonardiana in Vinci, too, has had its remarkable librarians. For more than forty years it flourished under the direction of Renzo Cianchi (1901-1985), whose specialized contributions to Leonardo scholarship were mostly biographical and documentary. Cianchi also initiated the Lettura Vinciana series.

Cianchi’s immensely productive successor in Vinci is Mauro Guerrini. Guerrini, the author of the volumes under review here, is largely responsible for the current flourishing of the Biblioteca Leonardiana. A professional librarian, unlike the other scholars remembered above, Guerrini has previously edited the proceedings of an Italian conference on ‘the future of bibliographical description’ (Il futuro della descrizione bibliografica, Rome: Associazione italiana biblioteche, 1988) and another devoted to special libraries (Biblioteche speciali, Milan: Editrice Bibliografica, 1986). Following Verga’s example, he has also furnished recent volumes of the Raccolta Vinciana with exhaustive lists of recent publications on Leonardo (Raccolta Vinciana 22, 1987 p.389-573; 23, 1989 p.307-376).

In 1989, Guerrini announced the forthcoming publication of the three volumes under review here (Academia Leonardi Vinci 2, 1989 p.174-175). The title announced at that time was ‘Bibliotheca Leonardiana. Catalogo della Biblioteca Leonardiana di Vinci e della Biblioteca dell’Ente Raccolta Vinciana di Milano’. Guerrini himself rendered this as ‘a general catalogue of the holdings of the Leonardo Library in Vinci and of the library of the Raccolta Vinciana in Milan’. Guerrini further anticipated ‘an even more ambitious’ project: an updated Bibliography of Vinciana to cover a period of half a millennium’ – in short, a new ‘Verga’. Since this preliminary announcement, the title of Guerrini’s impressive catalogue has been altered slightly but significantly, the descriptive subtitle being dropped and the dates ‘1493-1989’ added, rather misleadingly suggesting that these volumes constitute a comprehensive bibli-
ography of Vinciana. In fact, they offer precisely what the abandoned subtitle promised: a union catalogue of the holdings of the remarkable Leonardo collections in Milan and Vinci.

Guerrini's catalogue is monumental in format: three volumes of roughly 700 pages each (2,218 pages, consecutively paginated), 12 in. x 8.5 in., handsomely printed and furnished with generous margins. The first volume is in every sense the main volume. Brief prefaces by the two greatest living Leonardo scholars, Augusto Marinoni and Carlo Pedretti, are followed by a 22-page introduction in which the author explains the rationale and principles of his catalogue. The rest of this 796 page volume is devoted to a chronological catalogue of 6,192 works by and about Leonardo, each of which receives a detailed bibliographical description (based upon AACR2). Guerrini further indicates which library owns each title as well as its shelf mark, and, where appropriate, offers useful provenance notes. Recognizing the canonical nature of Verga's bibliography, Guerrini provides cross-references to the latter, and titles not found in Verga are so labelled ("omit Verga"). As Pietro Marani has remarked in a recent review (Raccolta Vinciana 24, 1992 p.327-331), this chronological catalogue affords, in effect, a systematic bibliographical survey of Leonardo's fortuna critica.

Volume 2 consists of a series of indexes to the first volume. Guerrini provides an author index (p.803-1073), a title index (p.1075-1258), an index to serials and periodicals (p.1259-1402) and, not least, a most helpful index of the places of publication for all titles published prior to 1821 (p.1403-1414). He further provides two tables giving the incidence of publications in twenty-eight languages, from Italian (65.93% of the titles listed) to Afrikaans (0.01%), and listing his own reference numbers for all titles by language of publication (except those in the predominant Italian). Next come inverted concordances between the 6,192 titles listed in volume 1 and those listed in Verga's standard bibliography (p.1427-1447), and a list of 433 titles omitted by Verga (p.1449). Volume 2 concludes with a concordance of the major donations constituting the Raccolta Vinciana and the Leonardiana in Vinci.

These indexes and concordances are most helpful. But the subject indexes Guerrini provides in his third volume are still more welcome. A brief, alphabetically arranged "bibliographical" index is followed by a somewhat longer thematic index (p.1459-1508). The remaining roughly 700 pages of the third volume are devoted to a monumental classified index of subjects, employing a variation upon the Dewey Decimal Classification (the system employed is outlined on p.1511-1533). Students of Leonardo will wish to note that, as Marani observes in the review cited above, these immensely useful subject indexes are based solely upon keywords in titles, rather than upon a subject analysis of the contents of the publications indexed. (Guerrini accordingly does not attempt to annotate his catalogue entries as did Verga, whose bibliography, while less "objective" for that reason, is frequently all the more helpful.)

Bibliotheca Leonardiana goes a long way toward filling our longstanding need for an updated bibliography of Vinciana while also providing, for the first time, an attempt at systematic subject access to the mountain of Vinciana. The author should be encouraged to continue his labors: Nobody is better placed to provide the "new Verga" we need so badly, and which Guerrini himself has forecast.

(Note: At the end of his acknowledgments, the author notes that an electronic version of Bibliotheca Leonardiana is available from Thesis editoria elettronica [Empoli-Firenze]. This reviewer has not had the opportunity of consulting the electronic edition.)

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