

Studies on the History of the University and Higher Education in Italy: between Historiographical Review and New Research Perspectives

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ABSTRACT: This paper intends to retrace the most significant phases of Italian university historiography from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day. In particular, it underlines the relevant role played by a number of national research centres and the initiatives to coordinate the work of Italian scholars dealing with the history of higher education. The contribution also demonstrates how, over time, the lines of research in the field of university history have broadened, even in an interdisciplinary and international perspective. From the early research promoted above all in relation to the medieval and modern period, there is now a preference for studies on the contemporary era, capable of highlighting the role of the various university seats with reference to the local context and the socio-economic, political and cultural development of our country.

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: History of the University; History of Higher Education; Research Perspectives; Italy; XX-XXI Centuries.

1. *Early attempts to organise studies in the field of university historiography*

The first attempts to organise studies in the field of the history of the university and higher education in Italy can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century. In particular, the roots of this historiography can be located in Bologna, precisely in 1907, on the occasion of the celebration of the eighth

centenary of the *Studium*, which had been founded in 1088¹. For this event, a Committee for the History of the University of Bologna had been set up, which was immediately transformed into a Commission and later called the Institute for the History of the University of Bologna. This institution had the task of «recalling the glorious glories of the institute» through the drafting of a systematic publication, which would collect and enhance the sources relating to the *Studium*, prior to the 16th century, and which would describe the course of the discipline through the centuries, tracing the evolution of the academic field and the establishment of the various chairs². A very precise work, therefore, that had to be strongly based on archival and printed sources, different from the ‘sketchy’ reconstructions proposed up to that time.

In addition to the publication, starting in 1909, of the *Chartularium Studii bononiensis*, as can be seen from the very first volume of the document, studies on the history of the University of Bologna also produced another type of publication, of a periodical nature, namely «Studi e Memorie per la storia dell’Università di Bologna» [«Studies and Memoirs for the History of the University of Bologna»], which had already been published since 1907. This

¹ For a quick reference to the history of the University of Bologna, see the links <<https://www.unibo.it/it/ateneo/chi-siamo/la-nostra-storia/nove-secoli-di-storia-1/nove-secoli-di-storia>> and <<https://archivistorico.unibo.it/it>> (last access: 3.09.2024) and the much more significant works by: G. Zaccagnini, *Storia dello studio di Bologna durante il rinascimento*, Florence, Leo S. Olschki, 1930; A. Sorbelli, L. Simeoni (edd.), *Storia della Università di Bologna*, 2 vols., Bologna, Nicola Zanichelli editore, 1944-1947; C. Calcaterra, *Alma Mater Studiorum. L’Università di Bologna nella storia della cultura e della civiltà*, Bologna, N. Zanichelli, 1948; G. Zanella, *Bibliografia per la storia dell’Università di Bologna dalle origini al 1945, aggiornata al 1983*, Bologna, Istituto per la storia dell’Università di Bologna, 1985; A. D’Amato, *La Chiesa e l’Università di Bologna*, Bologna, L. Parma, 1988; M. Barbagli, A. Colombo, R. Orsi, *Gli studenti e la città. Primo rapporto sugli studenti dell’Università di Bologna*, preface by P.U. Calzolari, Bologna, Bononia University press, 2009; S. Salustri, *Un ateneo in camicia nera. L’Università di Bologna negli anni del fascismo*, Rome, Carocci, 2010; N. Sarti, *L’ateneo e la città. Accademia e istituzioni a Bologna tra Otto e Novecento*, «Annali di Storia delle Università italiane», vol. 2, 2015, pp. 89-98; V. Casini, *Il IX centenario dell’Università di Bologna e il processo di internazionalizzazione dell’accademia italiana. Evoluzione nazionale e contesto europeo*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2017; M. Cavina, E. Desiderio, L. Sagripanti, *Bologna: University City*, Washington, National Geographic, 2021; A. Giorgi, L. Mineo, *Archivi per la storia dell’Alma Mater Studiorum: un centro memoriale per l’Università di Bologna*, «Annali di Storia delle Università italiane», n. 1, 2021, pp. 155-161; S.A. Sroka, G.P. Brizzi, *La deriva corporativa dei Collegi dottorali e la crisi dello Studio bolognese*, «Annali di Storia delle Università italiane», n. 2, 2023, pp. 119-146.

² Cf. Commission for the History of the University of Bologna, *Chartularium Studii bononiensis*, Imola, Cooperativa Tipografica-Editrice Paolo Galeati, 1909, Vol. I, pp. VII-VIII. This first volume is freely available at the link: <<https://archive.org/details/chartulariumstud01bolo/page/n5/mode/2up>> (last access: 3.09.2024). On the history of the Institute for the History of the University of Bologna, see above all: A. Sorbelli, *L’opera dell’Istituto per la storia dell’Università di Bologna*, «Studi e memorie per la storia dell’Università di Bologna», vol. 15, 1942, pp. 177-204 and G. Tabarroni, *Origini e attività dell’ISTUB, Istituto per la storia dell’Università di Bologna*, «Strenna storica bolognese», vol. 37, 1987, pp. 383-406.

publication had the task of «promoting and collecting monographic writings freely made by individual researchers and scholars, according to their different preparations and dispositions, on any element of the life of the University», in the course of its centuries-long history³.

These two types of publications were later joined by a third, intended to accommodate works on organic documentary series, such as those on faculty statutes or *acta graduum*.

In this sense, the Bologna Institute thus proposed itself as the first nucleus of connection between scholars dealing with the history of the university and initiated the creation of similar initiatives in the rest of the country.

It is no coincidence, for example, that the premises for the birth of the Institute for the History of the University of Padua were created thanks to the studies of Antonio Favaro – a mathematician ‘converted’ to history, whose research methodologies were positivist –, who was already a member of the very Commission for the History of the University of Bologna.

In rather limited terms, already in the 1910s, precisely between 1911 and 1912, Antonio Favaro and Biagio Brugi had begun publishing documentary sources useful for compiling the history of the university, namely the *Atti della nazione Germanica artista nello Studio di Padova (1553-1615)* [*Acts of the Germanic nation artists in the Study of Padua (1553-1615)*] and the *Atti della nazione Germanica dei legisti nello Studio di Padova (1545-1609)* [*Acts of the Germanic nation of legists in the Study of Padua (1545-1609)*].

It was only in 1921, however, that Favaro wrote to the then Rector Lucatello to propose the foundation of a permanent institute for the history of the University of Padua, along the lines of what had already been done by the Bolognese university, and to proceed with the production of a series of publications centred on the history of the university. The General Committee proceeded with the approval of the proposal and the Academic Council officially decided to open the institute on 30 January 1922.

The celebration of the seventh centenary of the establishment of the University of Padua was therefore, once again, the right occasion to set up such an institution. According to the indications of Favaro, who was its first president, the work coordinated by the Institute was to *focus* first and foremost on primary sources, therefore, to be based on the archival excavation of statutes, documents, illustrations, monographs, but it was also to proceed to the analysis of biographies and bibliographies relating to professors, students, the creation of chairs and the work of the faculties⁴.

³ *Ibid.*, p. VIII. See also the section drafted by the Commission for the History of the University of Bologna in «Studi e Memorie per la storia dell'Università di Bologna», Vol. I, part I, Bologna, Cooperativa Tipografica Azzoguidi, 1907, pp. V-IX, included in «Biblioteca de 'L'Archiginnasio'», series I, Vol. 1.

⁴ Favaro himself explains the Institute's main objectives in A. Favaro, *Per il settimo cente-*

In terms of publishing, the Institute was to manage an initial publication of the «Memorie e documenti per la storia dell'Università di Padova» [«Memoirs and Documents for the History of the University of Padua»], edited by Favaro himself, and then proceed with the publication of the first two volumes of the University's bibliography, namely the *Acta Graduum Academicorum Gymnasii Patavini*⁵.

Unfortunately, the sudden death of Antonio Favaro in September 1922 caused quite a few consequences for the activities of the 'fledgling' Institute, which only became particularly active and lively again later, around the 1960s.

In 1928 a permanent Committee for the History of the University of Modena was also established in Modena⁶, during its decade of administrative autonomy (1924-1934), during which other initiatives for the enhancement of the tradition of the University of Modena were also developed. For example, in 1926 the degree diploma had been renewed, in 1927 the use of a new seal had been granted, inspired by the *Sigillum magnum* of the Modenese community, and in 1928 the emblem of the Faculty of Law, the academic insignia and the university chapel had been restored. During that period, the main atrium of the University was also rearranged, with the addition of new commemorative plaques (e.g. to Giambattista Venturi, Antonio Scarpa, Lazzaro Spallanzani, Francesco Torti, Giuseppe Triani, Paolo Ferrari, Francesco Anselmi and Bartolomeo Valdrighi)⁷.

Between the 1920s and 1930s, in fact, the Bologna Institute was the only one to be more active and 'concrete' in the field of studies on the history of universities, while the other initiatives that had sprung up in the country remained largely circumscribed.

nario della Università di Padova, «Nuovo Archivio Veneto», vol. 34, 1917, pp. 165-166. Useful information on Antonio Favaro's initiative can also be found at <<https://mostre.cab.unipd.it/settecentenario/it/32/l-eredita-l-istituto-per-la-storia-dell-universita-di-padova>> (last access: 10.09.2024).

⁵ The first volume in three tomes, with the time span 1406-1450, was edited by Gaspare Zonta and Giovanni Brotto. Later on, several volumes were published, including those edited by Michele Pietro Ghezzi (1451-1460), Giovanni Pengo (1461-1470) and Elda Martellozzo Forin (1471-1500, 1501-1525, 1526-1537, 1538-1555). The complete list is available here: <<https://centroistoria.unipd.it/pubblicazioni-fonti>> <<https://centroistoria.unipd.it/pubblicazioni-fonti>> (last access: 10.09.2024).

⁶ Regia Università degli Studi di Modena, *Della istituzione di un Comitato permanente per la storia della Università di Modena*, Modena, Società tipografica modenese, 1928.

⁷ Cf. <<https://of.unimore.it/retemusei/www.retemuseiuniversitari.unimore.it/site/home/storie/articolo160025312.html>> (last access: 10.09.2024). On the history of the University of Modena see: Comitato permanente per la storia della Università di Modena, *Rassegna per la storia della Università di Modena e della cultura superiore modenese*, 7 vols., Modena, Università degli Studi, 1929-1977; C.G. Mor, *Storia della Università di Modena*, Modena, Società tipografica modenese, 1952; P. Di Pietro, *Lo Studio pubblico di S. Carlo in Modena, 1682-1772. Novant'anni di storia della Università di Modena*, Modena, STEM-Mucchi, 1970; G. Montecchi, *Le antiche sedi universitarie*, in G. Arnaldi, *Le sedi della cultura in Emilia Romagna: l'età comunale*, Milan, Silvana Editoriale, 1984, pp. 117-129.

2. *The role of universities as centres for the dissemination of culture: Minister Bottai's monographs project and its impact after World War II*

In order to observe a new collegial and well-articulated initiative on a national level, we had to wait until 1939. In January, the then Minister of National Education, Giuseppe Bottai, decided to send all the rectors of Italian universities a letter, inviting them to start a collection of monographs on universities throughout Italy⁸.

To use the words of Albano Sorbelli – secretary at the time of the Institute for the History of the University of Bologna and director of the municipal library of the Archiginnasio of Bologna –, Minister Bottai had noted how «the universities in the new luxuriance of Fascist life» had finally identified ways to participate in an increasingly efficient and decisive manner in national life. It was for this reason that he deemed it appropriate to promote awareness, both within Italy and internationally, of the country's longstanding cultural and academic heritage, as well as its status as a pioneer in the establishment of the university institution⁹.

Far from the rhetoric of the past, each university was therefore to draft its own 'autobiography', creating a correct, informative and exhaustive work, intended to make the national universities fully known and to arouse a deep interest in Italian higher education, not only in the limited circle of scholars and intellectuals. Minister Bottai had also attached to his circular letter a series of precise indications concerning the historiographic genre to which the editors of the works were to adhere.

As Gian Paolo Brizzi well explains, the project was much more demanding than the one already promoted in 1908 by Minister Rava, in which, in addition to a quick historical overview of each university, the focus was mainly on the internal regulations, the articulation of the faculties and the historical-artistic heritage¹⁰. Bottai, in fact, was thinking of a more articulated work,

⁸ Ministry of National Education, Directorate-General for Higher Education, Circular No. 233 of 26 January 1939, subject: *Collezione di monografie sulle Università d'Italia* [Collection of Monographs on the Universities of Italy], annex: *Norme per la esecuzione della Collezione di monografie sulle Università d'Italia* [Rules for the execution of the Collection of Monographs on the Universities of Italy], document published in the «Bollettino Ufficiale del Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale», vol. 66, n. 6, 7 February 1939, pp. 295-301.

⁹ Cf. A. Sorbelli, *Il primo Convegno Nazionale per la Storia delle Università italiane, Bologna, 5-7 aprile 1940 – XVIII*, «L'Archiginnasio. Bollettino della Biblioteca comunale di Bologna», vol. 35, n. 1, 1940, pp. 73-86.

¹⁰ Cf. G.P. Brizzi, *La storia delle università in Italia: l'organizzazione della ricerca nel XX secolo*, in L. Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca. Atti del convegno. Padova, 27-29 ottobre 1994*, Trieste, Edizioni Lint, 1996, pp. 273-292, in partic. p. 277. The project proposed by Minister Rava then flowed into the publication of: Ministry of Education, *Monografie delle università e degli istituti superiori, I-II*, Rome, Tipografia Operaia Romana Cooperativa, 1911-1913.

in which he would highlight the origins of each university, without however precluding recent history, using a rigorous methodology and also analysing the more complex aspects of the relationship between the university and its historical, social, cultural and political context¹¹. In particular, it would also have been important to reconstruct the history of the individual disciplines and the effects caused by the presence of great professors and important 'schools of thought' in some seats, which could ensure Italy of the Fascist regime a certain cultural prestige at international level.

In order to proceed with the production of these monographs, each university was to set up a committee of scholars, whose task was to collect and organise the existing literature and all evidence deemed useful for the compilation of the history of their university. The members of this committee were to be appointed by the rectors and, in contrast to the past, were not to be chosen solely from among the professors of History of Law or Medieval and Modern History. It was important that the committees consisted of representatives from all faculties, without neglecting the scientific faculties. The final text was to be the result of interdisciplinary work, even if physically drafted by only one scholar per university, in order to avoid excessive stylistic fragmentation¹².

The project proposed by Minister Bottai also intended to follow up on what had already been started by the Institute for the History of the University of Bologna, which he considered to be a true model: starting with the publishing initiative of monographs, in fact, all universities were called upon to create a permanent institute in order to collect studies on the history of individual academic seats and, more broadly, on national higher education¹³.

Picking up on the category proposed by Hobsbawm and Renger of the «invention of tradition»¹⁴, although at times resorting to particular 'manipulations', through the enhancement of national academic culture and tradition, Bottai basically intended to give universities a central role in the country's process of renewal and political affirmation. Fascism had made itself the interpreter of the need for change expressed at the end of the First World War and, having overcome liberalism, had decided to 'invest' in the education and indoctrination of the new generations, considered capable of 'relaunching' the new Italian culture and expressing the potential of the fascist regime¹⁵.

¹¹ Cf. L. Pomante, *Giuseppe Bottai e il rinnovamento fascista dell'Università italiana (1936-1942)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2018, p. 24.

¹² On the roles of the committee members, see: «Bollettino Ufficiale del Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale», vol. 66, n. 6, 7 February 1939, p. 300.

¹³ Cf. Pomante, *Giuseppe Bottai e il rinnovamento fascista dell'Università italiana (1936-1942)*, cit., p. 26.

¹⁴ E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1992.

¹⁵ In this sense it seems useful to refer to the contribution of G.P. Callegari, *Cariche ai giovani ovvero giovani alla carica*, «Critica fascista», vol. 8, n. 19, 1st October 1930, pp. 85-87, but also to: G. Ricuperati, *Per una storia dell'università italiana da Gentile a Bottai: appunti*

The project promoted by Bottai demanded a rather quick turnaround time, because by the end of 1939 all the texts of the monographs had to be submitted to the Ministry, which would then print them during 1940. This urgency was due to the scheduling of another very important event, which constitutes a significant junction for studies on the history of the Italian university. The National Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, in agreement with the Ministry of National Education had, in fact, planned for 1942 to organise the first International Congress on the History of Universities, which was to be held in Rome on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition. The planning of this event, moreover, was to be preceded in 1940 by the organisation of the first National Conference on the History of Italian Universities¹⁶. The conference was to be useful in coordinating the work of the various committees that had sprung up as a result of the monographs initiative, to give a strong impetus to the project, which was being delayed, and to prepare for the subsequent conference in 1942, which however due to the war did not take place.

On the other hand, the first national conference took place, it was organised in Bologna from 5 to 7 April 1940 and was personally attended by Minister Bottai, as well as numerous other scholars, including those in charge of editing monographs. This conference was in concrete terms the first real opportunity to bring together scholars who were concerned with university historiography in the various Italian academic institutions.

In addition, at the proposal of Carlo Guido Mor, professor of Law at the Royal University of Modena, the possibility of establishing a National Centre for the History of Schools in Italy was also suggested¹⁷ and the realisation of a second national conference on the history of the university, to be hosted in Padua in 1941, was envisaged. These initiatives, again due to the wartime emergency, did not come to fruition¹⁸.

As a matter of fact, Minister Giuseppe Bottai's project did not succeed in

e discussioni, in I. Porciani (ed.), *L'Università tra Otto e Novecento: i modelli europei e il caso italiano*, Naples, Jovine Editore, 1994, pp. 311-377; L. Pazzaglia, *La formazione dell'Uomo nuovo nella strategia pedagogica del fascismo*, in Id. (ed.), *Chiesa, cultura e educazione in Italia tra le due guerre*, Brescia, La Scuola, 2003, pp. 105-146.

¹⁶ See *Primo Convegno nazionale per la storia delle università italiane, promosso dall'Istituto per la storia dell'Università di Bologna (Bologna, 5-7 aprile 1940). Ordine dei lavori*, Bologna, Azzoguidi, 1940 and *Atti del Convegno per la storia delle Università italiane tenutosi in Bologna il 5-7 aprile 1940 e memorie in esso presentate. Vol. I*, with a presentation of P.S. Leicht, Bologna, Istituto per la storia dell'Università-Tip. Mareggiani, 1943.

¹⁷ See C.G. Mor, *Per un Centro Nazionale sulla storia della Scuola in Italia*, «Gli Annali della Università d'Italia», vol. 3, n. 6, 1942, pp. 457-461, and now L. Pomante, *Rinnovamento storiografico e passione civile nella proposta di Carlo Guido Mor di istituire un «Centro Nazionale sulla storia della scuola in Italia» (1940-1942)*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XIII, n. 2, 2018, pp. 379-391.

¹⁸ Brizzi, *La storia delle università in Italia: l'organizzazione della ricerca nel XX secolo*, cit., p. 279.

achieving all of its initially stated objectives, but it certainly had the merit of having given a strong impetus to studies on the history of the university and national higher education and to the creation of several local centres for university history, interpreted as institutionalised structures aimed at coordinating research in this field.

In the wartime and post-war period, the collegial organisation of studies on the history of the university slowed down considerably. Nevertheless, following the Fascist minister's proposal, wide-ranging works were published in this period, which still appear very useful today for reconstructing the history of individual universities. Reference is made, for example, to the works of Sorbelli and Simeoni on the University of Bologna, those of Visconti for the University of Ferrara, to Ermini's studies on the University of Perugia, those of Vaccari on the University of Pavia and the already mentioned Mor for the University of Modena¹⁹.

After a period of discontinuity, the tensions and contradictions caused by the youth protests of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the advent of the 'mass university', succeeded in inaugurating a new phase in university historiography. Some didactic initiatives date back to this particular historical moment, such as the introduction of monographic courses on university history topics or the creation of specific chairs, or the creation of publishing series, such as «Athenaeum» promoted by the publisher Forni in 1969, and «Storia delle Università italiane» [«History of Italian Universities»] published since 1971 by the publisher Olschki.

In the 1970s and 1980s, what particularly characterised the Italian situation, however, was the establishment of numerous study and research centres on the history of the university, set up on the model of those in Bologna and Padua. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the Centre for the History of the University of Pavia, established in 1979, the Committee for the History of the University of Rome, created in 1980, the Study Centre for the History of the University of Turin, created in 1986, the Documentation Centre for the History of the University of Messina, established in 1988, and similar structures created in Sassari, Ferrara, Pisa and, in more recent time, Macerata. All of these institutions aimed to promote research in the field of higher education and created various publishing series, which aimed to collect and disseminate the results of studies²⁰.

¹⁹ A. Sorbelli, *Storia dell'Università di Bologna. Il Medioevo sec. XI-XV*, Bologna, Istituto per la storia dell'Università, 1940; L. Simeoni, *Storia dell'Università di Bologna. L'età moderna 1500-1888*, Bologna, Istituto per la storia dell'Università, 1940; Sorbelli, Simeoni (edd.), *Storia della Università di Bologna*, cit.; P. Vaccari, *Storia dell'Università di Pavia*, Pavia, Il Portale, 1948; A. Visconti, *La storia dell'Università di Ferrara 1391-1950*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1950; Mor, *Storia dell'Università di Modena*, cit.; G. Ermini, *Storia dell'Università di Perugia*, Firenze, L.S. Olschki, 1970.

²⁰ See Brizzi, *La storia delle università in Italia: l'organizzazione della ricerca nel XX se-*

3. *The 1990s turn: a new historiographical approach*

Thanks to the assumptions made in the course of the 20th century, Italian university historiography experienced a real turning point from the 1990s onwards. A new season of studies was inaugurated thanks above all to greater methodological rigour and the broadening of research topics. In particular, in contrast to the previous studies that had privileged the medieval and modern periods, scholars' attention began to shift as a matter of priority towards university policies and regulations between the 19th and 20th centuries and towards historical reconstructions relating to individual universities in the contemporary age²¹.

One of the first evidence of this renewal was the publication of the first *Repertorio nazionale degli storici dell'Università* [*National Directory of University Historians*], edited in 1994 by the Interdisciplinary Centre for the History of the University of Sassari. This was the first real census of Italian scholars engaged in the field of university historiography and the first complete reference collection of studies produced and *in progress* in the field. The work had the merit of highlighting above all how the profile of scholars had decidedly changed with respect to the past: no longer only 'pure' historians, but also historians coming from 'science', no longer therefore exclusively scholars from the humanities but also from the sciences²².

A strong impetus for the inauguration of this new season of studies was then given by the creation and contribution of specific research centres and groups, established with the aim of bringing together and coordinating scholars in the history of universities and higher education systems from different university locations.

In this sense, one of the earliest examples is the Inter-University Study Centre for the History of Universities *Unistoria*, promoted by the University of Naples "Federico II", the University of Siena and the Italo-Germanic Histori-

colo, cit., pp. 286-287; L. Pomante, *Las investigaciones sobre la historia de las universidades en Italia. Un balance historiográfico del siglo pasado*, «CIAN-Revista de Historia de las Universidades», vol. 20, n. 1, 2017, pp. 163-192, in partic. p. 169; and check the links: <<https://centrostoria.unipd.it/storia>>; <<http://cesup.unipv.it/>>; <<https://www.cssut.unito.it/it/cssut/cenni-storici>>; <<https://archivio.unime.it/it/dipartimenti/scipog/centro-di-documentazione-la-storia-delluniversit%C3%A0-di-messina>> (last access: 10.09.2024).

²¹ See G. Fois, *La ricerca storica sull'Università italiana in età contemporanea. Rassegna degli studi*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», n. 3, 1999, pp. 241-257; G.P. Brizzi, *L'Università e la storiografia. Organizzazione e indirizzi di ricerca*, in A. Massafra (ed.), *Per la storia dell'Università di Bari. Studi e ricerche*, Bari, Edizioni Giuseppe Laterza, 2020, pp. 19-40.

²² Centro interdisciplinare per la storia dell'Università di Sassari, *Repertorio nazionale degli storici dell'Università*, Sassari, Chiarella, 1994; the work was later resumed and expanded in: Centro interuniversitario per la storia delle università italiane, *Repertorio nazionale degli storici dell'università, 1993-1997*, ed. by D. Negrini, Bologna, Clueb, 1998. To these texts may also be added Centro interuniversitario per la storia delle università italiane, *Le pubblicazioni e le attività 1997-2014*, ed. by I. Maggiulli, Bologna, Clueb, 2015.

cal Institute in Trento. Initially directed by Professor Aldo Mazzacane, a historian of Medieval and Modern Law²³, the Centre set up an initial research programme on the history of universities, which was later to lead to a series of scientific publications, the creation of a series of studies and research papers edited by the publisher Jovene of Naples, and the organisation of various conferences and study seminars.

The *acme* of this important phase of revitalisation and reorganisation of studies on the history of universities and higher education was recorded in 1996 with the establishment of the CISUI-Inter-University Centre for the History of Italian Universities. The Centre was set up on the initiative of a group of scholars from the universities of Bologna, Padua, Messina, Sassari and Turin, with the aim of going beyond the celebratory intentions of previous studies and to promote research into the history of universities, considered as institutional history and of individual locations, as cultural and intellectual history, as the history of the relationship between the university and the social, political and economic context, as the history of student life and of lecturers, also analysing the relationship between Italian, European and international universities. Since its foundation, CISUI has proposed itself as a coordinating structure between the various research institutes operating in the field of university historiography throughout the country, and in just a few years it has managed to become a reference structure for research in the sector both in Italy and in Europe. Today, the Centre brings together scholars and researchers from 27 Italian universities, is based at the University of Bologna, and proposes various ‘experiments’ not only on a scientific level but also on an educational level²⁴. CISUI also promotes the publication of two series of studies «Studi e ricerche sull’università» [«Studies and research about University»] published by il Mulino, and «Studi» [«Studies»] published, on the other hand, by Clueb, as well as the prestigious international journal «Annali di Storia delle Università italiane» [«Annals of the History of Italian Universities»], created in 1997, first published by Clueb and now by il Mulino²⁵. Alongside these editorial experiences, the Centre is involved in the organisation of a now considerable series of seminars and study conferences dedicated precisely to the theme of the contemporary university and designed to shed light on heuristic and methodological issues, contextualising them in the international panorama, and

²³ On Mazzacane see his recollection in: C. Vano (ed.), *Bibliografia degli scritti di Aldo Mazzacane*, «Le Carte e la Storia. Rivista di storia delle istituzioni», vol. 2, 2016, pp. 163-174; P. Schiera, *Per Aldo Mazzacane*, «Scienza & Politica: per una Storia delle Dottrine», vol. 28, n. 54, pp. 165-169 and the contributions presented on the occasion of the Seminar *Storie del diritto e altri racconti di Aldo Mazzacane* (Naples, 25 May 2016), organised by the Società Italiana di Storia del diritto and the University of Naples “Federico II”.

²⁴ <<https://centri.unibo.it/cisui/it/centro>> (last access: 10.09.2024).

²⁵ <<https://centri.unibo.it/cisui/it/pubblicazioni/annali-di-storia-delle-universita-italiane>> (last access: 13.09.2024).

to promote a relevant work of ‘care’ and protection of the Italian university heritage.

Over the past few years, CISUI has thus had the merit of creating an effective network of links between individual scholars, research centres, societies and scientific journals in which different methodologies and thematic *focuses* coexist, but which univocally aim to return an authentic analysis of the higher education system, assumes as an active and essential part of the reference context²⁶.

During the last decade of the 20th century, this ‘liveliness’ of research in the field was also manifested through the organisation of a series of important study conferences, which defined the relaunch of university history and inaugurated new avenues of investigation. Among the most significant, it is worth mentioning the conference held at the University of Siena on 30 November and 1 December 1989, *Università ieri e oggi. Offerta formativa e domanda sociale* [*Universities Yesterday and Today. Educational Offer and Social Demand*]; the one in Certosa di Pontignano (Siena) in April 1991, *Università e scienza nazionale tra Otto e Novecento* [*University and National Science between the 19th and 20th centuries*]; the one in Sassari in 1992, *Le università minori in Italia nel XIX secolo* [*The minor universities in Italy in the 19th century*]. In the same year the one in Naples entitled *Università e professioni giuridiche in Europa nell’età liberale* [*Universities and legal professions in Europe in the liberal age*], in 1993 the one in Milazzo on *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medioevo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento* [*Universities in Europe. University institutions from the Middle Ages to the present day: structure, organization, operation*] or the seminars organised by the Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento on *Università e scienza nel sistema politico dell’Italia unita: modelli teorici e assetti istituzionali* [*University and science in the political system of united Italy: theoretical models and institutional arrangements*], or the significant conference of October 1994 in Padua on *La storia delle Università italiane. Archivi, fondi, indirizzi di ricerca* [*The History of Italian Universities. Archives, fonds, research addresses*], or the 1996 conference held in Alghero, entitled *Le Università minori in Europa (secoli XV-XIX)* [*Minor Universities in Europe (15th-19th centuries)*]. The high-profile scientific committees of these initiatives are also worth mentioning, which saw the participation of important scholars including, to name but a few, Luigi Berlinguer, Aldo Mazzacane, Paolo Prodi, Franco Della Peruta, Giuseppe Talamo, Ilaria Porciani, Mauro Moretti, Jacques Verger and Gian Paolo Brizzi.

Thanks in part to the reflections promoted within the framework of the

²⁶ On CISUI’s recent activities, see: Centro interuniversitario per la storia delle università italiane, *Le pubblicazioni e le attività: aggiornamento 2015-2018*, ed. by I. Maggiulli, Bologna, Tip. Eurografica, 2018 and <<https://centri.unibo.it/cisui/it/attivita>> (last access: 13.09.2024).

conferences mentioned here, during the 1990s particular emphasis was placed on the role played by higher education systems in nation-building processes. This interpretative category turned out to be fundamental, because it made it possible to definitively move away from the logic of the histories of individual universities to open up the strand of analysis of the *university model* and its political-institutional and socio-economic function in the processes of nation building and affirmation. In fact, between the 19th and 20th centuries, the university represented the place where the new ruling classes were formed, the guarantor of the value of the qualifications necessary for the free professions and the place where national science was founded²⁷.

Simonetta Polenghi's important work, *La politica universitaria italiana nell'età della Destra storica 1848-1876* (Brescia, La Scuola, 1993), fits into this itinerary. The text stands out for its original methodological approach and the great wealth of archival and printed sources used. The volume still represents one of the most organic and in-depth contributions dedicated to the history of higher education and Italian universities in the liberal period. Among the most important themes highlighted by this research work are certainly the analysis of the politics of the Destra Storica, the role played by intellectuals between the need to adhere to the system and the need for innovation, university autonomy and freedom of teaching, the conception of the university as a scientific institution or as a school of higher education, the situation of the various universities and the gender issue²⁸.

On the subject of the reorganisation of higher education and university autonomy in the period of liberal Italy, we should also point out the significant publication by Floriana Colao, *La libertà d'insegnamento e l'autonomia nell'università liberale. Norme e progetti per l'istruzione superiore in Italia*. This work, published in 1995, is also based on a wealth of archival and printed documentation and is characterised by an essentially historical-legal approach. The publication, which refers to the period between the organisation of higher education in Piedmont in the mid-19th century up to the Gentile reform, has the merit above all of highlighting the tension created between the instances of state centralisation and the growing claims to autonomy of the individual establishments and local administrative realities²⁹.

The methodological and thematic renewal that took place in the field of university historiography during the 1990s is also represented by other rel-

²⁷ On this subject see above all: S. Soldani, G. Turi (edd.), *Fare gli italiani. Scuola e cultura nell'Italia contemporanea*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1993; Porciani (ed.), *L'Università tra Otto e Novecento: i modelli europei e il caso italiano*, cit.; A. Ferraresi, E. Signori (edd.), *Le università e l'Unità d'Italia (1848-1870)*, Bologna, Clueb, 2012.

²⁸ S. Polenghi, *La politica universitaria italiana nell'età della Destra storica 1848-1876*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1993.

²⁹ F. Colao, *La libertà d'insegnamento e l'autonomia nell'università liberale. Norme e progetti per l'istruzione superiore in Italia*, Milan, Giuffrè, 1995.

evant publications. These include the volume edited by Gian Paolo Brizzi and Angelo Varni in 1991, *L'Università in Italia fra età moderna e contemporanea. Aspetti e momenti*. The text is partitioned into two thematic sections: the first is devoted to the role of the University between autonomy and political power, the second to the evolution of academic life and the profile of teachers and students. Beginning with the events of the 15th century and continuing up to contemporary times, the work explains the relationship between the university and the state apparatus and the characteristics of the models of knowledge defined by the national academic context, with which different generations of students and lecturers had to deal³⁰.

Among the essays published in this volume, it is worth highlighting that of Andrea Pizzitola, *Gli studenti della nuova Italia*³¹. This contribution is considered an indispensable starting point for the development of studies dedicated to the university student world. Taking the context of united Italy as a point of reference, the author focused his attention on multiple aspects: from the number of students enrolled to their social condition, from their geographical origin to their ability to create associations, from the professional outlets defined by the doctoral course to the analysis of the first forms of protest³².

Three important study conferences were also convened at the end of the 1990s on the theme of university students and, in general, on the student reality between the modern and contemporary ages. The reference is to the conference in Milan (October 1997), *Università e studenti nel XIX secolo [University and students in the 19th century]*, based above all on the student protests in the course of the 19th century; the conference in Padua (February 1998) on the theme *Studenti, Università, città nella storia padovana [Students, university, city in the history of Padua]*; and finally, the conference in Bologna (November 1999), *Studenti e dottori nelle università italiane (origini-XX secolo) [Students and doctors in Italian universities (origins-20th century)]*, on topics

³⁰ G.P. Brizzi, A. Varni (edd.), *L'Università in Italia fra età moderna e contemporanea. Aspetti e momenti*, Bologna, Clueb, 1991.

³¹ A. Pizzitola, *Gli studenti della nuova Italia*, in *ibid.*, pp. 135-163.

³² Other works on the student reality include, for example: S. Lanaro, *Alle origini del movimento studentesco italiano*, «Ideologie», vol. 7, n. 1, 1969, pp. 61-78; A. Pizzitola, *Studenti e università. Per una storia*, Florence, Centro Duplicazione Offset, 1992; A. Cammeli, A. Di Francia, *Studenti, Università, professioni: 1861-1993*, in M. Malatesta, *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, 10. *I professionisti*, Turin, Einaudi, 1996, pp. 7-77; G.P. Brizzi, A. Romano (edd.), *Studenti e dottori nelle università italiane (origini-XX secolo). Atti del Convegno di studi, Bologna 25-27 novembre 1999*, Bologna, Clueb, 2000; F. Busetto, *Studenti universitari negli anni del duce: il consenso, le contraddizioni, la rottura*, presentation by M. Isnenghi, Padova, Il poligrafo, 2002; L. Pepe (ed.), *Universitari italiani nel Risorgimento*, presentation by F. Roversi Monaco, Bologna, Clueb, 2002; P. Del Negro (ed.), *I collegi per studenti dell'università di Padova: una storia plurisecolare*, Padova, Signum, 2003; S. Salustri, *La nuova guardia: gli universitari bolognesi tra le due guerre, 1919-1943*, preface by E. Signori, Bologna, Clueb, 2009.

related to academic life, problems connected to the formation of the ruling classes and the professional outlets of recent graduates.

In the same period, a new strand of research in the field of university historiography was identified in the protection of the cultural heritage of universities and the methods of preserving historical archives. Certainly also thanks to the reflections brought out by the 1994 conference in Padua, *La storia delle Università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca* [History of Italian Universities. Archives, sources, research directions], scholars' interest in the enhancement of academic cultural heritage had particularly grown³³. It was realised, in fact, that the protection of historical archives and academic memory could constitute an added value not only to historiographical analyses, but also to the future declinations of the academic world.

As a matter of fact, starting from the conference in Padua, especially thanks to the joint work of various institutions and scholars, research, cataloguing and analysis initiatives of the archival situation in Italian universities began to be developed. This line of research is still followed today, within which significant works have been published, for example by Luigiaurelio Pomante, Simona Negruzzo, Mirella D'Ascenzo, as well as those coordinated by the SIPSE-Italian Society for the Study of the Historical-Educational Heritage³⁴.

Also during the 1990s, one of the most original and stimulating research topics that characterised the history of the university was that of the so-called *smaller universities*. In fact, up until that time, historiography in this field had given priority to the 'largest' universities, to the detriment of a specific analysis of the characteristics and role played by the smaller seats. Thanks to a more careful reading of national political and cultural events, however, the important role that 'small' universities played in the promotion of higher education and in the cultural, social and economic growth of the contexts in which they

³³ Sitran Rea (ed.), *La storia delle università italiane. Archivi, fonti, indirizzi di ricerca. Atti del convegno. Padova, 27-29 ottobre 1994*, cit.

³⁴ On this subject, see for example: S. Negruzzo, F. Zucca (edd.), *Gli archivi storici delle Università italiane e il caso pavese. Atti del convegno nazionale (Pavia, 28-29 novembre 2000)*, «Annali di storia pavese», n. 29, 2001; Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali, *1° Rapporto sugli archivi delle università italiane*, ed. by the Group for the Coordination of the National project *Studium 2000*, Padua, Cleup, 2002; F. Danniau, R. Mantels, C. Verbruggen, *Towards a Renewed University History: UGentMemorie and the Merits of Public History, Academic Heritage and Digital History in Commemorating the University*, «Studium», vol. 5, n. 3, 2012; pp. 179-192; L. Pomante, *Between Memory and Research. The Italian University Archives in Some Recent Publications*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. IX, n. 1, 2014, pp. 785-800; M. D'Ascenzo, *Fonti per la storia della professione docente nell'Università di Bologna. Il patrimonio storico-educativo del Fondo Alberto Calderara*, «Annali di Storia delle Università italiane», n. 1, jan.-jun. 2020, pp. 201-210; G. Tomasella, *Ottocento anni di futuro. Sistema museale e patrimonio diffuso dell'Università di Padova*, in G.P. Brizzi, M. Donattini (edd.), *Conoscere il passato per progettare il futuro. Studi per l'ottavo centenario dell'Università di Padova*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2022; pp. 149-171; and check the link <<http://www.sipse.eu/>> (last access: 10.09.2024).

were embedded has been recognised, in connection with the aforementioned nation-building process.

Once again, two study seminars, namely the one held in Sassari in 1992, *Le Università minori in Italia nel XIX secolo* [*Minor Universities in Italy in the 19th century*], and the one held in Alghero in 1996, on *Le Università minori in Europa (secoli XV-XIX)* [*Minor Universities in Europe (15th-19th centuries)*], were the main instruments with which the first wide-ranging research on the subject was stimulated, which produced a series of important publications, including those by Porciani, Brizzi and Verger³⁵. These events, moreover, contributed to overcoming the «small university-small city» binomial, supporting a more comprehensive definition of the role of these institutions, deeply rooted at the territorial level. Universities that are in some way ‘contradictory’, which, despite their structural deficiencies, have been able to contribute profoundly to the dissemination and circulation of knowledge.

4. *The advent of the 21st century and the most up-to-date research perspectives*

Thanks to the vitality and solidity of the research carried out at the end of the 20th century, Italian university historiography has entered a new phase of development at the beginning of the 21st century. The new season was characterised by a transformation of the methodological and interpretative approach, now updated in multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and above all international terms.

Among the scholars who stood out most for their work in this period, we cannot fail to mention Mauro Moretti, Ilaria Porciani and Gigliola Fioravanti. To them we owe the development of a series of investigative ‘tools’, such as bibliographies and repertories, as well as the valorisation of a series of unpublished sources, which still today constitute indispensable objects for research in this sector. In particular, reference is made to the publication, between 2000 and 2002, of the documentary anthology *L’istruzione universitaria*

³⁵ I. Porciani, *Un ateneo minacciato. L’Università di Siena dalla Restaurazione alla Prima guerra mondiale*, «Annali delle Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell’Università di Siena», vol. 12, 1991, pp. 97-129; G.P. Brizzi, *Le università minori in Italia in età moderna*, in A. Romano (ed.), *Università in Europa. Le istituzioni universitarie dal Medio Evo ai nostri giorni: struttura, organizzazione, funzionamento. Atti del Convegno internazionale di Milazzo (28 settembre-2 ottobre 1993)*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubettino, 1995, pp. 287-296; G.P. Brizzi, J. Verger (edd.), *Le Università minori in Europa (secoli XV-XIX). Convegno internazionale di studi (Alghero, 30 ottobre-2 novembre 1996)*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubettino, 1998; in more recent times, see especially: L. Pomante, *Per una storia delle università minori nell’Italia contemporanea. Il caso dello Studium Generale Maceratense tra Otto e Novecento*, Macerata, eum, 2013.

(1859-1915) [*University education (1859-1915)*], as well as to the collections *L'università italiana. Repertorio di atti e provvedimenti ufficiali 1859-1914* [*The Italian university. Directory of official acts and measures 1859-1914*], and to *L'università italiana. Bibliografia 1848-1914* [*The Italian university. Bibliography 1848-1914*], i.e. a collection of normative acts, legislative measures, as well as very useful selections of documentary sources relating to the Italian university situation preserved at the Central State Archives³⁶.

In the same period, increasing attention was paid to the process of fascisation of Italian universities. In this case, the research already started at the end of the previous century by Giuseppe Ricuperati, Maria Cristina Giuntella, Michel Ostenc and Jurgen Charnitzky had anticipated the *focus* on this theme³⁷, declined through the analysis of university regulations – usually starting with the Gentile reform –, of the ideological control exercised over the academic body, as well as on the role of youth associations during the twenty-year fascist period. The research conducted, in particular, on the role of Catholic associationism, or rather on the FUCI-Italian Catholic University Federation, and the recent analyses conducted also on its female component³⁸ are worth recalling in this sense.

³⁶ G. Fioravanti, M. Moretti, I. Porciani (edd.), *L'istruzione universitaria (1859-1915)*, Rome, Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali – Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, 2000; I. Porciani (ed.), *L'università italiana. Repertorio di atti e provvedimenti ufficiali 1859-1914*, Florence, Olschki, 2001; I. Porciani, M. Moretti (edd.), *L'università italiana. Bibliografia 1848-1914*, Florence, Olschki, 2002. On the importance of these publications, see also: Pomante, *Las investigaciones sobre la historia de las universidades en Italia*, cit., p. 179.

³⁷ M. Ostenc, *La jeunesse italienne et le fascisme à la veille de la seconde guerre mondiale*, «Revue d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale», vol. 24, n. 94, 1974, pp. 48-64; Id., *La scuola italiana durante il fascismo*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1981; G. Ricuperati, *La scuola italiana e il fascismo*, Bologna, Consorzio provinciale pubblica lettura, 1977; Id., *Per una storia dell'università italiana da Gentile a Bottai: appunti e discussioni*, cit.; M.C. Giuntella, *Autonomia e nazionalizzazione dell'Università. Il fascismo e l'inquadramento degli Atenei*, Rome, Studium, 1992; J. Charnitzky, *Fascismo e scuola. La politica scolastica del regime 1922-1943*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1996.

³⁸ To trace the history of the FUCI see: T. Buongiorno Veroni, F. Mastropaolo, *La Federazione universitaria cattolica*, «Il Veltro», vol. 8, n. 1-2, 1964, pp. 181-220; G. Marcucci Fanello, *Storia della Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana*, Rome, Studium, 1971; C. Ballerio, *La Federazione universitaria cattolica italiana (1925-1939)*, «Italia contemporanea», vol. 27, n. 118, 1975, pp. 38-69; M.C. Giuntella, *I fatti del 1931 e la formazione della «seconda generazione»*, in P. Scoppola, F. Traniello (edd.), *I cattolici tra fascismo e democrazia*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1975, pp. 183-233; P. Pecorari (ed.), *Chiesa, Azione cattolica e fascismo nell'Italia settentrionale durante il pontificato di Pio XI (1922-1939). Atti del quinto Convegno di Storia della Chiesa (Torreglia, 25-27 marzo 1977)*, Milan, Vita e Pensiero, 1979; R. Moro, *La formazione della classe dirigente cattolica (1929-1937)*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1979; Id., *I movimenti intellettuali cattolici*, in R. Ruffilli (ed.), *Cultura politica e partiti nell'età della Costituente. Vol. 1, L'area liberal-democratica. Il mondo cattolico e la Democrazia cristiana*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1979, pp. 159-261; M.C. Giuntella, *Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana (FUCI) e Laureati Cattolici*, in F. Traniello, G. Campanini (dir.), *Dizionario storico del movimento cattolico in Italia, 1860-1980. Vol. I/2, I fatti e le idee*, Casale Monferrato, Marietti, 1981, pp. 295-301;

Alongside these lines of research, forms of resistance to the regime and the effects produced by the racial laws in the academic sphere have also been appropriately analysed in recent years. In this regard, I am thinking first of all of Simona Salustri's works and the conference organised in Turin in May 2021 on the theme *Regime e dissenso, 1931. I professori che rifiutarono il giuramento fascista* [*Regime and dissent, 1931. The professors who refused the fascist oath*]³⁹.

Among the various topics recently explored by scholars, there is also the revival of the analysis of the relationship between universities and city institutions and the reflection on the evolution of the principle of university autonomy in the course of history.

Moreover, worthy of consideration is the research conducted on a topic that has long been the *focus* of attention of historians of education, but which has only recently attracted the interest of historians of universities and higher education in the narrower sense. I refer to women's higher education and, more generally, to the slow and laborious process of integrating women into the university and professional world of united Italy. Over the last twenty years,

M.C. Giuntella, R. Moro, *Dalla Fuci degli anni '30 verso la nuova democrazia*, Rome, AVE, 1991; F. Malgeri *et alii* (edd.), *FUCI coscienza universitaria, fatica del pensare, intelligenza della fede. Una ricerca lunga 100 anni*, Cinisello Balsamo, Edizioni San Paolo, 1996; M.C. Giuntella, *La FUCI tra modernismo, partito popolare e fascismo*, Rome, Studium, 2000; T. Torresi, *L'altra giovinezza. Gli universitari cattolici dal 1935 al 1940*, Assisi, Cittadella editrice, 2010; L. Pomante, «Fiducia nell'uomo e nell'intelligenza umana». *La Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana (FUCI) dalle origini al '68*, Macerata, eum, 2015; and now on the female component of FUCI see especially: L. Pomante, S. Montecchiani, *L'associazionismo femminile cattolico: il contributo delle giovani universitarie della Federazione universitaria cattolica italiana (Fuci) nella prima metà del Novecento*, «Annali di Storia delle università italiane», n. 1, jan.-jun. 2022, pp. 7-24; S. Montecchiani, *The Role of Female University Students of the FUCI within the Italian Universities during Fascism and Post-War Reconstruction*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XVII, n. 1, 2022, pp. 259-277.

³⁹ On this subject, see: N. Bobbio, *Concetto Marchesi e la Resistenza all'università di Padova*, in *Trent'anni di storia italiana, 1915-1945. Dall'antifascismo alla Resistenza*, Turin, Einaudi, 1961, pp. 311-313; H. Goetz, *Il giuramento rifiutato. I docenti universitari e il regime fascista*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 2000; G. Boatti, *Preferirei di no. Le storie dei dodici professori che si opposero a Mussolini*, Turin, Einaudi, 2001; G.P. Brizzi (ed.), *Studenti per la democrazia, La rivolta dei giovani contro il nazifascismo*, Bologna, Clueb, 2005; S. Salustri, *Un ateneo in camicia nera. L'Università di Bologna negli anni del fascismo*, Rome, Carocci, 2010; N. Sarti, *L'ateneo e la città. Accademia e istituzioni a Bologna tra Otto e Novecento*, cit.; Ead., *La violenza studentesca nell'affermazione dei regimi totalitari. Universitari italiani e tedeschi a confronto*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», vol. 20, n. 1, 2016, pp. 65-89; T. Colacicco, S. Salustri (edd.), *La difficile transizione. L'università italiana tra fascismo e Repubblica*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2022; S. Salustri, *Perugia e la sua Università di fronte alle persecuzioni razziali del 1938*, in T. Dell'Era, D. Meghnagi (edd.), *Perché di razza ebraica. Il 1938 e l'università italiana*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2023, Vol. I, pp. 395-416; M. Flamigni, *Il governo Militare Alleato in Italia. Le attività della Education Subcommittee e l'epurazione delle università 1943-1945*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», vol. 20, n. 2, 2016, pp. 183-217; contributions from the 2021 Turin conference were published in: «Rivista di Storia dell'Università di Torino», vol. 10, n. 2, 2021.

in fact, valuable works have been produced on this front as well. It would suffice here to mention the works of Bresso and Govoni and other scholars on the «other half» of the university student world; those of Sbanò, Tacchi and Vicarelli on female graduates in Law and Medicine and the difficulties they encountered in entering the respective professional realities. Mention could be made of the works by Babini and Simili on the presence of women in scientific faculties, and those by Giorgi, Melis and Varni on the professional insertion of female graduates in public administration. It is also worth mentioning the recent publications edited by Albanese, Tagliabue, Naldini and Poggio⁴⁰ and, again in this direction, the organisation of the Workshop *Protagonism, activism and women's networks in universities in the contemporary age* (25 October 2021), on the initiative of CISUI and Antonella Cagnolati and Simona Salustri⁴¹.

Among the scientific events organised during the 2000s, two other international conferences should also be mentioned. The one in Bologna in October 2008, on the topic of university texts or, more precisely, on the function of the 'book' in the transmission of academic knowledge and in university teaching/learning processes, as well as on the evolution of this instrument from the birth of printing to the innovations of the technological era. The seminar, *Dalla pecia all'e-book. Libri per l'Università: stampa, editoria, circolazione e lettura* [*From pecia to the e-book. Books for the University: Printing, Publishing, Circulation and Reading*], examined the close link between the 'book' and the University, from the late Middle Ages to the present day. The emergence of the Internet has certainly generated new challenges: from the extraordinary pos-

⁴⁰ P. Bresso, *Le donne nell'Università di Torino. Studentesse, docenti, personale tecnico amministrativo (1876-1940)*, «Quaderni di storia dell'Università di Torino», vol. 8, n. 1, 2006, pp. 27-80; P. Govoni, *Donne e scienza nelle università italiane, 1877-2005*, in Ead. (ed.), *Storia, scienza e società. Ricerche sulla scienza in Italia nell'età moderna e contemporanea*, Bologna, CIS, 2006, pp. 239-288; S. Serangeli, L. Pomante, *L'inatteso dono di un abbandonato album fotografico: Iriade Tartarini e i suoi compagni d'Università del 1897*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», n. 13, 2009, pp. 175-185; N. Sbanò (ed.), *Donne e diritti. Dalla sentenza Mortara del 1906 alla prima avvocata italiana*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2004; F. Tacchi, *Dall'esclusione all'inclusione. Il lungo cammino delle laureate in Giurisprudenza*, «Società e storia», vol. 103, n. 1, 2004, pp. 97-125; G. Vicarelli, *Le donne possono essere medichesse? Eccezionalità e simbolo delle laureate in medicina tra Otto e Novecento*, «Medicina e storia», vol. 8, n. 1, 2004, pp. 57-76; V. Babini, R. Simili (edd.), *More than Pupils. Italian Women in Science at the Turn of the 20th Century*, Florence, Olschki, 2007; C. Giorgi, G. Melis, A. Varni (edd.), *L'altra metà dell'impiego. La storia delle donne nell'amministrazione*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2005; G. Albanese et alii (edd.), *L'università delle donne: accademiche e studentesse dal Seicento a oggi*, Padua, Padua University Press; Rome, Donzelli Editore, 2021; F. Tagliabue (ed.), *Le prime donne laureate a Firenze*, Firenze, Firenze University Press, 2022; F. Furlan, *Cercando Olga. Sui passi di Olga Manente, prima studente nera all'università Ca' Foscari di Venezia*, Portogruaro, Nuovadimensione, 2022; M. Naldini, B. Poggio (edd.), *Genere e accademia. Carriere, culture e politiche*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2023.

⁴¹ <<https://disci.unibo.it/en/news/protagonism-activism-and-women-s-networks-in-universities-in-the-contemporary-age>> (last access: 12.09.2024).

sibilities of low-cost reproduction of printed texts to the actual process of ‘dematerialisation’ of traditional bibliographic tools through the use of *e-books* or open access products⁴².

Along the same lines, another conference, organised in Messina in September 2013, entitled *Dalla lectura all’e-learning [From lectura to e-learning]*, turned its attention to the languages, methods and tools of university teaching in Europe, assessed from a transversal and comparative perspective among the various European realities. University teaching has now evolved from the original forms of *glossae* and *lectura*, as teaching and learning tools, to the contemporary use of e-learning and the related development of telematic universities⁴³.

It is precisely to this new typology of universities, which in recent years have recorded a decisive increase in enrolments and activities, that it is worth recalling two important contributions published in 2015 by Pomante, in which he tried to explain the complex set of events that have characterised the introduction of e-learning and distance learning in the Italian university system. A process that, in Italy, has taken on absolutely peculiar forms and implications compared to the rest of Europe, to the point of also being, in some ways, difficult to understand by scholars from other countries⁴⁴.

Also of great international significance is another scientific initiative, launched in early 2012, namely the project *Héloïse – European Workshop on historical academic databases*, which currently involves around 60 academic sites throughout Europe and over 120 Italian and foreign researchers linked by the common goal of creating a European network of databases on the history of universities from their origins to the present day⁴⁵. It is precisely in the context of *Héloïse* that some absolutely innovative research has found a place, such as that on university obituaries, as a source for studying the history of the university⁴⁶, and that on public memory, which have also found their way into the results of the recent Prin project, *School Memories between Social*

⁴² See G.P. Brizzi, M.G. Tavoni (edd.), *Dalla pecia all’e-book. Libri per l’Università: stampa, editoria, circolazione e lettura. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi. Bologna, 21-25 ottobre 2008*, Bologna, Clueb, 2009.

⁴³ See A. Romano, *Dalla lectura all’e-learning*, Bologna, Clueb, 2015.

⁴⁴ The works are: L. Pomante, *The Rise of E-Learning in the Italian University System between the Creation of On-Line Universities and the Innovation of the Educational Processes in Traditional Universities (2003-2013)*, in Id., *Between History and Historiography Research on Contemporary Italian University*, Macerata, eum, 2015, and Id., *In presenza e a distanza. Il ruolo dell’insegnamento a distanza nel sistema universitario italiano nell’ultimo ventennio*, in Romano (ed.), *Dalla lectura all’e-learning*, cit., pp. 407-423.

⁴⁵ <<https://heloise.hypotheses.org/>> (last access: 10.09.2024).

⁴⁶ For example, see L. Pomante, *I necrologi dei professori universitari. Una fonte preziosa per lo studio della storia dell’università e dell’istruzione superiore*, in G.P. Brizzi, C. Frova, F. Treggiari (edd.), *Fonti per la storia delle popolazioni accademiche in Europa. Atelier Héloïse*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2022. This line of research on obituaries is taken up, in particular, by the work previously proposed by R. Sani and A. Ascenzi on the teacher context.

Perception and Collective Representation (Italy, 1861-2001) and into the recent line of history of education research on the public history of education⁴⁷.

At the end of this long historiographical balance sheet, recent research on museums for university history – including specifically the MEUS in Bologna and the Museum for the History of the University of Padua – and the emergence of a new interdisciplinary perspective of investigation into the role of the Higher Council for Public Education cannot be forgotten⁴⁸.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning the fundamental publication promoted by CISUI *Storia delle Università in Italia [History of Italian universities]*, edited by Gian Paolo Brizzi, Piero Del Negro and Andrea Romano⁴⁹. It is a work that proposes an organic history of Italian universities, a work of synthesis capable of reconstructing in its entirety the history of the Italian university system and reflecting the enormous importance that universities have had in the history of our Peninsula. The work, consisting of three volumes, was inspired by similar initiatives previously conducted in other European countries⁵⁰, and for its compilation involved the involvement of over a hundred specialists. Even today, almost twenty years after its publication, it still represents, in the Italian cultural and scientific panorama, an undisputed point of reference for those who approach the history of the Italian universities and higher education, a field of research that, as we have seen, is constantly being updated and that today is more animated than in the past.

⁴⁷ About this PRIN project see <<https://www.memoriascolastica.it/>> (last access: 14.09.2024), J. Meda, R. Sani, «*School Memories between Social Perception and Collective Representation*». *Un Progetto di ricerca innovativo e a marcata vocazione internazionale*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XVII, n. 1, 2022, pp. 9-26, and the publication of the official proceedings of the closing international conference of the project, edited by J. Meda, L. Paciaroni and R. Sani, available here <<https://eum.unimc.it/it/catalogo/857-the-school-and-its-many-pasts>> (last access: 18.09.2024). On the theme of the public history of education, on the other hand, see especially: G. Bandini, *Public History of Education. A Brief Introduction*, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2023.

⁴⁸ In this regard, we refer especially to L. Pomante, *La storia dell'università italiana attraverso le raccolte museali*, in Id., *L'Università italiana nel Novecento. Nuovi itinerari storiografici e inediti percorsi di ricerca*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2020, pp. 181-196 and contributions presented at the recent conference promoted by CISUI and Centro di documentazione e ricerca per la storia del libro scolastico e della letteratura per l'infanzia dell'Università di Macerata, *Il Consiglio Superiore della Pubblica Istruzione e il governo del sistema universitario in età repubblicana* (Macerata, 30-31 May 2024).

⁴⁹ G.P. Brizzi, P. Del Negro, A. Romano (edd.), *Storia delle Università in Italia*, 3 vols., Messina, Sicania, 2007.

⁵⁰ The reference is to: J. Verger (dir.), *Histoire des universités en France*, Toulouse, Privat, 1986; W. Rüegg (ed.), *A History of the University in Europe*, 4 vols., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003-2011.