Italian studies

Collecting policy

User profile

This collection statement covers provision for Italian studies which, along with European studies, French studies and German studies, forms the Department of Modern Languages and European Studies. Joint courses are run with a number of other departments.

The collections primarily serve all staff and students within the Department of Modern Languages and European Studies, but may also be of interest to other interdisciplinary areas such as history, politics and current affairs, art, film and theatre and applied linguistics.

Research interests of academic staff include:

- Dante studies
- Medieval literature and culture
- Medieval intellectual history
- Medieval ecclesiology
- History of the universities in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance
- History of the Church (1600-)
- Renaissance literary culture and performing arts
- Cultural institutions of the Renaissance (especially learned academies)
- History of Italian language
- Italian socio-linguistics and dialectology
- Italian history
- Women's history and women's studies
- Italian cinema and history of the Italian cinema industry
- Modern Italian literature and culture
- Migration and minority studies
- Translation and trans-cultural studies
- History of the Italian publishing industry (1800-)

At present, Reading is one of the largest hubs of postgraduate researchers in the UK working on modern Italian history.

Staff in Italian studies contribute to the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences research themes: Language, Text and Power and Minorities. In addition, certain staff are members of the Early Modern Research Centre and the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies.
Information about the degree programmes offered in the department is available at:
www.reading.ac.uk/modern-languages-and-european-studies/Aboutus/mles-about-italianstudies.aspx

Visiting researchers and students make use of the extensive collections.

Current holdings

Italian studies cover a wide range of topics, including literature, language, language teaching materials, art, cinema, media, history and politics, and the Library collections are therefore scattered. The literature books are classified in the 850 section of the classification, history mainly at 945, and language and linguistics at 450. Relevant material can also be found at 940 (European history), the 300s (political science, economics, women’s studies); 400 (applied linguistics); and in the 700s (art and performing arts).

For more detail see the Italian studies Finding your way guide.

Books and multimedia

The University Library holds a nationally important collection of material on modern Italian history and an extensive collection of Italian literature, including texts and secondary literature. The section on Italian language and linguistics is comprehensive.

There are also substantial collections of books on European history, Italian and European politics, Italian art, Italian performing arts and translations of Italian (and other European) literature

The Library has access to several packages providing e-books, such as ACLS Humanities e-books, Cambridge Companions and others which contain titles relevant to Italian studies. Individual titles are also acquired via aggregators such as MyiLibrary.

There are a number of DVDs of Italian films as well as some multimedia language learning materials.

Periodicals

More than 70 current periodical subscriptions are paid for wholly or partly from Library funds allocated to Italian studies. The subscription costs of most of these are shared with Library funds from other Departments/units, mainly History, English Literature, French studies and German studies.

A number of e-journals useful for Italian studies are available via full-text databases such as JSTOR, Project Muse Humanities Collection and Business Source Complete.

Reference/bibliographic

There are a number of reference titles specific to Italian studies, especially for literature studies. Many useful reference resources are accessible online via Credo Reference, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Oxford Reference Online and Oxford Art Online.

There is also a good collection of Italian language dictionaries, including translating, defining and dialect dictionaries. There is online access to the Oxford-Paravia Italian dictionary via Oxford Language Dictionaries Online.

The online MLA (Modern Language Association of America) International Bibliography is used to identify literature and language related references. The Arts & Humanities Citation
Index, Social Sciences Citation Index and JSTOR can be used to locate references to literature in history, politics and other areas of Italian studies.

Other useful indexes are:

- BHA (Bibliography of the History of Art)
- Film Indexes Online (which includes FIAF, the International Film Archive, and Film Index International)
- IBSS (International Bibliography of the Social Sciences)
- LLBA (Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts)
- Project Muse Humanities Collection

**Related special collections**

The University Museums and Special Collections Service (UMASCS) holds a number of collections of interest to Italian studies, including the papers of the Italian Refugees Relief Committee and the Marion Rawson collection of papers relating to the fascist period.

The Rubeo and Sprigge collections (both largely un-catalogued) of materials, some of them very rare, relate to Italian history and culture of the fascist era and the Salo Republic.

Other special collections such as the Overstone Library contain some Italian travel writing and other items.

Over the years, the Library has accepted several substantial donations of books mainly in areas of Italian history. These, as well as some of the special collections material mentioned above, still remain un-catalogued. UMASCS and the Library will continue to seek funding and volunteer opportunities to catalogue these donations in line with teaching and research priorities.

**Strengths and exclusions**

The Italian studies collection is regarded as being one of the strongest in the United Kingdom. Particular strengths of the collections include: Modern Italian history in the 19th and 20th centuries (which forms a nationally important collection); Dante and early Italian literature; 20th century literature; history of the Italian language. The collection on Italian language is comprehensive; and the collection on Italian literature extensive.

Since 2009, the Library has acquired a number of Italian films and several core texts in Italian film, which have significantly strengthened its holdings in film studies.

Language learning resources are not generally selected by the Department of Modern Languages as Italian studies students are expected to purchase their own copies of the textbooks used. However, strategic purchases of language textbooks and second-language acquisition texts with a focus on Italian have been made since 2009, for language teachers’ professional development and to build a student-facing core collection of textbooks. The Library stocks a loanable collection of textbooks, grammars, self-study multimedia and easy readers.
Collecting level

Research is supported in areas of strength, for example the very strong collection of materials on modern Italian history (especially the fascist era).

There is good provision at undergraduate and postgraduate study level; and a good and maintained collection of basic reference material and dictionaries.

Inter-library loans

Researchers (staff and postgraduate students) make relatively modest use of the inter-library loans service, while undergraduates and taught postgraduates should be able to find almost everything they need in the Library.

Other information resources in the University

The Department of Modern Languages and European Studies Resource Room has a small collection of Italian classic works, monographs, reference works and some periodicals. It mainly serves the Department’s undergraduates.

Language learning materials, mainly available for reference only, are held in the International Study and Language Centre’s (ISLC) Self-Access Centre for Language Learning (SACLL).

Use of other libraries

Other specialist libraries used include the British Library (and its Newspaper collections); the Bodleian Library, Oxford; and various libraries and institutions in Italy.

Selection, acquisition and stock editing

Development of the collection is largely determined by purchase requests made by academic members of staff, either for teaching (through reading lists) or research, or both.

The majority of material purchased is in Italian, although there has recently been a shift towards acquiring some material in English, particularly for students of the BA in European Literature and Culture, which has no foreign language requirement.

Italian studies staff are cautious regarding the purchase of e-books, preferring printed copies, certainly for longer texts. The purchase of an e-book is only usually considered for reference works, such as encyclopaedias and dictionaries or perhaps shorter edited works in high demand.

There is scope to further develop the collection of Italian films available for loan and to review materials acquired for the work of academic staff who are no longer at the University.

The Library is a member of the Italian Studies Library Group whose membership includes the UK’s major academic and research libraries holding significant Italian collections and whose interests include co-operative collection management. Through co-operative initiatives of the Italian Studies Library Group, other research libraries may be consulted over potential items to be withdrawn from stock.

Policy written by Charlie Carpenter, Italian Studies Liaison Librarian, March 2012