AHRC award for 'Italian Academies' project: 23/6/2010

A research group led by Professor Jane Everson (Royal Holloway, University of London) with co-investigators Dr Lisa Sampson (Italian Studies, University of Reading) and Denis Reidy (British Library) has recently been awarded £780,690 by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for a four-year continuation of the major research project ‘The Italian Academies 1525-1700: the first intellectual networks of early modern Europe’.

The project team includes, besides the Principal and the two Co-Investigators, two post-doctoral Research Assistants at Royal Holloway, Dr Simone Testa and Dr Lorenza Gianfrancesco, and a doctoral student working under the supervision of Dr Sampson at the University of Reading.

The AHRC project undertakes a multidisciplinary study of the Italian Academies, which represent a vital and characteristic dimension of early modern culture. Between the early 16th century and the end of the 17th century, there were over 500 Academies operating in Italy alone. These institutions brought together scholars and experts in all branches of the arts and sciences and were places of cultural discussion, inspiring the founding of major institutions across Europe such as The Royal Society and the Académie Française. The Academies also had a more playful aspect, devising amusing names which were often represented visually in punning illustrations and devices.

The research builds upon and significantly enhances the existing AHRC-funded Themed collection database at the British Library “The Italian Academies 1530-1650: a themed collection database” (http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/ItalianAcademies/), devised by Professor Everson to create a directory of information on the Italian Academies. Research on the Academies had previously focused on the best known ones, or on their individual members, but this online and integrated catalogue has made it easier for researchers to access information about the lesser known academies; opening up the British Library’s extensive holdings to new research and providing the necessary details for establishing a direct link between a book and an Academy. In this new phase of the project, information and publications for Academies in Rome, Venice, Verona, Mantua, Ferrara, and Sicily will be added to that already compiled for Padua, Bologna, Siena and Naples. The intellectual activities, membership and socio-political status of these Academies will form the subject of the associated research publications. An international conference and two workshops are also planned, together with impact events.
Commenting on the award, Professor Everson said: “We are delighted that the AHRC has confirmed its support for this important collaborative project, which will enable us significantly to extend the benefits of our research to scholars in a very broad range of disciplines. The extension of the Italian Academies project has been widely welcomed internationally by researchers. It is an outstanding achievement for our discipline. The project will further enhance the long-standing collaboration of [Royal Holloway, University London] with the British Library, and that of colleagues in Italian with the University of Reading.”

For more information about the project, click on the following link: [http://www.rhul.ac.uk/Modern-Languages/research/italian-academies/index.html](http://www.rhul.ac.uk/Modern-Languages/research/italian-academies/index.html)