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Research Proposal:

**Renaissance Historiography of Milan at the Rare Book & Manuscript Library at UIUC:
the Texts, their Materiality, the Networks of their Owners**

1. Background. The Rare Book & Manuscript Library at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign possesses one of the richest American collections of incunabula and rare books that were printed in, and/or regard, Renaissance Milan. The library holds around 40 incunabula dating from 1472 to 1499, around 150 rare books dating from 1500 to 1599, and around 160 rare books dating from 1600 to 1630. Being a London-based specialist of Renaissance Milan with a seven-year experience of research in Milanese libraries and archives (see CV), I would be delighted to have the chance to spend one month at UIUC to explore such outstanding heritage.

I have individuated one main research drive that I would prioritize during my visit (see sections 2 and 3); in addition, as I shall explain in the fourth section of the proposal, there are other groups of interesting materials I could focus on should time allow it.

2. Main research drive: Renaissance historiography of Milan. The library holds a rich corpus of Renaissance works – 12 titles in total, printed between 1486 and 1628 – dealing with the history of Milan from its mythical origins to the age of the Visconti and the Sforza (the two dynasties that ruled the city and its duchy between 1277 and 1535). The corpus can be divided in three groups.

- The first group includes five of the most important classics of Sforza historiography;¹
- the second group includes six less politically charged, more retrospective histories and chronicles written after the end of the Sforza age, between 1549 and 1609;²
- the third group in fact corresponds to one single work, Robert Gomersall's *The Tragedie of Ludouick Sforza* (1628 – Online Resource). Despite not being a canonical history book, this last item stands out because it is the first English-language book on the Sforza, written in the form of a theater play. Comparing fiction and facts, and trying to figure out where Gomersall got his facts from would certainly be an exciting task – and something Sforza scholars have not done yet.

3. Focus: the material analysis of texts. However, besides their contents, what interests me most about these books is their materiality – that is, the historical evidence they carry with their *unique* physical features. In this perspective, it is not only the number of titles that matters, but also the number of single items – 20 in total (see notes 1 and 2). On one side, I wish to understand who owned the items and how they ended up at UIUC's Rare Book & Manuscript Library. On the other side, I wish to study how past readers approached these history books. This is possible through the analysis of material aspects such as book-bindings, marginalia and annotations, which all signal how texts were valued, interpreted and socialized in the past. What was regarded as important or problematic in the history of Milan? What kind of annotations were made on books? Were the books owned by one person only, or did they circulate creating networks of readership? What were these networks like? To sum up, the history encapsulated in the lives and afterlives of these specific items can be as important and revealing as the histories they tell in their strict texts. Books-as-objects can offer evidence that even the most renowned archival series cannot boast.

I would connect the results of my work at UIUC with those of parallel inquiries I am conducting in Milan

1 Giovanni Simonetta's *Rerum gestarum Francisci Sphortiae* [two copies: a second edition (1486 – call number Incunabula Q. B.F8152s1486) and a late Italian edition (1554 – IUA11480)]; Donato Bossi's *Chronica* [single edition (1492 – Incunabula Q. 909 B655c)], Bernardino Corio's *Patria historia* [three copies: one first Latin edition (1503 – Q. 945.21 C813h) and two Italian editions (1520? – Q. 945.21 C813h1520, and 1554 – 945.21 C813h1554)]; Tristano Calco's *Mediolanensis historiae patriae* [two copies, both first printed edition (1627 – 945.21 C126habr and Q. 945.21 C126h)]; and Galeazzo Capra's *Commentari* [two copies: one second Latin edition (1533 – 945.06 C17d1533) and one first Italian edition (1539 – 945.06 C17dIf)].

2 Paolo Giovio's *Vitae duodecim Vicecomitum Mediolani principum* [two copies: one first Latin edition (1549 – 929.2 V822g1549) and an Italian edition (1558 – 929.2 V822g1558)]; Gasparo Bugati's *Historia universale* [two copies: one first edition (1570 – X 909 B864H) and a compendium (1587 – X 909 B864HSUP)]; Tolosano's *Compendio delle croniche della gran cita di Milano* [fourth edition (1578 – 945.21 T586c)]; three works by historian Paolo Morigi: *Historia dell'antichità di Milano* [second edition (1592 – 945.21 M825h)], *La nobiltà di Milano* [two copies: one first edition (1595 – 920.045 M82n) and one second edition (1619 – 920.045 M82n1619)], and *Sommario delle cose notabili della città di Milano* [single edition (1609 – 945.21 M825s)].

(at the *Biblioteca Ambrosiana* and *Biblioteca Trivulziana*) and London (British Library). I have also applied with a similar project for a short-term award offered by the Huntington Library, where the same (or analogous) Renaissance books on the history of Milan are available (the response to my application is still pending). My method of analysis has already given encouraging results. Just to make one example, thanks to a series of marginalia on a book dealing with the history Milan's most ancient monuments (Francesco Ciceri's *De antiquorum monumentorum Mediolani*), I was able to discover that the book's author had worked in partnership with a secretary-humanist I have recently published an essay on, Ludovico Annibale Della Croce (see CV). Furthermore, Della Croce was only one member of a network that included other learned people working in Milan's chanceries, which is helping me delineate a whole unstudied civic cadre of sixteenth-century Milanese intellectuals.

More in general, both my current and perspective research focus on the materiality of texts as a means to unveil hidden aspects of cultural and social history. Firstly, with my PhD thesis,³ I am taking the chancery and the official documents of the last duke of Milan, Francesco II (1522–1535) as a case study to demonstrate that Renaissance chanceries were not just instruments of a well-delineated 'authority,' but also remarkably participatory socio-cultural hubs. And secondly, with my post-doctoral project, I will set myself the goal of writing a cultural history of Milan between the Renaissance and Counter-Reformation (ca.1450–ca.1630, hence my timespan of interest for this research proposal) from the under-investigated perspective of the making, publication, circulation, and preservation of political-administrative documents. Therefore, the work I want to carry out at UIUC perfectly matches the kind of expertise I have been developing on manuscript documents during the last years, and it will also allow me to enrich my knowledge on Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Milan.

4. Other interesting materials. This is all the more true since UIUC's library holds at least other two groups of rare books that are of great interest to me. One is a very complete corpus of texts – 5 in total – dealing with Milan's plague crisis of 1576–1577.⁴ Since a 'side project' of mine is writing a small article on the market of publications (poems, prayers, accounts, and celebrations once the plague had ended) that blossomed during traumatic events like epidemics, the library's collection could work as a convenient starting point. The other group is a fantastic series of 15 statutes/regulations of various Milanese institutions (above all guilds), printed between 1573 and 1623.⁵ Reading these texts would improve my knowledge of the Milanese institutional landscape in general; more specifically, I am also confident that many rules would reveal how each institution produced, published and preserved its records – something invaluable important with respect to my post-doctoral project.

5. Research timetable. Depending on the month I will choose for my visit – probably August or September 2016 – I will have from twenty-one to twenty-three workdays in total at my disposal. As pointed out above, my priority will be the material analysis of incunabula/rare books dealing with the history of Milan. I expect to spend from half to a full workday on each item: since the items are 20 in total, I realistically expect to spend thirteen–fifteen workdays on these materials. I will use the remaining workdays to survey the rest of the rare books, probably starting from those dealing with the 1576–1577 plague (which, as I said, could be fundamental to draft an article), and then moving on to the series of regulations of Milanese institutions.

Furthermore, I am keen to engage with other history- and Renaissance scholars at work at the University of Illinois. I consider networking as an integral part of visiting programs, and I would be more than happy to prepare a presentation about my current and perspective research before coming to Urbana, and to offer it on site.

³ Submission: April 2016; viva: June 2016.

⁴ Giuliano Gosellini, *Componimenti cristiani in materia di peste* (1577 – Cavagna 00784); Olivero Sacco Panizone, *Pianto della città di Milano* (1577 – 945.21 P194g); Id., *Giubilo della città di Milano* (1578 – 945.21 P194g); Gasparo Bugati, *I fatti di Milano al contrasto de la peste* (1578 – 616.923 B864f), Giacomo Filippo Besta, *Vera narratione del successo de la peste* (1578 – 616.923 B464v).

⁵ Statutes of weavers of silk, gold, and silver (1573 – X 331.8 M589S); regulations of the *Tribunale di Provvisione* (one of the most important administrative institutions of Milan, 1580 – Q. Cavagna 02350); code of conduct for poor women and orphan girls (1583, X 362.7 M5892R); regulations of the *Casa di soccorso* (a Milanese almshouse providing assistance for women, 1590 – Cavagna 05842); regulations of the Senate of Milan (1600 – X 349.45 M59D1597.); statutes of architects and engineers (1605? – Cavagna 06952); regulations of the *Ospedale maggiore* (the main city hospital, 1605 – Cavagna 02388); statutes of gold dealers (1610 – XQ. 338.6 M584S1610); statutes of the *cimatori* (trimmers of textiles, 1613 – 338.6 M582c); statutes of book dealers and printers (1614 – 338.6 M5871s); statutes of the *confettori* (leather tanners, 1615 – Cavagna 02330); statutes of the barbers (1618 – X 391.5 M589O1618); regulations for the import of provisions in Milan (1621 – Q. Cavagna 02519); statutes of wool dealers 1623 – 338.6 M58s); regulations for city officials dealing with criminal cases (undated – Q. 352.045 M589c).