

ITALY

[A list of books published in 2013. More recent publications will be listed in subsequent issues.]

*B come Bodoni. I caratteri di Bodoni a Brera e nella grafica contemporanea.* Milan: Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense; Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana editoriale. 2013. Ed. by ANDREA DE PASQUALE and MASSIMO DRADI. 95 pp. €20. ISBN 978 88 366 2659 5.

Catalogue of an exhibition held at the Brera Library in Milan in May–June 2013 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the death of Giambattista Bodoni.

*Una battaglia della cultura. Emanuele Casamassima e le biblioteche.* By TIZIANA STAGI. Rome: Associazione Italiana Biblioteche. 2013. 607 pp. €40. ISBN 978 88 7812 222 2.

Emanuele Casamassima (1916–88) had two careers, as a librarian and, from 1970, as a university professor of palaeography. But he is remembered mostly for a chance event, or, rather, an event that was avoidable. In April 1965 he was appointed director of the National Central Library in Florence, in a building constructed on the North bank of the Arno and opened in 1935. A year and a half later, on 4 November 1966, a devastating flood engulfed the library and a large part of its collections, which, unwisely, had been placed in the cellars. Having received no warning, Casamassima found himself trapped on the wrong side of the river, with all communications broken, and it was only possible to reach the library, through thick, treacherous slime, on the following morning. What happened next has entered into the myth and mythology of the *alluvione*: the director opened the doors to the world, chainlines of ‘mud angels’ manhandled the sopping books up and out of the fango in an extraordinary rescue, and the whole operation became a prototype of modern disaster management. Although the library’s catalogues were (and still are) in chaos for years as a result of the flood, in the end relatively little was lost. The National Central Library and the 1966 flood has already been described in a 2009 book by Elisa di Renzo; some of the same ground is inevitably covered in the present work, though it includes other aspects of Casamassima’s career and work as a librarian, and adds a lot of new information, including an important documentary appendix. Its weakness, perhaps, is that it betrays rather too easily its origins as a Ph.D. thesis, with a plethora of footnotes and an unwillingness to leave anything out. Nevertheless it is an important biographical study of a great librarian.

*La biblioteca di Avraham Ben David Portaleone secondo l’inventario della sua eredità.* By GIANFRANCO MILETTO. Florence: Olschki. 2013. xii + 141 pp. €19. ISBN 978 88 2226273 8.

This book is an afterthought based on a chance discovery. The author some time ago completed a lengthy monograph, in German, on the figure of Avraham ben David Portaleone (1542–1612), a Hebrew writer and thinker living in Renaissance Italy. Research in the State Archive at Mantua subsequently uncovered the inventory of the goods in Portaleone’s home at his death in 1612, which is the document, partly in Italian and partly in Latin (for the titles of the many books), edited here.

*Boccaccio in Romagna. Manoscritti, incunaboli e cinquecentine nelle biblioteche romagnole.* Ed. by PAOLA ERRANI, CLAUDIA GIULIANI, and PAOLO ZANFINI; essays by LORENZO BALDACCHINI, ALFREDO COTTIGNOLI, DONATINO DOMINI, and SEBASTIANA NOBILI. (Emilia Romagna biblioteche archivi, 80.) Bologna: Editrice compositore. 2013. 126 pp. €13. ISBN 978 88 7794 799 4.

Catalogue of an exhibition held at Ravenna in October–December 2013 and at Cesena in December 2013 – February 2014 to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the birth of Giovanni Boccaccio.