



# Paolo Rossi's legacy. His personal library and papers preserved at the Museo Galileo library

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In October 2006 Paolo Rossi (1923-2012), one of the most distinguished historians of science and philosophy of the postwar period, commissioned the Museo Galileo Library to preserve, after his death, his personal library and papers.

Here are some excerpts from his deed of gift:

I like to think that the books – some of which came from my father's library and which I began collecting during the war years – won't go missing, but will serve the work of young people who are dedicated to our studies. The papers also reflect the life I entirely devoted to study...

Mi piace pensare che i libri – alcuni dei quali provengono dalla biblioteca di mio padre e che ho iniziato a raccogliere durante gli anni della guerra – possano non andare dispersi, ma servire al lavoro di giovani che si dedicano ai nostri studi ... Anche le carte rispecchiano la vita che ho per intera dedicata allo studio...

After his death, the materials arrived in two steps:

## • June 2012:

- 160 boxes corresponding to about 140 linear meters of items and consisting of:
  - Modern monographs
  - Miscellaneous materials and serial issues
  - Archive (correspondence excluded)

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- **May 2017:**

215 boxes corresponding to about 190 linear meters of items and consisting of:

- Ancient & modern monographs
- Miscellaneous materials and serial issues
- Archive (recent years) + Correspondence

Relocating the materials from Rossi's apartment to the Museo Galileo Library was no small matter. In both relocations two library people and four porters were involved in the book boxing and hundreds of bulky boxes left Rossi's apartment through the windows thanks to a freight elevator.

### *Rossi's personal library*

In autumn 2012 we immediately started cataloging the books and arranging and describing the archival materials. It was a hard job, that has engaged the library staff for many years.



Fig. 1 – Books belonging to Rossi's personal library.

The cataloging of the book materials has recently been completed, and now that Rossi's entire personal library is cataloged, it is possible to make an analysis of this valuable collection and extrapolate some summary data (NB the numbers in round brackets refer to the number of publications).

- **Publication types:**

- ancient monographs (273)
- modern monographs (9,573)
- miscellaneous materials (pamphlets, off-prints, photocopies etc.) (6,018)
- serials (330)

- **Chronological span:**

- 16th century (35)
- 17th century (35)
- 18th century (198)
- 19th century (234)
- 20th-21th centuries (15,700)

- **Main languages:**

- Italian (12,827)
- English (2,082)
- French (931)
- Latin (147)
- German (101)
- Spanish (50)

- **Minor languages:**

Ancient Greek, Portuguese, Polish, Japanese, Russian, Dutch, Modern Greek, Hebrew

- **Least represented languages:**

Catalan, Romanian, Danish, Estonian, Finnish, Hungarian and Turkish

- **Main authors:**

This is a sort of ranking of the most represented authors among the approx. 6,000 ones who are included in Rossi's library. As you see, Rossi himself is included, together with his undisputed masters (Garin and Banfi), his preferred authors (Bacon, Vico and Galileo), some classics of philosophy, several of his friends and colleagues, and some reference points for a scholar of his time (Croce, Gentile and Vailati).

Rossi, Paolo (371)	De Liguori, Girolamo (38)
Garin, Eugenio (224)	Hume, David (37)
Banfi, Antonio (71)	Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (37)
Zambelli, Paola (63)	Bruno, Giordano (37)
Vasoli, Cesare (59)	Kant, Immanuel (36)
Cesa, Claudio (51)	La Vergata, Antonello (36)
Bellone, Enrico (48)	Aristoteles (35)
Croce, Benedetto (46)	Geymonat, Ludovico (34)
Vailati, Giovanni (46)	Ciliberto, Michele (34)
Bacon, Francis (45)	Bobbio, Norberto (34)
Galilei, Galileo (44)	Restaino, Franco (33)
Casini, Paolo (43)	Vickers, Brian (31)
Vico, Giambattista (42)	Gentile, Giovanni (31)
Elkana, Yehuda (42)	Crisiani, Chiara (30)
Raimondi, Ezio (38)	Sichirolo, Livio (30)

What emerges from these figures is that Paolo Rossi's personal library is a very large library: it consists of more than 16,000 works for a total of approximately 21,000 physical items, considering the periodical issues, the multi-volume works and so on. All these materials are currently housed in an external depot, 5-minute walking from the library. In order to optimize space, the books are arranged in triple and quadruple rows on 1-meter deep shelves.

Rossi's personal library is very heterogeneous: it mainly contains texts on the history of philosophy and on the history of science but there are also many books on historical, political, sociological and religious topics.



Fig. 2 – Rossi's books' current location in the library deposit.

It is also a highly significant library because it undoubtedly helps to define the cultural profile of its owner, reveals his educational background and sheds light on his interests and skills. This is true in the case of all personal libraries. What is striking and what really impressed the library staff who was in charge of cataloguing these books is that Rossi's library is a 'speaking' library: Paolo Rossi left a lot of 'traces' on many books, such as underlinings and annotations on the side margin, witty and often amusing comments which contribute to better delineate his philosophical positions and personality.

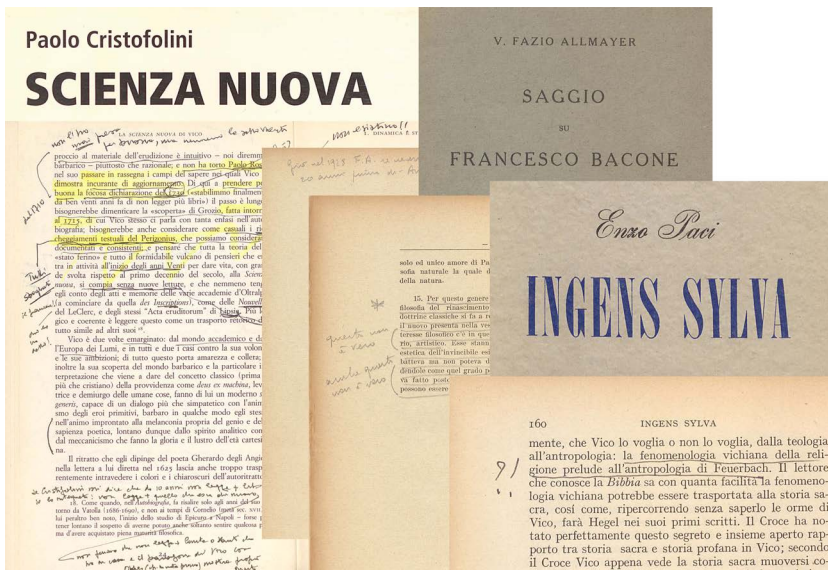


Fig. 3 – Books with Rossi's handwritten annotations.

An analysis of the Rossi's library allows us to answer some questions. For example:

– Which are the books by or on Vico that Rossi preserved in his library?

[Click here](#) to see the list in chronological order of the about 150 monographs of his book collection.

– Another question: What did Rossi read in the early '50s, before the publication of his book on Bacon?

The answer to this question is not easy. But his personal library can offer an indication.

[Click here](#) to see the list of the about 700 monographs and articles belonging to Rossi's library published between 1950 and 1956. Of course Rossi could have bought or read these books and articles much later. So the list is not proof of what Rossi read but an indication as to what he might have read.

### *Rossi's papers*

Regarding the archive, we completed, some years ago, the arranging and describing of the 1st part, while the 2nd part, consisting mainly of correspondence and, as such, protected by the privacy law, has still to be described.



Fig. 4 – Folders and documents belonging to Rossi's archive (left). An open folder (right).

These are the main series that are already arranged and described:

- writings and notes dealing with the history of philosophy and the history of science.
- drafts, proofs and preparatory materials of about 120 Rossi's publications (so that you can see the genesis and the different versions and revisions of Rossi's works: his books but also the journal articles and the book reviews, the notes, the introductions and the prefaces to the new editions and so on).
- final texts or drafts of about 150 papers that he presented at conventions and conferences.
- documents related to teaching and dissemination activities (for example the drafts of the radio programs of the '80s where Rossi interviewed philosophers, scholars and so on).
- informational materials on about 350 events (congresses, conferences, book presentations etc.). Paolo Rossi preserved, not casually but in an organized way, the invitation letters, programmes, depliant, his annotations on speeches and papers etc.
- a wide selection of journal articles and press clippings from major Italian newspapers and dealing with philosophical and cultural topics but also with social, political and current affairs.
- a collection of documents regarding Antonio Banfi.



### Overview of the archival materials

#### • List of the books read:

About 40 pages with the list of the books Rossi read between 1946 and 1950.

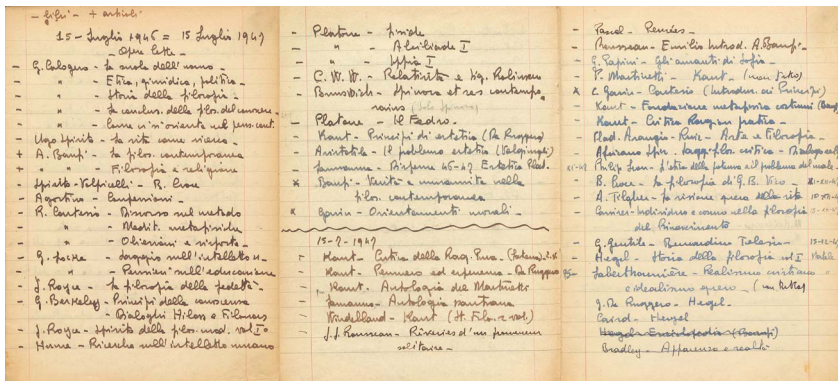


Fig. 5 – Lists of the books read.

#### • Two drafts of *I segni del tempo*

See below the first page of the handwritten draft and the corresponding page of the typewritten one.

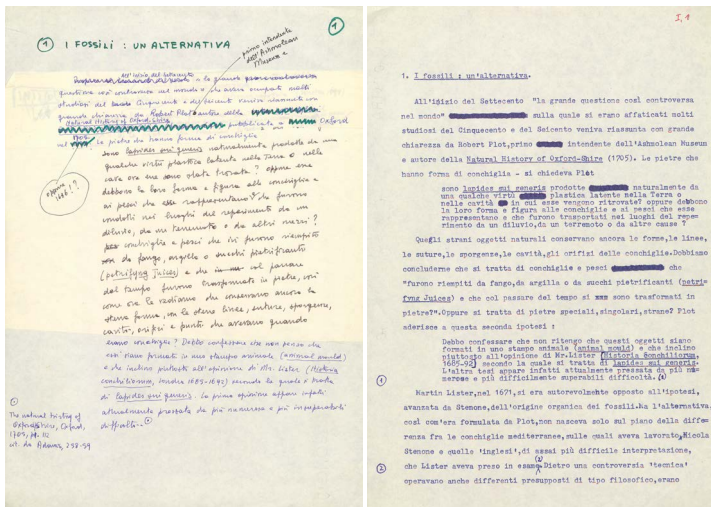


Fig. 6 – Handwritten (left) and typewritten (right) drafts of *I segni del tempo*.

### *Search tools*

The Rossi's Legacy books and documents can be searched through the Museo Galileo collective database, which allows integrated consultation of all the Museo Galileo's collections (books, scientific instruments, medals, archival documents, historical, modern and digital photographs etc.), as well as of the data produced in connection with various research projects.

[Click here](#) to launch a search on the Collective database.

Moreover, the Rossi's Legacy web page offers the possibility to download the papers' inventory and the PDF lists of the various types of publications belonging to Rossi's personal library.

[Click here](#) to access the web page and see the links in the "Related resources" area.