

# White Rose University Consortium: College of Arts and Humanities

## Arts and Humanities Research Culture in Italy

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### Arts and Humanities Research Institutions

#### *Top five institutions for arts and humanities research*

The Italian university system is usually perceived as being non-competitive. University rankings are not accorded as much importance as in some academic cultures because, in Italy, all university certifications obtained are, by law, equivalent. Despite this, some universities are considered more prestigious than others (usually older institutions, such as 'University of Bologna', which is the oldest university in the world, or the 'University of Rome – La Sapienza' and the 'University of Pisa'). Therefore, unlike in the UK, students tend to study at the university in the region which they are from. There is, however, some student mobility: usually from the poorer south to richer north.

No Italian university was among the top 200 institutions according to the 2012-13 [Times University World Rankings](#) for the Arts and Humanities. However, Italian universities do appear in the general world rankings in the following order [[Source](#)]:

1. University of Milan (251-257)
2. University of Milan – Bicocca (251-257)
3. University of Trieste (251-257)
4. University of Bologna (276-300)
5. University of Trento (276-300)
6. University of Turin (Torino) (276-300)
7. University of Padua (Padova) (301-350)
8. University of Pavia (301-350)
9. University of Pisa (301-350)
10. Polytechnic University of Milan (301-350)



## *Research centres*

The representative body of Italian research centres is the [Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche](#) (National Research Council), which has institutes in various Italian cities. Individual universities also have separate research centres and bodies.

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## **Libraries**

University students and staff members have free access to academic libraries. There is not always electronic access to libraries, i.e. by swipe cards, but access is granted through showing library staff a staff/student ID card.

The general public is also allowed to access libraries, provided that they have been issued a temporary card/pass. Members of the public may be limited in the number/type of books that they can borrow. Each library has different regulations on this.

Access to libraries is granted to students of other institutions; they usually need to fill out an application form available at the library entrance.

Access to non-university libraries (often called *biblioteche civiche*, literally 'public libraries') is available upon registration. The user is usually given a library ID, which is used to monitor his/her use of the library facilities.

There are English speaking librarians, they may not be proficient but they can probably answer your questions.

University libraries are not usually open in the evening: opening times are generally from 9am to 6pm. Libraries are closed on Sundays and may shut early on Saturdays.

Libraries are closed during [festivals and national holidays](#). They might also close for longer periods during the summer (particularly in August).

## *Finding and accessing what you need*

In my experience, the layout of libraries is usually open-stack. Users can request that a staff member bring any books from closed stacks to them.

The [National Catalogue](#) enables users to search for any bibliographic resources within Italian university libraries. For each search a list of all libraries owning a copy of the book/journal searched for is displayed together with a direct link to the specific library. Information concerning the borrowing/reference processes vary in each academic institution.

The [Central Institute for the Union Catalogue of Italian Libraries and Bibliographic Information](#) (ICCU) is responsible for the management of the online catalogue of the Italian libraries and the interlibrary loan and document delivery national services. ICCU works closely with the Regions and Universities to support the service of libraries, librarians and citizens.

### *Borrowing books*

Each library has its own procedures, although the system is generally similar to that of British institutions.

Some universities might not have a login system through which the user can access the list of borrowed books; therefore, online book renewal options might not be available and the user needs to go to the library in person in order to renew or request a resource.

Inter-library loans are available. Requests may have to be submitted in person rather than online.

### *Facilities*

Photocopying facilities are not always available inside Italian university libraries. Students often need to borrow books and make photocopies in photocopying shops, of which there are many around the universities. Important note: remember that, by law, no more than 15% of a book can be photocopied.

Study spaces are available either inside libraries or in study areas scattered throughout university buildings. Wi-Fi access for Internet is also usually available.

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## **Archives**

### *Access*

In order to visit archives (in academic institutions, private associations, museums, etc.) it is advisable to contact the curators in order to discuss the details of your visit. If, as can often be the case, your e-mails are not answered you may phone the archive or, better still, visit it in person. Remember to bring your university ID card with you.

Note that most Italian archives are not available online. The Minister for Cultural Activities is currently working towards establishing an online archive of the main national resources, called [Sistema Archivistico Nazionale](#) (National Archive System).

Like university libraries, public libraries and archives are closed during festivals, national holidays and on Sundays (and some also on Saturdays).

The procedures for borrowing and/or photocopying material need to be discussed with the archive's curators. Each archive has its own regulations.

### *Main arts and humanities archives*

The [Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali](#) (Minister for Cultural Assets and Activities) manages an online catalogue and guide for all Italian research archives and centres.

Among other things, the website offers the following:

- An [introductory guide](#) to the Italian archive system

- A [glossary](#) with archive-related terms
- An [interactive map](#) and alphabetic list of all Italian state-owned archives
- A [link to YouTube](#) channels with music and visual archives

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## Online Resources

The [National Catalogue](#) enables users to search for any bibliographic resources within Italian university libraries.

The [National archives database](#) enables users to search an online catalogue of all Italian research archives.

### *Journals and e-books*

There are fewer online resources available at Italian university libraries than at libraries in most UL institutions. Universities do have subscriptions to a few online journals but usually not as many as universities in UK. As at UK institutions, universities have subscriptions to several online journals. For others access may not be granted or students may need to pay to access some journals.

In general, online resources facilities are not as good as in the UK. The situation is improving but still the standards are not on par with those British students are used to. Due to the lack of central funding, universities often struggle to work on their online presence and also on the layout and organisation of their main website.

Students are usually able to access resources remotely. In my experience at the University of Turin, some resources were available remotely, but for others we needed to be connected through the university network.

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## IT Equipment

Like in the UK, computer clusters are available inside libraries and study areas. In my experience, though, these are not as organised or as well-equipped as in the UK. Registration is usually required in order to access computer facilities and sometimes students need to pay depending on the amount of time they want to spend using the facilities.

Departments purchase software, not installed on university computers, that is essential for some research projects (statistical packages, audio software, etc.) and equipment for carrying out empirical fieldwork (digital recorders, microphones, etc.).

Printing or photocopying is never free. Usually photocopying shops are scattered around universities buildings.

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## Web Links

[Central Institute for the Union Catalogue of Italian Libraries and Bibliographic Information](#) (EN)

[Sistema Archivistico Nazionale](#) (SAN) - National Archive System (IT)

[Glossary](#) with archive related terms (IT)

[Interactive map](#) and alphabetic list of all Italian state-owned archives (IT)

[National university libraries database](#) (EN)

[National archives database](#) (EN)

List of [Italian public holidays](#) (EN)

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