

Consortium of European Research Libraries

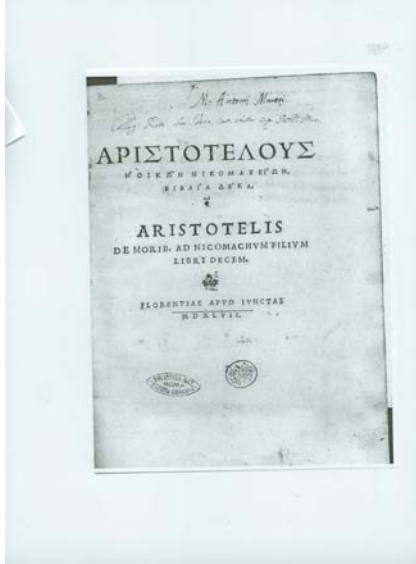
Excerpt from Newsletter 8 December 2003

The full text of CERL Newsletter 8 may be found [here](#).

Provenance description and access

Books collectors and libraries of the past: a computerised data management.

The SBN(A) database (the Italian database for ancient books) includes an owners' archive, currently only available through an on-site search facility. It is, however, possible for off-site users to write by e-mail (catantico@bnc.roma.sbn.it) to the ancient printed book department and to ask about specific owners.



The file functions were worked out jointly by BNCR programmers and by librarians working on ancient book cataloguing, with particular regard to this file's special requirements for data entry and queries. Since some manuscript names or notes can only be deciphered with difficulty, it is possible to link to the accepted name form and all the different corresponding cross references. Thus we can correct, erase or change the accepted form into the one used by the cross reference and *vice versa*. It is also possible to join the same headings. BNCR distinguishes between 'owners' and 'last owner'. For each item there can only be one last owner, and this is the person from whom the library received the copy. Both 'owner' and 'last owner' can be linked to one or several inventory numbers, identifying each item owned by the person. It is possible to insert or erase these links and to change 'owner' to a 'last owner' indication, or the reverse.

Muret – owner mark

The most interesting part for the user is the search function. The starting points can be the owner's identification number or his name and inventory number. When using the name as a search term, the system shows the linked records with a full edition, description, inventory number and shelf- mark, the copy description (binding, pages missing, manuscript notes), and makes it possible to reconstruct the library of each owner and his interests. Starting from the inventory number, it is possible to find out all the owners of the copy, thus tracing the item's history. For the BNCR, because of its ancient collection and its history, this research will be particularly interesting; BNCR holds the ancient collections of about 70 monastic libraries, but their books are not longer held as separate collections.



At present the owners' file includes about 4,000 headings, the results of cataloguing 75% of BNCR's 16th-century books (c. 26,000 copies). It has been expanded by cataloguing 30,000 of BNCR's 17th-century editions and it will be increased again by the cataloguing of the remaining 25% of its 16th-century editions and 17th-century material (34,500 editions, from about 40,000 copies), which is in progress. The largest proportion of BNCR's books comes from the Gesuitic Bibliotheca Maior in



Collegio Romano. This collection includes donations of important private libraries, such as the libraries of Marc Antoine Muret (16th-century French humanist), and Giovanni Battista Coccini (Decanus of the Auditores Rotae, who left his library to Collegio Romano in 1640). It will be possible to take part in finding copies of dispersed libraries, like Albani's and Colonna's: some items they owned are, in fact, in BNCR. Many Italian and foreign users have shown a keen interest in the owners' archive, and the BNCR is considering setting up off-site public access. BNCR are also considering the possibility of having an integrated image file showing owner's manuscript notes and owner's stamps.

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