**The Italian Academies 1525-1700:**

**The First Intellectual Networks of Early Modern Europe**

**Objectives**

The principal objectives of this proposal are to:
1. expand the existing BL Themed Collection database by adding more centres thus providing significantly more research material for the study of the Italian contribution to early modern European culture.
2. pursue new research on a range of topics drawing on data in the database and information discovered in the process of its development, and through the critical analysis of key texts, and contextualizing and comparative studies.
3. disseminate our findings and promote international interest in, and engagement with, research on the Italian Academies through hosting workshops, and an international conference on the Academies.
Our precise aims are to:
(i) Enhance the existing database by adding information on Academies in Rome, Venice, Verona, Mantua, Ferrara, southern Italy and Sicily using the tried and tested software and methods developed by the project team in collaboration with the BL IT services (eIS).
(ii) Undertake comparative studies to contrast the different experiences and operations of Academies in university cities such as Bologna and Padua with those in courtly centres such as Ferrara and Mantua, and/or those in cities with neither University nor court, such as Siena and Verona.
(iii) Develop further research on the reconstruction of the intellectual networks of early modern Europe later defined as the 'République des Lettres'. The creation of the database has underlined the fundamental role of Italian Academies in the establishment and operation of these networks.
(iv) Study the Academies in Naples and the south to advance knowledge of the culture of southern Italy in the early modern period. The data collected for Naples is extremely rich but is under-represented in scholarship on Italy in the period. Initial investigations suggest that the same is true of other Academies in southern Italy under Spanish rule. Academies here were more numerous than previously thought and have many different characteristics from their northern counterparts. The information for Naples will be enhanced with new data compiled for Sicily and other centres in Campania, such as Avellino.
(v) Incorporate data on Academies in Rome and Venice into the database alongside that for existing centres and develop thematic studies on the operation of censorship in early modern Italy and its impact on the development of science in the period. The issue of censorship is particularly relevant in these centres and the significance of this as an area of scholarship to international researchers has been encouraged by the opening of the Vatican archives relating to the Index.
(vi) Develop comparative research on theatre and spectacle within Academies across the peninsula, drawing on existing and new material compiled for the database and supplemented by other sources. Spectacle and ritual were intrinsic to academic culture for self-definition and for festive, political and religious purposes. The research will explore the role played by academies in centres such as Siena, Verona, Padua in the development of 'modern' theatrical forms and practices through their compositions, performances and critical writings.
(vii) Research the illustration of books for the Academies, particularly the role of female engravers and illustrations for scientific texts in the seventeenth century. Emblems and portraits played a significant part in the publications of some Academies and reveal the involvement of major artists with the Academies, as well as the intriguing interaction of female artists with these institutions.
By the end of the project we shall have:
- produced a series of linked publications and 1 PhD thesis on the Italian Academies
- expanded the BL Themed Collection database to include a further 400-500 Academies
- hosted 2 workshops and an international conference
- established an international scholarly network for continuing investigations.