

Rules for Readers in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

PREAMBLE

I. Nature of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

The Vatican Library is the Library of the Pope, established, in accordance with the intention of Pope Nicholas V, “pro communi doctorum virorum commodo” (breve of April 30, 1451). As later declared by Pope Sixtus IV, who re-founded it and gave it its legal status, it also serves “ad decorem militantis Ecclesiae, fidei catholicae augmentum, eruditorum quoque ac litterarum studiis insistentium virorum commodum et honorem” (Bull of June 15, 1475).

In the centuries following its foundation, the Vatican Library was made accessible to eminent scholars. It was eventually opened to all qualified readers in 1883 under Leo XIII (Letters *Saepenumero considerantes*, August 18, 1883, and *Augustum sanctissimumque munus*, October 1, 1888), who eased the admission process to the Library, and at the same time opened the Vatican Secret Archives to readers.

The Library as an institution stands in close relation to the “governance and ministry exercised by the Holy See” (John Paul II, January 15, 2000). It is one of those institutions of ancient origin which, “though not properly a part of the Roman Curia, nonetheless provide useful and necessary services to the Supreme Pontiff, to the Curia and to the Universal Church, and which are associated in some way with the Apostolic See.” In accordance with this status, the Library is governed “by laws of its own, both in regard to its constitution and in regard to its administration” (Apostolic Const. “Pastor Bonus”, June 28, 1988, art. 186 and 190).

The Vatican Library is the inalienable property of the Supreme Pontiff, and it is by his sovereign will that it is open to consultation. It is not a Public Law institution. It is a library specialized in the philological and historical disciplines; it also has historical holdings in the fields of theology, law and science. It is reserved for scientific research based on the study of manuscripts, printed books, coins and medals, prints, and other graphic and cartographic materials.

II. Responsibilities of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

The primary task of the Vatican Library, as an institution of both conservation and research, is to keep and conserve as carefully as possible the cultural treasures which have been entrusted to it. Further responsibilities include:

1. increasing its holdings of manuscripts, printed books and coins through acquisitions, exchanges and donations, in accordance with the materials already present in the collections and with the purpose of the institution;
2. studying and promoting knowledge of these materials through the work of the Library's regular and supernumerary staff, and by means of publications.
3. making available to qualified readers from around the world, with all necessary caution, both the originals and reproductions of the various types of documents and objects preserved in the Library, and providing for these readers all possible and appropriate scientific and technical assistance to their research, continually updating the instruments and aids which are helpful or necessary for their work.

From these responsibilities arises the commitment of the Library to create an environment which allows readers to adequately study the material which is entrusted to them. The Library is entirely free to select readers, prior to admission and thereafter, based on their observance of these Rules for Readers. It considers the ideal environment for study and research to be one which is characterized by strict silence and by respect for persons, as well as for the place which welcomes them.

The following Rules are intended above all to assure readers of working conditions appropriate to a place of study and research. Readers are therefore asked to read them carefully and to follow them scrupulously.

While it endeavors to welcome its readers in the best possible way, the Library is aware that its ancient buildings and structures do not allow it to offer them a level of space and comfort which would be considered ideal in a modern library.

Consultation of material may be restricted due to temporary unavailability of the requested documents (due to restoration, disinfestation, public exhibition, or the like), or because the requested document has not yet been inventoried, or due to poor condition of the document, or for other reasons, at the discretion of the Prefect of the Library. All materials are to be consulted and studied *in situ* only, in the appropriate reading rooms.

RULES FOR READERS

I. Admissions

Qualified researchers and scholars from around the world, particularly professors and researchers from universities and other institutions of higher education, and other learned persons known for their writings and scholarly publications, are admitted without distinction of race, religion, origin or culture. The prerequisites for admission are the availability of space and adequate training, documented and attested by an accredited academic institution. According to a long-standing tradition, readers are requested to indicate the nature of their research project.

University students are not normally granted admission. Exceptions may be made for graduate students preparing a doctoral thesis (*Dottorato di ricerca*) or studying for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy* (Dr. phil/PhD), as well as for undergraduate students who have a specific need to consult the manuscripts or other materials preserved only in the Vatican Library. Students must provide a letter indicating that their institution accepts responsibility for their actions, and the Library reserves the right to verify that they possess the competence and experience necessary to handle the precious materials with the required care. Annual reader's passes issued to students expire a few weeks earlier than the other passes, as indicated on the Library's annual calendar.

Holders of a valid pass who intend to consult numismatic materials must notify the Director of the Numismatic Department of their visit in advance.

Readers who are granted admittance are provided with a reader's pass which allows them to access Vatican City through Porta Sant'Anna. The pass is personal and may not be loaned or given to others. Loss or theft of a pass must be immediately reported to the Admissions Office of the Library. The individual whose name appears on the pass is personally responsible for any damages caused by its inappropriate use.

By accepting the reader's pass and signing the form in the Admissions Office, the Reader agrees to comply with the Rules and Regulations of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, a copy of which he receives with his pass.

For admittance to the Library, the following documents are required:

1. a letter of introduction (particularly for first-time applicants) and written attestations of academic qualifications, of which the Library keeps the original or a copy;
2. a valid identification document which includes the reader's address, of which the Library makes a copy;
3. a letter of guarantee, at the discretion the Library (but always required of students).

II. Obligations of the readers towards the Library

Readers admitted to the Library are required to:

1. observe the Rules for Readers;
2. treat all materials, particularly manuscripts, with the utmost care and extreme delicacy, protecting them from any type of damage;
3. provide the Library with a copy of any publications relating to materials consulted or received by way of reproduction, especially if the Library does not subscribe to the collections or periodicals in which they appear.

III. General Library Rules

1. General Behavior

Readers admitted to the Library are required to observe strict **silence** not only in the reading rooms, but within the entire premises, conversing only in the courtyard or in the Library bar. It is forbidden to disturb the study and work of other readers, e. g. by talking or by using any kind of noisy equipment.

Readers must wear attire appropriate for an ancient institution of culture and study.

Mobile phones must be turned off at the entrance. It is absolutely forbidden to use any electronic means of communication within the Library.

All readers are required to conduct themselves in a manner befitting the Vatican Library. Behavior by individuals or groups which is inappropriate to the dignity of the institution is forbidden.

Photographs, films, sound recordings, and all other types of reproduction are not permitted. It is absolutely forbidden to bring any kind of photographic or filming equipment, portable telephones with digital camera features, recorders, dictaphones, digital scanners and other devices which would allow reproduction of the Library's materials, environment or structures.

It is strictly forbidden to bring or to use scissors, knives, razor blades, razors, matches, adhesive paper, adhesive tape, glue, bottles of ink, correction fluids, and any type of liquid or other object or substance which could damage the collections of the Library.

Readers admitted to the Library are obliged to comply with the instructions of Library staff without discussion.

Smoking, food and beverages are not permitted in any part of the Library. Smoking is allowed in the courtyard;

food and beverages may be consumed only in the Library bar.

Access to the manuscript stacks and other stacks where books are stored is prohibited to the public. In addition, it is not allowed, to be in any area where there are staff offices, unless such access is explicitly granted; or to use equipment or materials belonging to Library personnel.

Finally, in order to access the Secret Archives from the Library, or vice versa, the main entrance of each of the two Institutions must be used.

2. Access to the Library

Readers admitted to use the Library, must, **upon arrival**:

- *at the Reception Desk*:

- a) hand in their reader's pass;
- b) take their numbered key;
- c) leave overcoat, umbrella, bags and any other items not related to studying in the locker;
 - in the *Sala dei Manoscritti* (Manuscripts Reading Room) or *Sala degli Stampati* (Printed Books Reading Room):
- d) hand in their key at the desk;
- e) enter their name in block capitals on the daily register, opposite their key number;
- f) choose the place at which they intend to sit;
- g) return to the desk and enter the number of the place they have chosen next to their name.

Upon leaving the Library at the end of a work session (even if intending to return the same day) readers must:

- *in the Manuscripts Reading Room or in the Printed Books Reading Room*:

- a) return the manuscripts or the printed books they have requested and retrieve their key;
 - *at the Reception Desk*:
- b) show any books of their own which they are carrying with them;
- c) remove articles deposited in the locker;
- d) return the key to the Reception Desk;
- e) retrieve their reader's pass.

IV. Rules for the Reading Rooms

1. General Rules

Assistance is provided for readers in the reading rooms. Surveillance is in effect at all times, including the use of technological devices. Each reading room has specific rules which are to be observed.

Readers are asked to bring with them only such items as are strictly necessary to their study and research. When they hand in their key at the desk, they should notify the staff of any materials of their own which they have brought with them.

Readers are personally responsible for the safety of the material which is entrusted to them. They must examine the material upon receiving it and immediately advise the staff in the reading room of any existing damages. This is a preventative measure intended not only to safeguard the collections of the Library, but also to limit the reader's responsibility. If the reader does not notify the staff of any damages, it will be assumed that he has received the work in good condition. In the case of damage or loss, he will be expected to bear the full cost of replacement and/or restoration. The Library reserves the right to determine the measures to be taken to ensure that it is reimbursed by readers who are responsible for such damages.

The observance of **silence** in the reading rooms will be enforced as an absolute *conditio sine qua non*.

In all of the reading rooms it is strictly forbidden to bring overcoats, umbrellas, purses, closed folders, or plastic envelopes of any kind, including transparent ones. The few objects that the reader carries with him must not be enclosed in any way. Portable personal computers (with no case) are permitted, as well as the strictly necessary amount of paper, open folders, magnifying lenses, and non-rigid rulers (of soft plastic or cloth).

Not permitted, in addition to the general prohibitions which have already been stated (e. g. food, beverages, cellular phones) are the following:

- reserving and occupying a reading place for longer than necessary;
- improper use of the Library's furnishings, equipment and rooms;
- blocking the movement of other readers in aisles and passages
- studying or consulting a manuscript or printed book in groups of two or more persons;
- consulting materials entrusted to another reader or passing one's own materials to others;
- consulting materials with soiled hands;
- writing, even in pencil, using manuscripts, printed books, or any other Library documents as support;
- making marks or underlining, even in pencil, in the manuscripts, printed books or other materials;
- tracing bindings, watermarks, or any other material.

For the use of special reading equipment (Wood's lamp, watermark, microfilm or microfiche reader, CD-ROM, etc) readers must ask the reading room staff. Use of this equipment is, of course, reserved for the consultation of microfilms, microfiches, CD-ROMs, etc. of Library materials.

2. Manuscripts Reading Room

Use of the Manuscripts Reading Room is restricted to readers who actually intend to study manuscripts. It is not allowed when only printed books need to be consulted.

Only erasable pencils may be used in the Reading Room. The use of fountain pens, ball-point pens, highlighters, paintbrushes, paints and any other type of writing instrument which leaves indelible traces is forbidden.

No one may remove a manuscript from the Reading Room or bring it from the Manuscript Consultation room into the adjoining or "Inventory" room.

For manuscripts kept in the stacks: readers may request to see three manuscripts in the morning (requests to be made between 8:45 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.) and two in the afternoon (requests to be made between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.). The documents preserved in the Archive Section must be requested before 12:00 p.m. Requests for manuscripts should be appropriately timed. In particular, once the request for manuscripts has been made, the reader should not leave the Reading Room for longer than it might reasonably be expected for the manuscript to arrive from the stacks. Each reader may have at his disposal no more than three manuscripts at a time. The request for the remaining two manuscripts may be made only after two from the previous request have been returned. Only one manuscript may be taken to the reader's desk at a time; however, in case of special needs, such as direct text collation or comparison of scripts, he may ask permission to take more than one manuscript at a time to his desk.

The manuscript being read or studied must always stand on the lectern. The pages should be held open by inserting the rods provided into the base of the lectern

Hands and fingers must never rest on the manuscript. To follow the lines while reading, the card provided on the lectern may be used.

The pages of the manuscript should be turned slowly and with extreme care to preserve them from further wear, avoiding any noise which might disturb other readers.

The pages of the manuscript should not be turned with a pencil in hand, nor should writing paper, notebooks, other manuscripts, printed books or other objects be placed on top of the manuscript.

If a reader needs to leave his place at the table for any length of time, he is requested to close the manuscript.

For the protection of its materials, the Library reserves the right, at any time, to provide for consultation reproductions of any type (if available), rather than the originals.

The manuscripts belonging to the *Riserva* may be requested by filling out the appropriate form and providing a written justification.

Readers may bring printed books from the open shelves of the Printed Books Reading Room and the Inventory Room into the Manuscript Reading Room and use them at their place. In the place of the printed book being used, a cardboard place marker must be inserted to indicate by whom it is being used. Readers who do not respect this rule, which is helpful to everyone, will have their passes temporarily suspended.

If a reader wishes to consult printed books from the stacks in the Manuscript Reading room, he must:

- a) hand in his key at the desk in the Printed Books Reading Room and enter his name on the appropriate form;
- b) receive from the desk a red card bearing his key number;
- c) hand in his card at the desk in the Manuscript Reading Room and enter his name in the register;
- d) retrieve his card from this desk when he returns the documents he has consulted;
- e) return his card to the Printed Books desk and, when leaving the library, retrieve his key.

3. Printed Books Reading Room

In the *Sala degli Stampati*, books may be taken directly from the open shelves and placed on the work-table chosen by the reader. However, no more than six volumes at a time are allowed. One of the markers provided, with the number of the place being used by the reader, should be inserted on the shelf where a book has been removed. Readers who do not respect this rule, which is helpful to everyone, will have their passes temporarily suspended. After use, the books should be left on the work-tables, not returned to the shelves. Books from the open shelves may not be reserved for the following day.

Books from the stacks may be requested at the distribution desk by filling out the appropriate form. No more than five books per day may be requested, and all requests are to be made before 12 noon.

4. Periodicals Reading Room

Readers who intend to consult materials in the Periodicals Reading Room (including books with the following shelf-marks: A-Z, Cat. d'Arte, Cat. Librari, Dattiloscritti, Editti, R.G. Bibliografia, R.G. Missioni, R.G. Musica, R.G. Riti, R.G Scienze Sociali) must:

- a) hand in their key at the desk in the *Sala degli Stampati* and enter their name on the appropriate form;

- b) receive from the desk a green card bearing their key number;
- c) hand in their card at the desk in the *Sala dei Periodici* and enter their name in the register;
- d) retrieve their card from this desk when they return the documents they have consulted;
- e) return their card to the *Stampati* desk and, when leaving the library, retrieve their key.

In the *Sala degli Periodici*, books may be taken directly from the open shelves and placed on the work-table chosen by the reader. However, no more than six volumes at a time are allowed. One of the markers provided, with the number of the place being used by the reader, should be inserted on the shelf where a book has been removed.

Readers who do not respect this rule, which is helpful to everyone, will have their passes temporarily suspended. After use, the books should be left on the work-tables, not returned to the shelves. Books from the open shelves may not be reserved for the following day.

Books from the stacks may be requested at the distribution desk, completing the appropriate form. No more than five books per day may be requested, and all requests are to be made before 12 noon.

V. Security Regulations

Library staff is authorized to give instructions to the readers, and the readers are obliged to follow such instructions.

The Library may install surveillance devices and carry out security checks.

The Library may ask readers to open personal objects (including purses, closed bags, folders and the like) and may inspect their contents as readers enter and leave the Library. Readers are obliged to comply with all such requests.

Readers who, despite repeated warnings, continue to disrupt the orderly functioning of the Library, or do not comply with the instructions of its staff, may be asked to leave the Library. The Prefect of the Library may also decide to exclude them permanently.

The Prefecture of the Library is obligated to inform the competent authorities of any theft or other criminal act or behavior.

Members of the Library staff must make themselves available and recognizable at all times. They may intervene, spontaneously or upon the request of a reader, in order to ensure that these Rules for Readers are observed, joining with the Library management in taking any preventative and punitive measures which may be deemed necessary.

VI. Sanctions

Readers who fail to follow the Library's regulations, and particularly those who repeatedly fail to meet their obligations to the Library as set out in these Rules, may be excluded temporarily or permanently from the Library, accepting all civil and criminal responsibilities.

Those who are found to be guilty of theft, or of defacing, mutilating or damaging in any way the materials entrusted to them, the premises or any other object which belongs to the Library will be banned from the Library permanently and referred to the judicial authorities. Permanent exclusion from the Library may also be imposed for:

- those who write or make marks of any kind, even in pencil, in books or documents;
- those who disrupt in any way the study and work of others;
- those who smoke within the confines of the Library.

These sanctions in no way limit the reader's responsibility for costs incurred through material damage.

In especially serious cases, the Library will inform other libraries of the reader's exclusion and of its motivation.

All obligations deriving from the relationship between the reader and the Library established at the time of his admission continue to be valid even after a reader's pass has been revoked.

VII. Reproductions

All reproductions of Library materials must be made by the Photographic Laboratories of the Library.

As a result, it is strictly forbidden to:

- use personal equipment such as cameras, digital scanners and similar means to copy or reproduce Library materials;
- download from the internal network of the Library onto personal computers any data from the electronic or digital collections of the Library;
- make tracings of any materials of the Library.

Photographic reproductions may be requested by using the appropriate forms available at the distribution desks, and the Library reserves the right to provide them at its discretion.

Photocopies (yellow forms) are made for printed volumes published between 1801 and 1990, and only for personal use. Orders may be placed between 8:45 and 17:00 at the distribution desk of the Printed Books Reading Room, preferably with the book itself.

Other types of reproductions for personal use only (green form), of printed books prior to 1800, of manuscripts and of objects, may be ordered by submitting the request at the distribution desk.

Requests for reproductions destined for publication in a book or review (pink form) should be addressed to the Prefect by the Publishing House (or by the Director of the review or of the institution responsible for the publication).

Requests for reproductions destined for other types of publications (electronic publications, lectures or conferences, transcriptions or musical performance, etc.) should be addressed directly to the Prefecture.

VIII. Copyright

Images of materials preserved in the Library may be published only with the written consent of the Library. Even after authorization to publish has been granted, the Library reserves the right to publish the same images itself, or to allow a third party to publish them.

The reader, who is in any case responsible for the use of the reproductions that he receives, is obliged to respect the current international regulations regarding copyright and the property rights. In any case, **the reproductions**, whatever the medium and whatever the purpose for which they were obtained, **may not be duplicated or passed on to a third party**.

The reader must scrupulously **observe all conditions stated on the request forms** , according to the type of use for which the request is made.

Specific rules apply to the transcription and performance of hand-written musical scores preserved in the Library, even when the scores are only transcribed and not photographically reproduced. Consultation of musical manuscripts is therefore allowed for personal study only; any other use of these materials (publication, reproduction, execution, and the like), must be formally authorized by the Prefect. Upon receiving a musical manuscript (or one containing musical text), the reader is asked to sign a statement obliging him to respect these rules.

IX. Limitation of Liability

The Library is not responsible for personal objects or any items brought by readers into the working area or to the lockers.

It is forbidden to leave personal items with the Library porter or other staff, and to receive mail, telephone messages, etc. at the Library.

The Library does not provide statements of presence in the Library.

X. Hours

As a rule, the Library is open **Monday through Friday** from September 18th to July 13th (June 13th for doctoral students and May 31th for undergraduate students). The exact dates and days of closure are indicated on the annually published calendar.

The **Reading Rooms** are open from **8:45 a.m. to 5:15 p.m.**

The **Business Office** is open from **10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**; and Tuesday and Thursday from **3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

The **Admission Office** is open from **8:45 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** and Monday and Thursday from **3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**