

Book trade in 19th century Italy: how to get by among forbidden books and troubles with communication and circulation

In this paper I'd like to discuss some aspects of the book market in Italy during the first half of the 19th century. The idea is to take in exam how the censorship – widespread in all the Italian States – and the problems concerning the duties and taxes had an influence on the book trade.

My reflections are developed by a special observation point, the Gabinetto Vieusseux of Florence.

Founded in 1819 by Giovan Pietro Vieusseux, a merchant from Geneva, this *cabinet littéraire* played a vital role in linking the culture of Italy with that of other European countries in the 19th century, and also became one of the chief reference points for the Risorgimento movement. It began as a reading room that provided leading European periodicals for Florentines and visitors from abroad in a setting that encouraged conversation and the exchange of ideas. A circulating library with the latest publications in Italian, French and English was also installed next to the reading room few years later.

Thanks to the rich archive that Giovan Pietro Vieusseux had left, we are able to know not only the functioning of his enterprise and their users but also a large network of correspondents - merchants, book sellers, librarians, journalists, authors etc. etc.- from every part of Italy and Europe. Through Vieusseux' s letters and documents I'd like to sketch out a scheme of the problems of Italian book trade, including the censorship obstacles and the difficulties of the importation of foreign books.

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