

A Century of Philatelic Manuals and Guidebooks in Italy

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A new logo is announcing that USFI, the Italian union of philatelic journalists and writers, has just entered its fiftieth year and is looking forward to the celebrations of 2016. In the last years, past president Danilo Bogoni organized very important exhibitions presenting specific ranges of Italian philatelic literature. At Milanofil 2014 were on display the encyclopedias and other large, popular instalment publications sold weekly at the newsagents' stands. At Romafil 2014 it was the turn of Sport-Olympic literature, documenting a long-standing tradition since the early days of the Landmans catalog (1948). The subject was then carried on by several authors with the support of the national thematic association (CIFT) and, overall, of the specialized Sport-Olympic association (UICOS).



The new board of USFI, chaired by Fabio Bonacina, asked Giancarlo Morolli to propose, plan and arrange new exhibitions of philatelic literature. Milanofil 2015 was confirmed about ten weeks before its start date, hence the time available was quite narrow. Nevertheless, it was possible to set up a well appreciated exhibition, devoted to a century of philatelic Manuals and Guidebooks in Italy. Thanks of the support of the Istituto di Studi Storici e Postali in Prato (the largest philatelic library in Italy), Bolaffi's Historical Archive, the Associazione Italiana di Storia Postale (AISP) and some USFI members, almost 80% of the works published in the time frame from 1894 to 1994 was displayed.

Actually the period considered should have started thirty years earlier, but the very first manual published in Italy was not available for display in such a short time. However, the "Guida-manuale per far collezione di francobolli", written by **Ulisse Franchi** and printed in Florence in 1864, was shown among the gems of philatelic literature at Monacofil 2013. In its 26 pages the book provides a detailed description of 1,475 stamps issued around the world from 1840 to 1863. Franchi was a well-known antique book merchant in Florence and a fund of his documents is at the National Central Library in Florence.

The birth of philatelic literature

In 1894 Milan hosts the first International Philatelic Exhibition, attesting the diffusion of philately in the region. In the same



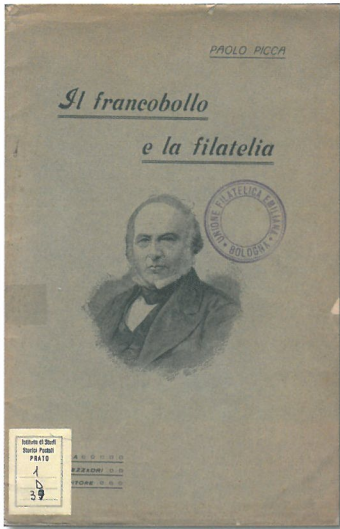
year three publications are made available, guiding collectors towards selecting, keeping, arranging and protecting their stamps. All these books, in short or detailed form, list the issues from all over the world, and this trend continues in the following decades. Women have been almost absent in Italian philately, but one of these books is written by a lady, **Maria Rosa Tommasi**, who "follows the footprint of the most learned among philatelists in Italy and abroad" and provides useful details to collectors. A second book, authored by **Teofilo Gay**, has a first part advising on how to build a collection, followed by a list of the issues of 141 countries.



Jacopo Gelli has a similar pattern: first the "handbook" part and then a comprehensive "philatelic dictionary" (400 pages). This title is misleading since its content in today's terms would

be described as “catalog of stamps from around the world.” Five years later, Gelli presents a new edition of the book, with an appendix listing the recent emissions, which occupies 47 pages, an indication of the expansion rate of stamps in the world.

The hobby gets organized



In absence of new initiatives, even reprints of lectures and presentations are useful to collectors as they explain the key concepts of philately from different points of view and help them to develop their collections in a sound way. **Paolo Picca** presents a monograph that relates to the first Italian Philatelic Congresses, aiming at confuting the belief that philately is a “simple childish pastime”. Indeed, “in

just seventy-two years of life, the stamp, from a simple sign of postage ... wonderfully expanded its sphere of social action ... and acquired a considerable importance”. Similarly Gino Socini exploits the opening celebration of the Circolo Filatelico Ligure for “a trial to philately and the philatelic collectors” that highlights the meaning of stamps. In his words, but also in the works that follows through the next decades till the Second World War, the connections with the stamps celebrating the Victory, the patriotic feelings and then the glory of the Empire are very frequent and offer an additional reason for collecting Italian stamps: the celebration of the Homeland.

The works of Picca and Socini fit into the context of the first steps of organized philately in Italy, materialized first in the Philatelic Congresses and then in the Federation of the Italian Philatelic Societies, founded in 1919 on initiative of several clubs already active in the last decades, under the leadership of Emilio Diena. In this initial period, lacking manuals and other guidebooks, other reprints are useful to collectors and to prospect philatelists, who might need orientation and motivations to start collecting. **Attilio Battaglia** emphasizes that “philately encourages to study



geography and history”, a concept common to several other works. **Fausto Salvatore** highlights the same concept: “a dedicated collector ... can study the continents and islands, seas and lands, and evoke the history of empires, kingdoms, and republics ...”. The lack of guidelines for the growing number of philatelists, who collect in a spontaneous way, is the reason for **Emilio Thoeni's** Guidebook that explains the fundamentals of philately. His goal is shared by **Ernesto Del Giorno**, which also gives some space to the history of the post in a book devoted to youth who, “in their free time, want to enjoy the pleasures of philately”. **Vittorio Di Favria** focuses on the different types of stamps. An entirely different approach is developed by **Alberto Borgognini** who deals with printing techniques, conservation and falsification of stamps.

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Publications during the Second World War

The Second World War has already begun when **Cesare Emiliani's** manual addresses mainly young collectors: actually it is the second, reviewed edition of a work that describes first the world of stamps and philately in general and then provides advice to both “the inexperienced and incautious collectors”. **Giuseppe Ciccarelli** and **Franco Ciarrocchi** publish an essential guide aimed at

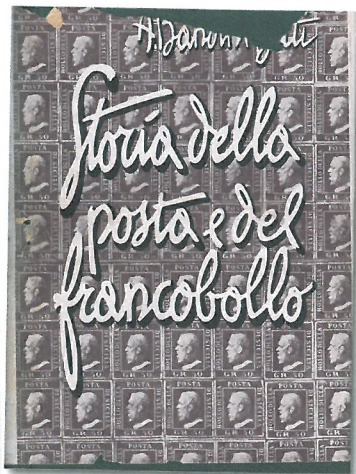
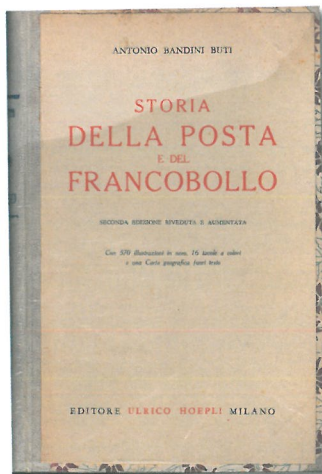




giving the reader motivations and concepts rather than providing him/her technical details about philately "a fascinating art, entertainment for the mind". It is full of information and extols the "irresistible charm of stamps" affirming that "the geography of philately is more real, more documented."



These philatelic journalists are well known to the readers of the Bologna's Il Resto del Carlino and Rome's Il Messaggero, two important national daily newspapers, with the pseudonyms Mastro di Posta and Filagrana. On the same track, with a very different style, is **Enzo Lucifero di Federico**, whose book is "an act of faith" in philately. **Italicus** looks at the basics, explaining the most common philatelic terms, abbreviations, country names, and watermarks.



The first important change is provided by **Antonio Bandini Buti**, who puts the history of postal services as the cornerstone of his equally ample and deep treatment of stamps and philately. The novelty is shown also in practical terms: up to now almost all books are in small, A5 like format, and the number of pages is limited to few dozens. This book is a tome of more than six hundred pages, of a wider format. In spite of war times, a revised and augmented edition is printed just three years later by a leading Milanese publisher.

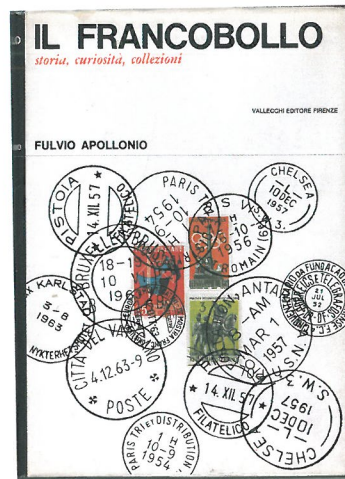


The war is over and philately blossoms with the economic recovery

Francesco Ruggiero's target are primarily young people, as his manual offer them a fast help to approach philately better prepared. The first work of foreign author, **Fernand Serrane**, puts the emphasis on the commercial aspects of philately. Enzo **Lucifero di Federico** revises and expands its work, thirteen years since the first edition, with the same spirit: pass on to collectors his enthusiasm, knowledge and experience.



Meanwhile, newspapers and magazines are turning their attention to philately by devoting a weekly feature written by a professional journalist or a philatelic writer. Their leader is certainly **Fulvio Apollonio**, journalist of La Nazione in Florence, co-founder and first president of USFI. His substantial book about stamps aims at a better understanding of philately by those who are already collectors and, above all, at raising the interest of the man in the street.



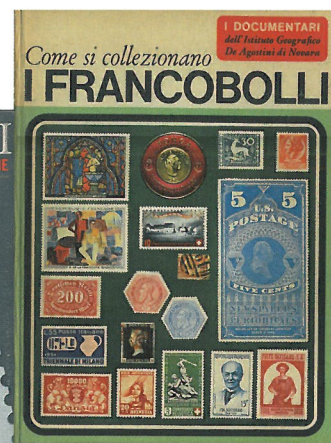
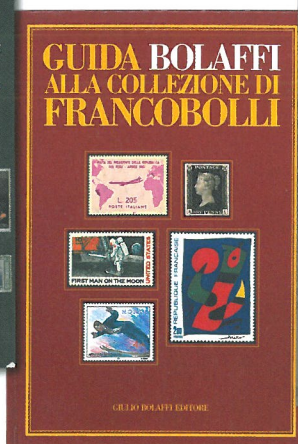
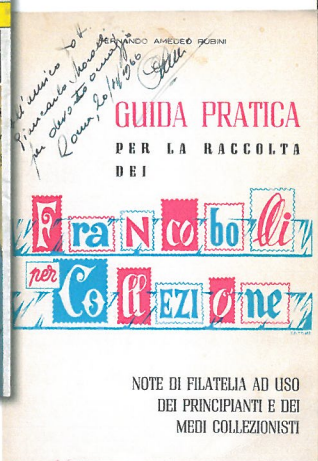
The same objective is common to the new book by **Antonio Bandini Buti**, author of a detailed manual of philately. Another well-known journalist, **Fernando Amedeo Rubini**, presents a practical guide to be used by begin-

ners and average collectors. **Luigi Cerrato** analyzes various aspects of philately and in particular the economic ones, from acquiring to eventually selling the items.

These are prolific years for the growth of our hobby in Italy. Publishers look to philately as an additional topic for their series documenting various hobbies and collecting interests. **Uberto Tosco** writes a lean publication for De Agostini "Documentaries" in which, after a quick textual introduction, he speaks mostly through the images and their explanatory comments.

Fernando Amedeo Rubini presents his guide in the context of a set of "Practical Encyclopedias" of another leading publisher, Sansoni. The guide is very articulate, in order to cover all aspects of philately for the benefit of the reader. Mursia relies on **Gennaro Angiolino**, who intends to demystify the concept that philately is a difficult hobby and that philatelic terms are

difficult to use. From England, where it was published in a popular series of paperbacks, arrives the book by **L. N. and M. Williams** edited by Enzo Diena. This work, part of a "Universal" series, intertwines the history of the post and that of philately, without forgetting many comments in support of the collector. The Bolaffi Company publishes a guide authored by **G. M. Vassallo** that, over three decades and in revised text and format, continues to help those individuals who want to enter the world of philately or who are already a part of it but want to gain confidence and competence. The "Treatise" of **Luigi Sassone** is an ample and rigorous guide that describes the characteristics of all types of postage stamps and also of those related to other communication services, and then illustrates the development of the collection and the philatelic organization in our country. While most publications aim at keeping a simple approach, Sassone provides comprehensiveness and depth of information.



The Encyclopedias



Luigi Piloni, in 1952, uses the title “Encyclopedia of postage stamp”, intending to emphasize the breadth of analysis and the richness of details in his book on the post and the stamps. The work meets the canonical definition of “encyclopedia” as exhaustive compendium of the subject matter, but it lacks the alphabetic order of the articles common to most encyclopedias. Almost two decades later, two other works adopt a similar title, but they approach totally different topics. The “Italian Philatelic Encyclopedia” is edited by the specialists of the **Associazione Filatelica Torinese**, eager to make available their knowledge with the support of other advanced collectors. Each volume presents in depth the issues of an ancient Italian state; unfortunately the series stops after the fourth volume. The “Encyclopedia of Stamps” edited by **Fulvio Apollonio** contains a large number of essays on the history of the post and of stamps, classic and thematic philately, organizational matters, etc., written by leading experts in the respective fields, and is planned for the general public, as its installments appears weekly at the newsstands.

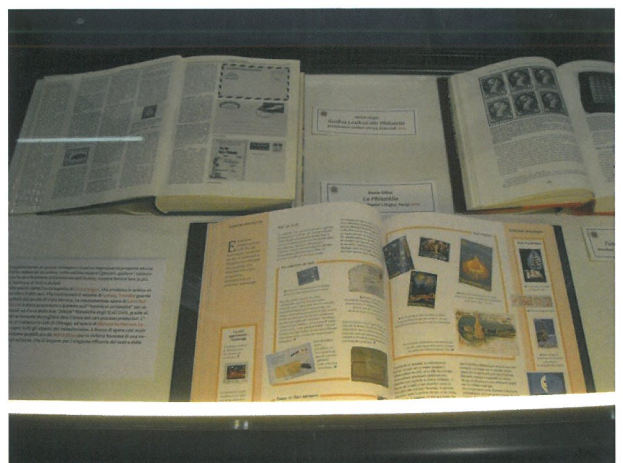


The last period

Editalia publishes a trilogy, in appealing “coffee table” format, including a volume edited by **Gennaro Angiolino** in collaboration with other writers that presents the history of the post and the stamps. The text is supported by an extensive use of enlarged illustrations, mainly from the many issues related to hi-



story and art, and has a special focus on stamps from the Italian area. A well-known and passionate philatelist, **Bepi Pavan**, wants to leave his “notes” of a collecting lifetime, hoping they are useful especially to newcomers, to which he recommends patience as a key ingredient for a successful hobby. **Vito Salierno** reviews the history of the post and of stamps, especially in our country, stimulating the curiosity of the beginner and providing new information to the specialist thanks to a comprehensive approach that takes advantage from his extraordinary knowledge of both postal history and philately. The stated objective of **Franco Filanci** is to provide the reader “what he always wanted to know about stamps and mail, but no one ever told him” ... to give collectors the ability to create, with stamps, stationery and postmarks “something always new, interesting, sometimes unique and exceptional.”



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