

RULES FOR READERS  
IN THE  
VATICAN APOSTOLIC LIBRARY



VATICAN CITY  
2022-2023

# PREAMBLE

## I. Nature of the Vatican Library

The Vatican Library is the Library of the Pope. It was established, in accordance with the intention of Nicholas V, “*pro communi doctorum virorum commodo*” (Brief of April 30, 1451); and with the that of Sixtus IV, who built it, “*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 opened to all qualified researchers in 1883 under Leo XIII (see his letters *Saepenumero considerantes*, August 18, 1883, and *Augustum sanctissimumque munus*, October 1, 1888), who eased the admission process and at the same time also opened the Vatican Secret Archives to readers.

The Library 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.” As such, the Library is governed “by laws of its own, both in regard to its constitution and 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 readers; it is not a public 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 Vatican Library

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 contract staff, and by means of publications.
3. making available to qualified readers from around the world, with all necessary caution, both the originals and various forms of reproductions of the documents and objects preserved in the Library, providing all possible and appropriate scientific and technical assistance for research, continually updating such instruments and aids which are helpful or necessary.

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 observance of the following Rules for Readers, considering the ideal environment for study and research to be one which is characterized by strict silence and by respect for persons and for the place which welcomes them.

The following Rules are intended above all to provide readers with working conditions appropriate to a place of study and research. Therefore, readers are invited to read them carefully and to follow them scrupulously.

Consultation of material may be restricted due to a temporary unavailability of the requested documents (due to restoration, disinfestation cycle, temporary exhibits, etc...), 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. Admission

Qualified readers from around the world are admitted without distinction of race, religion, origin or culture, particularly professors and researchers from universities and other institutions of higher education, as well as other learned persons known for their writings and scholarly publications. Requirements for admission are availability of space, and adequate training (documented and attested by an accredited academic institution). By long-standing tradition, applicants 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 or studying for a Ph.D. degree, as well as for undergraduate students who have a specific need to consult manuscripts or other materials preserved only in the Vatican Library. Students must provide a guarantee letter indicating that their institution accepts liability 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.

Readers who intend to consult numismatic materials must, in addition to obtaining a reader's pass, also notify the Director of the Numismatic Department of their visit in advance.

Admitted readers receive a reader's pass which allows them to access Vatican City through Porta Sant'Anna. The pass is personal and may not be given to others. Loss or theft of a pass must be immediately reported to the Admissions Office of the Library, together with a copy of the report submitted to the competent authorities. A replacement pass may be issued, in case of loss, theft or damage of the original pass, for a fee of **€20,00**.

By accepting the reader's pass and signing the form provided by the Admissions Office, the reader agrees to comply with these Rules, a copy of which he or she will receive with the pass.

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

1. a letter of introduction (particularly for first-time applicants) or a document attesting the applicant's academic qualifications, of which the Library keeps the original or a copy;
2. a valid identification document (which includes the person's address), of which the Library keeps a copy;
3. at its own discretion (but always in the case of students), the Library may require a guarantee letter.

## II. Obligations of Readers towards the Library

Readers admitted to the Library are required to:

1. observe these Rules and other indications that will be given from time to time to integrate it.
2. carry their pass with them at all times when they are in the Library premises, wearing it visibly in the cardholder which will be provided, whenever a pass is issued or renewed, by the Admissions Office;
3. treat all materials, particularly manuscripts and old printed books, with the utmost care and extreme delicacy, protecting these precious materials from any type of damage;
4. provide the Library with a copy of any publications relating to materials consulted or received by way of reproduction.

## III. General Library Regulations

### 1. General Behavior (penalties are applicable in some cases)

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 Library's courtyard or coffee bar. It is forbidden to disturb in any way the study and work of other readers, e.g., by talking out loud or by using any kind of noisy equipment.

Readers must wear **decent and respectful clothing**, convenient to the dignity of an ancient institution of culture and study. Readers are reminded that the Library, being within the Holy See, is subject to a number of specific rules relating decent dress and behavior, out of respect for the place and for those who work there. In addition, being open to readers from every country, it is important to respect each and every culture and religion, especially in cases where certain behaviors or clothing choices can be a sign of lack of sensitivity or lack of respect towards others.

**Mobile phones must have their ringers turned off upon entering** and may not be used for communication in any part of the Library buildings.

All readers are required to **conduct themselves in a manner befitting the decorum of the Library**. Inappropriate behavior by individuals or groups, which is not suited to the dignity of the institution, is forbidden.

**Photography, filming, sound recording, and any other type of professional media production is not allowed.** It is strictly forbidden to bring any kind of photographic or filming equipment (with the exceptions noted in Section VII below), tripods, movie cameras, recorders, dictaphones, digital scanners and other devices which would allow reproduction of the Library's materials, environment or structures, without the explicit authorization of the Prefecture.

It is strictly forbidden to bring and use scissors, knives, razor blades, razors, matches, adhesive paper, adhesive tape, glue, ink bottles, correction fluids, and generally any kind of liquid, substance or other object which could damage the collections of the Library. Readers are obliged to comply with the instructions of Library staff without discussion.

In all the Library buildings it is **forbidden to smoke and to consume food or beverages**.

Access to the stacks where manuscripts and books are stored is prohibited to the public. In addition, it is not allowed to enter any areas occupied by staff offices or to use equipment or materials assigned to Library staff, unless duly authorized.

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 the Library must, **upon arrival:**

- *at the Reception Desk:*

- a) present their card to the porter who will electronically record their arrival;
- b) receive from the porter the electronic key number for their locker;
- c) place in the locker all personal belongings which are not pertinent to studying;

- *in the Reading Room (Manuscripts, Printed Books, Periodicals, Sistine Hall):*

- a) electronically register their arrival at the distribution desk;
- b) enter their name in block capitals in the daily register, opposite their key number;
- c) choose the place where they intend to sit;
- d) return to the distribution desk and enter the number of the place they have chosen next to their name.

## **3. Leaving the Library**

When leaving the Library (even if they intend to return later in the same day), having ensured that they are leaving nothing behind, readers must:

- *in the Reading Room:*

return any manuscripts or printed books which they had ordered from the stacks and ask for the exit authorization from each of the Reading Rooms where the orders were placed (if they have no such materials to return, their exit may be authorized from any of the Reading Rooms);

- *at the Reception Desk:*

- a) show any books of their own which they are carrying with them;
- b) remove their personal belongings from the locker;
- c) electronically register their departure from the Library.

# **IV. Rules for consultation**

## **1. General Rules**

Assistance is provided for readers in the reading rooms. The Reading Rooms (Manuscripts, Printed Books, Periodicals, Sistine Hall) are equipped with surveillance cameras and tracking devices which will identify any irregular passage (e.g. into the stacks) by readers, as well as volumes which are moved from one reading room to another or illegally removed from the Library. Each Reading Room has its own specific regulations.

Readers who are admitted to the Library may move freely between the different floors of Reading Rooms, using the stairs or the main elevator and bringing with them the books they have ordered for consultation, after having registered them at the distribution desk of the "home" reading room of each book. They are obliged to wear their reader's pass in such a way that it is easily visible for staff and readable by the Library's tracking devices. Readers who disregard these rules will be asked to leave the premises.

Readers are required to bring with them only such items as are strictly necessary for their research. When they register their arrival, they should notify the Reading Room staff of any materials not belonging to the Library.

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 liability. If the reader does not notify the staff of any damages, it will be assumed that the reader has received the work in good condition. In case of damage or loss, the reader 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, briefcases and file folders. Portable personal computers and tablets (without cases) are permitted, as well as the strictly necessary amount of paper, open folders, magnifying glasses, and flexible measuring tapes (soft plastic or cloth).

In addition to the general prohibitions which have already been stated (e.g. food, beverages, etc.), the following are not permitted:

- **reserving and occupying a reading place for longer than necessary;**
- **improper use of the Library's furnishings, equipment and rooms;**
- **studying or consulting a manuscripts or printed books 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;**
- **marking or underlining, even in pencil, manuscripts, printed books or other materials;**
- **tracing bindings, watermarks, or any other materials.**

For the use of special reading equipment (Wood's lamp, watermark, microfilm or microfiche readers, CD-ROMs, 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. belonging to the Library.

## **2. Manuscript Reading Room**

Use of the Manuscript Reading Room is restricted to readers who are studying manuscripts, not for those consulting only printed books. Readers may request manuscripts from a terminal in the Reading Room, using their reader's pass.

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

The use of cameras and mobile phones to make reproductions is also prohibited (see below, "Reproductions").

It is not permitted to remove a manuscript from the Reading Room for any reason, or to bring it from the Manuscript Reading Room into the adjoining "Inventory" room.

For materials kept in the Manuscript Stacks: readers may request **five (5)** manuscripts per day (**Monday through Thursday** between **9:00 a.m.** and **5.20 p.m.**). Materials kept in the Archival Section must be requested **Monday through Thursday** before **1.00 p.m.** On **Friday** the manuscripts or documents kept in the Archives Section must be requested by **12:00**.

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; only after two manuscripts have been returned may a request for two more manuscripts be made. 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, one may ask permission to take more than one manuscript at a time to the desk.

The manuscript being read or studied must always stand on the lectern and 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, however the card provided on the lectern may be used.

The manuscript's pages should be turned slowly and with extreme care to preserve them from further wear.

The manuscript's pages 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, it is suitable to close the manuscript.

For conservation purposes, the Library reserves the right to provide for consultation one of the various types of reproductions of its materials which are available, rather than the original documents.

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 from the Inventory Room into the Manuscript Reading Room and use them at their desk. In the place of the printed book being used, one of the cardboard place markers (which are provided at each desk) must be inserted to indicate by whom the book is being used. Readers who do not respect this rule, which is helpful to everyone, will have their pass temporarily suspended.

Readers who wish to consult printed books from the stacks in the Manuscript Reading room must register electronically at the distribution desk of the Printed Books Reading Room and enter their name in block capitals in the daily register there.

## **3. Printed Books Reading Room**

In the Printed Books consultation rooms, only the use of an erasable pencil is allowed. The use of fountain and ballpoint pens, highlighters, markers, colors and any other type of writing or marking instrument that leaves indelible traces is prohibited.

For the consultation of printed books up to the seventeenth century included, only the use of erasable pencil is permitted and the use of fountain and ball-point pens, highlighters, markers, colors and any other type of writing instrument leaving indelible traces is forbidden.

In the Printed Books Reading Room, up to **six (6)** books may be taken directly from the open shelves and taken to the desk chosen by the reader. One of the markers provided showing the number of the desk being used by the person 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 pass temporarily suspended. Readers must not return books to their places on the open shelves: the volumes will be left in the study station used, where they can be kept until the following Friday. The bookmark with the wording "reserved" must be inserted in the volumes that the reader wants to keep, in a visible way..

Books from the stacks may be requested at the distribution desk by filling out the appropriate form. No more than **five (5)** books per day may be requested (**Monday** through **Thursday**, between **9:00 a.m.** and **4:00 p.m.**; on **Friday** until **12:30**). They may be returned at the front desk of the Printed Books Reading Room and the Periodicals Reading Room.

Upon request, a maximum of **five (5)** books may be held on deposit until the Friday of the week following the date of the request (or, in certain cases, for a longer period).

A reader may have up to **three (3)** printed books from the stacks at a time. Rare and valuable books must be consulted at the desks nearest the distribution desk. Such materials, if they are kept in the Reading Room for the reader, must be returned to the stacks every Friday.

#### **4. Periodicals Reading Room**

In the Periodicals Reading Room, up to **six (6)** volumes may be taken directly from the open shelves and placed on the desk chosen by the reader. One of the markers provided showing the number of the desk being used by the person, should be inserted on the shelf where the book has been removed. Readers who do not respect this rule, which is helpful to everyone, will have their passes temporarily suspended. Readers must not re-shelve the books, but should leave them on their desks. 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 completing the appropriate forms. A maximum of **five (5)** books may be requested per day, and all requests are to be made before 12 noon. They may be returned at the front desk of the Periodicals Reading Room, of the Printed Books Reading Room, or of the Sistine Hall.

Upon request, a maximum of **five (5) books** may be kept for the reader until the Friday of the week following the date of the request (or, in certain cases, for a longer period).

Each reader may consult no more than **three (3)** volumes at a time.

#### **5. Sistine Hall**

In the Sistine Hall, up to **six (6) books** may be taken directly from the open shelves and taken to the desk chosen by the reader. One of the markers provided showing the number of the desk being used by the person 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 pass temporarily suspended. Readers must not return books to their places on the open shelves: the volumes will be left in the study station used, where they can be kept until the following Friday. The bookmark with the wording "reserved" must be inserted in the volumes that kept aside, in a visible way.

Books from the stacks may be requested at the distribution desk of the Printed Books Reading Room or of the Periodicals Reading room by filling out the appropriate form. They may be returned at any of the front desks in the Printed Books Reading Room, the Periodicals Reading Room or the Sistine Hall.

#### **6. Reservation of volumes for consultation**

The service is available exclusively for readers with a regular library card and it depends on the state of conservation of the library material. Readers can send an email to [prenotastamp@vatlib.it](mailto:prenotastamp@vatlib.it) or fill out the online form.

The request must be submitted at least 48 hours (two working days) before the consultation. The day after the request, the interested party will receive a booking confirmation or a message of unavailability of the volume.

The volumes stored in external deposits are collected every **Monday** and **Thursday**; the requests must be sent in the working day before they are collected. The topography of the funds can be consulted on the Library's website: <https://www.vaticanlibrary.va/en/the-collections/collections-kept-in-the-stacks.html>.

The reserved books must be consulted and delivered to the Printed Books reading hall. The list of funds excluded from the service is on the Library's website and is constantly updated.

#### **7. Numismatic Department**

The Numismatic Department or Medagliere can accommodate one scholar per time. To study the numismatic material, it is required to fix an appointment with the Director sending an email to [bavmedag@vatlib.it](mailto:bavmedag@vatlib.it) or calling the telephone

number +39 06 69879406. After registering the arrival at the distribution desk of one of the two Reading Rooms, the scholar is accompanied by the staff in charge to the Numismatic Department where the scholar signs the Register of Scholars. During the examination of the numismatic material, the scholar:

- must wear **well-fitting and clean cotton gloves**, especially for some particular coins and medals;
- is assisted by the staff during the examination;
- must pay great attention to the numismatic material;
- **cannot take picture of the numismatic material.**

As there is no a Wi-Fi network at the Numismatic Department, the scholar may possibly use, only for study purposes, the pc workstation dedicated to guest.

## V. Security Regulations

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

The Library has installed surveillance devices and reserves the right to carry out security checks which it deems necessary, including asking readers to make available personal objects for inspection (e.g., purses, closed bags, briefcases, etc...) either upon entering or exiting the Library.

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 required to inform the competent authorities of any theft or other criminal act or behavior.

Members of the Library staff, who must make themselves available and recognizable at all times, are required to 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. Penalties

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 Regulations, may be excluded temporarily or permanently from the Library, without prejudice to any civil or criminal liability.

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

- **those who write or mark in any way books or documents, even in pencil;**
- **those disrupting in any way the study and work of others;**
- **those smoking in the Library buildings;**
- **those using mobile phones for conversations.**

In all above-mentioned cases, the reader remains liable for reimbursement of the material damage.

In especially serious cases, the Library will inform other libraries of the reader's exclusion and 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, with the exception of printed books published from 1601 onwards, must be made by the Library Photographic Laboratory. In the Manuscript Reading Room, it is therefore strictly forbidden to use personal equipment such as cameras, digital scanners and similar devices to copy or reproduce the Library's materials. It is also forbidden to make tracings of any of the Library's materials.

At the readers' desks in the Printed Books Reading Room and in the Periodicals Reading Room it is permitted to use cellular phones (or small cameras) for the reproduction, for personal use, of pages of printed books published between 1601 and 10 years before the current date. Such permission, and particularly the use of a flash, may be restricted, at the discretion of the Reading Room Staff, if it leads to disruptive behavior; if it represents a conservation risk for the Library's collections; or if the reader's behavior is clearly incompatible with current copyright regulations. By signing the pertinent declaration during the admission process, readers nonetheless recognize their own exclusive responsibility for respecting such regulations.

Photographic reproductions of the Library's materials may be requested, and the Library reserves the right to grant them at its own discretion.

Orders of photographic reproductions from manuscripts, printed books and other materials, for personal study or for editorial or commercial purposes, as well as requests for permission to use materials belonging to the Vatican Library, may be placed by **filling out the appropriate on-line form** for personal study or professional use: <https://www.vaticanlibrary.va/en/information-for-readers/photographic-reproductions.html>.

Photocopies will only be made from printed books published between 1601 and 10 years before the current date, and only for personal study.

Readers may also purchase, in the Bursar's Office (*Economato*), pre-paid coupons for ordering **overnight photocopies** (deliverable in 24 hours) from open-shelf books and from printed books kept in the stacks. The coupons are valid for one year and are not reimbursable. Each reader may order up to 150 pages of photocopies in the course of a year (from September to July). Readers who wish to use this service, after having received the volume to be photocopied from the stacks (or taken it from the open shelves), may fill out the form available at the distribution desk in the Printed Books and Periodicals Reading Rooms and present it to the Reading Room Staff together with the book, the coupon and their reader's pass.

## 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, or to allow a third party to publish them.

Readers are always liable for the use of the reproductions that they receive and are obliged to respect the current international regulations regarding copyright and 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 order forms, according to the type of use for which the order is made. Specific regulations 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 regulations.

## IX. Limitation of Liability

The Library is not responsible for personal objects or any items brought by readers into its premises or left in the lockers.

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

## X. Opening Hours

The Library is open **Monday through Friday from September 16, 2022 to July 14, 2023**. The calendar, the days of closure and any update about the access conditions are available on the Library website.

The **Consultation rooms** are open from **Monday to Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:20 p.m.**; on Friday from **9:00 a.m. to 13:30 p.m.**

The Sistine Hall, unless otherwise specified by the Prefecture, is open every day from **9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

The **Bursar's Office** is open daily from **10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon**; and also **Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

The **Admissions Office** is open daily from **9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon**; and also **Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

For updates on access or opening times, please refer to the Library's website or follow the [@bibliovaticana](#) Twitter account. For further information please contact us: +39 06 69879411; email [bav@vatlib.it](mailto:bav@vatlib.it).