



RULES FOR READERS IN THE VATICAN APOSTOLIC LIBRARY

I. Nature and Purpose of the Vatican Apostolic Library

The Vatican Apostolic Library is the inalienable property of the Supreme Pontiff, established “pro communi doctorum virorum commodo”¹ and “ad decorem militantis Ecclesiae, fidei catholicae augmentum, eruditorum quoque ac litterarum studiis insistentium virorum commodum et honorem.”² It is specialized in the philological and historical disciplines, and also, retrospectively, in the fields of theology, law and science. As “an outstanding means for the Church to contribute to the development and dissemination of culture, in support of the work of the Apostolic See,” the Library is charged with the task of “collecting and preserving a vast patrimony of learning and art and of making it available to scholars in search of truth;”³ it is dedicated to works of scholarly research, based on the study of manuscripts, printed books, coins and medals, prints, and other graphic and cartographic materials.

The purpose of these Rules is to ensure an optimal research and study experience for all admitted readers, and at the same time to preserve the collections in the best possible conditions.

II. Admission to the Library

By papal provision, the Library is open to qualified researchers and scholars without distinction of religion, origin or culture, particularly to teachers and researchers from universities and other institutions of higher learning, and to other learned persons. Conditions for admission are the availability of places and adequate training, documented by accredited academic institutions. Readers are requested to indicate the nature of their research project.

The reader’s ticket grants access to the Vatican City State through Porta Sant’Anna; it is strictly personal and may not be transferred to others. Loss or theft of the reader’s ticket must be reported immediately to the Admissions Office of the Library at the address ammissioni@vatlib.it. A duplicate may be issued for a fee of €20,00, upon presentation of a copy of report of loss or theft which has been submitted to the competent authorities.

For the issuance of a reader’s ticket, the following documents are required:

1. a **letter of introduction** (for first-time applicants or for renewals after several years), or a **document attesting the applicant’s academic qualifications**;

2. a **valid identification document which indicates the applicant’s address** (the Library keeps a copy);

3. university students are required to present a **guarantee letter** from a faculty member of their institution.

In particular cases the Library reserves the right to request further documents at its own discretion.

III. Obligations and Responsibilities of Readers

Readers admitted to the Library are required to:

1. observe the Rules contained in this document, and conform to any instructions imparted verbally or in writing by the Library staff;

2. clearly exhibit their reader’s ticket at all times while they are in the Library;

3. treat the materials entrusted to them with the utmost care;

4. provide the Library with a copy of any publications regarding the materials consulted or received by way of reproduction.

IV. General Regulations

In the Reading Rooms and in all interior spaces, readers must avoid **any disturbance to the activities of those who are studying and working** (e.g. by working in groups or out loud or by the use of noisy equipment); the courtyard and the coffee bar are to be used for conversation. The **use of cellular phones** for communicating or listening to messages is forbidden in all interior spaces, and all electronic devices (phones, tablets, computers) must be muted upon entering the Library.

Readers are expected to **dress in a manner which is respectful** of the institution and of the religious and cultural sensitivities of other readers, avoiding any excessively revealing attire, **Inappropriate behaviour** by individuals and/or groups is similarly discouraged.

¹ Nicholas V, Brief of April 30, 1451.

² Sixtus IV, Bull of June 15, 1475.

³ Francis, Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, 243.

It is not permitted to take photographs, films, audio recordings, or to produce any other kind of reproduction, except in authorized cases (see below, item VII); tripods, movie cameras, voice recorders, digital scanners, dino-lite, digital microscopes, and other similar devices are not allowed.

In all the Reading Rooms, only **erasable pencils, laptop computers, tablets without cases, the strictly necessary amount of paper, open folders, magnifying glasses, and flexible measuring tapes** (of soft plastic or cloth) may be used. It is forbidden:

- to bring **scissors, knives, razor blades, razors, matches, adhesive paper, adhesive tape, ink bottles, correction fluids or any other type of liquid;**
- to use **fountain pens, ball-point pens, highlighters, markers, colors and any other type of writing instrument which leaves indelible traces;**
- to introduce **umbrellas, purses, briefcases, closed file folders or other containers.**

The consumption of **food and drink** is allowed exclusively in the internal courtyard or in the coffee bar of the Library. **Smoking** is allowed only in the courtyard.

Access to the stacks and to the staff offices is forbidden to the public. It is also forbidden to use devices or materials which are assigned to the Library staff. Access from the **Library** to the **Vatican Apostolic Archive**, and vice versa, is allowed only through the **main entrance of each institution.**

Upon arrival, scholars admitted to use the Library must:

- a) show their reader's ticket to the Porter for the registration of their arrival;
- b) place in the locker assigned to them their personal belongings and any items which are not allowed in the Reading Rooms;
- c) register at the distribution desk of the Reading Room of their choice (Manuscripts, Printed Books, or Periodicals), advising the staff of any personal items they have brought with them;
- d) enter their name on the register at the distribution desk, opposite the number of the locker assigned to them;
- e) choose the place where they intend to sit, following any indications imparted by the staff, and enter it next to their name on the register at the distribution desk.

The Library is not responsible for any personal items or property introduced by readers into its premises or left in the lockers. It is forbidden to leave personal objects at the Porter's desk or with the Reading Room staff, or to use the Library as a reference for receiving mail, messages, telephone calls, etc.

When leaving the Library, even if they intend to return later the same day, readers (after ensuring that they have not left any personal effects in the premises), must:

- a) return any materials they have received in the Reading Rooms, which will clear them for exiting the Library; readers who have not received any materials must still request clearance to exit from the staff of one of the Reading Rooms;
- b) proceed to the Porter's desk, where they must show any books of their own or personal property which they have brought with them;
- c) remove their personal belongings from the locker;
- d) show their reader's ticket to the Porter to perform the exit procedure.

For security reasons, readers must pass correctly through the turnstiles on the first floor and on the ground floor, one person at a time, allowing the necessary time for the system to register their passage. The Library staff is authorized by the Prefect to reprimand readers who do not correctly observe the procedures.

V. General Reading Room Rules

Assistance is provided for readers in the Reading Rooms. The materials from the Library's collections are to be studied *in situ*; loans of any kind are not allowed. Consultation of materials may be restricted due to a temporary unavailability of the requested documents (due to restoration, disinfestation, exhibition loans, etc.), because the requested document has not yet been inventoried, due to the conservation status of the document, or for other reasons at the discretion of the Prefect.

Readers are personally responsible for the safety of the materials entrusted to them, which they must examine upon receipt, immediately notifying the Reading Room staff any existing damage. In the absence of such notification, it will be assumed that the materials were received in good condition. In case of damage or loss, the reader will bear the full cost of replacement or restoration.

The following are not allowed:

- consulting materials in groups of two or more readers; any special requirements for group study or discussion should be brought to the attention of the staff, who will endeavor to meet them where possible;
- reserving or occupying reading places for longer than necessary;
- improper use of the Library's furniture, equipment and rooms;
- consulting materials entrusted to another reader or passing one's own materials to other readers;

- consulting materials with soiled hands;
- writing, even in pencil, using manuscripts, printed books, or any other Library materials as support;
- marking or underlining, even in pencil, in manuscripts, printed books or other materials;
- tracing bindings, watermarks, or any other materials or objects belonging to the Library.

Special reading equipment (Wood's lamp, watermark, microfilm or microfiche readers, CD-ROM, etc...) may be requested from the Reading Room Staff. Use of such equipment is reserved exclusively for materials belonging to the Library.

- *Specific Rules for the Manuscript Reading Room*

The Manuscript Reading Room is reserved for the study of manuscripts, which the readers order from the terminal in the Reading Room, using their reader's ticket. The Library reserves the right to offer readers reproductions rather than the original requested materials, when available. Readers may not remove manuscripts from the Reading Room for any reason, nor may they produce reproductions of them with their own devices.

Up to **5** manuscripts may be requested each day, **from Monday to Friday**, between **9:00 a.m.** and **4:30 p.m.** Materials belonging to the Archival Section may be requested from Monday to Friday, before **1:00 p.m.**

Requests for manuscripts should be reasonably timed; readers are not allowed to collect their materials from the distribution desk after a period much longer than needed for them to be fetched from the stacks.

Readers may have up to **3 manuscripts at a time** at their disposal, bringing one at a time to their desk; in special cases, e.g. for collations or comparison of scripts, exceptional permission may be given for readers to bring two manuscripts at a time to their desks. Up to **3** manuscripts may be kept in reserve for up to **5** working days; this period may in some cases be extended.

The manuscript being studied must always stand on the lectern and 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 for this purpose. The manuscript's pages should be turned slowly and with extreme care and should not be turned with other objects (e.g. pencils) in hand. Whenever readers leave their desks, they must close the manuscript.

Manuscripts belonging to the *Riserva* may be requested by filling out the appropriate form and providing a written justification. Consultation of musical manuscripts is 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), readers are asked to sign a statement of responsibility.

Readers may bring books from the open shelves of the other reading rooms into the Manuscript Reading Room and use them at their desks. In the place of the book being used, one of the cardboard place markers which are provided at each desk must be inserted; readers should not return these books to their places, but leave them on their desks. However, in order to read printed books from the stacks in the Manuscript Reading Room, readers must register also in the Printed Books Reading Room.

- *Specific Rules for the Printed Books Reading Rooms*

In all the Printed Books Reading Rooms, up to **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 should not return books to their places on the open shelves, but should leave them on their own desks. In those books which readers wish to consult again, they should insert the provided bookmark in such a way that the notice "Riservato," is visible; these books will be kept until the following Friday.

Up to **5** books from the stacks may be requested through the OPAC on each day, from Monday through Friday, up until **4:30 p.m.** These books should be returned to the distribution desk from which they were collected. Up to **5** such books may be kept in reserve until the Friday following the date of the request; this period may be extended in certain cases. Readers may have up to **3** printed books from the stacks at their desks at once.

Rare and precious books are to be read in the first rows of desks in the Printed Books Reading Room. Cotton or nitrile gloves must be worn for the consultation of photographic materials.

Printed books may be reserved in advance through the OPAC, where each shelf-mark is associated with link to this service (which is obligatory for books kept in external stacks). Books are fetched from the external stacks on Mondays and Thursdays, and must be reserved by 7:00 a.m. on those days. Reserved books should be returned in the Printed Books Reading Room.

The topography of the collections and the list of series which are unavailable for consultation are constantly updated and available on the Library's website.

- *Specific Rules for the Numismatic Cabinet*

The Numismatic Cabinet of the Library is accessible to one reader at a time, by appointment with the Director, via email (bavmedag@vatlib.it) or telephone (**06 69879406**).

After registering in one of the Library's Reading Rooms, the reader will be accompanied to the Numismatic Cabinet, where they must sign the daily register. In order to examine the materials, readers must:

- bring their own **clean and well-fitted cotton gloves**, whose use is required depending on the materials to be studied;
- be assisted at all times by the staff of the Cabinet;
- **not take any photographs of the numismatic materials.**

Since the Cabinet does not have a Wi-Fi connection, a computer is at the disposal of readers who need to connect to the internet, exclusively for study purposes.

VI. Security Rules

In all the rooms of the Library, video surveillance and alarm systems are in place to identify irregular movements and entrances into restricted areas, and to trace the movements of volumes from one room to another or out of the Library. Readers may move freely between the different Reading Rooms, using the stairs or the main elevator, taking with them books which they have ordered or removed from the open shelves, after having properly registered the movement in each book's Reading Room of provenance.

The Library staff is authorized to enforce these Rules for Readers. The Library reserves the right to carry out any verification measures it deems necessary, including inspection of readers' personal belongings (such as purses, closed bags, folders, etc.), upon entrance or exit.

Readers who, despite repeated warnings, do not observe these Rules for Readers or the instructions of the staff, may be removed from the Library. The Prefect will decide about punitive measures, which may include temporary or definitive exclusion from the Library. The Library will inform the competent authorities of any theft or other criminal act or behaviour and, in particularly serious cases, will also inform other cultural institutions.

Permanent exclusion from the Library may also be imposed for:

- **marking or writing in books or documents;**
- **smoking inside the Library buildings;**
- **use of cellular phones for conversation;**
- **removing, soiling or damaging in any way the Library's materials, furniture or equipment.**

The reader's liability for any damages remains unchanged. All obligations arising from the relationship established at the time of the reader's admission continue to exist even after the reader's exclusion and/or the revocation of the reader's ticket.

VII. Reproductions and Copyright

The Library's collections and premises are protected by copyright. All reproductions of the Library's materials are managed by the Rights and Reproductions Office and produced by the internal Photographic Laboratory. The Library reserves the right to evaluate at its own discretion all requests for reproductions of materials from its collections, whether for personal use or for editorial or commercial use. All printed materials published during the last 10 years are in any case excluded from any kind of reproduction.

Requests for reproductions must be made by using the on-line form. By filling out this form, readers agree to respect all of the Library's conditions regarding copyright, authorship rights and property rights. Transcriptions and performances of musical partitions are subject to special regulations, which are applicable **even when the partitions are transcribed but not performed.**

Pre-paid coupons may be purchased in the Bursar's Office (*Economato*) for the **rapid photocopy** service for printed books published after 1601 and up until 10 years prior to the current date (up to 150 photocopies per year for private study, produced within 24 hours). The coupons are valid for 10 years and are not reimbursable. The Reading Room staff is available for further details.

At the reading desks in the Printed Books Reading Room, readers may use their own personal devices to reproduce, for private study purposes, pages of books published after 1601 and up until 10 years prior to the current date (not including photographic materials), after having filled out the appropriate form. This privilege, and that of using a flash, may be limited or denied at the sole discretion of the Reading Room staff. Readers who are authorized to make such reproductions assume full responsibility for their use and agree to formally request the consent of the Library if the images are to be published. The Reading Room staff is available to provide further details.

VIII. Hours

The Library is open **from September 16, 2024 to July 31, 2025, Monday to Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:20 p.m.** The calendar, the days of closure and the access criteria are indicated on the Library's website.

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

The Bursar's Office is open from **10:00 a.m. to noon; Tuesdays and Thursdays also from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 pm.**
For more information: bav@vatlib.it; +39 06 69879411.