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How to Digitally Reconstruct the History of an Early Modern Private Library?
Antonio Maria Graziani (1537-1611) and the Vicissitudes of His Books

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Abstract The paper illustrates the historical problems and the technical solutions adopted to create the Graziani Archives portal section dedicated to Antonio Maria Graziani's private library. The purpose of this section is to offer an entire catalogue of the volumes belonged to Graziani, trying to reconstruct the general outline and the internal articulation of Graziani's collection as well as the historical sources that allow us to virtually reassemble his own library.

Keywords Graziani Archives. Antonio Maria Graziani. Early modern private libraries. Digital catalogue. Library. Papal diplomat.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Cataloguing Challenges and Solutions: Reconstructing Antonio Maria Graziani's Library. –3 Navigating Complexity: Designing a Comprehensive Digital Catalogue for Antonio Maria Graziani's Library.

1 Introduction

In this paper, I intend to elucidate the theoretical intricacies alongside the technical solutions that have been adopted in the development of a distinct section within the Graziani Archives online portal.[1]

1 The Graziani Archives portal (`www.grazianiarchives.eu`) was realised within the project *Nuncio's Secret Archives. Papal diplomacy and European multi-denominational*

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This dedicated section is centred upon the library amassed by Antonio Maria Graziani (1537-1611). The designated area, denoted as *La biblioteca di A.M. Graziani* (The Library of A.M. Graziani), aims to provide a comprehensive catalogue encompassing the literary collection that once belonged to this eminent personality within the Roman Church. Notably, Antonio Maria Graziani, a cultivated humanist, held esteemed positions as a Papal diplomat of elevated rank and as bishop of Amelia (Marsili 2002). My present discourse does not primarily underscore the significance of this compilation in terms of unravelling Graziani's multifaceted intellectual disposition (on this topic, Iori 2025). Instead, the emphasis is directed towards the rationale behind and the process by which we have conceptualised a specialised digital instrument to address specific historiographical quandaries.

2 Cataloguing Challenges and Solutions: Reconstructing Antonio Maria Graziani's Library

In designing our digital catalogue, we encountered two major challenges: the initial hurdle involved establishing the true scope and breadth of Graziani's library, given that his books were dispersed among larger collections. The primary and most consequential of these challenges emanates from the Graziani family library located in Vada, containing approximately 2,000 volumes, predominantly from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[2] While this library underwent recent cataloguing, numerous volumes attributed to Graziani remained unidentified prior to our undertaking.[3] Another segment of Graziani's book collection found its way to the Kenneth Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas (Lawrence, KS).[4] However, these latter volumes are not isolated as a distinct compilation and

societies before the Thirty Years War (PRIN2017 JMPYTA). Raines (*supra*) offers a detailed description of the structure and content of the portal. For a brief presentation of the *Nuncio's Secret Archives* (NSA) project, cf. Bonora 2023 and the project website `https://nsa.unipr.it/`.

2 For a brief description of the Graziani family library in Vada, cf. Corsini 2000, 132-9 and Corsini 2021, 104-5. A comprehensive catalogue of the complete library is absent; instead, only catalogues pertaining to specific categories of volumes are available: Corsini 1998 (incunables and sixteenth-century *quarto* editions); Fiorini 2002 (sixteenth-century *folio* editions); Corsini 2004 (sixteenth-century *ottavo* editions printed outside Italy); Garfagnini 2023 (seventeenth-century editions in *folio* and *quarto*); Corsini, Garfagnini 2025 (sixteenth-century editions in *ottavo* and smaller formats).

3 Incomplete lists of Graziani's volumes are published in Corsini 2021, 110-6.

4 The dispersion of the Graziani family archives and library will be illustrated in Raines, forthcoming.

have been catalogued by the library without specific attribution.[5] Additionally, a third group of books eluded our grasp due to historical vicissitudes, such as the spoliation of the Graziani family residences over the centuries that caused some dispersion,[6] as well as sales conducted by some descendants of Antonio Maria during the last century in a bid to generate income (Raines, *supra*).

Given these foundational considerations, our initial and foremost endeavour entailed the meticulous reconstruction of the boundaries of Antonio Maria's library, facilitated by the fusion of three distinct categories of sources. The first category comprises seventeenth-century book inventories presently archived in Vada. Of particular significance is what we term *Inventario 1* (Inventory 1), a list of Graziani's books that likely dates back to 1608 – three years preceding Graziani's demise.[7] *Inventario 1* is accompanied by an additional catalogue, referred to herein as *Elenco tematico* (Thematic List), subsequently compiled by a distinct scribe. This catalogue categorises the same set of books as presented in *Inventario 1*, classifying them into sixteen thematic groupings: *S. Scriptura et Sancti Presbiteri* (Sacred Scriptures and Saintly Presbyters); *Theologi Morales* (Moral Theology); *Libri Spirituales* (Spiritual Literature); *Grammatici* (Grammar Texts); *Poetici* (Poetic Works); *Epistularii* (Epistolary Works); *Historici* (Historical Texts); *Retorici* (Rhetorical Works); *Philosophici* (Philosophical Texts); *Mathematici* (Mathematical Works); *Oeconomici* (Economic Texts); *Politici* (Political Treatises); *Iuridici Canonici* (Canonical Legal Texts); *Civiles* (Civil Law); *Medici* (Medical Writings); *Varij* (Miscellaneous Works). A subsequent enumeration, denoted as *Inventario 2* (Inventory 2),[8] was drafted by the representatives of the Apostolic Chamber on 22 March 1611, a few days after Graziani's decease. The envoys of Pope Paul V, however, did not fully scrutinise Graziani's library, but managed to catalogue only a few volumes they found inside a crate stored in the room where Graziani passed away. Thus, *Inventario 2* enumerates no more than 19 titles: of these, 10 align with those

5 The Kenneth Spencer Research Library has reunited manuscripts from the Graziani family archives in the Graziani-Commendone Collection but did not create a specific collection for the books alienated from the Graziani library.

6 Cf., for example, a letter dated 8 September 1643 (Archivio Graziani di Vada (Rosignano Marittimo, Livorno) (AGV), *Fondo Antonio Maria Graziani* (FAMG), unit 299, "M.M." to Giovan Battista Graziani), describing the great damage suffered by the library after the looting of Villa Graziani in Celalba (near Perugia), occurred during the summer of 1643 in the context of the first War of Castro (1641-44).

7 AGV, *Fondo archivio di famiglia* (FAFG), unit 210/4, "Libri Illustrissimi et Reverendissimi Domini Episcopi Amerini". A first transcription and presentation of the document is provided in Corsini 2021, 106-10. For the dating of *Inventario 1*, cf. Corsini 2021, 114-5.

8 AGV, FAFG, unit 91/1, fol. 9*v*-10*r*.

present in *Inventario 1*, while 9 are conspicuously absent.

The second category of sources encompasses the physical volumes retained in both Vada and Kansas (of special relevance are those bearing inscriptions or dedications signifying ownership by Graziani), while the third one involves insights derived from the extremely rich correspondences of Graziani.[9] Through the synergistic analysis of these sources, we deduced that Antonio Maria's private library held no fewer than 173 titles. Among these, 163 were featured in seventeenth-century book inventories, with the remaining 10 absent from the inventories but supported by tangible evidence like ownership inscriptions and dedications, thus validating their inclusion in Graziani's library (more details in Iori 2025).

Our secondary challenge revolved around identifying the editions and the physical copies owned by Graziani. This task entailed a systematic comparison between inventory-listed items and volumes present in both Vada and Kansas. The outcome revealed that 36 volumes (32 in Vada; 4 in Kansas) contained ownership inscriptions or dedications linking them definitively to Graziani. An additional 44 volumes stored in Vada lacked such inscriptions or dedications but could reasonably be associated with Graziani's collection, aligning seamlessly with bibliographic details found in seventeenth-century inventories. Regrettably, the remainder of the works listed in these same inventories – totalling 93 items – failed to correspond to any existing physical copies and must consequently be categorised as historical copies (Iori 2025). In summary, our current knowledge allows us to confidently identify 46% of the physical copies formerly possessed by Graziani (80 works out of 173). For the portion that remains without attribution, the inventories at least provide insight into titles, authors, and, in some instances, specific editions.

9 Most of these correspondences, which are largely unpublished, are preserved at the Graziani family archives in Vada and at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library. The NSA project members have systematically examined this massive documentation (cf. Raines, forthcoming), to retrieve relevant information about the history of Graziani's library (cf. Iori 2025).

3 Navigating Complexity: Designing a Comprehensive Digital Catalogue for Antonio Maria Graziani's Library

Upon amassing the requisite data for our digital portal, we initiated an exploration into the optimal digital tool for organising and presenting this information in a functional and historically pertinent manner. Initially, we contemplated the construction of a dual-purpose instrument, aiming to delineate distinct treatment for the physical copies owned by Graziani and the historical copies – those books that lack attribution. In regard to the former, our intention was to formulate individualised catalogue entries for each volume, encompassing comprehensive metadata, including the diverse material attributes that differentiate each extant copy, such as provenance notes, dedications, and apostils. Conversely, the historical copies would have been relegated to a separate listing, consolidated within a static page. Our design prioritised the thorough description of the extant physical copies, with the intent to digitally reconstruct and enable virtual engagement with the surviving segment of Graziani's collection.

However, we soon realised that such an approach held the potential to distort the essence of Graziani's library by omitting pertinent data. This partitioning of the library into two divergent and disparately treated sections – the surviving physical copies on one hand and the historical copies on the other – would obscure the comprehensive view of Graziani's library. This unintended consequence would relegate the historical copies to a peripheral status within the portal, despite their essential role in reconstructing Graziani's intellectual background (Iori 2025). Additionally, this configuration would have obfuscated the differentiation between inventoried and non-inventoried volumes, necessitating users to laboriously inspect each of the 80 individual catalogue entries dedicated to physical copies in isolation, thus negating a holistic overview. Furthermore, users would have been denied insight into the sequential arrangement of the books as listed in the book inventories, a structural element that assumes significance, especially in the context of *Inventario 1*. Indeed, this deliberate order suggests thematic subcategories within the collection, potentially reflecting Graziani's conceptualisation of their thematic relevance to his scholarly pursuits – for instance, the discernable division between Latin and vernacular books,[10] or the sequential arrangement of thematically coherent works, such as theological books, historical works, and others (Iori 2025).

Given these considerations, we opted for an alternative digital tool – one that can effectively capture the overarching outline

10 Cf. e.g. the headings "Testus [sic!] Canonici" and "Libri Volgari" in AGV, FAFG, unit 210/4, "Libri Illustrissimi et Reverendissimi Domini Episcopi Amerini", fol. 1*r*, 3*r*.

and internal structure of Graziani's library, alongside the historical sources facilitating its reconstruction. The idea was to integrate this tool into a single web page, commencing with a succinct introduction detailing the collection's history and elucidating the principles underpinning our cataloguing methodology **[fig. 1]**.

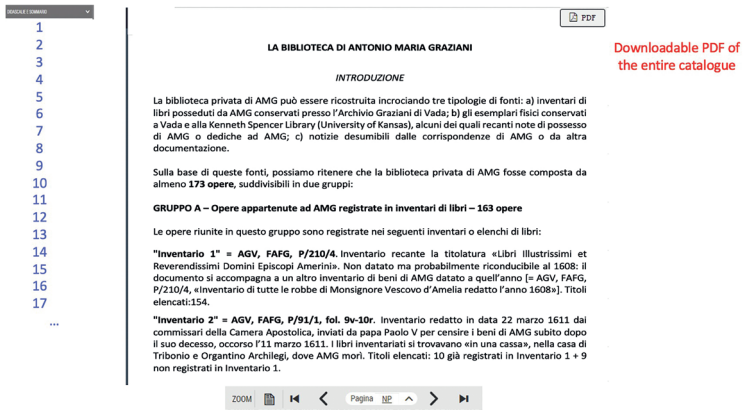

Figure 1 Initial mock-up of the Graziani's library section

Subsequently, the catalogue itself would have followed, incorporating the 173 titles constituting Graziani's private library. We further hypothesised that these titles would be sequentially numbered and grouped into two primary categories. The first group would encompass the items catalogued within seventeenth-century book inventories (163 items), presented in the sequence dictated by these inventories **[fig. 2]**.

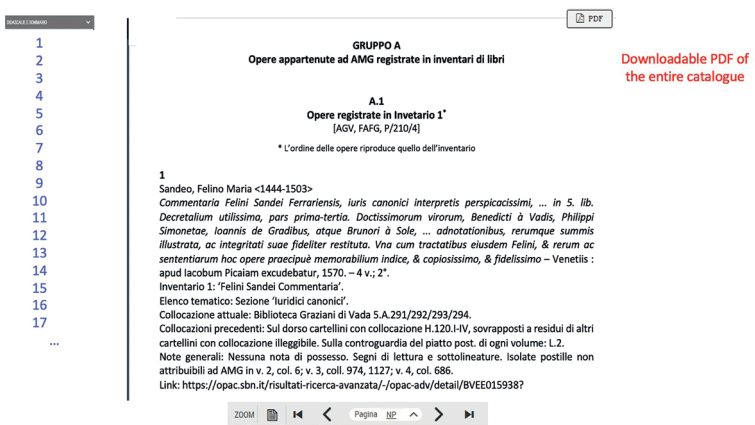

Figure 2 The books listed in *Inventario 1* as presented in the initial mock-up

The second group would then comprise a mere 10 items, numbered 164 to 173, cataloguing physical copies not documented in the inventories but marked by ownership inscriptions or dedications attributed to Graziani.[11]

The mock-up envisaged that each item within both groups would be conveniently accessible via the left-hand column, facilitating direct access by clicking on the corresponding number, thus obviating the need for exhaustive scrolling **[fig. 3]**.

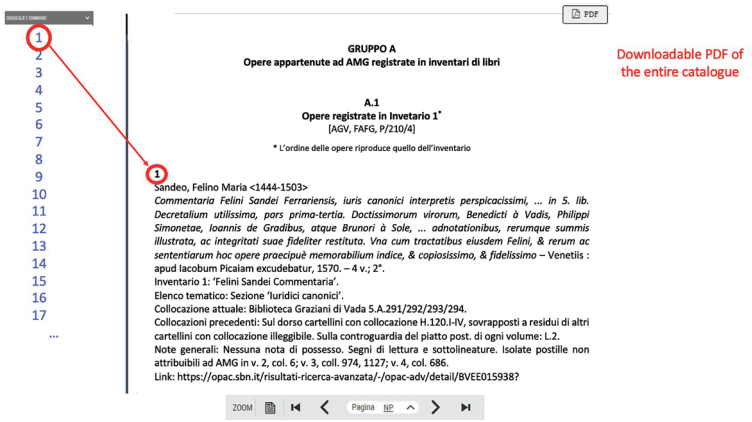

Figure 3 Direct access to each volume from a left-hand column

Moreover, a uniform descriptive structure was applied to each item, adhering to standardised templates. These templates were devised to impart the highest attainable levels of historical and bibliographic information in a uniform format. It was decided that divergent templates would be employed based on whether an item is an extant physical copy or a historical one. To illustrate this, we will consider some examples, moving from maximal to minimal information disclosure.

One highly informative entry revolves around an edition of Livy presently located in Kansas, gifted to Graziani by his pupil and young friend Mikołaj Tomicki.[12] This entry is assigned number 85 within our digital catalogue. The entry was thus structured across five hierarchical levels: the first encompassed bibliographical data (author, title, edition); the second pertained to the seventeenth-century inventories; the third level concerned current physical location (Vada or Kansas) and shelf mark; the fourth level documented material

11 Possible reasons for their exclusion from *Inventario 1* and *Inventario 2* will be discussed in Iori 2025.

12 On the relationship between Graziani and Tomicki, cf. Barzazi 2025.

attributes distinguishing the physical copy (ownership inscriptions, dedications, apostils by Graziani); and the fifth and final level provided a hyperlink to an entry of another online catalogue furnishing comprehensive metadata for the edition.

85
Livius, Titus
T. Livii Patavini Romanae Historiae Principis Decades Tres, Cvm Dimidia, Partim Caelii Secvndi Cvrionis industria, partim collatione meliorum codicum iterum diligenter emendatae. Eiusdem Caelii Praefatio, summam continens de mensuris, ponderibus, réq[ue] nummaria Romanorum & Graecorum… Simonis Grynaei de utilitate legendae historiae. Bartholomaei Marliani de origine urbis Romae Compendium… L. Flori Epitomae,… Doctorum uirorum… Annotationes, Glareani annotationibus… insertae – Basileae: per Ioannes Heruagios, Anno M.D.L.V. Mense Septembri); 2°.
Inventario 1: "Titi Livij Patauini Romanae Historiae. Cum reliquis libris".
Elenco tematico: Sezione "Historici".
Collocazione attuale: KSRL, Summerfield G191.
Collocazioni precedenti: Nessuna traccia.
Dedica: Sul frontespizio "Nicolaus Thomicius suo Antonio Mariae Gratiano". Sul verso della *praefatio* invocazione al libro di Antonio Maria Graziani: "Furem fac moneas, liber, rapaces / ad se contineat manus, crucemque, / si te surripias, statim mirare / surreptum metuens crucis reponet. / Ant. Mar. Grat". (= Giovanni Pietro Artemisio, *carmen* 95; con leggere modifiche).
Note generali: Postille di Antonio Maria Graziani, con segni di lettura e sottolineature, su quasi ogni pagina del volume.
Link: `https://catalog.lib.ku.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=3868964`.

Other items described historical copies solely known through the textual descriptions found within seventeenth-century inventories. In the luckiest cases, the detailed inventorial descriptions not only facilitate the identification of the title and author but also discern the specific edition owned by Graziani. Such an instance is exemplified by the commentary on the Psalms authored by Stanislaw Reszka and published in Krakow in 1591,[13] denoted as item 16 within our catalogue. In this context, the descriptive structure encompassed three levels: bibliographical information (author, title, edition, with the latter two enclosed in square brackets to indicate their historical nature); references to seventeenth-century inventories; and a hyperlink to the entry of another catalogue providing extended metadata. Notably, levels dedicated to the location and material attributes were understandably absent, given that the physical copy is no longer extant.

13 Cf. *Inventario 1*: "Paraphrasis in septem psalmos penitentiales Rescij Craccoviae in Architypo" (AGV, FAFG, unit 210/4, "Libri Illustrissimi et Reverendissimi Domini Episcopi Amerini", fol. 1*r*).

16
Reszka, Stanisław <1544-1600>
[*Paraphrasis in septem psalmos, quos vocant Poenitentiales S. Rescii. Accessit eiusdem Panegyricus* – Cracoviae: in Architypo. regia et ecclesiastica Lazari, 1591; 12°].
Inventario 1: "Paraphrasis in septem psalmos penitentiales Rescij Craccoviae in Architypo".
Elenco tematico: Sezione "S. Scripturae et Sancti Presbiteri".
Note generali: Unica edizione dell'opera pienamente riconducibile alla dicitura di Inventario 1.
Link:https://opac.sbn.it/risultati-ricerca-avanzata/-/opac-adv/index/14/ITICCUNAPE017364?fieldstruct%5B1%5D=ricerca.parole_tutte%3A4%3D6&fieldvalue%5B1%5D=Reszka%2C+Stanis%C5%82aw+&fieldaccess%5B1%5D=Any%3A1016%3Anocheck&struct%3A1001=ricerca.parole_almeno_una%3A%40or%40&sort_access=Data_ascendente%3A+min+31%2C+min+3086%2C+min+5003.

On certain occasions, however, the book descriptions present in seventeenth-century inventories only provide information regarding authors and titles. Such circumstances are exemplified by Francesco Sansovino's *Cronologia del mondo*,[14] featured as item 113 within our catalogue. In this instance, our catalogue entry continued to comprise three descriptive levels, albeit configured in a distinct manner. The initial level was dedicated to the 'author and title'. The second level, pertaining to the inventory details, remained unaltered. Meanwhile, the third level explicitly acknowledged our inability to ascertain the edition owned by Graziani. However, when pertinent, this level also denoted the presence of the *editio princeps* (first edition) of the work.

113
Sansovino, Francesco <1521-1583>
Cronologia del mondo
Inventario 1: "Cronologia del Mondo di messer Francesco Sansovino".
Elenco tematico: Sezione "Historici".
Note generali: Edizione non identificata. Editio princeps: *Cronologia del mondo di m. Francesco Sansouino diuisa in tre libri. Nel primo de' quali s'abbraccia, tutto quello ch'è auuenuto cosi in tempo di pace come di guerra fino all'anno presente. Nel secondo, si contiene vn catalogo de regni, & delle signorie, che sono state & che sono, con le discendenze & con le cose fatte da loro di tempo in tempo. Nel terzo, si tratta l'origine di cinquanta case illustri d'Italia, co soccessi de gli huomini eccellenti di quelle, & con le dipendenze & parentele fra loro. Con tre tauole* – In Venetia: nella stamperia della Luna, 1580; 4°.

Finally, the most regrettable scenario arises when the data furnished by book inventories prove inadequate to even discern the specific

14 Cf. *Inventario 1*: "Cronologia del Mondo di messer Francesco Sansovino" (AGV, FAFG, unit 210/4, "Libri Illustrissimi et Reverendissimi Domini Episcopi Amerini", fol. 3*r*).

work in question. Such an instance is exemplified by the enigmatic title *Auisi della Cina*,[15] as represented by item 154 within our catalogue. In such cases, the descriptive structure further diminished across the three levels. In the initial level, we presented the book description from *Inventario 1* enclosed within square brackets. The second level faithfully documented the seventeenth-century inventories, maintaining the conventional format. The third and final level endeavoured, to the extent possible, to offer identification suggestions in situations where the available information remains sparse.

154
["Auisi della Cina"]
Inventario 1: "Auisi della Cina".
Elenco tematico: Sezione "Historici".
Note generali: Opera non identificata. Possono essere le seguenti:
1. *Auuisi della Cina et Giapone del fine dell'anno 1586* – In Milano: per Pacifico Pontio, 1588; 8°.
2. *Auuisi della Cina et Giapone del fine dell'anno 1586. Con l'arriuo delli signori Giaponesi nell'India. Cauati dalle lettere della Compagnia di Giesù. Riceuute il mese d'ottobre 1588* – In Roma: appresso Francesco Zannetti, 1588; 8°.
3. *Auuisi della Cina, et Giapone del fine dell'anno 1587. Con l'arriuo de' signori giaponesi nell'India. Cauati dalle lettere della Compagnia di Giesù, riceuute il mese d'ottobre 1588* – In Venetia: appresso i Gioliti, 1588; 8°.
4. *Avvisi della Cina et Giapone, del fine dell'anno 1586, con l'arriuo delli signori giaponesi nell'India, cauati dalle lettre della Compagnia di Giesù* – In Anuersa: appresso di Christophoro Plantino architypographo regio, 1588; 8°.

Naturally, these examples do not encompass the entirety of the descriptive frameworks we formulated. Nevertheless, they may prove adequate to elucidate the configuration and the substance of the portal section dedicated to Graziani's library as originally conceived. The approach taken was intended to benefit users, primarily historians and scholars specialising in the history of books, aiming to provide them with an immediate overview of the contents of Graziani's library, without necessitating an extensive amount of clicking through numerous items. Nevertheless, the blueprint of the tool we delineated appeared to possess certain deficiencies. Admittedly, it could be construed as somewhat conventional and too similar to catalogues in paper form; above all, the user's experience could potentially have been restricted by the extensive nature of the text, which at that juncture encompassed not only the customary identifiers of the edition (such as author, title, place of publication, printer, date, and format), but also an array of supplementary particulars concerning the individual copy in question. As a result, users would have been compelled to

15 Cf. *Inventario 1*: "Auisi della Cina" (AGV, FAFG, unit 210/4, "Libri Illustrissimi et Reverendissimi Domini Episcopi Amerini", fol. 4*r*).

scroll through a lengthy list of entries, overloaded with information, which, due to the excess of data, ran the risk of obscuring the overall character of Graziani's book collection.

Thus, we set out to exploit the expansive capabilities afforded by contemporary digital humanities and, above all, the extensive features offered by Omeka S, to develop a catalogue structure more aligned with the standards of interchangeability and accessibility of information that characterise contemporary relational databases. In this perspective, we remained steadfast in our conviction that the presentation of Antonio Maria Graziani's collection, encompassing all associated books, within a comprehensive catalogue organised in accordance with the previously outlined two groups (after a concise introduction to the catalogue itself), was well-justified **[fig. 4]**. However, we have opted to condense this presentation by only preserving information regarding the edition, or at the very least, the author's name and title in instances where the edition remains unidentified **[fig. 5]**.

Figure 4 Introduction to Graziani library's catalogue as presented in the Graziani Archives portal

In addition, each catalogue entry has been hyperlinked to a corresponding Omeka S item providing interested users with the specifications of each entry. In fact, intricate and pertinent information concerning citations within the three inventories, potential identifications, particulars about copies (inclusive of ownership annotations, dedications, and apostils by Graziani himself), along with a hyperlink directing to an Online Public Access Catalogue for more extensive information, have all been incorporated into dedicated Omeka S items

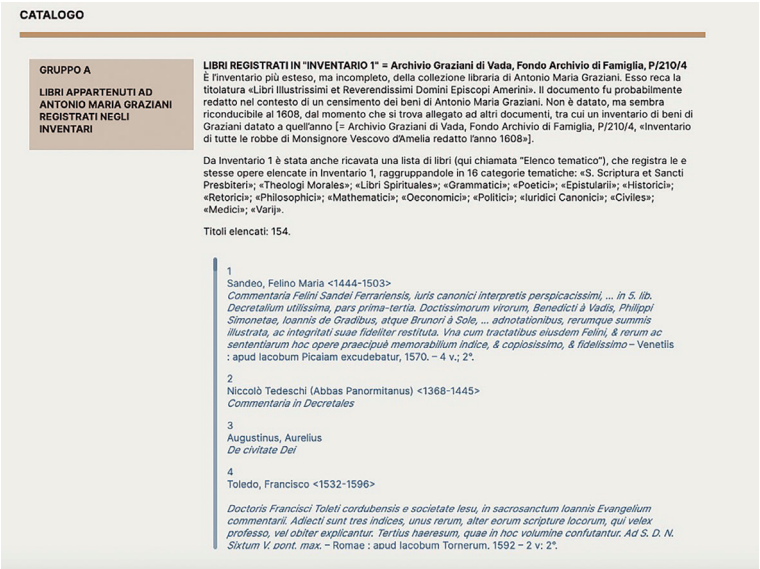

Figure 5 Catalogue of Graziani's library (identification of title and edition) as presented in the Graziani Archives portal

for each individual title. And these items are structured according to the standardised templates previously defined. These same items also provide, for the benefit of the user, all the information regarding the edition, or the author's name and title in instances where the edition remains unidentified. Furthermore, like every other item in our portal, the library items host a specific field that defines their document class – in this case: *Libro* (Book) – facilitating users who wish to search only for this type of document within the database. Finally, another field assigns a unique inventory number to each item, thereby preventing any confusion with other items stored in the database **[figs 6-7]**.

We believe the solution adopted of this specific tool effectively furnishes a portrayal of Antonio Maria Graziani's collection that is suitably intricate and historically trustworthy. At the same time, we feel that such a structured catalogue offers a balanced compromise between the needs of researchers and the capabilities/functionality provided by current digital tools. At least, this is how we have tried to combine the pursuit of innovative digital tools and the expectations of historical research. These kinds of efforts, perhaps among the most challenging in digital history, are likely to increasingly confront historians and data scientists in the years to come.

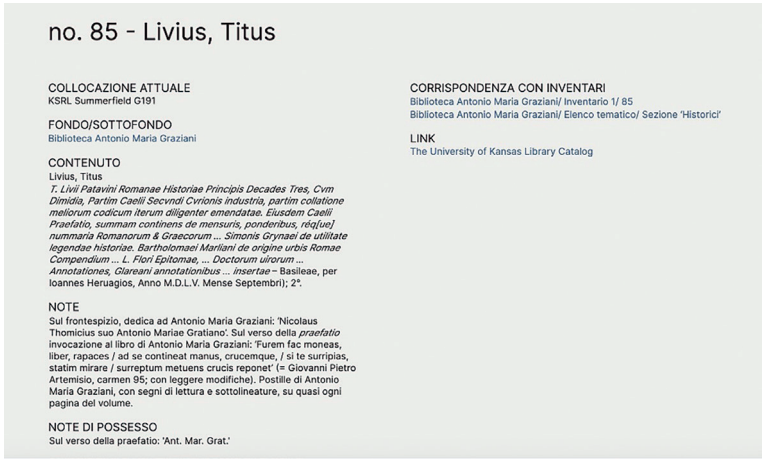

Figure 6 Livy's edition (Biblioteca Antonio Maria Graziani / 85) as described by a Book item template in Omeka S in the Graziani Archives portal

Figure 7 "*Auisi della Cina*" (Biblioteca Antonio Maria Graziani / 154) as described by a Book item template in Omeka S in the Graziani Archives portal

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