

Understanding the History of the Humanities from a Bibliometric Perspective: Expansion, Conjunctures, and Traditions in the Last Decades of Venetian Historiography (1950–2013)

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ABSTRACT

Historiography is undergoing incessant expansion in the number of publications and active scholars, as is the case with the humanities and sciences in general. Little is known about what effects this has on the research activity and ways of publishing of historians, often stemming from long-established practices. Yet it seems recurrent that during and after periods of sustained growth, several historians lament the increasingly specialized and narrow focus of their domain. This article considers three journals that specialize in the history of Venice but that represent different scholarly traditions. These are analyzed over the most recent decades of modern historiography (1950–2013). Special attention is given to the use of evidence, as mapped by citations to primary sources. It is shown that at least three trends overlap: the sustained expansion in the number of publications and active scholars; the persisting editorial traditions of individual journals; and the conjunctures of the field, either via geographical and intellectual exchanges or by methodological turns. Ultimately, expansion, conjunctures, and traditions all need to be considered to picture the dynamics of a scholarly community over the long term.

It is a feeling shared by scholars in all disciplines that, after periods of sustained growth, newer contributions become narrower in focus and increasingly technical. In historiography, a narrower focus could mean the analysis of more limited segments of time, space, or amounts of evidence, with more detail often coming at the price of a lack of innovative and overarching interpretations. Being more technical might signify instead an increased use of jargon, making contributions less understandable outside of experts' circles. Narrow and technical contributions are in turn related to increased specialization, or the focus on more granular topics, necessary to keep a suf-

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ficient level of mastery on a domain in the presence of an ever growing literature base. Yet, “so common have criticism of overspecializations been that their continuing appearance registers a failure of . . . historians to examine the history of historical practice.”¹ Certainly, responsibility for this failure should be shared more generally.

The understanding of the humanities from a bibliometric perspective is still underdeveloped.² Particularly lacking are analyses of the “historical bibliometrics” kind,³ aiming at unfolding the development of specific domains over time, with the effect that little is known of what changed or not, and when, during periods of perceived increased focus and specialization. Furthermore, an area of importance to historians is particularly poorly studied: the use of evidence. Humanists have been found to use a considerable amount of their citations to refer to primary sources, with proportions varying across fields.⁴ Yet, given the absence of reliable citation indexes for secondary literature,⁵ not to mention primary sources, little is known about how evidence is used in historiographical publications or about how different methods, intellectual trends, communities’ practices, traditions, individual preferences, editorial guidelines, and other factors influence a domain as a whole. Despite such accumulated delay, bibliometric research in the humanities is slowly maturing, for example, by considering specific fields and new sources of data.⁶ To be sure, some understanding is warranted given the complexity of the task

1. Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 25; chap. 2 gives several examples in a sketch of the history of historical specialization.

2. Jordi Ardanuy, “Sixty Years of Citation Analysis Studies in the Humanities (1951–2010),” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 64, no. 8 (2013): 1751–55.

3. See Derek R. Smith, “Impact Factors, Scientometrics and the History of Citation-Based Research,” *Scientometrics* 92 (2012): 419–27; and also Jean-Pierre Hérubel, “Historical Bibliometrics: Its Purpose and Significance to the History of Disciplines,” *Libraries & Culture* 34, no. 4 (1999): 380–88: “Historical bibliometrics may best be defined as the bibliometric study of periodicals and books published in the framework of time and space” (382). For a general overview of bibliometrics, the interested reader can profitably refer to Nicola De Bellis, *Bibliometrics and Citation Analysis: From the Science Citation Index to Cybermetrics* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2009).

4. Jennifer E. Knivel and Charlene Kelsey, “Citation Analysis for Collection Development: A Comparative Study of Eight Humanities Fields,” *Library Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (2005): 142–68.

5. For an overview, see Ludo Waltman, “A Review of the Literature on Citation Impact Indicators,” *Journal of Informetrics* 10, no. 2 (2016): 365–91; for journals: Philippe Mongeon and Adèle Paul-Hus, “The Journal Coverage of Web of Science and Scopus: A Comparative Analysis,” *Scientometrics* 106, no. 1 (2015): 213–28; for monographs: Alesia Zuccala, Raf Guns, Roberto Cornacchia, and Rens Bod, “Can We Rank Scholarly Book Publishers? A Bibliometric Experiment with the Field of History,” *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 66, no. 7 (2015): 1333–47.

6. A. J. M. Linmans, “Why with Bibliometrics the Humanities Does Not Need to Be the Weakest Link: Indicators for Research Evaluation Based on Citations, Library Holdings, and Productivity Measures,” *Scientometrics* 83, no. 2 (2009): 337–54; and Björn Hammarfelt, “Beyond Coverage: Toward a

at hand.⁷ Becker and Trowler organize “research specialisms” into two broad categories: rural and urban. The main feat to observe in order to collocate a specialism into either category is the “density” of the research on a shared set of topics, also termed the “people-to-problem ratio.” The more a specialism is organized into a few, well-individuated topics, each attracting a considerable number of scholars, the more urban it is. Most of the disciplines traditionally part of the humanities, despite sharing broad perspectives of interest, are considered by them to be rural, something also reflected by their propensity for individual investigations.⁸ Yet even the claim of a lack of cohesion, which would make it more difficult to consider any discipline in the humanities as a coherent whole, is a hypothesis that lacks empirical grounding.

In this study it is suggested that, in any time of growth of an academic field, at least three trends overlap, as illustrated in figure 1. The first trend is divergent and is given by the mechanics of expansion. Expansion can be driven by the rise in the number of scholars engaging with the field, an increase in funding, and, as a consequence, an increase in published materials. Expansion is usually self-reinforcing, at least for a period of time, and rapidly leads to a feeling of congestion among scholars who find it increasingly difficult to master the literature, fostering in turn improvements in the information-retrieval technologies at hand.⁹ The second trend is given by relatively

Bibliometrics for the Humanities,” in *Research Assessment in the Humanities*, ed. Michael Ochsner, Sven E. Hug, and Hans-Dieter Daniel (Cham: Springer, 2016), 115–31.

7. See Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), for an enjoyable and accurate account of the intricacies of footnoting. Joseph Bensman, “The Aesthetics and Politics of Footnoting,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 1, no. 3 (1988): 443–70, provides a gallery of motivations to cite in the humanities and social sciences, concluding “I am merely applying conventional concepts to fields whose footnoting cultures have not been studied. . . . Imagine how much more complex the material would be if we surveyed systematically at the empirical level footnote practices in one of the specific fields only barely touched upon in this essay” (463, 469). The challenge of the essay, cited eighteen times in Google Scholar at the time of writing, is still open: James Hartley, “What Do We Know about Footnotes? Opinions and Data,” *Journal of Information Science* 25, no. 3 (1999): 205–12; and Björn Hellqvist, “Referencing in the Humanities and Its Implications for Citation Analysis,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 61, no. 2 (2010): 310–18. For an overview of the bibliometric characteristics of the humanities, see Mu-hsuan Huang and Yu-wei Chang, “Characteristics of Research Output in Social Sciences and Humanities: From a Research Evaluation Perspective,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 59, no. 11 (2008): 1819–28. A good discussion of the challenges in extracting and indexing citation data in the humanities is instead given by Chris A. Sula and Matthew Miller, “Citations, Contexts, and Humanistic Discourse: Toward Automatic Extraction and Classification,” *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 29, no. 3 (2014): 452–64.

8. Tony Becher and Paul R. Trowler, *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Cultures of Disciplines* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001), chap. 6.

9. See Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011).

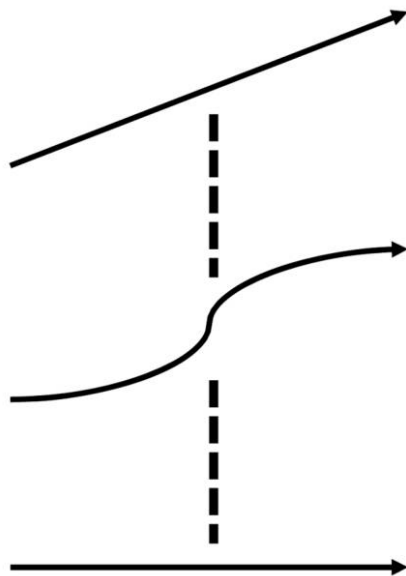


Figure 1. An illustration of divergent, conjunctural and stable trends. Their interaction gives rise to the complex dynamics of a growing academic field.

more sudden happenings within the expansion, caused by conjunctures of varied kinds: the diffusion of new emerging methods or trending topics, the within- or between-field movement of scholars, geographical “migrations,” shifts in interests within a domain, and so on. Even if the general trend is globally expansive, conjunctures can determine distinct local changes of importance in a given period of time. The third trend is more stable and is given by traditions, or continuities, within the field. An example of traditions are editorial guidelines established prior to the beginning of the expansion that stay active during its development. Traditions can, for example, determine specific responses of part of the community to the expansive trend or to conjunctures within it. An attempt at disentangling the intermingled effects of these trends can help in understanding the long-term dynamics of an academic field.

This article considers the modern Venetian historiography on Venice from 1950 to 2013, a period of sustained growth that caused scholars to lament the increasing narrowness and overspecialization of the domain beginning in the 1970s. The focus is on the use of evidence, considered from the perspective of citation analysis. That is to say, the frequency of in-text citations of a source in any given publication is also considered, something rarely attempted for historiography.¹⁰ The use of primary sources is

10. See Stephen E. Wiberley, “Humanities Literatures and Their Users,” *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, 3rd ed. (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2009), 2197–2204.

motivated by their relative stability: the amount of primary sources is substantially fixed, their availability changing slowly by means of better indexation, digitization, and previous research. This is an important property of primary sources, because it allows for the analysis of their usage without the immediate need to monitor their change. Ultimately, the goal of the article is to exemplify how these three trends—expansion, conjunctures, and traditions—interact at different levels of the bibliometric analysis, with the aim of clarifying their respective effects.

The historiography on Venice is vast;¹¹ as a consequence, a choice needs to be made in terms of the publications to consider for analysis. For the purpose of the present study, three journals have been considered with an emphasis on Venetian historiography: *Ateneo Veneto*, *Archivio Veneto*, and *Studi Veneziani*. These three journals, all published in Venice, originate from different traditions and therefore can be used to explore the enduring effects of their continuity. *Ateneo Veneto* is the journal of the academy by the same name, created during the Napoleonic reorganizations and always intimately engaged with the intellectual life of the city; *Archivio Veneto* was created during the heyday of positivistic historiography—the second half of the nineteenth century—to explore the documentary riches of the city; *Studi Veneziani* has been published since 1959, with the goal of renovating the field and engaging with the international community of scholars—who were quite removed from and often unaware of local historiographical traditions. Local historical publications are poorly known in terms of their role within historiography and the humanities in general. Nederhof individuates three possible audiences for the literature produced by humanists: international scholars, national or regional scholars, and nonscholarly audiences.¹² The three journals under consideration are firmly targeting the second audience, sometimes with the ambition to reach the first.

ON THE HISTORIOGRAPHY ON VENICE AND THE THREE JOURNALS

The post-Republic historiography on Venice was initially influenced by the imposed necessity to deal with a recent, yet all of a sudden distant past, that oriented the efforts of a large part of the city's scholars during the long nineteenth century. The unexpected point of departure is provided by Pierre Daru's 1819 *Histoire de la République de Venise*, taken as a real "punch in the stomach" by the local elite of the Republic, still struggling with the consequences of the new state of affairs after the Napoleonic turmoils following

11. Eric R. Dursteler, "A Brief Survey of Histories of Venice," in *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400–1797*, ed. Eric R. Dursteler (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1–24, esp. 1–6.

12. Anton J. Nederhof, "Bibliometric Monitoring of Research Performance in the Social Sciences and the Humanities: A Review," *Scientometrics* 66, no. 1 (2006): 81–100.

the end of the Republic in 1797. The *Histoire* put early local historians—often of patrician origins—on the defensive by questioning the very secular institutions of the Republic.¹³ Local historians spent decades trying to respond to the *Histoire* and more generally to a growing “antimyth view” of Venice. Some followed the path of evidence; notable among these is Emanuele Cicogna, whose works are still in extensive use to this day, but the “‘honest work of erudition’ was not enough.”¹⁴ Others published often apologetic contributions of alternating success, which, if they fell short in reestablishing a more positive view on the history of the Republic, at least helped consolidate several historiographical themes of enduring future importance.

The brief but intense Napoleonic interlude created two distinctive institutes of high culture: on the one hand, the Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti and, on the other, the Ateneo Veneto.¹⁵ The Istituto was a scientific organ at the service of the government, with a special but not exclusive focus on the sciences. Conversely, the Ateneo was, and still is, an urban academy. Both, one renewed, the other anew, were established by decree in 1810 and organized into three classes: sciences, letters, and arts. Yet the Ateneo is for most other respects very different from the Istituto. It is rooted in the life of the city, its most current debates and problems, with members by far and large coming from the learned professions—doctors, teachers, lawyers—instead of universities. An example of this engagement with society and topics of contemporary relevance is the establishment of the Ateneo public course in Venetian history in 1848. In 1851 the first issue of the “Acts” was published, later to become the journal *Ateneo Veneto*, in 1881. Despite a slow, secular trend toward an increased importance for the arts and humanities at the expense of the sciences, via the Ateneo it is possible to follow the “history of the problems of Venice, the debates, hopes, projects, illusions and

13. On views on Venice’s past during the nineteenth century and the response from local scholars, see Mario Infelise, “Venezia e il suo passato: Storie, miti, ‘fole,’” in *Storia di Venezia: L’Ottocento e il Novecento*, ed. Mario Isnenghi and Stuart Woolf, vol. 2 (Rome: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, 2002), 967–88. On nineteenth-century Venetian historiography, see also Gino Benzoni, “La storiografia,” in *Storia della Cultura Veneta*, ed. Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi, vol. 6 (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1986), 597–623; Massimo Cannella, “Appunti e spunti sulla storiografia veneziana dell’Ottocento,” *Archivio Veneto* 106 (1976): 72–115; James S. Grubb, “When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography,” *Journal of Modern History* 58, no. 1 (1986): 43–94; Claudio Povo, “The Creation of Venetian Historiography,” in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797*, ed. John J. Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 491–519.

14. Infelise, “Venezia e il suo passato,” 983.

15. See, for the nineteenth century, Giuseppe Gullino, “Istituzioni di cultura,” in *Storia di Venezia: L’Ottocento e il Novecento*, ed. Mario Isnenghi and Stuart Woolf, vol. 2 (Rome: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, 2002), 1051–80. For the twentieth century, see Giuseppe Gullino, “L’Ateneo Veneto,” in *Storia di Venezia: L’Ottocento e il Novecento*, ed. Mario Isnenghi and Stuart Woolf, vol. 3 (Rome: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, 2002), 1859–74.

delusions,” over two centuries. Therefore, no clear editorial guideline is apparently to be found in the articles published by the journal, if not for the relatively ample freedom left to the authors.¹⁶ It would be expected for the Ateneo to be only marginally concerned with historiography: a possible topic among many.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the opportunity to objectively examine Venice’s past “was soon buried under the mountain of mythologizing scholarship based on the documentary riches of the Venetian archives” in a new phase of “celebratory and archival myths.”¹⁷ The use of abundant documentary evidence in the search for a redemption for the city’s past was seemingly reinforced by two almost parallel turns: the opening of the Archive of Venice in 1848 and the unification of Venice into the Kingdom of Italy in 1866. According to some modern scholars, contemporary developments in German historiography toward “scientific” methods made little headway in Venice at the time, where “skepticism of value-free history was reinforced by intense local patriotism, which renders objectivity a secondary virtue.”¹⁸ To be sure, and perhaps fair, this “documentary fever” was increasingly shared by local and nonlocal scholars alike and inspired several initiatives of enduring impact. A notable example is the establishment in 1873 of the Deputazione di Storia Patria and its journal *Archivio Veneto*, devoted to the advancement of documentary knowledge.¹⁹ The first issue of the *Archivio Veneto* opens with the following statement: “There is likely no other city in Italy with so many historical documents as Venice, of importance not only for her very history, but for that of the whole of Europe.”²⁰ The abundance of documents calls for an ordered, “positive” historiography, in open dispute with the vague “traditions, or dreams” of a previous, foreign scholarship less grounded in archival research and minute fact-checking, as well as more critical of the city’s past. The only intellectual antecedent worth mentioning in this initial statement was the *Documented History of Venice* (*Storia documentata di Venezia*), by Samuele Romanin, published between 1853 and 1861, a work that explicitly tried, as the title suggests, to provide a factual, if apologetic, account of the history of the Republic. The spirit of the new journal was very clear: a focus on documentary editions and works of erudition, with high scientific rigor and exclusive focus on historiography, often tackling editorial projects of considerable ambition.²¹ To this day, the Deputazione is not engaged in other activities, such as the organization of conferences or courses, but

16. Gullino, “L’Ateneo Veneto,” 1862, 1864.

17. Povoio, “Creation of Venetian Historiography,” 491, 503, and 505.

18. Grubb, “When Myths Lose Power,” 48.

19. Infelise, “Venezia e il suo passato,” 983.

20. Adolfo Bartoli and Rinaldo Fulin, “Ai lettori,” *Archivio Veneto* 1, no. 1 (1871): v–xii, v.

21. See Gullino, “Istituzioni di cultura,” 1070–76.

is exclusively devoted to scholarly publication.²² *Archivio Veneto* is characterized by a marked focus on works of traditional historical erudition and has a broader geographical span than *Ateneo Veneto* and *Studi Veneziani*, as its research encompasses, by mandate, all the territories once part of the Venetian mainland. The journal is expected to be more conservative and focused on the extensive and thorough use of primary evidence.

It is only after the Second World War that the historiography on Venice gradually became modern, in the sense that few individual scholars, able to cast their interests over all the topics and sources deemed of interest, were displaced by more numerous and specialized groups of researchers, less interested in old, polarized debates.²³ To be sure, topics long related to the myth of Venice kept being investigated, yet experts recognize increasing differences that separate the post-WWII period from previous historiography: the rising number of junior scholars focusing, it is claimed, on ever narrower topics—"small-scale, dispassionate, technical studies"—a return of non-Italian scholars, again on the rise starting in the 1960s especially from the English-speaking world; the broadening of interests.²⁴ The importance of the city in the works of the school of the *Annales*, notable among them Braudel, played no little role in making Venice attractive at a time when American historiography was perhaps at its zenith.²⁵ In this way, scholars reached their capacity to master all the literature on any topic.²⁶

It is during this period of new encounters that *Studi Veneziani* was established, as part of the activities of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, a privately endowed research center.²⁷ Two of its axes of activity were an international projection realized through editorial projects, congresses, courses, events, and bursaries, and a work of accumulation of a wealth of documentary resources and means to access them. *Studi Veneziani*, published starting in 1959 as the *Bollettino*, then with its current name beginning in 1965, had the aim of: "deepen[ing] the studies and enrich the sources for the study of the Venetian society and state."²⁸ Such clear editorial guidelines are of particular importance, giving *Studi Veneziani* more thematic focus than *Archivio Veneto* or *Ateneo Veneto*. Even more so, its goal is not to consider the Venetian mainland, if not marginally, but to

22. Benzoni, "La storiografia," 622–23.

23. Dursteler, "Brief Survey," 15.

24. Grubb, "When Myths Lose Power," 49, 83–84.

25. Anthony Grafton, "History's Postmodern Fates," *Daedalus* 135, no. 2 (2006): 57.

26. Nicholas S. Davidson, "In Dialogue with the Past: Venetian Research from the 1960s to the 1990s," *Bulletin of the Society for Renaissance Studies* 15, no. 1 (1997): 13.

27. See Gino Benzoni, "La Fondazione Giorgio Cini," in *Storia di Venezia: L'Ottocento e il Novecento*, ed. Mario Isnenghi and Stuart Woolf, vol. 3 (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, 2002), 1925–34.

28. Gian Pietro Boggetti, "Presentazione," *Bollettino dell'Istituto di storia della società e dello stato veneziano* (1959): 1.

devote all its energies to Venice proper. Given its relative youth, international projection, and more focused mission, *Studi Veneziani* is expected to be the most innovative journal, dealing with a broader variety of topics and debates in historiography. In recent decades, the field “virtually exploded” in the variety and number of publications:²⁹ “what we see in recent Venetian historiography is a shift in interest from order to disorder, from orthodoxy to dissent, from the center of power to the broader social context.”³⁰

METHODS AND DATA

The period under consideration, 1950 to 2013, saw the development and expansion of modern historiographical studies of Venice. Crucially, a focus on historiography is enforced by considering especially those articles that refer explicitly to documentation held in the Archive of Venice. The importance of the archive as a repository of documentation for the history of the city is so relevant that only a few studies can be conducted without relying, at least in part, on its resources. The data set comprises 2,406 articles, of which 876 make reference to at least one document held at the Archive of Venice. Where applicable, the whole data set will be used for comparison. Different record groups and series at the Archive of Venice are cited with different frequencies, as shown in figure 2.

The procedure to obtain citation data is as follows: every issue has been digitized and coupled with metadata at the article level. Images were OCRed and automatically parsed to extract footnotes and the references therein.³¹ Afterwards, references were linked back to the central Italian library catalog or to the information system of the Archive of Venice to establish a citation. The link to the archive is made at the most granular level possible as allowed by the archive’s information system and by the information contained in each reference. Evaluations have been conducted at every step, the final one is reported here: the capacity of the system to recognize the identifiers of the sources cited in a set of articles manually annotated by expert librarians. This evaluation set consists of twenty-seven randomly picked articles. For citations to primary sources, the final result is a precision of nearly 1 and a recall of 0.825. Precision is very high because all citations have been manually corrected to ensure a proper analysis. Note that these measures consider all references with complete or abbreviated information of the cited source, excluding total abbreviations such as the use of *Ibid.*, or *Ivi*, if not including some cues on the cited source as well. The reason to leave out completely abbreviated references is to avoid overinflating counts with data from passages

29. Liz Horodowich, “The New Venice: Historians and Historiography in the 21st Century Lagoon,” *History Compass* 2 (2004): 1–3.

30. Davidson, “In Dialogue with the Past,” 22.

31. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) is an automated process to extract text from images.

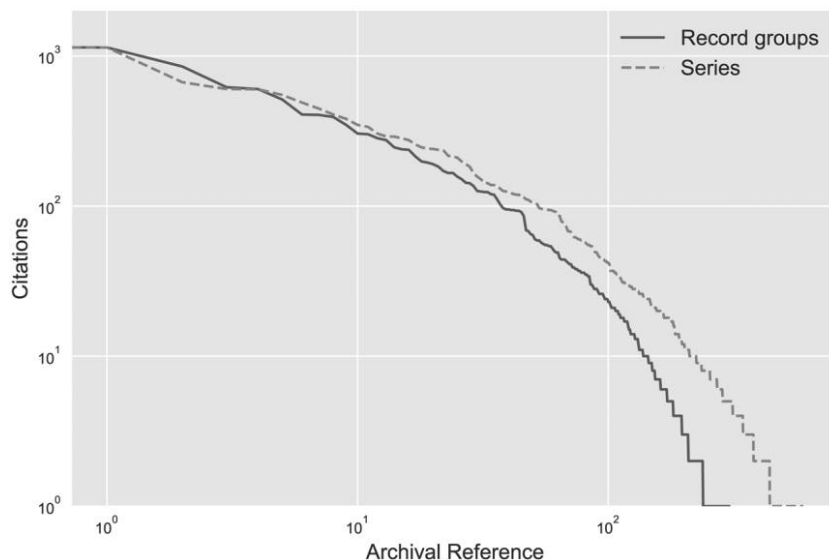


Figure 2. Distribution of citations to different document aggregates at the State Archive of Venice. The distribution is very skewed for both groups and series, meaning that few aggregates gather most citations. The plot is in log scale on both axes. Color version available as an online enhancement.

particularly rich in references. At the same time, considering abbreviated references allows one to proxy the frequency in usage of a specific source.³²

In order to investigate this development of the field, five periods are considered: the 1950s and early 1960s, when no data for *Studi Veneziani* are available; the subsequent

32. Precision is the number of true positives over the total number of positive results, either true or false. Recall is the number of true positives over the number of true positives plus false negatives. Intuitively, precision measures how accurate positive matches are; recall measures the proportion of positive matches that have been correctly identified over the total that should have been. A high precision, low recall algorithm will be mostly correct with a match, but will mistakenly class several positive matches as negative. Further technical details are provided in Giovanni Colavizza and Frédéric Kaplan, "On Mining Citations to Primary and Secondary Sources in Historiography," in *Proceedings of the Second Italian Conference on Computational Linguistics CLiC-It*, (Trent: Accademia University Press, 2015), 94–99; and Giovanni Colavizza, Matteo Romanello, and Frédéric Kaplan, "The References of References: A Method to Enrich Humanities Library Catalogs with Citation Data," *International Journal on Digital Libraries* (2017): 1–11. Both *Ateneo Veneto* and *Archivio Veneto* are considered from 1950 to 2013, and *Studi Veneziani* from 1965 to 2013. Some issues are unfortunately missing from the analysis: for *Ateneo Veneto*, the years 1954, 1959, and 1969; 1972, no. 69, and 1996, no. 146, for *Archivio Veneto*; and the years 195–64 for *Studi Veneziani*, when the journal was originally published as the *Bollettino dell'Istituto di storia della società e dello stato veneziano*. In total 48,301 in-text references to serial publications, 170,580 to monographs, and 69,175 to primary evidence have been considered. Of these, 21,031 are partially abbreviated references to documentation at the Archive of Venice, which have been manually verified and are used in what follows.

period that saw an influx of non-Italian scholars in the 1960s and 1970s, paralleled by a probably-as-rapid increase in the number of Italian scholars working on Venice; and three more periods of increasingly narrow span: 1980–94, 1995–2004, and 2005–13. Table 1 provides overall statistics for the three journals over the five periods, mainly in terms of number of published articles, active authors (both Italian and non-Italian), and languages used. Table 2 considers the proportions of citations to primary and secondary sources (both monographs and serial publications) for all articles and for articles with citations to documents at the Archive of Venice. Statistics are given overall, per article, and per page, as a means of gauging effects at different levels of granularity. Table 3 gives the values of six bibliometric indicators over time, calculated on a restricted sample of articles that refer extensively to documents at the Archive of Venice.

The indicators are:

1. *Variety*: the mean number of individual document series of the Archive of Venice cited in every selected article for the given period. Variety considers the amount of different unique primary sources used in an article.
2. *Frequency*: the mean number of citations to document series of the Archive of Venice cited in every selected article for the given period. Frequency considers the number of citations to primary sources in an article.
3. *Focus*: the mean minimum number of individual document series necessary to reach at least 75 percent of the citations given to documents to the Archive of Venice, for every selected article for the given period. A low focus entails that most citations in an article go to few sources; a high focus entails a more even distribution of citation across sources.
4. *Novelty local*: the mean proportion of novel document series from the Archive of Venice cited, for every selected article for the given period. A series is novel if it was never cited before publication in the given journal (considering all published articles).
5. *Novelty global*: the same as novelty local, but considering series never cited before across all journals (considering all published articles).
6. *Embeddedness*: the mean proportion of document series from the Archive of Venice cited by no other article in the same issue, for every selected article for the given period. Embeddedness goes from 1, when all the cited sources are not cited by other articles in the same issue, to 0, when all cited sources are cited by at least another article in the same issue. It allows one to measure the editorial coherence of each journal issue by considering the use of primary sources.

More details are given in the appendix.

Table 1. Publication Statistics by Journal

Statistic	Period				
	1950–64	1965–79	1980–94	1995–2004	2005–13
1. Articles (potential articles over 15 years): ^a					
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>	125	210	229	145 (218)	207 (345)
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>	93	137	169	110 (165)	125 (208)
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>	. . .	172	210	217 (326)	257 (428)
2. Articles with citations to documents at the Archive of Venice (proportion over the previous row):					
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>	9 (7.2)	15 (7.1)	43 (18.8)	18 (12.4)	40 (19.3)
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>	29 (31.2)	57 (41.6)	77 (45.6)	50 (45.4)	53 (42.4)
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>	. . .	92 (53.5)	134 (63.8)	122 (56.2)	137 (53.3)
3. Percentage of articles in Italian:					
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>	100	100	95.3	100	87.5
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>	100	100	100	96	98
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>	. . .	69.6	82.8	82.9	83.2
4. Average number of pages:					
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>	9	20	21	45	28
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>	27	38	26	32	27
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>	. . .	47	39	31	48
5. Number of active authors (papers per author):					
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>	8 (1.1)	12 (1.2)	39 (1.1)	16 (1.1)	34 (1.2)
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>	15 (1.9)	37 (1.5)	54 (1.4)	36 (1.4)	43 (1.2)
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>	. . .	69 (1.3)	106 (1.3)	98 (1.2)	98 (1.4)
6. Percentage of non-Italian scholars:					
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>	0	6.6	9.3	0	2.5
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>	0	7	5.2	8	3.8
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>	. . .	41.3	19.4	19.7	18.2

Note.—Publication statistics of the three journals over time. Only the first statistic considers overall article productivity; all subsequent statistics consider only the 876 articles with references to documentation at the Archive of Venice. Statistics 5 and 6 give the means and medians of the proportion of new series from the archive, over the total, at the article level. These proportions are naturally decreasing by accumulation.

^a Calculated considering a similar productivity for time windows of less than 15 years.

EXPANSION

Most recent overviews of the historiography on Venice picture an ever accelerating field, where more scholars produce somewhat narrower, technical studies on a less well connected set of topics. Despite some disagreement on how to qualify this phenomenon—positively, as a refreshing enrichment of perspectives, or, negatively, as a loss of domain coherence—all scholars agree that the task of keeping up with published literature is a lost cause already since the 1970s.³³ The expansion is indeed confirmed by the sheer number of articles published over time, growing since the 1950s. Table 1 gives the total number of articles published overall and the number and proportion of those articles that cite documents at the Archive of Venice; especially noteworthy is *Studi Veneziani*, which has been growing rapidly in recent years. The increase in the number of published articles is coupled with the enlargement of the documentary base of the historians of Venice. Figures 3 and 4 show the cumulative growth in the number of new series and record groups cited over time from the Archive of Venice. Historians keep working on new documentary evidence at all times, meaning there is an incentive in exploring new sources but also in specializing as the mass of evidence part of the scholarly debate grows. *Studi Veneziani* led this trend, yet *Archivio Veneto* and *Ateneo Veneto* did not refrain from expanding their source base, especially after *Studi Veneziani* contributed in accelerating the field's motion during the early years of its activity by publishing the most innovative articles, from Italian and non-Italian scholars alike, as will be discussed in what follows. Taking into account the literature on Venice not considered here, it is possible to understand why the expansion in published materials and use of evidence has induced a feeling of congestion and disconnection among scholars; yet besides the almost inevitable topical specialization that ensued, little is known of the effects in the practice of researching and writing history. In theory, narrower studies should be marked by a decreased variety, as well as an increased focus of citations to primary sources: a narrower study should focus on a limited set of sources, and use other sources only for contextualization, in order to delve deeper into very specific questions and sources. This is precisely what does not happen. The variety of sources cited from the Archive of Venice per article (see table 3, statistic 2) indicates a minor increase over time, which is likely to be attributable to the reception of previous studies than to a marked change in citation practices.³⁴ The focus of citations to evidence per article (table 3, statistic 4) is also remarkably stable, possibly increasing over time—meaning more primary sources are strongly linked together in

33. Dursteler, "Brief Survey"; Grubb, "When Myths Lose Power"; Horodowich, "The New Venice."

34. Interestingly, other studies have shown that the variety of citations to secondary literature rises greatly during the same period (1950 to the present). See, e.g., Sara M. Lowe, "Reference Analysis of the American Historical Review," *Collection Building* 22, no. 1 (2003): 15.

Archive articles (N = 876)															
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>															
As a percentage of articles	29.7	47.4	22.9	25	61.1	13.9	30.2	53.5	16.2	19.9	62.5	17.6	24.5	58.1	17.4
Mean number per article	10.1	16.1	7.8	28.1	68.7	15.7	33.9	60	18.2	52.4	164.6	46.4	31.7	75.3	22.5
Mean number per page	1.1	1.7	.8	1.4	3.5	.8	1.6	2.8	.9	1.2	3.6	1	1.1	2.7	.8
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>															
As a percentage of articles	34.4	55.9	9.7	26.9	60.8	12.3	34.1	51.7	14.2	44.1	43	12.9	34.6	48.3	17
Mean number per article	42.9	70	12.1	51	114.7	23.2	49.7	75.3	20.7	90.1	88.4	26.5	63.8	88.9	13.3
Mean number per page	1.6	2.6	.4	1.3	3	.6	1.9	2.9	.8	2.9	2.8	.8	2.4	3.3	1.2
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>															
As a percentage of articles	...	...	...	27.2	62.2	10.6	34.9	52.2	13	32.9	52	15.1	31.7	53.1	15.2
Mean number per article	...	...	...	58.6	133.7	22.8	59.2	88.5	22	63.4	100.2	29.1	86.2	144.5	41.2
Mean number per page	...	...	...	1.2	2.8	.5	1.5	2.3	.6	2	3.2	.9	1.8	3	.8

Note.—This table considers all citations to primary sources (PS), monographs (SS-m), and journal articles or contributions (SS-j) made from all articles or only articles citing documents at the State Archive of Venice.

Table 3. Indicators over Time

	Period				
	1950–64	1965–79	1980–94	1995–2004	2005–13
Articles with five or more sources cited:					
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>	0	4	11	4	9
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>	10	12	19	22	17
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>	...	45	65	50	54
Variety:					
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>	...	5.75 (6)	9.2 (10)	13.5 (10.5)	8.9 (7)
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>	8.9 (6)	7.5 (6.5)	10.6 (8)	9.9 (7.5)	10.6 (11)
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>	...	8 (6)	9.3 (9)	9.5 (7.5)	10.3 (8)
Frequency:					
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>	...	15.5 (13.5)	26.2 (20)	44.2 (37)	37.1 (17)
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>	38.1 (28.5)	30.75 (25.5)	62.9 (34)	91.6 (64)	80.9 (47)
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>	...	36.9 (28)	46 (35)	49.2 (20.5)	60.2 (28.5)
Focus:					
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>	...	3.25 (3.5)	4.4 (4)	4.75 (4)	4.4 (4)
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>	4 (3)	3.3 (3)	3.9 (3)	3.6 (3)	3.5 (3)
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>	...	3.7 (3)	3.8 (4)	4.1 (4)	4.1 (3.5)
Novelty local:					
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>	...	.78 (.82)	.41 (.4)	.43 (.38)	.34 (.29)
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>	.63 (.72)	.39 (.37)	.25 (.2)	.21 (.17)	.17 (.18)
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>	...	.39 (.33)	.22 (.18)	.1 (.09)	.07 (0)
Novelty global:					
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>	...	.35 (.37)	.11 (.07)	.17 (.14)	.04 (0)
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>	.6 (.7)	.14 (.15)	.13 (.09)	.09 (.1)	.06 (0)
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>	...	.24 (.2)	.17 (.12)	.06 (0)	.04 (0)
Embeddedness:					
<i>Ateneo Veneto</i>	...	1 (1)	.94 (1)	.96 (.98)	.86 (1)
<i>Archivio Veneto</i>	1 (1)	1 (1)	.99 (1)	.96 (1)	.99 (1)
<i>Studi Veneziani</i>	...	.76 (.79)	.84 (.87)	.86 (.89)	.81 (.86)

Note.—This table considers citations to document series at the State Archive of Venice, made by article citing at least five different series. The median is given in parentheses, where applicable.

new studies, instead of authors relying only on a narrow set of sources. What is clearly increasing, at least through the early 2000s, is the frequency of citations within articles, and especially to primary sources.³⁵ The trend is anticipated by *Studi Veneziani* and followed by *Archivio* and *Ateneo Veneto* shortly afterward. In a setting where the variety of sources used per article is stable or only growing slowly, such a disproportionate increase in the frequency of citations can in part signal a rise in technicalities, yet not

35. Table 2, part 2, gives the proportion of citations to primary sources, and also the mean number of such citations per article and per page. Table 3, statistic 3, gives the indicator on the frequency of citations to primary sources per article. All are generally rising and peaking during the 1990s.

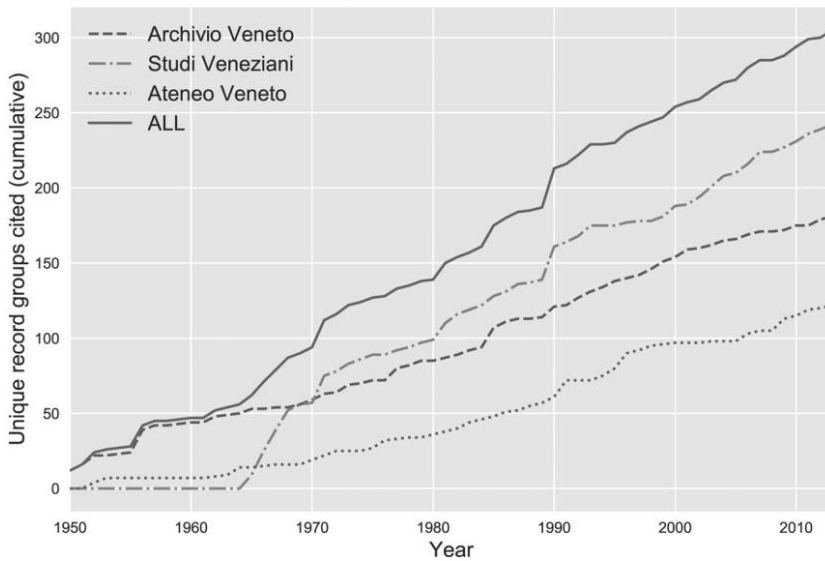


Figure 3. Cumulative number of new record groups cited from the State Archive of Venice. A group is considered to be newly cited if it has never been cited before in any article of the three journals. Color version available as an online enhancement.

in the number of more focused articles. A rise in the frequency of citations to primary sources could be motivated by at least two different reasons: first, a methodological shift toward a more in-depth use of evidence, paralleled by a growing sensibility for the need of more systematic referencing. The studies on Venice witness the diffusion of several new historiographical trends during the 1980s and 1990s: Italian microhistory, of importance for the study of Venice even if only marginally so for the three journals,³⁶ or the so-called material, local, cultural, and linguistic turns. All might have fostered a general increased attention for a more detailed use of evidence. Second, the increased frequency of citations to primary sources could display a rhetorical change of attitudes, by which scholars feel more and more compelled to show their prowess at a crucial skill for any historian—namely, the mastery of evidence. According to this interpretation, an increased frequency of citations can be due to rising competition for recognition within the domain.³⁷ Another signal in this respect comes from the subtle increase in citations

36. Francesca Trivellato, "Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?," *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011): "In the late 1970s and 80s, particularly after the appearance of Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* (1976) and Giovanni Levi's *Inheriting Power* (1985), Italian microhistory shook the ground of established historiographical paradigms and practices."

37. This is similar to what Bruno Latour proposed for the sciences, or referenced as persuasion, giving definite form to a set of previous publications in his *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 1987). The most notable antecede-

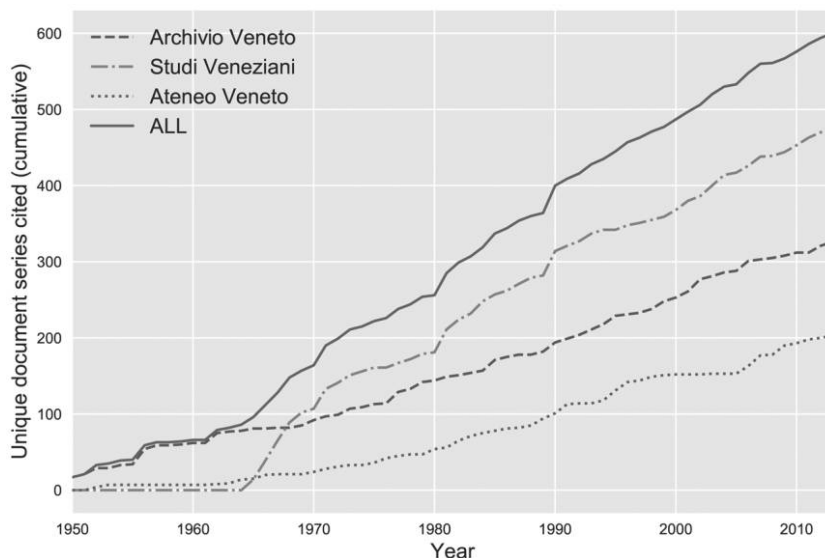


Figure 4. Cumulative number of new series cited from the State Archive of Venice. A series is considered to be newly cited if it has never been cited before in any article of the three journals. Color version available as an online enhancement.

to serial publications, such as journal articles. This known trend, which is not yet a menace to the role of the monograph as the main form of publication in the humanities,³⁸ may be due to higher instability and competition among young scholars: an increased pressure to publish and reduced time to do so pushes scholars toward writing for international journals instead of just focusing on riskier monographs.

Even novelty, or the capacity to introduce innovative evidence as represented by citations to previously never cited sources at the Archive of Venice, follows more complex patterns than the simple cumulative view that figures 3 and 4 might suggest. Figures 5 and 6 give the number of new record groups cited from the Archive of Venice in any given year, at the journal and global levels, respectively. (Journal level means

ent is Nigel G. Gilbert, "Referencing as Persuasion," *Social Studies of Science* 7, no. 1 (1977): 113–22. Stated differently, "one can increase the appearance of scholarship merely by increasing the number of footnote citations in one's publications" (Bensman, "Aesthetics and Politics of Footnoting," 444).

38. Jennifer W. Thompson, "The Death of the Scholarly Monograph in the Humanities? Citation Patterns in Literary Scholarship," *Libri* 52, no. 3 (2002): 121–36. Nevertheless, other studies have found a stagnation or even reduction in the number of references to journals, thus general conclusions are not possible: Vincent Larivière, Éric Archambault, Yves Gingras and Étienne Vignola-Gagné, "The Place of Serials in Referencing Practices: Comparing Natural Sciences and Engineering with Social Sciences and Humanities," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 57, no. 8 (2006): 997–1004.

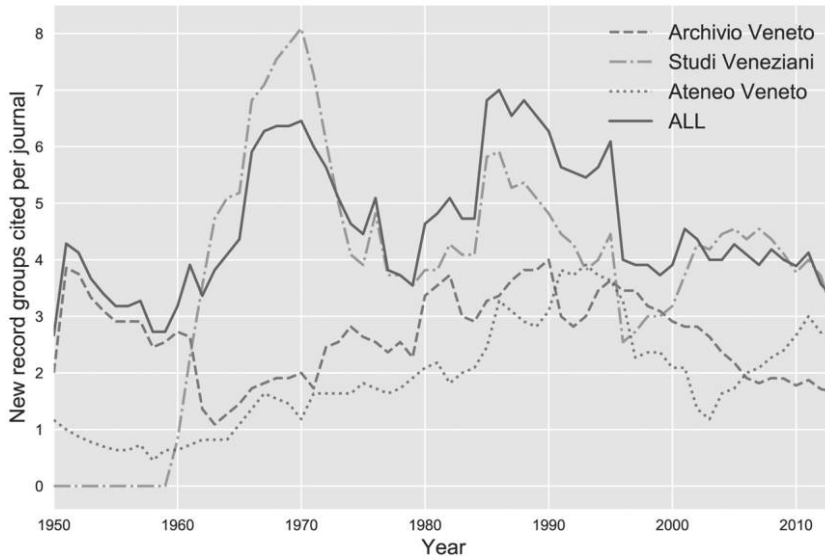


Figure 5. Number of new cited record groups at journal level. A ten-year rolling average is applied for smoothing. A group is considered to be newly cited if it has never been cited before in any article of the given journal. Color version available as an online enhancement.

the citation is novel considering previous articles within the journal; global level means considering previous articles from all journals). Table 3, statistics 5 and 6, gives the means and medians of the proportion of new series from the archive, over the total, at the article level. These proportions are naturally decreasing by accumulation. Globally, two periods of increased innovation can be found for *Studi Veneziani*: the beginnings (1960s and 1970s) and the late 1980s and early 1990s. *Archivio Veneto* and *Ateneo Veneto* have been able to innovate at a slower pace at the journal level, at least until the 1990s, but only sporadically at the global level (e.g., the 1980s for *Archivio Veneto*). Yet for all journals, few new sources are cited in recent years, as either a period of consolidation or a lack of innovation seems to be ongoing.

The perceived loss of cohesion in recent studies, so clearly felt by modern historians of Venice, is first and foremost an issue determined by the volume of published materials and subsequent incapacity of scholars to keep track of and navigate this growing mass of literature. There is room to argue that specialization, or the proliferation of loosely connected topics of inquiry, might be on the rise. At the finer-grained level of citation practices, changes in the frequency and novelty of citations to primary evidence seem due to more specific conjunctures as the influx of non-Italian scholars brought new directions of inquiry in the 1960s, and the diffusion of new methods, such as local or micro history, during the 1980s and 1990s. Other important aspects of

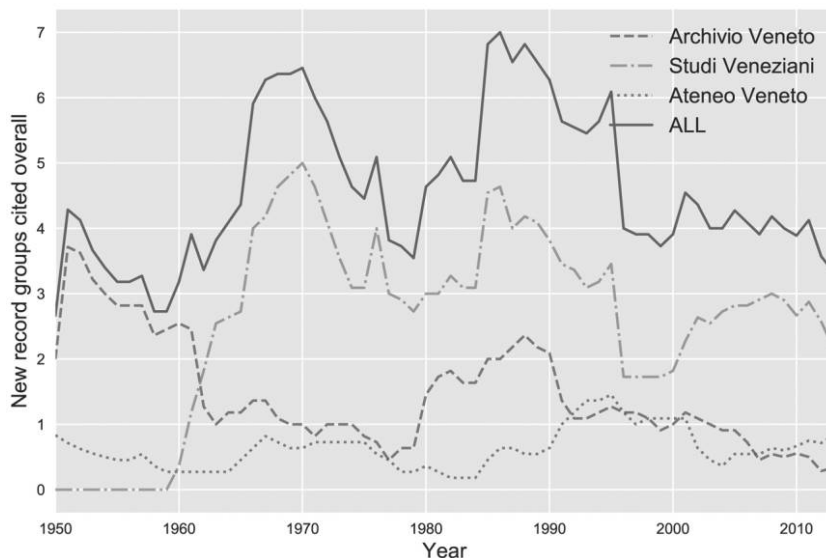


Figure 6. Number of new cited record groups at global level. A ten-year rolling average is applied for smoothing. A group is considered to be newly cited if it has never been cited before in any article of the three journals. Color version available as an online enhancement.

citation practices, such as the variety of primary sources in use per article or the focus of citations, are instead stable, and do not point to alarming changes such as the narrowing publications.

CONJUNCTURES

The field of Venetian studies seemed dormant during the first period under consideration (1950–64), to be abruptly shaken by the activities of the scholars at the Fondazione Cini or those who published in *Studi Veneziani*. In fact, events were set in motion before 1965 within the Fondazione through its *Bollettino*, and outside of the three journals considered here. This acceleration was apparently not felt in the strictly local and traditional setting of *Ateneo Veneto* and *Archivio Veneto*.³⁹ *Studi Veneziani* was able, likely unique in the city's publication venues, to give voice to the new perspectives of Italian and non-Italian scholars alike—it was created for this very purpose. The first modern conjuncture of Venetian studies thus developed from the late 1950s to early 1970s.

39. See the table 1 statistics for what follows. The exclusive use of Italian and presence of Italian scholars is also coupled with the highest proportion of articles per scholar ever for *Archivio Veneto* during this period, signaling a quite closed environment.

The topics addressed by non-Italian researchers, for the most part coming from the United States, United Kingdom and France, were markedly oriented toward the Renaissance, with a special focus on economy, society, and the political institutions of the Republic. These interests were indeed similar to those previously explored in Florence. Renowned scholars such as Brian Pullan, John Hale, Paul Grendler, and Frederic Lane published in *Studi Veneziani* at the time. Non-Italian scholars also tried hard to use Italian in order to engage with the local community. Yet the novelty of the publications of this period hardly came only from their impulses: some of the most innovative works were authored by Italians, also covering periods other than the Renaissance.⁴⁰

Interestingly, the second period (1965–79) was marked by the lowest ever proportion of citations to primary sources compared with secondary sources, across all journals. Specifically, non-Italian scholars had a tendency to cite fewer primary sources, and less frequently so, perhaps as a consequence of different scholarly standards or simply due to a lack of familiarity with and ongoing access to the archive.

As rapidly as it set in, the period of expansion ended during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Never in subsequent periods would non-Italian scholars be as present in *Studi Veneziani* as during its early years of activity. Perhaps also as a consequence of the growth of the field, more international literature was published and new publication venues were likely found, as ultimately the journal moved to its current more local dimension. To this day, *Studi Veneziani* maintains the lead in terms of contributions from non-Italian scholars and use of languages other than Italian, yet its scope is narrowing. There is even less turnover, as evidenced by a higher proportion of articles per active author (table 1, statistic 5). The impact of the opening of Venetian historiography during the 1960s was on the contrary better felt from the perspectives of *Archivio Veneto* and *Ateneo Veneto*. Instead of changing their traditional approaches and communities, these two journals went through a gradual broadening of their interests, as evidenced by the novelty indicator, on the rise until the 1990s. An example is given by Maria Pia Pedani. During the decade 1985–95, Pedani published several articles either proposing new topics for consideration, such as female convents—a theme then amply developed in subsequent literature—or considering old themes from a novel perspective, for example, in her work on the Austrian government of the Venetian ter-

40. For example, the top three articles by number of novel sources from the archive introduced globally during the second period in *Studi Veneziani* are Louise Robbert, "The Venetian Money Market, 1150 to 1229," *Studi Veneziani* 13 (1971): 3–94; Giorgio Zordan, "I vari aspetti della comunione familiare di beni nella Venezia dei secoli XI–XII," *Studi Veneziani* 8 (1966): 127–94; and Raffaello Vergani, "Gli inizi dell'uso della polvere da sparo nell'attività mineraria: Il caso veneziano," *Studi Veneziani* 3 (1979): 97–135.

ritories during the mid-nineteenth century.⁴¹ In *Ateneo Veneto*, during the 1990s, a small set of longer, better articulated studies took a similar direction, in an attempt to renovate the format as well as the contents of the journal's contribution to Venetian history.

After a period of flux, a second season of innovation eventually came for *Studi Veneziani*, marked by the advent of the new perspectives diffused through the 1980s and 1990s in what was a less coherent conjuncture in Venetian studies. Examples were microhistory, which played a role, albeit marginally, and the reception of other trends developed largely outside of Venice, such as local, cultural, and material history or, more recently, globalization, consumption, and the many new directions of social history (e.g., religious disobedience, gender, family, private life).⁴² It was in the 1990s and 2000s that archival record groups like the Holy Office underwent rapid expansion in use, in this case also paralleled by the rapid growth of citations to the Holy Office archive at the Vatican Secret Archive, after its opening to a larger public. Several articles published in the 1990 issues of *Studi Veneziani*, which made extensive use of novel sources, testify to this rapid development in multiple directions: the work of Donatella Bernardi on the interiors of Venetian houses in the eighteenth century, expanding on the pioneering work of Isabella Palumbo Fossati on the sixteenth century, published in both *Studi Veneziani* and *Ateneo Veneto*, and of Pompeo G. Molmenti before her in *Archivio Veneto*; or the work of Nerina Ranon on the community of Mel, a town in the Bellunese area.⁴³

Yet, contrary to the first one in the 1960s, this second conjuncture was markedly local and passive. *Archivio Veneto* largely ignored it, as did *Ateneo Veneto*, but for individual, sporadic contributions. *Studi Veneziani*, the first adopter to herald innovative changes in both cases, was in a strikingly different position during the two conjunctures: an active actor of the first one, a passive collector of what looks as a set of disconnected perspectives during the second one. The novelty of citations to documents at the Archive of Venice peaked during the third period (1980–94), as did the proportion of citations to primary sources and the frequency of citations to documents at the

41. Reference to, respectively, Maria Pia Pedani, "Monasteri di Agostiniane a Venezia," *Archivio Veneto* 125 (1985): 35–78, and "Il governo del Lombardo-Veneto dal 1849 al 1866: Note archivistiche," *Archivio Veneto* 134 (1990): 171–78.

42. Horodowich, "The New Venice," 3–4. A rise of topics in social, cultural, and religious history is evidenced in the *American Historical Review* too during the period 1970–90: Jean-Pierre Hérubel and Edward Goedeken, "Trends in Historical Scholarship as Evidenced in *The American Historical Review*: 1896–1990," *Serial Review* 19, no. 2 (1993): 79–83. For the multitude of new interests and methods discussed during the 1980s and 1990s, see Grafton, "History's Postmodern Fates"; and Trivellato, "Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory?"

43. Donatella Bernardi, "Interni di case veneziane nella seconda metà del XVIII secolo," *Studi Veneziani* 20 (1990): 172–258; Nerina Ranon, "La Comunità di Mel nel Seicento, fra rivendicazione antisignorile e conflitto interno," *Studi Veneziani* 20 (1990): 87–131.

archive during the fourth period under consideration (1995–2004). Such trends also hold for *Ateneo Veneto* and, especially, *Archivio Veneto*, whose emphasis on the careful use of evidence is ever rising, in parallel with a decline in innovation. This second conjuncture, still ongoing to some degree, was fostered by exogenous factors as in the 1960s. Yet, it registers a failure of Venetian historians to be actively involved in it and to add their contributions, potentially in continuity with previous traditions. Ultimately, during this second conjuncture, the landscape of Venetian studies fragments into numerous “parallel scholarly universes,”⁴⁴ with few exchanges among them.

TRADITIONS

If the three journals shared their participation in broader expansive trends and periods of change and consolidation, they also maintained a strong individual personality and persisting differences in their approaches. The proportion of articles citing documents at the Archive of Venice is stable over time, with an expected higher proportion at around 55 percent for *Studi Veneziani*, which is focused on the city’s history; still high but lower, at around 45 percent, for *Archivio Veneto*; and much lower for *Ateneo Veneto*, at around 10–15 percent (table 1, statistic 2). Journals also do not share authors in general, with some exceptions. For example, *Studi Veneziani* and *Archivio Veneto* shared thirty-nine authors who contributed an article to both, over 317 and 153 active authors, respectively. The obvious consideration is that most authors publish only in one journal, usually one or two contributions each. The proportion of citations to primary sources, monographs and journal articles is also following a similar trend across journals: a general rise of citations to primary sources and journal articles over time.⁴⁵ *Archivio Veneto* shows a higher proportion of citations to evidence, while

44. Grafton, “History’s Postmodern Fates,” 59.

45. For example, a proportion of references of 20 percent is given on average to evidence as reported in Clyve Jones, Michael Chapman, and Pamela C. Woods, “The Characteristics of the Literature Used by Historians,” *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 4, no. 3 (1972): 137–56. The same study also finds sensibly varying proportions for different periods of study (e.g., medieval, modern, and contemporary history). Notably, the comparison should be taken with caution, as most studies in the literature consider references, while here in-text citations are considered. References to primary sources are often proportionally lower than references to secondary literature, but higher in frequency (i.e., if considered as in-text citations). For comparison, Jean-Pierre Hérubel, “Materials Used in Historical Scholarship,” *Collection Management* 14, no. 1–2 (1991): 155–62, reports instead on average 50–60 percent of references to monographs, 30 percent to primary sources, and 10–20 percent to serial publications; Katherine W. McCain, “Citation Patterns in the History of Technology,” *Library & Information Science Research* 9 (1987): 41–59, reports around 46 percent of references to primary sources in the domain of the history of technology; Thompson, “The Death of the Scholarly Monograph in the Humanities?,” in turn reports around 41 percent of references to primary sources. No study considers the in-text frequency of such citations.

Ateneo Veneto's articles present more journal citations, perhaps a consequence of its more varied scope.

Nevertheless, several differences emerge. *Archivio Veneto* is a Venetian endeavor. The main language is Italian, non-Italian scholars are few, the pace of growth of new topics and sources is slower, and in this latter case more focused on exploring new document series rather than new record groups, perhaps with a preference for in-depth rather than in-breadth explorative studies. This conclusion is also confirmed by the high and rising frequency of citations to primary evidence in the journal. *Ateneo Veneto* is the least relevant journal in terms of volume of publications and contributions to historiography, and understandably so. Despite showing an increased interest for Venetian historiography during the boom of the 1960s and 1970s, the journal keeps its role of a minor actor. Perhaps for this reason, it is also capable of surprises: it offers a low-risk venue in which to publish and can be in some respects more dynamic than its better-known alternatives. Neither journal offers clear editorial guidelines, as evidenced by the high embeddedness of their issues. Evidently, issues are in this case not the level at which the journal topics of interest or guidelines are made explicit (see table 3, statistic 6). Finally, *Studi Veneziani* has been of great importance for the historiography on Venice. Always striving to be international, able to be innovative on a set of broad topics, and apparently more focused in planning its issues, nevertheless the journal is also more volatile than its two, older peers and is less successful at creating an identity for itself, beyond its tentative openness to innovation. If a long-established tradition is preventing a journal such as *Archivio Veneto* from being at the forefront of new trends and methods, it is also giving its activity a more stable focus, all the same without preventing a certain degree of adaptation and change.

In recent years it is increasingly difficult to characterize the field in a few, vivid strokes. *Archivio Veneto* is reverting to introversion, *Ateneo Veneto* still struggles to make a clear contribution to Venetian historiography, and *Studi Veneziani* has been publishing on a myriad of disparate topics after the last conjuncture left it void of a clear focus. In general, the rate of novelty is stagnant and has declined sharply, not only for *Studi Veneziani* but also for *Archivio Veneto* and *Ateneo Veneto*. Some attempts, such as a special issue of *Ateneo Veneto* devoted to doctoral students on the occasion of the two hundredth anniversary of the Institute (2013), albeit laudable, seem not to be part of a more general plan for reinvention. If in the 1960s non-Italian scholars tried hard to write articles in Italian, now Italian students and young researchers write in French and English, in an effort to increase their visibility. These three journals were able to serve different, complementary purposes during the past sixty years of Venetian historiography, often remaining close to their original spirit. It is perhaps less clear what the next sixty years will bring.

CONCLUSION

The recent publication of *The History Manifesto* by Jo Guldi and David Armitage garnered a considerable amount of attention among historians. The authors claim that history is in crisis. One symptom they detect is the increasingly narrow and focused scope of historians in terms of periods studied and sources used, which signals a failure to consider the *longue durée*. This is but one reason, according to the authors, for the marginality of historians in the public debate, not to mention the reduction of history into an introverted and professionalized academic field. This approach to history is termed the “short past.” Only recently, largely by means of the digital turn, does history seem to be reverting back to the long term.⁴⁶ As another scholar puts it, “in history, as also in literature or philosophy, research has become narrower and narrower.”⁴⁷ Similar statements have been made several times, in different periods, within many domains. Venetian scholars lamented the increasingly specialized and narrow nature of new publications at least twice during periods of sustained growth of the field: the late nineteenth century and the last third of the twentieth.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the debate remains open. What does it mean for a scholar, or a contribution, to become narrower, more focused, and more technical? What does topical or methodological specialization, which are indeed increasing, entail?⁴⁹ How do these two effects differ?

This article explored the recent story of three Venetian journals publishing on the history of Venice: *Ateneo Veneto*, *Archivio Veneto* and *Studi Veneziani*. All journals participate in the rapid and ongoing growth of studies on the history of the city, which is evidenced by the number of publications and the study of previously unconsidered primary sources from the Archive of Venice. Present-day scholars of Venice must now engage with a vertiginous amount of literature and known evidence, a situation incomparable with that of their peers in the 1950s and 1960s. At the same time all three journals maintain their original spirit in some ways, with *Studi Veneziani* quicker to innovate in the use of evidence, open to new trends, and international, but also more topically volatile. *Archivio Veneto*, as a counterexample, has strictly maintained its local outlook, with almost no participation from non-Italian scholars and a strong emphasis on works of erudition grounded in primary evidence, although not refusing to

46. Jo Guldi and David Armitage, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). For follow-up discussions, see contributions in *American Historical Review* 120 (2015) and in the special issue “La longue durée en débat,” *Annales HSS* 2 (2015).

47. David Abulafia, “Lucky Jim and *La Longue Durée*” (2014), <http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/node/5784/full>.

48. Benzoni, “La storiografia,” 610–12; Grubb, “When Myths Lose Power,” 83–84.

49. “The perspective on what was ‘too specialized’ differed according to one’s point of view” (Tyrrell, *Historians in Public*, 25).

innovate at a slower pace, at least until recently. Finally, two conjunctures in the local historiography on Venice clearly emerge from the analysis, at times when local historians were particularly influenced by the international community: the late 1950s to early 1970s was a period of sustained influx of non-Italian scholars that led to a renovation of studies long stagnating, with the enthusiastic participation of at least some local scholars. This first conjuncture, albeit exogenous, saw the active participation of the local community either by immediate adoption, in *Studi Veneziani*, or slower innovation in continuity, for *Archivio Veneto*. The second conjuncture, during the 1980s and early 1990s, manifested itself most notably in *Studi Veneziani*. It witnessed the partial reception of a multitude of new methods and topics of interest and was characterized by a general increase in the attention given to primary sources. Still exogenous, the second conjuncture was received passively and only partially by the local community of scholars, generating a fragmentation of perspectives. This period witnessed a rapid increase in novel documentary sources cited and in the frequency, yet not in variety nor focus of citations to primary evidence. This highlights how historians might change their sources and some rhetorical aspects of their use in publications but are not narrowing the scope of their attention with respect to primary sources.

The main limitation of this contribution rests in the still wanting explanation given for some of the conjunctures found in the local historiography on Venice. The numerical growth of both the community and its literature might partially explain changes in the rhetorical practice of historians, or their increased fragmentation in pursuit of a variety of methodologies and research questions. Indeed, the main focus of a quantitative, macroscopic study in the domain of historical social sciences at large is the detection, distinction, sequencing, and timing of events or trends.⁵⁰ This approach might further permit assessing their magnitude and statistical significance, yet their fuller explanation requires qualitative investigations too.

Changes in publishing in modern historiography might be due to a multiplicity of interlocking causes instead of a unique one. A global expansive trend fosters different reactions. It can generate a strong incentive to innovate by considering new topics or methods, but it can also lead to an increase in the specialization of scholars. Change comes in waves too, alternating periods of novelty and consolidation, that were termed here *conjunctures*. Eventually, expansion and conjunctures also coexist with enduring scholarly traditions, which might be influenced only in part, or not at all, by other trends. Finally, the use of evidence might be independent from any of the above, as was the case in this particular instance.

50. Peter Bearman, "Big Data and Historical Social Science," *Big Data & Society* 2, no. 2 (2015): 1–5.

APPENDIX

More details on indicators are provided here. As shown in figure A1, the distribution of distinct series from the archive cited in the 876 articles is very skewed. As a consequence, a filter on five or more sources allows to consider articles relying for the most part on evidence from the archive. Indicators were thus calculated only using these articles.

Example of an article used to illustrate indicators in what follows: source 1: ten citations, source 2: five citations, sources 3, 4, and 5: one citation each.

Variety: the mean (median) number of individual document series of the Archive of Venice cited in every selected article for the given period.

Example's variety: 5.

Frequency: the mean (median) number of citations to document series of the Archive of Venice cited in every selected article for the given period. Frequency accounts for both full and abbreviated references, excluding complete abbreviations.

Example's frequency: 18.

Focus: the mean (median) minimum number of individual document series necessary to reach at least 75 percent of the citations given to documents to the Archive of Venice, for every selected article for the given period. A low focus entails that most citations in an article go to few sources, a high focus entails a more even distribution of citation across sources. The h-index provides qualitatively similar results, which are omitted for brevity.

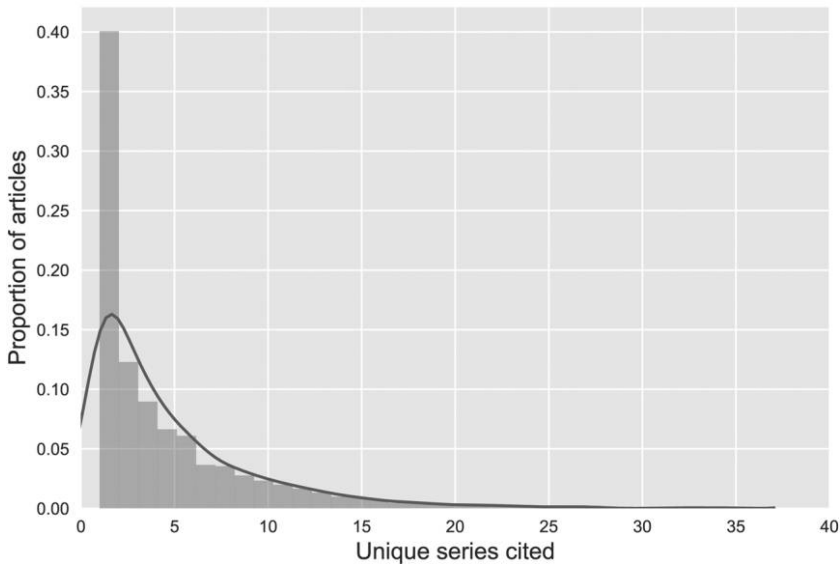


Figure A1. Number of different document series cited per article. Articles with a low number of series cited from the State Archive of Venice might be simply using sources from other archives or libraries.

Example's focus: 2 (the last quartile begins at 13.5; two sources gather 15 citations).

Novelty local: the mean (median) proportion of novel document series from the Archive of Venice cited, for every selected article for the given period. A series is novel if it was never cited before publication in the given journal (considering all published articles). Novelty is in general decreasing over time, as more and more sources have already been cited.

Novelty global: the same as novelty local, but considering series never cited before across all journals (considering all published articles).

Embeddedness: the mean (median) proportion of document series from the Archive of Venice cited by no other article in the same issue, for every selected article for the given period. Embeddedness goes from 1, when all the cited sources are not cited by other articles in the same issue, to 0 when all cited sources are cited by at least another article in the same issue. It allows to measure the coherence of journal issues by considering citations to primary sources.

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