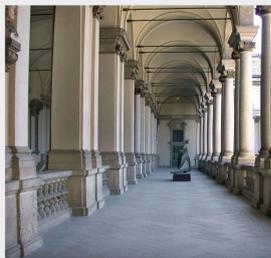


# Brera magic box

The palace of Brera is built on an ancient fourteenth-century convent of the Humiliaten and then passed to the Jesuits who established a school.

The palace is revealed as one of the places with the highest density of historical stratification of the country. Its current structure, solid and austere is the architect Francesco Maria Richini who worked there at the beginning of the seventeenth century, in 1773 due to the dissolution of the Jesuit order, the college of Brera becomes the property of the state and the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria wanted to make it home to some of the most advanced in the city's cultural institutions: **Academy of Fine Arts, Lombard Institute for Science and Literature, National Library Braidense Astronomical Observatory, Botanical Garden, the Pinacoteca di Brera.** The National Library Braidense is perhaps the place where, more than any other explains the extraordinary layering. Involves a first part dating back to when the Jesuits held the Milanese lesson from a good family, with texts now very rare, then there is the wing built by Empress Maria Theresa of Austria as part of the reorganization directed by the architect Piermarini, the architect of the Teatro alla Scala, and finally the Napoleonic expansion where you play on the eccentricity trompe d'oeil to suggest an escape higher the ceiling, probably inspired by the games perspective of Bramante in San Satyr.

The library contains some real treasures that tell Milan and our literary history, precious documents among which should be mentioned the various handwritten and printed versions of *The Betrothed* by Alessandro Manzoni, before and after rinsing in the Arno, the first editions of texts Foscolo and an elegant desk personnel belonging to the writer himself.



# BIBLIOTECA NAZIONALE BRAIDENSE



The intellectual and cultural revival occurring against the backdrop of 18th-century Enlightenment reform is the philosophy and rationale behind the inception of the **Brera Library**. In 1770, Empress **Maria Theresa of Austria** (1717-1780) offered the vast Pertusati library, initially intended for her son, Ferdinand, to the city of Milan.

**Count Carlo Pertusati** (1674-1755), president of the senate of Milan, was a man of deep learning whose fine private library, housed in his residence on Corso di Porta Romana, included around 24,000 volumes mainly of history and literature, collected on his journeys through Italy and other countries on missions on behalf of Vienna-based House of Habsburg. Maria Theresa's intention was to establish a modern institution complementary to the Ambrosiana Library (operating since 1609 and boasting a large collection of manuscripts). With the suppression of the Jesuit order decreed by Pope Clement 14 in 1773, the former Jesuit cultural centre in the Palazzo di Brera was acquired as a suitable seat for the Library. The Palazzo was subsequently renovated by Architect Giuseppe Piermarini, who designed the Maria Theresa stately salon - nowadays given over to temporary exhibitions and cultural events -, featuring a life-size portrait of the Empress by Agostino Comerio. The core of the historical collections of the Imperialis Regia Bibliotheca Mediolanensis was based on the Pertusati and the Jesuit collections, with the addition, in 1778, of the private library of well-known Swiss-born physician, Albrecht von Haller (1708-1777), including about 14,000 volumes of medicine, surgery, anatomy and botany. The Haller collection comprised the choicest 16th- to 17th-century medical literature and mirrored the major scientific debates of that period. Consequently, by the time it opened to the public in 1786, the Library boasted a wealth of resources in many different subject areas, from humanities to science.

The collections were then upgraded and enlarged through purchases, donations and above all legal deposit regulations. In 1795, Cardinal Angiolo Maria Durini, a regular at the Library until shortly before his death, bequeathed to the Brera his 2,400-volume collection of Greco-Roman literature, French and Milanese classics, including a number of rare 16th- and 17th-century editions with fine bindings. A major role in increasing the Library's collections was also played by the Avviso enacted by the Milan Regia Intendenza Politica on 30th April, 1788, entitling the Library to all books published in the state of Milan. Effective 1793 legal deposit was extended to include serial publications, edicts and local government acts. In the first half of the 19th century, legal deposit from the kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia, boasting Italy's top book printers, was another great boost to the Library's collections.

The Brera institution kept true to its purpose as a comprehensive and all-encompassing public library throughout the 19th century, with the acquisition of prominent collections like the **Alessandro Manzoni** donation, offered by Manzoni's grandson in-law, Pietro Brambilla, between 1885 and 1886, including 200 original manuscripts, 250 books with Manzoni's marginal notes and a bunch of about 5,000 autograph letters. The Library also holds a substantial collection of manuscripts, some important items of which belonging to the historical collections of the Brera, others coming from the suppression of religious congregations. The latter include Francesco Berlinghieri's (1440-1501) *Geographia*, made for Lorenzo the Magnificent (1449-1492) and illuminated in the atelier of Attavante degli Attavanti (ca.1452- 1525), the *Graduale* with splendid illuminations by Cristoforo Cortese (ca.1452-1525), and the rhyming bible of Pietro da Bescapè (ca.1220-1280), which is the earliest work in the Milanese dialect. 20th century purchases being confined to volumes of humanities, the comprehensiveness of the Library's collections was ensured by legal deposit alone, mandatory for all printing firms based in Milan and its province. Effective September, 2006 Italy's legal deposit regulations were changed to cover all publishers based in the same region as the legal deposit library, instead of printing firms as before. This has led to a massive increase in the items delivered. Alone in 2007, the Library received through legal deposit legislation 16,000 books and 6,000 newspapers, compared to only 3,000 books and 726 newspapers purchased.

The National Braidense Library (Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense) is one of the 47 Italian State libraries. It depends upon the Directorate General for Libraries and Cultural Institutes (Direzione Generale per le Biblioteche, gli Istituti Culturali e il Diritto d'Autore) of the Ministry of Cultural Assets and Activities (Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e per il Turismo).

Since July 2015 it has merged into the museum system of the **Pinacoteca di Brera**, under the general direction of James M. Bradburne.



BIBLIOTECA NAZIONALE BRAIDENSE  
Milano, Via Brera 28 - [www.braidense.it](http://www.braidense.it)



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