For an institution that is only 113 years old, the American Academy in Rome has come through a lot. That is why it has to be every person every entrusted with its leadership, each of whom has had to tackle problems peculiar to his or her own time.

On the scene, Charles Felsen McKinnon found that it was not easy to imagine the Academy and its leader from the 1990s. He went into his own board to build up to the title: “It is a beautiful building, but there was no other available. Other stuff crises were of a different order on an altogether occasion, the director of gay art and design, FAAR 89, 90,” which time it would have to be a second when one of the fellows was challenged to a duel. In 1999, the altered scene forced McKinnon to resign.

However, no one now put to the text more than Lawrence and Isabel Roberts, who arrived in Rome in December to take the Academy after the Second World War. The Stil contra the Roberts found the institution in a state of ruin, the staff was mostly dispersed, and the Academy had been transformed into a center for study for architectural and art historians. The Roberts in their turn only had time to hire a person to serve as the Academic Director, and to bring in their own collection from the United States. The Roberts returned from the war with a collection of their own, which they took care to take account of the challenges of the end of the twentieth century, which would continue in the first decade of the twenty-first. All of them are aiming at how to do with institutionalizing the remaining and restoring the property, increasing the endowment, and developing the scholarship to evolve with the times.

Beginning in the 1990s, as Italy transformed itself into one of the leading industrial powers in the world, the Academy faced a sharp rise in costs and saw its purchasing power decline dramatically. Bankruptcy looming, Maintenance of the Academic’s gardens was done in savings and living conditions became both outdated and run down (the setting, to mention only the most egregious defection, was so substantiable that buildings and gardens threatened to close the Academy!). Library acquisitions were cut to such an extent that this day did find libraries from those years in the collection. Stipends for the Rome Prize fellowships were not competitive. All aspects of Academy life were understood, from the management of the Rome Prize competition to the fact that we had no senior person in the arts for more than fifty years.

Many of these challenges have been successful in the past fifteen years. In 1999, the trustees developed a master plan to restore and renovate the entire property, a plan that has since been implemented and more. The Academy now has a comprehensive information technology infrastructure, state-of-the-art in 1999, and long-term projects are an additional property, Via Angelino Mina, (S), which provides family housing as well as a specially designed home for the Fellowship. We have been able to in order to restore Villa Aurelia as the setting for the Academy’s program, and so do our fellowships and residencies, including the American Academy in Rome, to make the transition, to develop a new project that is at once more accessible and more feasible, and to maintain the quality and prestige of our programs, both academic and scholarly.

Perhaps most important, the Academy now not only has a tradition to maintain in the arts, but also has the support and the arts, for the arts, throughout the entire organization. The Academy now has the resources to pursue the future, to plan for the future, and to do so in a manner that is both efficient and sustainable.

In summation, the Academy now has a comprehensive information technology infrastructure, state-of-the-art in 1999, and long-term projects are an additional property, Via Angelino Mina, (S), which provides family housing as well as a specially designed home for the Fellowship. We have been able to in order to restore Villa Aurelia as the setting for the Academy’s program, and so do our fellowships and residencies, including the American Academy in Rome, to make the transition, to develop a new project that is at once more accessible and more feasible, and to maintain the quality and prestige of our programs, both academic and scholarly.
The Year Without the Library

Carmela Vircillo Franklin, FSR ’85, FS ’02
Editor

It will be even more beautiful than the old one, its accommodations for readers will be more comfortable and convenient, and its books will be cleaner of dust and mites. Nevertheless, the most important improvement will be the additional capacity that we will gain, through compact shelving and deeper stacking for linen, along with structural and systemic upgrades. The library will reopen on September 11, 2006, and we are planning a formal celebration of it for Thanksgiving week of this year.

Christina Huetter, Diane Stetner Librarian, adds: After the most common question, “Will you reopen on schedule?” we are sometimes asked why we are doing this at all. We don’t lack for answers—compliance with new code requirements, more space for books, more space for readers, better preservation conditions, new and restored furniture—these are all needs that have become increasingly critical since we first began planning this project in 1999. However, at the same time, we realize that our efforts are anomalous, that all around us other libraries are scaling back or investing more heavily in electronic resources instead of in books and mortar. That is one reason that I am finding this year interesting: I can see how much research our fellows can actually accomplish with a small reference collection, a group of twenty-five books each from our general collections, and expanded access to electronic data bases. So far, the complaints have been few, and we still notice fellows doing ‘virtual tours’ for the new books that we put out each week.

Libraries everywhere are in transition—moving ahead or back on how they can use their two tracks, acquiring both digital and analog materials electronic texts and images alongside of old fashioned books and journals. There has been much talk on how libraries can “compete” with information hubs such as Google and personalized services such as MySpace. I recently attended a conference at which almost everything we do every day has been dismissed as ‘legacy activities’ (translation—books, journals, cataloging and reference services) and at which the presumption was that we must stop having our generation, but the next generation will bypass libraries altogether, instead doing it online already doing so. So I cannot help wondering: Will the next generation of Academy fellows appreciate our newly renovated library, with its reformed wooden enclosures full of old fashioned books and its new compact storage full of old-fashioned periodicals? I think they will, but only if we keep the broader context in mind. Our libraries represent the study of the humanities, in which old and new book happily side by side, in which critical judgment, peer review, and the selective sifting of information still count for something. Our library may be a refuge, but it is also part of a network of libraries in Rome and in the United States that allows us to share resources and to coordinate our collections and services. This year, alongside the renovation, we have taken other steps toward the future with the advent of a new catalog software (try it at www.rivista.org) and improvements in our access to full-text databases, such as JSTOR (Journal Storage) and the History E-Book Project (now becoming the Humanities E-Book Collection). The next step is for our library to become a more active participant in shaping the future of research in the humanities. We have begun in a modest way, by sending a set of our Movers to be digitized for JSTOR.

The academic year 2006–2007 will be remembered in the annals of the American Academy in Rome as the “Year Without the Library.” Our library closed at the end of July 2006, in preparation for its renovation. A huge squat packing the books to be sent to an off-site storage facility (in Sommi, near Rome). In September the work of moving and building up of removing and upgrading began in earnest. It has been a fascinating and instructive experience for the community from many points of view. First, of course, there was the excitement of looking at what the demolition revealed a labyrinthine course of the stairs, flying under our books at greater depth than we would have thought; the railroad tracks, covered up by the pavement of the library’s ground floor, that once served to transport coal, laundry and other materials in the old days. It was our very own “underground railroad,” which we hope to keep exposed in part in the renovated library. Light will now be able to shine through the removed esche di base of the cryptopatras, where new readers’ desks will be placed. The vaulted-beamed beauty of the furniture and woodwork, liberated from its contextual grimy by local restorers, will be removed. In addition, the books we thought we had lost to had long since disappeared; the firelight behind shelves and other obstructions, will interface out. But along with the area that any construction site engenders, we have also felt a great absence in our daily life, the absence of our readers, who walked through our front gate, as lunch in the dining room, drank coffee in our bar, and who have been such an important link to Rome and beyond for our fellows. The most serious representation of the library’s closing has been felt by our fellows and residential community (including me, as I have missed my occasional forays into the library to check out a bibliographic query or to get a book to show a fellow or colleague). The reasoning presence of the library as the font of knowledge and reference at all hours of the day and night was sorely felt by its absence and has been Remediated by the current fellows, who now clamoring to be allowed to return after the building’s reopening to sample that aspect of Academy life denied to them. However, not all the consequences of the library’s closing have been negative. Many of our fellows have become habituated of the library at Ecole Francaise, the British School, and even the Palazzo Veneziano, as well as the Vatican Library, and this venturing out into the city has brought its own rewards. Now that the reconstruction is well under way, and we have entered the phase in which some those who did not know our library can begin to envision what the renovation will look like.

Reading room, lying in preparation

Reading room during renovation

Top right: compact shelving for woodwork and storage

Middle: compact shelving during renovation

Left: compact shelving during renovation
In September 2014, the Academy began a campaign for its second centennial. This effort is part of a long-standing commitment to the Academy’s role as the nation’s premier center for the preservation of Classical Rome in one institution. The Academy’s seventy-five-year-old tradition of supporting the safeguarding of cultural treasures includes the acquisition of the Villa Aurelia, the former residence of the last American ambassador to Rome, and the Academy’s current efforts to renovate the building and make it accessible to all.

The Academy’s campaign, which has raised more than $35 million to date, is a testament to the Academy’s strong support from its members and friends around the world. The campaign’s success is due in large part to the Academy’s focus on its mission to preserve and promote the arts and sciences.

The Academy’s centennial campaign is a significant milestone in its history. The Academy has been a leader in the field of cultural preservation for more than a century, and its efforts have helped to preserve some of the world’s most important works of art and architecture. The Academy’s mission is to inspire and educate the public through its extensive programs and exhibitions.

The Academy’s centennial campaign is an opportunity to support the Academy’s efforts to continue its important work. The Academy’s financial success is crucial to its ability to carry out its mission.

The Academy’s campaign has received strong support from individuals, foundations, and corporations. The Academy has also received significant support from the United States government, which has provided a grant to support the Academy’s efforts.

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World building, but the experiment was deemed “tinkertoy,” and, as the director’s report put it, “thus far we have been unable to teach the students in the Academy primary to make the cause of the Academy.

With the support of trustees and the help of an anonymous donor, the Academy of Arts and Letters also developed the skills of several young artists, including a sculptor and a painter, one of whom was an Academy alumnus. This was followed by the development of a larger, more sophisticated, and more ambitious project: a new and larger Academy building.

The new Academy building was designed by architect Robert Venturi and built by the Venturi team. The building was completed in 1973 and is now the site of the Academy’s main offices and meeting space.

The Academy of Arts and Letters continues to be an important institution for the academy and its members, providing a place for the exchange of ideas and the promotion of excellence in the arts.
Publication has always been an important part of the program. As part of the Director’s gift celebration, a special edition of the publication was presented to the University. This gift will help support the program’s continued success.

The publication was well-received by all who attended.

Ingrid Pedersen, Assistant Professor of Art History, University of Minnesota, presented a paper titled “The Rise of Neoclassical Architectural Revival in South Carolina.” Her paper explored how local architects in South Carolina adopted Neoclassical styles in the 18th and 19th centuries, and how these styles were influenced by European trends.

Jodi Huisjen, Associate Professor of Art History, University of Texas at Austin, discussed her research on the use of photography in architectural history. She highlighted the importance of visual documentation in understanding the evolution of architectural styles and materials.

David G. Brown, Associate Professor of Art History, University of California, Los Angeles, presented a paper on the influence of Italian Baroque architecture on American-designed public buildings in the United States.

Elizabeth Gray Rieger, Vice President for Development, University of Minnesota, discussed the importance of publications in advancing the University’s mission and showcasing its research.

Peabody, who is widely regarded as one of the leading experts in the field of architectural history, provided valuable insights on the significance of the publication and its impact on the field.

Publication endowment funds will support the program in the future.

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Welcome Returning Fellows and Residents

William Franklin
Associate Director for External Affairs

If you are not staying at the Academy, you may apply to the director to open an account for a $50 (or $100) renewable deposit in the Finance Office to cover services provided to you by the library, mailroom, tolls, and Pottery Express. Fees and mail.

Individual meals must also be budgeted for at the rates as needed. Returning fellows and residents not staying at the Academy who wish to use the library will be issued a normal reader’s card; please bring a photo if the first time you come to see the library. Reminder: The library of the American Academy in Rome is open only on Sat., Sun and public holidays. To learn how to use the library, please contact the Circulation Desk. The best way to stay in touch with and informed about the American Academy in Rome is:

www.americanacademy.it

Stay in touch!
If you have any questions or need any information, please contact the Circulation Desk at 545-8181.

Society of Fellows News

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Welcome returning fellows and residents who visit the American Academy in Rome, but advance arrangements are strongly encouraged so that the guesthouse can be informed of your arrival. To notify the Academy of a proposed visit, contact: fellowships@aaroma.org, or the associate director for external affairs, at 39-06-679 -9044.

The American Academy in Rome (Fulbright Commission) is a cultural and governmental exchange program that has been working with the Italian and American governments and the private sector for over 50 years to further the exchange of persons, ideas, and experiences between the United States and Italy.

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Interview conducted by Michael L. Bodegran on behalf of the Society of Fellows on January 15, 2015.

James Bodegran: I first met Michael L. Severn at his office at Columbia University. We’ve been in contact since then, and I was very glad to see him on the occasion of the Board of Trustees. The conversation is being recorded for the Society of Fellows in order to inform our Fellows and provide some background for the issues on the agenda for the Board of Trustees.

Michael L. Severn: When I was president of the Corporation of Stanford University in Italy, it was President George, Rome, Italy, and when I knew that I was coming to Rome for these negotiations, I invited the head of the Academy. That was my first encounter; I went in the Villa Aurelia for about a week. Since then, there was a strong relationship between the University and the Academy. We met and talked about how the University could collaborate with the Academy, and that is the beginning of this project.

Michael L. Severn: I think that the relationship between the University and the Academy has been very fruitful. I think that the University has benefited from the Academy’s expertise and resources, and the Academy has benefited from the University’s resources and the opportunity to engage with the University’s students and faculty. I think that the relationship has been mutually beneficial.

Michael L. Severn: I think that the Academy has always been a very important institution. It has a long history and a distinguished record of accomplishment. It has always been at the forefront of the advancement of knowledge and the development of new ideas. It has always been a place where people have come together to learn and to do research. I think that the Academy has always been a very important institution, and I am very proud to be associated with it.

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