

## CONTEST TOPICS

### “THE OLDEST LIBRARY IN THE WORLD – COMIC CONTEST”

The aims of the comic contest “*THE OLDEST LIBRARY IN THE WORLD*”, organized by the **Capitolare Library** in cooperation with **Fondazione Discanto** and with the contribution of **UniCredit**, are to tell some episodes of the engaging story of the oldest library in the world using different means of communication, suitable and attractive for a new audience. Its purpose is to approach and charm also those who are not into the subject and who aren't passionate about manuscripts and ancient books.

Each applicant shall choose one of the following topics for the realization of his/her project, in accordance with the procedures and the deadlines laid down by the Contest Rules.

#### **1) URSICINUS AND THE SCRIPTORIUM**

On August 1st, 517 a “mischievous” friar named Ursicinus finished copying the Life of St. Paul the Hermit by St. Jerome, and the Life of St. Martin of Tours, written by Sulpicius Severus in the 4th century. But Ursicinus, once that he was done with his job, did not play by the rules of his time and dated it. “This manuscript – he wrote – was completed in Verona, on August 1st, in the year when Agapitus, very prestigious man, was consul (which is indeed August 1<sup>st</sup>, 517), by the hand of Ursicinus, reader minister of the Veronese Church”. Scholars consider this manuscript one of the oldest in the Latin West bearing a dated colophon. This book, known all over the world, is therefore extremely precious not only for its content, but also because it states that at that time, and probably since the previous century, in Verona there was already an established Scriptorium, producing different kinds of books.

#### **2) SCIPIONE MAFFEI AND THE DISCOVERY OF THE LOST BOOKS**

In 1625, the building of some new rooms was planned, to be placed above the canonical vestry, and bound to keep the Capitolare's books. While he waited for its construction, the librarian Agostino Rezzani placed several ancient manuscripts and incunabula behind the frame molding of a wardrobe in the next room, and he edited a catalogue of the manuscripts. Unfortunately, he died of the plague that in 1630 killed two thirds of Verona's inhabitants, and he took to his grave the secret of the hiding place. It was only in 1712 that the accurate research made by Scipione Maffei and the Canon Carlo Carinelli brought

those relics back to light. The news of the discovery aroused surprise and enthusiasm within the people of letters, who kept on knocking at the door to consult the books. Chronicles report that when Carinelli found the manuscript, he ran straight to Maffei to inform him about the discovery. As soon as he learned the news, Maffei left his house in a hurry, still wearing his slippers and housecoat, to reach the Capitolare and start immediately to study these immensely precious ancient books.

### **3) GIUSEPPE TURRINI AND THE MANUSCRIPTS RESCUED FROM THE BOMBS**

On January 4th, 1945, there was an air raid on Verona. After a first severe alarm warning, four waves of “Liberator” bombers dropped several bombs in a very short time. The first three waves hit the two train stations of Porta Nuova e Porta Vescovo, while the last one dropped its bombs within the city; at 12.33, a bomb fell right on the Capitolare.

The bomb fell on the most vital area of the building, in the central part of the main hall. Luckily, the librarian Mons. Giuseppe Turrini, helped by doctor Wolfgang Hagemann, Secretary in the Office for the Protection of the Monuments, Artworks, Libraries and Archives in Italy, had rescued the books, moving them to the rectory of the church in the small town of Erbezzo, and avoiding thus the destruction of the rarest and oldest manuscripts of the Capitolare.

**NB:** Those in need of further information about the story of the Capitolare Library shall write to [info@capitolareverona.it](mailto:info@capitolareverona.it).