



ULRICO HOEPLI

THE INSIGHTFUL IDEAS OF A

BOOKSELLING
PUBLISHER

by Pier Carlo Della Ferrera
interview with Ulrico Carlo Hoepli
texts by Tindaro Gatani, Ada Gigli Marchetti and Joseph Jung



Ulrico Hoepli and the Hoeplis, Swiss Milanese

Pier Carlo Della Ferrera* meets Ulrico Carlo Hoepli**

What memories do you have of Ulrico Hoepli? What aspects of his character and of his business activities do you regard most interesting and do you feel merit attention?

My memories of Ulrico Hoepli, the founder of the bookshop and of our publishing house, are those that my family has handed down by word of mouth, as I was born a few months after his death, in January 1935. My mother and father married in 34 when he was still alive, shown by a lovely picture I have of the occasion; my grandfather Carlo and my uncle Gianni spent a lot of time with him and knew him very well. Therefore I had the good fortune to hear stories about his life, affairs, anecdotes about this man, who in our family was known and is still known as *Avo*, which means Forefather. He was a great uncle to my father, an uncle to my grandfather, a great great uncle to me and so calling him “Forefather” seemed perfectly normal.

After a period of apprenticeship in Zurich, Wroclaw and Leipzig, Ulrico Hoepli moved to Trieste, (this city is very important to me because my mother is from Trieste) where he worked at a bookshop that is now called “Italo Svevo”. Here he had the great foresight to understand that the future of publishing was in Milan. This fact has always impressed me because in 1865-1870 Trieste was at the height of its development, as an outpost to Austria and Central Europe, it was a leading cultural centre, a city that was soon to be that of Joyce, Weiss and of the school of Freud, of Ettore Schmitz, namely Italo Svevo. However, despite this he understood that, to be successful in the book trade, you had to go to Milan.

Ulrico Hoepli also demonstrated this sense of the future, this great intelligence when he asked his nephew to continue running his business. Ulrico Hoepli, who married Elisa Häberlin, had no children. However, he had such an extraordinary sense of the future that he literally forced his nephew, my grandfather Carlo – that I knew very well because he passed away in 1972 and I worked with him – to join him in Milan. My grandfather often complained to me about this: “You know my uncle forced me to come to Milan, he forced me to take the German school-leaving certifi-

cate in Frauenfeld, because he said that if you didn’t speak German you couldn’t make it in the book trade, because the printed book had originated in Germany, with Gutenberg. And then my uncle forced me to come here to run the business”. He was so determined, almost violently so, that the business should remain in the family, that he took his nephew, tore him away from Lyon, the city where he lived and was happy, and nominated him his successor. So right from the beginning, his desire to do something long-lasting, that



stood the test of time, was apparent.

What were the origins of Ulrico Hoepli’s family?

Ulrico was the youngest of four children, five if you count a brother that died when he was young. As my father and my grandfather always said, he belonged to a family of *wohlhabender Bauern*, of well-off, but not particularly wealthy farmers. I have a document that dates back to the sixteenth century that shows how the Hoeplis had always been a family of farmers from the Canton of Thurgau, a region that was rather poor in the past, that made its living from the cultivation of vineyards and above all of fruit trees, so much so that it was known as the “apple factory”. He actually came from Wängi, a small village that we are still citizens of. The young Ulrico “emigrated”, he went to be an apprentice in Zurich, in a bookshop called Schabelitz. He was a very intelligent boy who had a sense of adventure and innovation.

The relationship between the young Ulrich and his mother, Regina Gamper, is well-

On page 1:
A portrait of Ulrico
Hoepli, 1935

On the left:
The publisher in the
eyes of Tullio Pericoli
(2005).

On the right:
Hoepli (in the front)
with his nephew Carlo
in 1910.

Ulrico Hoepli's
birthplace in Tuttwil.



known. As Joseph Jung wrote in one of his books, she was the one that acknowledged her son's inclination towards intellectual activities. Little is known, on the other hand, of his relationship with his father, Mathias.

I remember the relationships that Ulrico Hoepli had with his brothers very well, especially that with Johann Heinrich, or Jean Henri, the brother from Lyon, who – I say it rather paradoxically – gave him his nephew Carlo Hoepli. My family didn't talk about his father and mother very much, so we have to trust what our friend and historian Jung says. Perhaps, due to a certain male chauvinism, the mother was never acknowledged with the great merit she deserved.

However, it is important to mention that individual and personal events – as so often happens – played a fundamental role in all of this. The opportunities provided by a city like Zurich, where a certain intellectual vivacity was present, working in a large bookshop combined with this young man's intelligence as well as his later work experience in Leipzig, Wroclaw, Trieste and Cairo undoubtedly enabled him to develop his plan to buy the Laengner bookshop in Milan. This was really small, and he was able to expand it, partly thanks to the good relations he had with the local Protestant community. I believe that his great intuition played an important role, as I mentioned before. There is no doubt that his mother was a very important figure; but then all mothers are.

What difficulties did he have to face at the start of his career, on his arrival in Milan?

The first obstacle – although it might seem banal – was the language. Ulrico Hoepli, Swiss, was raised speaking *Thurgauerdütsch*; he lived in Trieste for a while, but the city, although geographically Italian, belonged to the Habsburg Empire and at that time German was the dominant language.

My father and my grandfather, as well as my uncle Gianni, who is still alive and over ninety years old, or even my aunt Bianca, who has just turned ninety, have always jokingly told me that the *Avo* spoke Italian rather badly. His intelligence enabled him to understand it well, but he always kept a strong German accent and initially encountered the odd difficulty, especially in the written form.

To overcome this problem, he surrounded himself with an excellent team of co-workers, such as Giovanni Piazza, who wrote his letters for him and acted as his intermediary.

Despite these difficulties, you could say that he enjoyed success right from the start. Evidently Ulrico Hoepli had innate business skills; he was “daring” and “shrewd”, as Enrico Decleva wrote, so much so that he succeeded in becoming the publisher of the Italian royal family, although he was Swiss and a Republican, and the publisher for the Vatican, although he was Protestant.

Yes, he was “daring” and “shrewd”, but also very courageous, because at the beginning of his career he often came close to bank-

ruptcy and had to face incredible failures.

In 1873 he decided to publish a book that entailed considerable expense, the *Codex diplomaticus Cavensis*, an ancient code preserved in a Benedictine abbey. The monks did not honour their commitment and the initiative, which could have been of considerable interest, was a failure from a business perspective. He was brave, but the business did not generate the expected results. One anecdote which has become famous in our family is that of the decisive role played by his brother in Lyon, Jean Henri, who gave him a “legendary” loan of 20,000 Swiss francs. Without this money he would probably have had to close the business.

Being a Republican and publisher of the royal family, Protestant and publisher of the Vatican was a skill that Ulrico Hoepli had because he was Swiss. The Swiss are world citizens, considered such because of their open-mindedness, their tolerance and their cosmopolitanism. So naturally being Swiss, for all of these reasons, is a great advantage. An advantage that the *Avo* knew how to exploit in the best way possible, but not because his sole objective was money and business, as demonstrated by a number of incidents.

My family still recounts everybody’s sense of desperation when, in 1930, Hoepli decided to donate the Planetarium to the city of Milan, because – he said – “I have found fortune in my life and my work in this city, and I want to give what I have earned back to the city”. The documents still preserved in the Zeiss Ikon archives in Jena demonstrate that he paid for the building that Piero Portaluppi designed for the planetarium *bar bezahlt*, i.e. in cash, and donated it to the city. And he did the same with the library in Zurich. In Zurich’s Central Library there is a plate with the name of all of the institution’s benefactors; Ulrico Hoepli’s name appears among these because in 1903 he made a generous contribution of 25,000 Swiss francs to the library, which was a lot of money in those days. However, his actions were not for profit or personal gain. Later, my father and my grandfather had to change their opinions about the donation of the Planetarium, so much so that they often repeated: “You know, in reality, we should be grateful to the *Avo*, because if it hadn’t been for the Planetarium, there would

never have been a via Hoepli in Milan”, a great honour for us.

Ulrico Hoepli had both business and social skills. This enabled him to approach the pope, the king, anyone, and to be a good mediator between the Protestants and the Catholics. I think that he displayed “ecumenical” skills.

What relationships did Hoepli manage to forge with newly-established cultural and academic institutions or those that were already an established part of the Milanese or Italian cultural life?

Ulrico Hoepli possessed innate skills in human relations, he was likable, perhaps due to his directness or to that distant Swiss accent that you could pick up in conversation and he immediately managed to establish strong ties with figures from the old Politecnico [Polytechnic], which at that time was called the Istituto Tecnico Superiore [Technical High School].

In particular, he forged an extraordinary relationship with the great Giuseppe Colombo, author of one of Hoepli’s bestsellers, the *Manuale dell’ingegnere* [Engineer’s handbook]. Giuseppe Colombo, lecturer in

MANUALE
DELL’
INGEGNERE

CIVILE E INDUSTRIALE

PER

G. COLOMBO

Professore di Meccanica e Costruzione di macchine
nel R. Istituto tecnico superiore di Milano.

Con 131 incisioni ed una carta d’Italia.



ULRICO HOEPLI,

LIBRAJO-EDITORE

NAPOLI

MILANO

PISA

1877 - 78.

Title page of the first edition (1877-78) of the *Manuale dell’Ingegnere civile e industriale* [The civil and industrial engineer’s handbook] by Giuseppe Colombo.



NUNTIATURA APOSTOLICA.
POLONIAE



Varavia 23 April 1921

Ill. Signor Commendatore,

Ho fatto la consegna dei volumi Santefeli recitati insieme con la graditissima e gentilissima sua del 10 corrente; furono accolti con commossa riconoscenza, della quale io mi onoro di essere interprete prima ancora ch' Ella ne ricave diretta espressione: il Suo riverito nome è già fatto nel libro d'oro dell'Università di Varavia, il quale è ancora alle prime e storicamente più memorabili sue pagine in questa ancora acerba aurora di vita della rifosta Polonia.

Le sono molto grato, ottimo signor Commendatore, per avere Ella così graziosamente secondato la mia preghiera e per tutte le belle e buone ed indulgenti cose che mi scrive.

A Lei, alla Vecchia Guardia, alla nuova promettente recluta ogni bene augura e prega

Ill. Signore
Ulrico Comm. Hoepli
Libro B. - Milano

il suo obliquo suo
+ A. Ratti Nunzio Apostolico

P.S. Una targhetta applicata già ora al frontespizio di ciascun volume dice ai prefati, cioè ai futuri il nome ed il bel gesto del munifico donatore.

Mechanics and Machine Construction, was the man who in that period, between the eighteen seventies and the first decade of the twentieth century, gave electricity to Milan. Close to the Rinascente there is a beautiful plate that reads: “Here Giuseppe Colombo for the first time illuminated piazza del Duomo”. He was a fine character who was no doubt a great source of inspiration to Ulrico Hoepli and gave him a lot of suggestions, also as a friend and not just as someone that worked with the publishing house. As always things are created from great minds.

The case of the *Manuale dell'ingegnere* is also rather representative because it has always been the heart, the symbol of Hoepli publishing, which favours scientific-technical subject areas. Being on excellent terms with the Politecnico was fundamental and even today the *Manuale dell'ingegnere* still provides guidelines for all of us.

Ulrico Hoepli was extraordinarily apt in developing this network of contacts; he was a sort of midwife, an obstetrician, capable of bringing a book, written by others with better knowledge of the subject and who knew how to express themselves in Italian better than him, into the world.

Other than with the Politecnico, he was on excellent terms with the Biblioteca Braidense, with the Ambrosiana, as he was a great friend of the then Prefect Achille Ratti, who later became Pope Pio XI, with the Scuola Superiore di Agricoltura [Agricultural High School] and with all of the vocational schools, with the SIAM, with the Umanitaria, with the Accademia Scientifico-Letteraria [Academy of Science and Literature] and the Osservatorio Astronomico di Brera [Astronomic Observatory of Brera].

Do you remember any particularly unusual publication or any curious facts about a publication?

Today's catalogue contains about 1,000 titles. Over the years more than 12,000 titles have been published, so it is quite normal that there have been some strange books. My father and grandfather often laughed about the yucca handbook. I can hardly even remember what a yucca is, maybe it's a fruit or a tropical African plant. That was the era in which Italy possessed the African colonies of Libya, Somalia and Eritrea, and therefore the

yucca handbook had its usefulness, its *raison d'être*. A scientific-technical publisher like Hoepli had to move in a number of different directions, even if that meant publishing books that nowadays might seem strange or unusual. I don't know where the yucca handbook ended up, or how many copies were sold. Similarly, today it seems strange that for a certain period, the Hoepli catalogue included more than one magazine, a series and a considerable number of books for children and young people as well as a women's magazine, with features on fashion, embroidery and cooking. This happened in the period at the turn of the nineteenth century and lasted up until the First World War. Then this direction was practically abandoned and the publishing house started specialising in other sectors.

It is curious, interesting and in a certain respect moving, when reading some of the



Manuali [Handbooks] from one hundred years ago, to see that the time it took to travel between Milan and Chiasso by train was 5 or 6 minutes faster than it is today.

You could say that, in the first few decades of his business enterprise, Ulrico Hoepli tried a number of different avenues, until he identified a particular field, a main direction and gave the publishing house a precise image, which was to last over time: that of a scientific-technical publisher.

Yes, probably these were the first steps and as such were naturally characterised by some degree of uncertainty.

On the left:
A letter written by Achille Ratti to Ulrico Hoepli on 23rd April 1921, when the future Pope Pio XI was Papal Nuncio in Poland.

Advertisement for the magazines for women and young people published by Hoepli between the end of the nineteenth century and the first few years of the twentieth century. The insertion from 1910 is taken from “Il Natale del libro” [“A book for Christmas”], a catalogue that proposed Christmas gifts and the latest books available from the publisher and bookseller.

It is remarkable and important to note how, despite the fact that he was a native German speaker, Ulrico Hoepli used English, and particularly Anglo-American handbooks as his models rather than those of German origin. Nowadays it seems normal to consider the United States as a forerunner in terms of technology, but in 1870 this was not the case, especially for those that were culturally and linguistically linked to the German-speaking world. Hoepli, on the other hand, drew strong inspiration from the example that came from across the Atlantic, from the United States, so much so that he travelled to America for what we would now call a professional trip to refresh his skills on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition of Chicago in 1893, from which we still have his notebook. He had come up with the idea of the handbooks some time previously so it was not inspired by that trip, the *manuali* project was already clear, but he wanted to perfect his publications; he knew that Anglo-American production in this sector was highly innovative and in continuous evolution.

Once again he showed great intuition; he understood that scientific-technical publishing was something that was lacking in Italy, and therefore represented an open field, which still had to be ploughed, and an attractive niche in which he could move with the utmost flexibility and in which he could dominate.

Hoepli placed considerable focus on the antique book market, publishing prestigious editions such as the *Codex Atlanticus* and *Codex Vergilianus* of Petrarca preserved at the Ambrosiana.

Yes, some time ago Hoepli had a well-developed antique book sector.

At a certain point in his business activities, together with one of his nephews, namely my grandfather Carlo, he concentrated mainly on the publishing house and on the bookshop, which were later run by my father and my uncle Gianni. In what you could nowadays call a reorganisation of the company structure, another of his nephews, Erardo Aeschlimann, a native of Winterthur and son of Amalia Häberlin, sister of his wife Elisa, was placed in charge of the antique book sector. The latter continued the work that Hoepli had started at the end of the

nineteenth century with great ability and success, and which, in the first few decades of the twentieth century was considerably boosted by the contribution of the renowned antiquarian and bibliophile, Mario Armanni. In the Thirties and Forties, but also after the war, up until the Fifties, the Hoepli Antique Bookshop was very active in all world auctions. I could recount some anecdotes on the subject that are very moving for me. The most recent happened just a few days ago. I was at the publisher's, Franco Maria Ricci, and while leafing through a Bodoni that they had recently purchased from Sotheby's, I noticed that before arriving at Sotheby's the book had been sold at an auction of the Hoepli Antique Bookshop, held in Lucerne in 42, in the midst of the Second World War.

When Aeschlimann passed away, no member of the family was able to run the antique book sector with the same skill, and so all that is left is a small antique and modern antique section in the bookshop; but we are no longer at the level we once were, or at the level of the great Milanese antique bookshops like Vigevani or Pozzi.



Catalogue of antique and modern, rare and curious editions of French literature on sale at the Hoepli Antique Bookshop in 1895.

Ulrico Hoepli's main co-workers pose in front of the bronze bust of the publisher commissioned in 1896 on the occasion of the celebrations of 25 years of business activities.



Even though he wanted to give his publishing house a scientific-technical image and to prioritise this area, Hoepli founded the antique bookshop because he had a universal idea of the book that had no boundaries, which stemmed from his being a bookseller. A good book called *Il libraio di Amsterdam [The bookseller from Amsterdam]* has recently been published, which would be useful to read to understand how, for a bookseller, it is natural to be open-minded and to switch almost automatically from the *Manuale dell'ingegnere* to the works of Jung or Heidegger.

What was Ulrico Hoepli like in his personal and professional relationships with his co-workers, with his nephew Carlo, with Giovanni Piazza, Cesarino Branduani and the others?

I believe he was very generous and extraordinary. He hired Branduani as an assistant in his bookshop when he was still very young and at a certain point the boy had to be admitted to a sanatorium due to a serious pulmonary condition – at that time tuberculosis was fairly widespread. Ulrico Hoepli followed the case personally and ensured that he continued to receive his salary for the entire duration of the illness. A company is made up of people and no doubt Hoepli had the great ability to put the right people in the right place and to treat them well and very generously.

There are no stories in my family of clashes or arguments with co-workers.

He only had the occasional difficulty with his nephew Carlo, given the close family tie and the degree of familiarity between them.

My grandfather has recounted to me, complaining, that ever so often uncle Ulrico was strict or hard. While one has infinite patience and understanding with a son, one tends to be stricter with a nephew.

... what about with the authors?

I remember that my grandfather often said: "Look, uncle always said that the authors should be paid immediately, just like the suppliers, the paper manufacturers, the printers, that the relationship with the authors is fundamental, and that the authors are our strength".

And then there are curious and amusing stories about these relationships. For example, that Ulrico Hoepli, when he received suppliers, customers or authors, always stood and never even gave them a seat; in this way he managed to see them quickly and succeeded in concluding a lot of business matters over the course of one day, also because he started working and receiving visitors from very early in the morning.

Treves, Sonzogno, Dumolard and Vallardi are some of the publishers that Hoepli had to share the market with. What sort of relations did Hoepli have with his competitors?

Ulrico Hoepli was one of the founders of the Società degli Autori [Authors' Society], which has today become the SIAE, Società Italiana degli Autori e degli Editori [Italian Society of Authors and Publishers]. At that time – around 1880 – there were practically no associations between those that sold books and those that published them, with the exception of the Associazione Libreria

Italiana [Italian Booksellers' Association], founded in 1869 by another great pioneer of the Italian book industry, Giuseppe Pomba, whose business activities developed into today's UTET. There was an old copyright law in force, inadequate for the times, as it was the dawn of the industry and so it was important to establish new rules that clarified relations between authors and publishers, the publishing contract. There was a lot to do and Ulrico Hoepli was an active participant. Moreover, he immediately understood what we are more than aware of today, namely that fostering relations with associations provides considerable enrichment from a personal, intellectual and professional perspective. It is not by chance that the focus on relations with other publishers and direct participation in the SIAE have become a family tradition.

Therefore relations with competitors were very friendly, certainly not in order to steal their market share, but rather towards a mutual understanding of what sectors were more economically viable and productive. Not forgetting that Hoepli, as a bookseller, sold the books of all of the contemporary publishers.

How did Hoepli see the two business activities, that of bookseller and that of publisher? Bookselling is commercial, whereas publishing is more linked to production. The same applies to the business today as to that of a century ago. Even though they are very different, Hoepli saw a close link between the two activities, almost to the point of not being able to separate them. The bookshop "provided the antennae" to understand the market. Seeing every day how many and what sort of people came into the bookshop and what books were most popular and sold provided him with important information on the direction of his publishing activities. It was a great privilege and a great advantage for Hoepli the publisher to also be a bookseller. Moreover, the bookshop, along with life's ups and downs, could offset the lack of profit of the publishing house during the more difficult periods. For example, during the wars – both the First and Second World Wars – there was a shortage of paper and raw materials and therefore no printing was permitted. Fortunately there was the bookshop;

at least there was one customer a day, even in times of crisis.

This is almost certainly why he had a soft spot for the bookshop, just like we still do now. Knowing what value continuity and tradition held for Ulrico Hoepli, he couldn't help thinking that the publishing house and the bookshop were founded together and that before him Laengner and others had practised the same business activity in that same place as far back as 1840.

The historic era in which Ulrico Hoepli lived was a time of great change, which in Italy, through various stages, led to the passage from historic Right wing to Fascism and in Europe saw the end of the empires, the rise of national identities, the breakout of a world war and the beginning of dictatorships. It was a time of great social unrest, often with violent episodes, even in Milan, a period in which, even without taking sides or playing an active role in politics, you couldn't help but have a political opinion. How did Ulrico Hoepli stand in terms of politics?

He played the part of the Swiss national. He stayed neutral and never took a specific stance, he did his duty. Publishers like us have to rise above taking sides.

In any event, he had great social sense. Not only, as I mentioned earlier, did he donate the Planetarium to the city of Milan, he also contributed to the establishment of libraries and schools, such as that in Wängli, his native village. He also founded a *Stiftung*, the Hoepli Foundation, in Zurich, which supports cultural activities and looks after the needs of the elderly. I would say that his actions were more social than political. Naturally he also had the opportunity to forge excellent relations with personalities of the political world and with various governments.

He also had relations with the Fascist government, having published the works of Mussolini, which represented a rather isolated case for Hoepli's publishing business. But it was the Duce who chose Hoepli and not the other way round. He preferred Hoepli over other publishers due to his neutrality, his independence and because he trusted him more than the others. Hoepli gave him 10%, much less than his competitors would have offered; Mussolini obviously thought that the other publishers were

cheating him. It was essentially a business transaction that had nothing to do with politics; and it was, amongst other things, an excellent business transaction.

Ulrico Hoepli believed in individual ability and projects, and paid considerable and genuine attention to activities that supported social causes. In this he reflected the best Protestant tradition and was no doubt influenced by his education and roots. Examples of philanthropy were fairly frequent in Switzerland at that time; take Dunant and the Red Cross for example, or Pestalozzi and his teaching institutes. However, he never took an active role in politics, nor showed sympathy with extremist causes and this was certainly not a short-coming. He had great common sense, was dedicated above all to his work and was in the habit of repeating to his relatives and co-workers: *“Ihr sollt schaffen”* “You have to work, you have a good company, what more do you want from life?”. And it was a good thing he did so, because you have to lead by example.

Contrasting descriptions have been written about Ulrico Hoepli’s character. It seems he was melancholy, often absorbed in his thoughts, not very cheerful, but also jovial and light-hearted; sometimes he is described as being gruff and brusque, other times as cordial and friendly. Can you recall any episodes that shed light on the different sides of his character?

A good film has just been released, *Un’ora sola ti vorrei* [For one more hour with you], written and directed by my niece Alina Marazzi, which, by recounting the story of her mother – my sister – in reality also recounts the story of our family. It is a film that has been made through the editing of old film clips taken with a 16 millimetre cine camera, one of which was taken on my father’s wedding day. There, there is a beautiful, extraordinary image of Ulrico Hoepli, who limps slightly and walks with a cane. The film clip dates back to April 1934 and the *Avo* passed away in January 1935, so it was in the last eight months of his life. I see this Ulrico Hoepli walking along... and looking... with a slightly melancholy, but resilient smile, that portrayed hope. I believe – but this is my impression – that he was very happy to think that his nephews, Carlo

in particular, were continuing the family business.

Then, naturally there were also the sides to his character that you have described. I would add that, like all good Swiss, he was also very punctual and very precise, unlike those of us who over time have become rather “Italianised”.

No doubt there were also moments of sadness, such as not having children and the depression that his wife Elisa suffered from, a rather taboo subject, that until only recently my family have spoken about with some difficulty and that my father mentioned only in the last years of his life.

We know that he loved travelling, the mountains, billiards and Swiss skittles ...

He had a real passion for travelling. Like his passion for aeroplanes, which he passed on to his nephews. The *Avo* was one of the first to fly over the Alps with a Swiss pilot, my father had a pilot’s licence and my uncle Gianni was one of the first helicopter pilots. Then, fortunately, the vocation for publishing and the family business prevailed; to everyone’s great relief, because in those days not only did helicopters often crash, they were also very expensive.

Ulrico Hoepli was a member of the Italian Alpine Club and of the Swiss Alpenclub, he liked trekking in the fresh air, especially in the mountains, where he even tried his hand at climbing.

He was a keen billiard or Swiss skittle player, similar to bowling, when his business engagements allowed: at his house, the Hoepli villa, where he had a special room and track, or at the Swiss Society of Milan, of which he was a founder member.

Ulrico Hoepli was familiar with the Valtellina area, did he ever make any trips there?

I believe so because the Valtellina, for various reasons, was always fairly present in our family’s lives.

My paternal grandmother, Maddalena Porro, Carlo’s wife, studied in a girl’s college in the Valtellina, I seem to remember in Madonna di Tirano. My father had problems with his eyesight and spent one or two summers in Teglio, because in those days the treatment for people with eyesight problems was to look at the green countryside. No doubt

Ulrico Hoepli (1906-2003), great nephew of the publishing house's founder, in the Fifties.

Hoepli went to the Valtellina to assist him. Lastly, Ulrico Hoepli had professional relations with the two Rajna brothers, Pio and Michele. He published *Le corti d'amore* [The courts of love] by the former, a philologist, in 1890 and *L'ora esatta dappertutto, ossia Modo semplice di regolare gli orologi sul tempo medio dell'Europa centrale in qualunque luogo d'Italia* [The exact time everywhere, namely The simple way to set clocks to the average time of central Europe at any place in Italy] by the latter, an astronomer, in 1897.

You mentioned that Ulrico Hoepli's social ideas were shaped by his Protestant standing. Can you provide some more detail on Hoepli's religious beliefs?

The *Avo* got in touch with the Protestant community in Milan immediately, because Laengner, the owner of the bookshop until 1870, was one of their most important representatives. Laengner was German and as such belonged to the Lutheran church, whereas Hoepli, Swiss, followed the school of thought of Zwingli and belonged to a different community, the Reformist one.



Nevertheless, he was also on good terms with the German Protestant community and played a very active role in the church in via Marco De Marchi.

Besides, in those days there was one Protestant school in Milan, which then became the Swiss school – it was called the Scuola Internazionale [International School] – attended by all of the members of my family, up to my father.

As regards his religious sentiment more specifically, Ulrico Hoepli was a good and decent supporter of the Protestant church and had a rather non-denominational relationship with the faith, with all the differences that the concept of non-denominational has in the Protestant church with respect to the Catholic one. Probably what he believed in most was respect for tradition and teaching family values.

What legacy has Ulrico Hoepli imparted to the philosophy of the publishing house and the bookshop?

He has no doubt left a very important legacy that we seek to preserve and pay tribute to in the best way possible. The influence of the founder on the publishing business is still clearly visible in today's publications. However, there are other aspects I would like to draw attention to.

First of all, that the bookshop and the publishing house were rebuilt after the Second World War by a second Ulrico Hoepli, as great as the first for me, namely my father. The war completely destroyed the bookshop; only a few books were left. After the war it seemed impossible to start up again. However, my father had the same determination, the same faith in the future that the original Ulrico Hoepli had and built this magnificent bookshop that we are standing in now.

My father inherited the sense of the future and of continuity that were very marked in the *Avo*, and that are very common in family businesses, more visionary than others, and with healthier and more sound financial prospects.

Following in the footsteps of a tradition develops and consolidates an identity that has very positive effects on the entire company. The Foundation established in 1911 in Zurich on an idea of Ulrico Hoepli has always promoted the study of the history of

publishing, very developed in Zurich, just as in the entire German, French and Anglo-American speaking worlds. This rather Swiss approach of understanding and studying one's past provides great encouragement for the future. As our founder did at the time, today we also express our gratitude and support to those who are involved in studying the history of our business such as Enrico Decleva, Tullio De Mauro and all of those who, also in Italy, have contributed to the fruition of studies about our publishing house and its founder for some time now. We are not doing it to look back with nostalgia at times gone by, in a *laudator temporis acti* sense, but because studying the past helps understand the path that has been taken, one's own identity, and therefore builds company strength.

Ulrico Hoepli came from a village in the small Swiss canton of Thurgau, known more for its production of cider than for its propensity for cultural exchanges. Nevertheless, he displayed a vocation for international publishing – we mentioned the inspiration he took from Anglo-Saxon *handbooks* – and immediately set up business relations throughout Italy (in



1873 he opened a branch in Naples, three years later in Pisa). In the wake of this tradition, even today we seek to be present everywhere, from Chiasso to Porto Empedocle, we pay considerable attention to our relations with our native country and we aim to be European publishers. It is no coincidence,

for this reason and probably due to the advantage of being Swiss, neutral and world citizens, that up until two years ago I was the Chairman of the Federation of European Editors.

Mentioning this role brings me to another aspect that stems from the legacy of the teachings of our founder, namely the focus and close links between our work and the relevant associations: Ulrico Hoepli was one of the promoters of the Società degli Autori, for many years my father and I were board members of the SIAE, a position held today by my son Giovanni.

Just like a century ago, the bookshop, which we are particularly fond of, represents something more than a simple bookshop for Milan. For various reasons we sell books that others don't and therefore it's a bit like a library, almost a cultural beacon for the city. Moreover, in 1958 my father commissioned two great architects of that time, Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini to design it, paying close attention, just like its founder, to the cultural Milanese ambience.

Even though he didn't come from Milan, Ulrico Hoepli wanted and succeeded in creating such strong ties with the city that he is considered Milanese. This identity, which was well-rooted in the life of the city, has always been cultivated and pursued by all of his successors right up to us.

In 1896, on dedicating the magnificent *Dizionario milanese-italiano* [Milanese-Italian Dictionary] to the people of Milan, Ulrico Hoepli wrote: "After twenty-five years of residence and hard work, this beautiful and generous city that has been my home has now become *my* city; bonds of affection, reciprocity in relations and daily events give me the impression that I am its legitimate son". Like him, we also like to think of ourselves as "Swiss Milanese".

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** Chairman of the Ulrico Hoepli Publishing House

Advertising postcard produced in 1958 for the opening of the headquarters of the Hoepli International Bookshop in the street of the same name in the centre of Milan.



Hoepli, the “new man” of Italian publishing

by Ada Gigli Marchetti*



The Galleria De Cristoforis with the Hoepli Bookshop in a photograph dated 1930.

The Italy of the second half of the nineteenth century must have seemed rather attractive to a foreigner, brimming with prospects and opportunities. Indeed, even though the country originated from an ancient civilization, it was actually “new” and recently formed. Established in 1861, it was lacking in everything and so everything had to be built: political and administrative structures as well as economic and cultural activities.

In particular, the potential of the Italian book market was equally attractive to foreign entrepreneurs. A few years after the formation of the new State, once the numerous obstacles that appeared to be getting in the way of its development (especially the shortage of a public of book readers) had been removed, the Italian printing-publishing industry represented a very strong magnet for many foreign operators active in the sector.

This was how the various Le Monniers, Loeschers and Dumolards – amongst others –, after relocating to Italy and opening their bookshops, managed to rapidly transform themselves into established publishers. Lombardy, but above all Milan, was particularly attractive, the latter immediately establishing itself as the most dynamic location for the industry in the whole country. And this was true especially for those who came from Switzerland, a country that despite several ups and downs, had always had very strong ties with Lombardy. In the recent *Risorgimento* era, hadn't the Swiss Confederation been the “land of exile” for many Italian patriots? And was it not the land from where the émigrés – through printed matter, books and newspapers – were able to freely express their opinions and their causes to the rest of the world?

And it was precisely in Milan that, in 1870, Ulrico Hoepli, the most representative example of foreign immigration to Italy, chose to establish his publishing business, a business whose fortunes have survived to the present day.

After having arrived in the Lombard capital from his native Switzerland and after having purchased a bookshop through written correspondence, without any assistance and without in-depth knowledge of Italian culture and literature, not to mention of the language, Hoepli succeeded in rapidly becoming an established point of reference



for the educated Milanese bourgeoisie. His shop, located in the heart of the city, as well as offering a huge quantity of literature, science and fine arts books in all languages, especially German, English and French, began to be frequented by an increasing number of literary and cultured men, above all technicians and scientists.

Right from the start Hoepli combined his profession as a bookseller, which he considered the intermediary between art and the public, with that of publisher. His first title was the reprint in 1871 of a small grammar book, *I primi elementi di lingua francese* [*The first elements of the French language*], by Martin, followed a year later by a successful prestigious periodical, the “Guida per le Arti e Mestieri” [“Arts and Crafts Guide”], which changed its title in 1878 to “L’arte e l’industria” [“Art and industry”].

The publishing business of the young entrepreneur acquired strength and prominence as it gradually put down roots in the city and in Milanese society.

In 1873 Hoepli was designated bookseller-publisher of the prestigious Osservatorio

Astronomico di Brera and in the same year acquired the works of two renowned astronomers: the essay by Giovanni Celoria *Sul grande commovimento atmosferico avvenuto il 1° di agosto 1862 nella bassa Lombardia e nella Lomellina* [On the great atmospheric disturbance that took place on 1st August 1862 in lower Lombardy and in Lomellina] and the *Osservazioni astronomiche e fisiche sulla grande cometa del 1862* [Astronomic and physical observations on the great comet of 1862] by Giovanni Virginio Schiaparelli, who was in charge of the same Observatory from 1860. Also in 1873 he published the work of the jurist Ercole Vidari *Dei principali provvedimenti legislative chiesti dal commercio italiano* [On the main legislative requirements of Italian commerce] and the following year became bookseller-publisher of the Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere [Lombard Institute of Science and Literature], the most important Milanese cultural institution in this field.

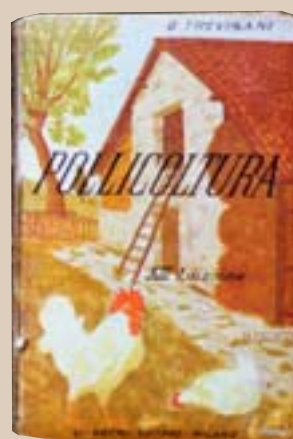
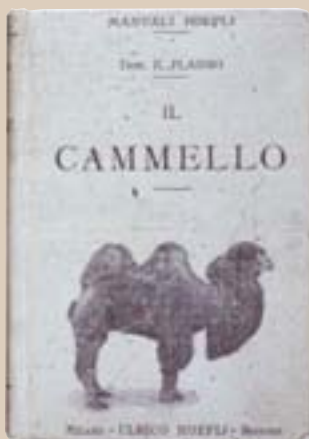
Hoepli rapidly gained notoriety at national level and, from the single book published in 1871, in the space of three years was printing more than twenty titles per year.

In the early stages of his business and for the whole of the nineteenth century, the choice of titles was guided by an underlying eclecticism. In a sort of “hotchpotch”, scientific and technical specialist works, which were easily the most numerous, (ranging from fields such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, geography and geology to areas such as medicine, veterinary medicine and botany), stood alongside books from many other genres. He published books from old and new literature from a large number of very different European and non European countries (such as Greek and Roman literature, Italian, French, English, German, Slavic, Persian and American literature, ...), in actual fact there was a wide range of old and modern grammar books: from Greek, Latin and Hebrew grammar to French, English, and German grammar. The publication of grammar books was always combined with the publication of the relative dictionary. And that still wasn't enough. Legal and economic books (some of which were important and long-lasting such as the *Primi elementi di economia politica* [An

introduction to the study of political economy] and the *Primi elementi di scienza delle finanze* [Finance, its principles and methods], both by Cossa and both dated 1875 or the *Elementi di diritto civile e commerciale* [Elements of civil and business law] by Triaca dated 1880) were published alongside history books (for example the *Storia generale delle storie* [General History of histories] by Rosa dated 1873), philosophy (*La pena di morte e la sua abolizione secondo la filosofia hegeliana* [The death penalty and its abolition according to Hegelian philosophy] by D'Ercole dated 1875 or *La filosofia positiva e gli ultimi economisti inglesi* [Positive philosophy and the latest English economists] by Schiattarella dated 1876) and art (for example the *Scritti d'arte* [Art Writings] by Francesco Dall'Ongaro dated 1873 or *Arte Greca* [Greek Art] by Iginio Gentile dated 1883). They also published works by great authors: Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea* dated 1884, *Oedipus the king* by Sophocles and *Das Buch der Lieder* [The Song Book] by Heine in the same year, *Les Comédies* [The One-Act Comedies] by Molière in 1888, *Jerusalem delivered* by Tasso in 1895, not to mention many others. All of these works were edited, sometimes translated, by distinguished scholars, as well as being illustrated by talented artists. The first publication of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, for example, was edited by Scartazzini, later by Scherillo. *La Vita Nuova* [New Life] once by Scartazzini, once by Barbi. The *De vulgari eloquentia* was edited by Pio Rajna. The *Works of Shakespeare*, published from 1875 onwards, were translated by Giulio Carcano, the *Iphigenia in Tauris* in 1885 by Maffei. Lastly, *The betrothed* was illustrated by the painter Campi, and several years later, in 1897, by Gaetano Previati.

There was also no lack of *excursions* into contemporary literature, even though the examples are more sporadic. It is sufficient to mention *Giacomo l'idealista* [Giacomo the idealist] by Emilio De Marchi dated 1897 or *Le veglie di Neri* [Neri's soirée tales] by Renato Fucini in the same year.

Hoepli's publishing business was not limited – as we have mentioned thus far – to technical-scientific books (or even periodicals) alone, or to *tout court* cultural books, but



ventured, often successfully, into the “great works” of children’s literature, as well as, to a lesser extent, into women’s publications. And it also ventured – although it would be more correct to say enjoyed venturing – into those which we are accustomed to calling Saturday afternoon hobby or Sunday books, books whose content was so disparate and obscure that not only did they not sell, but had little or nothing to do with the range of subjects, although varied, published.

Of the very high level works, whose transactions were often conducted at a pure loss in financial terms, but as such they represented important milestones in the history of culture, there was the publishing, for example, in 1890, of the *Monumenti antichi* [Ancient monuments] edited by the Accademia dei Lincei [Lincean Academy], of the *Codex Atlanticus* by Leonardo da Vinci in 1894 and, in 1898, of the *Divina Commedia illustrata nei luoghi e nelle persone* [The Divine Comedy with illustrations of the places and the people] edited by Corrado Ricci.

Works that were certainly of lesser cultural impact, but that generated better economic returns, were those published for children. With his usual business intuition, Hoepli understood right from the last twenty years of the nineteenth century how promising the “market” offered by the younger public was, whose increasing literacy stimulated their interest in reading. The publisher knew how to offer this public the best in specialised literature available at that time in Italy and across Europe. In this way, alongside works written by renowned Italian authors, from Anna Vertua Gentile to marquis Colombi and Ida Baccini, the Hoepli catalogue acquired a wealth of authors (imported from abroad) that were soon to become the classics of children’s literature. Following the very famous *Pierino Porcospino*, based on the on the 123rd edition of Hoffmann’s *Struwwelpeter* [Shock-headed Peter], translated into verse by Gaetano Negri, the works of the Brothers Grimm, Jonathan Swift, Hans Christian Andersen, Daniel Defoe and many others were also published.

While considerable attention was paid to the younger public, a lot less interest was shown in the female one, even though at that time

women were showing increasing interest in the world of reading. Apart from a couple of short works, *I diritti della donna* [Women’s rights] by Dohm in 1877 and *Svaggi artistici femmili. Ricami, pizzi, gioielli, ventagli, specchi e vetri di Murano* [Female artistic pastimes. Embroidery, laces, jewellery, fans, mirrors and Murano glassware] dated 1891 by Melani, the publisher dedicated only one, extremely conservative magazine entitled “La stagione” [“The season”] to the female public. Published between 1882 and 1915, this magazine, in the true European spirit that permeated Hoepli’s publications, was printed in fourteen languages and in two editions, the “large” luxury one and the “small” more economical one, and reached an overall circulation of 750,000 copies per issue. The periodical was dedicated exclusively to fashion and women’s pastimes; it systematically avoided anything – regardless of whether novels or short stories – that could be considered a channel for subversive moral or artistic tendencies.

However, Hoepli’s most successful idea, the one that made him “unique” and “innovative” in the publishing world not only in Milan but in Italy as a whole, was the publication, based on the example of what was already being published in England, of a series of *Manuali*. It was actually Ulrico Hoepli himself who “invented” the term “manuale” deriving it from the English word *handbook*. Through the sober little books of this collection, the young editor launched one of the most successful and important cultural operations of that time; with excellent timing, the series fulfilled the pressing demands of a society, especially that in Lombardy, in rapid economic expansion and therefore in need of trained and qualified technical “managers”. The *Manuali Hoepli* represented the tools able to provide complete support in learning or practising a trade or profession. The accuracy, the simplicity and the extreme variety of the subjects covered enabled Ulrico Hoepli to have a competitive advantage over the large publishing houses, ranging from Dumolard to Sonzogno, from Vallardi to Treves, even though they had been producing scientific books for some time. The *Manuali* series rapidly acquired an established look. Inaugurated in 1875 with the *Manuale del tintore* [Painter’s

The cheerful covers of some of the old editions of the *Manuali* [Handbooks], the most renowned and representative series of the Ulrico Hoepli Publishing House.

handbook] by Lepetit, and consolidated in 1877 with the very successful and long-lived *Manuale dell'ingegnere* by Giuseppe Colombo, at the time the prestigious director of the Politecnico, it assumed the character of an encyclopaedia, split into several volumes clearly to be used for consultation. Even though technical and scientific subject areas continued to dominate - they were also extensively used as scholastic textbooks - in fact the *Manuali* invaded almost all branches of human knowledge: from agriculture to physics to chemistry, from natural history to medicine and surgery, from electricity to engineering, from mathematics to law, from archaeology to history and geography, from philosophy and teaching to the art of war, from literature to linguistics to music. The years that followed the birth of the *Manuali* series were marked by a general and impetuous development of the publishing industry in Lombardy. Milan, in particular, had become the most important city for the production of printed matter, dominated by two colossi, Sonzogno and Treves, to the point of deserving the name the Leipzig of Italy.

Such a favourable general situation could not help but aid the further growth of an editor who was as eclectic and open-minded towards innovative ideas as Hoepli. From then on his handbooks were no longer published in dribs and drabs, but in waves: a relentless outpouring of work, both original and translated. 53 handbooks were published in 1880. 100 were released in 1890. Between 1894 and 1898, in a period of economic and social crisis - the years of the unfortunate Africa campaign, of the bank scandals, of the "bread riots" - around 700 titles were published.

The economic reawakening of Milan at the start of the twentieth century, after the tragic pause of 98, was particularly felt by Hoepli in his position as bookseller and publisher. In the *belle époque* years, the bookshop was more than ever the heart of Milanese intellectual circles. Browsing along the shelves of the bookshop it was not uncommon to encounter men of culture, literary men, the city's "publisher friends", as well as famous personalities, who were passing through Milan: Giuseppe Giacosa, Sem Benelli, Sabatino Lopez, Emilio Treves, the Vallardis, Benedetto Croce, and many others.



It was the bookshop that provided the editor with an idea of the tastes and needs of market "demand". The bookshop may well have even induced and stimulated that demand. In any event, the bookshop was not just a sales outlet, but also a lively information and cultural centre and a sort of litmus paper of the needs and tastes of the public of readers. As the bookshop business thrived, the publishing business was certainly no less successful. Ulrico Hoepli, assisted by his nephew Carlo from 1903 onwards, had now added many other, no less prestigious, collections to his now classic series of *Manuali*: these included the *Biblioteca tecnica* [Technical Collection], the *Biblioteca classica hoepliana* [Classic Hoepli Collection] and the *Collezione storica Villari* [Historic Villari Collection].

As the number of books published increased, the public towards whom they were addressed also expanded. This was particularly true of the new public of children and women. In 1900, considerably ahead of the times, the editor decided to dedicate a book to the latter entitled *Come devo allevare il mio bambino* [How I should raise my child] by Valvassori-Peroni, which was none other than a precursor of the bible of modern puericulture: *Il mio bambino* [Baby and

The logotype with the motto *In labore virtus et vita*, which accompanied the publications of the Ulrico Hoepli Publishing House from 1870 on.

child care] by doctor Spock.

Alongside books addressed to the general public, the house continued to publish great works, such as the “monumental” *Storia dell’arte italiana [History of Italian Art]* by Adolfo Venturi, which was first published in 1901.

The economic recession that followed the First World War and which had marked the start of the decline of the glorious and historic Milanese publishing houses, such as Treves and Sonzogno, did not appear to have any substantial impact on the bookshop or the publishing house. After having been transformed from an individual proprietorship into a partnership in 1923, even though still strictly family-run, and after having started to sell antique books as well, in 1925 Hoepli boasted a catalogue of around 5,000 titles. Over 1,500 handbooks were published together with 3,000 other publications. The bookshop continued to be the city’s most loved and popular cultural centre. Almost as if to seal the profound bond that linked Hoepli to Milan, to celebrate sixty years from his arrival in the city, in 1930, the aged editor wanted to donate a large planetarium to the City Council so that – as he himself publicly confirmed – everything that had come from science could be given back to science.

More than half a century after his arrival in the Lombard capital, the “Swiss” editor found himself working in an environment that had changed radically. The development of the publishing industry was a *fait accompli*, but the main players were no longer the same. The former giants, Sonzogno and Treves, were replaced by new giants, Mondadori and Rizzoli. And new, young editors such as Bompiani and Scheiwiller were emerging. Ulrico Hoepli appeared to be one of the few surviving editors of the old guard, who had not been swept away by the transformation and modernisation of the industry. The reasons for his longevity are numerous. First and foremost, a certain pragmatism who had led him not only not to oppose the national political scene of that time, but also to publish the *Scritti e discorsi [Writings and speeches]* by Benito Mussolini in 1933, which later provoked considerable debate. Secondly, his constant attention to the bookshop business, which appears to have protected him from the business risks of publishing unsuccessful books. Thirdly and

above all, considerable faith in the direction of his publications. Well-rooted in the market niche consolidated in the *Manuali* era, substantially abandoning any *excursions* into the more diversified publishing “genres”, he continued to concentrate on technical-scientific publications. Evidence of such faith was the magazine “Sapere” [“Knowledge”]. When it was released for the first time in 1935, just a few months after his death, it aimed to offer (or rather, it aimed to continue to offer) a sort of panorama of all advances made in the technical and scientific worlds. By doing this, under the leadership of his nephew Carlo, it became, in the wake of tradition, a symbol of the renewed publishing season.

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Between Switzerland and Italy. The life and character of Ulrico Hoepli

by Tindaro Gatani*



Ulrico Hoepli was born on 18th February 1847 in Tuttwilerberg, a hamlet of a few houses of Tuttwil, a village in the Canton of Thurgau, “amid green slopes – said Giovanni Galbiati, in *Ulrico Hoepli. Profilo [Profile]*, Milan, 1935 - not far from the eternal sigh of Lake Constance, under the arch of the Rhine, there where the river bends majestically and lazily towards Schaffhausen”. At the age of fourteen we find him in Zurich, the training ground for his life. In fact, it was here that he attended the vocational schools and learnt the “trade” by working in one of the city’s top bookshops. The future publisher also worked in a number of other bookshops in Leipzig, Wroclaw, Vienna, Trieste and Cairo, where he worked in the



former Khediviale Library, which belonged to the Egyptian viceroy.

He also forged strong ties with the city on the Limmat through his marriage, celebrated in 1872, to the Zurich-born Elisa Häberlin, his partner and tireless co-worker, who he had met two years earlier, when, not yet twenty-four, he had been about to leave for Milan. He arrived on 7th December 1870, the day of the city’s patron saint Ambrose. Less than a month after his arrival in the Lombard capital, Hoepli took over the old bookshop of Teodoro Laengner in the Galleria De Cristoforis, rapidly expanding the modest bookshop business, which he then combined with the publishing one.

The Galleria De Cristoforis, which was

accessed from Corso Vittorio Emanuele, was, as Gaetano Afeltra recounts in his article *Il vecchio libraio e il suo segreto. Ricordi di una Milano che non c’è più [The old bookseller and his secret. Memories of a Milan that is no longer]* published in the “Corriere della Sera” on 9th February 1991, “a long alley covered by a large glass roof, full of shops that bring back nostalgic memories of the great heritage of Milan”. Some decades later, as well as the Hoepli Publishing House, “there was a hairdresser’s, a shop selling corsets and bras, Walter Toscanini’s antique bookshop; there was Lucchini’s, men’s fabrics; the ‘Betezat’ children’s wear shop, a smart shoe shop, the Pancrazi stationer’s, the famous Sala Volta, the Paravia bookshop, the De Cristoforis guesthouse and several lawyers’ and accountants’ offices”. The Galleria De Cristoforis was basically a salon for Milan’s well-to-do and at the same time a renowned street of the city.

At the start of his publishing career, in order to avoid competing with the other established publishing houses, the young man from Thurgau decided to limit the publication of novels and fictional works, and concentrate instead on a completely untapped field: that of science and technology. Literature, in the true sense of the word, already had its publishers. After the Unity of Italy, Milan, with the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, the Politecnico, the Osservatorio Astronomico di Brera and the Accademia Scientifico-Letteraria was one of the most important cultural cities in Europe.

Right from the very start of his time in Milan, Hoepli engaged the trusted services of Giovanni Piazza, who first managed the bookshop that Hoepli had opened in Naples, in 1873 and then, for many years, worked as an agent for the publishing house.

Despite the fact that he already desired “great and beautiful things” the actions of the young publisher had to be initially shrewd and cautious. “Naturally in the beginning – remarks Galbiati – his actions were those of settling in and testing the water, if courage and caution were together to reap the fruit he dreamed of in later days”. Hoepli’s main objective was to contribute to satisfying the cultural needs and the thirst for knowledge of this new Italy, “in which the problems of industry, enterprise and of

Portrait of Elisa Häberlin, Ulrico Hoepli’s wife, around 1872.

The people of Tuttwil crowd around Ulrico Hoepli's birthplace on the occasion of the marriage of the editor's great-nephew of the same name, to Teresa Gerberding (7th April 1934).

everyday life presented themselves with pressing urgency, as irresolvable unless through a vast and rapid cultural momentum and expansion, which through accurate research could be implemented effectively" (*Gli Svizzeri in Italia [The Swiss in Italy]*, Milan, 1939).

To pay tribute to the life and work of this great man, on the occasion of the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of his birth that were held on 22nd August 1997 in his native Tuttwil, a magnificent book entitled «... am literarischen Webstuhl...» [*... at the literary weaving loom...*] *Ulrico Hoepli 1847-1935. Buchhändler, Verleger, Antiquar, Mäzen [Bookseller, publisher, antique dealer, patron]* was published by in the editions of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. Coordinated by Joseph Jung, Secretary of the Hoepli Foundation, 25 scholars contributed to the compilation of this important work, which enriched the biography and the cultural contributions advocating increasingly closer relations between Italy and Switzerland, in the name of their many common values and needs. In the introduction to the book, the Federal Councillor Flavio Cotti, Chairman of the cited Foundation, amongst other things, draws attention to how "in the recently unified Italy of 1870, Ulrico Hoepli [...] succeeded in interpreting the changes that the young State was encountering in its rapid industrialisation in the best way possible", creating his *Manuali* to respond "to the new need for more in-depth and accessible know-how in all fields of technology and natural sciences". The importance that still today links the Milanese publishing house to Switzerland is confirmed by the enthusiastic reviews and the attendances at the exhibition, held in Zurich's Central Library (December 2003-February 2004), on the character and work of *Ulrico Hoepli (1847-1935) ein Thurgauer zwischen Limmat und Naviglio [a man from Thurgau between the Limmat and the Naviglio]*. Hoepli was Swiss and Italian at the same time and to emphasise his affection for his two homelands often said: "I feel the same love for Italy as I do for Switzerland". He made so many donations to "his two homelands" that it is difficult to list them all. This generosity was recently documented by Joseph Jung in an essay which is part of the above-mentioned

book, translated and referred to in *Ulrico Hoepli. 1847-1935. Editore e libraio [Ulrico Hoepli. 1947-1935. Publisher and bookseller]* by Enrico Decleva, Milan, 2001. The "Milanese" as his fellow citizens respectfully called him, always responded with great generosity to the numerous and diverse requests that he received from Tuttwil and from the whole of Thurgau. Thanks to this, when he returned to his home town, the leading figures of the town and of the Canton gave him the full red carpet treatment, welcoming him with a musical band, songs, fireworks and houses decked with flags. For the occasion, the Town Council declared a so-called "Milanese day", a bank holiday to celebrate such a famous son.



His generosity was not limited to his home village. He made many other donations, to Zurich's Central Library, the mental hospital of Münsterlingen, the Swiss school in Milan and Zurich University.

In 1911, again in Zurich, he decided to establish a foundation that bore his name and that did its best to increase the literary and scientific studies of the scholars of the two countries. On that occasion, the Swiss government, approving the memorandum of the association, made it immediately clear that it was willing to take on the chairmanship. In this way the Swiss authorities demonstrated their high esteem for their fellow countryman, who had gained recognition for his exceptional cultural commitment in Italy. Even today, the meritorious activities of the Hoepli Foundation continue to include making generous contributions to scientific and literary scholars of the two countries. Of the many gifts he made to Swiss cultural institutions we recall the oil on canvas painting *La cameriera [The Servant Girl]*, by Amedeo Modigliani, which

he donated to the Kunsthaus in Zurich in 1927. Amongst many other gifts, Ulrico Hoepli gave “his” Milan a valuable collection of paintings, and to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the publishing house, the renowned Planetarium in the gardens of Porta Venezia, which is still one of the most modern in the world. He gave a vast number of books to the libraries of the two countries which, on different occasions, showed their recognition: in 1901 the university of the city on the Limmat awarded him, a *laurea honoris causa* as a great promoter of science; Milan, on the other hand, by naming one of the streets in the city after him, where his publishing house is still located today.

The proverbial modesty of the Hoeplis was contrasted only by the Italian renaissance-style villa of 350 square metres that they had built in the Simplon district in 1894-95. The Hoepli villa, with extensive grounds, had a total of 28 rooms, including a splendid dining room measuring 9 metres long and almost 5 metres wide, a Chinese room, a renaissance room and a billiards rooms. It had a large wooden staircase decorated by the Swiss artist Richard Arthur Nuscheler, a loggia that was accessed from the dining room and a terrace. Nobody has ever been able to explain, as Joseph Jung emphasises, “the reasons that drove the Hoeplis to build such an impressive villa”. Also because “the villa was not used to show off the position he had achieved, nor was it a location for splen-

did parties”. As we know, in fact, “Hoepli preferred a form of more reserved hospitality, he usually invited friends and acquaintances to his house on Saturdays to converse, play and dine together”.

On only one important occasion was the villa really used for official entertainment when, in 1906, it welcomed the Federal President Ludwig Forrer, who had arrived in Milan for the ceremony to inaugurate the Simplon tunnel. The villa was guarded by a platoon of honour and the tributes of the Milanese were so numerous and so insistent that the “king of Switzerland” had to repeatedly come out onto the balcony. Joseph Jung recounts for the first time a funny incident as he tells how Hoepli, who was just about to get into the carriage to accompany Forrer to the official ceremony with the King of Italy, realised that the President was wearing his usual floppy hat. “This will certainly not do”, exclaimed Hoepli. “We have to wear top hats!”. “If anyone has anything to say, that’s his problem”, retorted Forrer. “I have only brought this hat so I obviously can’t wear another”. “Very well”, replied Hoepli. “You will have to do without my company; on an occasion such as this I cannot possibly go against all etiquette”. So Forrer, at this point stunned and angry, said: “And where, pray, can I find a top hat at the last minute?”. “Easily done”, said Hoepli, gesturing to his housekeeper, Marie Bützberger, who arrived with two new top hats purchased the day before.

On 14th February 1930, to acknowledge the



A watercolour of the Hoepli villa dated 1896.

On the left:
Ulrico Hoepli at
Niagara Falls,
which he visited
during his trip
to North America
in 1893-94.

On the right:
Ulrico Hoepli (fourth
from the right) and the
Swiss pilot Mittelholzer
(fourth from the left)
on the occasion of the
flight across the Alps
on 20th April 1931.

esteem and recognition that he had earned in his sixty years as a publisher and bookseller, Ulrico Hoepli was received in Rome, on the same day, in succession, by the Pope, the King of Italy and the head of the government, Benito Mussolini. This was an honour only reserved for heads of state. In 1933, the Ulrico Hoepli Publishing House was also chosen for the publication of Mussolini's *Scritti e discorsi [Writings and speeches]*, a project that in a few years achieved a circulation of 240,000 books of the Duce's works.



As Eduard Stäuble recalls, in *I protagonisti [The protagonists]*, Locarno, 1995, “at the time, Hoepli behaved very openly with the Duce, who for him, epitomised the idea of the unification and the unity of the young nation” and “fate spared Hoepli the worst delusions regarding the Duce (1935, defeat of Abyssinia; 1939, invasion of Albania; 1940, alliance with Hitler in war)”.

As well as his passion for books and antiques, Ulrico Hoepli loved the mountains and travelling. He chose the Swiss Alps as his preferred holiday destination, another demonstration of affection for his homeland, and when he could, on his own or with the members of the Italian Alpine Club, he travelled to and climbed the Swiss or Italian Alps. He even travelled to distant locations such as Spitzberg or to Egypt with his wife Elisa, or to Spain, to the Orient, as well as twice to America, North and South. Lastly, at the ripe old age of 85, he still wanted to feel “the thrill of flying over the Alps”. His wish was granted thanks to the Swiss pilot Walter Mittelholzer who, on Monday 20th

April 1931, flew him in his plane from Milan to Zurich, where the publisher was guest of honour at the procession of the Sechseläuten, the festival organised by the corporations of the city on the Limmat to celebrate the start of Spring by burning the *Böögg*, the effigy representing the old man of winter.

The following day, the “old” Hoepli was already on his way back to Milan to his office, where he always arrived early. He also passed away in his office, while he was writing a letter, on the morning of 24th January 1935, at the age of 88. Commemorating the loss of this great man, on 4th June of the same year, in a speech at the Milan Planetarium, Giovanni Galbiati, Prefect of the Ambrosiana, made an extensive and faithful portrait of the publisher, which was to serve as an outline for his cited *Profilo*. “To see him, to converse with him, you could easily mistake Hoepli for one of our fifteenth century booksellers, who were

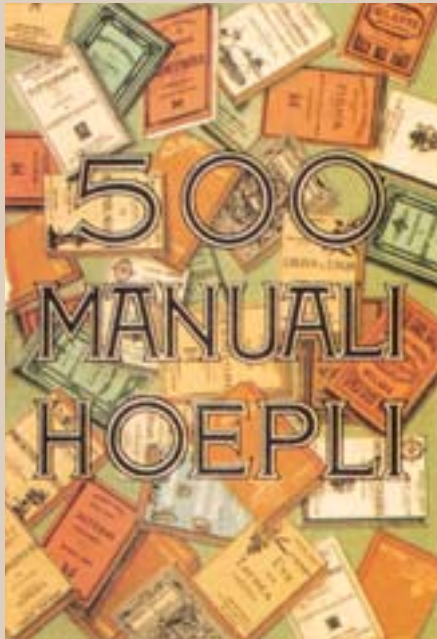


craftsmen in their own workshops, like Zaroto in Milan, and who were not complete without their books. Of medium height, stocky build, a full face, hair that stood up on his forehead, and still thick at the sides, his beard cut and stiff, simple, precise and concise with words, with a hint of that relaxed old-Rhine wit of Thurgau, as punctual as a good robust Swiss watch. He knew what he wanted, which books he should publish in accordance with what he considered his duty and the plan he had established in the vastness of the publishing world”. And this after having said that “Hoepli was there for everyone and oversaw everything with a strict and dry discipline that, however, had a gentler, almost paternal side, so much so that he looked after his co-workers

The publishing
catalogue of the
500 *Manuali* Hoepli
(1897).

unreservedly and willingly even outside the bookshop, in family affairs”.

Gaetano Afeltra, in his cited article in the “*Corriere della Sera*” also mentioned the family atmosphere that reigned at the publishing house. Speaking of Cesare Branduani, the legendary Milanese bookseller who passed away at the age of eighty in 1976, “a figure of a long cultural season, friend of hundreds of writers”, Afeltra recalls how “Cesarino” had started working at the age of ten at the Ulrico Hoepli’s Publishing House, where his father, a postroom worker, who on 90 lira a month was struggling to bring up seven children, had managed to find him a job. “Very well, send him to me at seven sharp”, Mr. Ulrico had said “and we’ll see what we can find for him to do”. So the next morning, the humble postroom worker and his son turned up early and were waiting for the shutters of the bookshop in Galleria De Cristoforis to be raised. “When Hoepli saw that young boy with his pene-



trating eyes but still with the face of a child, he was moved. Taking him by his hand to introduce him to the head office boy, he first asked him: “What’s your name?” – “Cesarino”. And from that moment on he was known simply as Cesarino by everyone”. In a few years, Cesarino became one of the bookshop’s best employees. It is said that thanks to his excellent memory he remembered not only the 2,000 titles of the *Manuali Hoepli*, but also the prices and where all of the books were located on the shelves. And so, from humble shop assistant, Cesarino, by

climbing all of the steps on the ladder, became director of the bookshop, and has always acknowledged his employer with affection.

In addition to the success of its renowned *Manuali*, the Ulrico Hoepli’s Publishing House soon achieved great recognition for its prestigious collections of art, literature and science as well as its magnificent folio publications. Like the *Manuali*, the works of the collections were edited by top experts in the field. Of the Hoepli collections, the splendid editions of the *Codici Vaticani* [*Vatican Codex*], the *Collezioni archeologiche, artistiche e numismatiche dei Palazzi apostolici* [*Archaeological, artistic and numismatic collections of the apostolic Palaces*] and the *Monumenti storici ed artistici del canton Ticino* [*Historic and artistic monuments of the Canton of Ticino*] deserve a special mention. The Swiss Ulrico Hoepli knew how to show his great love for his adoptive homeland by paying great attention to the publications of the works and studies of Dante. The first publication of the poet by Hoepli was the “Dantino” [*Little Dante*] in microscopic letters dated 1878. This was followed by the “Dante minuscolo” [*Miniscule Dante*] by Fornaciari, the heliochrome reproduction of the 1337 Codice Trivulziano [*Trivulzian Codex*] and the “Dante del Re” [*Dante of the King*], *The Divine Comedy*, called this because commissioned by King Umberto I with annotations by Stefano Talice da Ricaldone. Various editions of *Vita nuova* [*The new life*] and of the *Canzoniere* [*Songbook*] and the *Ultimo Rifugio di Dante Alighieri* [*The last refuge of Dante Alighieri*] were also brought into the world by the Hoepli printing presses, not to mention the *Nuovi studi danteschi* [*New studies on Dante*] by D’Ovido, *Beatrice nella vita e nella poesia del secolo XIII* [*Beatrice in the life and poetry of the XIII century*], *Dante e la Francia* [*Dante and France*] by Farinelli and various other works including also *Dante nell’arte tedesca* [*Dante in German art*] by Locella.

For a publisher like Hoepli, so attentive, by virtue of his Swiss origins, to what was happening in the Germanic cultural world and above all in his homeland, the importance of the in-depth studies on Dante that were being conducted by his fellow countryman, Giovanni Andrea Scartazzini,



could certainly not be overlooked. Born in Bondo, a village in the Val Bregaglia in 1837, after studying initially in his hometown and attending high school in Basel, Scartazzini had attended the faculty of theology in the Rhineland city for a brief period and then, “due to ideological divergences” with his professors, transferred to the university of Bern. From that moment on, unfortunately, divergences of opinion, clashes and intolerance were to often characterise his relations both in the work environment and in his studies. Basically this young man from Bregaglia was – as Reto Roedel in his *Lectura Dantis*, Bellinzona, 1965 put it – “of a demanding nature and, on occasion argumentative” and therefore “found it hard to settle down”. A man with this type of character was not made to stay long in one place. As a Protestant minister, his wanderings brought him to various towns in Switzerland, even staying for a brief period in his home

town of Bregaglia, to Soglio, ending up in Fahrwangen on lake Hallwil in the Canton of Aargau, where he spent the last seventeen years of his life with his wife and children. In fact he died there in 1901. His great passion was the study of Dante and especially of *The Divine Comedy*. His dedication drove him, as Galbiati notes “almost to breaking point” so much so that “he lived for Dante alone, and was brimming with quotations even in the sermons that he gave to the uncultured boors”. In order to dedicate himself to his beloved studies, without distractions, Scartazzini always preferred to practise as a minister in the smaller villages. Although he lacked the contact and debate with other scholars, which is so necessary for a work of great harmony, his works achieved considerable success in Germany and Italy. It was the era in which the two countries were rediscovering Dante and his most important work.

In 1880 Hoepli went to visit the minister in Soglio to negotiate the publication of *Dante in Germania. Storia letteraria e bibliografia dantesca alemanna [Dante in Germany. Alemannic literary history and bibliography of Dante]* in two volumes, which were released in 1881 and 1883 respectively. Also in 1883, and again by Scartazzini, the *Vita di Dante [The Life of Dante]* and *Opere di Dante [The Works of Dante]* were published in the form of *Manuali*, and the following year were combined in a single book of *Dantologia [Dantology]*. It was precisely in the *Dantologia* – as Reto Roedel in *Giovanni Andrea Scartazzini*, Chiasso, 1969, points out – that the ideas of the two Swiss nationals were merged, who by their nature were especially interested in divulging and satisfying all “of those peculiarities that too many other Dante biographers and experts” had scorned, but that could instead “respond to the needs of many”, without forgetting to work in a scientific manner “despite their popular nature”. In the meantime, Hoepli and Scartazzini met a second time at the minister’s new residence in Fahrwangen to negotiate the “abridged edition” of *La Divina Commedia riveduta nel testo e commentata [The Divine Comedy reviewed and with annotations]*, which was published in 1893. The release of Scartazzini’s latest commentary understandably provoked a wave of harsh criticism. In fact, Scartazzini had once again

The Bodoni cover of the “Dante minuscolo hoepliano” [“Miniscule Hoepli Dante”] published in “Il Natale del libro” [“A book for Christmas”] dated 1904.

intentionally ignored certain editors when he actually should have avoided doing so. Therefore, there was certainly no lack of controversy. This tough character from Bergaglia however, was not someone who was easily shaken and certainly never missed an opportunity to provide some sharp retorts of his own. For some time Ulrico Hoepli had acknowledged the criticism made of his fellow countryman. We find evidence of such in a letter addressed to the Zurich-born philologist Karl Täuber, preserved in the Zurich Central Library, in which, on 14th January 1890, he wrote, amongst other things, that “to a certain point Scartazzini is an authority”, but “in the last few years he has not kept abreast of the times”. In any event, the publisher never lost his respect or personal friendship with the Swiss scholar of Dante, publishing in 1896 the first and in 1899 the second volume of the *Enciclopedia dantesca. Dizionario critico e ragionato di quanto concerne la vita e le opere di Dante Alighieri* [*The Dante encyclopaedia. A critical and annotated dictionary regarding the life and works of Dante Alighieri*], the third volume of which, comprising the *Vocabolario-concordanza delle opere latine e italiane* [*Vocabulary-concordance of Latin and Italian works*], was finished, after the death of Scartazzini, by Antonio Fiammazzo in 1905. The importance and the success of the work of this Bregaglia-born man is also demonstrated by the fact that the *Commento scartazziniano* [*Scartazzinian Commentary*] is still written in large red letters on the title page of Hoepli’s *Divine Comedy*, edited, from the fourth edition in 1903 onwards, by Giuseppe Vandelli, and which has been reprinted up to recent times. The Hoepli edition of the Scartazzinian commentary has in any event provided such stimulus and influence as regards the knowledge of the *Divine Comedy* that future annotators, however authoritative, would never have been able not to take it into due consideration. In fact, still today – as Roedel remarks – even though the “course of the annotators is different, addressed more to resolving those problems that we see as being real and almost unique to poetry of this genre, Scartazzini’s work, powerful in the field of scholarly documentation,



remains a tool that assists the new annotators, who, if they do not want to fail, cannot and must not ignore the truth revealed by the research of Our man”. Research that “given the bilingualism” of the person conducting it, “could have been used as a link between the culture of the North and that of the South”.

Ulrico Hoepli, who did not have any direct heirs, had always wished to keep the business in the family, something he achieved by organising for his two nephews, Carlo Hoepli and Erardo Aeschlimann, to work with him. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of his Company, in the foreword to the publishing house’s General catalogue for 1922, the publisher, to emphasise his gratitude to Italy, amongst other things, wrote: “It is not up to me to judge my work; however, I do want to say this: that what I have done has been inspired by my great love for Italy, by the unshakable faith I have in its future, by the sincerity and dignity of the scholars who are progressively bettering Man and Society. My two nephews, Carlo Hoepli and Erardo Aeschlimann, are here to succeed me, when I feel that I can no longer remain at my battle post. They will be continuing from where I have left off, and I would like to wish them all the very best. With determination, with faith in your ideals, you can, you must always go further”. And it was at his “battle post” that Ulrico Hoepli died 13 years later. As we have seen, the Ulrico Hoepli Publishing House practically everything

The Dante scholar from Bregaglia, Giovanni Andrea Scartazzini (1837-1901), author of the famous commentary to *The Divine Comedy*, published a number of times by Hoepli from 1893 onwards.

apart from novels. Of the around eight thousand titles published by the founder there are very few works of fiction. His successors have remained loyal to this prescription, by continuing to give ample space to astronomers, linguists, geographers, scholars of Dante, librarians, art historians and anyone that spreads knowledge in technical and scientific culture. After the Galleria De Cristoforis was demolished in 1935, all of the Hoepli business activities were transferred to via Berchet, where the bookshop, with its 14 windows, became one of the most attractive and largest in Italy. Totally destroyed by bombs in the Second World War, the Ulrico Hoepli Publishing House and the International Bookshop were one of the first businesses in Milan to reopen after 25th April 1945, the day of liberation from Nazi fascism. In the offices in Corso Matteotti, under the leadership of his successors, the publishing house and the bookshop continued in their work to serve both culture and science. In 1958, to mark the rebuilding, a modern bookshop and new offices commissioned by Ulrico Hoepli (1906-2003) and designed by the architects Figini and Pollini were inaugurated. The building, situated in via Hoepli 5 in the centre of Milan between the Duomo and La Scala theatre, still houses the company's headquarters.

We like to remember Ulrico Hoepli through the lovely profile of him written by an anonymous author in the previously cited *Gli Svizzeri in Italia*, published in 1939 by the Swiss Chamber of Commerce in Milan: "Ulrico Hoepli, indefatigable worker, methodical, precise, with an excellent sense of business, prolific understanding, sometimes daring, at other times reserved, embodies and personifies the ideal type of great modern editor, who has to combine, in an agile and eager mind, the rapidity and precision of business intuition with a higher spirituality; because in modern society [...] the function of a book is no longer the product of industry or commerce, but is above all something that serves difficult and very delicate philosophical and practical requirements. [...] Hoepli had the gift of not becoming fixed in his ideas, even when middle-aged, and not even in old age [...]; his spirit and mind were mature when he was

young, he had youthful ideas and intentions when old age could have justified a more relaxed approach. Ulrico Hoepli was a builder; as tough and hard as he was intelligent and eager, combining common sense with his infinite love for the art of publishing, of which he was the master. He knew how to build his company [...] without improvisations and without dragging his feet, avoiding anything that he had not thought through, constantly refusing any sense of stagnation of ideas. He had distinguished colleagues in Italy who had gained recognition as publishers and artists; he respected them, he applauded their works, which he also admired and encouraged. [...] But he did not imitate anyone, nor did he have any imitators in the true sense of the word. His work was too personal and original. [...] For sixty years many great minds [...] gravitated around Ulrico Hoepli and his House [...] because his work was personal and creative, and each publishing conquest was a triumph of his brilliance, of his instinct and of his method. Over the course of his long life, Ulrico Hoepli had devoted friends, some of whom had risen to the heights of everlasting fame. [...] But his friends were those who felt and recognised him, based on their experience and by his virtue, the Prince of publishers".

* *Researcher at the Zurich Central Library*

modigliani



Hoepli the patron. The Ulrico Hoepli Foundation

by Joseph Jung*



Ulrico Hoepli receives the Swiss president Ludwig Forrer on 1st June 1906, on the occasion of the celebrations in Milan for the opening of the Simplon tunnel. Forrer was the first Chairman of the Hoepli Foundation.

The then fifty-year old Ulrico Hoepli had been mulling over the idea of a foundation right from the end of the 1890's. However, the renowned publisher remained undecided as to the purpose to be given to the foundation for some time. In the summer of 1911 he decided on promoting "the support of Federal councillors who are close to retirement"; however Federal councillor Ludwig Forrer was against the idea, stating that the government "could never accept" a gift of that nature. The proposal that came from Bern, to appropriately assign the foundation's funds to "a first-class technical magazine" designed by the Polytechnic, was personally rejected by Hoepli. In the end, the Ulrico Hoepli Foundation found its *raison d'être* in the "support of institutions and initiatives in the public interest (especially charitable ones) or to promote science and the arts in Switzerland", a purpose ratified by a Notarial deed dated 8th September 1911. Initially Hoepli gave the Foundation 100,000 francs and ordered that the assets of the Foundation should be managed *sine die* by Crédit Suisse. A Board of Trustees were to decide the actual destination of the funds, although Hoepli reserved himself special rights regarding their allocation. As a non-binding request, he prescribed the following distribution: half of the amounts donated were to be assigned to activities in the public interest and charity, particularly to the poor, the sick and the young; a quarter to scientific activities, specifically to the fund for widows and orphans of professors of the Polytechnic and University of Zurich, to schools in the Canton of Zurich, Winterthur and Frauenfeld; and a quarter to artistic activities in the fields of literature, figurative arts and music.

Hoepli entrusted the management of the Foundation to a board of five members which – after numerous changes made by Hoepli himself – still today comprises a government representative (who acts as chair), a Councillor of State from the Canton of Thurgau and one from the Canton of Zurich, by the Chairman and a member of the Board of Directors or of the Management, of Crédit Suisse. The execution of resolutions and looking after correspondence is the responsibility of the Secretary, who is also an employee of the bank. It is no wonder, given his

personal contacts, that Hoepli, despite the "modest", for those days, resources, succeeded in convincing government representatives to hold a position on the Board of Trustees. In this way, Federal Councillor Ludwig Forrer also became the first Chairman of the Ulrico Hoepli Foundation.

At the beginning of 1923 Ulrico Hoepli increased the Foundation's capital to 500,000 francs. The following year he donat-



ed a further half a million francs. On the death of Ludwig Forrer, the government – respecting the will of the founder and on the express wish of Federal councillor Giuseppe Motta – appointed Federal councillor Heinrich Häberlin as its representative. "I believe – wrote Hoepli in 1922 to his nephew – that we could do many good things for Tutwil and Thurgau". Häberlin, from Thurgau, who chaired the Foundation for 26 years, did not fall short of his expectations. Of the amounts disbursed between 1924 and 1935, totalling around 460,000 francs, almost 100,000 francs were employed in projects in the Canton of Thurgau. If in the above-mentioned period only the disbursements for charitable and social projects are considered, the Canton of Thurgau, with its 73,000 francs, equal to around 40% of these allocations, was at the top of the list of the beneficiary Cantons.

The Ulrico Hoepli Foundation rapidly gained great prestige; even in the first few decades of its activities, when foundations established for the anniversaries of the large banks didn't even exist, and when other foundations that have today become important had not even

been established and others had carelessly lost their capital in speculation, the Ulrico Hoepli Foundation played an important cultural and socio-political role. The chairman of the foundation at the time declared, in 1935, that “many outsiders have slipped into our fodder trough of subsidies”, and: “Now I am very busy with the Hoepli Foundation, because the needs of writers and artists also need to be tended to...” or, in 1940: “I now feel like a pocket version of the Swiss subsidy cow, that is sometimes milked at the Hoepli udder and sometimes at the Pro Helvetia one. I am the biological proof that the cow is well only when it is milked”. In 1911 Ulrico Hoepli saw social and charity work as a fundamental task of his Foundation; under no circumstance was it to become an institute to support writers without talent, it was not to “raise freeloaders who stand at the entrance to the temple of fine arts, blocking the light of the elect” nor was it to be an insurance company for publishers, enabling them to publish books without taking any business risks. Hoepli also did not want the State to feel relieved of its cultural obligations thanks to the Foundation’s contributions. He expressly instructed that “politics and religion” should have no weight in disbursements. His waiver, which came later, of specifically indicating the content of the activities to which the funds should be allocated, proved to be an act of wisdom. The Board of Trustees, who had always had the faculty to

refer to criteria for quality, in its resolutions, had until then fully exploited this total liberty within the scope of the Foundation, adapting the grounds for the disbursements, over the years, to the ever-changing needs of society.

The Ulrico Hoepli Foundation today makes a valid contribution to cultural initiatives. As a tribute to the life and work of its founder, it considers its main mandate the publication of quality books, with particular focus on historical-cultural subject areas and to intellectual publications that cover the Italian and Swiss linguistic areas. The Foundation is also closely linked to Hoepli’s homeland, the Canton of Thurgau; it believes its mission to be the preservation of cultural heritage, achieved through the continuous funding of selected projects to preserve heritage monuments.

Ulrico Hoepli was a patron even in his private life; Switzerland and Italy benefited from his magnanimity in equal measure. He made the greatest gift to his adoptive homeland by publishing the great Italian classics and the technical-scientific books that contributed to Italian prosperity. His patronage crowned the work of his whole life.

Hoepli defined himself as having an “Italian, but really Milanese heart, sentiments and affection.” Understandably, he focused on Milan more than on any other city; with the Biblioteca Popolare Ulrico Hoepli [Ulrico Hoepli Public Library], established on the



Hoepli in 1927, at his desk in the bookshop in Galleria De Cristoforis

occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of his publishing house, with the Planetarium inaugurated on 23rd May 1930 and with a valuable collection of paintings. In 1930 Hoepli received the Gold Medal of the city, also as acknowledgement of the many donations he had made in total discretion. He paid particular attention to the funding of scholastic and scientific activities in his “adoptive homeland”, so that the students could share his success and the profits he had made thanks to books. His passion for Italy was complemented by his patronage of Switzerland, with an inestimable number of donations. “The good Ulrico has recently been so inundated with requests for offers, that he has regularly forwarded to me, that I will have to appoint a secretary just to reply to them”, said Johann Heinrich Hoepli in 1930. The applicants included friends and strangers, private citizens and public officials; “at that time didn’t I too make numerous requests for help? – but then who didn’t?” There were cases of vital necessity and of small daily requirements.

Hoepli was ever-present when money was needed for the construction of a spa on the Bichelsee or when the church in Wängi needed a new central heating system. The Association of shooters from Tuttwil wrote to him because they were short of funds for the construction of their headquarters, the village music master wrote to him when they needed to buy the folders for sheet music and a piano. Hoepli donated his parents’ house to the local council. He recognised the “need to introduce electric lighting even to small towns”, and put his hand in his pocket to modernise his hometown. Therefore the people of Tuttwil benefited particularly from the generosity of their emigrated fellow citizen. Hoepli also made other donations: in 1903, 25,000 francs for the construction of Zurich’s Central Library; in 1910, 100,000 francs for the women’s block of the Münsterlingen mental hospital; in 1917, 50,000 Italian lire for the Scuola Svizzera di Milano [Swiss School of Milan]; between 1914 and 1918 the statue in white marble portraying a Niobe, at an estimated value of 10,000 francs, for the University of Zurich. In the midst of such generosity, the most important gift that Hoepli gave Switzerland is the Foundation that still

today bears his name.

The current members of the Foundation’s board are:

The former Federal councillor Flavio Cotti (chairman),

Walter B. Kielholz (deputy chairman),
Walter Berchtold,

The councillor of State Bernard Koch (Canton of Thurgau),

The councillor of State Dr. jur. Markus Notter (Canton of Zurich),

Secretary: Prof. Dr. Joseph Jung.

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CH-8070 Zurich.

** Secretary of the Ulrico Hoepli Foundation in Zurich*

Hoepli today

Hoepli between 1935 and 2005

In 1935 Carlo Hoepli succeeded the founder Ulrico and gave a new boost to the publishing house in the years that preceded the Second World War, through the publication of authors such as Arnheim, Berenson, Guénon, Tucci and of magazines such as “Sapere” and “Cinema”. Unfortunately, the world conflict had a devastating effect on the company, with the destruction of the warehouse (1942) and the bookshop (1943). Only 82 titles of the 4,000 present in the catalogue were available in 1943. After the war, Carlo Hoepli, together with his son, Ulrico (1906-2003), painstakingly reconstructed the technical and scientific catalogue. The works of Desio, Giedion and Nervi appeared alongside the reprints of the most successful Hoepli titles and in 1955 the *Enciclopedia Hoepli [Hoepli Encyclopaedia]* was released.

A symbol of the reconstruction was the inauguration of the current headquarters in via Hoepli 5 in 1958 with a modern bookshop and new offices. The company remained family-run and Ulrico's brother Gianni, worked with him, and from the 60's onwards also his son Ulrico Carlo. The production of technical publications was confirmed and extended over the course of the 60's and 70's, the publishing house expanded its catalogue to university publications (80's) and scholastic ones (90's) and in recent years, to new areas such as computing and management. At the same time the Ulrico Hoepli International Bookshop has grown, reaching today's six floors, becoming one of the most important bookshops in Europe.

The current Hoepli Chairman is Ulrico Carlo Hoepli, flanked by the fifth generation, his three children Giovanni, Matteo and Barbara, the general manager Susanna Schwarz, the publishing director Marco Sbrozi and by the director of the bookshop Aldo Modugno. A total of around one hundred employees work between the publishing house, bookshop and warehouse.

The Ulrico Hoepli Publishing House

The Hoepli catalogue has almost 1,300 titles currently available and each year publishes around 120 titles, between new publications and new editions. The catalogue is the real asset of a publisher like Hoepli, who has always aimed to produce publications that will stand

the test of time, through books that are printed over and over again. An exemplary case: the renowned *Manuale dell'ingegnere [Engineer's handbook]*, which from a slim first edition in 1877-78, the work of the engineer Giuseppe Colombo, has today reached its 84th edition, the work of 200 people, with a total of 6,680 pages, divided into four volumes. Some other similar examples: the *Nuovo Gasparrelli. Manuale del geometra [New Gasparrelli. Surveyor's handbook]* (22nd edition), the *Vademecum per disegnatori e tecnici [Vademecum for designers and technicians]* by Luigi Baldassani (19th edition), the *Dizionario tecnico inglese-italiano italiano-inglese [Technical dictionary English-Italian Italian-English]* by Giorgio Marolli (12th edition).

The focus on the professions is one of the constant features of the catalogue, confirmed by a wide range of books present in the *Biblioteca tecnica Hoepli [Hoepli Technical Collection]*.

In recent years, technologies linked to audio-video, the various forms of computing, covered by the *Hoepli Informatica [Hoepli Computing]* series and books dedicated to safety and legislation have been added to the healthy series of volumes dedicated to engineering, architecture, building, electronics and electrical engineering.

Another strength of the Hoepli catalogue are the linguistic publications and the dictionaries, essential tools for an increasingly global and interdependent world: for example the great bilingual dictionaries dedicated to English (Picchi, *Grande dizionario di inglese [Great English Dictionary]*), Spanish (Tam, *Grande dizionario di spagnolo [Great Spanish dictionary]*) and Russian (Dobrovolskaja, *Grande dizionario russo-italiano italiano-russo [Great dictionary Russian-Italian Italian-Russian]*), are all amongst the most popular in Italy, not to mention bilingual technical and commercial dictionaries dedicated to English, French and German, grammar books, courses and an array of support material for the main European and non-European languages, and Italian for foreigners.

More recently, considerable interest has been shown in marketing (Raimondi, *Marketing del prodotto-servizio [Product-service marketing]*, management (Kerzner, *Project Management*) and communications (Colombo, *Atlante della comunicazione [Atlas of communications]*, as well as in professional tourism, confirmed by

the many volumes of the *Turismi & Turisti* [*Tourism & Tourists*] series.

A growth area is represented by university texts with a series dedicated to economics (among the authors the Nobel Prize winner Stiglitz, Fischer, Dornbusch, Krugman and the Italians Padoa Schioppa, Kostoris, Masciandaro, Pittaluga) and to translation studies, important books on engineering (Ballio-Bernuzzi, *Progettare costruzioni in acciaio* [*Designing steel constructions*], architecture (Newfert, *Enciclopedia pratica per progettare e costruire* [*Practical encyclopaedia for design and construction*], 7th edition), to which a series of nursing science and one of specialist English texts have recently been added.

In the field of scholastic publishing for secondary schools, Hoepli is currently one of the top ten publishers in Italy with a consolidated production in subjects covered by technical, vocational and artistic institutes. A specific catalogue on basic professional training and on-going training is also available.

A range of publications as extensive as that of Hoepli is bound to include some strange titles, dedicated to hobbies, art techniques and leisure time; books on sailing, technical subjects and illustrated editions of history books. In recent years another two traditional Hoepli areas have been revived: children's stories and books dedicated to Milan. In terms of the former, new editions of classic fairytales (Andersen, Grimm, The Arabian Nights) preserving the drawings of great illustrators such as Accornero and Nicouline, have been published, while even more recently the enjoyable *Campa Cavallo* [*That'll be the day*], the twenty animal proverbs illustrated by Altan, was released. For Milan, to whom over the years Hoepli has dedicated a series of very significant publications, various books on the city's history and traditions have been published in recent years.

The Bookshop

The Ulrico Hoepli International Bookshop is characterised by the fact that it has extremely specialised sectors that satisfy the interests of both the general reader and of those that are looking for tools with which to update their professional skills. With a selection of over 175,000 titles and 500,000 Italian and foreign volumes, it is one of the largest bookshops in

Europe, with a surface area of over 2,000 square metres, more than 40 linear metres of shop windows and two linear kilometres of shelves. The forty sales assistants give advice on a wide range of subjects ranging from: the sciences; architecture; art; graphics and photography; legal fields; economics; computing; and literature; to the various fields of non-fiction: medicine; children's books; sport; cooking; travelling; and antique books. The percentage of foreign books available exceeds 30%. In Milan they say: "go to Hoepli's" if you are looking for a particular book or one that is difficult to find. There is no guarantee that you will find the book there, but it can be ordered and the sales assistant will be able to provide you with a bibliography on the subject so the customer never goes away empty-handed. The Hoepli Bookshop seeks to unite the interests of those that use books for their professional careers and of those that seek the pleasure of reading, although often the customer is one and the same. In addition to books, there is also a section dedicated to international specialist magazines ranging from architecture to economics, the cinema and scientific subjects. A section dedicated to DVDs has recently opened with classic films and documentaries. The bookshop also has an area where once or twice a week, book presentations are organised as well as a small area for art or photographic exhibitions.

Hoepli.it

To complement the services of the bookshop, in 2001 a website www.hoepli.it was set up. The site, which was recently revamped and expanded, offers 500,000 books and 2,000 magazines on line, free consultation of the Hoepli English dictionary, as well as all of the books in the bookshop, the option of making bibliographical and in-depth searches by means of the search engine called *Booxster*. At present the site receives one million visitors per year.



Ulrico Hoepli

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Sources and photographic references

Hoepli editorial and family archive, Milan, p. I, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVIII, XX, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXXIV, XXXV, XXXIX

Art Photo Studio Paolo Manusardi, Milan, p. I, IV, VI, IX, XXXV

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Tullio Pericoli, Milan, p. II

The portrait on p. II was painted especially for this publication by the painter Tullio Pericoli, Milan.

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