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Collected Works of Leonardo da Vinci

Plan (1986) Unpublished

In the 1930's the King of Italy appointed the Reale Commissione Vinciana, headed by Professor A. Favaro, to publish the first complete edition of Leonardo's works. The second world war interrupted the project and it has not officially been taken up anew. Nonetheless, scholars have in the meantime produced new transcriptions of a majority of the manuscripts: Brizio (*Trivulziano*), Keele (*Windsor Corpus*), Marinoni (*Atlantico, Trivulziano, Volo, Mss. A-M* in progress). Pedretti (*Leicester*) and Reti (*Madrid*). Indeed the only major texts which have not been transcribed in the past generation are those in London (*British Museum, Codex Arundel; Victoria & Albert Museum, Codex Forster I-III*).

The emphasis of the last generation has been on luxury editions aimed at wealthy collectors, far beyond the reach of scholars and even most libraries. The new edition would make a combined videodisc/computer or microfiche/computer version available for major libraries, as well as paperback versions for scholars.

The publisher will obtain the support of the *Commissione Vinciana* in Rome, the *Raccolta Vinciana* in Milan and the new Leonardo da Vinci Society in London. The publisher will arrange for permission to reproduce the manuscripts from the libraries and owners involved and make the necessary copyright agreements with respect to the existing transcriptions. The publisher will then film all the treatises and paintings, including those accepted as being school of Leonardo.

A general editor will be appointed who will go through the complete works numbering each diagram and each passage as Keele has done in the case of the *Windsor Corpus*. The general editor will also assign preliminary search words for each folio, identifying topics therein treated: e.g. geometry, hydraulics, philosophy. The general editor will assign each of these topics to individual editors who will be sent copies of the films and programmes for the catchwords and be responsible for a) checking searchwords, b) checking transcriptions, and c) providing translations of passages relating to their topic. The results will be checked by the general editor. Problematic passages will be submitted to a committee appointed by the *Commissione Vinciana*, *Raccolta Vinciana* and the Leonardo da Vinci Society. The complete works will use Dr. Keele's edition as a model.

In the case of the videodisc and/or microfiche edition, concordances of key searchwords for each folio will be entered into computer programmes, thus permitting users to retrieve automatically all passages in a given manuscript dealing with a particular topic. This information will, in turn, be linked with existing attempts at dating individual folios such that the same search can be carried out chronologically. In addition, individual editors will be encouraged to identify key sequences of folios linking parts of one manuscript or even a series of manuscripts. Where applicable, the six levels of development identified by the editor will be used (cf. Progress Report 1982). These sequences will be sold as separate programmes and herald a new type of publication.

A scholarly work concerning Leonardo's studies of linear perspective would traditionally have offered translations in the main body of the text, providing the original Italian passages in the footnotes. For this reason footnotes frequently took up more than fifty percent of a book and made it both heavy and expensive. Once a computer assisted version of the complete works has been produced, such footnotes will be obsolete. If, for instance, the reader is on page 333 (Fig. 14) and would like to check the original behind the translation on A112v he need merely go to the videodisc or microfiche edition and check that folio. Indeed a computer programme can provide on the screen all the original folios in the precise sequence that they are discussed in the text. This will have the added advantage of enabling readers to see the original context of a diagram printed in isolation in the actual book. Hence, what would otherwise have been hundreds of extra pages of footnotes and appendices will now be another programme that can be plugged into the main edition of the primary works. In the past secondary literature has tended to compete with the primary sources for attention. If this new approach becomes standard then new secondary literature will require that readers pay added attention to the primary literature on which it is based.

More complex concordances can also be developed to include all key words both in the original and in translation, as well as all key words describing Leonardo's illustrations. Once again these will be made available as programmes which can be purchased separately.

As videodisc and computer retrieval methods become more effective, individual editors will be able to integrate these descriptions in tracing the development of individual images on a single folio and throughout the manuscripts and demonstrate the systematic nature of his experimental approach. These series will again be made available in the form of programmes.

Complete editions have traditionally been treated as isolated projects. As videodisc and computer retrieval methods improve this will change. An edition of Leonardo's works provides a slice of horizontal history, connecting his various activities in one generation. However most of these ideas have both precedents and subsequent developments and thus also form a part of the vertical history of any given topic. It would therefore be advisable to initiate two further projects which would begin nearly independently and evolve interdependently: namely, a corpus of literature on linear perspective and a corpus of literature on the artist-engineer tradition. Individual editors would now be assigned specific themes such as snorkels or lifejackets which they would trace throughout the literature and record in a programme.

Once these sequences have been integrated with the edition of Leonardo's works it will become possible to search for all drawings of a topic within the notebooks and establish where these fit into the history of the topic. This would open up a new approach to the history of technology and science by making visible the continuity principle that is essential in all cumulative knowledge. As such this project of the collected works of Leonardo da Vinci would have implications considerably beyond those of a typical edition.