

# Much to Celebrate: The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Italian Society of Accounting History

During its last Congress, held in Bari on December 5 and 6, the Italian Society of Accounting History (ISAH) celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A special section of the Congress was dedicated to this milestone, featuring past Presidents and me, as the Editor of *Accounting and Culture*, to reflect on four decades of history. Over these forty years, ten Presidents have led the ISAH: Umberto Bertini, Giuseppe Bruni, Giuseppe Catturi, Francesco Poddighe, Maria Bergamin, Luciano D'Amico, Roberto Di Pietra, Valerio Antonelli, Antonella Paolini, and Massimo Sargiacomo.

The current President, Massimo Sargiacomo, introduced the celebration, and Giuseppe Catturi highlighted the origins of the Society. He described the activities of the first and second Presidents, Umberto Bertini and Giuseppe Bruni – both of whom have passed away – and reflected on his own tenure as President. Catturi emphasized that the Society's origins date back to August 27, 1984. In his speech, he explained that during the IV Congress of Accounting History, held in Pisa from August 23 to 27, a group of 31 individuals came together to establish a cultural society aimed at promoting historical studies in the accounting field. Tito Antoni, Umberto Bertini, and Riccardo Varaldo were tasked with preparing all the necessary arrangements for its formal constitution, which was finalized on July 24, 1987.

During the tenure of the first President, Umberto Bertini (1987–1991), the inaugural Congress of the Italian Society of Accounting History was held in Siena on December 20-21, 1991. Giuseppe Bruni succeeded Bertini as President, and during his tenure, Residential Seminars were introduced. These seminars provided additional opportunities for younger generations to be nurtured and to present posters showcasing their early-stage research. Giuseppe Catturi also reflected on his time as President of the Society and his role as the founding

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Editor of the journal originally titled *Contabilità e Cultura Aziendale*, whose first issue was published in 2001.

Francesco Poddighe, the fourth President of ISAH, reflected on the VII Congress, held in Bari on October 5 and 6, 2003, which focused on the accounting profession. He also highlighted the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Italian Society of Accounting History, organized in Pisa on January 27, 2005. Poddighe emphasized the enduring passion that has driven and continues to inspire scholars involved in ISAH's activities.

Unfortunately absent in Bari, Maria Bergamin, the first woman to lead ISAH, served as President from 2005 to 2010. During her tenure, she organized the VIII Congress held in Atri-Silvi on September 22-23, 2005; the IX Congress in Perugia on September 27-28, 2007; and the X Congress in Bocconi, Milan on November 5-6, 2009. Additionally, under her leadership, the celebration for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Tendenze Nuove negli Studi di Ragioneria* was also held in Venice in 2006.

In his speech, delivered online from Brussels, the sixth President, Luciano D'Amico, who succeeded Maria Bergamin, underlined the great growth of both the quality of Italian accounting history studies and the number of researchers, as well as the major role assumed by this discipline in universities' study plans. He recalled the important evolution of the discipline in the Italian context, where a shift towards new accounting history was evident during his office, as seen in the XI Congress held in Rome in 2011 to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the unification of Italy.

Roberto Di Pietra expressed his pleasure in meeting many young scholars, who are clear evidence of the growth of the Italian Society of Accounting History as a community capable of attracting younger generations. In his speech, he emphasized the importance of curiosity-driven research, which does not necessarily produce an immediate practical impact.

Valerio Antonelli, who served as President from 2017 to 2020, recalled several significant events during his tenure. These included the Congress in Turin in 2018, the medal of the President of the Republic awarded to ISAH for its cultural activities, the establishment of awards honouring Tito Antoni and Alberto Bisaschi, the Summer School in Pisa in 2019, and the International Seminar on Accounting History held in Siena the same year. His tenure was notably impacted by the pandemic in 2020, which prompted the organization of a series of webinars to enable virtual meetings among accounting history scholars to discuss ongoing research. Another hallmark of his presidency was the creation of a new organizational structure for AIDEA, in which ISAH played a pivotal role.

Antonella Paolini, in her speech, highlighted the extensive work undertaken during her time on the ISAH Board. She began as Secretary during D'Amico's presidency and later served as Vice President under Di Pietra and Antonelli. As President, from December 2020 to February 2021, she represented ISAH in organizing the election of the AIDEA President, working within the framework of AIDEA's new aggregate model.

The current President, Massimo Sargiacomo, reflected on the numerous initiatives launched since the start of his presidency in 2021. These included the continuation of webinars, the establishment of the 'Luca Pacioli' and 'Grandi Maestri' scientific awards, the Summer School held in Ottranto (June 16-18, 2022), the Conference celebrating Fabio Besta in Venice (October 3, 2022), and the XVI Congress in Naples (December 15-16, 2022), which included a special event honouring Umberto Bertini, who passed away in March 2022.

Commenting on his second term, which began recently, Sargiacomo underlined the development of a pivotal project to create a digital archive of Italian accounting history publications. This initiative, which aims to map scientific publications in accounting and provide digitized versions of these works, supported by PNRR funding, will soon be presented to ISAH's community. The possibility of a future virtual museum of accounting history has also been highlighted.

I also had the honour of speaking at this event, reflecting on my experience as Editor-in-Chief of the journal since 2014. Over the past decade, the journal transitioned to publishing in English, expanding its reach to an international audience. It has also organized various events, such as workshops and special issues, in collaboration with international scholars. I highlighted one of ISAH's significant achievements for the journal: the recent ranking of *Accounting and Cultures* in the Q1 Journal Ranking (ANVUR GEV 13b, 2020-2024). This accomplishment, made possible through ISAH's dedicated efforts, represents an important milestone for the journal as we prepare for the forthcoming VQR 2020–2024 research evaluation exercise.

These forty years of the Society testify to the dedication, innovation, and scholarly passion of its members over the decades and represent an inspiration for future generations to continue building on this rich legacy.

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