**University Council for Languages (UCFL)**
**Italian report for the Spring Executive Committee meeting, 24 May 2024**
**Alvise Sforza Tarabochia (University of Kent)**

This report is based on ongoing discussion in the discipline, and on updates from representatives of the two main professional associations: the Society for Italian Studies in the UK and Ireland (SIS) https://italianstudies.org.uk/ and the Association for the Study of Modern Italy (ASMI) https://www.asmi.org.uk/.

**Census of HE offer of Italian language and Italian Studies**
I have started a review process to cense all Universities still offering Italian either as a standalone degree (SH or JH), as part of a degree in Modern Languages or in IWLP. This aims at renewing the census of Society for Italian Studies, that was halted during the pandemic. I have received some replies, but the full picture is not available yet. Considerations below stem from the partial answers I received so far.

**Sector Crisis**
Much like other languages, Italian is currently affected by the turmoil that hit the Higher Education Sector, in particular since the beginning of 2024.
Live list of Universities with redundancies programmes: https://qmucu.org/qmul-transformation/uk-he-shrinking/
As is well known to UCFL, of these several (e.g. Aberdeen, Kent, Lincoln) included languages and Italian in the areas at risk. Some Universities reached a resolution, but the full picture is far from clear.
Currently there is a widespread feeling that Italian Studies (along with most other individual language specialisms) will continue to be offered at UG and PG levels, along with a strong support for specialist research, only in a handful of Universities with a long standing tradition. Non-Russel Group and post-92 Universities will offer (best case scenario) Italian as part of wider BAs in Modern Languages, with very limited specialist staff, and most will either discontinue Italian or offer it as part of IWLP only.
Changes in a discipline are to be expected over the course of time, therefore I don't believe aspects of this change are lamentable *per se* (i.e. the rise of an identity and community of modern languages scholars as opposed to scholars in individual languages). As we all know the issue is that this change stems exclusively from financial considerations and it comes with numerous job losses and a profound cultural impoverishment, which needs to be addressed both at individual language level and as part of a community of modern language scholars.
Staff report also concerns of overworking, since many units of Italian are staffed only with one substantive member, often on a fractional contract.
As per previous report, worries on low recruitment, both at UG and PG level, continue being widespread in the community. This is exacerbated by the direct equation between recruitment (in particular international UG) and survival of subjects.

**Year Abroad**
Colleagues continue to report problems related to the running of the Year Abroad (especially when it is compulsory) in a post-Brexit, post-pandemic context. The work done

by the UCFL Special Interest Group on Year Abroad continues to be of significant help in this regard.
The Italian consulate seems to be particularly difficult in releasing work visas for British students beyond 3 months. By comparison the French embassy offers a hotline to support applicants. This makes longer work experiences difficult and discourages students from taking Italian. Once the census is over I would like to help colleagues coordinate lobbying the Italian consulate to facilitate obtaining such work visas.

**Society for Italian Studies Update**
In January 2024, Professor Ruth Glynn was appointed as the chair of the Society for Italian Studies. The SIS is in very good financial health, largely due to the change of contract for the *Italian Studies* journal. The society continues to maintain a separate fund dedicated to EDI, facilitating e.g. attendance to conferences from the Global South. The biennial conference at Royal Holloway in June (19-21 June 2024) will be the largest ever, featuring over 300 speakers and held entirely in person. *Italian Studies* will soon have two new Senior Editors, pending ratification at the AGM in June, with the Senior Editor for cultural studies pending appointment. PG and ECR representatives have been very active in the society. Their *Notes in Italian Studies* online journal has been highly successful and is now entering its third year.

The SIS has identified outreach and collaboration with schools as a priority area, highlighted by discussions at the Italian Teachers Day 2024. Funding school initiatives through SIS and introducing hybrid events for schools lacking commutable access to Italian academics is being discussed. SIS proposes to leverage commuter students as ambassadors for the Italian language during holidays and is urging the creation of language champions in the public domain to further promote Italian studies (both applicable to all languages).

**Association for the Study of Modern Italy Update**
Website has been updated.
*Modern Italy* journal is now published Open Access – authors will *not* have to pay APC. CUP has signed 'read and publish agreements' with many universities which will facilitate publishing Open Access.

ASMI's 2024 conference will be on Italy and its Environments. CFP and info here: https://asmi.org.uk/asmi-2024-conference-call-for-papers/

**UK-based Italian Studies journals**
*Italian Studies* (SIS), *Modern Italy* (ASMI), *The Italianist, Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies* are publishing their issues regularly, with many articles and special issues reflecting the intellectual liveliness of the discipline.

*Alvise Sforza Tarabochia, Canterbury, 17 May 2024*