

Letters to the Editor

Nov.1, 1981

Dear Editor,

I have to make some remarks on Mr. Wellisch's paper How to make an index - 16th century style: Conrad Gessner on indexes and catalogs, published in "International Classification" 8 (1981) No.1, p.10-15, to vindicate the exactness of a bibliographical citation made by Gessner and declared wrong by Wellisch.

In the Wellisch paper, otherwise a good and appreciable one, there are some incorrect points in the translation from the Latin text; but on the following I have to call publicly the attention, because it unjustly throws some unfavourable light on Gessner. On page 12, Wellisch translates in these words:

"Similarly, some distinguish between Greek and Latin words as in Budaeus' commentary on Pollux the Athenian, where in one index the Latin words, in another the Greek ones are contained" the Latin text of Bibliotheca Universalis p.20 v,a: "Sic etiam Graeca a Latinis nonnulli distinguunt, ut in Athenaeum, Polucem, commentarios Budaei, uno indice Latina vocabula, altero Graeca comprehenduntur".

The translation, erroneously, confuses the three separate works by Athenaeus, Pollux and Budé with a work by Pollux commented by Budé, and of course wrongly identifies Athenaeus with Pollux. Pollux and Athenaeus are both from Naucratis (Egypt), and nearly contemporaries, but they are completely distinct persons and writers.

Wellisch realized that it does not exist a work by Pollux commented by Budé, and in his note (19) he writes: "This is a slip of the pen....The reference is more probably to Iulii Pollucis onomasticon...Rodolpho Gualthero....interprete (Basileae: R.Winter, 1541-1542)"; wanting in some way to explain and to justify the Gessner's

mistake. But Wellisch had to be more cautious in this hypothesis, and to reflect that Gualtherus was a Tigurinus (a citizen of Zürich) as Gessner was, and was very probably known personally by Gessner; this excludes the possibility of the mentioned slip of the pen.

The three works cited by Gessner as examples of works published and equipped with two separate indexes, one for Latin and one for Greek words, are the following: one by Athenaeus, one by Pollux and one by Budé, exactly as in the text given by Gessner.

1....Athenaei dipnosophistarum...lib. XV...Indices duos, Graecum alterum, alterum Latinum, quibus omnium rerum quaecunque in his libris tractari solent, prompta tibi et expedita copia fiet. Basiliae, apud Joannem Valderum, 1535.

2. Iulii Pollucis vocabularium...I. Pollucis vocabularii index in latinum translatus ut vel graece nescientibus nota sint, quae a Polluce tractantur. (Follows the index in Greek). Venetiis, apud Aldum Romanum, 1502.

3. Commentarii linguae graecae, Gulielmo Budaeo...autore. Indice latino, et graeco, locupletiore, et diligentiore multo. Basileae, 1530.

In the same paper Wellisch complains that practically no one has given attention to the importance of Gessner's Bibliotheca Universalis for the history of indexes and catalogues. May I integrate? I published a paper with the title I loci communes nell'opera bibliographica di Gessner in the "Annali della Scuola Speciale per Archivisti e Bibliotecari dell'Università di Roma" Anno XIV, 1974, p.5-21.

I am yours

Alfredo Serrai

Prof. Alfredo Serrai
Via della Stazione di S. Pietro 22
00165 ROMA, Italy