

# Literati and Scholars at the Dissonanti Academy in Modena (1680-1800)

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This note summarizes our research into the scholars at the Dissonanti Academy in Modena from its early meetings to 1800.

## 1 SOURCES

Today, the Dissonanti Academy is known as the "Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts of Modena." The academy maintains a website with a list of all its members from 1684 to the present day, which can be found at <https://www.accademiasla-mo.it/it/i-soci-storici>. However, the list only includes the date each scholar joined the academy and does not provide any additional personal information or their field of study. We have made an effort to gather more information, but unfortunately, the fields of research for many scholars are unknown, especially if they have no publication record.

## 2 THE ACADEMY

The "Accademia dei Dissonanti" was founded in 1684 after few years of planning. During the early meetings, scholars decided on the academy's name and symbol, which was meant to represent "harmony in the variety of chords." The academy was named "Dissonanti" with the motto "*Digerit in numerum dissonantes*", which means "dividing into discordant numbers" (Accademia Nazionale di Scienze, Lettere e Arti di Modena 2023).

In 1780, Girolamo Tiraboschi (Bergamo 1731 - Modena 1794) organized a public meeting to commemorate the academy's first century of operation. During his speech, he emphasized the crucial role played by Francesco II d'Este, Duke of Modena, in establishing the academy and reactivating the university of Modena around 1680. The Prince was a strong supporter of high-quality knowledge and had always encouraged the academy's growth. Since its inception, the academy has enjoyed the approval of local authorities, indicating a strong relationship between the two institutions, as well as between the academy and the university (for more details about the interaction between the academy and the university of Modena see Section 9). The French Revolution caused the academy to cease operations in 1795, but it was re-established during the Napoleonic Era. The academy began to focus on mechanical subjects in addition to the humanities. Finally, in the 19th century, the academy was given its current name, the "Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts of Modena" (Accademia Nazionale di Scienze, Lettere e Arti di Modena 2023).

## 3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on our sample of scholars linked to the Dissonanti Academy in Modena. We were able to link 431 scholars to the academy, but unfortunately, we do not have information on the year and place of birth for many of them. This information is only available for around 15% of the scholars. The average age at the time of first appointment was approximately 38.3 years, which is relatively late compared to other academies. The average lifespan was 70.5 years. Interestingly, the median distance between the scholars' places of birth and activity was only 18km,

which reflects the academy’s local outreach (see also Figures 2). Finally, we found that the coverage of scholars on Wikipedia is lower than on Worldcat: we find a maximum of 38.4% of members in Worldcat.

Period	nb. obs	birth date	known place	mean age at appoint.	mean age at death	med. dist. birth-univ.	with Wiki.	with Worldcat
1618–1685	38	15.8%	15.8%	49.7	68.7	18	13.2%	26.3%
1686–1733	130	27.7%	26.2%	38.3	74.5	71	13.1%	42.3%
1734–1800	263	28.9%	30.8%	37.4	68.9	36	14.4%	38.4%
1618–1800	431	27.4%	28.1%	38.3	70.5	37	13.9%	38.5%

Table 1: Summary statistics by period

## 4 FIELDS

In Figure 1, we can observe the distribution of scholars across different fields at the Dissonanti Academy of Modena. Until 1800, the academy had a strong focus on humanities, with 81 members specializing in this area. However, there were also 56 members who studied medicine and the sciences. Unfortunately, for a significant portion of members (241 members), we do not have any information regarding their fields of study. Even if we find their publications, it is not always possible to assign a precise field to the scholar.

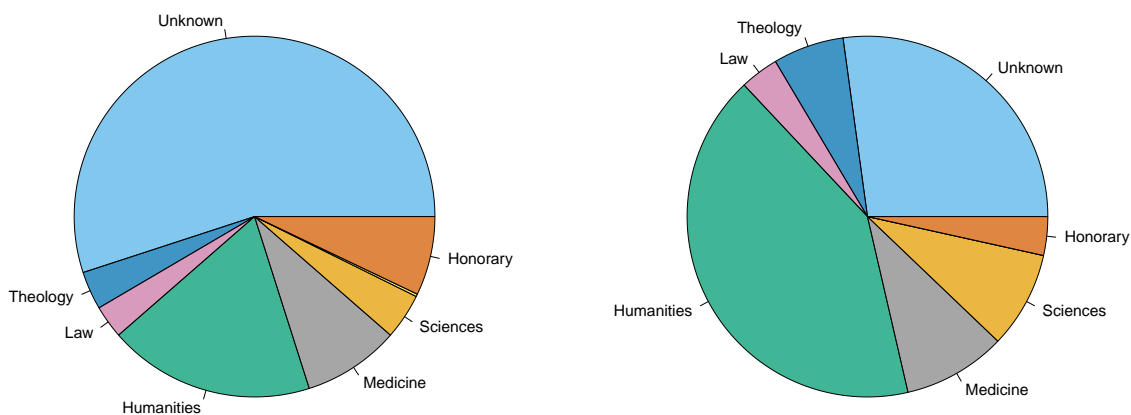


Figure 1: Broad fields at the Dissonanti Academy of Modena (left: all scholars, right: published scholars only).

## 5 PLACE OF BIRTH

Figure 2 displays the documented birthplaces of the ordinary members active at the Dissonanti Academy of Modena. There are no corresponding members, and most of the scholars come from Italy, confirming the local influence of the academy, already seen in Section 3.

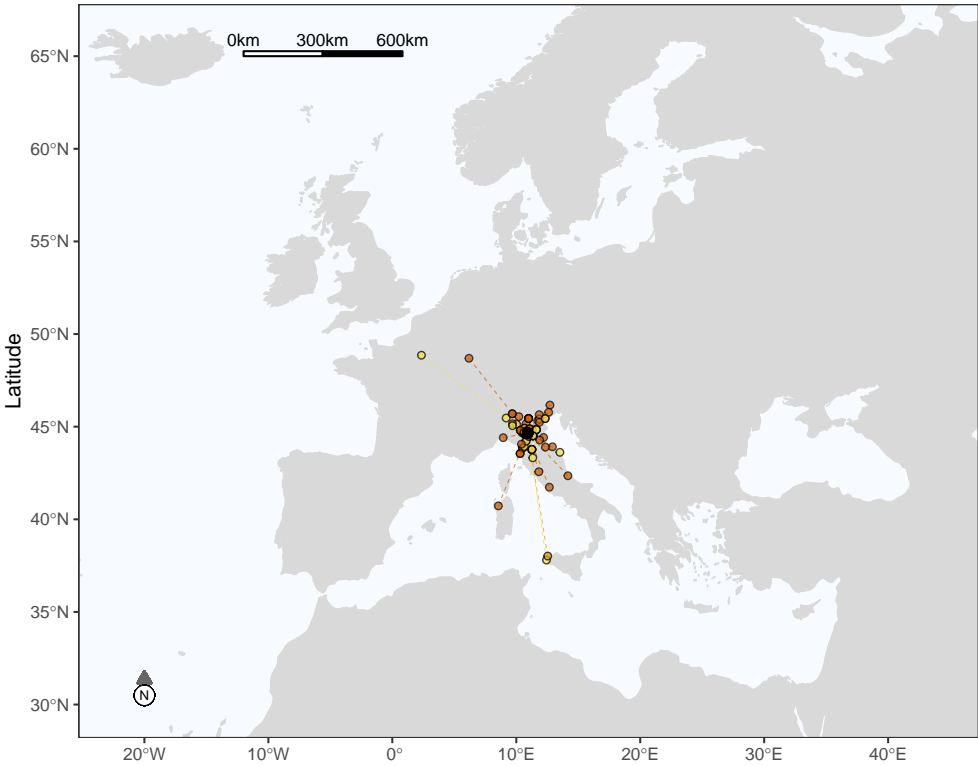


Figure 2: Places of birth of the ordinary members of the Dissonanti Academy of Modena

## 6 HUMAN CAPITAL OF SCHOLARS AND LITERATI

For each person in the database, we compute a heuristic human capital index, identified by combining information from Worldcat and Wikipedia using principal component analysis. Figure 3 shows the names of all the scholars with a positive human capital index at the Dissonanti Academy of Modena.

## 7 TOP 5 SCHOLARS

**Lodovico Antonio Muratori** (Vignola 1672 – Modena 1750) was an Italian historian, writer and presbyter (e.g. a minister of the Christian Church). He enrolled in the University of Modena after taking orders in 1688. Muratori's works primarily focused on Italian history, including his publication of one of the first pieces in vernacular language, called *Annali d'Italia*. He was also active in the religious context and fought against false beliefs, believing that superstition should not be included in the Christian mindset. Muratori was a member of the Dissonanti Academy from 1700 to 1722. His publications also aimed to improve the common good, emphasizing the importance of education and sciences. Due to his scientific importance, he was elected to other important Italian academies such as the Accademia della Crusca and Ricovrati Academy, as well as the Royal Society of London.

**Lazzaro Spallanzani** (Scandiano 1729 – Pavia 1799) was an Italian biologist and priest. He studied biology at the University of Bologna under the guidance of his cousin Laura Bassi (Bologna 1711 – Bologna 1778), who was a professor there. His groundbreaking research focused on animal reproduction and echolocation, which helped to disprove the theory of spontaneous generation - the idea that living organisms could arise from inanimate material. In addition to being a member of the Dissonanti Academy from 1768, he was also a member of thirteen other academies throughout Europe and taught at the universities of Modena and Pavia.

**Apostolo Zeno** (Venezia 1668 - Venezia 1750) was an Italian scholar, poet and journalist. Son of an ancient Venetian family, his first attempt as a journalist was not successful but in 1710 he founded the "Giornale de' letterati d'Italia" together with his brother Pier Caterino Zeno, Francesco Scipione Maffei (Verona 1675 – Verona 1755) and Antonio Vallisneri (Trassilco 1661 – Padova 1730). This journal achieved great success, thanks to the high quality of the contributions. In 1718 he was called as poet to the imperial court of Vienna, where he published 36 libretti. He was a member at the Dissonanti Academy in Modena from 1723 to 1731 and at the Crusca Academy between 1722 and 1750.

**Bernardino Ramazzini** (Carpi 1633 – Padova 1714) was an Italian physician. He is mostly remembered for his contribution to occupational medicine (e.g., prevention of diseases among workers), about which he published his most famous work "De Morbis Artificum Diatriba". He fostered the use of quinine to cure malaria. Ramazzini was a member of the Dissonanti Academy in Modena from 1684, and he also held memberships in the Leopoldina Academy and the Prussian Academy. He taught at both the University of Modena and the University of Padua.

**Francesco Scipione Maffei** (Verona 1675 – Verona 1755) was an Italian writer and art critic. He studied in Parma and Rome, where he joined the Accademia degli Arcadi. Maffei collaborated with Apostolo Zeno on the creation of the journal "Giornale de' letterati d'Italia." He wrote extensively on the archaeology of Verona, publishing "Verona Illustrata." Maffei was a member of the Dissonanti Academy in Modena from 1723 to 1731, and he also became a member of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* in Paris and the Royal Society in London. He founded a museum in Verona, and built his own observatory in his later years to study astronomy.

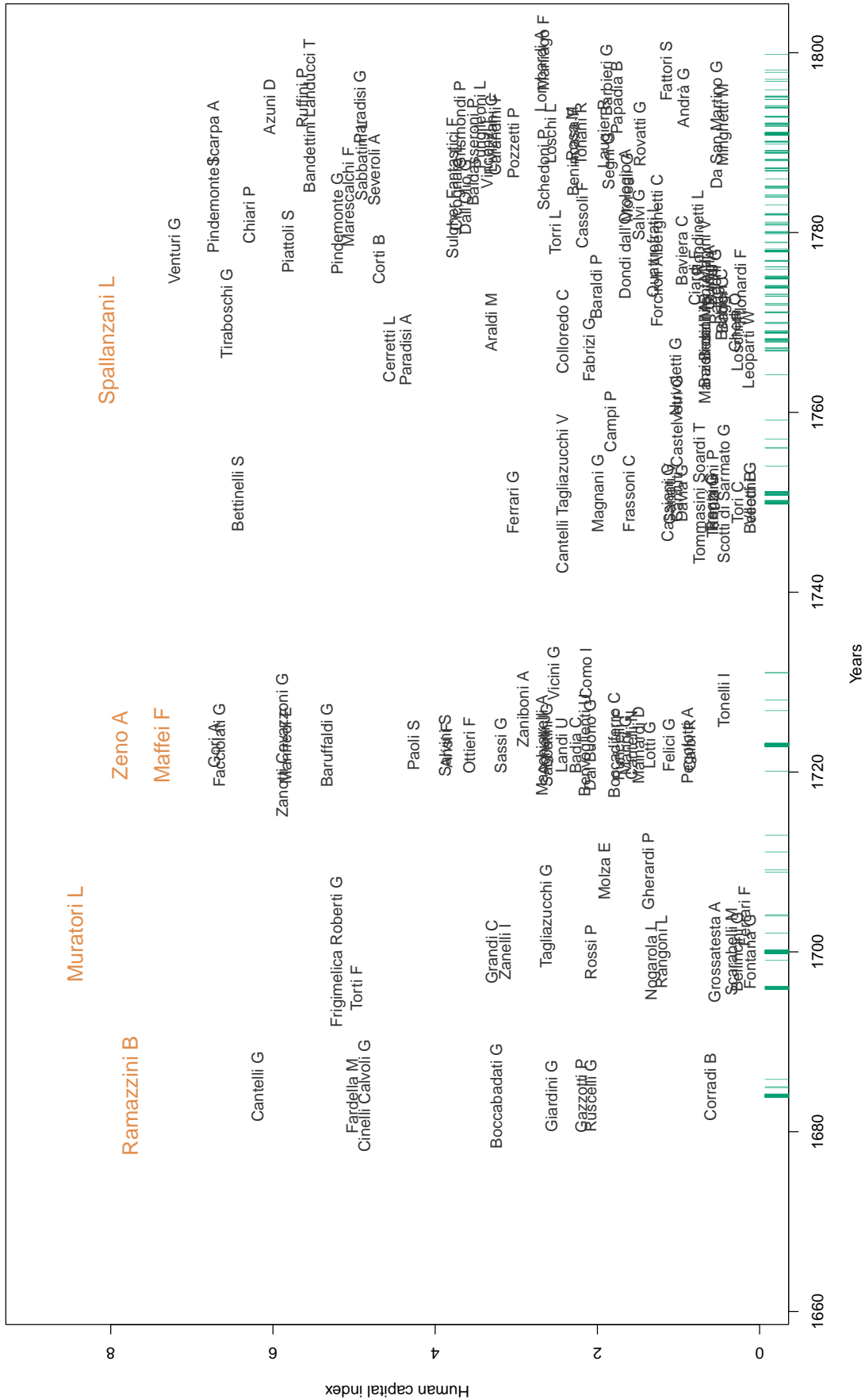


Figure 3: Famous scholars of the Dissonanti Academy in Modena

## 8 DIVERSITY

The Dissonanti Academy in Modena had four women among its members: **Teresa Bandettini Landucci** (Lucca 1763 – Lucca 1837) member from 1792, **Veronica Cantelli Tagliazucchi** (Bologna 1700 – ? 1770) member from 1751 to 1767, **Fortunata Sulgher Fantastici** (Livorno 1755 – Firenze 1824) member from 1782, and **Paolina Secco Suardo Grismondi** (Bergamo 1746 – Bergamo 1801) member from 1792.

All of them were poetesses. About Veronica Cantelli Tagliazucchi we do not have any other information. About the other three women we know that all of them changed their names when they obtained the membership of the *Accademia dell'Arcadia*: Teresa Bandettini Landucci chose Amarilli Etrusca, Fortunata Sulgher Fantastici was called Temira Parraside, and Paolina Secco Suardo Grismondi was Lesbia Cidonia. All three of them were married with children, for more details about women in Academia before 1800, please refer to de la Croix and Vitale (2023b, 2023a).

## 9 INTERACTION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF MODENA

The figure 4 illustrates the extent of interaction between the University of Modena and the Dissonanti Academy in Modena between 1680 and 1800. The diagram depicts a significant overlap, indicating a strong connection between the two institutions: 60 scholars were members of both the academy and the university between 1680 (academy's foundation date) and 1800. This close association could be attributed to the influence and foresight of Francesco II d'Este, Duke of Modena, who revitalized the *Studium* (which became the University of Modena) and promoted the establishment of the academy in the 1680s. The academy and university were also closely linked to the local political and religious authorities.

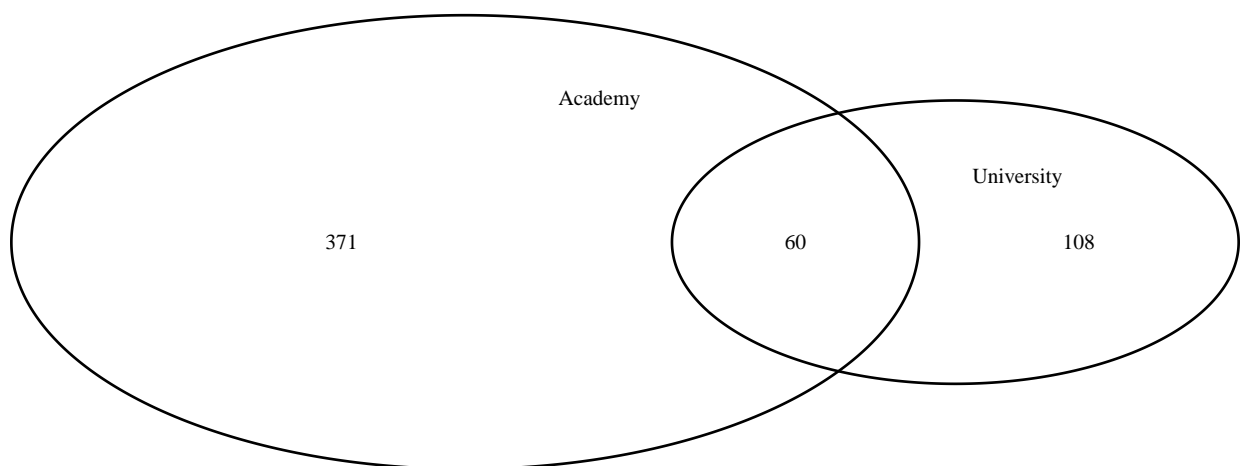


Figure 4: Interaction between the Dissonanti Academy and the University of Modena between 1680 until 1800.

## 10 FINAL THOUGHTS

The Dissonanti Academy in Modena, which is still active today under the name "Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts of Modena", has always been focused on local outreach, just like the University of Modena, with which the academy has had a close connection. Initially, the academy focused mainly on humanities, but it started to include scientific subjects in the 1790s.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Homepage: <https://perso.uclouvain.be/david.delacroix/uthc.html>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UTHCerc>

Database: <https://shiny-lidam.sipr.ucl.ac.be/scholars/>

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