



**Università
degli Studi
di Ferrara**

**Dipartimento
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XV Atelier Héloïse (Ferrara, 3-4 December 2026)

Remembering and Representing: Universities and Their Historical Sources

Dates ad place

3 – 4 December 2026

Conference Room Palazzo Schifanoia

Via Scandiana 23, 44121 Ferrara

Organizer

University of Ferrara – Department of Humanities, in collaboration with the Museal System of the University (SMA) and the Institute for Renaissance Studies of Ferrara

Language of Conference

English

Call for Paper

The study of the history of European universities from the late Middle Ages to the modern period is often complicated by the difficulty of accessing archival material. Sources that bear witness to the evolution of universities as institutions, as well as their role in disseminating scientific knowledge and training Europe's ruling classes, are rarely grouped together in a single collection or repository. More often, and this is particularly true of universities that have seen a succession of different forms of governance during their history, we are faced with a considerable fragmentation of documents. On the one hand, it was only at the end of modern age that universities began to take shape as autonomous institutions with centralised administrations, giving rise to the need for systematic inventorying of all management documents. On the other hand, not all of them invested equal energy over the centuries in protecting and valorising their documentary heritage. Moreover, sources produced by bodies that were involved in university management in various ways are often supplemented by other extra-institutional documentary sources.

From a historical perspective, these sources do not merely document institutional practices but also reveal how universities constructed, negotiated, and transmitted their identities over time. Charters, statutes, matriculation registers, ceremonial records, commemorative writings, and jubilees functioned as media of remembrance and representation, shaping narratives of continuity, tradition, and legitimacy. Historical research based on university sources therefore allows us to analyze processes of remembering and forgetting, the selective canonization of actors and practices, and the ways in which universities retrospectively interpreted their own pasts in response to political change, reform, and crisis.



Within this general context, Ferrara's Atelier Héloïse 2026 will explore three main areas of research:

- first, the processes of sedimentation, organization and conservation of documentary collections relating to the history of universities, from institutional archives to collateral sources;
- second, historical research on university identity, memory, and representation, focusing on processes of remembering and forgetting, commemorative practices, and historiographical traditions based on institutional and extra-institutional sources;
- third, the presentation of digital solutions – both in progress or already implemented – that guarantee the composition of digital archives and enable the processing and dialogue of information drawn from a variety of sources.

Contributions focusing on the following topics are therefore welcome:

- The processes of formation and preservation of institutional university archives;
- Archival collections that rebuild the life of universities produced by other entities (general or local government institutions, student associations and professional colleges, conservation institutes, etc.);
- Investigations into collateral sources for the history of universities: notarial archives, chronicles, family books and/or archives, etc.;
- Historical research on university identity, memory, and representation as reflected in institutional archives, commemorative practices, and collateral sources;
- IT tools or methods for identifying and organizing data in relation to both historical demand and the communication of research results.

Conference submission guidelines

Each submission paper may contain:

- Presenter name and their affiliation
- Presenter short CV
- Paper title
- Abstract (250-word maximum) summarizing the topics to be addressed, research questions, and goals

Please send paper proposals to Prof. Matteo Provasi (matteo.provasi@unife.it) by **30 May 2026**. Acceptance decisions will be sent by email by 15 July 2026.

Living expenses

The local organizer will cover the costs of two nights accommodation and the social dinner (the evening of 3rd December) for all the speakers.