

## THE DAILY BUREAUCRACY OF THE SOPRINTENDENZA

July 25, 2015 Stefano Costa Archives, Explore Posts, Italy archives, Curation, Italy, soprintendenza

**5:47 AM CEST.** My #dayofarch starts with the phone ringing the alarm tune. I remember it's #dayofarch today. I tweet, for those few already awake.

I can't get "The magnificent seven" out of my head so I [play it from Youtube while I shower](#), reinventing the lyrics.

I wake up so early every day, so I can avoid rush hours and spend less time commuting. The radio keeps me company, with horrible news of a shooting in the US, dozens of migrants drowned in the Mediterranean, and a Earth-like planet found by the Kepler team. It's a "twin" or "cousin" depending on which news channel you listen to. Most journalists are so clueless that the artist impressions of Kepler 452b have become "photographs" in their words. There is an atmosphere. There may be plants (according to the spectral footprint data received by the telescope). There may be life. What if there is no intelligent life? What is there was intelligent life on Kepler 452b but they self-destroyed their advanced civilisation and now the simpler organisms are starting over, with their simple goals? A good science-fiction work must involve some archaeology, after all.

I work at the Soprintendenza Archeologia della Liguria, as I recounted in the past few years in my #dayofarch posts.



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@stekosteko

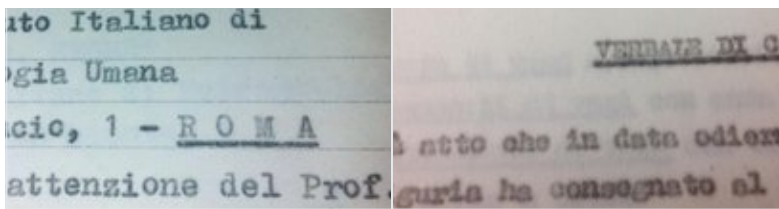
The exact name is different now, but I work here [#dayofarch](#)

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At **7:22 AM CEST**, I'm at work. Today it should be a “relaxed” day, at least compared to yesterday when I was working in parallel on two urgent dossiers. For the first two hours I'm “digging” through old records dating back 30 and even 50 years ago. I don't do fieldwork, I don't work in a lab. My work here is mainly at a desk, with occasional inspections at storage facilities and excavation sites. The main task I'm following is the harmonisation of all records on State-owned archaeological finds that are kept in storage spaces out of our immediate control. This includes “temporary” storage at excavation sites, museum depots, etc. With a few exceptions, 90% of items related to archaeology are a property of the State, in Italy. Our records for all the items stored (and even on display) at local museums are lacking. The strategy is quite straightforward: look what we have in our archive, what is in the museum archive, what is actually in the museum, compare, supplement missing information in the form of inventory records, assign inventory numbers, assess monetary value. Lather, rinse, repeat – it's an endless work and I've been told that no one before me had the exact role of doing this, which probably explains the gaps in our archive records. There's some beauty to this work, though, like early examples of digital typesetting and beautiful old-school typography:





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More goodness from this archive folder, goes back to the 1940s.  
The typography is just as good [#dayofarch](#)

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Two hours later, I start having a general picture of the situation of the museum I'm looking at, but yesterday's dossiers strike back. First I talk with a colleague from the Direzione Generale Archeologia in Rome, who needs some documents about the Piazza Verdi dossier sent by e-mail. Unfortunately digital dossiers can easily get at several GB in size, so it's more efficient to send a DVD via traditional mail. In this case, the Direzione Generale needed an excerpt from the dossier as soon as we could. Presto and done! The second urgent dossier from yesterday is the transition of all archaeological museums from the Soprintendenza to the newly formed Polo Museale who keeps together all State-run museums in each region. I took care of collecting and harmonising all documentation about the five archaeological museums of Liguria. Yesterday we sent the entire dossier out, but today I was told that some documentation was missing, so a supplement was needed.

Then, from **11:00 to 12:50**, I'm out of office for a protest sit-in at the local office of the Treasury Ministry. We're protesting because they blocked the payment of part of our stipends since 2014. The Renzi government is imposing huge austerity measures on key sectors like school, culture, health, transport ... but few seem to notice. In our case, the dirty trick is they keep the money for one or two years, and then *obviously* we are paid, but without any interest rate (and in the meantime, some other reduction usually happens, so the actual stipend remains the same).

Back at the office, I continue working on the Piazza Verdi dossier. It's a common preventive archaeology situation, but it got out of hands for political reasons because it involves a big architectural project. I speak again on the phone with my colleague in Rome, we cross-check the documents we already sent out in DVD with the ones they already had. Bureaucracy, that is.

At **13:50** I'm out. It's Friday! I've got a two hours drive from Genoa to Torino, where I live with Elisa. It takes five minutes of full-force AC before I can enter the car that was parked under the sun. It is 36 °C outside.

When I arrive in Torino, after a short nap (after all, I woke up pretty early) my second [#dayofarch](#) starts: it involves Byzantine pottery and [#phdwriting](#) – I wrote extensively about my research in [a series of daily](#)

[blog posts from Crete](#), but it's difficult to keep the motivation up and the words going. I write my PhD thesis before dinner. I have dinner. I write my PhD thesis after dinner. At 23:32 I'm quite exhausted.

This was a rather terse account of my 4th #dayofarch, but hopefully it provided some interesting insights into what goes on at the Soprintendenza.