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The Italian Society of Sciences known as the Society of XL in Modena in the late 18th and 19th centuries

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Through the analysis of an unpublished manuscript, “History of the Italian Society of Sciences residing in Modena” conserved in Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, written by the librarian Antonio Lombardi (1768-1847), we propose to remember the Society history for the period in which it was based in the capital of the Estense Duchy, having Modena professors as presidents. The Society, also known as the Society of the XL, was created in 1782 by Antonio Maria Lorgna (1735-1796) in Verona: when in 1796, he was succeeded by Antonio Cagnoli (1743-1816), an astronomer and professor of mathematical analysis at the Military School, in accordance with statutory regulations, the seat was transferred to Modena. Lombardi’s history ended in 1847, when he died, although the last president, the physicist Stefano Marianini (1790-1866), professor at the Modena University, remained in office after the fall of the Austro-Estense Duchy in 1859 until 1875 when the Society was definitively transferred to Rome.

After the Restoration, Paolo Ruffini (1765-1822), a mathematician and physician from Modena University, new president elected in July 1816, succeeded in obtaining from Duke Francis IV (1779-1846) financial means for Society functioning.

When he died in 1822, Luigi Rangoni (1775-1844), Minister of the Interior and financier of the Society, took over as president and remained in charge until his death in 1844. He located the headquarters in his palace in via Farini in Modena where he also placed the Social Library formed by exchanging volumes of the Memoirs published by the Society. Marianini was his successor.

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