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History of the National Institute of Optics (INO) in Arcetri

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The National Institute of Optics, now part of the CNR, has undergone significant development since its foundation in 1927. Initially led by Vasco Ronchi, the Institute aimed at designing and testing optical devices and training specialized technical personnel, particularly for military applications.

Following World War II, optical devices were largely supplanted by electronic sources, which were more controllable and easier to handle than traditional optical sources, which were inherently limited in terms of spectral coherence and output power. In 1946, the Institute was renamed the National Institute of Optics (INDO), still under the direction of Prof. Vasco Ronchi.

The advent and development of lasers and opto-electronic devices restored optics to the prominent role it enjoyed in the early decades of the century. Since 1975, the Institute, now known as the National Institute of Optics (INO), has been restructured to meet new scientific challenges. Under the leadership of Prof. F. Tito Arecchi, initially as Commissioner and later as President, INO achieved excellence in various areas, including Quantum Optics, Optical Metrology, and Optoelectronics over the next two decades.

Throughout its history, the Institute has maintained a strong focus on research and teaching. For many years, it was the principal site for teaching optometry and hosted a specialization school in optics at the University of Florence. Telling its history could be an interesting perspective for the history of optics in the 20-th century in Italy.

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