Wednesday, September 24th
6–7:30 pm

6 pm:
Welcome and Opening Remarks
Jeanne Brasile - Director, Walsh Gallery

Remarks on Valente Library
Dr. John Buschman
Dean of the University Libraries

Xue-Ming Bao
Dr. John Buschman
Frank Capra
Kara Caroccio
Vanessa Cotto
Jody Lee Drafta
Jillian Lope
Robert Rementeria Jr.
Sierra VanRyck deGroot
Michael Villanueva
Joseph Yankus

Walsh Gallery Advisory Board

Audience Q&A

Strangers in a Strange Land
An Exhibition on the History of Italian-language American Imprint
curated by James J. Periconi

Monday, September 8th -
Friday, October 17th, 2014
A STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL WORLD

“Strangers in a Strange Land” very specifically fosters reflection upon the complex political and historical landscape occupied by Italians immigrating to America roughly from the late 19th century through the end of World War II. During this period, known as “The Great Migration,” the Italian American publishing industry created and reflected a vibrant national literary and political culture among a broad spectrum of permanent residents and transient Italians living and working in the United States. The works they published entertained, educated and inflamed an Italian-language audience in that half-century of critical development in Italian American history.

The historical period central to “Strangers in a Strange Land” was tumultuous. The issues remain relevant to the fabric of contemporary American life. A justifiable fear of terrorism from anarchists sworn to overthrow the United States government, and the subsequent deportations of immigrants accused of participating in these activities, parallel events taking place today. Moreover, the suppression of a free press for political reasons, with right and left fighting each other with words and weapons, define both past and present and serve as a backdrop for this exhibition of Italian-language American imprints.

This exhibition upends the commonplace beliefs that all Italian immigrants to America immediately began to learn the English language exclusively for reading, writing and speaking, and that they were virtually totally illiterate. Through this broad and representative sample of publications and related objects, we gain an understanding of a once thriving Italian-American language book, newspaper and magazine publishing industry in the United States, especially in the 50 years before World War II. During this period, known as “The Great Migration,” the Italian American publishing industry created and reflected a vibrant national literary and political culture among a broad spectrum of permanent residents and transient Italians living and working in the United States. The works they published entertained, educated and inflamed an Italian-language audience in that half-century of critical development in Italian American history. The works on view are those of Italian-language writers in the United States who looked back to the mother country for their language, but also tried to come to terms with their American experience.

- James J. Periconi, curator