



Ca' Foscari  
University  
of Venice

Department of  
Philosophy and  
Cultural Heritage



## Online Advanced Training Lab on Alchemical Secrecy

New Methodological  
Challenges in Computational  
Cryptanalysis, Philology, and  
the History of Philosophy &  
Science

**June 30, 2026**  
1.30 PM – 3.30 PM  
(Rome Time)



This event is part of the project SECRETS (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions), funded by the European Union (GA number: 101148607)

### OVERVIEW

Organized within the framework of the MSCA Project SECRETS, this Methodological Lab provides high-level training for Ph.D. students, postdoctoral fellows, and advanced researchers. The session addresses new challenges in the historical method by investigating ciphering as a technique for the production, protection, and circulation of knowledge in early modern alchemical culture, combining computational cryptanalysis with philology and intellectual history.

### AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

The lab will guide participants through the decryption and analysis of an alchemical cipher found in the notebook of John and Arthur Dee (British Library MS Sloane 1902). This cipher represents an early and rare example of a Bellaso/Della Porta type – a strong encryption method historically deemed indecipherable.

Following the speakers' integrated approach, the training will cover:

#### **Computational Cryptanalysis**

Algorithmic strategies for the plaintext recovery of historical ciphers.

#### **Philology & History of Philosophy**

Critical analysis and interpretation of encrypted texts as a medium for protected philosophical knowledge.

### Knowledge Networks

An examination of how these ciphers functioned within a broader, secret alchemical knowledge network.

### MAIN SPEAKERS

Dr. **Richard Bean**, University of Queensland (Australia)

Dr. **Sarah Lang**, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (Germany)

Dr. **Megan Piorko**, Villanova University (USA)

### DISCUSSANTS

Dr. **Meagan Allen**, Johns Hopkins University (USA)

Dr. **Sergei Zotov**, Warburg Institute (UK)

### SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR, ORGANIZER, AND CHAIR

Dr. **Donato Verardi**, MSCA Fellow, Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Italy)

The event is free, held online, and designed for Ph.D. students, postdoctoral fellows, and advanced researchers. Registration is mandatory.

To participate and receive the webinar link, please contact: [donato.verardi@unive.it](mailto:donato.verardi@unive.it)