

*Abstract*

In various lists of the books owned by Leonardo da Vinci, the artist notes the titles of several manuals of ars dictandi. The surviving epistolary documents which can be attributed to him – an original letter, not however in his own hand, and several copies – do not allow us to assess to what degree Leonardo used these manuals in writing his own correspondence. As a whole, though, the manuals would seem to constitute a coherent collection which might indicate the existence of a rationally organised plan to acquire proficiency in this skill. The article attempts to describe this ‘macrotext’, starting with a description of the treatises mentioned by Leonardo and including an analysis of the role they played in the development of epistolary skills generally. On the basis of this reconstruction the article hypothetically outlines the criteria which might have guided Leonardo in choosing certain texts from the diverse range of manuals in this field which were then available.