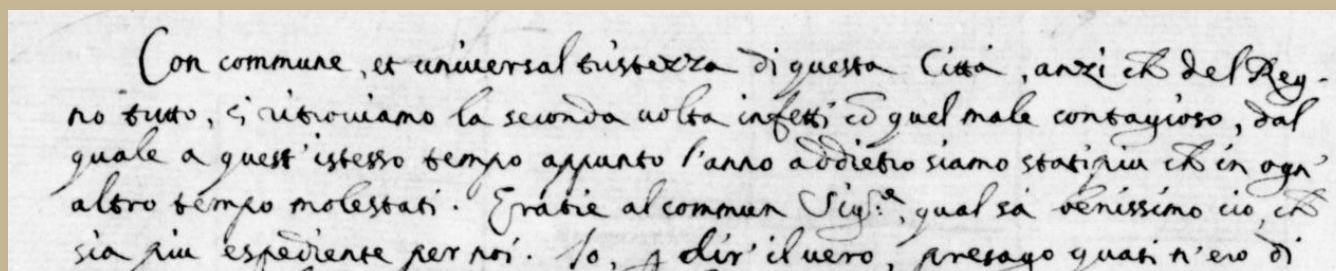




DIGITAL INDIPETAE DATABASE NEWSLETTER

A YEAR AFTER THE LAUNCH



“With the common and universal sadness of this city, or rather of the entire Kingdom, we find ourselves for the second time infected with that contagious disease, from which at this very time last year we were more afflicted than at any other time.”

–Pietro Drago, Dec. 20, 1625

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

THE DID EDITORIAL BOARD

The Digital Indipetae Database (DID) was launched on March 26, 2020, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. During that year, despite the uncertainties, hundreds of people worked with us to contribute to this “symphonic” project. Entering the second year of our project, we would like to spotlight some witnesses of this work.

The first section of the newsletter is dedicated to the **high school projects**. More than 500 students from Italian high schools have been working on the transcription of the *indipetae* in Italian, Spanish, and Latin.

The second section is dedicated to the world of **colleges and universities**. During this academic year, university students (from Milan to Yale) have written their M.A. theses or Ph.D. dissertations on topics connected to the *indipetae* in collaboration with the DID. Additionally, we started the “Indipetae Lab” at the University of Macerata (planned also for next year) and an internship at the University of Padua. Other university projects are ongoing (we will cover them in depth in our next Newsletter): Andreas Motsch (University of Toronto) is working with his graduate assistants on Latin and French *indipetae* and

studying early modern Jesuits who left Europe for New France. Monika Miazek-Męczyńska (Institute of Classical Philology, Poznań, Poland) and her students are focusing on the Latin *indipetae* written from the Polish province. They started their work with the letters by Michał Piotr Boym (1612–1659), a Jesuit missionary to China and a famous scientist and explorer. Bruno Pomara (University of Valencia) is planning to work with his students on the Spanish *indipetae*.

The third section is dedicated to **publications**, with several texts published or forthcoming in connection with the DID.

The fourth section is dedicated to the translation of **an *indipeta* written in Arabic**—a simple way to show the richness of this source.

Finally, the fifth section is an **update** on the transcription of the letters—we are very happy with the number of letters already transcribed that will be soon uploaded to the DID.

We want to thank all the people who have supported our work during this year!

HIGH SCHOOL PROJECTS

The Indipetae high school projects have proved to be particularly successful. More than 500 students from Italian high schools have been involved so far. In this section, you will find a list of the schools involved in the project; the story of one teacher, Livio Ciappetta and the chronicle of the Indipetae Full Immersion Experience at the Liceo Gandhi, in Merano.

The following high schools are involved in the project:

- Istituto d'Istruzione Secondaria Superiore Daniele Crespi, Busto Arsizio
- Istituto d'Istruzione Secondaria Superiore Paciolo d'Annunzio, Fidenza
- Liceo Classico e Musicale Bartolomeo Zucchi, Monza
- Centro di Formazione Professionale Castel Fusano Alberghiero, Roma
- Istituto Tecnico Economico Alberico Gentili, Macerata
- Istituto Scolastico Don Carlo Gnocchi, Carate Brianza
- Istituto d'Istruzione Secondaria Superiore Agostino Berenini, Fidenza
- Liceo Classico Gandhi, Merano

PASSION FOR HISTORY

LIVIO CIAPPETTA, PH.D., TEACHER AT THE CFP CASTEL FUSANO ALBERGHIERO, ROME



Livio Ciappetta and his students

History has been my passion for a long time and before teaching in the vocational school where I work now, I dedicated more than twelve years to historical research—especially the history of the Inquisition.

Now, as a school teacher and education coordinator, I continue to experiment in new methods of teaching history through innovative programs. The sole and obvious objective is to transmit a passion for history, often using unusual and unexpected methods. This is why I felt immediately enthusiastic when Sonia Isidori, research fellow at the IAJS, told me about the Indipetae project.

In a vocational school, history does not occupy a prominent place in the curriculum. Those who enroll in our school aspire to a quick professional start, and they often find any non-technical instruction superfluous. So, when I proposed to my students to transcribe seventeenth century letters and to discuss the lives of the authors and their human journey, it was only out of respect for me that they did not laugh out loud.

I began the project animated by a selfish pleasure, much more akin to my first career as a researcher than to my current job as a teacher. After so much dedication to my students, I said to myself, now they can make me happy by working on this project just to please me.

When I first showed a letter on the interactive whiteboard, I was ready to entertain them with all the usual weapons of a teacher struggling with boredom among his students. But at the sight of the incomprehensible seventeenth-century handwriting, I saw my students lean forward, in the gesture of people sharpening their eyesight. The initial astonishment was soon followed by the excitement of the challenge of understanding a letter or a word before their classmates. After the first few lines, which were difficult to understand, the students began to understand the spelling, and the transcription went quickly, with the students reading aloud every word of the text together, as if it were a nursery rhyme.

Over the next few days, I assigned a group of letters to each student and they started to ask for my help in the transcription process. In small groups, we began to look together at the *indipetae* and transcribe them. I could not help but be amazed at their joy, discovering that they were increasingly able to understand and to recognize a sign, a symbol, a meaning of a term. The letter became a sort of treasure map, where you go hunting for a “g,” an “f,” or an “l”. The meaning of the letters seemed to be almost secondary when compared to the pleasure of interpreting each graphic sign.

“ I COULD NOT HELP BUT BE AMAZED AT THEIR JOY, DISCOVERING THAT THEY WERE INCREASINGLY ABLE TO UNDERSTAND... THE LETTER BECAME A SORT OF TREASURE MAP ”



Another aspect, less playful, fascinated my students: the stories of seventeenth century missionaries were somehow similar to their own stories. Like the authors of the *indipetae*, my students want to leave, in search of fortune, for the pleasure of the journey, or to escape from something. The hope of going far away ideally unites two apparently distant worlds.

The Indipetae project has fulfilled an extraordinarily important task: to offer passion to young people. This was perhaps an unorthodox use of the sources given to us. One would have legitimately expected that the interest of the project would reside in its ability to shed new light on the history of the Jesuits and their missions—something that certainly happened, and in a very rich way. But the most impressive result, especially in my vocational school, was the fact that through the *indipetae* we felt life in history, and for this we are enormously grateful.

I would like to conclude with a comment written by one of my students, Enorà Poretti. “A few months ago, my teacher, Mr. Livio Ciappetta, proposed to my class a new experience: the transcription of some letters dating back 400 years. Personally, I was immediately interested in this project, and I was quickly thrilled and fascinated by it. I was amazed and at the same time enchanted by my ability to understand a letter, at first unknown and incomprehensible compared to the usual writing I am used to, and I find myself reading it with ease and spontaneity. While transcribing these stories I noticed that even though they are ancient, they were still part of our everyday life.”

FULL IMMERSION EXPERIENCE IN MERANO

ELISA FREI, INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED JESUIT STUDIES

The Indipetae Full Immersion Experience took place at my former high school, the Liceo Classico Gandhi in Merano. A group of 3rd-year students worked on early modern Latin *indipetae* from the Austrian province. The students spent the mornings of an entire week working on the *indipetae* with their teachers (in particular Laura Speranza, teacher of Latin) and myself.

Every day we had a guest speaker: Sabina Pavone, Guido Mongini, Marco Rochini, Claudio Ferlan and Marina Massimi all helped the students to understand different aspects of the *indipetae*. The schedule included a basic paleography training and group discussions, led by Emanuele Colombo. Students were thrilled about the project.

First of all, it allowed them to experience Latin as a “living” language, used by young men of their own age. Second, they were challenged as potential “humanists” in their attempt to transcribe and translate the letters. Third, they were intrigued by the history of the Society of Jesus as it emerged from the sources. The feedback was very positive: the school plans to repeat the experience, and the students are looking forward to seeing their names on the DID.

“
THE INDIPETAE PROJECT HAS
FULFILLED AN EXTRAORDINARILY
IMPORTANT TASK:
TO OFFER PASSION
TO YOUNG PEOPLE
”

Photo: Unsplash

UNIVERSITY PROJECTS

THESES AND DISSERTATIONS IN COLLABORATION WITH THE DID

Martina d'Amato, *Scrivere il desiderio. Per un'analisi linguistica delle indipetae del 1640*, University of Milan.
Supervisor: Prof. Giuseppe Polimeni

Filippo Bertolasi, *"Sotto la cenere sta il fuoco nascosto". Indipetae italiane del Seicento*, University of Pavia.
Supervisor: Prof. Miriam Turrini

Alessio Cavazzini, *Il desiderio delle Indie: gesuiti candidati alle missioni nel Seicento*, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Piacenza.
Supervisor: Prof. Marco Rainini

Michele Bulgini, *Il progetto Coindico. Fonti archivistiche per una storia digitale*, University of Macerata.
Supervisors: Profs. Federico Valacchi and Sabina Pavone

Nicholas Lewis, *The Reformation Beyond Borders: Nicolas Trigault SJ and the Broadening of Early Modern Catholicism*, Saint Louis University, St. Louis (MO).
Supervisor: Prof. Charles H. Parker

INDIPETAE LAB AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MACERATA

SABINA PAVONE, UNIVERSITY OF MACERATA



Sabina Pavone

The Digital Indipetae Database is not only an important research project but has also proven to be an opportunity to build new forms of teaching by involving students in the transcription of the letters. Within the Cultural Heritage Tourism major at the University of Macerata, taking advantage

of the presence of Emanuele Colombo as a visiting professor, we organized a workshop entitled "Reading Sources: from Paper to the Screen" that we initially promoted through a video made especially for this occasion and distributed on the web.

In the workshop, students were engaged not only in transcribing a group of letters of a single Jesuit but also in reconstructing the history of "their" Jesuit through the internet and other tools made available to them.

The students enthusiastically accepted the opportunity to work on some primary sources, and they learned to read seventeenth century handwriting and to confront themselves with historical methodology, but they also left space for the emotional element in the reconstruction of the biographical path of the *indipetae*. The success of the workshop also led two students—

Marco Camellini and Marco Vaccarini—to decide to continue working on the *indipetae* for their thesis project.

The Indipetae Lab will be offered also next year, with the collaboration of Elisa Frei, a member of the editorial board of the DID and now a research fellow in my research group at the University of Macerata.

The workshop has also been included in the initiatives of the European project DiTemp (Digital Transformation and Employability: acquiring transversal competences in curricular education) as a good practice in the effort to involve students, and a webinar held by Emanuele Colombo and myself has allowed us to disseminate the results to a wider audience.



Video: "Dalla carta allo schermo. Fonti in controllo"

WEBINAR

FROM PAPER TO SCREEN: THE DIGITAL INDIPETAE DATABASE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MACERATA

Webinar Flyer: "From Paper to Screen: The Digital Indipetae Database at the University of Macerata"



A PROJECT AT YALE UNIVERSITY

THOMAS SANTA MARIA, PH.D. CANDIDATE,
YALE UNIVERSITY

This term I gave the students of my class at Yale an option to submit a translation assignment for their final project. One of my students, Jocelyn Chau, opted to translate letters from the DID. The DID is a fantastic resource from which she was able to easily locate texts and filter through the database to narrow the scope of her project. Ultimately, she did a very fine translation of all the collected letters sent from Jesuits at the college at Chambéry to Superior General Jan Phillip Roothaan from 1831–1846. She accompanied her translation with a very helpful introduction as well as useful commentary. A project like this would simply not be possible without a resource like the DID.

READING THE INDIPETAE WITH NEW EYES

MIRIAM TURRINI, UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA

Much has been written on the *indipetae* and the documentation's availability always favors new research itineraries. In particular, the collective nature of the Digital Indipetae Database project, with its openness to high school and university students, favors the inclusion in the research of new ways of reading the texts. I mentored one of my students, Filippo Bertolasi, in his thesis project on a selection of *indipetae* by eight Jesuits (1628–1650), one of whom alone, Sebastiano Berni, left for the missions.

This allowed me to look at this epistolary genre with new eyes and to conduct a further reflection with respect to issues addressed so far mainly from the perspective of academic historiographic research: what is the meaning of the Spiritual Exercises? What was the life horizon of a young man in the mid-seventeenth century? Why choose to become a Jesuit? What was desire for a Jesuit? What truly were the Indies to the writer? Why was there so much resistance to meeting the demands of enthusiastic would-be missionaries? What was previously taken almost for granted became a question. Through the eyes of a twenty-year-old graduate student, the *indipetae* appeared as curious and unusual documents and regained their provocative charge for our culture and for the profession of historian.

A HISTORIAN'S APPRENTICESHIP

LUCIO BIASORI, UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

In November 2020, the Department of Historical and Geographic Sciences and the Ancient World of the University of Padua promoted an internship in collaboration with the Digital Indipetae Database. Under the supervision of Lucio Biasori and Elisa Frei, an undergraduate student has already started to transcribe a group of letters with excellent results. New candidates are soon expected for carrying out this relevant research experience in the field of digital humanities.

A PH.D. CANDIDATE WORKING ON THE INDIPETAE

NICHOLAS LEWIS, PH.D. CANDIDATE,
ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY

I started working with the *litterae indipetae* at the beginning of my dissertation research. It changed the way I thought about intellectual history, as the petitioners I read did not seek the Indies out of some argumentative logic, but rather expressed their desire in very emotional ways, often with surprisingly violent imagery. As I began applying for grants to fund my research, I naturally felt a special type of empathy for the *indipetae*.

I am excited about the future of research on the *indipetae*, as the Digital Indipetae Database not only makes this type of material more accessible for graduate students and professionals, but also shows a common interest among institutions like the IAJIS, KU Leuven, and ARSI to collaborate and form friendships. Crowdsourcing the transcription of individual letters also makes the task facing us (analyzing some 16,000 petitions in an assortment of languages) much more collegial and feasible.

“ I AM EXCITED ABOUT THE FUTURE
OF RESEARCH ON THE INDIPETAE ”

UPDATES ON THE DID

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY COLLECTION

MARCO ROCHINI, UNIVERSITY OF TURIN

The first collection of *indipetae* available on the DID counts 873 letters, dating from 1814, the year of the restoration of the Society of Jesus, to 1857. The letters cover the generalates of Tadeusz Brzozowski (1814–1820), Luigi Fortis (1820–1829), Jan Philip Roothaan (1829–1853), and the first years of that of Pierre-Jean Beckx (1853–1887).

I coordinated the work on this collection, in collaboration with Elisa Frei and with the support of students from Italian high schools.

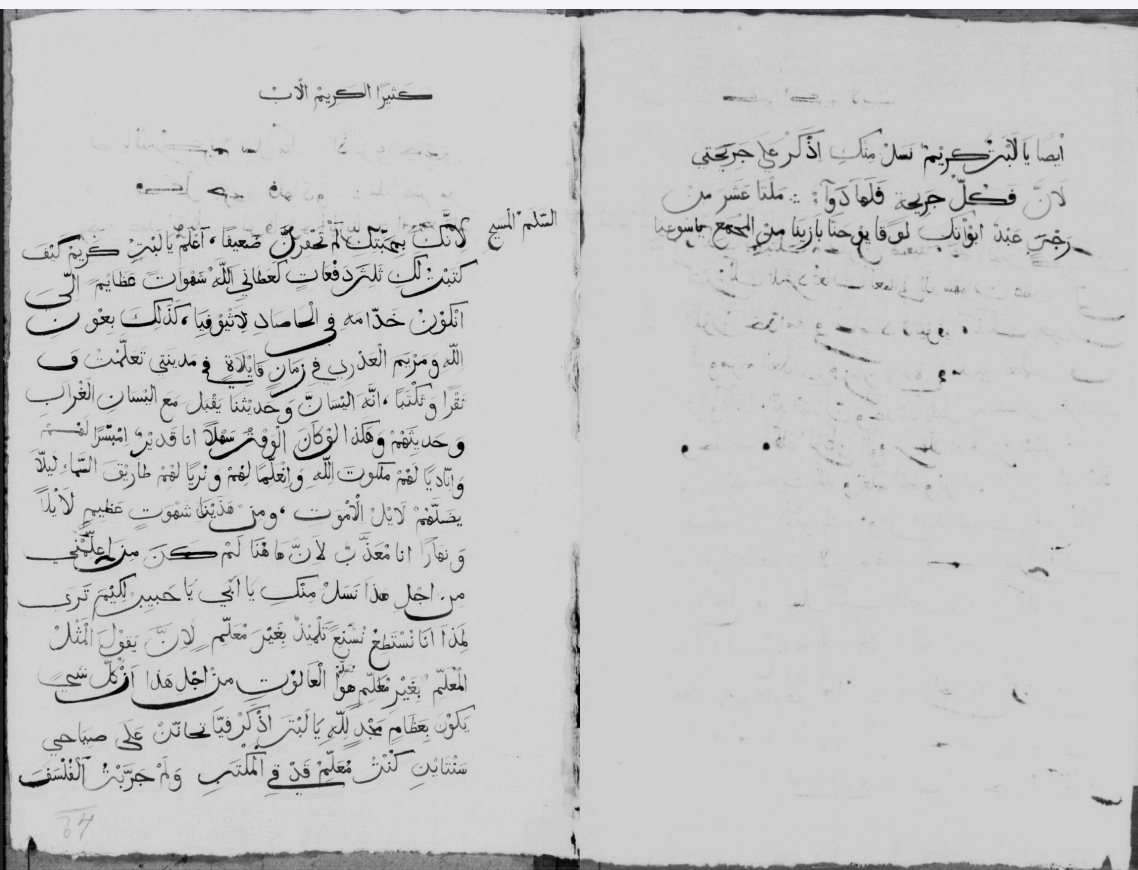
We worked with the digital librarians at Boston College to upload the images and transcriptions, as well as identify the metadata for advanced searches. Of the 873 letters of the New Society uploaded to the DID, 62 are in Latin, 23 in French, and 788 in Italian. The collection is available online, in open access; an ongoing review process will be concluded by the summer of 2021.

NEXT STEPS

SONIA ISIDORI,
INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED JESUIT STUDIES

During my first year as a Research Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies (Boston College), I transcribed and analyzed the *indipetae* written during the generalate of Mutio Vitelleschi (1615–1645), one of the longest generalates in the history of the Society of Jesus that marked a remarkable growth of the order (from 12,000 to 16,000 members). The Jesuit Roman archives preserved 4,959 letters from this period, a number that represents almost one-third of the entire collection of *indipetae* of the Old Society (1540–1773). By June 2021, thanks to the continual involvement of many high school and university students and collaboration with Elisa Frei, we will complete the transcriptions of about 2,500 *indipetae* (in Italian, Spanish, and Latin). In 2022 we plan to complete the work on the *indipetae* from the Vitelleschi generalate. In the meantime, I am working on a critical reading of the *indipetae*, trying to use them as a privileged key to access voices and stories often forgotten by the official narratives of the Society of Jesus.





THIS IS A RARE EXAMPLE OF AN INDIPETA IN ARABIC, WRITTEN BY THE MALTESE JESUIT LUCA BEZZINA (BEZINA), MALTA, MARCH 9, 1627. TRANSCRIBED AND TRANSLATED BY ADNEN EL GHALI.

TRANSLATION

To the very generous Father,

The peace of Christ.

Since, because of your love, you do not despise the weak, you must know, generous Father, that I have written you three letters because God has given me a great desire to serve Him in the missions in Ethiopia. Also, through the help of God and the Virgin Mary, in my city I have been learning, reading, and writing for a long time.

Regarding the language, our conversations are in the language of strangers. So, if time allows it, I could preach to them the Good News and announce the kingdom of God; [I could] teach them and show them the way to Heaven so that they are not led astray by the darkness of death. I feel a great desire for this. I am tortured night and day because here there is no one to teach me.

That's why I ask you, dear Father, how can one be a Disciple without a Master? Because, as the saying goes, a disciple without a master is the master of himself. Everything is done by the Great Glory of God.

Father, remember me and have mercy on me. I was a teacher for two years in school and I did not practice philosophy. Also, look at my wounds, generous Father, as there is a remedy for every injury.

Malta, 10th of Rajab

Yours truly,

Lucas Jean Bazin from the Society of Jesus



The **Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies** seeks to deepen an understanding and appreciation of the history, spirituality, educational heritage, and pedagogical approach of the Society of Jesus through courses, workshops, publications, and scholarly symposia.



The **Digital Indipetae Database** allows for the free exploration of the Jesuit petitions for missions (or the *indipetae*) from the Old and New Society. The growing collection will allow users to search by a number of facets and to see scans of the original documents.

NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Sonia Isidori
Elisa Frei

CREATIVE DIRECTORS

A. Taiga Guterres
Katherine Palko

CONTACT

Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies
Boston College
140 Commonwealth Ave.
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467
bc.edu/iajs | 617-552-2568

VISIT THE
DIGITAL INDIPETAE DATABASE



JOIN OUR MAILING LIST
FOR UPDATES

PUBLICATIONS

UNA FONTE LUNGA CINQUE SECOLI: LE LITTERAE INDIPETAE

Una fonte lunga cinque secoli: le Litterae Indipetae, ed. **Girolamo Imbruglia, Pierre-Antoine Fabre, and Guido Mongini** (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, forthcoming)

In 2021, Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu (IHSI) will be publishing a collection of essays dedicated to the *Litterae indipetae*, edited by Girolamo Imbruglia, Pierre-Antoine Fabre, and Guido Mongini. The multi-language volume (in Italian, French, and English) presents chapters from leading and emerging scholars of the *indipetae*. The forthcoming publication brings together for the first time in one volume studies that view from multiple angles the thousands of petitions written by Jesuits who sought a missionary appointment—historiographically, chronologically, and thematically—thereby presenting a unique view of almost five centuries of Jesuit history through one of its most famous undertakings: the missions to the ‘Indies.’ (*Camilla Russell, editor, IHSI, Rome*)

THE FIRST ITALIAN INDIPETAE

The First Italian Indipetae, ed. **Emanuele Colombo, Irene Gaddo, and Guido Mongini** (Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources, forthcoming)

A bilingual edition (Italian/English) of the first Italian *indipetae* (1557–1580) written under father general Diego Laínez, Francisco de Borja, and Everard Mercurian, with introductory essays by the editors.

I GESUITI DALLE ORIGINI ALLA SOPPRESSIONE

Sabina Pavone, *I gesuiti dalle origini alla soppressione*, 3rd edition, (Bari: Laterza, 2021)

The introduction to the new edition of this classic book mentions the Digital Indipetae Database.



2019 INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON JESUIT STUDIES

The proceedings of the 2019 International Symposium on Jesuit Studies (Boston College) are published by the Institute of Jesuit Sources and available online and in open access via the Portal to Jesuit Studies. Three forthcoming essays are dedicated to the *litterae indipetae*.

