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## Introduction

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# Introduction

CRISTIANO CASALINI, EMANUELE COLOMBO, AND SETH MEEHAN

One of the main reasons for the continued expansion of Jesuit studies is the richness and unequalled organization of the sources that the Society has preserved throughout the centuries.

A practice of recordkeeping—of registering, circulating, and preserving its diverse observations, rules, and opinions from around the globe—that can be traced back to the early Society has been consistently observed over time, so that we have now inherited an outstandingly well-preserved patrimony of accessible source materials. The zealous activity of the order’s archivists and librarians has allowed for a wide array of cultural initiatives, such as journals, editorial enterprises, and centers and institutes for research. These have flourished in such a way as to make the archival collections known to the wider public. These very same initiatives have become “sources” over time, that is, monuments of memory for further investigation.

Thanks to the Society’s “source-friendliness,” the explosion of Jesuit studies in recent decades has hardly come as a surprise. One might debate how revolutionary or continuous the Jesuits’ archival mentality was in comparison with the customary practices of other Catholic religious orders, but one fact is undeniable: the organization and cultivation of memory and the current availability of primary and secondary sources related to Jesuit history is unparalleled, and this could not but boost the historiographic attention given to this particular religious order among the many within the Catholic Church.

In the last thirty years, Jesuit historiography has turned from a field dominated by the order’s members to a field where most scholars are lay, thus providing external perspectives on the Society of Jesus. Historiography has worked on these sources in two principal directions. From one side, the sources have served to deepen the Society of Jesus’s self-understanding, as a sort of repository for an inward-looking historiography, especially on aspects of governance, culture, identity, spirituality, and hagiography.

From the other side, the sources have served as testimonies of how the outwardly expressed Jesuit interpretation of the world has developed over time and space. Jesuit sources have also attracted interdisciplinary approaches that consider the material as a prism through which one may examine many facets of history on a global scale.

To reflect upon all these aspects of the Jesuit engagement with sources over the centuries, almost eighty scholars from all over the world were hosted by the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies at Boston College for the International Symposium on Jesuit Studies (June 11–13, 2019).

Simon Ditchfield (University of York) opened the event with a keynote address entitled “Daniello Bartoli, S.J. (1608–1685): His Sources and the Writing of the First ‘Global’ History of the Jesuits.”

The panels that followed offered multidisciplinary approaches that explored two fundamental questions: How did the Jesuits engage with their sources? And how should we engage with the Jesuits’ sources? Archeological discoveries, studies on material history, and anthropological comparative analysis were among the many intriguing insights that panelists shared. Archivists and librarians introduced the audience to unexplored collections, ongoing digital projects, and research perspectives on a wide array of sources that have thus far been neglected by historiographers. Scholars discussed how bureaucratizing practices such as recordkeeping, drafting diaries, memoirs, histories, catalogs, letters, and correspondence helped to build a Jesuit patrimony of sources and shape the identity of the Society’s members, especially in the global context over the many years this religious order has continued to operate.

These proceedings offer a selection of revised versions of the presentations that were given during the symposium. The essays are structured around two main sections: section 1, “Jesuit Sources of Self-identification,” presents perspectives on how sources have been used as a means for crafting a Jesuit identity, while section 2, “Sources as Windows to Jesuit and Other History,” provides insights on the engagement of Jesuit sources with the outer world. The essays have been grouped in this way so that readers can explore clusters of problems thematically under the umbrella of the major question that each section poses.

The contributions that are published here inform readers about research projects that are at different stages of progress: some are very advanced, others are works in progress, and a few are initial, promising calls for further development and collaborations. The variety of topics covered and the presence of different methodological approaches point to the richness of studies on the Society of Jesus.

Moreover, the nature of the sources considered by the contributions in this volume is variegated. They range from documents that were crafted for an administrative purpose to sources of a spiritual nature, lending themselves to either quantitative or qualitative analyzes. There are sources conserved in the very rich central archive of the Society but also documents that are preserved in local institutions, such as archives, libraries, and institutes. There are manuscripts, handwritten sources but also printed sources, for the old adage according to which “nothing is more unpublished than the published” is particularly effective when applied to the Society of Jesus, whose extraordinary publishing activity has yet to be thoroughly studied. Finally, there are documents that photograph the “long durée” of the Society’s history, from its origins to the present.

This collection highlights an ongoing return to sources, a *ressourcement* turn that occurs periodically in the history of institutions and allows us to reread the past in the light of new questions.

In publishing these proceedings online, the editors hope to provide the wider public with glimpses of some of the many lines of research cultivated in Jesuit studies, convinced as they are that the main achievement of the symposium has

been to show that engagement with the sources is still a very lively undertaking in the Society the Jesus, one for which the management of sources and records has always been linked with a forward-looking program.