Cardinal Giuseppe Garampi
An eighteenth-century pioneer in indexing

Charles Burns

The Vatican Secret Archive is a treasure-trove of material, a mirror reflecting, in one all-embracing chronological and geographical sweep, the multifarious aspects of papal activity through the course of many centuries. But Aladdin in this cave needs to be able to find his treasure. So for him the Index Room is the Holy of Holies. This article tells the story of the prime begetter of the Index Room, Cardinal Giuseppe Garampi (d. 1792) and the transformation of his 820,000 ‘slips in a shoebox’, intended for the writing of a history of the Church, into the Schedario Garampi, an indispensable tool for archival research.

The Vatican Secret Archive

The Vatican Secret Archive has been a focus of attention for several hundred years. The term ‘secret’ is enough to bring cold shivers to one’s spine. It actually has nothing whatever to do with cloak-and-dagger, fly-by-night activities. It was a designation applied generally in the 16th century to the personal archive of any European sovereign, indicating that it was private (‘privy’ as in ‘Privy Seal’) and not in the public domain. The word ‘secretary’ has the same root and derivation. And so ‘secret’ was correctly attached also to the archive of the Sovereign Pontiff, the Pope. More than 400 years later, the adjective ‘secret’ has become inappropriate.

It is inappropriate, first, because in 1880 Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) opened these historical collections to consultation by scholars, putting an end to the maxim ‘no one gets in, nothing goes out’ (Joshua 6,5), until then so strictly enforced. Ever since, the Vatican Archive has been a veritable Mecca for researchers from all over the world, who spend countless hours in the reading room, delving into the sources. And no longer is it pointless, as it once was, to talk about efficient retrieval systems.

It is inappropriate to use the term ‘secret’, secondly, because at the beginning of the 21st century, implementing a wise policy of the recovery of collections dispersed here, there and everywhere, the Vatican Archive has become in reality, if not in name, the central archive of the Holy See. The interest of this archive, therefore, lies not in the misnomer ‘secret’, but in the fact that one of the richest collections of historical records is conserved here.

The papacy itself originated in the early years of the Roman Empire. The documents of the earliest centuries may not have survived to present times, but the archive conserves the Papacy’s memory of its past, forming the historical consciousness it has of itself and taking it forward, for an institution without a memory is an institution without a future. The archive has been compared to a mirror with the magic quality of reflecting, in one all-embracing chronological and geographical sweep, the multifarious aspects of papal activity throughout the course of the centuries, be it doctrinal, constitutional, missionary, canonical-juridical, social, political, administrative or financial, or be it, indeed, the patronage of some of the greatest architects, goldsmiths and painters of all times.

Whoever has the good fortune to consult the Vatican Archive will soon realize the importance of this seemingly inexhaustible mine of primary information. Depending on one’s personal interest and approach, unexplored avenues open up, exciting new topics emerge, not unlike a child shaking a kaleidoscope to create an endless succession of patterns.

The Vatican Archive is to be found in the Belvedere Court of the Vatican Palace, occupying over 100 rooms, with a floor area of approximately 16,800 m² and housing roughly 75 km of documentation. Research scholars are admitted to the reading-rooms, without distinction of nationality, race, or religious affiliation, and the number of readers’ tickets issued annually now approaches 2000.

The researcher is like Aladdin in his legendary cave, in which treasure trove of every sort has been stored, if only it can be found. In fact, the Vatican Archive contains as many treasures as there are collections: some are vast and of extreme importance, others are smaller, but none is insignificant. Obviously, such a mass of records, generated over many centuries and in very disparate ways, can hardly be homogeneous. Even when a given collection is accurately described and inventoried, the contents can still be elusive and retrieving any particular item may not be rapid or easy.

The Index Room

This means that the Index Room is an obligatory starting point for the researcher, or, one might say, a Sancta Sanctorum, a Holy of Holies. The series of indexes in the Index Room is in constant increase and stands at over 2800. This number comprises works of the most varied quality and usefulness, often compiled as the fonds (collections) were in the process of creation, when methods were in vogue that have long been overtaken. In many instances the indexes
provide only basic information, the first essential steps towards consultation, though the contents of some collections have been described in greater detail and can be found in the relevant catalogues and card indexes. The series, as a whole, reflects the dedication and industry of a long succession of archivists from the time of Pope Paul V (1605–21) until the present.

For a professional indexer, even with the advantages of today’s methods and technology, the sheer complexity and immensity of the Vatican’s archival patrimony would certainly present a fascinating challenge, a sublime dream, or perhaps, an appalling nightmare.

The earliest Index Archivii Vaticani was prepared by Michele Lonigo, around 1620, less than a decade after the institution of the Secret Archive under Pope Paul V. It was written in an elegant hand with helpful additions to the text in the form of genealogical tables. In 1672, Giovanni Bissaiga produced the first comprehensive inventory of the contents of the cupboards (the then method of storage) on the first floor of the archive (the piano nobile). Fifty years later, between 1727 and 1741, Pietro Donnino De Pretis inventoried the subsequent acquisitions, housed in the more ample space of the floor above. Generations of scholars have held Lonigo and Bissaiga in reverence, though it has to be said that their efforts were of somewhat limited value since they told the contents of the cupboards, but not the contents of the volumes therein.

Giuseppe Garampi: diplomat and cardinal

In the matter of indexing the Vatican holdings the real pioneer was Giuseppe Garampi. Born in Italy in 1725, at Rimini, on the Adriatic coast, Garampi received a solid grounding in the natural sciences. At an early age he showed a marked preference for the study of law, history, and antiquities in general, and, at the age of 20, was the youngest member of the Lyncean Academy (the oldest scientific academy in the world and home to Galileo). He entered the service of the Church and in 1749 was ordained to the priesthood. Rome was the obvious place to seek advancement and make a career. Almost immediately he attracted the attention of influential patrons and, that same year, Pope Benedict XIV (1740–58) appointed him coadjutor to the prefect of the Vatican Secret Archive, with right of succession, which came about in due time. Later, in 1759, he was named in addition prefect of the archive of the Castel S. Angelo, which may be best described as the ‘cabinet des antiquités’ of the papacy.

During the 20 or more years that Giuseppe Garampi retained the two principal archival posts of the Vatican, he expended tireless energy on organizing the collections and recovering dispersed material, but above all on the compilation of inventories and catalogues. Foremost among these was his Schedario, about which more below. Numerous works of critical erudition, as one might expect, came from his pen. His investigations extended to other archives in search of corroborative documentation on the feudal rights and possessions of the popes.

This developed into a semi-official tour of the German principalities and Swiss cantons on a fact-finding mission concerning political and religious affairs. His visits to the libraries and archives provided ideal cover for making contacts of a more diplomatic nature and gleaning useful political information for the Holy See. The itinerary was extended to the United Dutch Provinces and the Austrian Netherlands, to Flanders, on to France, and from there to Austria. After an absence of almost two years, at the end of May 1763, Garampi finally returned to Rome.

Six months later he was off again, to Frankurt, for the coronation of the Emperor Joseph II as King of the Romans, diplomatic business once more being combined with pleasure. He was absent from Rome for the best part of 1764. These extensive travels had introduced him to the most erudite scholars of Europe, with whom he now maintained a regular network of correspondence.

Garampi’s talents did not go unrecognized. In 1772 Pope Clement XIV (1769–75) named him titular archbishop of Berito, and appointed him papal nuncio to Poland. Such was his success in handling some extremely delicate affairs that, in 1776, the recently elected Pope Pius VI (1775–99) accredited him to the imperial court at Vienna, the most prestigious nunciature of all, and conferred on him the residential bishopric of Montefiascone and Corneto for good measure.

The politico-religious situation in the Holy Roman Empire was fraught with difficulties. In his intrepid defence of the papal policies, the nuncio was accused of intrigen- gence, of a zeal bordering on fanaticism, of astute duplicity rather than astute diplomacy. His usefulness as a diplomat was spent.

His ecclesiastical career, however, was not yet at an end. At only 59 years of age, in 1785, Giuseppe Garampi was named cardinal. It allowed him to relinquish the nunciature in a blaze of glory, return to sunny Italy, and dedicate his energies almost entirely to the pastoral duties of his diocese. The epistolary contacts with the whole of Europe continued unimpaired until his death on 4 May 1792.

Schedario Garampi: slips in a shoebox

Memory is short. Garampi is no longer remembered as a diplomatist, nor as a diplomat, not even as an outstanding pastoral bishop or cardinal. Ironically, his memorial survives in the card index that bears his name, the Schedario Garampi. This is his real monument. To this day, it provides a researcher in the Secret Archive with his entrée to the treasures of the Vatican collections.

The index was compiled and organized by Garampi the diplomatist between 1751 and 1772, prior to his career as a diplomat. He had three major projects in mind: first, a calendar of all papal decrees throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, from the second half of the 5th century onwards; second, a statistical survey of all the departments of the Roman Curia and the respective officials in the service of the papacy; and last, but by no means least, a history of the dioceses of the Church, to be embodied in a mammoth historical work entitled Orbis christianus – ‘The Christian World’. The thousands of slips (some 820,000) compiled by Garampi and his collaborators were intended to be a census of all the sources pertinent to these three topics, conserved principally in the Vatican Archive.
Not quite the shoebox so beloved even of today’s indexers, but not far off.

The information was written on separate slips of paper, which normally contained three elements: (1) the date, placed in evidence at the top; (2) the subject matter, with indications of the place (diocese), the person, or the entity involved; and (3) the archival reference, the collocation of the document in a fond, a volume or a collection of charters. Often the indications are not all that clear, either because the material was not well ordered, or because outmoded references are given, but especially because an almost unintelligible system of conventional symbols, abbreviations and the like was employed, perfectly understandable to Garampi and his team at that time but enigmatic and often difficult to interpret today. One must not forget, moreover, that the purpose of these slips was to provide Garampi with the first steps towards the compilation of an historical treatise: the author never intended them as a card index to facilitate for others the consultation of the papal archives.

From shoebox to usable index

This formidable operation was well advanced, but still far from completed, when the prefect was drawn into the whirl of international diplomacy. After Garampi’s death, the slips were put aside and his projects appeared to have died with him. It was only a century later, with the opening of the Vatican collections to general consultation, that inspiration dawned: what a wonderful help these slips would be, if only they could be made available to researchers. So began the herculean task of pasting these 820,000 slips onto pages and binding the pages into volumes. What was originally intended as the basis of an historical work now became an indispensable tool for archival research. By modern standards it may appear rudimentary, but since then nothing comparable has been attempted on such a scale and it remains unsurpassed.

The Schedario Garampi consist of 125 large volumes, corresponding to the serial numbers 445–556 and 670–81 of the Indexes, arranged in ten classes as shown in Table 1. What is evident immediately is that four classes are principally concerned with the Holy See – popes, cardinals, offices and churches of Rome – and are homogeneous. The rest refer to Christendom as a whole and form a rather mixed bag. Within each sector, the material is arranged alphabetically (names of the dioceses, of the persons, of the offices, of the titles of the churches etc.) and then chronologically.

A more logical arrangement would have been to place the ten classes in hirerarchical order, rather than the sequence adopted in the Index Room today. One wonders why this was not done in the first place. A clearer shape could have been given to the index, as outlined below.

1. Popes. The names of the popes follow one another in alphabetical order. The references are mainly to the registers of bulls, to the registers of briefs and to the archive of Castel S. Angelo. The number of slips is relatively modest and likewise the amount of information furnished by them.

2. Cardinals. Similar to the previous volume on the popes.

3. Offices. The slips are arranged in the alphabetical order of the titles of the different offices, functions, positions of rank of the personnel of the Roman Curia, from ‘Abbrevi- ator’ to ‘Zecca’.

4. Churches of Rome. The first volume contains three groups of slips: (a) cardinalitial titles from ‘S. Adriano’ to ‘S. Vito’, in alphabetical order (ff.1–164r); (b) cardinal- itial deaconries from ‘S. Adriano’ to ‘S. Teodoro’ (ff.164v–180); (c) other churches and chapels of Rome, from ‘S. Andrea’ to the word ‘Collegium’ (ff.181–200). The second volume takes up at ‘Collegium’ and continues through to ‘S. Tommaso’.

5. Bishops. This is by far the most substantial sector of the index. The material is arranged alphabetically according to the Latin name (the De Curia form) of the dioceses of the Catholic Church, and then chronologically for each diocese. For instance, ‘Aberdonen’ = Aberdeen, ‘Cathanen’ = Caithness, ‘Dunblanen’ = Dunblane, ‘Dunkelden’ = Dunkeld, ‘Ergadien’ = Argyll, ‘Glasguen’ = Glasgow, ‘Moravien’ = Moray, and so on.

6. Abbots. Three volumes are insufficient to contain the vast information available on this subject in the Vatican holdings, so obviously the repertoire is incomplete. Even so, about 1500 monasteries are mentioned, arranged alphabetically, but under the diocese within which the monastic house was situated. The period covered is predominantly the 14th and 15th centuries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial number of the Schedario</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Index no.</th>
<th>No. of vols in each class</th>
<th>No. of slips (approx)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1–30</td>
<td>Benefices</td>
<td>445–74</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>73,000</td>
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<td>31–67</td>
<td>Bishops</td>
<td>475–511</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>325,000</td>
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<td>68–91</td>
<td>Miscellaneous I</td>
<td>512–34 A</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>238,000</td>
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<td>92–4</td>
<td>Abbots</td>
<td>535–7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18,000</td>
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<td>95–106</td>
<td>Chronological</td>
<td>538–49</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54,000</td>
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<td>Popes</td>
<td>550</td>
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<td>108</td>
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<td>551</td>
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<tr>
<td>109–11</td>
<td>Offices</td>
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<td>Churches of Rome</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>114–25</td>
<td>Miscellaneous II</td>
<td>670–81</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>46,000</td>
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7. Benefices. The nature of this sector is rather peculiar. The criteria behind its formation are not at all clear. Mainly it consists of information on the conferring of church benefices – this would account for its title. However, the total absence of references to the Lateran Registers, the principal source for information of this kind, is surprising and without explanation.

8 and 9. Miscellany I and Miscellany II. After ‘Bishops’, this is the richest sector of the index. These two ‘miscellany’ sections contain the most varied information, which is classified alphabetically, usually under the designation of the respective diocese. It is complementary to the sections on ‘Bishops’ and ‘Abbots’, especially in regard to cathedral and conventual chapters, chapels, hospitals, and so on.

10. Chronological. This sector covers a wide arch of time, from AD 163 until 1766. Anything prior to the 13th century refers almost exclusively to printed editions of monuments. It would be a mistake to think that this sector recapitulates the data contained alphabetically in the other classes. References to be found here are not contained necessarily elsewhere in the index.

Tantus labor non sit cassus

An enterprise of such dimensions could never be perfect; and the imperfections are too all too familiar to the readers of this journal. Alas, without keeping a diary of the work in progress, those collections were not always calendared systematically and exhaustively, and that constitutes a serious defect in a project of this kind. The process was haphazard: some material was ‘indexed’, some not. Documents were omitted because for one reason or another (the criteria are far from clear) they were deemed irrelevant. The compilers of the slips is not rigorous; the alphabetical order (partly because of changes of usage over time) is erratic. Different dioceses with the same or similar name (e.g. ‘Cathanen’ – Caithness, and ‘Cathanen’ – Catania) find themselves intertwined. And what about those ‘f’s and ‘s’s so often undistinguished and undistinguishable, so that ‘Roffen’ (Rochester) could so easily become ‘Rossen’ (Ross, in Ireland, or Rosemarkie in Scotland) and vice-versa? Only when there are further clues and a good understanding of the context (e.g. a mention of Skibbereen in connection with Ross) can one be sure what the reference actually is. Likewise with the problem of single dioceses that later merged. So, to use the Schedario Garampi successfully researchers need the usual battery of reference material.

But, despite all the shortcomings, the fact is that it is tantamount to a miracle that the imperfections of the Schedario Garampi are so few! Unwittingly perhaps, his men were pioneers. In conclusion, therefore, one line from a beautiful Latin hymn, well known to Garampi and to his successors: Tantus labor non sit cassus – ‘May such endeavour not be in vain’.

Mons. Charles Burns OBE FSA FSAScot was born in Glasgow in 1933. Ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Paisley, in 1957, he obtained his Doctorate of Church History at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome and his Diploma of the Vatican School of Diplomatics and Palaeography in 1961. During 1961–2 he was Ross Trust scholar of the University of Glasgow. From 1962 to 1997 he was archivist of the Vatican Secret Archive, and since 1987 has been a lecturer on the history of papal diplomacy at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy.

Index on trial

William Prynne, ‘an Utter-Barrister of Lincolnes Inn’, who lived 1600–69, wrote and published many controversial Puritan pamphlets. He was described two centuries later by Isaac D’Israeli as ‘a too vulgarious author without judgement, but the character of the man not so ridiculous as the author’. In 1633 he published his Histrio-mastix: The Players Scourge, described in the 20th century as ‘practically unreadable’,1 which most rashly censured theatrical performances, so popular at the court of Charles I, and at a time when Queen Maria Henrietta herself was acting in a pastoral play. Prynne’s aspersions on thespians were emphasized in the 40-page index he himself prepared, as in the trenchant entry (abbreviated here):

Women-Actors notorious whores . . . and dare then any Christian women be so more than whorishly impudent as to act, to speake publiquely on a stage perchance in man’s apparel and cut haire here proved sinful and abominable in the presence of sundry men and women? . . . O let such presidents of impudency of impiety be never heard of or suffered among Christians, 385.

A further four pages are devoted to John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester, burned for heresy in 1555. The Bishop’s sermons and letters are quoted at length. A sample entry is:

Bishop Hooper preached twice every day of the weeke; would have Bishops to preach once every day, would have two sermons every Lord’s Day, his censure of those who complain of too much preaching, S31.

Prynne was prosecuted in 1634 for impugning the virtue of Henrietta Maria, and the index was quoted at the trial by the Attorney General. Prynne was sentenced to have his book burnt by the hangman, pay a fine of £5000, be expelled from Oxford and Lincolns Inn, to lose both ears in the pillory, and suffer perpetual imprisonment.

1 G. Norman Knight (1963) Chairman’s address. The Indexer 3 (3), 90.

Hazel K. Bell, Hatfield
Indexing the proceedings and publications of the Scottish Parliament

Tori Spratt and Shona Skakle

This article describes the processes followed in deciding whether to index the proceedings and publications of the Scottish Parliament. The methods chosen once the decision to index was taken are outlined, along with a discussion of the reality now that the parliament exists and there is material to index. The article concludes by discussing the challenges of organizing and providing subject access to this information and possible future developments.

In October 1998 Janet Seaton and Tori Spratt began work on setting up the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe). Elections for the Scottish Parliament were to be held on 6 May 1999, and SPICe was to open its doors to Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) on 8 May. During the first two weeks it was necessary to devise staffing structures and advertise the posts, draw up budgets, and develop a service plan. The implementation team had grown to four by the end of the year, and the first of the newly appointed staff arrived in February 1999. How the proceedings and publications of the Scottish Parliament would be indexed was just one of many decisions that had to be taken at an early stage in this process.

The first stage was to identify what the outputs of the parliament were likely to be, and how they would need to be treated to make them accessible to MSPs, their staff, staff of the parliament and the outside world. Although the parliament did not yet exist, it was reasonable to assume that the outputs would, on the whole, be similar to those of Westminster.

It became obvious that just publishing these outputs on the parliament’s website would not provide adequate subject-based access to the material. The only way to provide this would be to index it. Once it was established that subject indexing would be required, the next step was to decide whether to start from scratch or use (possibly with adaptations) a pre-existing system.

Factors to consider included:

- time-scale;
- the cost of developing a local system;
- lack of in-house expertise to develop such a system;
- how the information would be stored and organized;
- whether or not the system used would rely on thesaurus control;
- whether subject indexing was to be automatic or intellectual;
- the need to retrieve information about the UK parliament (Westminster), the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

An early decision was that, whatever route was taken, thesaurus control was vital to maintain the integrity of the data held. This control extends beyond subject access and includes the way that names and organizations are held, thus preventing the problems that can occur where people and organizations are known by more than one name. It also reduces the possibility of inputting errors as records containing typographical errors would not be accepted by the database, and alternative forms of names used would be switched to the preferred form.

The desire for thesaurus control, along with an appreciation of the time and costs that would be involved in developing a local database that met our requirements, meant that the logical decision was to use POLIS (the Parliamentary On Line Indexing Service) to describe and index the proceedings and publications of the Scottish Parliament. The database structure also meant that it should be possible to input and index material with minimal changes.

Once POLIS was chosen, the next decision was whether to employ indexers locally, or pay for a member of staff in Westminster. Although there were likely to be technical difficulties to overcome, SPICe decided to employ indexers locally, feeling strongly that local expertise in POLIS searching and indexing techniques would benefit the whole team. Even at such an early stage in the process it was also obvious that although POLIS was the sensible choice initially, in future a local database might be developed. Such a development would be easier if local indexing expertise were already available.

POLIS (Parliamentary On Line Indexing Service)

POLIS is a sophisticated database that provides name- and subject-indexed references to parliamentary proceedings and publications. It has been in use since 1980 and is available outside parliament, on subscription, as Justis Parliament. Apart from the breadth and volume of material covered, the greatest strength of POLIS from the point of view of SPICe was its thesaurus.

POLIS uses a number of thesauri to control the way that names and subjects are described. These include members, corporate authors, personal author names, organizations,