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Jagiellonian Monarchies in the Apostolic Chancellery. On the Procedure of Searching and Disseminating Data on Central Europe from the Vatican Archives

**Monarchie jagiellońskie w Kancelarii
Apostolskiej. Procedury wyszukiwania
i udostępniania informacji o Europie Środkowej
w archiwach watykańskich**

Abstract

The article presents a new method for searching and publishing materials preserved in the registers of the Apostolic Chancery at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The approach is based on the systematic use of archival indexes and digital tools. Traditional methods of working with papal sources are extremely time-consuming and inefficient. Although research in the Vatican Archives has been carried out for almost 150 years, there is still a lack of modern archival aids and digital editions that would enable effective use of these resources for studies on the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Using the example of Polish affairs from the pontificates of Sixtus IV, Innocent VIII, and Alexander VI,

the author demonstrates how historical indexes to the *Registra Lateranensia* and *Registra Vaticana*, complemented by targeted searches in the *Registra Supplicationum*, can be effectively employed to identify and catalogue the preserved source material. The proposed procedure made it possible to locate more than one thousand entries relating to Poland within a single month—a result that, under traditional research conditions, would require decades of work. A comparative analysis with the *Repertorium Germanicum* confirmed the high effectiveness of the method, which allowed for the identification of over 85 percent of the bulls preserved in the registers. The article also proposes a model for digital publication of the collected data in accordance with the FAIR and Linked Open Data (LOD) standards. This model enables the gradual release of material—from basic metadata to in-depth analyses of individual documents—and the integration of multiple research projects. In doing so, it enhances scholarly communication and increases research efficiency. Although the method has been tested on Polish material, it has a universal character and can be applied to other regions of Europe.

Keywords: Vatican Archives, papal registers; Jagiellonian monarchies, source editing, fifteenth century.

Abstrakt

Artykuł przedstawia nową metodę przeszukiwania i publikowania materiałów zawartych w księgach Kancelarii Apostolskiej z przełomu XV i XVI wieku, opartą na systematycznym wykorzystaniu indeksów archiwalnych oraz narzędzi cyfrowych. Tradycyjna metoda pracy ze źródłami papieskimi jest niezwykle czasochłonna i mało efektywna. Choć badania w Archiwum Watykańskim prowadzone są od niemal 150 lat, nadal brakuje nowoczesnych pomocy archiwalnych i edycji cyfrowych, które umożliwiłyby wykorzystanie tego zasobu w badaniach nad końcem XV i początkiem XVI wieku. Na przykładzie polskich spraw z pontyfikatów Sykstusa IV, Innocentego VIII i Aleksandra VI autor pokazuje, jak historyczne indeksy do serii *Registra Lateranensia* i *Registra Vaticana*, uzupełnione o ukierunkowane poszukiwania w *Registra Supplicationum*, mogą być skutecznie wykorzystane do identyfikacji i katalogowania zachowanego materiału źródłowego. Zastosowana procedura pozwoliła na odnalezienie ponad tysiąca wpisów dotyczących Polski w ciągu jednego miesiąca – wynik, który w tradycyjnych warunkach wymagałby dekad pracy. Analiza porównawcza z *Repertorium Germanicum* potwierdziła wysoką skuteczność metody, umożliwiającą odnalezienie ponad 85% bulli zachowanych w registerach. W artykule zaproponowano również model cyfrowej publikacji zebranych danych zgodny ze standardami FAIR i Linked Open Data (LOD). Model ten umożliwia stopniowe publikowanie materiału – od podstawowych metadanych po pogłębione analizy poszczególnych

dokumentów – oraz integrację różnych projektów badawczych. Tym samym rozwiązanie to usprawnia komunikację naukową i zwiększa efektywność prac. Choć metoda została przetestowana na materiale polskim, ma charakter uniwersalny i może być zastosowana do innych obszarów Europy.

Słowa kluczowe: Archiwum Watykańskie, registry papieskie, monarchie jagiellońskie, edytorstwo źródeł historycznych, XV wiek.

Introduction

The Vatican Archives have been open to researchers for nearly 150 years, and considerable effort has been devoted to their exploration. Despite the existence of numerous national editorial projects focused on papal sources,¹ these editions rarely extend beyond the mid-15th century. For all nations—with the partial exception of Britain² – not only the publication of full source texts, but even the compilation of regesta and indexes of papal favors from the Renaissance period has proven impossible. As a result, much of the documentation produced by the Roman Curia—one of the most influential centers of diplomacy, culture, and ecclesiastical authority in Europe—remains effectively inaccessible to scholars conducting research at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. This problem is especially evident for historians of Central Europe, where archival losses over the centuries have been particularly severe. The period in question was a crucial moment in shaping the region's geopolitical position, which would for centuries serve as a zone of expansion for both the Habsburg and Ottoman empires. Relations with the Holy See played an important role in this context, yet a full understanding of them is impossible without access to the documents preserved in the Vatican Archives. Developing tools that would allow researchers working on the history of the Polish, Czech, and Hungarian kingdoms to efficiently search and use the Vatican collections therefore appears all the more urgent.

The aim of this article is to propose an effective method for identifying, retrieving, and publishing materials from the Vatican Archives

1 On the outcomes of such initiatives in the broader European context, see: Anna Zajchowska, "Monumenta Vaticana – koncepcje edycji późnośredniowiecznych źródeł papieskich. Przyczyny sukcesów i porażek," in *Editiones sine fine*, vol. 1, eds. Janusz Tandeci, Krzysztof Kopiński, Wojciech Mrozowicz (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 2017), 143–162.

2 The most recent volume of the *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (vol. 21) reaches as far as the pontificate of Leo X (1513–1521).

relating to the transitional period between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Using the example of Polish affairs during the final three pontificates of the fifteenth century, the article presents a research approach and demonstrates its practical effectiveness. The method in question can be applied to most European countries, especially those whose documentation constitutes only a small portion of the Vatican collections—such as Hungary, the Czech lands, Portugal, or the Scandinavian kingdoms. It is also intended as a starting point for broader collaborative efforts to uncover and publish materials from the Vatican Archives related to the history of the Jagiellonian monarchies.

To fully understand why the lack of published Vatican source editions poses such a significant problem, it is necessary to briefly explain the nature of late medieval papal bureaucracy and the structure of its archives. In the second half of the fifteenth century, the Roman Curia was a religious, diplomatic, and cultural centre of Europe, receiving thousands of petitioners each month. Papal scribes recorded the content of their petitions and the documents issued in response in official registers. Over time, this process produced a vast archival resource – comprising several thousand manuscript volumes – that sheds light on a remarkably wide range of aspects of life in late medieval Latin Europe. Within this massive corpus, however, only a very small fraction relates to Central European affairs. Finding those entries is akin to searching for a needle in a haystack. In practice, locating any relevant information in the papal registers without knowing its exact placement is nearly impossible, as it requires careful page-by-page reading of the registers across dozens, if not hundreds, of handwritten codices.

For this reason, since the late nineteenth century, most European states have sent scholars to Rome to locate papal materials relevant to their national histories.³ This research has relied on careful page-by-page reading of the registers. Despite ongoing efforts,⁴ the slow pace of this work offers little hope that materials from the closing decades of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries will become publicly accessible within this century. However, this does not mean that bridging the gap in our knowledge of the papal registers – or making a large portion of

3 Zajchowska, „Monumenta Vaticana,” 143–162.

4 The most important ongoing editorial series include *Repertorium Germanicum*, which also covers material concerning Bohemia, Prussia, and western parts of Poland; and the *Collectanea Vaticana Hungariae*, dedicated to documents relating to the Crown of Saint Stephen. In Poland, work is being carried out within the framework of the project *Monumenta Vaticana res gestas Polonicas illustrantia*, which currently focuses on the pontificates from the early 15th century.

the Central European materials known to scholars – is impossible today. Archival indexes, which have thus far remained largely unused in the exploration of the Vatican Archives, together with digital technologies, now offer promising tools for dramatically accelerating this process.

The Vatican Archives lack modern archival aids that would allow researchers to easily locate information in the registers. However, they do contain historical indexes created for the internal needs of the papal bureaucracy between the 15th and 18th centuries. While these indexes still serve their original function today, they should be regarded primarily as sources in their own right. Their effective use requires extended and consistent study, making them unsuitable for scholars seeking to locate a single, specific piece of information within the archives. However, when used skilfully, they make it possible to identify a significant number of documents concerning particular regions (*down to the level of the diocese*) in the papal registers within a relatively short amount of time.

The form of these indexes varies depending on the period of their creation and the series to which they belong (as will be discussed in more detail below), but several features are common to most of them. Regardless of the volume, entries in the indexes typically include the name of the diocese to which the granted favour was related, a brief description of the case (the petitioner’s name and a very concise summary of the request), as well as the folio reference in the original register where the document was recorded. A typical index entry might read: *Cracoviensis, Michael de Prasmaw: parrochialis per obitum, f. 133*. This format does not allow for the identification of all individuals or entities mentioned in the documents, but rather points to the region for which the papal favour was intended. However, since individuals from Central Europe rarely appear in entries intended for other regions, a search conducted within the indexes offers the possibility of identifying documents for further analysis without the need to manually review hundreds of volumes – dramatically accelerating archival research.

Pontificate	Registra Vati- cana (vols.)	Registra Lateranensia (vols.)	Registra Suppli- cationum (vols.)	Number of volumes	Number of indexes
Sixtus IV (1471–1484)	546–681	713–837	670–839	431	6
Innocent VIII (1484–1492)	682–771	838–924	840–960	298	5

Pontificate	Registra Vati- cana (vols.)	Registra Lateranensia (vols.)	Registra Suppli- cationum (vols.)	Number of volumes	Number of indexes
Alexander VI (1492–1503)	772–884	925–1126, 1128	961–1169	525	7
Number of volumes	339	415	500	1254	18

Table 1. Preserved volumes of papal registers and indexes from the pontificates of the late 15th century⁵

Effective use of the indexes requires not only familiarity with the archival holdings themselves, but also a solid understanding of the bureaucratic practices of the Roman Curia. It is therefore appropriate to provide a detailed description of the research procedure, so that it may serve as a model for analogous studies carried out for other periods or regions. The effectiveness of the method employed can be assessed through the presentation of the results obtained – using the pontificates of Sixtus IV, Innocent VIII, and Alexander VI as examples – as well as by comparing them with the actual content of the sources. It is also necessary to outline the next stages of research, which include the processing, analysis, and publication of the material retrieved in this way. Due to significant differences in the structure and character of individual archival series, the query was divided into three separate segments corresponding to the division into *Registra Vaticana*, *Registra Lateranensia*, and *Registra Supplicationum*. The same structure has been adopted in the description of the research procedure.

Description of the search procedure

Registra Lateranensia

The indexes to the *Registra Lateranensia* are the most consistent in structure. They systematically cover all pontificates of the Renaissance

5 The table lists volumes that pertain entirely to a given pontificate; however, individual bulls may also appear in other volumes. A detailed register of the volumes corresponding to each series and pontificate can be found in: *Sussidi per la consultazione dell'Archivio Vaticano*, ed. Germano Gualdo (Città del Vaticano: Archivio Vaticano, 1989), 185–195, 278–285; Bruno Katterbach, *Inventario dei Registri delle Suppliche* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1932), 44–68.

popes, starting with the registers of Callixtus III (1455).⁶ They were created in the eighteenth century. The portion covering the pontificates relevant to this study was compiled specifically in the 1750s and 1760s.⁷ The handwriting reflects the typical script of that period – usually legible. The volumes follow an alphabetical arrangement: documents were grouped by the initial letter of the name of the diocese for which the favor was intended, and within each of these sections they were further organized according to the registers. This structure makes it possible to limit a search to only a few letters of the alphabet (in the case of Poland: C, G, L, N, P, V/W), but at the same time makes it difficult to determine the complete contents of each volume, since the information is dispersed across all the alphabetical sections.

In most cases, a single index volume includes entries for all letters and for all registers covering several years of a given pontificate. For example, volume 338 indexes all the registers from the seventh and eighth years of the pontificate of Pope Innocent VIII.⁸ Because in the eighteenth century register volumes were identified by the number of the book within a given year of a pontificate – rather than by the continuous numbering system used today – determining a modern archival shelfmark requires comparing the book numbers from the indexes with those in concordance tables.⁹ In some cases, the modern numbering has also been added in pencil by archivists in the margins next to the original number.

Importantly, the indexes to the *Registra Lateranensia* were compiled before the Napoleonic Wars and therefore include information about documents from volumes that were lost during the transfer of the Vatican Archives to Paris.¹⁰ Although the brief format of the entries does not allow for the reconstruction of the full text of the original bulls, it does confirm their existence. When combined with the *Registra Supplicationum*,

6 The indexes covering the pontificates of the Renaissance popes are contained in: Archivum Apostolicum Vaticanum (AAV), Indici, vol. 325–365.

7 This is evidenced by the printed headings found in some volumes. For example, in AAV, Indici, vol. 332: „Index bullarum Sixti IV complectens annos I, II, et III eius pontificatus. Tomus primus. Ab Antonio Malocardi Regesti Earundem Bullarum Custode Transcriptum de anno domini MDCCLXI.”

8 AAV, Indici, vol. 338.

9 *Sussidi per la consultazione*, 278–285.

10 The indexes of the lost volumes contain information on 273 bulls concerning Poland: 92 from the pontificate of Sixtus IV, 45 from that of Innocent VIII, and 136 from that of Alexander VI. For more on the fate of the Vatican Archives during the Napoleonic Wars, see: *Vatican Archives. An Inventory and Guide to Historical Documents of the Holy See*, ed. Francis X. Blouin Jr. (New York–Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998), XX–XXI.

which recorded the content of petitions at an earlier stage of the curial process,¹¹ it becomes possible to reconstruct most of the information necessary for historical analysis. Some of the indexes themselves were also lost during the Napoleonic period. From the final three decades of the fifteenth century, precisely two are missing: those covering the 7th to 9th years of the pontificate of Sixtus IV, and the 3rd to 4th years of the pontificate of Innocent VIII. For these periods, traditional research must be conducted directly in the original registers.¹²

Twelve volumes of indexes to the *Registra Lateranensia* were examined for the pontificates of Sixtus IV, Innocent VIII, and Alexander VI.¹³ They contain information on 726 bulls related to Poland.¹⁴ Of these, 218 date from the pontificate of Sixtus IV (126 preserved), 142 from that of Innocent VIII (97 preserved), and 366 from the pontificate of Alexander VI (230 preserved). In total, 453 bulls are found in surviving registers, while 273 come from volumes that have been lost.¹⁵

Registra Vaticana

In contrast to the *Registra Lateranensia*, which were indexed only in the eighteenth century—more than two hundred years after the registers themselves had been created – and according to a consistent and systematic method, the *Registra Vaticana* were indexed much earlier,¹⁶

11 On the curial procedure, see: Thomas Frenz, *I documenti pontifici nel medioevo e nell'età moderna* (Città del Vaticano: Scuola Vaticana di Paleografia, Diplomatica e Archivistica, 2008), 71–91.

12 A total of 50 volumes of registers from the period in question have been preserved: 30 from the pontificate of Sixtus IV (AAV, Reg. Lat., vol. 769, 771–772, 774–775, 777–782, 784–785, 787–789, 792–804, 819), and 20 from the pontificate of Innocent VIII (AAV, Reg. Lat., vol. 846A, 846B, 853–855, 859–862, 864–867, 869–871, 876–879).

13 Sixtus IV: AAV, Indici, vol. 332–335; Innocent VIII: AAV, Indici, vol. 336–338; Alexander VI: AAV, Indici, vol. 339–343.

14 When referring to Poland, I mean the Polish Church — that is, the territory of the Gniezno and Lwów metropolitan provinces, excluding the dioceses of Wrocław and Lubusz. I have also classified the dioceses of Chełmno and Warmia as belonging to Poland for the purposes of this study.

15 The list of documents identified in the indexes will be published on the Atlas Fontium platform: <https://data.atlasfontium.pl> (access: 11.10.2025).

16 The volumes AAV, Indici, vol. 274–276, were compiled in the early 16th century. This is indicated by the handwriting, which still bears medieval characteristics, as well as by a marginal note in volume 274: „Anno domini 1521 Iohannes Varodus hoc fecit” (f. 204r). AAV, Indici, vol. 287 was compiled in 1630, as indicated by the heading. The early modern script and the alphabetical arrangement of the entries — similar to that found in the indexes to the *Registra Lateranensia* — also confirm its 17th-century dating.

but in a far less uniform way. For the three pontificates under discussion, four indexes survive.¹⁷ These cover only part of the material and not the entire series.¹⁸ Some of the remaining volumes include internal tables of contents, known as *rubricale*, written directly in the registers themselves.¹⁹ Only six registers lack any tool that would allow for a quick overview of their contents.²⁰

It should be noted that the *rubricale* were maintained less systematically than the indexes. In some cases, the diocese is not mentioned, which makes it much more difficult to identify entries related to Poland. For example, a note such as “*Expectativa – Ioanni Ianussi – f. 83*”²¹ provides no clear indication of origin. In such cases, the researcher must either examine the entire volume or rely on the appearance of Polish place names or personal names within the *rubricale* themselves.²²

The research included all existing indexes, as well as the volume AAV, Arm. XXXV, vol. 34. In addition, *rubricale* were consulted in volumes lacking indexes,²³ and some registers were examined in full when they contained no table of contents, had incomplete *rubricale*, or omitted the names of dioceses.²⁴ As a result, 343 bulls concerning Poland were identified: 109 from the pontificate of Sixtus IV, 97 from that of Innocent VIII, and 137 from that of Alexander VI.

Registra Supplicationum

In contrast to the *Registra Lateranensia* and *Registra Vaticana*, no early modern indexes were created for the *Registra Supplicationum*. This appears to be due to two characteristics of this series. First, it contains

17 The relevant indexes are as follows: for the pontificate of Sixtus IV, AAV, Indici, vol. 274 and part of vol. 287; for Innocent VIII, AAV, Indici, vol. 275; and for Alexander VI, AAV, Indici, vol. 276.

18 Index 274 contains information on the volumes AAV, Reg. Vat., vol. 551–652 and 654; Index 275: AAV, Reg. Vat., vol. 698–717, 720–739, 741–768, 932, and 934; Index 276: AAV, Reg. Vat., vol. 772–866; Index 287: AAV, Reg. Vat., vol. 660–677, 682–690, and 879–883. In addition, indexes for the volumes AAV, Reg. Vat., vol. 691–693 and 868 are also found in AAV, Arm. XXXV, vol. 34.

19 AAV, Reg. Vat., vol. 546–550, 653, 655–659, 678–681, 694–696, 770, 867, 869–872, 874–878, 884.

20 These are the volumes: AAV, Reg. Vat., vol. 697, 718, 719, 769, 771, 873.

21 AAV, Reg. Vat., vol. 662, f. 2r.

22 For example, a bull described as “altare portatile – Stanislaw de Mlyn, f. 88” (AAV, Reg. Vat., vol. 662, f. 2r) was identified on the basis of the Polish name of the petitioner.

23 AAV, Reg. Vat., vol. 867, 869–872, 876.

24 AAV, Reg. Vat., vol. 684–697, 718–719, 769–771, 875, 884.

documents of lesser formal weight than the registers of bulls. It was less carefully maintained, and many supplications recorded in it never resulted in papal bulls.²⁵ From the perspective of the early modern papal bureaucracy, indexing this material may have seemed unnecessary. Second, unlike the bull registers, the *Registra Supplicationum* were organized chronologically. They were divided into *quinterni*, each containing documents approved by the pope (or by a delegated official) in a given month. For this reason, once the approximate date of a document is known, locating the relevant supplication is relatively straightforward.

From the historian's point of view, however, the *Registra Supplicationum* are of considerable value. They contain documents copied at the earliest stage of curial procedure and therefore also include cases in which no bull was ultimately issued. Because of this, they preserve significantly more material related to Central Europe than the bull registers. While they do not provide direct evidence that papal favors were actually granted or used – a fact too often overlooked – they reveal a great deal about the nature and extent of contact between the people of Central Europe and the Holy See. Moreover, since each supplication had to contain all the necessary information required to draft a papal bull, these entries often allow researchers to reconstruct the full content of documents from lost registers of *Registra Lateranensia*.

The *Registra Supplicationum* are the most numerous and the most challenging to search: their large physical size, less careful handwriting, and high number of entries make them demanding to navigate. Unlike bulls, supplications follow a much shorter and more compact formula, making the individual entries shorter but more densely packed with information. Nonetheless, their chronological arrangement allows researchers to significantly optimize the search process.

Each bull recorded in the *Registra Lateranensia* should correspond to a supplication preserved in the *Registra Supplicationum*. Since a papal favor was assigned a date at the very beginning of the curial procedure, the dates of the bull and the supplication were identical.²⁶ This means that, knowing the date of a document, one can easily narrow down the chronological range of the registers in which the related supplication is likely to appear. Studies on Polish contacts with the Holy See show that some interactions – particularly the arrival of Polish diplomatic

25 On this topic: Adam Zapała, *Kontakty Polaków i Litwinów ze Stolicą Apostolską za pontyfikatu papieża Mikołaja V (1447–1455)* (Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, 2021), 83–89, 269–271.

26 Frenz, *I documenti*, 74–75.

missions – often led to short-term but significant increases in the number of submitted supplications.²⁷ Consequently, if the dates of Polish embassies to the papal court or the issuance of numerous bulls for Polish petitioners are known, it becomes possible to identify periods in which a higher concentration of Polish-related entries can be expected in the *Registra Supplicationum*. In such cases, one should identify the volumes covering the specific timeframe²⁸ and limit the search to them. This approach makes it possible to locate supplications corresponding to preserved bulls, as well as those that never resulted in a formal document or whose copies have since been lost. In this way, a relatively modest effort can yield a substantial number of Polish petitions. In order to verify the effectiveness of this method, a case study was conducted, which confirmed the efficiency of the approach.

Based on information concerning the presence of Polish embassies in Rome during the pontificate of Pope Innocent VIII, two test samples were selected: the obedience embassy of Jan of Targowisko and Rafał of Leszno, present in Rome in 1486, and that of Andrzej Róża Boryszewski and Ambroży Pampowski in 1492. Knowing that the first embassy was received by the pope on 26 May 1486,²⁹ two volumes of supplications covering the period from May to July 1486 were examined.³⁰ These volumes contained 31 Polish petitions.³¹ A similar test for the second embassy, based on the search of a single volume covering March–April 1492,³² yielded an additional 13 entries related to Poland.³³

Both test samples demonstrated that proper preparation of the search and identification of a hypothetical period of Polish activity at the Holy See can significantly increase the efficiency of research in the *Registra Supplicationum*. In total, 44 entries related to Poland were identified by

27 On that topic: Zapala, *Kontakty*, 263–269.

28 Assistance in this regard is provided by: Katterbach, *Inventario dei Registri delle Suppliche*.

29 Jerzy Zatycki, „Zapomniane polonicum drukowane w Rzymie w r. 1496 (Jana Targowiskiego Łacińska mowa do papieża Innocentego VIII),” in *Mediaevalia – w 50 rocznicę pracy naukowej Jana Dąbrowskiego*, ed. Józef Garbacik (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1960), 309.

30 AAV, Reg. Suppl., vols. 858–859, identified on the basis of: Katterbach, *Inventario*, 54.

31 AAV, Reg. Suppl., vol. 858, ff. 20r, 20v, 31v–32r, 84r, 97v, 98r, 133r–134r, 138v–139r, 166r–166v, 171r–171v, 176v, 203r, 205v, 206v, 211r, 236r, 257v–258r, 286r–286v, 290v; AAV, Reg. Suppl., vol. 859, ff. 6v–7r, 51v, 55r, 69r, 98r–98v, 117r–117v, 148r–148v, 161v, 164v, 179r–179v, 210v, 217v.

32 AAV, Reg. Suppl., vol. 954, identified on the basis of: Katterbach, *Inventario*, 58.

33 AAV, Reg. Suppl., vol. 954, ff. 28r, 35r, 45v, 52v, 58v, 62r, 75r–75v, 104v, 153v–154v, 155r, 165r, 166r, 238v.

consulting only three volumes. The test periods were selected based on the literature on the subject indicating the presence of Polish embassies, but they could just as well be established by noting increases in the number of Polish-related entries in the registers of bulls. There is no doubt that similar results can be expected throughout the period under discussion.

Search effectiveness

When using a method that significantly increases the speed of searching the material—especially a collection as vast as the papal chancery registers – it becomes necessary to ask how such acceleration affects the accuracy of the search. In other words: how large a portion of the relevant documents in the Vatican Archives can actually be identified using this approach? The effectiveness of the method can be estimated by comparing its results with those of existing source editions. Unfortunately, such a comparison cannot be made with Polish material, since the indexes for the last pontificate published in the *Bullarium Poloniae* – that of Paul II – are not sufficiently complete.³⁴ In this situation, the most appropriate test is a comparison between the results of the search for the pontificate of Sixtus IV and volume 10 of the *Repertorium Germanicum*.³⁵ It must be noted, however, that the German edition included only the western dioceses of the Gniezno metropolis, omitting entries from the dioceses of Płock, Lithuania, and Ruthenia. On the other hand, one volume of the Lateran register indexes from the pontificate of Sixtus IV (covering the 7th to 9th years) has been lost. Given these limitations, the comparison must be restricted to those registers for which indexes have survived.

Of the 326 entries concerning Polish-related matters identified in the indexes from the pontificate of Sixtus IV, 224 could be matched with records found in the *Repertorium Germanicum*. Among the 102 unmatched entries, 58 refer to dioceses not covered by the *Repertorium* – including

34 From the pontificate of Paul II, three indexes have survived: one very brief and incomplete index for the *Registra Vaticana* (AAV, Indici, vol. 273), and two for the *Registra Lateranensia* (AAV, Indici, vols. 330–331). Unlike most Lateran indexes, these were not divided by years of pontificate; instead, each volume contained selected letters covering the entire pontificate. Unfortunately, one of these indexes – the one covering the letters O to Z – has been lost. As a result, it is difficult to determine exactly which bulls were included in that volume, and therefore impossible to use it for a reliable comparison of the effectiveness of index-based searches.

35 *Repertorium Germanicum*, vol. 10: Sixtus IV (1471–1484), part 1: Text, eds. by Ulrich Schwarz, Juliane Trede, Stefan Brüdermann, Thomas Bardelle, Kerstin Rahn, Hubert Höing, Michael Reimann and Sven Mahmens (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2018).

39 from the Diocese of Płock. In the case of the remaining 44 records, the information should theoretically be present in the *Repertorium*, but no corresponding entries could be found. The most problematic were references from lost registers (16 entries), as their accuracy cannot be verified, especially regarding folio numbers. An additional challenge in comparing the two resources lies in the absence of a digital version of RG volume 10, as well as in the inconsistent and often erroneous spelling of Polish names in both the indexes and the *Repertorium Germanicum*. It is possible that a full-text analysis of the registers will allow further correspondences to be identified.

More important from the perspective of the present analysis is the verification of the completeness of the index-based search – in other words, determining what portion of the documents recorded in the *Repertorium* could be identified through the indexes. In this case, out of 260 entries in the *Repertorium*, 224 documents were found in the indexes. An additional five documents were recorded in the indexes, but in forms that did not allow for their unambiguous identification as Polish-related (e.g. a provision for Giuliano della Rovere was listed without a diocese, but under the category “cardinalis”,³⁶ and privileges for Andrzej Róža Boryszewski were entered under “indulgentia”).³⁷ In some such cases, Polish documents were successfully identified despite these issues – for instance, entries categorized as “collectoria in Polonia”³⁸ or with altered spellings of diocesan names (e.g. “Crachoviensis”³⁹ instead of “Cracoviensis”). There is also a group of 30 Polish-related documents that could not be located, despite efforts to find them. The alphabetical arrangement of indexes makes it difficult to assess the completeness of information concerning individual registers. More detailed examination showed that some volumes were not fully indexed. The best example of this is *Registra Vaticana*, vol. 664 from index 287, in which almost no bulls are listed between folios 150 and 190. Similar gaps – although less significant – also appear elsewhere (e.g. in index 274, for Reg. Vat., vol. 600, there is a break between folios 65 and 78).

Despite all the shortcomings described above, the indexes made it possible to locate over 85% of the Polish-related entries from the bull registers that are recorded in the *Repertorium Germanicum*. If the unmatched entries (44) are also taken into account, this figure

36 AAV, Indici, vol. 274, f. 16v.

37 *Ibidem*, f. 13r.

38 *Ibidem*, f. 116v.

39 *Ibidem*, f. 260r.

undoubtedly exceeds 90%. Such a level of effectiveness – combined with a dramatically increased speed of archival research – demonstrates that the method outlined above is satisfactory and offers a real possibility of rapidly making available the majority of materials concerning Poland from the papal chancery registers. An additional benefit, which should not be overlooked, is the identification of several dozen entries related to petitioners from the eastern territories of the Jagiellonian monarchy.

From Archival Search to Digital Publication

The archival search is only the first stage of the project, serving as a foundation for further efforts to make the identified material accessible. Once the indexes have been examined and a supplementary search carried out in the volumes lacking indexes, it is necessary to verify the exact location of all the Polish-related entries in original registers and then acquire their digital reproductions. The research conducted so far has made it possible to verify the location of 661 documents,⁴⁰ and digital scans have already been obtained for a portion of them.⁴¹

Once the scans of the source material are available, the next step is their analysis and publication. The most comprehensive form of publication is a full critical edition. However, the preparation of transcriptions and the philological analysis of documents is extremely time-consuming. For this reason, as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, the standard format for publishing papal source material became the *regest* edition.⁴² This format made it possible to present the essential content of documents without requiring full philological analysis. In the twenty-first century, this function has largely been taken over by databases. A database not only accelerates the processing of material even further,

40 One of the main obstacles in this regard is the access policy of the Vatican Archives. Currently, researchers are allowed to consult only three volumes of the registers per day, which makes the process of verifying the material proceed very slowly.

41 As part of the NCN *Miniatura* project “Polish Diplomats at the Apostolic See in the Second Half of the 15th Century – Library and Archival Research” (no. 2021/05/X/HS3/01142), a total of 1,104 digital scans of documents from the Vatican Archives were acquired, covering the pontificates of Innocent VIII and Alexander VI. The scans include 65 volumes of the Vatican Registers (AAV, Reg. Vat., vol. 682–692, 695–697, 711, 715, 717–722, 724, 726, 729, 730, 732–735, 741, 742, 746, 749, 752, 755–757, 759, 761, 763, 766, 769, 770, 783, 785–787, 789, 790, 792, 802, 843, 848, 849, 861, 868–872, 875, 879, 880, 883), 8 volumes of the Lateran Registers (AAV, Reg. Lat., vol. 120, 850, 891, 918, 933, 948, 960, 987), and 3 volumes of the Supplication Registers (AAV, Reg. Suppl., vol. 858, 859, 954).

42 Zajchowska, „Monumenta Vaticana,” 152, 157–159.

but also offers the benefits of information technology. Structured data is more precise and significantly easier to search than text written in natural language. The application of LOD (Linked Open Data)⁴³ and FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable)⁴⁴ standards also enables broader reuse of the database, including the integration of multiple editions. All these arguments support the decision to publish the material in the form of a structured database.

The best way to publish a database based on handwritten source material is to combine the presentation of manuscript scans with structured data linked directly to specific parts of the images.⁴⁵ The INDXR software platform enables the creation of this type of edition.⁴⁶ It uses GIS (Geographic Information System) technology to associate locations on the scanned pages with entries in the database. This solution has already been successfully implemented in several projects, particularly those dealing with large-scale documentary material.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, due to financial constraints, it is not currently possible to obtain the rights to publish images of all the Polish-related documents from the Vatican Archives.⁴⁸ As a result, in this case, the material will be made available as data only, without scans. Although this is not a perfect solution, it does not diminish the research potential of such a database.

43 <https://www.w3.org/wiki/LinkedData> (access: 3.04.2024).

44 <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/> (access: 3.04.2024).

45 On such an approach, see: Słoń Marek, "Pryncypia edytorstwa źródeł historycznych w dobie rewolucji cyfrowej," *Studia Źródłoznawcze* 53 (2015): 155–161; Słoń Marek, Słomski Michał, "Edycje cyfrowe źródeł historycznych," in *Jak wydawać teksty dawne*, ed. Karolina Borowiec, Dorota Maslej, Tomasz Mika and Dorota Rajszczyk-Robińska (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Rys, 2017), 65–84.

46 The software is available at: <https://indxr.ihpan.edu.pl/>. Its functionality is described in: Arkadiusz Borek, Tomasz Związek, Michał Słomski, Michał Gochna and Grzegorz Myrda, "Technical and methodological foundations of digital indexing of medieval and early modern court books," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 35 (2020): 233–253.

47 Marek Słoń, Urszula Zachara-Związek, "The Court Records of Wschowa (1495–1526). Digital Edition," *Studia Geohistorica* 6 (2019): 206–220 https://atlas.ihpan.edu.pl/gis/agad_wschowa_i2_pub/index.php (access: 3.04.2024); Michał Gochna, *Księgi sądowe powiatu kaliskiego 1587–1594* https://atlas.ihpan.edu.pl/indxr/app/kspk_pub/index.php (access: 3.04.2024); Wojciech Lis, *Najstarsze księgi miejskie Kalisza z lat 1537–1556*, <https://atlasfontium.pl/ksiegi-miejskie-kalisza/> (access: 3.04.2024); Arkadiusz Borek, *Księgi konsystorza kaliskiego z lat 1504–1534* https://atlas.ihpan.edu.pl/indxr/app/kkk_pub/index.php (access: 3.04.2024).

48 The cost of obtaining a license to publish a single page from the registers online is €150 (<https://servizi.archivioapostolicovaticano.va/fotoriproduzioni/#/pro?lang=en> (accessed: 3 April 2024). Consequently, acquiring the rights to make several thousand scans publicly available far exceeds the financial capacity of grant-based funding.

INDXR allows the data model to be tailored to the editor's needs, enabling the inclusion of all relevant information. The dataset described above will be modeled on two levels. The first is the document level, which includes core metadata such as archival reference, place and date of issuance, issuer, document type, and type of grace granted. The second level concerns the entities mentioned in the text – individuals, places, and institutional entities (including ecclesiastical benefices).

The use of a database and online publication, unlike traditional printed editions, does not require the entire body of material to be made available at once. Instead, it allows for the initial release of a list described with basic metadata, followed by a more detailed analysis and annotation of individual documents. The material collected so far will allow for the gradual publication of the Vatican and Lateran Registers from the pontificate of Innocent VIII. Work will then continue with the registers of Alexander VI and subsequent popes. At the same time, further queries will be carried out in the Vatican Archives, especially in registers that lack indexes. Finally, the records concerning Poland from the *Registers of Supplications* will be identified and published according to the methodology described above. After the publication of each major batch of documents, it should be accompanied by a separate article discussing its specific features.

It should be emphasized that this approach does not rule out the possibility of carrying out a detailed search of the registers volume by volume at a later stage, along with the full publication of the identified documents concerning Poland. Such work is already being done in Poland, for example within the project *Monumenta Vaticana res gestas Polonicas illustrantia*. The release of the database described above will give Polish researchers a practical tool for navigating the Vatican Archives. Still, only the complete publication of the sources can ensure full access to the material. It is worth noting that both projects are being developed in digital form and follow LOD and FAIR standards, which will allow their results to be integrated in the future.

Conclusions

The research method described above made it possible to examine 848 codices within a single month and identify 1,112 Polish-related entries (839 of which are found in preserved registers). It also opened up the possibility of narrowing the scope of further research in volumes lacking indexes, especially in the *Registra Supplicationum*. Searching this material

using traditional methods would be a task requiring many years of work by a large research team. Acquiring and processing this material using digital methods will, in the near future, provide Polish scholars with the tools to make effective use of the sources held in the Vatican Archives from the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. More importantly, the procedure is universal and can be adopted by researchers from other countries. From a Polish perspective, the most important next step would be to carry out a similar project for the kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia. This would make it possible to recover data on petitions submitted to the Holy See from all Jagiellonian monarchies and gain a deeper understanding of how these kingdoms positioned themselves between the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman sphere at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. The use of digital methods for publishing the results – based on LOD and FAIR standards – not only allows for the gradual addition of new documents to the collection, but also creates the potential for integrating and jointly searching across multiple databases of this kind in the future.

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