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The Letters of the 13th Century Popes in the Age of "Big Data": the Constitution of a Unified Digital Corpus and Some New Research Perspectives

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The government by the Papacy in the 13th century over the whole of Western Europe, not only in spiritual matters but also in a great many temporal matters, makes it a unique case of a centralised institution. The written word, and especially the production of the papal chancery, was a sine qua non for the exercise of this 'Roman' government. Since the editorial efforts of the 19th century, historians have become aware of the quantitative importance and multiform interest of this documentation. The advent of the Digital Humanities now makes it possible to undertake the construction of a unified electronic corpus of pontifical letters, which will change the conditions of research completely. This is the vocation of APOSCRIPTA, an evolving and collaborative database, freely accessible online, launched in 2017, which currently gives access to more than 20,000 letters and continues to grow quickly. We will present the difficulties and challenges involved in building up this corpus, and give some examples of possible research that will be facilitated by this new tool.

Julien Théry, Archivar und Paläograph (École des Chartes), ist Professor für mittelalterliche Geschichte an der Université Lumière in Lyon. Seine Forschungen befassen sich mit Gerichtsverfahren der Kurie gegen Prälaten, den Formen der päpstlichen Regierung vom 12. bis 15. Jahrhundert und den Beziehungen zwischen dem französischen Königtum und dem Papsttum im selben Zeitraum.