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# The *Popolo's* Room. Describing Medieval Archives Through a Fourteenth Century Bologna Inventory

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents a dataset derived from a medieval archive inventory preserved in the State Archives of Bologna, the *Liber seu memoriale* of 1324. This source, resulting from the reorganization of an important portion of the archives of the ancient city commune, describes all the documents produced during the administrations of 54 different *capitani del popolo*, the foreign officers who, along with the podesta, governed the city, changing every six months. It offers a comprehensive view of the archival material produced by these officers from 1281 to 1308 and helps in understanding Italian city archives of the Middle Ages.

The article delves into the 1324 inventory's origin and structure, emphasizing its innovative system. Then it describes the methodology used to create a table in which individual items described in inventories are listed, along with other data provided by the identification of the descriptions with actual preserved registers. The resulting dataset, named *Camera Populi 1324*, includes detailed information on the archival units, the persons involved in their production, and the curie, the different teams of officers directed by every *capitano*.

The dataset has been utilized for a critical edition of the *Liber seu memoriale* and a virtual reconstruction of the *Popolo's* Archives. The reuses of this dataset span academic research, teaching, and broader applications, such as tracking specific individuals' activities, reconstructing communal office contexts, and assessing the loss of medieval documentation over time.

The simple and flexible dataset structure allows for adaptation to other medieval and premodern collections, enhancing its versatility for various archival history and research projects. Overall, this dataset provides a valuable resource for understanding medieval administrative practices and archival structures.

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## (1) CONTEXT

The State Archives of Bologna (Archivio di Stato di Bologna, henceforth ASBo) holds some of the most important sources for the study of public archives in medieval Europe. Among these are inventories dating back to the late 13th century produced to control the transfer of documentation from the offices to the archives and to detail the extant documentation, not least to prevent disappearances or alterations (Romiti, 1994). As part of the Gustave Eiffel University's *Archival City* project,<sup>1</sup> we investigated one of these inventories, the *Liber seu memoriale* of 1324, which turned out to be both the result and the instrument of a reorganization of a relevant portion of the archives of the ancient city commune, the *camera populi*. The comparison between the descriptions of the documents of this inventory and the records preserved today in the ASBo made it possible to produce a dataset that provides a detailed overview of the registers produced by the *capitano's curia* between 1281 and 1308. This was the basis for two scholarly outputs (a critical edition and a website) with which we intend to revive the study of Italian city archives of the Middle Ages and to propose a model for their description consistent with the categories of the time.

### (1.1.) THE CITY-COMMUNE AND ITS ARCHIVES

During the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, Bologna was organized in two parallel structures: the *commune*, presided over by the *podestà*, was structured in various councils to which all the citizens residing in the city, enrolled in the tax and military lists, had access; and the *popolo*, presided over by the *capitano del popolo*, structured in colleges (such as the *anziani e consoli*) and other councils (such as the *consiglio del popolo*) to which citizens enrolled in the guilds and arms societies (voluntary neighbourhood associations) had access (Tamba 2018). The two magistrates were foreign officials, called from another city to govern Bologna for six months. They were assisted by a group, the *curia*, consisting of several judges who presided over the courts and other offices, notaries who wrote documents, and *berrovieri*, guards at their command. At the end of their service, their work was subject to audit, and only if they were successful were they paid the money due to them (Gaulin, 2000). Also because of the need to verify their work the establishment of the rule of these foreign officials coincided with a new desire to preserve scriptures in the register, the so-called «scriptural revolution» (Maire Vigueur, 1995).

To preserve writings and to copy records filed at the request of citizens in Bologna there was the *camera actorum*, divided into a room of the *commune* and a room of the *popolo*. Each of the two repositories was equipped with cabinets (*armaria*), shelving (*schaffe*), chests (*casse*), sacks and other containers designed to store the documents (Giansante, Tamba & Tura, 2006).

In order to control the transmission of records from the offices to the *camera actorum*, delivery minutes called *designations* («descriptions») describing the deposited records were drawn up at the end of each term of office of a foreign magistrate. Sometimes, these were copied into a register, a kind of summary inventory of the documents.

### (1.2.) THE 1324 INVENTORY: ORIGIN AND DESCRIPTION

The *Liber seu memoriale omnium librorum et scripturarum repertorum et repertarum in camara actorum populi*<sup>2</sup> («Book or register of all the books and writings found in the archives of the *popolo*») constitutes a more complex operation that does not merely record the existing records but attests to a rearrangement aimed at giving the material found a more coherent and rational arrangement.

On August 8, 1324, the *consiglio del popolo* decided to provide for a general rearrangement of the archives of the *capitano del popolo*, whose activity was exposed by Blanshei (2010). The records of the offices had not been deposited for five years; there was a lack of space to store them, and there was no list of the documents. The council entrusted the magistracy of the *difensori dell'averè*, the officials in charge of controlling and defending municipal property, with

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1 <https://archivalcity.hypotheses.org/> (last accessed: 10 December 2023).

2 Archivio di Stato di Bologna, *Comune, Uffici a competenza specifica, Camera degli atti*, s. I, Inventari ed elenchi, b. 1, reg. 4, *Liber seu memoriale*, c. 2r (da ora *Liber seu memoriale*).

the task of overcoming these problems.<sup>3</sup> Empowered by this resolution, the *difensori dell'avere* appointed two notaries (Tomaso domini Carnelvari and Egidio Zambecari) with the task of drawing up this list, the *Liber seu memoriale*.

As a result of a recent restoration, the paper manuscript is currently protected by a parchment cover measuring 450×320 mm and two unnumbered guard sheets placed at the beginning and end of the register. On the recto of the first guard sheet, the reference number «I/4» and the indication «Armarium populi (consistenza al 1324) documenti dal 1281 al 1308» have been written in recent years in pencil. The manuscript measures about 420×310×20 mm and consists of a single fascicle formed by 25 bifolios which have a bell-shaped watermark. The blanks turn out to be ff. 1r-v, 3v, 5r and 9r. The initial leaf originally served as a guard sheet and is the only one wholly unoccupied by writing. It is possible that what has been preserved may be only the first part of a larger project. This would explain why the descriptions transcribed in the extant book each go as far back as the year 1308, while the rearrangement of the papers and the inventory date back to 1324. The manuscript consists of 50 ff. and has recently been foliated with pencil in the upper right margin of the recto of each paper with Arabic numerals, progressing from 1 to 50. Between ff. 34v and ff. 35r there is a flyleaf of paper preserved, containing an archival description: the paper is marked as «34/bis».

### (1.3.) THE 1324 INVENTORY STRUCTURE AND RELEVANCE

Unlike the inventories preserved for the earlier period, in the *Liber seu memoriale* the logical structure coincides with the material organization, an indicator of an ordering project providing the context of the creation of this instrument of description. Indeed, the fifty-four series described in it correspond to as many mandates of individual *capitani del popolo* during the twenty-seven semesters of the period from 1281 to 1308, and to as many *casse* («chests») marked by Roman numerals between I and LIV. For each series, an initial note shows, on the left, the number of the chest that holds its records and, in the center, the name of the captain, the year and the semester of the mandate (Figure 1).

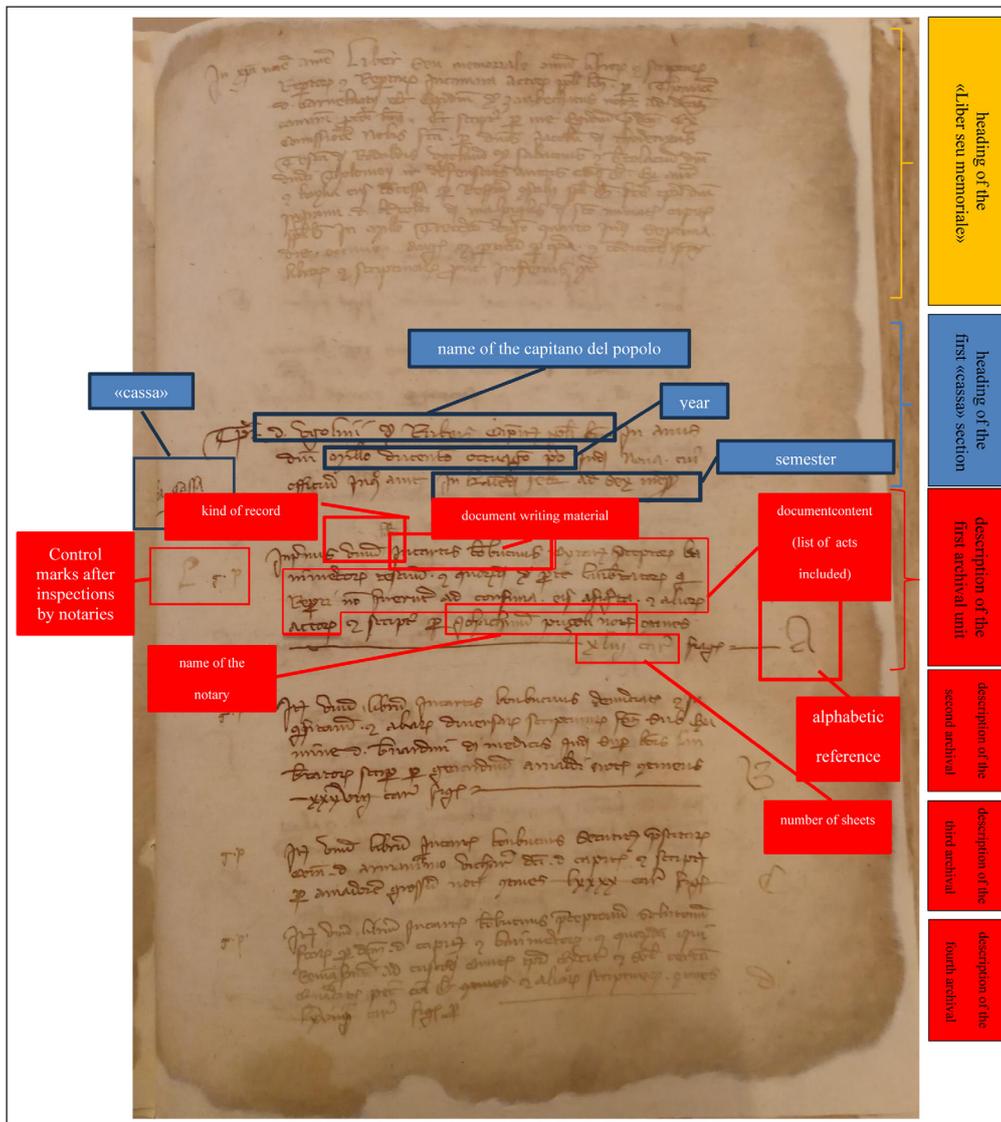
This is followed, for each series, by descriptions of the archival units it contains. These are mostly *libri* («books») with an average of about fifteen items per series/case. These descriptions are arranged in three columns so that three pieces of information about each individual description can be arranged side by side: On the right, there is the archival reference code, expressed by one letter following the order of the alphabet. The letters used are arranged in the following order: a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, v, x, y, z, 7, 9 (the two «Tironian» tachygraphic symbols for «et» and «con»), + (a symbol in the form of a cross). On the left we read the traces of several inspections of the archives, which took place at different times, following the publication of the 1324 inventory. They are expressed with the initials of the inspecting notaries who wrote the signs «g», «p», and (capital) «L».

The actual descriptions occupy the middle column, in the center of the paper, and are the most substantial section of text on the page. They diverge considerably in the degree of analyticity because they depend on sources on which the two Bolognese notaries who prepared the inventory could rely in 1324. They are usually summary descriptions that provide a variable set of elements (the subject matter, the presence of the blanket, the type of deeds it contains, the name of the notary redactor and sometimes the name of the judge responsible for its creation, or the number of papers).

In the same fonds, an older but undated inventory of the *camera populi* is preserved fragmentarily; however, it can be dated at the end of the thirteenth century, certainly after 1285.<sup>4</sup> In this inventory it is possible to identify some of the same archival units described in the *Liber seu memoriale*. The interesting fact is that they often have references codes different from those they appear to have in 1324. The hypothesis that during the rearrangement carried out in 1324 the notaries in charge provided for the production of new references codes is supported by the analysis of the covers of several surviving registers, which show in different spaces of the cover two different letters corresponding to the descriptions in the two inventories. For

<sup>3</sup> ASBo, *Comune-Governo*, 198, *Riformagioni e provvigioni, Riformagioni del Consiglio del popolo*, registro siglato XIV/1 (1323-1324), posta di mercoledì 8 agosto 1324, indizione VII, c. 151r.

<sup>4</sup> ASBo Comune, *Uffici a competenza specifica, Camera degli atti*, s. I, *Inventari ed elenchi*, b. 1, reg. 2, partially published in Fasoli (1932).



**Figure 1** The structure of the inventory (*Liber seu memoriale*, c. 2r).

example, register 27 of the actual series of the «Giudici del capitano del popolo»<sup>5</sup>, shows on the cover in the upper left-hand corner the letter H, which corresponds to the alphabetic reference it appears to have in the thirteenth-century inventory, while further down it shows the letter A, which is set next to its description in the *Liber seu memoriale* (Figure 2).<sup>6</sup>

The inventory of 1324 did not give a passive account of the existing arrangement by copying descriptions and references already available, but was the instrument for the creation of a new system in which the documents of each series – corresponding to the semester of a *capitano del popolo* and distinguished by a single case designated by a figure in Roman numerals – were identified using an exclusive, regularly progressive, alphabetical code, which, unlike the previous reference codes, could not give rise to misunderstandings and made each document correspond to only one possible identification code.

The innovative structure of this inventory constitutes an important step in the history of archival practices and prompts us to study it analytically, at the same time as an example of the way of thinking about an archive in medieval Bologna and as a testimony to the archival structure assumed by the *camera populi* in 1324.

## (2) DATASET DESCRIPTION

**Object name** – Archival City Bologna- Camera Populi 1324.

**DOI:** <https://nakala.fr/10.34847/nkl.cbde886f>

**Format names and versions** – CSV.

<sup>5</sup> ASBo, Comune, Capitano del popolo, Giudici del capitano del popolo, 27.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, c. 6r; *Liber seu memoriale*, c. 5v.

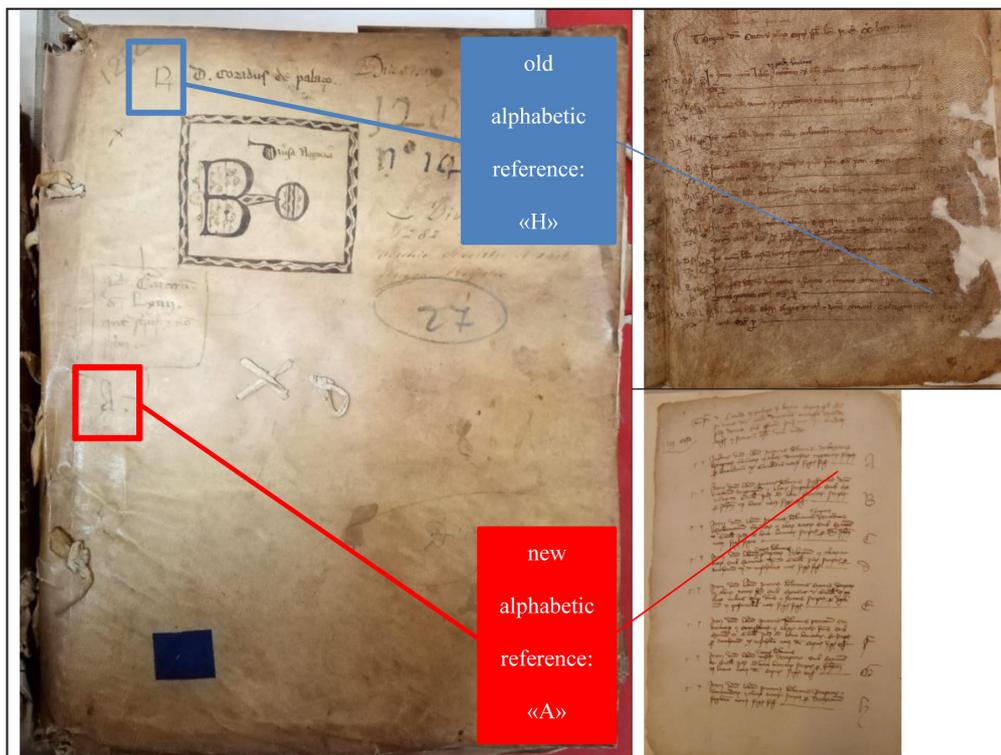
**Dataset creators** – Giuliano Milani, Université Gustave Eiffel, Professor of Medieval History (Conceptualization, Data Curation, Funding Acquisition, Methodology, Investigation, Project Administration, Supervision, Validation); Armando Antonelli, ASBo, Archivist (Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Resources); Clement Carnielli, Ph.D in Medieval History (Data curation); Paul Lecat, Université de Tours, Assistant Professor of Contemporary History ACP; Carole Lamoureux, Ph.D, historian and archivist, ACP (Data curation, Software); Benjamin Suc, IT manager (Data curation, Software).

**Language** – Latin (see n. 17), Italian (see Table 1 for translation).

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**Repository name** – Nakala.

**Publication date** – 2023



**Figure 2** Traces of two subsequent orders corresponding to two different inventories.

### (3) METHOD

#### (3.1.) GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The *Camera Populi 1324* dataset is an analytical and augmented transcription of the *Liber seu memoriale* that intends give account of the listed documents and to reflect the rationale of this source. This is different from current online<sup>7</sup> and press description tools, such as that of Montorsi and Scaccabarozzi (2011) or Archivio di Stato di Bologna (s.d. 1). These are organized according to a hierarchical tree structure with, at the highest level, the repository and, below, funds and series. The *Liber seu memoriale* considers the archive as the place that gives public faith to the documents it contains. Tancredi da Bologna's *ordo iudiciarius*, written in Bologna at the beginning of the thirteenth century, tells that something can be considered public if it comes from a public closet or archives, such as the account book («dicitur publicum, quod de archivo seu armario publico producitur, liber scilicet rationum», as in Bergmann, 1842, p. 248) Consistent with this principle, it describes the *camera populi* in a topographical order, manifested by the chests corresponding to the various captains who succeeded one another

7 <http://www.archiviodistatobologna.it/bologna/patrimonio/complessi-archivistici?id=IT-ASBO-00000137>. (last accessed: 10 December 2023).

ITALIANO	LATIN	ENGLISH
Accuse	Accusationes	Accusations
Acque	Acque	Waterways
Affitti di beni di banditi lambertazzi	Locationes possessionum bannitorum pro parte lambertaciorum	Rents of confiscated properties of banned lambertazzi
Aggregato	–	Sammelband
Ambasciate	Ambaxate	Embassies
Annotazioni		Notes
Araba		Arabic numerals
Assente	–	Missing
Assoluzioni	Absolutiones	Absolutions
Bandi	Banimenta	Bans
Calanchi	Calancha	Badlands
Carta	Cartis banbucinis	Paper
Carta sciolta	Foleum	Charter
Cartulazione		Foliation
Cassa	Cassa	Chest
Cause e questioni civili	Cause et questiones civiles	Lawsuits and civil matters
Citazioni	Citationes	Summons court
Commissioni	Commisiones	Errands
Condanne	Condemnationes	Convictions
Confessioni	Confessiones	Confessions
Consilia	Consilia	Consilia
Consistenza	–	Leaves (ff. = folia; bb-white pages)
Consistenza attestata		Leaves mentioned in inventory item
Coperta	–	Cover
Data più antica	–	Earlier act
Data più recente	–	Later act
Denunce	Denunciationes	Complaints
Descritto nell'inventario del 1324	–	Described in the 1324 inventory
Descrizione inventario		1324 inventory item
Dimensioni	–	Dimensions
Difese	Defensiones	Defenses
Esistente	–	Existing
Fideiussioni	Fideiussiones	Sureties
Fideiussioni dei confinati lambertazzi	Fideiussiones confinatorum pro parte lambertaciorum	Sureties of confined lambertazzi
Fondo	–	Fonds, Collection
Giudice	Iudex	Judge
Gride	Cridaciones	Proclamations
Inquisizioni	Inquisitiones	Inquisitions
Intenzioni	Intentiones	Intentions
Intitolazione	Intitulatio	Heading
Liste di anziani e consoli	Nomina ancianorum et consulum	Names of <i>anziani</i> e <i>consoli</i>

(Contd.)

ITALIANO	LATIN	ENGLISH
Liste di beni di banditi lambertazzi	Bona bannitorum pro parte lambertaciorum	Properties of banned lambertazzi
Liste di ministeriali delle due società	Nomina ministerialium duorum societatum qui presunt	Names of <i>ministeriales</i> of the two preeminent guilds and arms societies
Liste di Sapienti	Nomina sapientum	Names of <i>sapientes</i>
Liste di Ufficiali	Nomina officialium	Names of officers
Mandati di pagamento	Solutiones	Payments
Materia	–	Writing material
Moderna	–	Modern
Notaio	Notarius	Notary
Notifiche	Notificationes	Notifications
Pagamenti di affitti di beni dei banditi lambertazzi	Solutiones locationum bonorum pro parte lambertaciorum	Payments of properties of banned lambertazzi rents
Pagamenti di beni dei banditi lambertazzi	Solutiones bonorum pro parte lambertaciorum	Payments of banned lambertazzi properties
Passaggi	Passi	Pasagewayss
Pergamena	Cartis pecudis	Parchemin
Petizioni	Petitiones	Petitions
Ponti	Pontes	Bridges
Precetti	Precepta	Precepts
Presentazioni dei confinati lambertazzi	Presentationes confinatum pro parte lambertaciorum	Confined lambertazzi answers to roll calling
Processi	Processus	Trials
Promesse	Promissiones	Promises
Proteste	Protestationes	<i>Protestationes</i>
Registro	Liber	Book
Relazioni	Relationes	Reports
Requisizioni	Requisitiones	Orders
Responsabile dell'amministrazione	–	Person responsible for administration
Responsabile della documentazione	–	Person responsible for documentation
Responsabile della scrittura	–	Person responsible for writing
Riformazioni	Reformationes	Decisions
Riformazioni del consiglio del popolo	Reformationes consilii populi	Decisions of the <i>consilium populi</i>
Risposte	Responsiones	Responses
Segnatura	–	Reference code
Sentenze	Sententie	Sentences
Sequestri	Sequestrationes	Confiscations
Serie	–	Series
Stato	–	Conservation status
Strade	Strate	Roads
Superfondo	–	“Superfonds”
Termini	Termini	Terms

(Contd.)

ITALIANO	LATIN	ENGLISH
Testimonianze	Testes	Witness
Tipologia documentaria	–	Record type
Tipologia testuale	–	Acts
Produzione	–	Creation
Deposito	–	Deposit
Guardia	–	Disposition
Unità di conservazione	–	Storage unit
Vie	Vie	Roads
Volume	Volumen	Volume

**Table 1** Translation Table. Latin original forms (when existing) and English translations of Italian terms used in the dataset.

over the years and, within each chest, by individual units characterized by the alphabetical reference that the register had acquired following its reorganization.

### (3.2.) THE REGISTRI TABLE

For each description of an archival unit in the *Liber seu memoriale*, a row of the *Registri* (i.e., books) table of the dataset was created, marked by a progressive numeric identification code (column «ID»). For each row, the information arranged in the columns was derived partially from the descriptions themselves, and partially, when possible, from the corresponding registers existing in the ASBo.

With the exception of Latin descriptions and headings, all the other information is in Italian (see [Table 1](#) for translation). The descriptions of the archival units in the *Liber seu memoriale* have been transcribed in full in the column «Inventory description».<sup>8</sup> From the descriptions, we took information about the chest number («Chest»), and the archival «Alphabetic reference». For the records that have not survived these descriptions are the only sources of information. This is why, for lost documents we also derived from the descriptions other data in other columns: «Record type», «Writing material», and, if present in the descriptions, the «Number of leaves in the description», and acts recorded in the document («Acts» column) and the names of the persons responsible involved in the production of the document («Person(s) responsible» columns. By drawing up a scheme that could be applied to a large set of documents, these persons were divided into three types: the person «Responsible for the administrative process», in this case the *capitano del popolo*, the persons «Responsible for the documentary production», i.e., the captain's judge or judges, and the persons «Responsible for documentary process», namely the material extenders, i.e., the notary or notaries. From the start and end dates of the mandate of the *capitano del popolo* were derived, in the absence of other information (i.e., for lost documents), the start and end dates of writing the document.

The work of identifying the records described by the *Liber seu memoriale*, carried out by Armando Antonelli, constituted the most challenging part of building the dataset and made it possible to integrate numerous other pieces of information in other columns of the *Registri* table. Four elements were taken into consideration to identify a register described with an archival unit currently present in the ASBo: the three persons responsible for the document (*capitano del popolo*, judge and notary, and the alphabetic reference). If these four elements of identification coincided, the identification was marked as *certa* (i.e., certain) in the «Identification» column. In other cases, when one of the elements (e.g., notary's name) did not match, the acts recorded, and the number of leaves were also considered. In the case where these other elements matched, the identification was qualified as *incerta* (i.e., uncertain).

Although most of the individual descriptions in the *Liber seu memoriale* were identified with single records currently in archives, the research revealed several more complex situations which required adaptations in the dataset. In some cases, a single book described by the 1324 inventory was found to be currently dismembered into several books. In this case the

<sup>8</sup> The version in which these descriptions appear in the dataset is taken from a working transcription that contains some differences from the final one. Therefore, to cite the text of the descriptions, it will be necessary to refer to Antonelli & Milani (2024).

row of the *Liber seu memoriale* description has been repeated as many times as there are current corresponding registers, and in each of the repetitions the modern reference code of the corresponding register has been reported in «Reference code» column. This has also been reported in the «Notes» column. In other cases, different registers, which in the *Liber seu memoriale* appear distinct and described in different descriptions, were found to be bound together in one currently existing register. In these cases, the register was reported as *aggregato* (i.e., *Sammelband*) in the «Conservation status» column, and the leaves of the existing register that matched the corresponding description were indicated in the «Notes» column.

In still other cases we found records from the period covered by the *Liber seu memoriale* which, although they should in principle be inventoried in the chests corresponding to the *capitano del popolo* under whom they were produced, do not appear in the 1324 inventory. The identification code of these documents has a “p” before the number and in the «Identification» column they were indicated as *assente* (i.e., absent).

The identification of the corresponding existing registers made it possible to add other elements. The text of the Heading was transcribed in the «Heading» column, when possible, from a modern inventory of the *Giudici del capitano del popolo series* written by Montorsi and Scaccabarozzi (2011), otherwise directly from the register. In the «dimensions» column the dimensions of the short side («b»), of the long side («h») and of the thickness («p») are measured in millimetres (mm). In the «Number of leaves and white pages» column was reported the number of existing leaves («ff»), the number of unwritten faces of these leaves («bb»), and when present the number of single pieces of parchment or paper bound between the pages («ced»). The presence and the material of the cover were inserted in column «Cover». The «Foliation» was identified as modern, ancient, expressed in Roman or Arabic numbers. The date of the first and last act recorded was inserted in columns «First date» and «Last date»). In «Acts» column were mentioned the acts presented in the description, in columns tagged «Person(s) responsible» were added other persons responsible, especially notaries, not mentioned in the descriptions of the 1324 inventory.

Data on the life-cycle of the document were included in columns «Creation», «Deposit» and «Disposition», as in the associated «First» and «Last» «date(s)» columns. To create categories that would apply to other medieval documents, this life cycle was divided into three phases: creation, deposit, and disposition, all of which were connected to an office and dated. The office of the creation phase (when the document remained in the office where it was produced), was identified on the basis of the archival description of the 1324 inventory, the header of the actual register, or the title of the responsible person for documentation (the judge). The creation dates have been inferred from the first and last recorded act (in the case of an extant register), otherwise from the first and last recorded document in other books produced during the mandate of the responsible person for the administrative process (the *capitano del popolo*). In the next step, the document was transferred to a place of deposit. In the case of the documents in the dataset we know (from other inventories) that they were certainly transferred into the *camera actorum* but we are not certain that they were already in the *camera populi*. The dates of this phase were set after the last recorded act (the end date of the creation phase) and 1324, the date of the *Liber seu memoriale*. In the subsequent phase, the document was deposited in a final archive where it was to remain until its transfer to the ASBo where it remains today. That is why the dates are the year 1324 (the date of the inventory) and October 22, 1874, (the birthdate of ASBo).

The identified documents were eventually supplemented with data concerning the current archival reference, divided down into its various hierarchical levels: «Superfonds», «Fonds», «Series», «Subseries», «Storage unit» and «Reference code».

### (3.2.) THE PERSONE TABLE

In the *Registri* table, the names of individuals occupying the «Responsible» columns are expressed using alphanumeric codes consisting of the letter N (for Name) and a progressive number. In the *Persone* («persons») table a row has been created for each of these alphanumeric codes («Person ID»). Each row corresponds to an individual mentioned in the descriptions of the *Liber seu memoriale*, in the heading of the registers or in both these sources. The names, for which the most common Latin form has been transcribed, have been divided into various

elements that characterized the onomastic system in use in medieval Italy: «First name»; «Patronymic»; «Family name»; «Profession»; «Italian form of the family name»; «Place of origin»; «City-commune under whose jurisdiction the place of origin was located»; «Office(s)» held in the *Liber seu memoriale* and/or the extant registers.

### (3.3.) THE CURIE TABLE

In the *Registri* table, the *curia* in which each document was produced is indicated (in «ID Curia» column) by an alphanumeric code composed of the letters «ID» followed by a progressive number. In the *Curie* table, an equivalent number of rows has been created for each of these alphanumeric codes («Curia ID» column). Each row corresponds to the *curia* of an individual *capitano del popolo* governing a semester mentioned in the titles of the *Liber seu memoriale* or in the heading of the extant documents or in both (column B). For each *curia*, the date of the oldest act (column «First date») and the date of the most recent act (Column «Last date») present in one of the extant registers are provided. The following columns («ID Capitano del popolo»; «ID Judge(s)»; «ID Notary(es)») list all the individuals directly part of the *curia*, expressed by the identification codes of the *Personae* table. Using the same sources and the same codes, the final columns («Massaro del Comune»; «Ufficiale comunale»; «Podestà») list other persons who collaborated with the *curia* of the *capitano del popolo* but were not directly part of it, either because they were citizens of Bologna or because they were part of the *curia* of the other foreign magistrate, the *podestà*.

## (4) RESULTS

The *Camera Populi 1324* dataset has already been utilized in two scientific projects: a critical edition of the source material and a virtual reconstruction of the Popolo's Archives. Based on the transcription made by Armando Antonelli for the dataset, the authors have provided a printed critical edition of the *Liber seu memoriale*, enriched with two introductions (one about the production of the *capitano del popolo*'s documents, and the other about their archiving), apparatus and indexes: Antonelli & Milani (2024). In this publication the text of the *Liber seu memoriale* is provided in a philologically accurate form, and many questions regarding its origin and its potential for the study of the medieval administration and archives are extensively addressed and discussed.

The entire dataset has also served as the base for the design, development, and web publication of a website that virtually reconstructs the *Camera Populi* as documented in the *Liber seu memoriale*.<sup>9</sup> This site allows web users to appreciate the topographical representation of the fonds and its chests. Users can navigate within these chests to search for documents and access detailed descriptions of archival units, including pictures and all the information present in the dataset. The same website also enables searches on the individuals involved and the composition of the *curie*. The site is designed for three main audiences: archivists and archival historians, historians of medieval politics and documentation, and researchers on medieval Bologna.

## (5) REUSES

These three target audiences are indeed formed by the same individuals who may find the *Camera Populi 1324* dataset valuable for their research. The detailed description of a collection of over seven hundred and fifty archival units opens up various types of research opportunities in the fields of political history, administration, and practical use of writing in the Middle Ages. The examples provided below are just a few possible cases of use. The dataset includes codicological data (material, dimensions, headings) on a specific type of documentation, that of the daily administration books, which has been studied less than others. It can be the base for a larger survey. It also provides data on various acts related to judicial and administrative procedures. Additionally, it offers information about the members of the itinerant curie that circulated in communal Italy, including well-known figures in the fields of legal history and literature.

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<sup>9</sup> Camera Aetorum: the Archives of the medieval commune of Bologna <https://bologna.archivalcity.org/> (last accessed: 10 December 2023).

Indeed, the data available in the *Camera Populi 1324* dataset can be valuable for both pure academic research and research-oriented teaching. Researchers can use the dataset to track the activities of specific individuals who repeatedly governed or administered the city of Bologna (by extracting information related to the documentation of a single individual or *curia*). It can also be used to reconstruct the context in which certain communal offices operated during the period (by extracting information related to the documentation of a single office related to the creation of certain documents). Furthermore, it enables more in-depth analytical research on short timeframes, such as a five-year period, a year, or a semester, by consulting the rich preserved documentation (by extracting data related to the documentation of a specific period). These data can also be integrated into other research on medieval inventories to achieve the most accurate representation possible of one of the oldest preserved European archives, that of the city-commune of Bologna.

The data, whether aggregated with data from other archives or used separately, can be employed to calculate how much medieval documentation has been lost over the centuries. This would enable scholars to better understand how past archival choices have influenced the survival and representativeness of medieval documents.

Finally, the flexible structure of the dataset has been designed to be adaptable and applicable to other medieval and premodern collections, using sufficiently general categories. This means that scholars working with other ancient inventories can examine, test, and customize this structure for their own research and tailor it to the specific needs of the archival collections they are working with. This allows for greater versatility in using the dataset for a wide range of archive history and research projects.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Giuliano Milani: Conceptualization, Data curation, Funding Acquisition, Methodology, Project Administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing, review & editing.

Armando Antonelli: Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Writing – original draft.

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