By convention and almost by nature, letters embody exclusive communication between writer and recipient (who may then exchange roles). But purported privacy does not exclude both parties having a wider audience in mind. A further layer must be considered too since the versions of the medieval letters or model letters that have come down to us in the manuscripts are frequently suspected to be rewritten, faked, or composed as model letters. Modern scholarship often focuses on the fictionality of such letters and is used to distinguish stylistic models from “real” letters, so preventing letters which appear as didactic examples from being used as historical sources. And yet many of the model-epistles included in the medieval treatises of letter-writing cannot be easily defined as “fiction” in the modern sense of the word. Thus the exploration of the meeting points between different disciplinary approaches itself represents a highly productive research method.

This conference will bring together speakers on letters as literary documentations and as documentary inventiveness. How do letters document specific instances of reading, writing or rewriting? How do we distinguish between fictional letters, if any, and real ones? How does looking at ‘made-up’ letters help us to better understand medieval notions of fictionality? Why and how are letters produced to inform the historical context of other texts? The Latin tradition will be of special interest, but contributions from other European literatures are also comprised. The program includes papers on unedited texts, and workshops on celebrated cases of disputed authorship: women’s letters, Epistolae duorum amantium, Baudri of Bourgueil and Constance, Dante’s (?) Letter to Cangrande.

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September 9-11, 2013,
Università di Siena
Scuola Superiore Santa Chiara
September, 9

15.00-17.00

Saluti Francesco Stella
Opening lectures

Wim Verbaal (Ghent)
Epistolary Voices and the Fiction of History
Anne-Marie Turcan (Paris)
L’ars dictaminis, pour quoi faire?
Paolo Cammarosano (Trieste)
Lettere fittizie e lettere autentiche nel medioevo italiano (secc. XII-XIV)
Walter Isebaert (Bruxelles)
Medieval Letters and Letter-Collections: a Letter is not a Letter is not a Letter...

17.30-19.00

I Before “Ars dictaminis”: the Early Middle Ages

Mary Garrison (York), The Typology of Early Medieval Letter Collections and Authorial Sense of Posterity: Boniface, Alcuin, and Others
Francesco Mosetti Casaretto (Torino) L’epistola di Ermenrico fra finzione e realtà
Carlos Pérez González (Burgos) Las epistolae de Eginardo: un modelo estilístico de epistolario, fuente histórica para el conocimiento de la Germania medieval.
Chair Stéphane Gioanni (Roma).

September, 10

9.00-11.00 II. XI-XII Centuries: ”Ars dictaminis” and the Epistolary Turn

Elisabetta Bartoli (Firenze) Da Maestro Guido a Guido Faba: autobiografia e lettera d’amore tra la seconda e la terza generazione di dittatori
Vito Sivo (Foggia) Prosa e versi nel Registrum di Paolo Camaldolese
Florian Hartmann (Bonn) Il valore sociale dell’ars dictaminis e il self-fashioning dei dittatori comunali
Sara Moens-Jeroen Deploige (Ghent) Epistolary Self-fashioning and the Construction of Authoritative Personae in Guibert of Gembloux’ Letter Collections
Chair Gian Carlo Alessio

11.30-13.30

III. Round Table Women’s Letters

Greti Dinkova-Bruun (Toronto) Aegidius of Paris and his Two Letters to Bishop Odo
Roberto Angelini (Firenze) Donne di potere nell’epistolario di Idheberto di Lavardin
Ivan Boserup (København) An Ambiguous Liber epistularum. The Letter Collection of Abbot William of Æbelholt
Chair Reka Forrai (CML)

15.00-16.30 III. Round Table Women’s Letters

Peter Dronke (Cambridge)
Women’s Love-Letters from Tegernsee
Joan Ferrante (New York) What Really Matters in Medieval Women’s Correspondence
Chair Lucie Doležalová (Praha)

17.00-19.00 IV. Round Table Duo amantes

Stephen Jaeger Poetic Style in the Epistolae duorum amantium With a Balance Sheet on the Ascription to Abelard and Heloise (Urbana)
Paolo Garbini (Roma Sapienza) Il pubblico della ”Rota Veneris” di Boncompagno da Signa
Discussants: Constant Mews (Monash), Ileana Pagani (Salerno).
Chair Francesco Stella

September, 11

9.00 –11.00 V. XIII and XIV Centuries

Ronald Witt (Duke University) Ars dictaminis: Victim of Ars notarie?
Fulvio Delle Donne (Potenza) Dalle lettere ai dictamina. Processi di finzionalizzazione e tradizione testuale
Benoît Grèvin (CNRS Paris) From Letters to dictamina and Back. Recycling Texts and Textual Collections in Late Middle-Age Europe (XIII-XIVth centuries).

11.30-13.00

VI. Workshop on Dante and the ”Letter to Cangrande”

Thomas Ricklin (München) L’Epistola a Cangrande: Qualche ipotesi a proposito della sua fortuna
Natascha Tonelli (Siena) Altre epistole letterarie: a Moroello Malaspina e a Cino da Pistoia
Discussants: Alberto Casadei (Pisa), Stefano Carrai (Siena).
Chair Claudia Villa (Bergamo).