This 18-month research project (1 October 2012 – 30 March 2014) investigated the production of conduct literature works for and about women in Italy in the period 1470-1900. It was co-funded by the Leverhulme Trust and the Isaac Newton Trust. The Principal Investigator was Dr Helena Sanson and the Research Associate Dr Francesco Lucioli.

With the spread of the printing press and the establishment of the vernacular as a language of culture, Italy saw a wide output of texts that aimed to define the nature of women, their role in society, and their conduct in everyday life. Fluctuating between prescription and description of life and conduct, on the one hand these works embody the static voice of tradition and seem to offer a high degree of homogeneity in terms of the feminine ideal they present across the centuries; on the other, they defy homogeneity by reflecting and adapting to the changing philosophical, cultural and literary trends across the centuries, thus offering a fascinating account of, and insight into, the changing role of women according to the needs of society.
THE OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT ARE THE FOLLOWING:

A) PUBLICATIONS

Books:


4. Isabella Sori, *Ammaestramenti e ricordi, circa a’ buoni costumi, che deve insegnare una ben creata madre ad una figlia, da citella, d’accasata e da vedova; [...] divisi in dodici lettere [...]. Con [...] dodeci Difese, fatte contro alcuni sinistri giudicii, [...] e nel fine un Panegirico [...] dell’Illustissima città d’Alessandria* (1628), ed. by Helena Sanson (with introduction, notes to the text, glossary, and index of names). Cambridge: MHRA, forthc. 2018 (89,175 words).

Further outputs stemming from research conducted for the project and currently in progress:


Peer-reviewed articles and book chapters:

**P.I. Helena Sanson:**

1. ‘Women, Culture and Conduct at Carnival Time in Annibale Guasco’s *Tela cangiante* (1605)’, *Letteratura italiana antica* 16 (2015), 551-76.

2. ‘Widowhood and Conduct in Late-Sixteenth Century Italy: The Unusual Case of *La vedova del Fusco* (1570)’, *The Italianist* 35 (2015), 1-26.


**R.A. Francesco Lucioli:**


3. “‘Un secolo nel quale nel quale non si pensava che all’amore”’: Notes on Some Sources for *L’istrione* by Jarro (Giulio Piccini)’, *Romance Studies*, 33 (3) (2015), 120-30.


B) WE HAVE CREATED A FIRST CORPUS OF CONDUCT LITERATURE TEXTS FOR AND ABOUT WOMEN 1470-1900, COLLECTING C. 4100 TITLES.
We have put together an initial corpus of works, written by male and female authors, from the last decades of the 15th century until the post-Unification period, that are concerned with women’s nature and their role in society: the texts in the corpus offer an interesting overview of the construction through time of an ‘ideology of conduct’ for women, in relation to economic and cultural changes.

C) PANELS AND PAPERS AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES:


18-21 Sept. 2013 International Conference of the ‘Associazione degli Italianisti Italiani’ (I cantiere dell’italianistica. Ricerca, didattica e organizzazione agli inizi del XXI secolo), Rome. Panel: ‘Conduct Literature for and about Women in Italy’. Speakers: Helena Sanson (University of Cambridge), Francesco Lucioli (University of Cambridge), Lucy Hosker (University of Cambridge); Marzia Caria (University of Cagliari); chair: Marzia Farnetti (University of Ferrara).

19-20 March 2014 RSA, Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting, New York. Panels ‘Conduct Literature Texts for and About Women in Early Modern Italy: Between Description and Prescription’. Speakers: Helena Sanson (University of Cambridge), Francesco Lucioli (University of Cambridge) Paolo Pucci (University of Vermont) (session 1: chair Brian Richardson, University of Leeds); Valerie Hoagland (New York University), Federica Boldrini (University of Catanzaro), Marguerite Deslauriers (McGill University) (session 2: chair Helena Sanson, University of Cambridge).

D) ORGANIZATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE (funded by the Italian Cultural Institute; the Italian Department at the University of Cambridge; The Society for Italian Studies; the Centre for Gender Studies at the University of Cambridge)

20-21 March 2014 ‘Prescribing and Describing Life: Conduct Literature for and about Women in Italy, 1470-1900’.
See: http://www.mml.cam.ac.uk/italian/news/Conduct/Conduct%20programme
E) BOOK EXHIBITION:
17 February-22 March 2014 Cambridge University Library: exhibition of conduct literature texts preserved in the Library, 1470-1900.
See: https://specialcollections.blog.lib.cam.ac.uk/?p=7120

F) BOOK SERIES:
WOMEN AND GENDER IN ITALY 1500-1900/ DONNE E GENDER IN ITALIA 1500-1900 (CLASSIQUES GARNIER, PARIS)
Research conducted for the project highlighted the desirability of a book series that would welcome, among others, also monographic studies that focus on the vast existing body of conduct literature, as well as editions of texts written for and about women.

The new double-blind peer-reviewed series Women and Gender in Italy 1500-1900 is entirely dedicated to women, literature, language, and gender issues in the Italian tradition, with particular reference to the period from the Renaissance to Post-Unification.

It publishes single-authored volumes, edited volumes, as well as critical and annotated editions of texts written by women or about women. The series publishes work in both English and Italian. Volumes are available in paperback and hardback, and electronically.

Classiques Garnier (Paris) has been publishing literary works since 1896.

Members of the editorial board: Novella Bellucci (Università La Sapienza, Rome); Abigail Brundin (University of Cambridge); Tatiana Crivelli Speciale (University of Zurich); Ursula Fanning (University College Dublin); Laura Fortini (Università degli Studi Roma Tre); Ann Hallamore Caesar (University of Warwick); Francesco Lucioli (University College Dublin); Gilberto Pizzamiglio (Università Ca’ Foscari, Venice); Tiziana Plebani (Biblioteca Marciana, Venice); Brian Richardson (University of Leeds); Sarah Gwyneth Ross (Boston College); Lisa Sampson (University College London); Jane Tylus (Yale University); Diego Zancani (University of Oxford); Gabriella Zarri (University of Florence).