Abstract

In the past few years, an increasing effort has been put into developing new systems for gathering, sharing and describing images with the help of digital technologies. Projects have been taking advantage of the new developments for creating databases and digital tools to gather and make searchable Medieval and Early-Modern images of different kinds (illuminations, paintings, printed illustrations, stamps, etc.)

This one-day workshop will bring together people currently involved in such projects, to discuss the objectives and the technical features of the different platforms, data gathering strategies, methodologies adopted for the iconographic and figurative description and future developments, with a specific focus on the main challenges encountered by each project, possible links, and interoperability.

The main aim of the workshop is to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and the creation of new operating connections within this community of practice, while offering an overview of the state of the art as far as the treatment of digital images as objects of research are concerned.

Speakers

1. Ilaria Andreoli, Fondazione Cini
2. Giles Bergel, Visual Geometry Group, University of Oxford
3. Maria Alessandra Bilotta, Universidade Nova of Lisbon
4. Hans Brandhorst, Iconclass
5. Flavia Bruni, Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unico
6. Jost Depuydt, Plantin Moretus Museum
7. Rembrandt Duits, The Warburg Institute
8. Barbara Ellertson, BASIRA Project
9. Doug Emery, BASIRA Project
10. Gennaro Ferrante, Illuminated Dante Project
11. Nick Herman, BASIRA Project
12. Harald Klinke, LMU Munich
13. Ilenia Maschietto, Fondazione Cini
14. Maria Alessandra Panzanelli Fratoni, Università di Torino
15. Ciro Perna, Illuminated Dante Project
16. Ethienne Postumus, Iconclass
17. Régis Robineau, IIIF/Biblissima Project
18. Maria Alessia Rossi, Index of Medieval Art
19. Drew Thomas, University College Dublin
20. Sandy Wilkinson, University College Dublin

Abstracts (in alphabetical order)

Ilaria Andreoli – Ilenia Maschietto
The Essling LOD Project: objectives and issues
The "Essling LOD" project has two main objectives: to make the unsurpassed catalogue of 15th-16th century Venetian illustrated books compiled by the Prince of Essling, a French collector and scholar, easily accessible and searchable; and make accessible through digital fac-similes the copies it

describes and belonged to Essling, now kept in the library of the Giorgio Cini Foundation. As part of the workshop, will be presented the phases and characteristics of a project based on Linked Open Data technology, as well as some methodological choices adopted to bring uniformity and connectivity to bibliographical data, and the problems encountered.

Giles Bergel
Visual search and the early-modern printed image
Computer vision has made printed images readily searchable, allowing researchers to find unique images; compare them with very similar images; and classify them by type or content. This presentation will briefly introduce a series of collaborations between the Visual Geometry Group (VGG) in Oxford and a number of book historians that have resulted in new resources for the study of printing. The presentation will report on the state of the art in visual search using computer vision, and outline some work in progress in improving its performance, usability and integration with collections systems. Highlighting VGG's suite of open-source software tools, the presentation will brief workshop participants on how to build their own visual search systems with minimal technical effort.

M.A. Bilotta and M.A. Panzanelli Fratoni
The Study of Illustration and Decoration Patterns in Law Manuscripts and Books. The projects
IUS ILLUMINATUM **and** *IVS Commune online*
The IUS ILLUMINATUM international research team, based at the Institute of Medieval Studies of the Institute for Medieval Studies (IEM) the NOVA School of Social Sciences and Humanities of Lisbon and coordinated by Maria Alessandra Bilotta researcher at the same University, it aims to study the illustration and decoration of legal manuscripts and legal documents produced in medieval times. Among the scientific aims of the team, made up of specialists in the illustration of medieval legal manuscripts from different parts of Europe, there is also that of studying the different iconographies that accompany the legal texts and also that of structuring a uniform system description of such illustrations and decorations, making use of the expertise of the specialists involved. By virtue of these skills and aims, the IUS ILLUMINATUM research team was invited to collaborate with the IVS commune *online* project, coordinated by Maria Alessandra Panzanelli Fratoni. In fact, the transmission of legal texts from late Middle Ages to Early Modern Age (14th-17th century) is the focus this latter research project funded by the Ministry of Research and University within a program (Programma Giovani ricercatori "Rita Levi Montalcini") that the speaker is conducting in the Department of Historical Studies of the University of Turin. A database named "IVS Commune online" is being developed which is based on the structure and partially of data already recorded in the TEXT-inc database (http://textinc.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/). IVS Commune *online* is meant to expand the research and include analytical descriptions of legal texts from both manuscripts and printed editions (1350-1650). In this frame, to illustrations and decoration patterns major attention is paid, being considered as a part of the texts. Therefore the database includes a special field also for linking to the dedicated resources, to start with the 15cIllustration db. Most of all, a collaboration has been started with Maria Alessandra Bilotta and "IUS ILLUMINATUM" project, which aims to produce some Guidelines for a coordinated system of description of illustration and decoration patterns in the field of Law.

Hans Brandhorst and Etienne Postumus
Annotation, standardization and collaboration
When we think about cataloguing and providing subject access to images in the digital age, we have a tendency to focus on technical solutions for problems that often are not of a technical nature. A lot of energy, for instance, is spent on software to repair problems caused by the lack of consensus about standards for subject metadata, rather than on reaching consensus and actually applying them.
In our contribution we shall argue that this is a case of "the cart pulling the oxen" (Adage I vii 28: Plaustrum bovem trahit) and propose a more practical approach, shifting the emphasis from better

software to better data. In a little case study we shall demonstrate how standardization - via the use of Iconclass - facilitates annotation and collaboration.

We shall select some items from the website "French emblems at Glasgow" (https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/), in particular from Guillaume Le Perrière's "Morosophie", and show how they could be linked to textual sources like the Parabolae and Adagia collected and published by Desiderius Erasmus. We aim to demonstrate that collaboratively annotating those texts and images works better if a shared classification is used. The Arkyves platform where our annotations are stored, however, is at the moment located behind a paywall.The second part of our contribution will consist of a demonstration of the 'state of affairs' regarding the new version of the Iconclass system, which is presently under construction. Workshop participants are invited to assess what has been done so far and contribute their ideas.

A final - also non-technical - topic we shall address is that of open access. Our present situation is hybrid: the Glasgow site and Iconclass are both open access. The Arkyves platform, which contains the annotation tools, is not. This raises an interesting question about annotating and collaborating.

Flavia Bruni
EDIT16 2021: new user interface, new tools, new chances for interoperability
Conceived in the eighties as a traditional series of volumes, the survey of sixteenth-century Italian editions EDIT16 has gone through several challenges and changes but only seen minor improvements in its website since its launch as an online catalogue in March 2000. This paper will provide a brief overview on the newly designed user interface for EDIT16, which will be launched by the end of 2021, with a main focus on embedded tools to explore and compare digital images, especially in the perspective of interoperability with other relevant projects.

Joost Depuydt
Opening up the collection of 14,000 woodblocks of the Officina Plantiniana
The Plantin-Moretus Museum keeps an extraordinary collection of 14,000 woodblocks. With these examples of true craftmanship, book illustrations and other decorative elements were printed in the Plantin printing house. In the 1960's, all blocks were systematically ordered, individually numbered and printed. All these pictures were collected in five large volumes, which could only be browsed in the reading room of the museum. Around the same time, all blocks were treated with a woodworm product, which later turned out to be toxic. As a result consultation of the blocks was substantially difficult. Recently all the prints have been made digitally available, so that everyone can browse online in this wealth of images. Impressed by Plantin offers a simple image-related access via keywords. It now serves as an inexhaustible source for new artistic creations. With the support of the Flemish government all woodblocks have been digitally photographed over the past two years. This unique collection is now available online for the international research community. For easy searching in this huge collection, all woodblocks are being described in our collection database. The collection contains very diverse subjects, each of which requires its own approach. We will focus on the challenge to describe the 4,000 botanical images and how an accidental find helped us describe 18th century ornamental initials.

Rembrandt Duits
Classifying Early Modern Iconography. The Warburg's Wittkower System in Digital Form
The Photographic Collection of the Warburg Institute, although a medium-size photo archive, is one of the few general survey collections of art pre-1800 that is organised by subject matter or iconography. For this purpose, the Collection uses a unique and idiosyncratic classification system, the core of which was developed by Rudolf Wittkower during the 1930s. This classification system has, for obvious reasons, overlaps with Iconclass, but is also different from it. Over the past ten years, staff at the Photographic Collection have been working to translate the classification system into an-on-line digital taxonomy. The paper will address the challenges of this process, including the transition from analogue to digital, adding new content, and issues of interoperability.

Barbara Ellertson
Images as Windows: the BASIRA Project
Books as Symbols in Renaissance Art is a collection of images of European art — largely painting and sculpture — which contain portrayals of books.

A collaboration between independent scholars and the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, this database is being moved onto a custom-developed platform using Open Source software. The public search interface, an Open Access web application, is planned for launch during the winter of 2022. Our presentation will summarize our current state of work, our upcoming release of a public search interface, and the challenges we found in organizing metadata for a wide variety of disciplines. As a relatively young project, the BASIRA team probably has more questions to ask than solutions to propose. Among the topics we'll discuss are issues of data integrity, iconography classification, and future interfaces with other collections of visual resources.

Harald Klinke
On the use of distant viewing in art history. Feature extraction, dimension reduction and the grammar of images.
Digital methods in art history allow computer-aided access to quantities of images that represent works of art. Based on the term "distant reading", this is often referred to as "distant viewing". In this talk, the processing methods of Big Image Data as well as the possibilities and limits of generating knowledge from data will be critically examined. How do algorithms constitute similarity? What evidence do meta-images create? After all, what do we learn about the works of art? This talk suggests answers that are applicable to art history projects that use images as data.

Maria Alessia Rossi
The Index of Medieval Art at Princeton: A Database of Medieval Visual Traditions
For the past century, the Index of Medieval Art has maintained a thematic archive of medieval iconographic subjects dated from early Christianity until the sixteenth century. Founded in 1917, this archive originally took the form of a series of card files housed in two shoe boxes at Princeton University. Very quickly this endeavor grew into an elaborate system of physical files, and then into an initial digital platform in 1991 that has now been redesigned and renewed. Throughout this long period, specialized researchers have continued painstakingly to catalogue every significant detail of works of art in an expanding medieval corpus. As we move into the twenty-first century, the Index's challenge is to continue showcasing medieval iconography through an online database that preserves the virtues of its physical archive while at the same time implementing new advanced search options, filters, and browse tools that will answer to a new generation of users.

Régis Robineau
Manuscripts Iconography (and beyond) in the Biblissima Portal
The Biblissima Portal provides unified access to more than 300,000 illuminations in manuscripts from French collections (from the BnF and many public libraries). This dataset results from the merging of two major databases on illuminated manuscripts: Initiale and Mandragore. In this talk we will present the work done to reconcile the two iconographic vocabularies and show how we leverage the IIIF standards to let users visualize large sets of digital images. A quick demo of the current features will be given, with a glance to the ongoing developments and future challenges in the framework of the Biblissima project (2021-2029). Extensions to this work are indeed planned in the future towards illustrated printed books, sigillography and epigraphy.

Sandy Wilkinson and Drew Thomas
Ornamento Europe: an atlas of the visual geography of the Renaissance book
Based on forty percent of all known European books printed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (ca. 150,000 printed books/pamphlets and 34,000 prints), Ornamento Europe has created a record of some six million ornamental features, including: musical notation, printers' devices, ornate letters, fleurons, maps, portraits, and illustrations. Assisted by the Irish Centre for High End Computing and the Oxford Visual Geometry Group, we have embraced and leveraged Deep Learning and Image Matching technologies. Each element has been allocated a type classification (to which Iconclass descriptors have been added); it is our intention that these descriptions will be enhanced as the project progresses, combining Deep Learning and expert intervention (though this will be subject to the outcome of a current round of funding applications). Each visual element we have identified so far has also been passed through image matching technology made available by the Oxford VGG, but rather than relying on their interface to undertake searches manually, we have systematically compared each image with every other item in the repository. The results of our efforts—which we are only really now in a position to even begin considering—will allow us to suggest places of publication and printers for a large number of anonymous publications in the period, and to trace how blocks from letters to illustrations have been passed from printer to printer, and in some cases from city to city and region to region. The opportunities to offer clues to assist in unsolved bibliographical mysteries, or to uncover previously hidden networks and associations, are very clear. As important, it is our hope that Ornamento Europe will help facilitate research into the art of early print, not least by offering the most comprehensive catalogue of book illustrations available; more broadly, it is likely to reveal for the first time local, national and transnational trends in the visual geography of the Renaissance book.