Ideas and Plannings for a New Watermark Database of the DFG-Handschriftenzentren

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I will give you a short report on the state of plannings and ideas or wishes for a new watermark database in Stuttgart. The idea was born on a meeting of the heads of the German manuscript departments with cataloguing competence (Handschriftenzentren). The heads observed that in the past and current cataloguing of the medieval occidental manuscripts supported since the 1960s by a special DFG programme in diverse libraries innumerous watermarks have been collected. For an unknown amount of these there are no references in Briquet, Piccard and the other known watermark repertories. Due to the positive experiences, especially with *Piccard-Online,* the conference commissioned the Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart to check the requirements and possibilities for creating a new watermark database that works *like* or *together with Piccard-Online.* The representative of the DFG showed interest in such a programme and suggested collaboration with the Hauptsstaatsarchiv Stuttgart.

At the very moment I can say—and this information is quite fresh as it is the result of a meeting on last Thursday—that the **cooperation partners** in the project indeed will be the Württembergische Landesbibliothek as masterminding institution and the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg as developper and provider of the necessary information technology. But we're still at the beginning of our planning, and there are more possible partners on the list.

In short our idea is to create an open database as an additional reference tool to *Piccard-Online, WZMA* and *WILC*—for mentioning only

the largest ones. The aim is to make digitally accessible watermark collections unpublished so far and to provide for the future a **central publication opportunity** for additional watermarks out of current cataloguing of manuscripts or any other transmission on paper.

Perhaps a word on our interest in the BERNSTEIN project: Of course we're looking forward to an environment provided by BERNSTEIN to place our ressource and to make it accessible for the public together with the already existing databases. I think, that's quite clear, but also quite essential for our project.

At the moment I'm visiting libraries and institutions holding watermark collections. I try to figure out the material conditions in which the single records are found, and especially if the collections consist in drawings, rubbers, photographs, radiographies or original paper specimens and if there's metadata on the records and how it looks like. Based on expertise and informations provided by the holding institutions we will make besides a **quality evaluation** a draft of a **quantity structure** of single records that can be expected in a first phase of the project.

The materials to start with as a **basic endowment** of the new database are the existing watermark collections in the manuscript libraries of Leipzig (University Library), Munich (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek) and Berlin (Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz). These are mostly drawings on paper. The Leipzig collection, for example, though small in quantity is of especially high quality because it covers medieval material from Eastern German Librarys. Quite understandably this material is not represented in the Piccard collection, as for the political situation before 1989 Gerhard Piccard could not travel to Eastern German institutions.

This description of this situation is also true for the watermark collection of the Deutsche Buch- und Schriftmuseum in Leipzig, which is of

even more particular interest for its about 300,000 single records covering widely the modern period which is very much under-represented in the other ressources.

We're also thinking about **how to raise new content**. For example, as a part of the project one could think of the publication of the watermarks in the incunabula collection in Stuttgart, which is the second largest collection in Germany. Any way, the DFG seems to be willing to foster watermark indexing within new cataloguing projects of medieval manuscripts.

As our idea is to keep this new database open for new input it is absolutely necessary to build a **flat architecture**, avoiding classification hierarchies that we have now in a highly complex design in *Piccard-Online.* In this respect the *ComponentModel* developped by the BERNSTEIN project should be very welcome for us. I think it would be a strong argument in our application, if we could rely on the implementation of such an authoritative European standard in our database. I'm very happy that the Landesarchiv as our future project partner has promised that it will possible to adapt the software used for Piccard-Online to fit these new requirements.

In respect of the **basics of watermark research** our programme should include the development of a **standard for the reproduction** of watermarks taking into account that most institutions we're going to work together with are not able to use beta-radiography—in other words: I guess, we're not done with drawings. Furthermore it should include the definition of a **minimum standard for indexing watermarks**, comprising, for example, holding institution, source, date, iconographic desription. This standard should on the other side be flexible enough to cover additional information of all kinds satisfying so the needs of collections with deeper and not so deep descriptions. In any case we should be able to manage complex watermarks, to relate watermark pairs and marks and countermarks etc.

Concerning the question of enhancing **retrieval** I strongly believe that our programme should include the development of **authority files** (Normdateien) for alternative terms and multilingual classification. I think that should be quite an interesting option also for BERNSTEIN. With this outlook I'd like to conclude my remarks.

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