

Uppsala University Coin Cabinet
Working Papers

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Digitizing Matariki University Museum Coin Collections
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The aim of this workshop was to gather the experience and expertise of various researchers and curators of university coin collections in Europe and the US, who are by a majority members of the Matariki Network of Universities, established in 2010 by seven likeminded universities in order to draw upon their collective strengths and collaborate, grow, and excel in research and education. It is all important to identify best practice models for the future digitization of the universities' numismatic collections, for instance by improving and expanding existing databases, in order to enable universities and their museums to better conserve, protect, and present the collections in their possession. The ultimate goal is of course that they may be broadly accessed and utilized even by scholars and students who are not necessarily trained in numismatics, both at the member universities of the Matariki Network of Universities and around the globe.

The conference was organized by STEFAN KRMNICEK (Tübingen) and HENDRIK MÄKELER (Uppsala). Representatives of various collections presented their own processes and designs and invited feedback for creating better platforms and troubleshooting various facets of the process of digitizing numismatic collections. This was meant to be merely the inception of an open dialog.

The conference opened with an address by the Dean of Tübingen's Faculty of Humanities, JÜRGEN LEONHARDT, who emphasized his delight at the Matariki Network's success thus far in realizing their mission of collaborating on shared interests. RICHARD POSAMENTIR (Tübingen) welcomed the conference on behalf of the Institute of Classical Archaeology and acted as the chair of the first day of the conference. He noted the institute's commitment to international collaboration and the opportunity to exchange and share resources and ideas.

FRANK DUERR (Tübingen) discussed the progress that MUT (Museums der Universität Tübingen), the central institution of all collections of the university, has made since its inception in 2006. The mission of this body is to protect, maintain, and promote the many artefacts in its multifarious collections; all in the name of education and the preservation of cultural heritage. They hope to continue to enhance their reputation within the university and community by making their collections more accessible, however the primary hurdle is a lack of funding needed to facilitate such expansion. In 2010 MAM|MUT was established with two primary, long-term, objectives: the digitization of all collections and the educating and training of others in using these resources. MUT's first project, carried out by students and staff, led to the archiving, scanning, and digitizing of 20,000 magazines and, eventually, to the production

of a related exhibit “Aufmacher”. Students learned how to care for artefacts, input data, create a useful database, and design and carry out an exhibit. Due to the success of this project, two further projects have been approved and are being carried out now. Thus far, MAM|MUT has been successful in the primary areas of its mission and in training the next generation of conservators, curators, researchers, and promoters of the preservation of material artefacts.

STEFAN KRMNICEK (Tübingen) followed up with an explanation of the history and condition of Tübingen’s coin collection and projected plans for its preservation, publication, and digitization. Today, Tübingen’s university coin collection is one of the largest and most important of its kind in Germany. At the moment only 32 coins from their collection can be found online (Corpus Nummorum Thracorum) but Krmnicek explained that Tübingen has just embarked on the “Münzkabinett” model (already used in Berlin, Bonn and Düsseldorf) because it is efficient, easily maintained, and constantly updated. In addition, he emphasized that Tübingen’s catalogue would provide comprehensive descriptions of coins so that the database will be accessible and useful to a broad range of researchers. In addition, coins will be linked to other platforms, which collect data related to numismatic dates, find spots, mints, hoards, etc. The transfer of data from print catalogues to a digital platform, along with the cataloguing of ~15,000 coins will provide valuable hands-on training for students. Already students (at the Bachelor’s and Master’s level) are required to take each a lecture and seminar in numismatics and are invited and encouraged to assist faculty members working on projects related to the collection, which highlights Tübingen’s Institute of Classical Archaeology’s unique role in German academia as a centre for numismatics research, teaching, and public outreach through its university museum coin collection. The process of creating a useful database will be facilitated and improved through the integration of faculty, curatorial, and student cooperation.

ROBERTA L. STEWART (Dartmouth) gave a history of her involvement with Dartmouth’s Greco-Roman coin collection and emphasized her commitment to using coins and the process of creating catalogues and databases to educate her students. Since 1993 Dartmouth’s Hood Museum has been able to offer a paid student internship in the coins department each semester. The student works with curators to study and catalogue the collection. In this way the collection is constantly maintained and students receive sophisticated training. Stewart explained some of the particular problems she has had in providing visibility to the collection since they are part of an art history collection and are often overshadowed by larger, more visually striking artefacts. The iconography of

coins is only one facet of their significance to research. To demonstrate the wealth of knowledge that can be accessed from coins, Stewart taught a course in 2009 entitled “From Art to Artifact.” Each student became an expert of a single coin. First they studied visual aspects of their coin to learn that each aspect (e.g. portrait, symbol, Latin phrase, date) might provide valuable comparanda for multidisciplinary studies. To demonstrate that coins are both valuable as individual pieces but also collectively, Stewart required students to plot the find spots of their coins. All of their findings were displayed on a website that they designed and produced. Stewart continues to use the finished product as a teaching tool. A second edition of the project was meant to be more user friendly and to build upon strengths of the first website by including more geographic and temporal data. Not yet satisfied that these websites do justice to demonstrate all of the useful facets of coins, Stewart suggested looking toward user friendly, open sourced platforms such as Omeka, which is free and licensed for education. Omeka is similar to ArtStor, so the appearance of coins would be emphasized, and it has the potential to include both basic and more advanced information. Aside from demonstrating the various ways that she has used the creation of databases of coins to teach technology, data collection, numismatics, and ancient Greece and Rome, Stewart also reiterated the importance of attracting potential donors and supporters, who ultimately allow for the continuation of these types of courses and projects.

The last speaker of the night, RICHARD KELLEHER (Cambridge), presented some of the problems and solutions he and his colleagues have encountered while working with the extremely rich collection of coins and metals at the Fitzwilliam Museum. After giving a brief history of the collection at Cambridge, he explained that the primary job of the Numismatics Department’s permanent staff was to preserve, study, and document their collection in order to provide catalogues for visiting scholars and students. The hope is to soon have the entire collection fully digitized but this has proved a gargantuan task given the sheer size of the collection and the time needed to obtain high quality images and thorough documentation. Internal users are able to access a comprehensive database (AdLib) that documents each object as thoroughly possible (with a minimum standard in place) and allows information to be added over time. External users may find information about some coins in the collection through the Fitzwilliam’s “Collections Explorer” website or other external sites. While there are many coins in “Collections Explorer”, the images and information varies in quality. However, Kelleher emphasized that everything is constantly being updated and given the great progress made just in the last few years, he

was optimistic that the collection will continue to be more accessible and useful for potential researchers.

The second day of the conference was opened by RICHAR KELLEHER, who acted as that day's conference chair.

HENDRIK MÄKELER (Uppsala) began the day's discussion with a brief history of Uppsala University's collection. He emphasized that one of its great assets was its wealth of supporting documentation (e.g. receipts, certificates). Given this great breadth of documentation, Mäkeler and his colleagues have been committed to creating a database that is able to highlight and make accessible materials and sources related to each object. Not only are these documents interesting in their own rights but they may also prove useful for a broad audience interested in various facets of numismatics. They presently have two publication series: *Studia Numismatica Upsaliensia* (print) and Uppsala University Coin Cabinet Working Papers (digital). Digitization of the holdings became even more important after Gotland University merged with Uppsala University on 1 July 2013. There was a need to make the numismatic collection accessible at both campuses, and in the long run hopefully also allow for the digitization of Gotland's wealth of Viking treasures. The creation of a numismatic online database as part of the "Alvin" portal for cultural heritage collections was made possible through collaboration with the university's library. The "Alvin" portal is a sister portal to "Diva", the Swedish portal for long-term preservation of digital publications, and it too will soon become a national resource in Sweden. Both portals are built upon open source software. The "Alvin" portal unites and manages metadata from archival finding aids, objects, and authorities (e.g. people, organizations). RAGNAR HEDLUND (Uppsala) took over the presentation and demonstrated the digitization of all ancient and Byzantine coins in the Uppsala University Coin Cabinet, which is funded by the Riksbankens jubileumsfond. The decision to publish Republican coins first was based on the idea that they are particularly appealing and had the potential to draw a large audience. At the moment items are being input into the database at a rate of about forty objects per day. While the database is already largely seen as a success, a few areas remain to be developed, for instance a connection to the Coin Cabinet's website. The most important advantage of the "Alvin" portal is that it is not only able to disseminate the knowledge that is entered into the system by curators but it also generates knowledge by linking related data so that numismatic information is combined with other evidence like incunabula, letters, manuscripts and paintings. Thus, the numismatic holdings may add new approaches to history, economics,

politics, etc. It will hopefully be a model for how various disciplines of humanities can collaborate to create useful, sophisticated, and user-friendly digital resources.

CRAIG BARCLAY (Durham University Museums, Oriental Museum) was unable to attend the workshop and his paper on Durham University Museum's coin collections had, unfortunately, to be cancelled.

The final speaker of the conference was LUTZ ILISCH (Tübingen). In addition to its many Greco-Roman coins, Tübingen boasts one of the world's largest collections of c. 75,000 Islamic coins and Ilisch introduced the history of the collection. He also demonstrated some of the important features of these coins and some of the main differences in the way such coins are collected, catalogued, and preserved. The systematic cataloguing of Islamic coins is relatively new compared with coins of other periods and Ilisch raised the question as to whether it is useful or advisable to skip creating print catalogues of Islamic coins. The issue is not a matter of whether catalogues should be in print or not (since print catalogues can be generated from digital data) but whether or not Islamic coins should first be systematically catalogued so that coins of the same period, location, ruler, etc. will be studied and presented in proximity to each other. Ilisch explained that in determining the date, mint, and authenticity of Islamic coins, the ability to view a collection of related coins all at once is incredibly useful. If digital databases ignore the benefits of viewing coins altogether, as they have historically been able to be viewed in coin cabinets and drawers, they may create problems. The emphasis should not only be on coins as individual objects but also equally, if not more importantly, as components of larger collections based on geography, date, ruler, mint, etc. If Islamic coins are to be included in the databases already created, there needs to be the possibility to include new categories of data (e.g. Arabic script, lunar dates) and ways to convert this data so that it is useful more broadly.

STEFAN KRMNICEK emphasized in his closing remarks that the conference had shed light upon the challenges and goals that are common to the digitization projects at coin collections within but not limited to the Matariki Network of Universities: the objects need to be made accessible to students and staff for teaching and research, their provenance needs to be recorded properly since, in general, the objects have passed through the hands of many people and institutions, not all of which kept careful or accurate documentation, and the objects need to be set in a global research context. The number of suggestions and solutions for more efficiently and effectively producing digital coin catalogues was encouraging and demonstrated the importance of

international collaboration in this field. All partners involved shared the same problems, and it became clear that every single problem had been addressed by at least one of the institutions involved. Hence, joining forces of the very limited staff at the individual university coin cabinets makes sense and helps create a global group of eminent expertise in the field.

The consensus was that numismatic collections can add to the excellence in research and teaching at the partnering universities and that by making these collections available online the Mataraki Network will make a great contribution to the global backbone of numismatic data. By creating a presence online, numismatics will also add to the visibility of the universities involved and better demonstrate the field's continuing relevance. In this way, the importance of preserving coins and other artefacts becomes even more obvious and encourages further research and support. Krmnicek looked forward to seeing the progress of everyone's digitization projects and to future collaborations between university museum coin collections that were sparked during the Tübingen conference.

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Welcome and opening remarks

Jürgen Leonhardt (Department of Humanities, University of Tübingen)

Richard Posamentir (Institute of Classical Archaeology, University of Tübingen)

Papers, 22.10.15

Frank Duerr (Museum of the University of Tübingen, MUT), MAM|MUT – Digital documentation in the Museum of the University of Tübingen MUT

Stefan Krmnicek (Institute of Classical Archaeology, University of Tübingen), Ancient coins @ Tübingen: Digitizing and teaching

Roberta L. Stewart (Department of Classics, Dartmouth College), Roman History in Nummis: Coins and Computers

Richard Kelleher (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge), Coins in Cambridge: Documentation and digital presentation

Papers, 23.10.15

Hendrik Mäkeler & Ragnar Hedlund (Uppsala University Coin Cabinet), The big picture: Cataloguing coins alongside archival and other data

Craig Barclay (Durham University Museums, Oriental Museum) Durham University
Museums: Coin collections [cancelled]

Lutz Ilisch (Department of Oriental and Islamic Studies, Tübingen), Islamic numismatic
data between database and collection

Closing Remarks

Stefan Krmnicek (Institute of Classical Archaeology, University of Tübingen)