Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme

Calderón, Carme López, project dir. Galicones. Database

José Julio García Arranz

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Découvrir la revue

Citer ce compte rendu

Arranz, J. (2022). Compte rendu de [Calderón, Carme López, project dir.
Galicones. Database]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*,
45(3), 259–262. https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v45i3.40439

Calderón, Carme López, project dir.
Galicones. Database.
Santiago: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 2018. Accessed 6 March 2022.
galicones.com.

Galicones is an academic database and digital library available in two languages:
Spanish and English. It aims at reproducing, cataloguing, and improving access
to a wide variety of engraved images taken from early modern illustrated books;
that is, materials published between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries
and currently held at the Biblioteca General de la Universidad de Santiago de
Compostela in Spain. The database was created in 2018 as an outcome of the
research project La Gestión del Conocimiento en las Humanidades Digitales:
Iconclass Index y Estudio Iconográfico de una Muestra de la Colección de Libros
Raros de la USC (Knowledge management in the digital humanities: Iconclass
and the iconographic study of a selection of rare books at the USC). The project
is currently directed by Carme López Calderón, who is also responsible for the
digital platform. The website is generally oriented to scholars in the field of
iconography and, more particularly, to researchers interested in emblem books
and related works.

  According to the website, this digital platform has two central objectives:
(1) the iconographic analysis of the individual images identified and collected
in the project; and (2) the reception of these images through the study of their
ownership and potential readers. In relation to the first objective, the metadata
associated with each printed element (which is referred to as an "object") incor-
porates Iconclass alphanumeric notations, which are hierarchical and seem to
follow the revised methodology of Erwin Panofsky. Such an approach requires
both an in-depth study of the illustrations and the systematic notation of their
motifs, themes, and meanings, thus facilitating users' access to a full set of in-
terpretations and allowing them to find new and opportune connections, in
line with Jan Białostocki's notion of "encompassing themes."[1]

  The second objective encompasses a study of the ex-libri preserved in the
books included in the project. Information obtained from provenance marks are
included in the metadata with the purpose of identifying past owners and read-
ers—which include priests, laypeople, and religious and civil institutions—so

---

1. Białostocki, "Encompassing Themes."

as to trace the influence that these works may have exerted on the visual and written works produced in these circles.

The database is accessible through Hispana (hispana.mcu.es)—the digital heritage portal that connects archives, libraries, and museums in Spain (among which are the institutional repositories of Spanish universities and the digital libraries of the autonomous communities of Spain)—which is also a national aggregator to the content of Europeana (europeana.eu). The database was built with Java EE and PostgreSQL, and the images are presented through thumbnails, with the option to download in 300 dpi. The usefulness of this database for specialized researchers is evident: even though Galicones is still at an early stage of its implementation, the platform already contains 9 of the 17 books planned for its first phase of development, with 521 engravings (or "objects") catalogued and digitized. Among the books included are many emblematic works: Pedro de Salas's *Affectos divinos con emblemas sagradas* (Valladolid, 1658), a version of Herman Hugo's *Pia desideria*; Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco's *Emblemas morales* (Madrid, 1610); Francisco Núñez de Cepeda's *Idea de el Buen Pastor copiada por los SS. Doctores representada en empresas sacras* (Lyon, 1682); Nicolás de la Iglesia's *Flores de Miraflores, hieroglíficos sagrados, verdades figuradas, sombras verdaderas del mysterio de la Inmaculada Concepción de la Virgen* (Burgos, 1659); and the illustrated emblems of the Latin edition of Filippo Picinelli's *Mundus symbolicus* (Cologne, 1694).

In addition, there are prints from other iconographic works, including treatises on numismatics and antiquities (Vincenzo Scamozzi's *Discorsi sopra L'Antichità di Roma* [Venice, 1583] and Theodore Galle's *Illvstrivm imagines, ex antiquis marmoribus, nomismatibus, et gemmis expressae* [Antwerp, 1606]), mythography (François Pomey's *Panteon mytico, ò Historia fabulosa de los dioses de la Compañia de Jesus* [Madrid, 1764], translated into Spanish and expanded by Lorenzo Díaz de la Madrid), and the cartography of the ancient world (Claudius Ptolemy's *La Geografia di Claudio Tolomeo Alessandrino* [Venice, 1574], translated into Italian by Girolamo Ruscelli).

With regard to copyrights and permissions, users of Galicones can download and publish the platform's images in their academic works, so long as they give the proper reference followed by a credit line: "Courtesy of the Project Galicones, funded by the Programa de axudas á etapa posdoutoral da Xunta de Galicia (Consellería de Cultura, Educación e Ordenación Universitaria)" ("Conditions of Use"). Moreover, once an academic piece is published, Galicones

kindly requests that the author send the reference of the published work to the project director so that the impact of the platform can be documented.

As for the potential venues of investigation, one must highlight Galicones's commitment to foster new studies about iconography and emblematics. For that reason, new researchers should be encouraged to make use of the methods and content housed in this digital library.

Among the strongest qualities of this database is the design of the interface, which is user friendly and intuitive. As mentioned above, the website allows images to be downloaded in good resolution (300 dpi), free of charge. Moreover, it contains an advanced search mode, which enables complex searches, including filters by author, type of object, and function. It is critical to highlight some additional innovative aspects of Galicones. For instance, this is, as far as I can tell, the first Spanish digital collection to employ Iconclass to index the content of the images. A significant part of Galicones's repertoire consists of books published in Spain that are available only in Spanish. Because of this linguistic barrier, very few Spanish books have been indexed using a specialized controlled vocabulary such as Iconclass.

At the same time, through its consistent and meticulous annotation to each figure based on the three basic levels of the iconographic method of Panofsky, Galicones is the first digital collection to combine Iconclass and the iconographic method. This methodological endeavor facilitates the development of future academic studies in significant ways, as researchers will be able to compare images that employ the same motif with a similar or dissimilar meaning, discover different motifs that convey the same meaning, design new digital approaches (such as data visualization), and so on. Some of the images in the Galicones database indexed with Iconclass have also been incorporated into Arkyves (arkyves.org).[2] Combined with provenance studies, Galicones is thus set to become a powerful tool that will allow researchers to identify "semantic communities" in which these complex illustrations were interpreted and promoted.

Naturally, the database does have a few shortcomings. Galicones is the outcome of a very ambitious project that aims to fully transcribe and index 1,500 images in its first phase of development. To date, however, only one third

2. See Efthymia Priki's review of Arkyves (Emblem Books) in this issue.

of this number have been made available. That said, the project is ongoing and is still expected to accomplish its full dataset in a timely manner.

In addition, although the image of each object can be downloaded in high-quality resolution, the thumbnails shown on the web page are very small and may hinder users' appreciation of important details, especially in complex illustrations. Moreover, the wealth of notations associated with each image can be confusing for users who are not familiar with the iconographic method; at the same time, these notations can also retrieve too many results in basic searches. The relation between the notations, which allows users to "read" the images according to the levels of the iconographic method, can result in subjective indexing. Therefore, since this method is adopted in the indexing process, it should also be represented in the public interface with the inclusion of a field corresponding to each of the three levels of iconographic analysis ("pre-iconographic," "iconographic," and "iconological"). This would perhaps allow new ways to filter the results of a search.

Also, the ex-libri preserved in the books do not always correspond to former owners, but to modern owners (such as university libraries) who obtained these books at some point in their history. Therefore, they cannot cast much light on the historical reception of the books. The absence of an Open Archives Initiative repository that would feed other databases like Hispana or Europeana must also be noted here. Such developments, however, are expected to be addressed in future stages of the project.

Finally, although the usability of the site is accessible and intuitive, Galicones would benefit from a user guidelines page. These omissions and challenges, and others that may be detected in the platform, will likely be addressed in new iterations of the project in the coming years.

JOSÉ JULIO GARCÍA ARRANZ
Universidad de Extremadura
https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v45i3.40439

Work Cited

Białostocki, Jan. "Encompassing Themes and Archetypal Images." *Arte Lombarda* 10 (1965): 275–84. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43106115.