Connecting Inscriptions: The Ohio State University’s Collection meets EDR

The number of Digital Humanities projects in Classics is growing by the day to “accommodate” our field to our interconnected world. A pending task for those of us working in Digital Epigraphy is to connect the large number of databases between each other. I am doing that between OSU’s collection and EDR – Epigraphic Database Rome.

Center for Epigraphical and Palaeographical Studies (CEPS)

The Center was created at The Ohio State University in September 1986. Stephen Tracy took the initiative in its creation with the strong support of Charles Bobcock and other colleagues. It is the only comprehensive research facility for the study of Greek and Latin inscriptions and manuscripts in the United States of America. The Center maintains an excellent library of books on epigraphy and palaeography as well as an extensive collection of photographs and squeezes of Greek and Latin inscriptions and microfims of Latin manuscripts. The Center houses a number of special collections including Arthur and Joyce Gordon’s photographs and squeezes of Latin inscriptions.

OSU CEPS - EDR project

The aims of my project are:
- to link the photos and squeezes of the Center’s collections coming from Rome with EDR
- to revise and update the digitalization of that specific part of the collection on OSU server
- to reference all the Center’s photos which are yet to be identified with a CIL number
- to create EDR files for the photos and squeezes without EDR number

With this project, I will be able to connect the two databases making any research project simpler, improving both EDR and OSU Knowledge. In the records coming from the Gordon’s collection at CEPS there now is a link to all the epigraphic information corresponding to the inscription through EDR. In any EDR record, there would be a link to the photo and/or squeeze of the CEPS’ collection. Additionally, this would provide the two databases additional visibility in the academic community.

Why is this project necessary?

To illustrate my point, I will explain some examples of the previous state of things.

In the case of CIL VI, 962, a dedication to Trojan, there is a photo at the Arthur E. Gordon collection, available online at CEPS. The inscription was digitized in EDR (EDR103991) and had two external links to EDR: one image of the paper file (F026965) and one photo (F013631). Still, Alfoldy’s photo was only offered as a miniature. Therefore, the only proper picture available online was the one from CEPS, but this reference lacked publicity in the main epigraphical databases. However, thanks to this project there is now a link in EDR to the CEPS photo and vice versa.

CIL VI, 5197 is the epitaph of Mususc Scuranus, dispenser ad sicum Gallicius provinciae Lugdunensis. It was present in EDR (EDR102406) without any photo or external link. The CEPS has two photos not digitized yet at the beginning of this project. Thanks to it, Wendy Watkins, curator of the Center, and I were able to create a record for CIL VI, 5197 on the CEPS database and I linked it with EDR’s entry. Thereby, we now have available online epigraphical information and physical record.

In the case of CIL VI, 36201, a nine years old girl’s funerary inscription, there is no record in EDR and the multiple photos of the CEPS collection are not available online yet. On one hand, I am developing the EDR file based on Gordon’s photo and integrating it with the information provided by the Panciera’s Archive of Latin Epigraphy, host of Sapienza University of Rome by an EDR team. On the other hand, Watkins and I digitized the CEPS’ photos. At the end of the process, I would link the two records. All the relevant information will be available for the public.

Author: Cristina de la Escosura Balbás
University of Zaragoza

Focus

With this series of examples, I want to show how the two databases could help each other to improve and make the researching work simpler and more accurate. Besides, the collections and work of the CEPS would reach a larger range of European researchers, helping to achieve the main goal of the epigraphic community (and their databases): linked open data, collaboration between working projects and better user experience.

CIEGL2022