

'Do you have any pictures of ...?'

Constructing a Finding Aid of early printed images for the Roderic Bowen Library and Archives

The Project

The purpose of the project on which you will be working is to create a detailed catalogue of early printed illustrations.

The guide will be made available via the RBLA web site and the information it contains will be used to enrich the bibliographic records of RBLA holdings currently available via Horizon.

Discoveries of previously unrecorded images will be reported to relevant authorities and recorded on COPAC for use by the wider research community.

In describing images we will need to strike a balance between the general and the specific. Although we will use general categories such as 'political propaganda' and describe specific details such as 'swords and daggers', we will also try to do justice to intermediate level abstract concepts such as 'conspiracy' or 'faction'.

In creating such a sophisticated guide, our intention is not only to facilitate subject-specific searching, but also to encourage users to interrogate adjacent entries through which they are likely to find related material and topics of which they might otherwise have been unaware.

In addition to subject description we will record information related to the history of early printing and the early print trade.

Technical Standards

The guide will conform to professional standards. It will use the hierarchically ordered collection of definitions of objects, people, events and abstract ideas listed in ICONCLASS (<http://www.iconclass.nl/home>). Art historians, researchers and curators use ICONCLASS to describe, classify and examine the subject of images represented in various media such as paintings, drawings prints and photographs.

Successful iconographic descriptions use standardised keywords and phrases. The guide on which you will be working will use Library of Congress Authority Standards (LCAS).

ICONCLASS and LCAS have been adapted for use by the bpi1700 project (British Printed Images to 1700). Our project follows in the footsteps of the bpi1700, and we will use the subject headings and controlled vocabularies that project found useful. We do not need to reinvent the wheel.

Support

Our intention is not to train you as cataloguers or as archivists, but rather to offer you the opportunity to work with primary source materials and to contribute to the creation of a scholarly resource that will be of value to future researchers. We do not expect you to have any previous knowledge of the history of printing or art, nor do we expect you to understand the technicalities of cataloguing. Your job will be to describe in your own words the treasure on which you will be working; our job will be to make your descriptions accessible by creating a thesaurus based on LCAS and ICONCLASS.

For an example of the kind of resource we are intending to create have a good look at <http://www.bpi1700.org.uk/index.html>. The site has very useful sections on the history of printing and printing techniques. Follow up some links, if you have time.