VISUALIZING THE QUIXOTE: A DIGITAL HUMANITIES ARCHIVE FOR TEACHING AND RESEARCH

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Abstract

Hundreds of artists have illustrated the Quixote (1605) following their own understanding and views of the text, at times pushed by the needs and desires of an editor or institution, but all trying to capture and replicate in the few instances afforded by their creations the genius of Cervantes, in their particular time and place, and for their intended public. The illustrators have been compelled to create images capable of representing complex narrative meanings, settings, and characterization as visual readings. Their designs and engravings attempt to make visible the imaginary reality conceived by the author in his text; in this manner they are both a useful critical guide and an effective graphic reference to see what we are told, to confirm the reality of the words. And at their best, they graphically illuminate and elucidate the text for the reader as visual annotations.

Although some selective illustrations are occasionally included in critical and bibliographical studies, the complete iconographic record has remained inaccessible until now. Since 2003 the Cervantes Project, in collaboration with the TEES Center for the Studies of Digital Libraries at Texas A&M University, and with the support of the Cushing Memorial Library, the Cervantes Chair at the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, and the National Endowment of the Humanities, started to digitize, annotate and make available online in the form of a fully documented and accessible hypertextual digital archive the tens of thousands representations and visual readings constituted by the illustrations of the Quixote. At present the Textual Iconography of the Quixote archive includes over 50,000 digital images from over 850 editions. Our current research involves how best to reimagine and interpret the rich visual, textual and documentary information contained in the archive. We present here the taxonomic organization of the archive and our approach to integrate through metadata words and images in order to create new forms of reading and learning.

Keywords: Archive, digital, hypertextual, image, Quixote, visual.

The Cervantes Project is a digital humanities project established in 1995 to develop a comprehensive archive dedicated to the study of Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616). Our goal is to create an online digital repository of textual, documentary, bibliographic, and visual resources to serve the needs of students and scholars interested in Cervantes' life and works, focused in particular on his masterpiece, Don Quixote de la Mancha (1605, 1615) (http://cervantes.tamu.edu).
The *Quixote* is considered the first modern novel and the most influential work of fiction ever written. The knight of La Mancha is variably recognized as a modern myth, a cultural icon, and a symbol of man’s human individualism, as seen in a myriad of representations in art, film, music, and literature. Nonetheless, the thousands of illustrations depicting his adventures have not been collected and studied either as a significant critical tradition or as a valuable artistic archive. Hundreds of paintings, illustrators and engravers have indeed illustrated the *Quixote*, each following their own vision and at times the needs of an editor or institution, in their own particular time and place. The illustrated history of the *Quixote* shows that such visual readings are representative in technique, approach, and perspective of each age and century, from the baroque woodcuts of the 1600s depicting a burlesque comic hero, to the stylized neoclassical engravings, to the colorful artistic drawings of the 20th century. In all, the illustrators imaging the text attempt to create representations capable of capturing complex narrative meanings, settings, and characterization in visual terms. In this manner, their designs and engravings make tangible and more accessible the fictive reality imagined by Cervantes; they are both a key critical representation and an effective graphic reference for readers to see in what they are told. At their best, they not only depict in concrete visual terms imaginary actions but also illuminate the text for the reader as visual annotations.

The rich critical and artistic tradition of the textual illustrations of the *Quixote* owes its existence, ironically, to a gradual tendency in its textual history to complement the text with multiple paratextual elements such as portraits, biographies, maps, documents, and, of course, illustrations, in an effort to make the *Quixote* more accessible and universal. This approach has resulted in the fortunate creation of an extensive history of visual readings that has resulted in a common familiarity with the characters and adventures in the story. Most significantly, the textual illustrations have allowed readers to see, and to know, even what was never written or seen in the imaginary world of Don Quixote in the novel.

Given these facts and conditions, largely responsible for creating the myth of the *Quixote*, it is impossible to overemphasize the value of providing access for the first time to a digital archive containing and documenting the thousands of illustrations accompanying the *Quixote* since its publication in 1605 and that confirm its canonical stature and influence in many fields of study, such as art, music and film.

Starting in 2003 the *Cervantes Project*, in collaboration with the Center for the Study of Digital Libraries at Texas A&M University, and with the support of the College of Liberal Arts, the Cushing Memorial Library, the Cervantes Chair at the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, and the National

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Endowment of the Humanities, started to digitize, annotate and make available online the thousands of representations and visual readings constituted by the textual illustrations of the Quijote in the form of a fully documented and accessible hypertextual digital archive. The Textual Iconography of the Quijote archive is a rich and innovative educational tool and a valuable research resource for scholars in the Humanities studying not only Cervantes’ novel, but for those interested in literary studies, book and editorial history, illustrated books, and visual culture.

Although some sample illustrations are often reproduced in critical studies, editions and exhibit catalogues, we lacked until now knowledge of and access to the complete iconographic tradition associated with the publication of the Quijote as a major contributing element to both the canonization of the novel and to the iconic transformations of its principal character. Our archive updates and expands, first of all, what has been the standard reference to study the iconography of the Quijote, the 1895 the bibliographic catalogue of H. S. Ashbee’s collection, entitled An Iconography of Don Quijote. However, in recent years, however, several important publications have appeared dedicated to visual studies, as well as to the artistic and hermeneutic value of the illustrations, starting with Ronald Paulson and Rachel Schmidt, and then thanks to the work of Patrick Lenaghan and José Manuel Lucía Megías, sparked in part by the 2005 centenary celebration. These studies begun to place the illustrations in new cultural, aesthetic and historical contexts, demonstrating their key critical value and their important role in the reception and interpretation of the novel.

Two fortunate circumstances have facilitated our project: 1) the celebration of the 4th centenary of the Quijote in 2005, and the renewed interest it brought to all aspects of Cervantes scholarship, and 2) the current drive to provide electronic access to scholarly materials and unique collections in digital format, recently recognized by funding agencies such as the National Endowment for the Humanities and the ACLS.

The development of the collection and the initial research on the editorial history of the Quijote took place in 2001-2003. Since then, the Cervantes Project and Texas A&M University have acquired a large number of significant editions for the purpose of documenting the illustrated Quijote, resulting in the creation of the Eduardo Urbina Cervantes Collection at the Cushing Memorial Library and Archives. The collection includes over 3,000 volumes and is concentrated in 18th and 19th century English, French, and Spanish illustrated editions, while the digital archive contains today (January 2006-2009). Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NEH.

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The archive can be found at http://dqi.tamu.edu. For all the publications related to the development of the iconography project see: http://cervantes.tamu.edu/V2/CPJ/iconography/publ.html.


An Iconography of Don Quijote, 1605-1895 (London: Printed for the Author at the University Press, Aberdeen and Issued by the Bibliographical Society, 1896). It includes a Preface and 468 items with detailed descriptions: 1-327 refer to illustrated editions or to illustrations issued separately, plus a Supplement with a list of further unseen items, and sections on “Pictores, statues, Tapestries”; based largely on Ashbee’s own collection, now in part at the British Library and the Hispanic Society of America in New York.


2012) 46,375 fully annotated and searchable high-resolution images from 862 editions, linked through taxonomic anchors to encoded editions of the Quixote in Spanish and English.10

The Cushing Memorial Library of Texas A&M University provides acquisition funding, management of the physical collection, cataloging expertise, as well as key archival support and digitization services for the project. Such robust infrastructure and institutional support ensure the comprehensiveness and future of the digital archive derived from our collection, already one of the preeminent rare Cervantes collections in the world. Furthermore, on the technical side, the collaboration with the Center for the Study of Digital Libraries and our leading role in the Digital Humanities initiative at Texas A&M further guarantees the sustainability of the archive and access to its content.

At the front end, the online index tool provides a means to classify and describe its contents in 15 different fields. Clicking on the Index link (the default is by Year) reorders the items in the collection according to 5 main categories and 14 subcategories, as follows:

Complete Works [16]

*Don Quixote* [850]
  a. Sources [27]
  b. Editions [496]
  c. Adaptations [16]
  d. Children's Editions [179]
  e. Continuations and Imitations [55]
  f. Albums and Engravings [59]
  g. Other [18]

Other Works by Cervantes [48]
  a. Editions [44]
  b. Adaptations [2]
  c. Other [2]

Cervantes Studies [249]
  a. Biography [39]
  b. Geography and History [24]
  c. Criticism [180]
  d. Miscellaneous [6]

Bibliographies and Catalogues [77]\(^{11}\)

The archive's main interface contains a link to access and visualize individual title pages of the items contained in the collection, and a link for direct access to the digitized images belonging to each edition. In addition to the textual illustrations the archive contains digital images of *ex libris*, portraits, maps, facsimile documents, decorations, and illustrated covers and endpapers. The small thumb image in the Browse field connect the user to larger versions of the images as well as to all the textual, artistic and technical image metadata in 19 different fields; which in turn provide access to biographical information about the illustrators and engravers.\(^{12}\) Digital image representations of the illustrations are provided in three levels: small index thumbs, median web images together with metadata, and large size digital images for close up inspection and analysis.

11 The numbers in brackets represent the contents of the archive as of January 19, 2012.

12 Currently the archive contains links to notes and biographical information for 594 illustrators and engravers.
The second finding aid provides browsing access to all the illustrations in the archive by Part, chapter, episode and adventure according to the narrative taxonomy devised for both parts of the text, and corresponding to the Subject field of the image metadata. The images contained therein can be accessed in total by chapter, or individually following the links for the 434 taxonomic elements. The number of available images in each section is displayed alongside the category and it is automatically updated every time a new edition/image is added to the collection.

Thirdly, the image archive can be accessed by content following four general categories: people (characters), places (geographical, physical), objects and animals. These categories capture the free text information entered by the editors in the image metadata fields Commentary and Notes, and refer back as well to the Title and Title supplied fields. The numerical count for each item appearing next to each of the 113 current entries is updated automatically every time a new image from a new edition is entered into the database and generated dynamically by the user during the browsing session.

An important initial objective of iconography project was the specification of a comprehensive narrative taxonomy identifying all the episodes and adventures, characters and places in the Quixote. The taxonomy, representing the logical narrative structure of the work in visual terms, provides the addressing mechanism by which illustrations, texts, and other components of the archive can be associated with one-another automatically. Through manipulation of the structure of the taxonomic elements and through specification of the desired interrelationships in the relational database, hypotheses about the history of the illustrated Quixote can be posed and examined through coordinated inspection of text, illustration, commentary, and bibliography. Two multilayered search engines and three finding aids have been incorporated into the functionality of the archive in order to maximize user access and to facilitate interlinkage between the image archive and the projected textual variorum edition.

Specifically for the textual iconography, an XML schema has been created representing the complex interrelationships of episodes and adventures traceable throughout the entire text of the Quixote as identified in our narrative taxonomy. The two editions of the Quixote selected, one in Spanish and one in English, have been encoded in TEI XML (Text Encoding Initiative) with support from an NEH Preservation and Access grant. Since this mark-up includes elements created by project staff as modifications of the TEI DTD to represent the various episodes, adventures, themes and motifs present in the narrative, additionally encoded texts will provide an even richer searching opportunity for Cervantes scholars.

A key element of the textual iconography archive is a searchable MySQL database containing metadata in 19 different fields for each of the images from the editions in our collection. This metadata

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Fig. 6: Taxonomy and Images.

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13 Don Quixote, ed. Thomas Lathrop (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2010) and El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha, ed. Florencio Sevilla (Madrid: Castalia, 2008). We thank both editors for their permission to use their texts.
includes technical information produced when the images are created, but more significantly information about the textual and narrative source of the novel, its taxonomic identification and technical characteristics, relationships, as well as extensive descriptive and artistic information.

Fig. 7: Search, Metadata, Images.

By means of server-side processing implemented in a Java servlet-based architecture, metadata for each illustration is extracted from the database, and placed within a set of tags representing a metadata wrapper element in a Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS) document. In this way, by means of hyperlinks embedded in different parts of the document the relationships between all images comprising a single illustrated edition of the *Quixote*, as well as the EAD encoded finding aid and the TEI encoded base text, can be elucidated and displayed.

Encoding the two base texts of the *Quixote* requires, at minimum, using multiple TEI tag sets. Additionally, and most importantly, in order to present the full richness of Cervantes’ scholarship for the textual iconography of the *Quixote*, a set of elements for encoding sections of the text representing the various episodes and adventures generally accepted by Cervantes’ experts and unique to scholarship of the novel have been developed in the form of an extensive textual taxonomy. These unique elements are embedded into the text using existent TEI elements and attribute options or by creating a new XML schema to accommodate them.

Fig. 8: Edition and Links.
The added value of the illustrations in the Quixote textual iconography digital archive derives from the interactivity between the new digital archive of images and already available electronic texts. At present we are developing tools to compare, visualize and collage related images from several editions, artists, etc., as part of our research to create new forms of access and inquire, beyond browsing and searching. In that connection we plan to expand archival description methods and advance better ways to integrate texts and visualize images with metadata.

Given the access limitations and inadequacies of previous resources in print, the Textual Iconography of Quixote archive represents a leap forward in the preservation and access of rare book collections and their content. In addition, the development and application of search tools, findings aids, and interactive visualization tools capable of generating multiple displays and of elucidating new analytical approaches, significantly increases the scholarly value and educational use of the image archive will make possible a more complete and profound knowledge of the role, functions and diverse uses of textual illustrations, and will help us understand in particular their contribution as visual narratives and how they have shaped reader’s responses and critical interpretations of the Quixote as an experimental and canonical text. The digital archive of the textual iconography associated with Cervantes’ Don Quixote is, to our knowledge, unique in its scope, goals and technology applications, and as such will serve as a model for similar iconographic projects.

REFERENCES


