

Werk

Label: Advertising

Ort: Graz

Jahr: 1996

PURL: https://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?514854804_0006|log61

Kontakt/Contact

[Digizeitschriften e.V.](#)
SUB Göttingen
Platz der Göttinger Sieben 1
37073 Göttingen

✉ info@digizeitschriften.de

THE ESEDRA SYSTEM – DIGITAL REPRODUCTION OF ANTIQUE BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS

The Glasor company was established as a service company operating in the field of the organization of meetings, congresses, exhibitions and events of any type.

The Esedra project of digital reproduction on CD-Rom stemmed from the practical need encountered by our company during the preparations for the exhibition on “Illuminated Treasures”, which was held in Bergamo and Brescia in 1995. The Fine Literary Arts Service of the Lombardy Region had restricted borrowing of all the 128 volumes of illuminated texts from the libraries to reproduction on microfilms. Although we fully agreed with this principle, its application would have compelled us to carry out an enormous and costly microfilming operation which nobody could possibly have done in such a short space of time – the exhibition was opening in March and it was then already November.

There were basically two courses open to us: the first consisted in finding somebody who would do the work using the traditional method; the second was to “put aside” the normal techniques and look for a new approach, if possible transforming this into one of the attractions of the exhibition itself, since, like any book display, it too had the restriction of showing the public only two pages of the precious manuscripts at a time. We found it impossible to believe that in 1995 the best way to reproduce ancient documents was still based on photographic methods invented in the 19th century, with all their relative advantages and disadvantages.

We therefore opted for the experimental course and, logically, turned to the far-reaching and boundless world of computer science. We soon realized that the technological prerequisites for our ambitious project existed: over 23,000 reproductions (approximately 40,000 pages) to be stored in the memory of a computer within the time limit of three months. This type of technology had never been used before for similar applications, except for very limited projects in terms of numbers of reproductions and certainly not in those aimed at safeguarding our cultural heritage.

And this is the most important point: we tried to look at the problem from inside out and consider as a primary requirement the safeguarding of this heritage and not simply its display in a more or less attractive way.

We felt that the first possible way of safeguarding an antique document should be to make a reproduction of it which could, in most cases, be consulted instead of the original. This type of reproduction requires two main characteristics:

1. perfect readability of the contents
2. easy utilization and consultation by the average user.

1. Readability

First level readability: the possibility to interpret each grapheme on the sheet fully.

Second level readability: manuscripts, incunabula, books, documents, in their broadest meaning, are the guardians of a series of information which goes beyond mere and simple words. There are elements contributing to the interpretation of a text which do not fall within simple writing signs: decorations and ornaments – readability of the chromatic values of iconography –; use of different inks – colour, fluidity, layers, scrapings, stains (indispensable elements in any philological analysis); features of the writing support – colour, material, dry and ink lines in different colours; binding; defined dimensions.

The traditional methods – microfilms and microfiches – are cost-efficient with regard to first level readability, but these supports have revealed themselves rather difficult to preserve and not user-friendly (for example: in order to consult page 200 you have to go through all the pages). On the other hand, to ensure perfect second level readability, a public and/or private organization must take on a considerably heavy financial burden. In fact, colour photography by a professional photographer using an optical bench is indispensable in this case.