

Piccard-Online and BERNSTEIN

The Archives of the State of Baden-Württemberg holds the world's largest on-line collection of watermarks, with about 92.000 records. They were collected by Gerhard Piccard (1909-1989) who published one third of his collection in 25 volumes between 1961 and 1997.

Watermark are an important means for dating paper manuscripts of the late Middle Ages and early modern times. In case a document bears no date, watermarks allow precise dating. The first step is to search for an identical watermark taken from a dated source. The year when this document was created can also be assumed for the undated document, as paper used to be an expensive good which was bought and used up within a couple of years.

The watermarks originate from manuscript collections from over 85 European libraries and archives, mainly based in South West Germany, but also in France, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium. The main period covered by the collection lies between the 14th and 17th centuries. The collection comprises hand-drawn tracings of watermarks that were transferred to standard-sized record cards. These record cards were digitised in a project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). "Piccard-Online" offers a database containing the images and additional data about the watermark and the paper it originates from. Search strategies may involve navigating the images, entering keywords or using indices. Piccard-Online is available in three languages: German, English and French.

The eContentPlus project BERNSTEIN aims at connecting Piccard Online to other large European watermark collections, amongst them the Watermarks of Medieval Ages (WZMA) in Vienna and the Watermarks in Incunabula Printed in the Low Countries (WILC) in The Hague. The watermark portal will be enriched by contextual bibliographical and geographical data, image processing tools, statistical features and a dissemination kit. The project, funded within the eContentPlus programme started in September 2006 and will be finished within 30 months. Nine institutions from Austria, France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy and The Netherlands take part in the project.

<http://www.piccard-online.de>

<http://www.bernstein.oew.ac.at>

