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Images of the English Medieval Cathedral and City

Proposal for the Technology Fellows Program Summer 2003

Abstract: A proposal to digitalize approximately 200 slides of medieval English cathedrals and cities, and store them in a searchable, annotated, web-based database for use primarily in medieval literatures course.

The genesis of this project is two-fold: an uncompleted goal of the “Technology and Course Design in the Arts and Humanities” Andrew W. Mellon funded pilot program I facilitated with Samuel J. Pezzillo at Birmingham-Southern College in the summers of 1998 and 1999 (<http://panther.bsc.edu/~shagen/pilotindex.html>), and the “The Classics Images Collection” (<http://csunx2.bsc.edu/CIC/>) in progress by Pezzillo and partially funded by a Technology Fellowship in spring 2001.

During the 1998 pilot program several medievalists in the group planned to pool personal photographic images from the Middle Ages to be used for classroom purposes. The images were to be hosted by ORB, the *Online Reference Book for Medieval Studies*, (<http://orb.rhodes.edu/>) edited by Carolyn Schriber at Rhodes College; unfortunately, before we could get fully underway the designated point person left the ACS institution he had been affiliated with. Without a coordinator with time to devote to the proposed collection, the plan faltered. Subsequent to that endeavor, my colleague and co-leader of the pilot, Sam Pezzillo, began digitalizing his extensive collection of slides in the Classics from Italy and Greece. The collection is hosted by the computer science discipline at Birmingham-Southern College in a database that allow queries, textual descriptions, and thumbnail examples.

Using this same hosting option I propose this summer to

- Digitalize approximately 200 slides of medieval English cathedrals, churches, and walled cities,
- Enter them in the database with appropriate query tags and identifying text, and
- Make the collection available online for instructional use.

My slides include excellent pictures of the pilgrims’ portal, pilgrims’ steps, and the martyrdom site at Canterbury Cathedral, the still existing city wall of the City of York, Roman foundations, Clifford’s Tower, and York Minster—including the rose and Five Sisters windows. Other images

include some Arthurian sites, and city and cathedral pictures from Norwich, Oxford, Salisbury, and locations in Wales. I also have 8 mm videotape of many of the same places. Almost all of these images were originally captured specifically for classroom use and have some connection with typically taught Middle English texts, such as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Arthurian romances, Sir *Gawain and the Green Knight*. The collection may also be of use to historians of the period, especially in regard to late Roman Britain, Thomas Beckett, and the time of Edward III.

Over the years many of the slides have become scratched, faded, or discolored. I fear that if they are not soon copied, their effectiveness as teaching tools will be lost. Although I have many more images than the 200 or so I proposed to catalog this summer, I believe this number will be the basis of a useful foundation collection for in-class or web-based course materials. I've talked to Sam Pezzillo, and we would like to place the two image collections together—at least as links—off of the Birmingham-Southern College library webpage. Since the collection will also be linked to my Chaucer and medieval literature resource pages (<http://panther.bsc.edu/~shagen/>), which are already referenced by ORB and Labyrinth (<http://www.georgetown.edu/labyrinth/labyrinth-home.html>) , they will be generally available for instructor and student use.

Many of the images already exist in jpeg versions, but they were hastily made and not always compressed for efficient storage. I know that both the image quality and file size can be improved. Much of the hardware and software that I will need is easily available on campus, but I may need some help from the Technology Center at Georgetown in order to get the best frame captures from the 8 mm videotape, and I would like to attend any workshops on beginning digital video editing held at the Tech Center this summer.

Once I complete the 200-image proposal, I will go on to other images I have of pre-Roman Britain—maybe even of slides I have used in a survey of British literature to 1920. These would include images of famous writers' residences, 18th-century Bath, and London and Dublin sites related to early 20th-century works. Certainly the project holds possibilities for an eventual sabbatical project.