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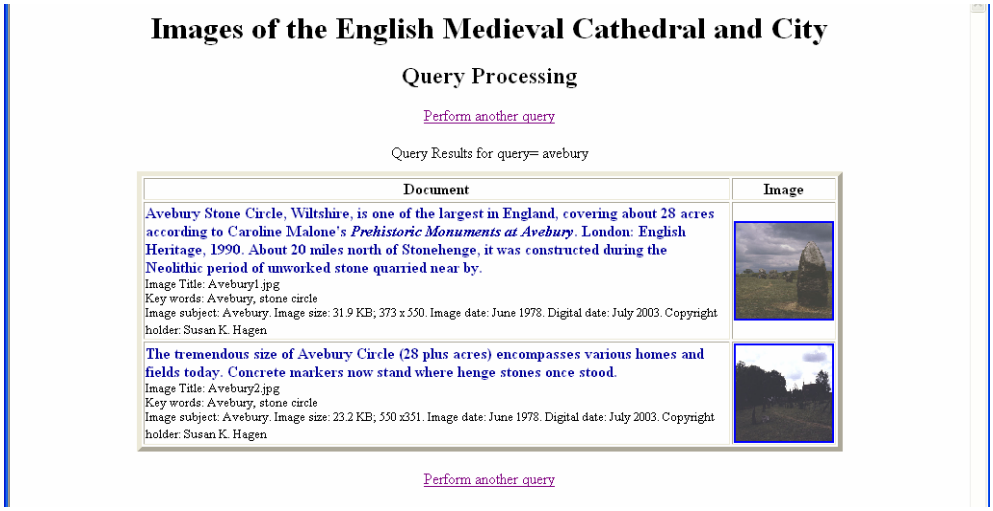
Images of the English Medieval Cathedral and City
Follow-up Report August 2004

Proposal 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 literature courses.

At the close of the official fellowship period the Images of the English Medieval Cathedral and City (http://csunx2.bsc.edu:8080/IEMCC/html/explain.html) collection contained just under 200 annotated images. Currently it contains over 200 images and continues to grow. Housed on a server at Birmingham-Southern College, the collection is available to the public and can be search by key words. I have already used the collection in two courses: a first-year course in legacies of medieval literature in popular culture (http://panther.bsc.edu/~shagen/monsters.htm) and an upper-level course in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (http://panther.bsc.edu/~shagen/chaucer.htm). Consequently, the initial goals of the fellowship proposal have been met, but since last fall new features have been added to the collection.

Thanks to the work of Lewis Patterson at BSC, who created the original database structure, iemcc now also has a Java-based function that allows a viewer to isolate a portion of an image and enlarge it for viewing purposes. Of course, there are limitations to which a selection can be enlarged or sharpened, but in the case of architectural images, this feature proves very useful in making specific points about building design and decoration.

The process of designing the collection was, in itself, instructive. One of the first steps in creating iemcc, was to determine how the images might be used in teaching. That then helped determine the categories to be included in the image description that accompanies each thumbnail preview of the images retrieved in a keyword search.



Images of the English Medieval Cathedral and City

Query Processing

Perform another query

Query Results for query= avebury

Document	Image
Avebury Stone Circle, Wiltshire, is one of the largest in England, covering about 28 acres according to Caroline Malone's *Prehistoric Monuments at Avebury*. London: English Heritage, 1990. About 20 miles north of Stonehenge, it was constructed during the Neolithic period of unworked stone quarried near by. Image Title: Avebury1.jpg Key words: Avebury, stone circle Image subject: Avebury. Image size: 31.9 KB; 373 x 550. Image date: June 1978. Digital date: July 2003. Copyright holder: Susan K. Hagen	
The tremendous size of Avebury Circle (28 plus acres) encompasses various homes and fields today. Concrete markers now stand where henge stones once stood. Image Title: Avebury2.jpg Key words: Avebury, stone circle Image subject: Avebury. Image size: 23.2 KB; 550 x351. Image date: June 1978. Digital date: July 2003. Copyright holder: Susan K. Hagen	

Perform another query

More than just identifying the subject in those annotations, I decided that it was important to provide some historical background and to note the date the picture was taken, since historical sites are constantly under renovation. The categories I decided on were the following:

- Annotation
- Image title
- Key words
- Subject
- Image Size
- Image Date
- Digital date
- Copyright holder

The copyright holder was included because the collection might eventually contain some image taken by colleagues. As for search or key words, while that field often seemed redundant—the same words usually appearing in the image annotations—it nonetheless allowed me to include search words keyed to teaching topics. With the key words, the subject heading is, however, redundant, and I might delete that field at some future time. Finally, so as not to lose the information about the subject of the picture in all the details of the image file, I placed the annotation for the images in blue, thereby separating it from the technical information and drawing the viewer's attention.

In the process of scanning slides and photographs for web-based presentation, I was forced to compromise print-size in favor of reasonable screen size of images accessed via the Internet. As a result, it should be noted that the images in the collection are most suitable for computerized viewing. Also, there is a noteworthy peculiarity in the annotations. While the annotations for a particular image topic—such as Canterbury Cathedral, for example—were originally written at one time in series, I later realized that, because of a particular search word or phrase, one of those images might appear in the middle of a series of quite different images. Consequently, each annotation had to contain certain essential information, even though when viewed in topical series the annotations seem redundant. I also had to strike a balance in the annotation between what I wanted my students to know or notice and what other viewers might find interesting. To date, the most useful topics in the collection are

- Canterbury Cathedral,
- Norwich Cathedral
- Tower of London,
- Salisbury Cathedral and Old Sarum Castle and Cathedral, and
- York Minster and the city wall.

Other interesting entries include Iffley Church, Malvern Church, Winchester, and Stonghenge. All places in the collection are listed on the information page of Images of the English Medieval Cathedral and City however.

One intention for the original project has not been realized, though. None of the 8 mm video material that I have has been digitalized at this point. In the future, I hope that that will be possible. First, however, there are many more slides to be scanned and rehabilitated for classroom use; in particular slides that will be useful in survey of British literature, such as Westminster Abbey and the city of Bath are in line for scanning. Two indispensable tools in this process have been a good slide scanner (not a flatbed scanner with a slide attachment) and Photoshop Elements, which makes possible easy brightness, contrast, and focus adjustment, and scratch removal.