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DGHM150
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Studio Assignment 1

Project Review: Online Coins of the Roman Empire (OCRE)

Introduction

The [Online Coins of the Roman Empire](#) is a joint project between American Numismatic Society and the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University. Dr. Andrew Meadows and Professor Roger Bagnall are the co-directors of the project. Dr. Meadows is a specialist in the history, numismatics and epigraphy of the Hellenistic Greek world.¹ Professor Bagnall is an American classical scholar and teaches Ancient History at the Institute for the study of the ancient world at New York University. His previous teaching experience was at Columbia University teaching classics and history for 33 years.² The extensive experience of these co directors gives the project a good standing. On the *About* page you can find more information on the full team behind the project including the list of individuals who helped to provide multiple language translations for the project. The project page can be viewed in 17 different languages which is a very impressive as it provides a wider access to the public.

Before the OCRE, research on the Roman imperial coinage was largely dependent on paper based catalogues, online auctions or limited collection on online platforms. Now, OCRE serves as a single major online catalogue where people can navigate through approximately 43,000 types of coin entries from the entire Roman Empire and access all this data for free. The data on these coins is very detailed and can also be downloaded in several formats like excel

¹ "AIA Lecturer: Andrew Meadows." *Ask the Experts: AIA Archaeology FAQ - Archaeological Institute of America*, www.archaeological.org/lecturer/andrewmeadows.

² Soule, Kristen. "Roger Bagnall." *AWOL Index: Capitulary of Charlemagne Issued in the Year 802*, 12 Apr. 2018, isaw.nyu.edu/people/faculty/emeritus-faculty/rbagnall.

spreadsheets, charts and so on. It truly appears to be a milestone for numismatics, making research and study easier and more accessible for scholars, more numismatics as well as the general public who might be interested in knowing more about Roman imperial coinage. On the project website, you can find every published type of Roman Imperial coin from Augustus 31 BC up until the death of Zeno in AD 491.

Funding & Collaborators

The project was launched in 2012, however in May 2014, the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded OCRE \$300,000 to be dispersed over three years, to complete the project.³ This was included as a part of the Humanities Collections and Reference Resources program. It is powered by Numishare and is available under the Open Database License. The list of collaborators on the project as listed on the ‘About’ and ‘Contributors’ page is impressive; there are a total of 122,866 contributors mentioned in the contributors section and this adds to the well-rounded quality of the project. The range of data available on the 43,000 types of coin on this project is incredible and collected from sources like nomishare.org. ANS database developer Ethan Gruber, who built OCRE, explains how it has been designed from the beginning to use a Linked Data approach to deliver added functionality: “OCRE is built on [Numishare](#), an open source suite of applications for managing and publishing numismatic collections on the web.”⁴

³ Online Coins of the Roman Empire.” *American Numismatic Society*, numismatics.org/ocre/.

⁴ “OCRE – A Major New Tool for Roman Numismatics.” *OCRE – A Major New Tool for Roman Numismatics*, 17 July 2012, numismatics.org/wikiuploads/NewsEvents/07.17.12OCREPR.pdf.

Collaborators



Münzkabinett
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

OCRE is made available under the [Open Database License](#).
Powered by [Numishare](#).

 [nomisma.org](#)

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the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#): Celebrating 50
Years of Excellence

Design and Functionality




The design of the website is very modern and user friendly. The home page provides a detailed overview of what the project encompasses, who contributed to the project and how to best navigate it. There are many external links embedded for people who want to read more instructions and understand the range of the project in depth. The main tabs are well organized into clear categories labels like *Browse*, *Search*, *Map*, *Symbols*, *Identify a Coin*, *Contributors*, *Visualize Queries*, *APIs* and *About*. The project is built on a numbering system created by the Roman Imperial Coinage series. The site is very intuitive for perhaps a new user who may not exactly know what they are looking for versus a scholar who knows exactly what they are searching for. You can use the database to *Browse* and *Search* for a particular coin using keywords from different drop down menus. Additionally, you can even enter the date if you're looking for coins within a certain period range. You also get 'data options' during your search where you can download your query data details in an excel sheet format or view it in a chart format in order to visualize it. The search tools are pretty well categorized to make the search more user friendly, so you can refine your search by authority, deity, denomination, findspot, issuer, manufacture, material, mint, object type, portrait and region.

Another useful feature of the project is a Map based search for a better visual identification of coins and the area where they were found. There are filters similar to the manual search filters to find coins on this map in order to refine your search. You can also click on the circles on the map to keep zooming into the map till you get to the exact location. The map provides a good visualization and number of coins or types of coin available in the area one might be researching in. The map page also provides an external link to a page with usage instructions for the map, which is helpful and adds to the functionality of the map feature. The map is very modern looking which helps with the familiarity aspect but it could have been interesting to have it look more rustic from a more aesthetic point of view.



A very interesting and extensive page on the project includes a *Symbols* based search where you can explore under two major branches of ‘monograms’ and ‘mintmarks’. Once you narrow down this search you can find particular types of monograms and coinage under those narrowed down

divisions. You can find examples, images, mint, denomination, date and even the map visualization of the particular coin you choose to learn more about.

Type	Example
<p>RIC X Marcian 535</p> <p>Mint Thessalonica</p> <p>Denomination AE4</p> <p>Date A.D. 450 - A.D. 457</p>	
<p>RIC X Marcian 538</p> <p>Mint Heraclea</p> <p>Denomination AE4</p> <p>Date A.D. 450 - A.D. 457</p>	
<p>RIC X Marcian 564</p> <p>Mint Cyzicus</p> <p>Denomination AE4</p> <p>Date A.D. 450 - A.D. 457</p>	

Conclusion

Overall, this project does a very good job of serving as a platform that can be widely used by a large audience of scholars, numismatics and general public. It is detailed and comprehensive in the way it presents the data and since it is powered by established database sources, the information seems reliable and helpful. Scholars might use this project to answer questions related to the period of a certain coin artifact that they may have found or to discover the origin of a misplaced coin. Non-scholars may use this project to learn about how the history of coins progressed in the Roman Empire, what do the symbols on certain classic coins mean, to conduct basic research on related topics or to generally gain more exposure to the coinage. While these are just assumptions, one thing that the project could perhaps touch on is to specify somewhere on the site how scholars and non-scholars can respectively use this project to gain the best and most efficient outcome for their potential research goals. This addition can help guide the users to make the most out of the project and certain features of the project can be highlighted in this section accordingly as well.

Metadata

- Title: Online Coins of the Roman Empire
- Description: Database for identifying, cataloging and researching coinage of the Roman Empire
- URL: <http://numismatics.org/ocre/>
- Author(s): Co-directors Dr. Andrew Meadows and Professor Roger Bagnall
- Place: American Numismatic Society and the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York

University

- Date Created: 2012 – 2017 • Date Accessed: February 2019
- Availability: Free