# The miniatures of the antiphonaries of the Diocesan Library of Chioggia: a digital life

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The research project presented here is the creation of a digital existence for the art historical information that emerged from research into the miniatures of the antiphonaries of the Diocesan Library of Chioggia.[1] To realise the project, problems related to consulting the three chorales were identified: the difficulty of viewing them in person in a way that would not risk ruining them, together with the absence of catalogue cards or page numbering. In this context, skills acquired during a Master's degree in Visual Arts at Bologna, especially in the Digital Humanities course held by Professor Tomasi, resulted in being able to create a website using knowledge of HTML and CSS languages. The result is a small digital space where one can visualise textual and multimedia content concerning the illuminated capital letters (*capilettera*) found inside three antiphonaries of the Diocesan Library of Chioggia (VE), in manuscripts 4523, 4527 and 4528 respectively. An intuitive web platform allows the user to navigate between various general sections and two catalogues through the use of search filters set to refine the selection of items within them. This project created e a digital space for the preservation, archiving and diffusion of the historical and artistic heritage of the three codices in question and, in addition, a further enhancement of the manuscripts' preservation in situ, with the installation of the platform in the computer station on the ground floor and thus becoming accessible to all users attending the library.

Illustrating the various navigable sections of the site and its internal tools begins with the home page, where there is a brief presentation of the project, direct links to the most important sections of the site and a contact section below. The textual section in 'Catalogue Texts' contains the catalogue cards of the three antiphonaries that can be consulted in XML (created following the tei-manuscript format). It is also possible to download a PDF file with the text of the antiphons on one side and its translation from Latin into Italian on the other. Not being a codicologist, this section is a draft and is open to numerous future improvements and extensions. Such as, for instance, the full-text metadata of the texts contained in the chorales and, perhaps, the extrapolation of data related to the musical notes attached to the antiphons. Precisely because of the importance of the musical aspects of the work under consideration, preparation for the application of a tool developed by Knightlab,[2] a digital laboratory of the University of Chicago, called

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[1] For an introduction to the library: http://poloculturale.diocesidichioggia.it/biblioteca-diocesana/ (accessed29/08/2022).

[2] Knightlab official website: https://knightlab.northwestern.edu/ (accessed 29/08/2022).

Soundcite, has been developed. With Soundcite it is possible to attach an audio file to a portion of text, in this case, by attaching to the first antiphon of chorale 4523 a recording of the text sung in Gregorian chant archived in the McSphere database,[3] of the University of Macmaster in Ontario, where there are numerous recordings of sung antiphons openly accessible. The result is a good example of what could become an interesting implementation to be studied in the future. It would be useful to be able to integrate it with an XML viewer of the full-text of the antiphons; in this way, it would be possible to read the text of the antiphons and the corresponding musical notation while listening to the choir voices sing what is in front of us. This would be an excellent way to fully enjoy the work, the musical part of which is absolutely essential. In the section dedicated to the catalogue of miniatures, a card for each miniature has been prepared, together with filters for refining the search on the left-hand side. The card presents the picture of the thumbnail and a short identification. Once the page of the thumbnail is opened there is an enlarged image and a button for sharing, one for downloading and one for opening the Dublin Core XML file. Below the image, the complete metadata tab appears with links to the vocabularies checked. To the side, a quick link to other searches related to the subject represented, a link to the in-depth tab on the author of the miniature and a link to the Nuova Biblioteca Manoscritta portal.[4] At the bottom, internal links to the location of the library from Google Maps have been provided, together with a section devoted to other miniatures depicting the same subject to propose visual comparisons and a link to Neumz (an application for listening to Gregorian chant).[5] Turning to the page relating to the author's file, one can immediately see a link to the bibliography relating to the artist updated to 2021, conceived as a section that can be constantly updated. Next to the metadata tab is a link to another artist present in the Chorales of Chioggia and a link to the Nuova Biblioteca Manoscritta portal. At the bottom, another Knightlab tool called Storymaps has been used. This is a useful tool for creating highly intuitive dynamic maps with a strong sense of storytelling. Thus, the movements of the Master of the Pontifical Dandolo during his period of artistic activity can be mapped, so that his interventions in the lagoon areas and theVeneto hinterland could be observed. In conclusion, it is useful to reiterate the importance of using metadata, which allows the creation of content described with unambiguous and verified vocabularies that integrate our information within a global network of digital cultural data.

These files, being in a network of certified virtual links and cross-references, encapsulate all the main information about the cultural objects they carry and guarantee their preservation and dissemination in terms of time and space. The use of standardised languages, well-known onthe web, increases the reliability of the metadata created and ensures its longevity in terms of long-term data preservation. To gain a better insight into the use of these models in a cultural context, one can

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[3] MacSphere official website: https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/ (accessed 29/08/2022).

[4] Nuova Biblioteca Manoscritta is the digital catalogue of manuscripts in the libraries of the Veneto Region:https://www.nuovabibliotecamanoscritta.it/index.html?language=IT (accessed on 29/08/2022).

[5] Neumz official website: https://neumz.com/it/italiano/ (accessed 29/08/2022).

look at examples of the use of XML files in platforms for digitising manuscripts such as e-codices,[6] and Manus Online.[7] With respect to future improvements of the web platform and its interoperability, some improvements concern the growth of the textual catalogue, with the possibility of including full-text metadata of all antiphons and musical notation. Others focus on the possibility of using an image viewer that can be integrated with XML descriptors, to make the observation and reading of the antiphonary content easier and more detailed. In order to respect the current wishes of the institution to which the liturgical codices belong, which prefers at the moment to attempt an internal approach through the use of the platform on the Library's private server, the site is currently not visible to everyone. In the future, there will be a way to make the website openly available on the web and it may become a starting point for the development of a larger virtual space, ready to accommodate additions, improvements and new discoveries by scholars that will enrich knowledge of the three antiphonaries in the Diocesan Library in Chioggia.

**Erica Andreose** was awarded her Masters at the University of Bologna on the topic presented here.

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[6] Official website of e-codices, the virtual library of manuscripts preserved in Switzerland: https://www.e- codices.unifr.ch/en (accessed 29/08/2022).
[7] Official website of Manus Online: https://manus.iccu.sbn.it/ (accessed 29/08/2022).