The Subject is Iconography
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For the Index as an iconographic resource, subject matter is, and always has been, essential to both organizing and searching the archive. The iconographic terms of the subject continues in the database with the precedent set by the original Indexers. Emphasis on iconography extends to the free text of the description, where using controlled vocabulary, aspects such as gesture, color and posture are additions not found in the cards. In this paper, I want to focus on the subject, and how the switch from a printed to digital archive has affected it.   For us at the Index, the subject is fundamental. Our experience with subject matter has been recognized by the Library of Congress, which acknowledges the Index as a subject authority.

The founder Charles Rufus Morey began the Index of Christian Art with the intention of classifying ALL medieval art within a relatively short period of time, using iconography as the basis, with access through an extensive subject file extending from Aaron (or Alpha and Omega in the paper files) to Zwentibold of Lorraine.

The card files that evolved from the legendary shoe box have not been added to since the 1990s, but most original subjects live on in the database along with new or refined entries which now number more than 27,000.

New in the database is a subject authority (at right) that records the accepted form of the subject (SUB) in format and language reflecting already established Index headings, for consistent results in searching. The authority includes related subject terms (REL) suggesting other subjects to look at; a

Format Name	SHO	__	a	Subject
Subject	SUB	__	a	
			s	
			h	
See From Term	XSU	__	a	
Related Subject	RTS	__	a	
Broader Subject	SBB	__	a	
Narrower Subjec	SBN	__	a	
Group	GRP	__	a	
Period of Saint	SNT	__	a	
Feast Day	FST	__	a	
			d	
Chronolog Limit	CHL	__	a	
Place of Activt	LOA	__	a	
Dates	DAB	__	a	
Type of Date	DKI	__	a	
Subject Keyword	KWW	__	a	
Profession	PRO	__	a	
Affiliation	AFF	__	a	
Subject Note	NTS	__	a	
Text Reference	TRT	__	a	
Iconclass	ICO	__	a	
Other Subj Syst	OTH	__	a	
Bibliography	CIT	__	a	
Use Note	NUS	__	a	
New Authority	NEW	__	a	
Signed	SGN	__	a	

Subject authority template

designation of scene, figure, or object (GRP);   date and type of date when relevant (DAB and DKI); broad keywords (KWW); and notes, including clarification of how the subject is used (NTS). Text references (TRT) indicate where the person or event appears—be it a Biblical reference, or a citation from an accepted edition of the relevant text. Also part of the authority are Iconclass parallels (ICO) and bibliography (CIT) pertaining to the subject. Finally, there are cataloging notes

for Index scholars (NUS) and signature fields (NEW and SGN) none of which are

visible to Index users. Type,

and amount, of information on

the completed authority in the

database varies according to

Database authority record for subject

subject, as in the example at right. Neither "Related, Broader or Narrower

Subjects" nor "Text Reference" fields are relevant for the authority record for

Louis IX, King of France, but all other fields are included

In the transfer from a paper to an electronic file, several subjects were

refined, such as "Christ: Crucifixion", which under that broad title included every

aspect of the Crucifixion in 19 full drawers of catalog cards covering some 37,000

different representations of the

scene. Now, reflecting a new

approach to iconography, the

crucifixion is expanded to 74

subjects, to include specific

episodes, such as the shaping of the cross, forging of the nails, Pilate writing the

titulus, as well as the number of crosses, and the various individuals who may be

represented on a consistent basis in crucifixion scenes. All of these subjects still

begin "Christ: Crucifixion", grouping them in a single alphabetical sequence.

More compact subjects have been treated in a similar fashion. In the card

file "David: with Bathsheba"

included any iteration of the

David and Bathsheba story.

The 65 records that would have

been covered by that single

Full View of Record

Choose format: Standard format Catalog card Citation Name tags MARC tags

Record 11 out of 11

System Number	000017007
Subject	David and Bathsheba
Seen From	David: with Bathsheba
Related Subject	David and Bathsheba: Bathsheba bathing
	David and Bathsheba: David sending Messenger
	David and Bathsheba: in Bed
Group	Scene
Period of Saint	Old Testament
Text Reference	OT, II Samuel 11:02-04
ICONCLASS	71 H 7

subject have been divided into the four scenes as above, left.

Full View of Record

Choose format: Standard format Catalog card Citation Name tags MARC tags

Record 52 out of 52

System Number	000152113
Subject	David and Bathsheba: Bathsheba bathing
Group	Scene
Period of Saint	Old Testament
Text Reference	OT, II Samuel 11:02
ICONCLASS	71 H 7

They are "David and Bathsheba" for the two

individuals together, with no other context; "David

and Bathsheba: Bathsheba bathing" as seen above,

"David and Bathsheba: David sending Messenger"

**Princeton University Library,
Garrett 52, fol. 63r**

that is, sending a messenger to bring Bathsheba to him, and "David and

Bathsheba: in Bed". In turn, each new subject has its own authority.

The introduction of large collections, or parts of collections, including

manuscripts from the Morgan Library, Princeton University, New York Public

Library, and others, have had a significant impact on the Index for a variety of

reasons.[1] The original cut-off date for Index entries was 1400—Morey felt that

the more independent thinking of the 15th century led to looser representations

of iconography . Over the past decade with the aforementioned manuscript

projects, the terminus date for the Index has been pushed to the middle of the

16th century. Also, in the case of the Morgan Library and Princeton University,

collections were whole-heartedly embraced—all illuminated manuscripts were

included, be they liturgical, devotional, literary, historical, scientific, or legal.

One of the more remarkable increases in the database, are subjects related

to specific texts—something that didn't exist in

the cardfile. A Manuscripts Titles drawer

directs the researcher to texts, for example, the

Roman de la Rose where one finds a listing of

eight *Rose*

manuscripts which in turn leads the researcher to the photograph files, where the subjects assigned for various scenes, are typed on the images.

When figures such as virtues or vices in *Rose* manuscripts were identified for the cardfile, they were categorized under Personifications. Events in the *Roman de la Rose* text were generally filed under "Scene: Secular". With this arrangement, images have been removed from their context, giving no sense of how they relate to the *Roman de la Rose* text.

Now however, the Index offers the researcher 183 subjects under "Roman de la Rose", specific to miniatures in the 14 largely complete *Rose* manuscripts described in the Index database.   The earlier generic "Scene: Secular" has become "Roman de la rose: Scene, …", with a text reference to the Lecoy edition of *Roman de la Rose*. Avarice, and other Rose personifications are treated in the same

Full View of Record

Choose format: Standard format Catalog card Citation Name tags MARC tags

Record 14 out of 14

System Number	000116905
Subject	●Roman de la Rose: Scene, Lover pierced by Arrow of God of Love
Group	Scene
Text Reference	Roman de la Rose, ed. Lecoy, v. 1679 ff.

fashion—a brief subject authority, with text reference. Continuing in the tradition of the broader approach of the original Index, the initial subject, e.g. "Personification: Vice, Avarice", is retained on database folio records, directing researchers to other depictions of Avarice.

The move from printed cards to a digital format, and the addition of the

collections mentioned above, necessitated the creation of new subjects and the

refining of existing terms either to reflect changes in iconography after 1400 or to

meet the requirements of new data. However, the authority of the paper Index,

with its iconographic approach to the formality of the subject, and the free text

with controlled vocabulary of the description, is maintained in the digital Index

and enhanced by a broader base of material.

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[1] Seepapers by Beatrice Radden Keefe and Henry Schild in this collection.