

Ashmolean opens online coin bank

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Leander swimming the Hellespont to his lover Hero on a coin of AD 177-180.
Credit: Ashmolean Museum

The Ashmolean Museum has just launched the most advanced coin website in the world. Roman Provincial Coinage Online comprises one of the largest collections of images and related inscriptions from the ancient world, which is searchable by iconography, place, and time. It is an exciting development for those interested in ancient coins, in classical archaeology, and in Roman history.

The guided searches, integrated images, interactive maps and linked tutorials put the site a generation ahead of other web-based numismatic publications. The website was developed by the University's Academic Computing Development Team. It is built around a substantial database

of Roman Provincial Coinage in the Antonine Period (AD 138–192), which was put together as a result of a research project directed by Professor Chris Howgego of the Ashmolean Museum and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the University.

It contains information on 13,730 different coin types from 386 cities, and is based on 46,725 individual specimens. The database is based on the ten most important and accessible collections in the world, and on all published material. Roman Provincial Coinage Online has been designed as a model for putting the rest of provincial coinage online in the future, from its beginning in 44 BC to its end in AD 296/7.

Professor Howgego said: ‘It was decided to publish online in order to make this extensive body of information and images about the Roman world available in the most flexible and user-friendly way possible. We hope more people will use the material within a wide variety of classical and archaeological studies. This facility we are providing for online users should make the material far more accessible than conventional publications. We hope this will encourage museums, collectors and dealers to feed back new material so we can continue to update the website and make the conventional publication more complete.’

‘Roman provincial coinage’ includes those coins not produced under the imperial authority of Rome. They fall within the period of the three and a half centuries following the death of Julius Caesar in 44 BC. Coins struck in the name of cities represent the most common type of provincial coinage. Cities usually produced bronze coins, which circulated locally and provided most of the small change in the Eastern half of the Roman Empire.

The website is at rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/

Source: University of Oxford

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