

Parchments, maps and special materials in Italian archives: digitization and interoperability

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Digitizing traditional materials has to solve some basic issues, as trust: we have to face both with the legal role of the documents and with the habits of our traditional users.

At the state of the art, Internet offers to the user a virtual access to a wide range of digitized originals of special typology from archives and libraries, namely parchments, maps, photographs, manuscripts. The starting point is the identity of these collections: what makes parchments or maps really “special” among the others materials, and how we can provide a specific description for them preserving on the other side the general archival and librarian standards. Moreover, a specific access mode has to be found to emulate operations usually performed in consulting the originals.

The paper describes structure, characters of this kind of collections in the State Archive of Rome and in the others State Archives of Italy, focusing on the digitization projects carried on in the last years.

A key role is played by the content-driven and context-driven strategy to access digital collections. A digital object is a different thing than the original, and can often provide to the user a wider range of features than the original; a very important one is the interoperability that can be implemented using relational modelling coming from databases technology.