

## **Collaboration on Medieval Charters – Wikipedia in the humanities?**

Benjamin Burkard

In recent years the creation of massive bodies of digital data in the cultural heritage domain has become cheaper almost month by month, as digital photography is more and more replacing analog photography. While the creation of – at least facsimile oriented – corpora of digital documents has therefore become increasingly simple, the creation of access information has remained as expensive and time consuming as ever. This is true for the simple librarians definition of metadata as bibliographic information as well as various stages of editorial work, as e.g. literal transcriptions, which can be interpreted as high end metadata for the improvement of the accessibility of document collections.

As the creation of metadata in any imaginable definition requires human effort and will continue to do so for quite some time, there is no solution in sight for the foreseeable future. This could lead to the less than satisfactory vision, that we will encounter more and more digital resources which are barely accessible as they lack appropriate data to provide for search mechanisms and similar. It could also lead to the equally unsatisfactory situation that the potential of digitization equipment is not used, as projects are reluctant to make material available without proper descriptions.

Almost from the beginning of the creation of modern digital systems for cultural heritage information, it has been argued, that this problem can be overcome, if we re-define the traditional roles of the parties interested in the handling of such materials: If the users of digital documents can actively contribute notes and other information they extract from the documents while using them for their own purposes could make information available, which the holding institutions – libraries, archives, museums – can then use in their web systems to support access to the collections, the situation described initially could be much improved.

The author has produced a system which shall support such a working process. That system, which can be demonstrated as a prototype, provides for a collaborative working environment to create metadata up to full transcriptions for the specific context of the medieval charters of the Monasterium-Project.