THE VIATIONALPES PROJECT
Valorizing an exceptional cultural heritage: the illustration of traveling in the Alps

Project: http://www.unil.ch/viatricalpes
Database: http://www.unil.ch/viatricalpesimages

World Library and Information Congress, Milan 2009: "Libraries create futures: Building on cultural heritage"
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The Project

A veritable national treasure, the travel literature — consisting of both texts and images — conserved in the country’s public libraries constitutes an exceptional documentary resource for the humanities and the social sciences. It is, moreover, a source of interest and pleasure for the general public too.

The aim of our project is to assemble and study the alpine iconography produced in travel literature between 1540 and 1860 ca.

Up to now, more than 10,000 illustrations of the Alps have been inventoried by the VIATIONALPES team, and more than 1,000 have already been digitalized, indexed and made available to the public through the RIVES database.

RIVES
http://www.unil.ch/viatricalpesimages
AN OPEN-ACCESS KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR RARE TRAVEL ILLUSTRATIONS
IMAGES TEXTS + hyperlinks to the digitalized version of the relevant rare book
hyperlink to biographic and bibliographic information
A VALUABLE TEACHING TOOL
RIVES, a platform shared by a number of different research teams, will soon contain documentation of other geographic regions.

Source of the Rhône and glacier of La Furca
Alphonse Beauxmont Jean-François, etc.
Drawn from France to Italy through the Lepontine Alps, London, 1800
Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire de Lausanne, cote: RC 399

"The three transparent sources rise at the back of the AIG, at the back of which stand the small chalets or huts, as represented in the drawing, the author having taken the view from the top of a small plateau, or flat surface, which commands the extensive glacier of La Furca, and (by will) from where issue a part of the Rhône, as described. On the right stands the mountain which bears its name, and on the left the basis of the glacier"

The Iconography of Travel
A new interdisciplinary field of studies
Images of alpine travel are characterized by the importance they accord to the depiction of landscape. Thus the study of these images will improve our understanding of the historical, but also geographical and climatic properties of the alpine landscape in a given period.

Such study will also add to our understanding of aesthetic representations, of the relationship between word and image, of the construction of identity, of the scientific imagination and of the history of travel and tourism. Such images also address the social and material history of books and illustration.

INDEXATION
In a standardized language: keywords, thematic domains, geographical thesaurus, etc.
DESCRIPTION (by the indexers) & CAPTIONS (by the authors)
CONTEXT
texts of the original authorial descriptions of images
GEO-LOCALISATION
spatial location of images

Swiss libraries collaborating in the digitalization of both images and texts