

# THE VIATICALPES PROJECT

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

Project: <http://www.unil.ch/viaticAlpes>  
Database: <http://www.unil.ch/viatimages>

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 VIATICALPES 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/viatimages>

AN OPEN-ACCESS  
KNOLEDGE 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",  
Albanis Beaumont Jean-François,  
Travels from France to Italy through the Lepontine Alps, London, 1800,  
Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire de Lausanne, cote: AC 389



CAPTION: "The three transparent sources rise at the back of the hill, at the basis 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 icy Vault, from where issues 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 Grimsel"

In the drawing N° XXIV. I have given as exact a representation as possible of this astonishing *tableau*, from the outlines taken by myself on the spot, and which are such, I may venture to assert, as they really appeared to an eye which is desirous of letting nothing escape that deserves attention. I may therefore add, that this superb glacier, of which a stranger can form no idea and of the magnitude of which, as well as the surrounding rocks, I am sorry to add, my drawing gives but an inadequate conception, may be compared to an extensive amphitheatre of ice, whose steps are more than three hundred feet in height, forming so many stupendous transparent pyramids of crystal, reflecting on all sides the beams of the sun.



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.

ACCESS POINTS  
to the illustrations

### 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