FAIR Epigraphy

Arts and Humanities Research Council

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation

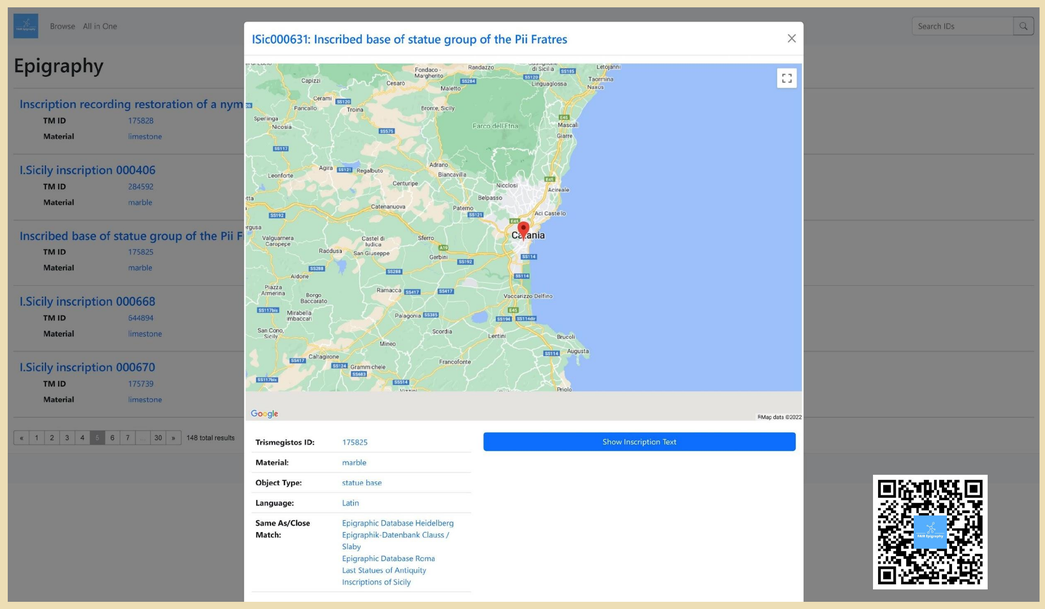
Too many databases?

… or just not enough linked data?

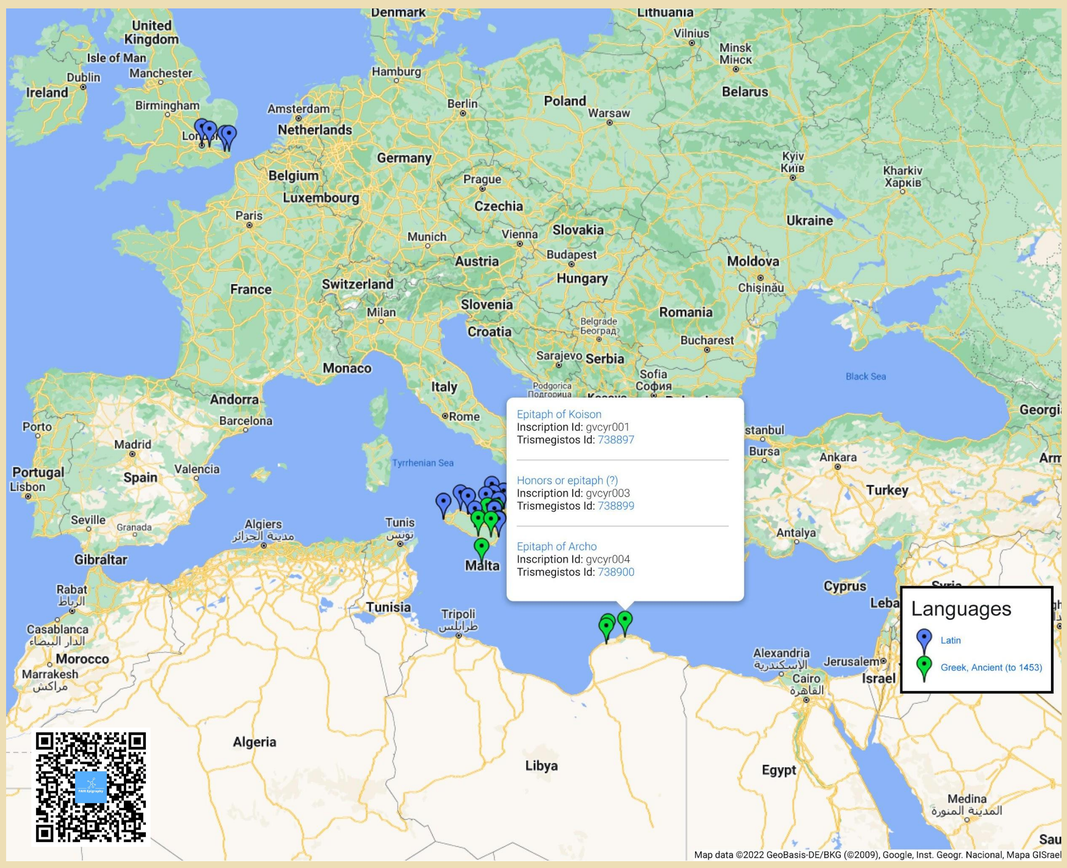
Why FAIR?

There are ever more digital epigraphy projects, adding more value and detail to our epigraphic knowledge every day. The true value of these projects will only be realised if they can be combined and connected. No-one has the resources to host or maintain all these projects, or manage a single 'master' corpus with this much data. To achieve this, data must be accessible and interoperable – we must adopt the FAIR Principles:

- **Findable**
- **Accessible**
- **Interoperable**
- **Reusable**



Sample inscription browser, presenting core data across 148 inscriptions from I.Sicily, IGCyr, and RIB
https://fair-epigraphy.github.io/RDF_pilot_1/index.html



Sample inscription browser, presenting core data across 148 inscriptions from I.Sicily, IGCyr, and RIB
https://fair-epigraphy.github.io/RDF_pilot_1/all_in_one.html

Most projects already use standards, and many are accessible. As this pilot browser demonstrates, it is already possible to combine the data from multiple projects and to begin to explore it.

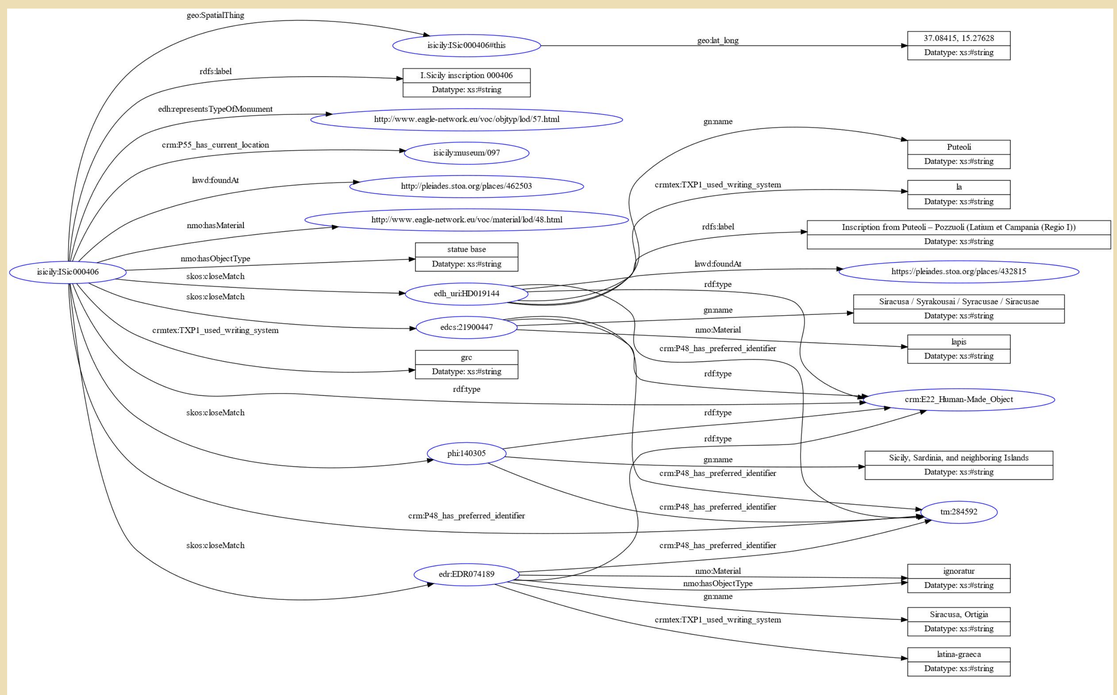
To make this a reality, all projects need to do is publish their data in standard ways (e.g. RDF) and aligned to agreed community standards (e.g. the EAGLE vocabularies). Projects can continue to use their own standards internally.

The FAIR Epigraphy project will provide tools and support to:

- help projects publish their data
- develop community standards
- make the published data searchable

Why Linked?

To make data comparable, we use standard terminologies and classifications. To make data actually interoperable, computers need to be able to identify the points of commonality. Linking your data points to agreed unique identifiers (e.g. a Trismegistos number, a Pleiades place, or an EAGLE object type), means a computer can identify which inscription records are the same, which objects come from the same place, or which inscriptions are on the same objects.
The example on the right shows the scale of such connections – but also the limits of existing data and where things still need to be improved!



Visualisation of the RDF graph of I.Sicily000406 = TM 284592
(note that different projects record different data for this inscription!)

Where next?

In order to understand where to focus our work in the next 3 years, in spring 2022 we undertook a survey of the state of digital epigraphy, including existing standards, methods and accessibility. The survey covered 40 projects, including established and new projects from across Europe and the US. We published the results on Zenodo in June 2022:
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6610695

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Come along to find out more:
7-9pm on Thursday 1 September

We are:
Imran Asif (Software Engineer, University of Oxford)
Peter Hermankova (Researcher, Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz)
Marietta Horster (PI, Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz)
Jonathan Prag (PI, University of Oxford)