Modelling and sharing geo-historical information: the SyMoGIH project

Background
Historians systematically retrieve knowledge from their sources: but a great amount of the information thus produced is subsequently lost, because it is considered of no intrinsic value after serving in publications. Quite often information cannot be reemployed in new projects because data modelling was too closely determined by the research agenda or insufficiently documented.

Aim
Establishing a collaborative platform that enables historians to:
- store the information they collect during their individual research or collective programs
- share it with other colleagues in a cumulative system
- exploit it by using different kinds of digital tools to visualise and analyse it
- insure permanence and reuse of collected information

Method
Creation of a generic data model adapted to historical method, based on a few fundamental procedures:
- define historical objects (actors, concepts, places, etc.) that have the same function as authority records in library catalogues
- create informations that document relationships among objects at a given date, and roles to specify the function of each object
- atomize information and define it as objectively as possible
- provide sourcing for each information

Results
More than 30 scholars and students are currently using or have used the database and 5 research programs are linked to the project. The rights and obligations of each user are defined by a charter.

At the end of this workflow, data can be visualised and analysed with existing software tools (multidimensional analysis, spatial analysis, network analysis, etc.), or published on a website.

Conclusion
The SyMoGIH project (Systeme modulaire de Gestion de l’Information Historique – Modular System for Historical Information Management) proves that geo-historical information can be collected and shared on a collaborative and cumulative platform.

References
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