

CEGESOMA NEWSLETTER

NO 41 - NOVEMBER 2018

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PUBLICATIONS

We have published two issues of the Journal of Belgian History. [The double-sized thematic issue in English \(2018, 1-2\)](https://www.journalbelgianhistory.be/en/journal/journal-belgian-history-xlvi-2018-1-2) is entirely dedicated to Congo during the First World War. [The following single issue \(2018, 3\)](https://www.journalbelgianhistory.be/en/journal/journal-belgian-history-xlvi-2018-3) has four individual articles.

[\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.journalbelgianhistory.be/en/journals)

RESEARCH

We assess the progress of the project ADOCHS (Auditing Digitization Outputs in the Cultural Heritage Sector), a project about the enhancement of the processes of quality control of digital heritage collections

[\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=3805&pag0nbr=68&pagofs=0)

INVITATION

The partners of UGESCO (a project about new methods to valorise photographic collections) invite you in CegeSoma on 12 December 2018 for a test run of their newly developed applications and the participative platform UGESCROWD.

[\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=3808)

IN MEMORIAM JACQUES WYNANTS

The loss of a passionate historian with a close personal connection to CegeSoma, from the very early beginnings.

[\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=3799&pag0nbr=68&pagofs=0)

EXHIBITION

Make the most of the coming weeks and of the Christmas holiday to visit the exhibition 'Brussels, November 1918. From War to Peace?', a realization of CegeSoma /State Archives in the BELvue Museum.

[\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.belvue.be/en/activities/exposition-temporaire/brussels-november-1918)

- [Nederlands](#)
- [Français](#)
- [English](#)



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Journal of Belgian History, XLVIII, 2018, 1-2

Thematic Issue : Congo during the First World War

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Half-time for the ADOCHS project!

On 1 November 2016, the CegeSoma launched the ADOCHS project in collaboration with the Royal Library (*KBR*), and the Universities of Brussels (*Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)*, *Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)*). The project aims to improve quality control processes for digital cultural heritage collections. After having worked for two years at CegeSoma, Anne Chardonnens now prepares to join the *ULB*-team. We interviewed her to reflect on the results she has accomplished so far.



Can you introduce yourself to our readers?

I am a PhD student in Sciences et Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication at the *Université libre de Bruxelles*. Before being involved in the ADOCHS project, I first worked for nearly one year on the MADDLAIN project. This project aimed to improve digital access to collections, by studying the behaviour and needs of the users of the State Archives, CegeSoma, and the Royal Library.

What does ADOCHS mean?

It is an acronym for Auditing Digitization Outputs in the Cultural Heritage Sector. The objective is to develop new methodologies to analyse and improve the quality of metadata and images in the context of digitization processes. I am in charge of the metadata part, while a PhD student in Digital Mathematics is responsible for the images part.

CegeSoma is one of the partners of the ADOCHS project; in which ways can the project be useful to the

Centre?

The CegeSoma collections are documented by the help of descriptive metadata. It is this 'data about data' that then allows users to search Pallas - the digital catalog. Thus, metadata containing titles, legends or keywords will help users to find one of the 300.000 photographs held by the Centre.

However, it turns out that the quality of these metadata is very uneven. As explained [one year ago](#), the keywords used to describe the collections present us with different types of problems. The ADOCHS project provides an opportunity to take the time to identify these problems and test new solutions, in order to create better access to the collections.

Does it mean that you spend your days rectifying misspelled keywords?

To manually correct metadata that is inaccurate, incomplete, or inconsistent is a very time-consuming task. It is a painstaking work and it would take several fulltime people dedicating themselves exclusively to this task to obtain significant results.

I prefer methods allowing me to automate the entire process, or part of it. For example, the free software OpenRefine makes it easy to find duplicates, empty fields, similar terms containing a slightly different spelling, and then to process a thousand anomalies with a single click.

You are about to join the Université libre de Bruxelles (another partner of the ADOCHS project) after having worked for two years at CegeSoma. What is your feedback halfway through?

The first months allowed me to better understand the institution, its mission, its history, its collections, and how it works. It was a particular context: the recent integration in the State Archives, the arrival of a new director, the departure of a long-time computer scientist (who knew all the "secrets" of the main database), and finally, the prospect of data migration to the collection management system of the State Archives. In addition to this better understanding of the context in which the project takes place, the time spent inside the institution has allowed me to better understand the issues related to metadata quality, which also turns out to be critical for the success of other projects like [EHRI](#) or [UGESCO](#).

After having delved into the state of the art, the needs of the institution and its users (see for example the [needs of researchers](#)), and carried out some preliminary analyses, I have decided to tighten the scope of my work around authority data for person entities. In the case of CegeSoma, a lot of names of personal names are contained in the keywords used to index documents. My work has focused on exploring how the Linked Open Data can be used to disambiguate the personal names, link them to other collections around the world, or enrich them using contextual elements from knowledge bases such as Wikidata. But it is not over, it is a work in progress ...

What's next?

As an EHRI fellow, I currently have the opportunity to stay at the [CDEC](#) (Fondazione *Centro Di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea*) in Milan. I am conducting tests to see to what extent parts of the CegeSoma collections could be linked to theirs, through the [Person](#) authority records. It is very exciting and lets me imagine new possibilities!

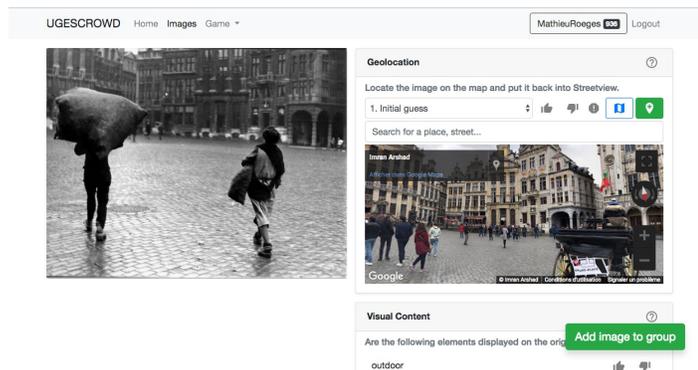
Of course, there is still much to be done and it would be vain to believe that everything can be "cleaned up" (unfortunately, one cannot miraculously deduce the identity of a person whose only first name has been encoded, without date or any other additional information), but it is exciting to be able to analyse the possibilities and limits of new tools with the help of empirical data, knowing that this will be of direct benefit to staff and end-users.

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Our photos described by artificial intelligence... and checked by our readers!

In April 2017 the research project UGESCO (Upscaling the Geo-temporal Enrichment, exploration and exploitation of Scientific Collections) was launched in order to experiment with new methods to valorise our photo collections.

On 12 December 2018, the project partners will proudly present the new tools they have developed and which combine computing power with the expertise of our researchers and users.



A common dictum says that "a picture is worth a thousand words". However, poorly documented images create numerous questions for researchers: Which sense ought they to give to a picture which was hardly described by its producer? How to discover the geographical and historical context in which the photo was taken?

Another essential question for information officers and archivists is how much time they are willing to spend on a structured description of each picture. How to integrate visual elements into a keyword-driven catalogue and how detailed must a description be?

The aim of the UGESCO project is to provide solutions by partly automating the process, in order to increase metadata quality.

The project partners (*UGent, KUL, ULB* and *NAB*) have developed applications based on visual recognition technology and automated processing of natural language that enable researchers to detect the place where a photo was taken as well as the date, and to provide a brief description of digitised historical photographs. All of these tools use machine learning principles and therefore yield improved results each day.

Yet, what is special about UGESCO is that it does not only rely on artificial intelligence, but it also gives experts and the large public the possibility to verify the data produced via a crowdsourcing platform.

On Wednesday 12 December 2018, the project researchers will be pleased to present you the results of their work. You will also have the opportunity to test the applications they developed and the participative platform UGESCROWD. This Launch Event starts **at 9.30 am in the conference room of Cegesoma** and is open both to experts and to the large public; in short, to everyone who wants to participate in valorising our photographic cultural heritage.

Please click [here](#) to view the program.

Please click [here](#) to register for this event.

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In memoriam Jacques Wynants

Jacques Wynants – our “big Jacques” as senior colleagues at CegeSoma recall him – has passed away in the manner in which he desired: quietly, discretely... He left us on Sunday 18 November 2018, in the wake of the First World War commemorations, which in recent years had taken a lot of his attention as a passionate researcher.



An unusual curriculum

Born on 28 July 1940 in *Liège*, Jacques Wynants spent most of his professional life as a secondary school teacher.

After his training he took up studies in History and obtained a Master's Degree in History in 1982 from *Université catholique de Louvain (UCL)* with a thesis about the city of Verviers and the liberation at the end of the Ardennes battle.

He was a professor for some twenty years at the *Institut Sainte-Claire* in *Verviers*, and became head of the *Saint-François-Xavier* institute in 1984 until his retirement.

The history of the Second World War was a life-long passion of Jacques. This particular interest may originate in his personal recollection and experience as a child during this time.

This conflict was not his only focus of interest however. Other subjects close to his heart were the civil population during the First World War, social history from the 18th to the 20th century, the industrial revolution in his hometown of Verviers, cultural heritage, the history of the “East Cantons” and the “Ten Municipalities”, German immigration in his home region (mainly 19th century), etc.

A committed man

Jacques was not only a passionate but also a very committed man. He was a man of confidence and of action, just like his father, and did not hesitate to take up responsibility which he assumed to the end.

The list of associations that called upon him as secretary, president or administrator is long... very long indeed. He acted as president of the Verviers Society for Archaeology and History, the Church Council of the listed church of Saint-Remacle, a landmark of the “golden age of the clothiers city” (19th century). He was also secretary of the Administrative Commission for the Museums of Verviers, a member of the Scientific Committee of the tourism office for wool and fashion, and correspondent and later associated researcher of CegeSoma, and president of the non-profit support organisation of CegeSoma “*Les Amis du CegeSoma*” until early 2018.

His no-nonsense approach and thorough knowledge of the inner workings of associations of all sorts were highly precious to our institution

A key figure of CREHSGM , a source for inspiration and a friend of CegeSoma

The path of Jacques crossed the *CREHSGM** – the predecessor of CegeSoma – at the early moments of the institution, in the years 1967-1968. As a close friend to José Gotovitch, he became correspondent for the Centre in 1969 and as such helped to bring numerous archives, journals and testimonies, which he gathered over the course of the years in the Verviers region, to our Centre.

Throughout these years, he also gave us the opportunity to get to know his warm, sympathetic and optimistic character. He always had a positive word for everybody, an open ear and constructive input for projects of all sorts.

After being a member of “*Les Amis du CegeSoma*”, he became its administrator in 2004 and its president in 2007. He was obviously highly appreciated in this office.

Unfortunately, the time of his departure came, which has left colleagues and friends saddened and distraught.

Thank you, Jacques, for all these years of commitment and passion. Thank you also for your involvement in CegeSoma and its support organisation.

Alain Colignon & Isabelle Ponteville
21 November 2018

**Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes historiques de la Seconde Guerre mondiale*

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Temporary exhibition

Brussels, November 1918 FROM WAR TO PEACE?

26/09/2018 - 06/01/2019

0.00€

Schools , Individuals , Groups

The Great War (WWI) ended on 11 November 1918. For Brussels, the Armistice finally ended an occupation that had lasted nearly 50 months. How did the inhabitants of Brussels experience the end of the war, and what major issues did it face at the time?

Through photographs, historical documents and archive film footage, this trilingual exhibition – in English French and Dutch – plunges us into the turbulent Brussels of 1918, a city grappling with health problems and struggling to cope with an influx of refugees, closely followed by returning soldiers and Belgians coming back from exile.

November 1918 was also a new dawn, chiefly characterised by the celebration of victory (even more than of peace), as well as being the time when the long-awaited introduction of universal male suffrage was finally announced.

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- As individual: free during the opening hours of the museum
- With the family: a treasure hunt (in French or Dutch) for kids aged between 8 and 12: €1 per child - no booking required.
- With a group: prior booking necessary - info and booking
- Guided tours are available on request - info and booking



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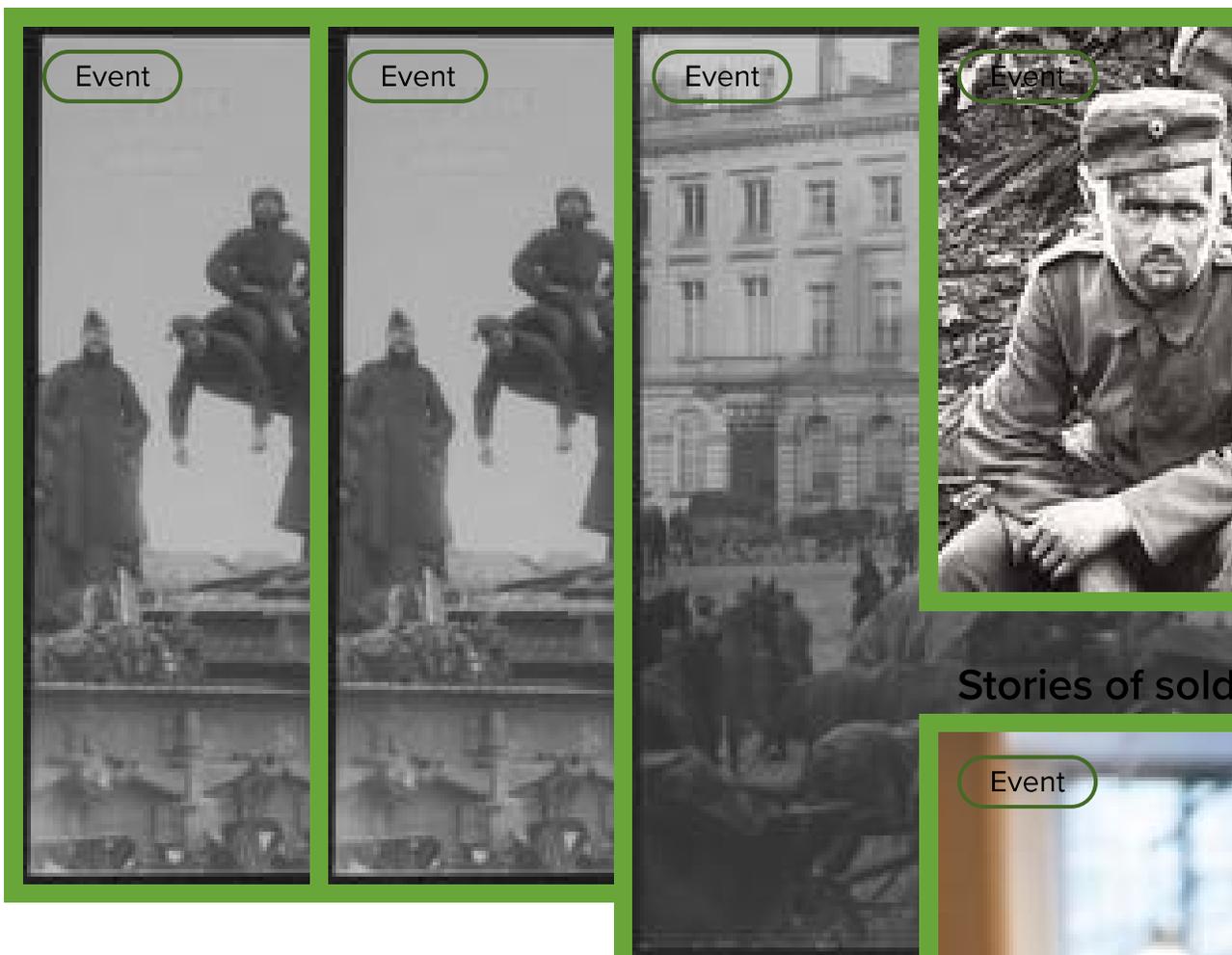
- From 26 September 2018 to 6 January 2019
- Free admission
- Reservation necessary for group visits - info and reservation
- Guided tours on demand - info and reservation

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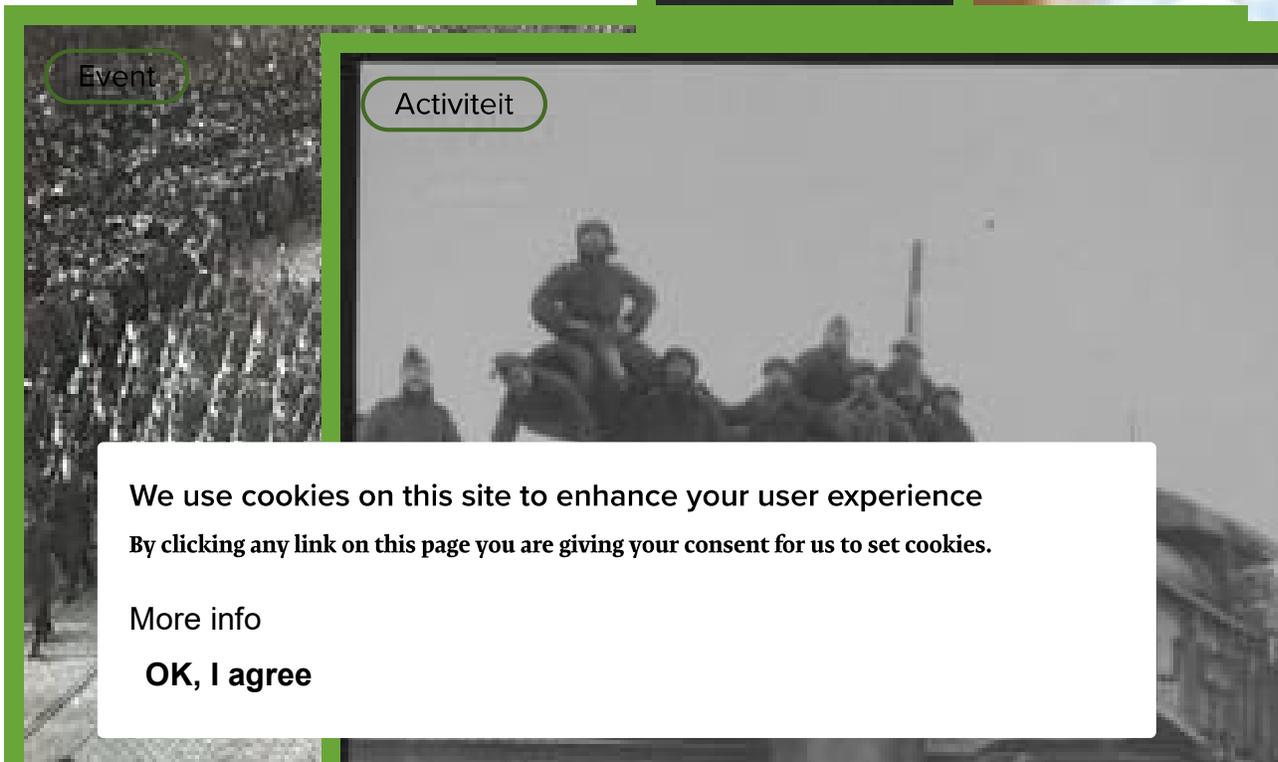
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Laurence van Ypersele Fair Brussels Museums 2018 **Guerre**

Bezoek de tentoonstelling 06/12/2018 November 1918 Een klas.

LECTURE

05/01/2019

Young and old alike are invited to celebrate t
exhibition Brussels, November 1918. activity
Societies' remembrance
from Saint Nicholas! Play tours - from 3 to 1
crusade, or in any oth

Lecture in French - Laurence van Ypersele More info in French



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