MEDEA: *Archeologische metaaldetectievondsten in Vlaanderen* - and some thoughts on the future alignment of object vocabularies

Das rechte Wort am rechten Platz. Kontrolliertes Objektvokabular in der Archäologie

Round Table im Archäologischen Museum Hamburg
14. Oktober 2019

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Overview

Part 1: object vocabularies and classification on MEDEA and beyond

Part 2: Authority or multivocality? Some thoughts on the future alignment of object vocabularies
MEDEA

• www.vondsten.be
• Finds database for detector finds in Flanders (Belgium)
• Started at Vrije Universiteit Brussel – now part of Histories
• Aimed at self-reporting
• Database: graph implementation of CIDOC-CRM

munt, zilver (ID-28392)

Vondst
Datum: 22 jul 2017
Locatie: Oudenaarde

Object
Opschrift: IMP CAES NERVA TRAIAN AVG GERM /
             PONT MAX TR POT COS II
Dimensies: gewicht: 3.3g
           diameter: 18mm
Materiaal: zilver

Categorie: munt
Periode: Romeins

Details
Toegelast: 24 jul 2017
Gevalideerd op: 25 jul 2017
Status: Gepubliceerd

Object classification in MEDEA

High-level object categories: mostly functional
- Based on FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus, also used by PAS

Lower-level classification: open approach
- Classification can be added by any user in the ‘finds expert’ role
- Three types of classification: typology/comparative find/literature reference
- Design decision: balancing authority vs fluidity of research and diversity of user knowledge
Towards a larger collaboration

European Public Finds Recording Network

- PAS, PAN, DIME, FindSampo, MEDEA
- Website and manifesto to be published soon
- Part of our aims: to aggregate and expose datasets through a unified portal > ARIADNEplus

We need a unified vocabulary!

Vision.

- Broad public engagement and access to the archaeological heritage at local, region, national and European level;
- A democratised approach to heritage management in Europe stimulated through the incorporation of principles of citizen science and crowd-sourcing;
- A recognition of recorded public finds as an important body of archaeological evidence for human behavior and interaction.


https://ariadne-infrastructure.eu/
Some thoughts on the alignment of object vocabularies

The current situation:
- Authoritative vocabularies (notably, Getty AAT)
- High-level, generally agreeable classification
- But not detailed enough for archaeological purposes => regional classifications

How to link these different classifications?
More detail > more scope for disagreement between vocabularies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heynowski 2016</th>
<th>PAN - Heeren &amp; van der Feist 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2.1 Runde Blechfibel</td>
<td>Type 88 Vroegmiddeleeuwse schijffibula met groefendarcoratie, notably 88a3 and other subgroups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2.2 Kreuzemailfibel</td>
<td>Type 89a (5 subtypes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2.3 Münzfibel</td>
<td>Type 86b <em>Pseudo-muntfibula</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2.4 Heiligenfibel</td>
<td>Type 89c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2.5 Lunulafibel</td>
<td>Type 89h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2.6 Kreuzfibel</td>
<td>Type 88c (7 subtypes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2.7 Peltafibel</td>
<td>Type 89h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 Scheibenfibel (includes Early Middle Ages at the highest level, but few early medieval subtypes)</td>
<td>Type 88 {some sub-subtypes: 88a2} Type 86a <em>Pseudo-muntfibula</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1.3 Brakteatenfibel</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2.1.4 Rechteckfibel</td>
<td>Type 88f; Type 89b1-2, 89k1</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2.1.8 Kleeblattfibel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1.9 Urnesfibel</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2.3 Schalenfibel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partly 3.26 Scheibenfibel mit integrierem Nadelapparat?</td>
<td>Numerous enamelled brooches of Type 89 Subtypes of Type 88: 88a1, 88b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[https://www.metaldetektorfund.dk/thesaurus/](https://www.metaldetektorfund.dk/thesaurus/)
Linking datasets - coping with detail

Option 1: keep formal classification at a high level
- At odds with the aims of Linked Open Data
- Obscuring substantial archaeological knowledge

Option 2: choose and expand on a single standard vocabulary
- Realistic? Different vocabularies already in use
- Future-proof? New typological research, new finds, new regions
- Ethical? Not conforming to Open Science ideals (and EPFRN’s philosophy)
  - Whose authority? Whose needs?

Option 3: multivocality

Open Archaeology: `a transparently accessible knowledge base that can be used for many different scales of enquiry by many different audiences' (Beck & Neylon 2012, 494)
Multivocality

Acknowledge diversity
- Research vs museums vs heritage management vs public
  - E.g. DIME > Harja table, a detectorist typology

Existing solutions/platforms: e.g.
- Linked Open Vocabularies (lov.linkeddata.es)
- WikiData (www.wikidata.org)

But the problem of disagreement remains!
Multivocality

Align conflicting detail through attribute-based vocabularies

- Inherent in existing classifications > compatible with, not replacing taxonomic approaches!
- Cf. shifting focus to traits in ecological research
- Cf. current archaeological theory on things as relational entities
- Great potential for new, user-centered applications, including research and citizen science
One example: digital technology and citizen science – trait-based classification of bumblebees

Thanks for your attention!

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