DigiPal | Digital Resource and Database for Palaeography, Manuscripts and Diplomatic
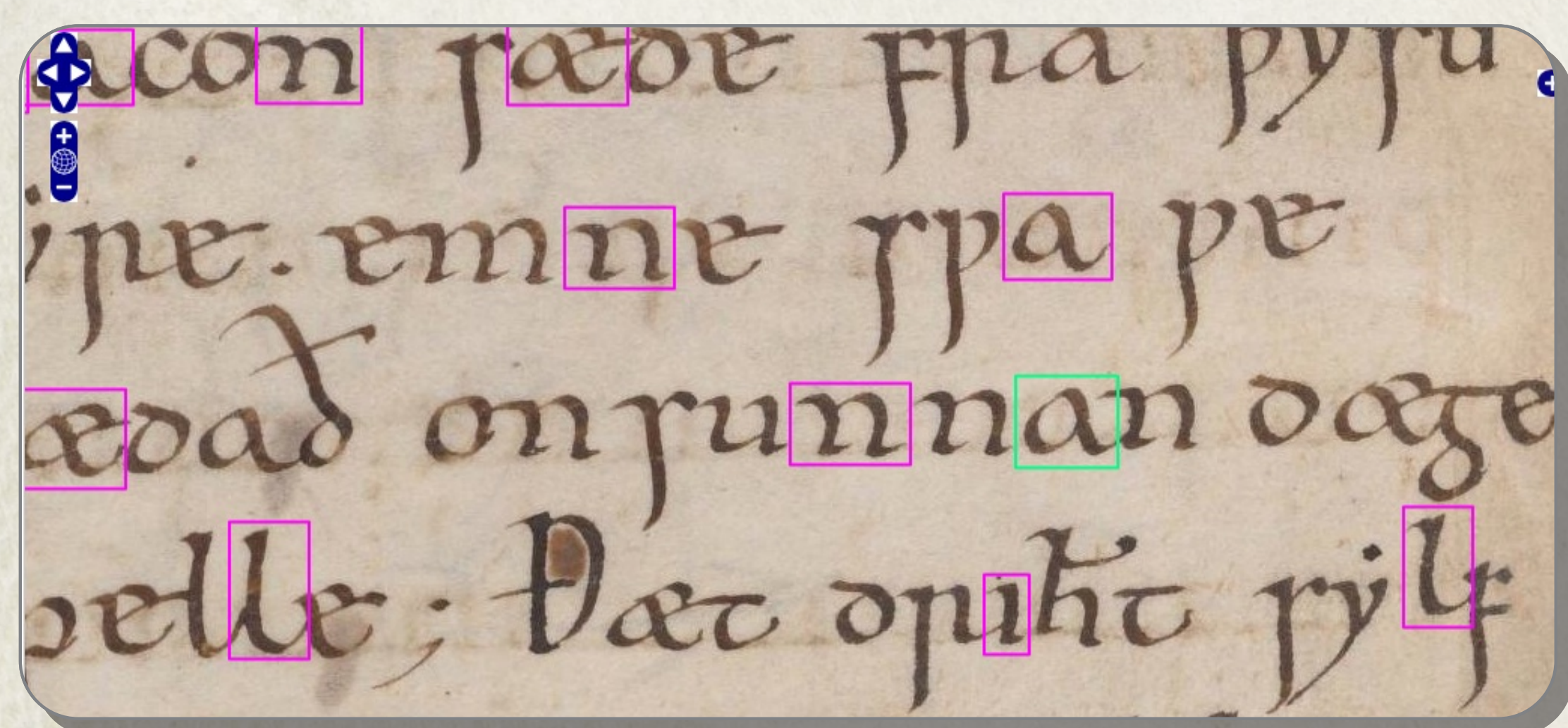
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What is DigiPal?

The 'Digital Resource and Database for Palaeography, Manuscript Studies and Diplomatic' (DigiPal) is a new resource which is being developed at the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College London. The project began in October 2010 and is funded by a four-year ERC Starting Grant.
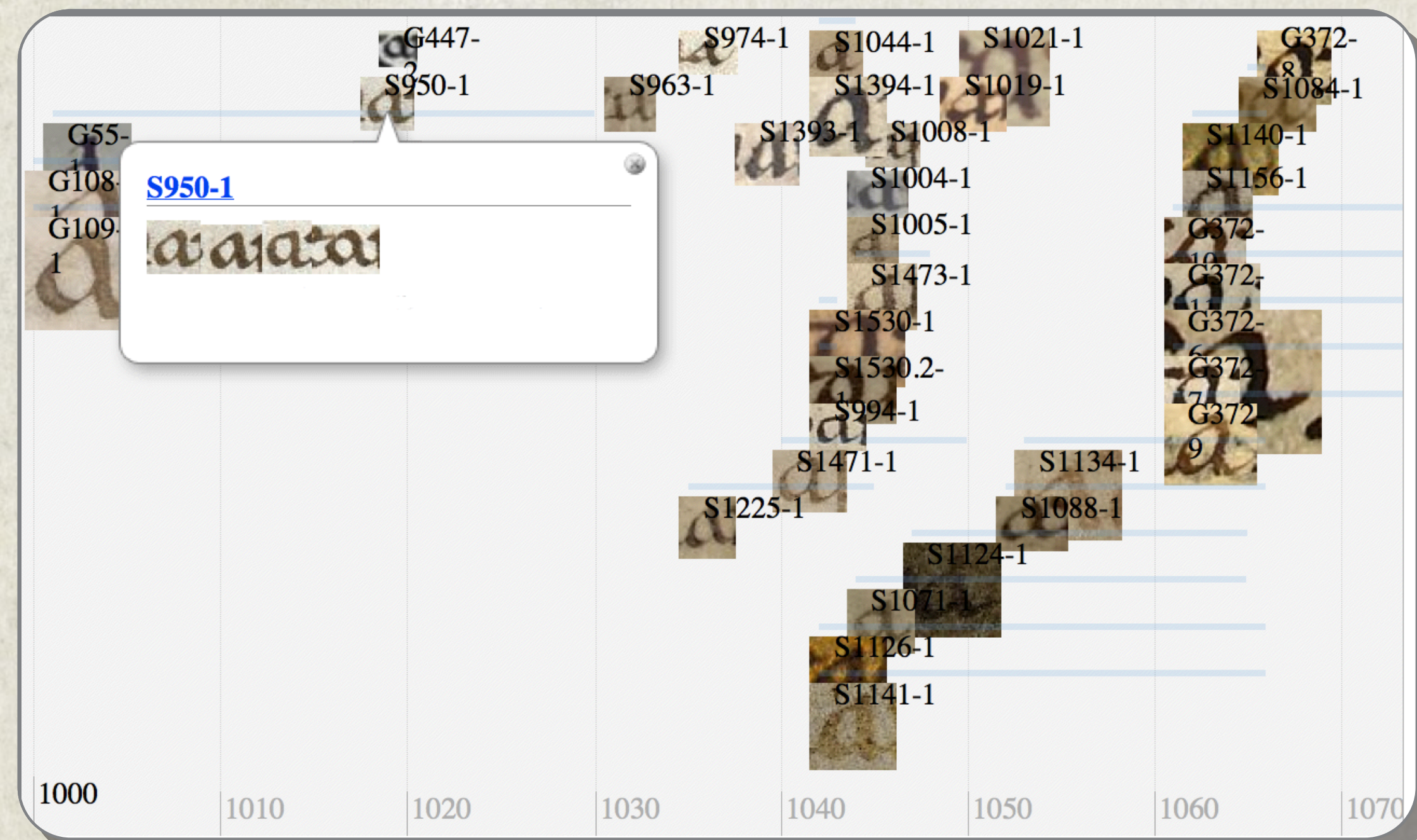

Annotated letters in the manuscript

Objectives

The DigiPal team will develop a web-based framework for the study of script in its manuscript or diplomatic context. Our focus is eleventh-century English vernacular minuscule which will provide a substantial test-case for this framework. We will catalogue about 1200 scribal hands and source digital images for as many of these hands as is feasible.

Methods

DigiPal aims to bring new methods in Digital Humanities to the study of medieval handwriting. At its heart will be hundreds of newly-commissioned photographs of eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon script from the major manuscript collections in the world, with detailed descriptions of the characteristics of the scribal hand(s), the textual content, and the wider manuscript context.

Forms of 'a' in Canterbury manuscripts

Timeline: 'a' in eleventh-century vernacular minuscule

Exploiting and developing new technologies

DigiPal will be more than just an online annotated catalogue of manuscript images. It will take advantage of recent advances in digital research as well as developing new technologies in order to offer innovative ways of interrogating and interacting with the material. It is our intention that DigiPal will showcase the benefits of digitally-assisted palaeography, opening up new possibilities for the study of scripts, scribes, and manuscripts.

Visualisation

The DigiPal team will develop innovative forms of visualisation that have not previously been used to their full potential with web-based manuscript projects. These will include linked annotation of images, interactive timelines, user-configurable grids of images, and user workspace to save and manipulate images. These will allow scholars to apply new developments in palaeographical method which have been discussed in theory but which have proven difficult or impossible to implement in practice.

Key challenges

• Develop 'Human–friendly' tools for exploration and discovery. Web interface must be designed for medievalists and must present information in ways that are useful to them.

• Integrate content from existing projects (including ManCASS C11, Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060–1220, eSawyer, and the Peter Stokes database).

• Create a substantial body of new material.

• Develop a taxonomy for describing script features

Project Team

Peter A. Stokes – Project Director and Principal Investigator

Stewart J. Brookes – Research Associate

Beatriz Caballero – Lead Interface Developer

Paul Caton – Lead Analyst

José Miguel Vieira – Lead Web Developer

For more information, visit our blog:

DigiPal.eu