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Dissemination Strategies of the Innovative Training Network (ITN) CARMEN

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Dissemination Strategies of the Innovative Training Network (ITN) CARMEN¹

Marietta Horster

In 2023, the role of social media is so obvious that it is hardly necessary to name the contexts of the connected world we live in. This includes the widespread influencer postings (even if one does not follow any, everybody has probably heard of at least one) or the excellent science blogs of some research institutions, museums, universities or e.g. the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. Most institutions make use of several media: webpages, mailing-lists, newsletters, X (Twitter), Instagram, Facebook and other social media, flyers and posters, leaflets and video clips. They chose these tools for example to provide information about events, new developments, publications and decisions or they invite the recipients to discussion and participation. The choice of the appropriate medium or of several media, the language level or ‘tone’ and the amount and kind of visual means connected with individual messages depend on the addressees, the content and the context of the message. Individual institutions or project teams might be in need of support when deciding which of all these different media to use and how.² Some pay for professional mentoring, others look for best practice models or, for example, guides to social media marketing in print or online versions or YouTube videos with instructions on “How to start a science blog”.³

In addition to the war in Ukraine, which has now also been going on for a long time on social media, the strong effects of these media are visible and perceptible in France

¹ The CARMEN project receives funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 954689.

² On the outreach potential of science blogs for example in the French language, see Mayeur 2017. For guidance on using social media for EU funded projects see <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/horizon-2020-projects-media-and-social-media-related-topics> (accessed 20 July 2023).

³ The author dispensed with references for the above written passage, as many of the attractive offers are of commercial nature, but see e.g. the offer by Stanford University, <https://news.stanford.edu/2021/04/13/guide-science-outreach/> (published in 2021; accessed 20 July 2023).

as well. The political events and gatherings in March and April 2023 were all being arranged at short notice through the channels of social media. These actions included e.g. the blocking of train tracks in France in reaction to the government making use of Article 49.3 of the French constitution in the context of the pension reform. The heated atmosphere, the opposition of the extreme right in solidarity with trade unions and other groups – this momentum was not created via the old channels of communication, the television or the newspapers. However, TV is still “the most used medium in Europe”,⁴ and it still reaches a surprisingly broad audience with science and research related topics.⁵ Although print media suffer from a decreasing number of readers, they still play an important role not only for the ‘establishment’.

CARMEN – few restraints and minor restrictions in 2020/2021

In 2019, our CARMEN application was up to date with these developments and with research on communication and dissemination, and it was successful. With the pandemic, consumers’ demands for online services and, consequently, the application of these services increased. However, since 2022, “we’re also seeing news fatigue setting in – not just around COVID-19 but around politics and a range of other subjects – with the number of people actively avoiding news increasing markedly.”⁶ In addition, some dissemination strategies were no longer feasible considering the changed circumstances after the launch of the CARMEN project in 2020: for example, the ideas to present posters and talks in schools in several European countries and to install visualisations of inscribed objects in local museums had to be abandoned. It turned out that postponement was no option for such plans. Neither we nor others were able to estimate when the pandemic would allow us freedoms of this kind again. It was also clear to the responsible supervisors of the Early Stage Researchers (ESRs) that the last year (2023/2024) should not include any time-consuming activities for them. The last 12 months of such a project with 11 doctoral students should be focused on ensuring the central impact shown in Figure 1 below, the improved career perspectives and employability of our ESRs through excellent degrees.

In addition, we increasingly realised that, despite all the important social components and the obvious gain in personal (not only virtual) scientific exchange, we must be much more prudent and environmentally conscious for example in planning trips by plane, now and in the future.

⁴ In contrast to the development in some European countries (in which multimedia services gain more and more prominence), TV user numbers are still increasing in the USA and most European countries, see e.g. <https://www.statista.com/topics/4039/media-usage-in-europe/> (published 6 January 2023); <https://www.statista.com/statistics/243789/number-of-tv-households-in-the-us/> (published 16 March 2023), both pages accessed 20 July 2023.

⁵ See Lehmkuhl et al. 2016.

⁶ Newman 2022, 10.

Considering all these caveats and constraints, it was appropriate to jointly reflect on alternative forms of dissemination and communication. Most importantly, our whole project is based on questions of mediality, target groups and user-orientation, albeit in Roman times. Therefore, reflections on the content of our project on the one hand and on the dissemination of our research subject and results on the other hand converged in some ways. In the course of 2021, the coordination team developed existing ideas further and came up with new strategies for communication, including these online working papers. With different means and activities, our consortium has found ways to achieve the goal of reaching more than the inner circle of experts.

CARMEN – adaptation of the “EU Horizon” programme’s goal

The chart⁷ below visualises the four main fields of achieving excellence in every ITN – Innovative Training Network, the organisational form of our CARMEN project. The last two entries in the “Impact” column include the issues concerned in this paper.

Excellence	Impact	Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation
Research programme	Enhancing career perspectives and employability, skills development	Coherence and effectiveness of working plan
Training programme	Research training: including contribution of non-academic sector (if appropriate)	Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures
Quality of supervision	Exploit and disseminate the project results	Infrastructure of the participating organisations
Quality of interaction between participating organisations	Communicate project activities to different target audiences	Commitment to the programme of the participating organisations

Figure 1

Apart from the research and training programme, our team is required to “exploit and disseminate the project results” and “communicate project activities to different audiences”. Dissemination and communication to a wider audience and to the countries paying into the EU treasury are thus key elements not least to justify why the CARMEN ITN receives funding for 11 doctoral students as well as for their research and training programmes.

The definition of both the propagation and the information strategy in this context is obvious: dissemination is a strategy targeted at peers (= scientific community, professional organisations, policymakers) whereas communication “aims to demonstrate

⁷ Adapted from slides 15–19 of “The EU Research & Innovation Programme 2021 – 2027, Horizon Europe Proposal Evaluation: Standard Briefing”, Version 6.0 (24.03.2023) https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/experts/standard-briefing-slides-for-experts_he_en.pdf (accessed 20 July 2023).

the ways in which the research, training and mobility contribute to a European ‘Innovation Union’ and account for public spending”.⁸ The crucial point is to demonstrate that European and international collaboration has resulted in a greater achievement than would have been possible otherwise. This concerns the excellence and innovation of the research (theories and methods) and of our research results as well as the increase in the competitiveness of the ESRs on the European job market. Moreover, even though the CARMEN theme concerns a widespread form of poetry that was present in both public spaces and private contexts, it cannot be said that the study of this poetry contributes to the resolution and management of modern societal challenges although this poetry was apparently appreciated by many groups of the ancient population. Nevertheless, our research sharpens sensibilities that are also important for us today. This includes the obvious question of how we deal with the cultural heritage of individual modern nations but also of the Roman Empire as such; it also includes the constructive examination of democratic art and what that is. Likewise, among other things, we can ask whether our (not only lay but also scholarly) modern standards of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ art, of quality and provinciality, are appropriate and whether these standards perpetuate a hierarchised and Eurocentric view. We contribute to this discussion – if we communicate accordingly, engage in debates and present our research issues and results. In our application for the CARMEN ITN in spring 2019, we promised to ‘translate’ science into an attractive and approachable, hands-on view on antiquity rooted both in Europe and in its different regions. The broad public financing our ITN shall find out what happened to their funding and receive fascinating results via different communication channels in return. Our mission is to meet these objectives using all the appropriate media.

As a standard, communication strategies should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. In our application, we had to take a stand on this and clarify, in accordance with the SMART principles, what we planned and when.

CARMEN – the issue of social media in the Roman world

The Seminar-Conference in Dijon and Alesia on 3–6 April 2023 under the heading of “Social Media in the Ancient World” aimed at exploring in presentations and discussions what various museum experts and our PhD students considered relevant for this subject. Following the event, the published working papers will deal with the subject of social media – modern and ancient. During these three days, we discussed 1) what communication means for us as a group of researchers of *carmina Latina epigraphica*. We also addressed – and that is the awesome feature of inscriptions and poems, manuscripts and

⁸ For dissemination see https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/dissemination-and-exploitation-research-results_en#guidance-documents (accessed 10 August 2023); aims of communication taken out of the guide for application (version 4.0, December 2019), p. 25 https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/guides_for_applicants/h2020-guide-appl-msca-rise_en.pdf (accessed 10 August 2023).

monuments – 2) the communicative potential such inscribed *carmina* carried in antiquity and what they thus mean in our present time. Some of the CARMEN Working Papers 2023/2024 will deal precisely with this latter question.

At the same time, we have invested in the first aspect as well, not with daily and lively blogging but with an attractive newsletter – informative, not too ‘scientific’ and richly illustrated – and with a series of four insight-articles in the widely distributed *The Project Repository Journal*.⁹ These are just few of the measures we took so far to fulfil our mandate to give back to Europe and the taxpayers who finance our ITN as a group and guarantee the funding of each doctoral student for much more than finishing the dissertations at the end of the three-year period.

Research excellence	Variety and richness of cultural heritage
Presentation at national and international workshops and conferences	Visualisation of and stories behind objects and texts (short clips, interviews etc.)
Publication of preliminary and final results (open access)	Creating spaces for meeting and dialogue including a general audience
Newsletter with updates on ongoing research	Newsletter with presentation of individual projects, of activities and events
Activities at local universities and (post-)graduate activities to encourage young scholars to work in such fields	Social media as a contemporary strategy and means to present objects and texts of the past and explain why they can be fascinating

Figure 2

To achieve this goal, the ESRs have created YouTube videos and podcasts to disseminate knowledge about our cultural heritage, to enhance the historical and linguistic awareness in our countries and to propagate the knowledge of techniques for conveying traditions and the rich treasure of antiquity.¹⁰ In 2020, Christin Rochlitzer gave her voice to a very beautiful poem about the nostalgia of a Roman administrator whose job in the middle of densely wooded, high mountains made him promise to Silvanus (god of the woods) to plant trees in Italy – if this would allow him to return to his Italian home soon (*CIL* XII 103 with 805; *CLE* 19).¹¹ The video was produced by the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften in the series “Der Klang der Alten Sprachen” to present the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* to a broad audience, and this format matches the dissemination objectives of the CARMEN-project perfectly. Another video documents Ana Lemes’ and Laura Sarli’s engagement in an interactive seminar with schoolchildren, both from the University of Trier, and accompanied by one of their supervisors, Professor Stephan Busch, at the European Commission’s science fair

⁹ The first was published in June 2023; I myself as project coordinator briefly introduced the project (Horster 2023). The following three articles by different authors from our team of supervisors and ESRs will appear in 2024.

¹⁰ <https://carmen-itn.eu/clips-podcasts/>.

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdSPpFSF75c>.

“Science is Wonderful!”, 16–17 March 2023.¹² Until now, there is but one more clip. It was created by Gabriël de Klerk while working on his PhD thesis on the creation of masculinity by means of inscribed poetry.¹³ He presents to a broader public what he thinks about and how he works with an epitaph for a soldier who died after three years of service at the age of twenty. The soldier’s mother and sister erected a tomb and surprisingly chose a poetic inscription focused on the transitoriness of nature and life (*AE* 1947, 31; *CLEPann* 38).¹⁴ Also apart from these great individual activities of the doctoral students, not least appealing to younger generations with such clips and videos, CARMEN and other projects are all about communication: we are working towards adapting the techniques we use to promote our research to the demands and opportunities of our time. In doing so, we are also aspiring to be sensitive to differences in gender and class and the respective needs as well as to expectations and challenges of individual countries and ‘cultures of knowledge’.

Exploring our cultural heritage is already (and should become even more) an investment into the future of our European community. The Roman Empire, though created by conquest and with fierce battles, devious raids, many losses and even more suffering, unified many regions in Europe. The Romans’ imperial concept definitely exceeded modern Europe and encompassed the entire Mediterranean region as part of this unity. The contours of this empire were based on eminent political reasoning but also on less obvious economic grounds: for example, the Romans profited greatly from the enormous wealth and natural resources in the North African coastal states and on the Turkish west coast. Roman imperialism, despite its aggressive roots, united these regions for many centuries. Admittedly, it allowed a high degree of diversity and regional specificity, but in the end the culture of the Romans created the unifying bond. From the fourth century onwards, Christianity also had a similar unifying and all-encompassing, even imperial claim, partly with equal readiness to enforce unity by violent means. This does not lead us away from the Latin *carmina*, which existed even after the expulsion of the Romans in the late antique and early medieval centuries, whether in Visigothic Spain, Ostrogothic Italy or Vandalic Africa, and continued into the early modern period.¹⁵ It is a great privilege that the supervisors and institutions have the opportunity to work with these young researchers on the CARMEN subject, to be able to support and accompany them on their way to their doctorate and to communicate what the team is doing, what the ITN’s common interest and research is about.

The two aspects presented above, the modern approaches to dissemination and the ancient ways of creating poetical but ‘democratic’ and ‘social media-like’ ways of expression, were at the core of the three days in Dijon and Alesia and are represented in

¹² Ana Lemes is a Latinist and Laura Sarli an archaeologist; in this seminar for young Europeans, both gave an idea of the potentiality and attraction of antique objects inscribed with Latin poetry: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTVs6vlsBVg>.

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tue3GrKeOhk>.

¹⁴ An English translation and commentary is provided by Courtney 1995, 187, 398–399.

¹⁵ Kagerer – Wulf 2023.

the following working papers by M. Tibout (6/2023), V. Rey-Vodoz – M. Aberson (1/2024), S. Lefebvre (2/2024), N. Potier (3/2024), E. Oikonomou (5/2024), G. Naccarato (6/2024), M. Butini (7/2024), F. Tecca (8/2024) and L. Sarli (9/2024).

Abbreviations

<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année épigraphique</i> , Paris 1888 sqq.
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> , Berlin 1862 sqq.
<i>CLE</i>	<i>Carmina Latina Epigraphica</i> , ed. F. Bücheler – E. Lommatzsch – P. Cugusi, 4 vols., Lipsiae 1895–1926; Berlin 2023.
<i>CLEPann</i>	P. Cugusi – M. T. Sblendorio Cugusi, <i>Studi sui carmi epigrafici: Carmina latina epigraphica Pannonica (CLEPann)</i> , Bologna 2007.

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