



Courtesy: Royal Albert Memorial Museum

# A MILLION PICTURES: Magic Lantern Slide Heritage as Artefacts in the Common European History of Learning



Courtesy: RAMM

## *Partners and Network*

From **1 June 2015 until 31 May 2018** researchers from the **universities** of Utrecht (NL), Exeter (UK), Antwerp (BE), Girona (ES) and Salamanca (ES) will carry out research on lantern slides, in close cooperation with **museums, archives, curators, researchers in other institutions, people working in the creative industries**, and, of course, **collectors**.

## *Objectives*

**A Million Pictures** has two major objectives:

**1.** This project will **enable research on lantern slides / sets that were used for educative purposes in Europe**: it will examine the slides and their use as didactic tool in educative processes of audio-visual nature in different European societies between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but mostly of the nineteenth century.

Questions will concern the slides themselves (content, aesthetics, intended effect, production standards, accessories etc.), their dissemination (selling strategies, user-producer communication, stimulation of users' needs, presentation platforms etc.) and their performative context (theatrical settings, appeal as live entertainment, readings and stage directions for the lanternist, audience response etc.). The group will examine how the presentation of slides worked in different historical contexts, specifically those regarded as educational (scientific institutions and museums, *variétés* and theatres, learned societies, schools and societies for popular education). This project will thereby complement existing studies on lantern technology by investigating the historical context as a parameter for social change.

**2.** **A Million Pictures** will **develop a standard for documentation and conservation of magic lantern slides that serve the needs of various stakeholders**, in the form of a guideline/best practice. Associated partners in this research project represent the various institutions, e.g. museums (especially film museums), archives, libraries, private collections, but also artists that work with historical objects and present their creations to contemporary audiences.

Many libraries and museums have thousands of magic lantern slides in their collections, yet there is no standard procedure for documentation and conservation of the slides. This limits the accessibility of the objects for researchers and other interested parties. A sample of the magic lantern slides from the partners' collections will be digitized and the metadata will be made accessible for further research (via the *Lucerna* database, [www.slides.uni-trier.de](http://www.slides.uni-trier.de)) and for creative re-use projects.



## *Exchange Platform Lucerna*

**Lucerna** is a web resource providing information on the magic lantern. The fully relational database, launched officially in December 2011 after six years of preparation, contains **cross-related records for nearly 8.400 lantern slide sets comprising almost 220.000 individual slides** (over 110.000 of which have been listed by title, and more than 17.000 illustrated by a digital image). Entries also record about 4.500 individuals, more than 1.500 organizations, 7.800 locations and over 6.000 historic events connected with the magic lantern, lantern hardware, and texts (readings, newspaper articles, lecture notes, catalogues and more). This information can be **accessed free of charge at [www.slides.uni-trier.de](http://www.slides.uni-trier.de)**. The database was created by Richard Crangle who has since been its most active contributor, supported by university teachers, scholars and students, archivists, curators and librarians, collectors and amateurs of optical media and, last, but not least lantern performers.

*Lucerna* is based on principles of open access to data and sharing knowledge; it aims to gather all types of information related to the magic lantern. Private collectors, museums and institutions with lantern slides or related material in their possession are invited to use the resource to identify the objects in their collection and to share their information via *Lucerna*. **A Million Pictures** will also use *Lucerna* to present research results while also assuring that scans of slides and metadata will be made available to the respective catalogues or databases of the respective archives.

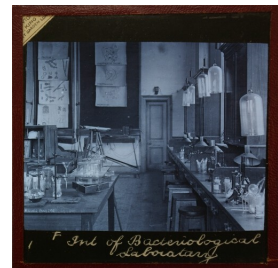
## *Participation of third parties*

As one of the project's aims is to **bring together everyone with an interest in lantern slides**, many of the planned activities are open to the general public. The **project website <http://www.uu.nl/a-million-pictures>** gives detailed information on the project's progress and activities. Interested parties can **subscribe to the project newsletter** by sending an email to Sarah Dellmann ([s.dellmann@uu.nl](mailto:s.dellmann@uu.nl)).



Courtesy: Banham Collection

Let's research and discover  
the magic and mystery of  
19<sup>th</sup> century magic lantern slides!  
<http://a-million-pictures.wp.hum.uu.nl/>



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## *Funding*

The research project **A Million Pictures: Magic Lantern Slide Heritage as Artefacts in the Common European History of Learning** has received funding from the national research organisations **NWO (NL)**, **Belspo (BE)**, **AHRC (UK)** and **MINECO (ES)** via the **“Joint Programming Initiative in Cultural Heritage”** from the **European Commission**.

