Chinese Iconography Thesaurus

DCMI NKOS Workshop November 9, 2023

Etienne Posthumus - FIZ Karlsruhe

Zhang Hongxing 張弘星 - V&A London
CIT - a journey from 2016 to now
CIT - a journey from 2016 to now

Towards a Subject Indexing Standard for Chinese Art
Inspired by ICONCLASS

The comprehensive classification system for the content of images.

https://iconclass.org/
Inspired by ICONCLASS

The comprehensive classification system for the content of images.

First published in 1972-1985 as 17 volumes of printed books.

Online since 1999

https://iconclass.org/
The importance of controlled vocabularies

Linking collections, making cross-collection search and analysis feasible.
The importance of controlled vocabularies

Used in semantic web and AI research.

Invaluable source of quality training data.

https://iconclass.org/testset/
V&A Research project

To create a subject indexing standard for Chinese art
Where we began...

Selected one of the most representative **historical catalogues** as the core raw data to build the terminology

Midian zhulin 秘殿珠林 and Shiqu baoji 石渠寶笈
Where we began...

Modelled on ICONCLASS principles devised by Henri van de Waal, which in turn was built on Erwin Panosky’s classic theory of 3-tier iconographic meanings.
On the road...
https://chineseiconography.org/
CIT - has two parts

Terminology
CIT - has two main parts

Terminology

- Nature
- Human Being
  - human body
  - soul
  - senses
    - sight
    - sense of hearing
    - sense of taste
    - sense of smell
    - sense of touch
    - hallucination
    - consciousness
    - reasoning
    - speaking
    - emotion
    - desire
    - temperament
    - conduct of life
    - human life
    - human figure
    - types of admired people
- Society and Culture
- Religion
- Myths and Legends
- History and Geography
- Literary Works
CIT - has two main parts

Terminology

- Human Being
- human body
- soul
- senses
- sight
- sense of hearing
- sense of taste
- sweetness
- sourness and astringency
- sense of smell
- sense of touch
- hallucination
- consciousness
- reasoning
- speaking
- emotion
- desire
- temperament
- conduct of life
- human life
- human figure
- types of admired people
- Society and Culture
- Religion
- Myths and Legends
- History and Geography
- Literary Works
CIT - has two main parts

...and the application of the terminology

(the visual sources)
Use as a controlled vocabulary

https://chineseiconography.org/id/...

Each term is a SKOS concept
Use as a controlled vocabulary

https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT284490

Each term is a SKOS concept
Use as a controlled vocabulary

https://chineseiconography.org/id/CIT284490.jskos
Queryable: https://chineseiconography.org/sparql
Future work:

Alternative modellings, including image resources as Linked Open Data
Considering mapping to https://linked.art/
https://github.com/iconclass/cit