DIGITAL MELLINI PROJECT: AN EXPERIMENT IN ART-HISTORICAL COLLABORATION

Nuria Rodríguez Ortega, University of Málaga
Murtha Baca, Getty Research Institute

Digital Art History
Challenges, Tools and Practical Solutions Workshop

September 22, 2011

"The design of digital tools for scholarship is an intellectual responsibility, not a technical task."*

*Johanna Drucker, "Blind Spots: Humanists Must Plan Their Digital Future," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, volume 55, issue 30, page B6 (April 3, 2009).

"Digital Mellini": Overview

- A collaborative project of the Getty Research Institute (GRI) and the University of Málaga, with help from the UCLA Digital Library Program

- **Objectives:**
  1. To explore new methods and tools with which to reinvent the concept of scholarly work and publishing
  2. To create a model to develop collaborative critical publications in digital media
  3. To contribute to the development of virtual research environments for art-historical scholarship

Over-arching Questions

- How can we develop critical and interpretive studies in digital media in a collaborative way that accommodates multiple scholarly perspectives?
- What are—and what should be—

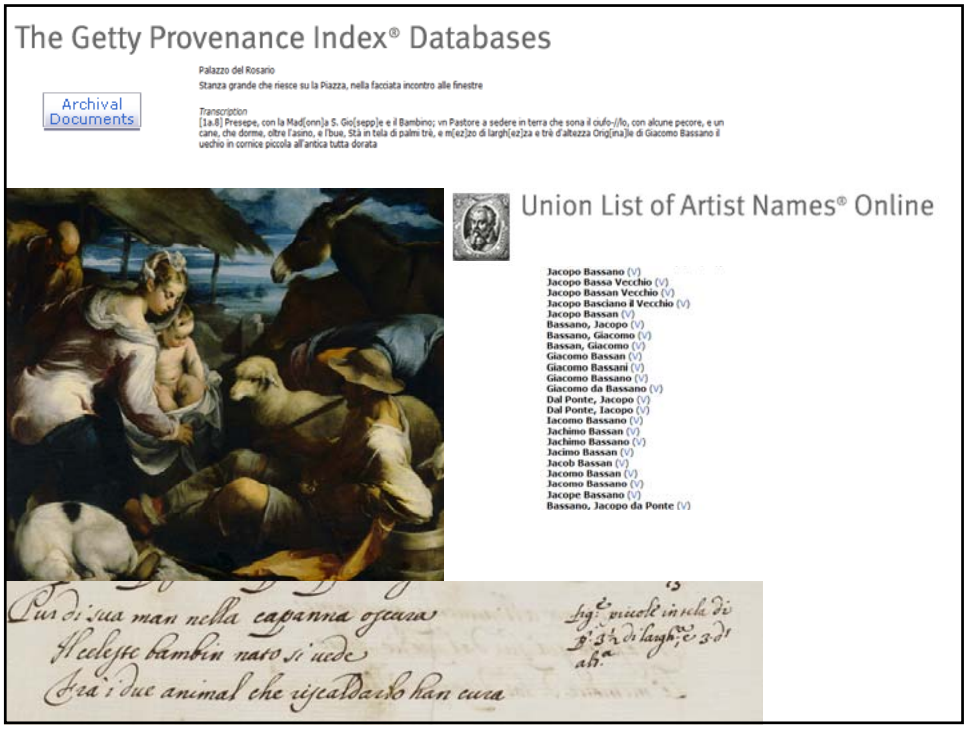
the behaviors of art historians using collaborative digital work spaces?

Areas of Activity

1. Digital implementation: development of platform-prototype. The idea is that this platform will serve as a model for the further development of similar projects in the field of digital art history.
2. Analysis of the use of the digital environment. To this end, the team will open the workspace to a small group of specialists in art history.
3. Investigation of the historical text and its context to provide a critical basis on which to consider online scholarly research.

Elements of the Digital Publication

- Digital facsimile
- Transcription of original 1681 Italian text (marked up in TEI); transcription of conventional inventory from 1680
- English & Spanish translations (marked up in TEI)
- Links to other resources—e.g. Getty vocabularies, Provenance Index databases, Iconclass
- Critical essays (may have another "locus," i.e. print)
- Glossary and/or link to TTC (thesaurus of historical terms)
- Images of related works of art
- Researcher-added "tags" attached to individual items
- Discussion forum


The Getty Provenance Index® Databases
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Archival Documents
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Dal Ponte, Jacopo (V)
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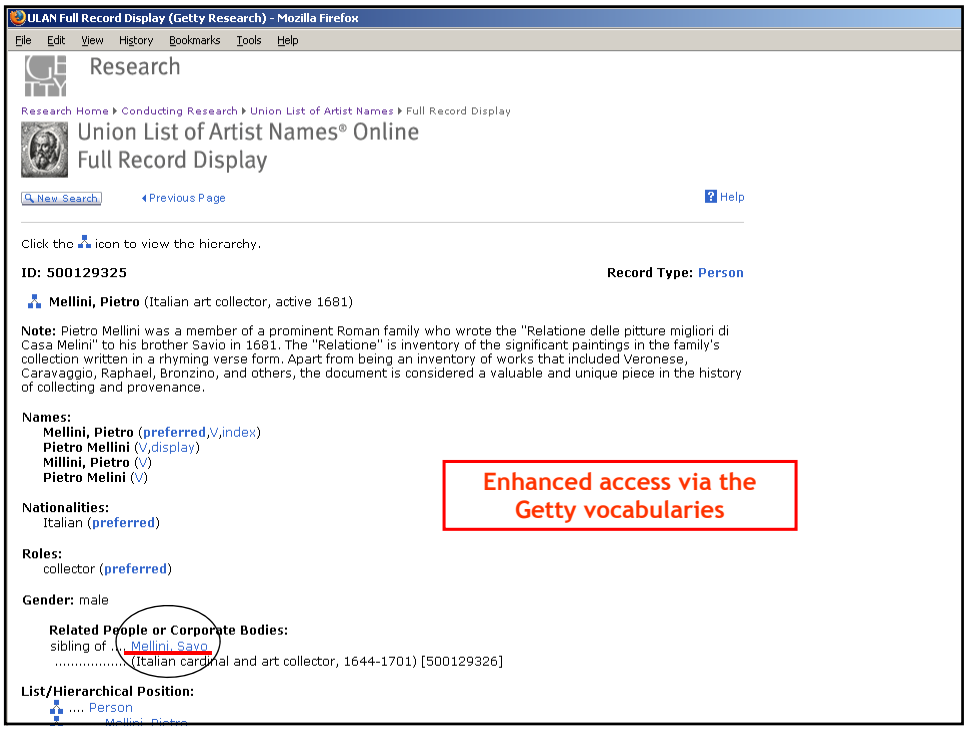
Bassano, Jacopo da Ponte (V)


ULAN Full Record Display (Getty Research) - Mozilla Firefox
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Research
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Union List of Artist Names® Online
Full Record Display
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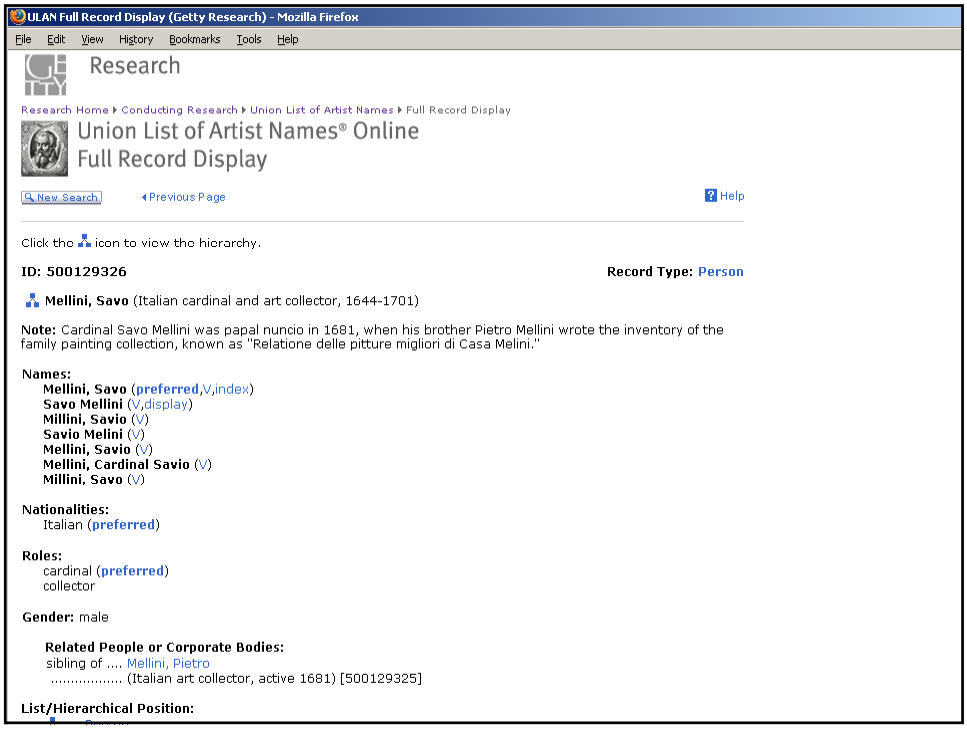
Click the icon to view the hierarchy.
ID: 500129325
Record Type: Person
Mellini, Pietro (Italian art collector, active 1681)
Note: Pietro Mellini was a member of a prominent Roman family who wrote the "Relatione delle pitture migliori di Casa Melini" to his brother Savio in 1681. The "Relatione" is inventory of the significant paintings in the family's collection written in a rhyming verse form. Apart from being an inventory of works that included Veronese, Caravaggio, Raphael, Bronzino, and others, the document is considered a valuable and unique piece in the history of collecting and provenance.
Names:
Mellini, Pietro (preferred,V,index)
Pietro Mellini (V,display)
Millini, Pietro (V)
Pietro Melini (V)
Nationalities:
Italian (preferred)
Roles:
collector (preferred)
Gender: male
Related People or Corporate Bodies:
sibling of ... Mellini, Savo
(Italian cardinal and art collector, 1644-1701) [500129326]
List/Hierarchical Position:
.... Person
Enhanced access via the Getty vocabularies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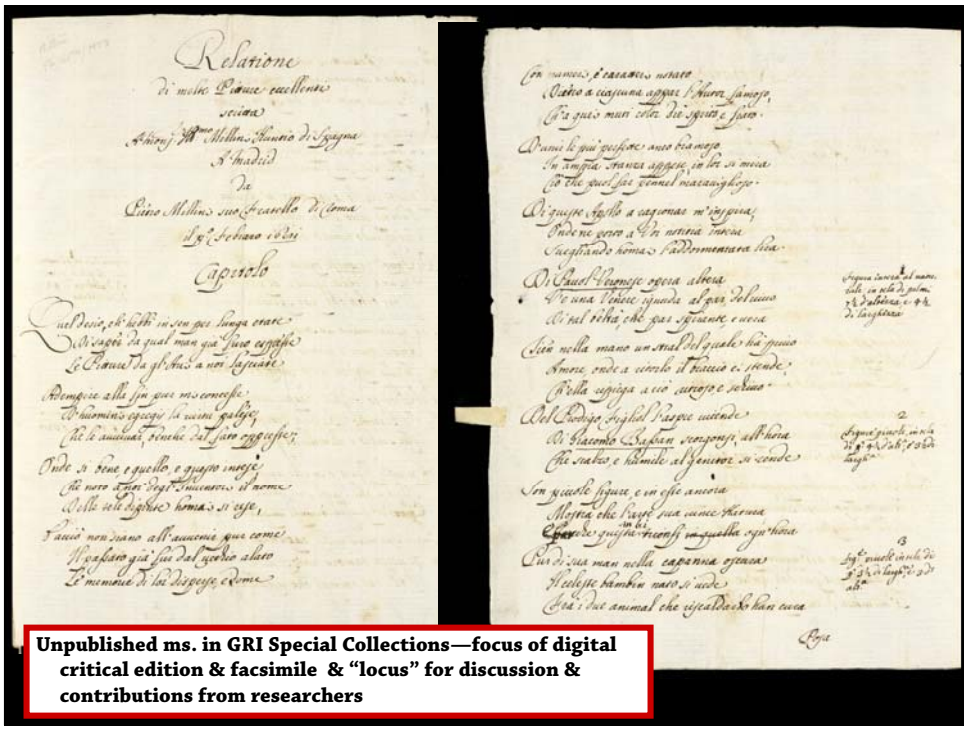
ID: 500129326
Record Type: Person
Mellini, Savo (Italian cardinal and art collector, 1644-1701)
Note: Cardinal Savo Mellini was papal nuncio in 1681, when his brother Pietro Mellini wrote the inventory of the family painting collection, known as "Relatione delle pitture migliori di Casa Melini."
Names:
Mellini, Savo (preferred,V,index)
Savo Mellini (V,display)
Millini, Savio (V)
Savio Melini (V)
Mellini, Savio (V)
Mellini, Cardinal Savio (V)
Millini, Savo (V)
Nationalities:
Italian (preferred)
Roles:
cardinal (preferred)
collector
Gender: male
Related People or Corporate Bodies:
sibling of .... Mellini, Pietro
..... (Italian art collector, active 1681) [500129325]
List/Hierarchical Position:

Digital Mellini
Why are we doing this project?

Why Digital Mellini?

- The focus of the project is an unpublished historical document, with transcription, translations in English and Spanish, links to other documents, links to images, links to other resources (e.g. ULAN, Provenance Index database, Iconclass, etc.).
- The online publication will eventually include tools not available in print publications, including "collaborative workspaces" for scholars and students and tools for "social tagging."



Unpublished ms. in GRI Special Collections—focus of digital critical edition & facsimile & "locus" for discussion & contributions from researchers

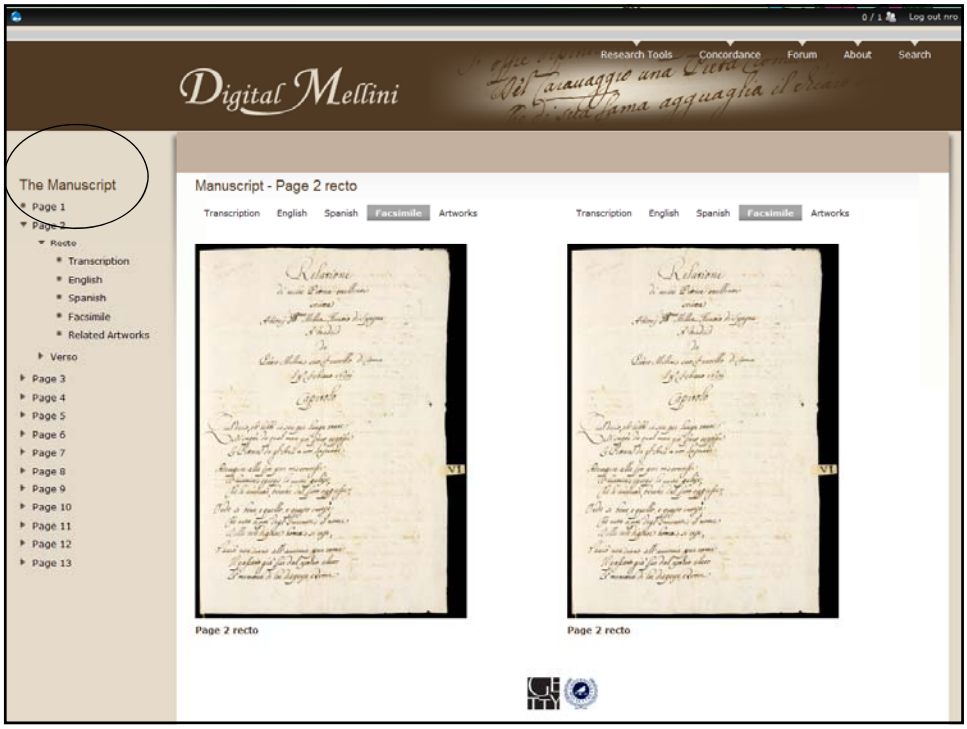
Why this particular text?

- Unpublished and unique
- Potential for research on digital publications
  - Relatively short and well structured
  - We have other documents that are closely related: useful to make textual comparisons and to explore how to use digital technology to enhance such comparisons. (e.g., with "conventional" 1680 inventory of the same collection).
  - Unidentified images: useful to promote scholar participation and to explore how to interrelate digitally texts and images in a meaningful way.
  - Presence of aesthetic ideas, critical terms and concepts allows us to explore the possibilities of computational linguistics and other textual technologies to expand critical interpretations.

Developing a Virtual Research Environment

The Virtual Workspace

- Critical and collaborative *DIGITAL* publication
- Space for collaboration, interchange and discussion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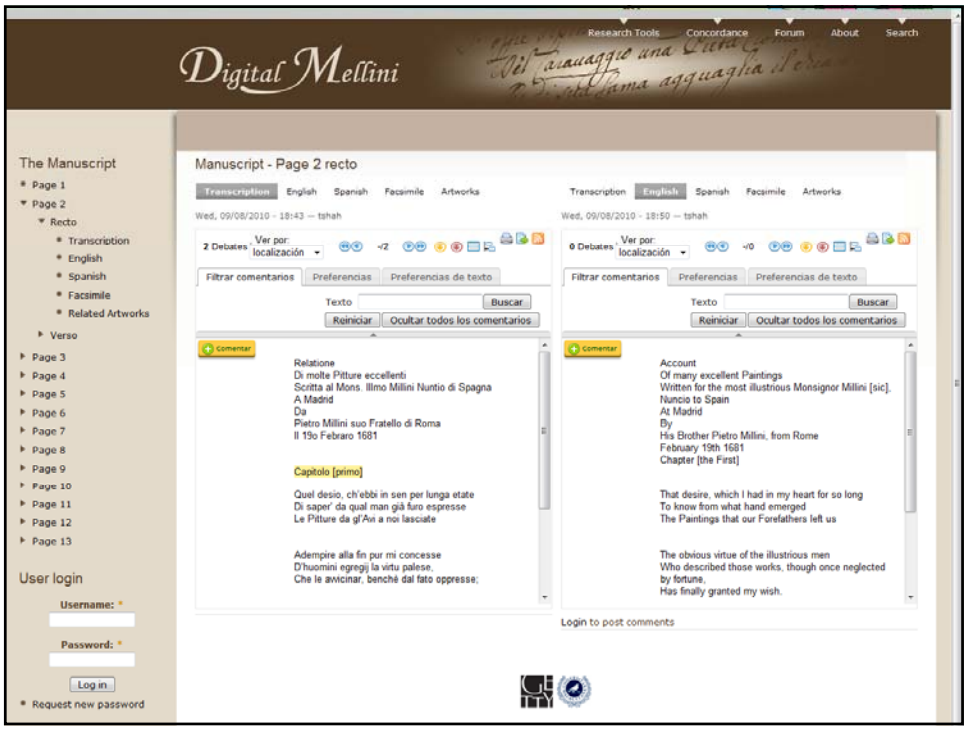
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Reiniciar
Ocultar todos los comentarios
comentar
Relatione
Di molte Pitture eccellenti
Scritta al Mons. Illmo Millini Nuntio di Spagna
A Madrid
Da
Pietro Millini suo Fratello di Roma
Il 19o Febraro 1681
Capitolo [primo]
Quel desio, ch'ebbi in sen per lunga etate
Di saper' da qual man già furo espresse
Le Pitture da gl'Avi a noi lasciate
Adempire alla fin pur mi concesse
D'huomini egregij la virtu palese,
Che le avvicinar, benché dal fato oppresse;
Account
Of many excellent Paintings
Written for the most illustrious Monsignor Millini [sic],
Nuncio to Spain
At Madrid
By
His Brother Pietro Millini, from Rome
February 19th 1681
Chapter [the First]
That desire, which I had in my heart for so long
To know from what hand emerged
The Paintings that our Forefathers left us
The obvious virtue of the illustrious men
Who described those works, though once neglected
by fortune,
Has finally granted my wish.
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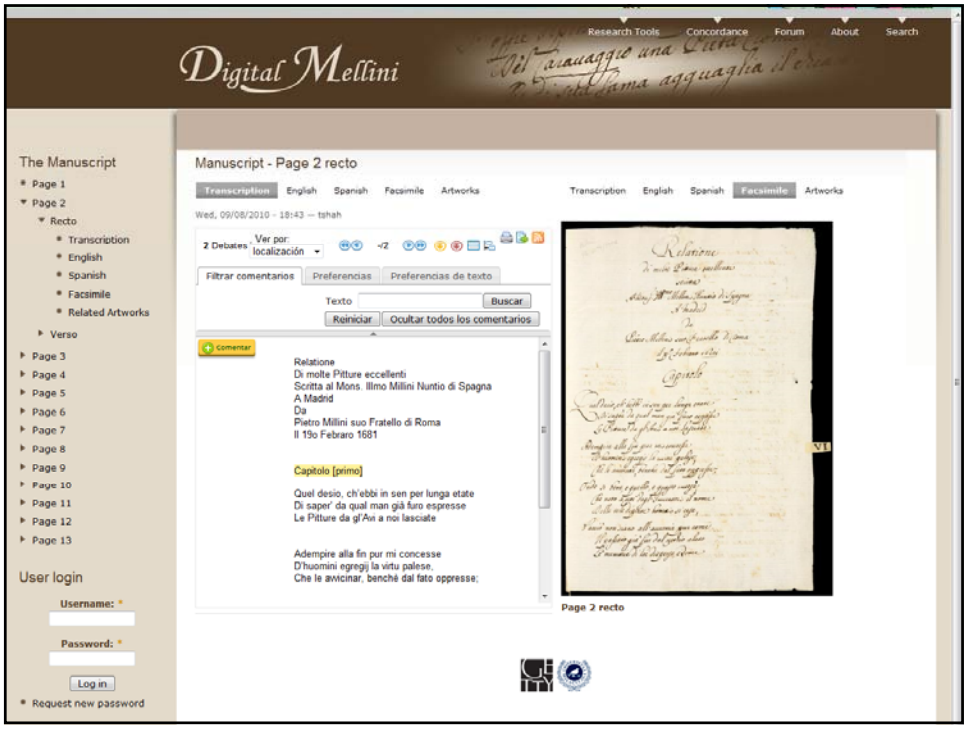
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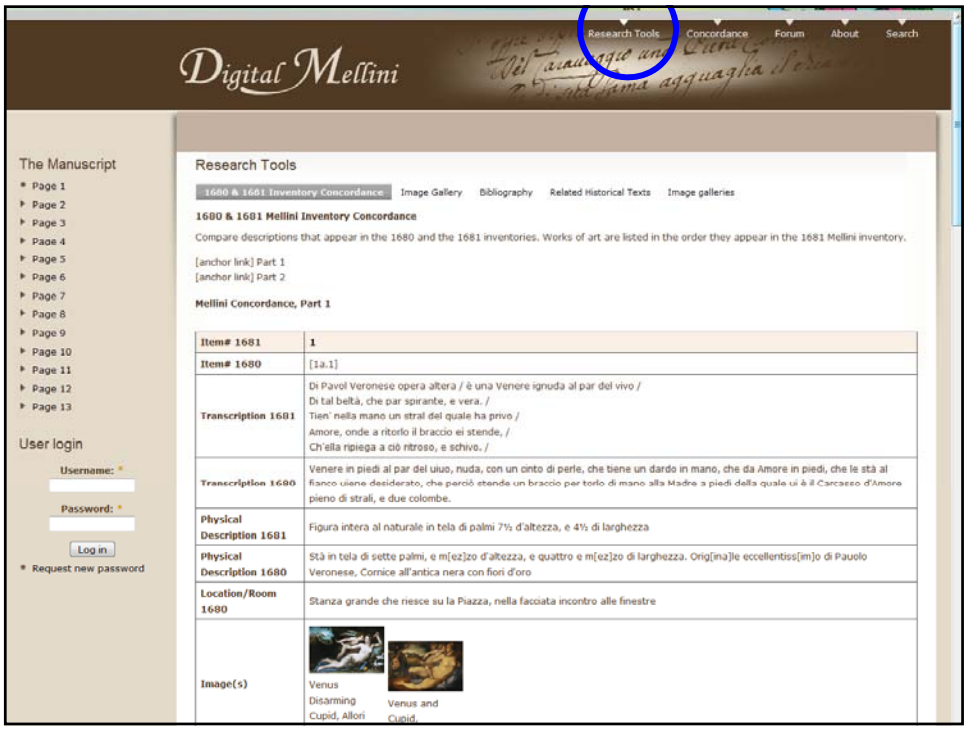
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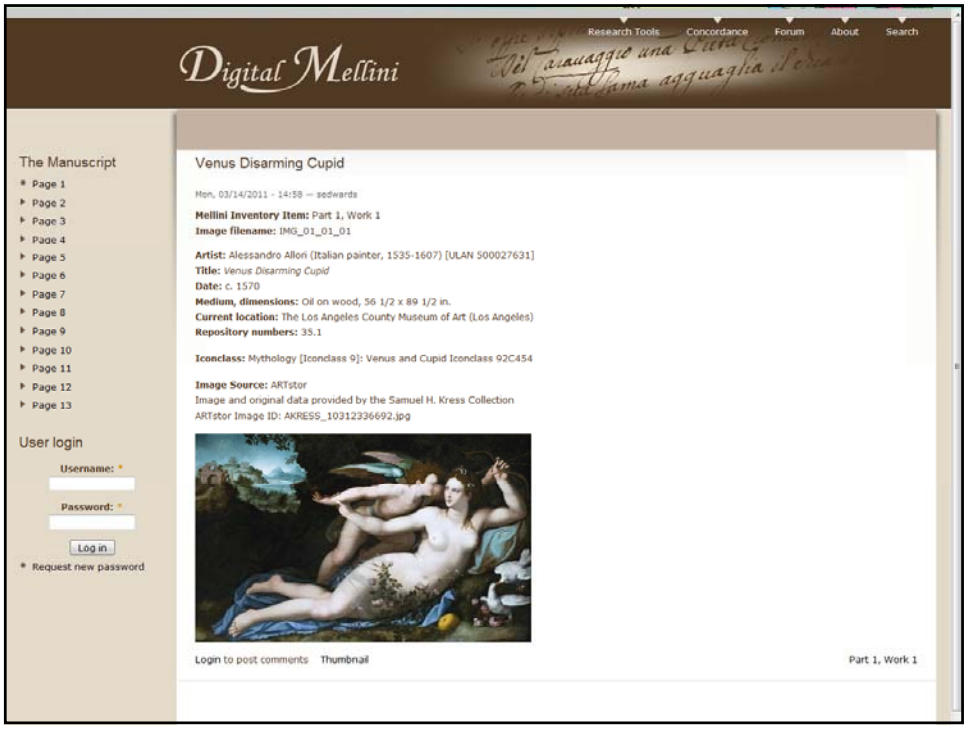
1680 & 1681 Mellini Inventory Concordance
Compare descriptions that appear in the 1680 and the 1681 inventories. Works of art are listed in the order they appear in the 1681 Mellini inventory.
[anchor link] Part 1
[anchor link] Part 2
Mellini Concordance, Part 1
Item# 1681
1
Item# 1680
[1a.1]
Transcription 1681
Di Pavol Veronese opera altera / è una Venere ignuda al par del vivo /
Di tal beltà, che par spirante, e vera. /
Tien' nella mano un stral del quale ha privo /
Amore, onde a ritorlo il braccio ei stende, /
Ch'ella ripiega a ciò ritroso, e schivo. /
Transcription 1680
Venere in piedi al par del uiuo, nuda, con un cinto di perle, che tiene un dardo in mano, che da Amore in piedi, che le stà al fianco uiene desiderato, che perciò stende un braccio per torlo di mano alla Madre a piedi della quale ui è il Carcasso d'Amore pieno di strali, e due colombe.
Physical Description 1681
Figura intera al naturale in tela di palmi 7½ d'altezza, e 4½ di larghezza
Physical Description 1680
Stà in tela di sette palmi, e m[ez]zo d'altezza, e quattro e m[ez]zo di larghezza. Orig[ina]le eccellentiss[im]o di Pauolo Veronese, Cornice all'antica nera con fiori d'oro
Location/Room 1680
Stanza grande che riesce su la Piazza, nella facciata incontro alle finestre
Image(s)
Venus Disarming Cupid, Allori
Venus and Cupid,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Venus Disarming Cupid
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Mellini Inventory Item: Part 1, Work 1
Image filename: IMG_01_01_01
Artist: Alessandro Allori (Italian painter, 1535-1607) [ULAN 500027631]
Title: Venus Disarming Cupid
Date: c. 1570
Medium, dimensions: Oil on wood, 56 1/2 x 89 1/2 in.
Current location: The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles)
Repository numbers: 35.1
Iconclass: Mythology [Iconclass 9]: Venus and Cupid Iconclass 92C454
Image Source: ARTstor
Image and original data provided by the Samuel H. Kress Collection
ARTstor Image ID: AKRESS_10312336692.jpg
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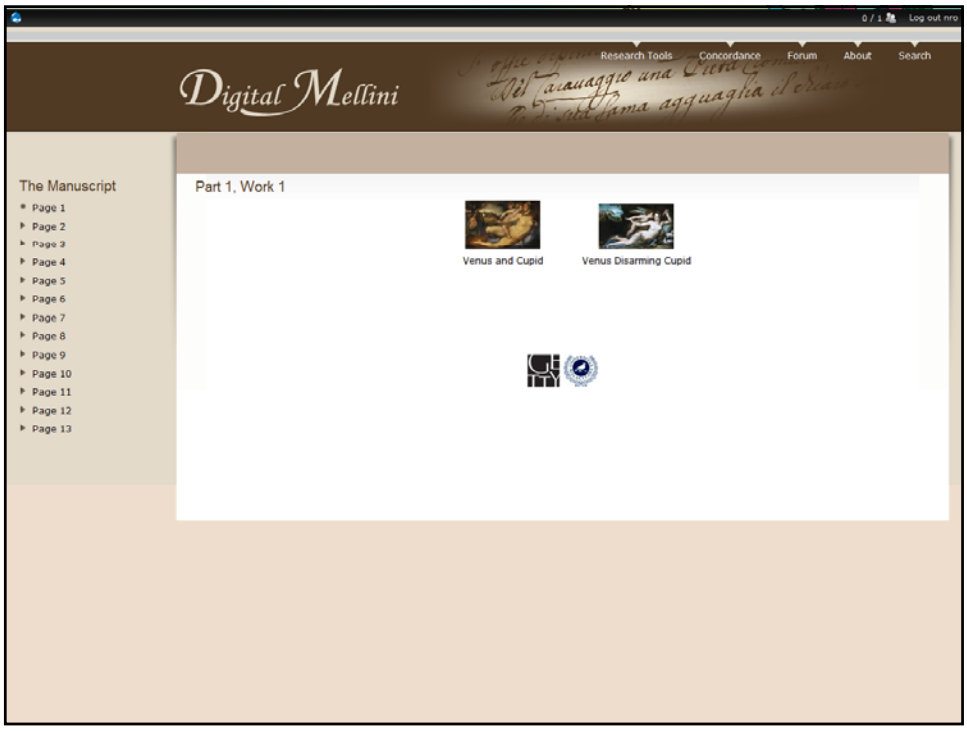
Thumbnail
Part 1, Work 1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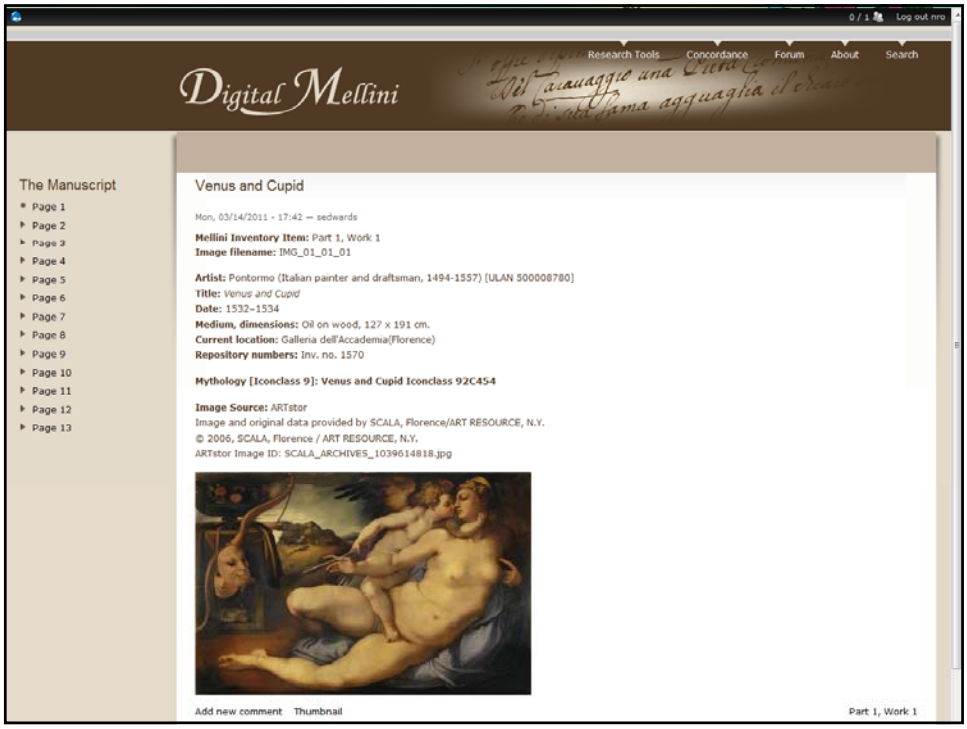
Venus and Cupid
Venus Disarming Cupid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Venus and Cupid
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Mellini Inventory Item: Part 1, Work 1
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Artist: Pontormo (Italian painter and draftsman, 1494-1557) [ULAN 500008780]
Title: Venus and Cupid
Date: 1532–1534
Medium, dimensions: Oil on wood, 127 x 191 cm.
Current location: Galleria dell'Accademia(Florence)
Repository numbers: Inv. no. 1570
Mythology [Iconclass 9]: Venus and Cupid Iconclass 92C454
Image Source: ARTstor
Image and original data provided by SCALA, Florence/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.
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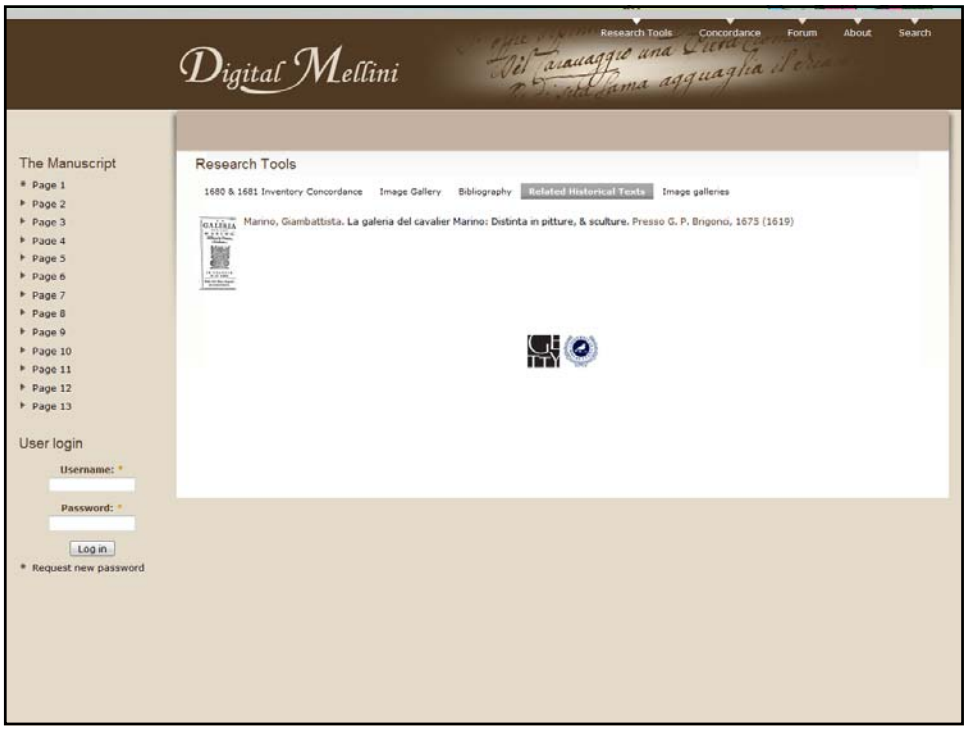
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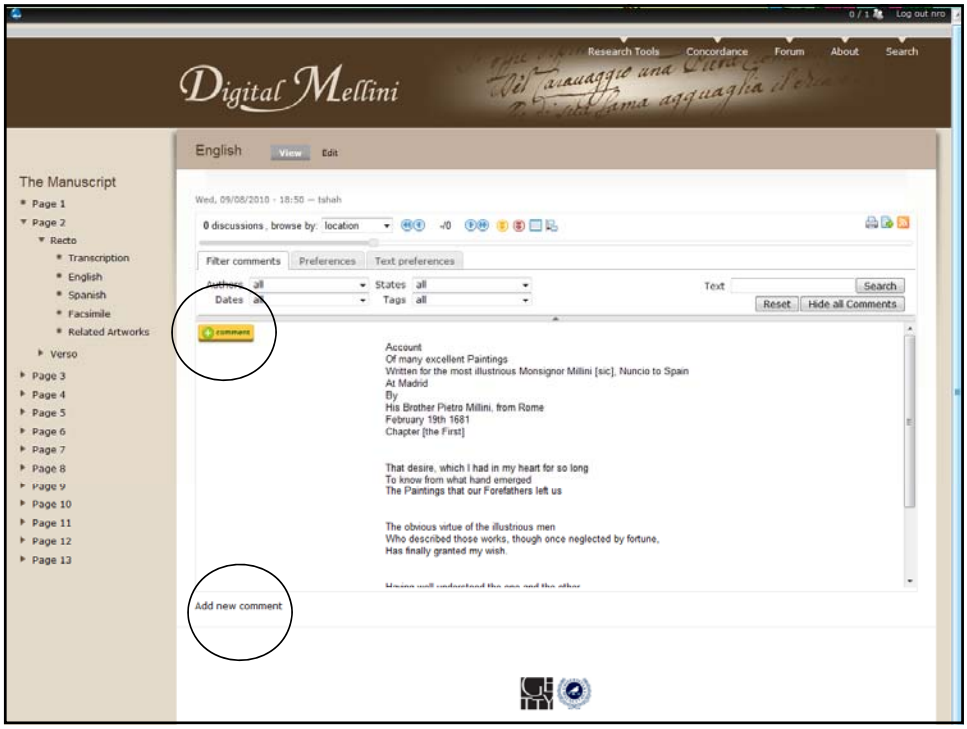
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Account
Of many excellent Paintings
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At Madrid
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His Brother Pietro Millini, from Rome
February 19th 1681
Chapter [the First]
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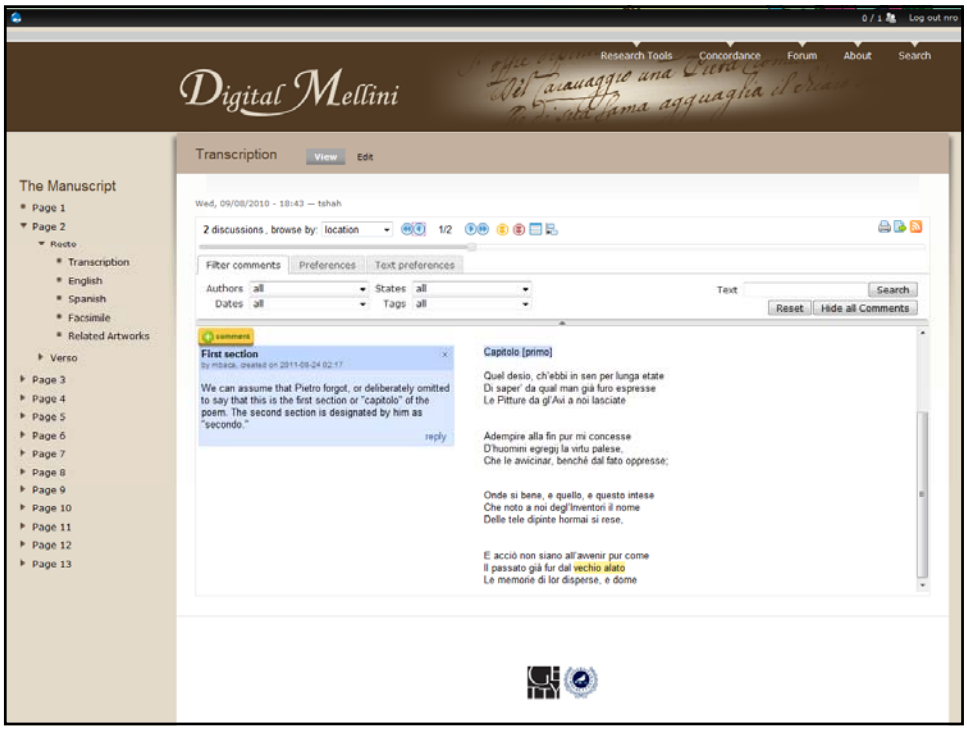
To know from what hand emerged
The Paintings that our Forefathers left us
The obvious virtue of the illustrious men
Who described those works, though once neglected by fortune,
Has finally granted my wish.
Add new comment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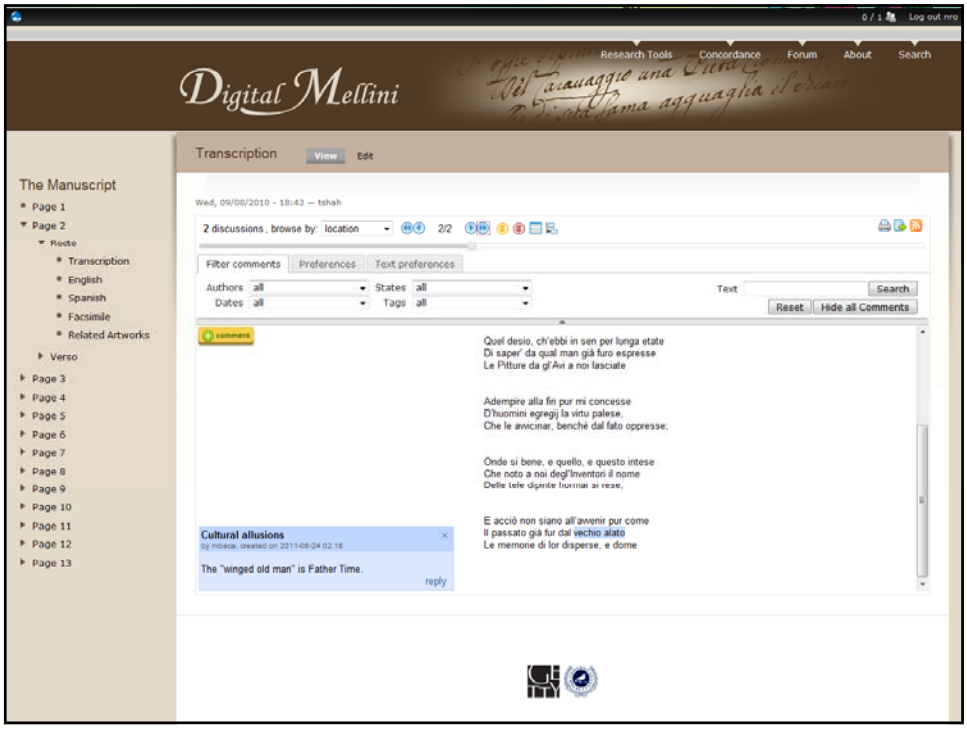
First section
We can assume that Pietro forgot, or deliberately omitted to say that this is the first section or "capitolo" of the poem. The second section is designated by him as "secondo."
reply
Capitolo [primo]
Quel desio, ch'ebbi in sen per lunga etate
Di saper' da qual man già furo espresse
Le Pitture da gl'Avi a noi lasciate
Adempire alla fin pur mi concesse
D'huomini egregij la virtu palese,
Che le avvicinar, benché dal fato oppresse;
Onde si bene, e quello, e questo intese
Che noto a noi degl'Inventori il nome
Delle tele dipinte hormai si rese,
E acciò non siano all'avenir pur come
Il passato già fur dal vechio alato
Le memorie di lor disperse, e dome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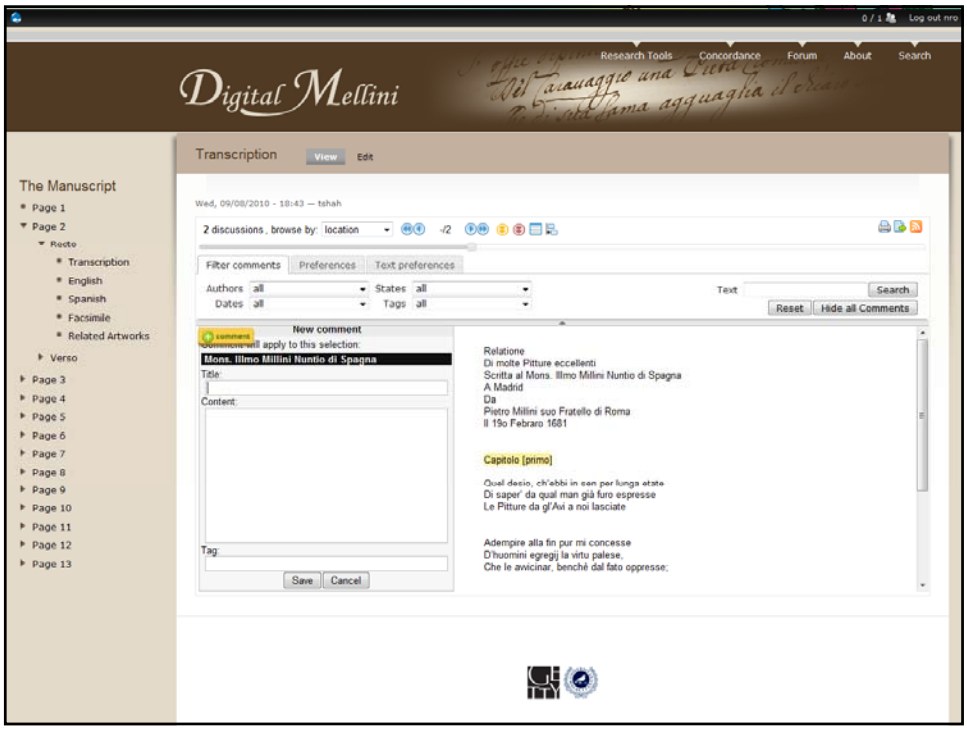
Che noto a noi degl'Inventori il nome
Delle tele dipinte hormai si rese,
E acciò non siano all'avvenir pur come
Il passato già fur dal vechio alato
Le memorie di lor disperse, e dome
Cultural allusions
The "winged old man" is Father Time.
reply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Relatione
Di molte Pitture eccellenti
Scritta al Mons. Illmo Millini Nuntio di Spagna
A Madrid
Da
Pietro Millini suo Fratello di Roma
Il 15o Febraro 1681
Capitolo [primo]
Quel desio, ch'ebbi in sen per lunga etate
Di saper' da qual man già furo espresse
Le Pitture da gl'Avi a noi lasciate
Adempire alla fin pur mi concesse
D'huomini egregij la virtu palese,
Che le avvicinar, benchè dal fato oppresse;

Challenges and difficulties

- Technical issues
- Involvement and motivation of scholars
- Methodologies: protocol of rules for virtual collaboration
- Visualizations
- Authorship

Digital Mellini Research Questions

- What do historical documents like the Mellini poem and inventories teach us about the function of works of art in the political, social, and diplomatic spheres?
- What does the document reveal about the art market during the late 17th century?
- What is role of words in the development of visual culture?

… more questions

- How does Pietro Mellini's *terza rima* inventory (a "virtual collection" based on a real collection) compare and contrast with Giambattista Marino's "galleria" (an "invented collection" based on a blending of real and fictional works) of 1619?
- Despite the fact that Pietro Mellini based his poem on a real gallery of paintings, he re-creates a "new" virtual gallery in terms of display (mental display).
  - What is the "mental display" that Pietro creates using particular words and references? (linguistic construction – *ekprhasis*).
  - What role does the audience's "visual culture" play?
- Who was the intended audience for the 1681 document?

Exploring new modes of research & publication ("design of digital tools for scholarship")

- What should be the essential elements & functionalities (intellectual, technical, textual and visual) of a digital critical edition?
- What are the issues and challenges in translating historic texts?
- How can the discipline of art history begin to move away from single authorial models resulting in print-only publications, toward more open, collaborative models of research and publication that "take place" on line?

Communication and collaboration can be challenging!