

The Winchester Cabinet

Lucy Moore

The Winchester cabinet [see [Link](#)] is a collection of over 3000 coins, medals and tokens. It was compiled by William Eyre who was a barrister and who bequeathed the collection to Winchester Cathedral on his death in 1764. It remained virtually untouched until it was purchased in 1954 by the University of Leeds. The cabinet has a strong focus on Greek and Roman coinage, but also includes British coins from the Iron Age to the eighteenth century, trade tokens, siege pieces and numerous medals. As a collection it gives a fascinating insight into eighteenth century collecting practices, and the cabinet itself is a unique example of the cabinet-makers craft, utilising embossed leatherwork to create a piece that is visually stunning once its doors open to reveal the drawers and their contents. However, the cabinet itself is unstable, and needs significant restoration, which means that access to it is limited.

In order to enable people to “visit” the cabinet, the team worked with an animator to prototype a digital experience where visitors can see the cabinet, and a small selection of numismatic items from it. To create further interaction and creativity, the team created audio descriptions, told from the perspective of the objects, to demonstrate the variety of stories each coin or medal can tell. The objects chosen include a first-century BC stater, an eleventh-century penny, an English Civil War siege token and a Dutch non-conformist medal. These objects were decided on after lengthy discussion between team members.

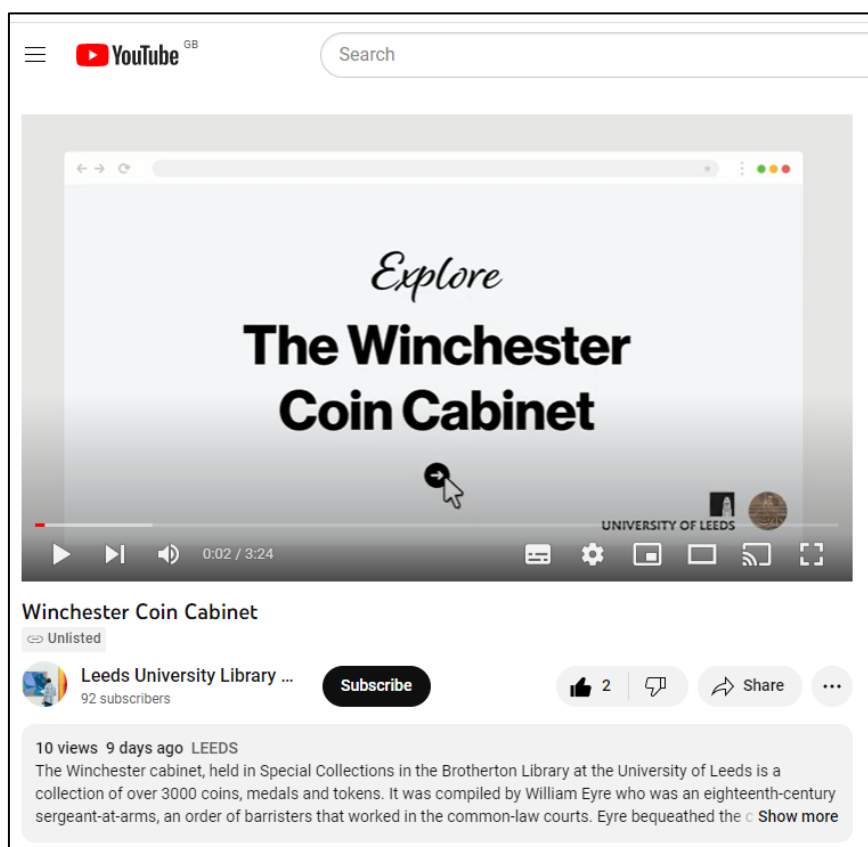
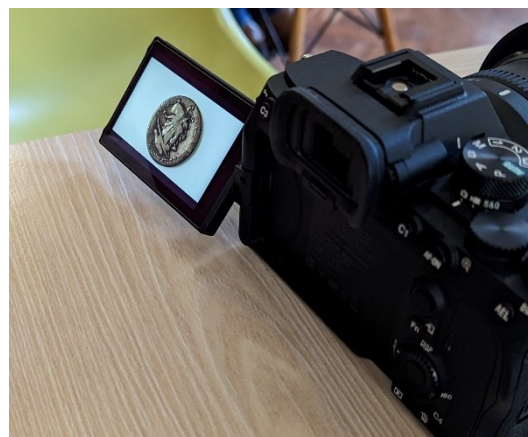


Image of the YouTube landing page ([Link](#))

Key considerations for the animation included: how worn was the piece? Worn coins would need new illustration, which might be limited by capacity. What details could be animated? Here, animator Dan Cohen was really key in explaining what was graphically possible. Could more engaging sounds be added? In the animation of the Pontefract siege piece, the imagined sound of a portcullis dropping draws attention to that detail.



Digital images were used to animate the coins

The project was showcased in April 2023 at the Digital Universities UK (DUUK) Conference Stall run by colleagues from Special Collections at the University of Leeds, as an example of ***Digital Creativity with Cultural Collections***.

The project team consisted of Dan Cohen, Henry Clarke, Simon Glenn, Lorna Johnson and Lucy Moore. Dan Cohen is an animator and former University of Leeds student, Henry is a Lecturer in Classics at the University of Leeds, Simon is a Lecturer in Ancient History and numismatic adviser to Special Collections at the University of Leeds, Lorna is an artist and researcher at the University of Leeds, and Lucy is a curator and postgraduate researcher at the University of York. Audio was provided by students Phoebe Aston, Alessandra Phillips, Sophia O’Kane and Siobe Morling.

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