## The OPAL Project in Lower Saxony

Sponsored by the Foundation of Lower Saxony, the Opal Project in Lower Saxony is administered by the Goettingen State and University Library, Germany. The project offers digital access to Lower Saxony's cultural assets via an image database; access to this database is free of charge. The OPAL website also features interactive tours and exhibits.

Having amassed a total of more than 20,000 digitised museum objects in roughly two years, the OPAL project compares favourably to local cultural portals elsewhere in Germany.

The OPAL Project in Lower Saxony enables visitors to explore a diverse range of collections, all from one interface. These collections include paintings and drawings of the University of Goettingen's art collections; historical maps and photographs of the province; children's books and youth literature of the Enlightenment period; and plaster casts from the Ancient World.

OPAL Lower Saxony invites researchers, lecturers and other citizens of the province to become better acquainted with Lower Saxony's art and culture by exploring the website's presentation of museum objects. Co-operation with museum and library partners across the province allows OPAL Lower Saxony to continually expand its service. OPAL's easy-to-use technical infrastructure supports project partners in their ongoing efforts to digitise and display electronically cultural objects. This infrastructure also assists in the preparation of virtual exhibits and other teaching materials. Users profit from the portal's use of Web 2.0 technologies, which promote easy, fun-to-use access to the province's cultural assets: an example is the integration of Google Maps, a feature which enables visitors to determine the various locations of cultural objects. Other signification improvements include expanded search and browse functions; an attractive gallery view; a new web interface allowing easy entry of metadata for participating institutions; and a community function entitled 'my favourite object'. This feature allows visitors to the website to choose and comment on their favourite item from the more than 20,000 museum objects currently on display.

Internet:  http://www.opal-niedersachsen.de