



2009 CONFERENCE

IDENTIFYING THE PERSON: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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Abstract

Numbering Buildings and People in Eighteenth-Century France: The Police and the 'Numerization' of Identities

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The eighteenth century was a crucial period in France for the transformation of urban policing and the development of new means of identification, based on the impersonal, written document and extensive registration. This period saw the introduction and the gradual generalization of house numbers in the cities. During the same period the police developed new policies towards some specific segment of urban population, using numbers as means of identification. This paper focuses on the origins of these two sets of policies, compares them and focuses on the possible links and common principles between them. It explores also proposals from policemen to universalize the use of numbers to express and fix personal identity in France. Eventually, it tries to assess how the eighteenth century may have been an early step in the 'numerization' of identities.

The Documentation of Individual Identity: Historical and Comparative Perspectives since 1500

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