

LRCW.net: A web site with a virtual laboratory for the study of Coarse and Cooking Wares in the Late Antique Mediterranean



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1. INTRODUCTION

This website is devoted to the study of Coarse and Cooking Wares in the Late Antique Mediterranean. It is designed as a public website with a virtual laboratory intranet where all institutions and researchers interested in the subject can work together towards a specific goal such as the creation of an on-line "encyclopedia" for these categories of ceramics. The LRCW.net website and the associated virtual laboratory are just a small part of a wider initiative that aims the creation of an on-line Encyclopedia for Ancient Ceramics in the Mediterranean.

3. THE SOFTWARE ARCHITECTURE

In the situation of the project, it is promoted the research and the development of technologies based in free software.

The whole systems works with a LAMP technology, acronym that means a set of software sub-systems needed to achieve a global solution, in this case:

Debian GNU/Linux operating system
Apache 2.x web server
MySQL 5.x database management system
PHP 5.x programming language
The public portal of the project uses Joomla!, a content management system (CMS) of open source and programmed with PHP, and that requires a MySQL database. One of its biggest possibilities is the great quantity of existing extensions and that are easily integrated in the CMS, as for example, the basic contact application. The open services to the Laboratory database, as the Online Library, are being developed by the Laboratory manager as own extensions for Joomla!

4. PUBLIC WEB SITE

The public space consists of an Internet portal, created and managed with a Content Management System (CMS) called Joomla!, that enables the project members in charge to edit and publish easily the dynamic and interactive contents of the website.

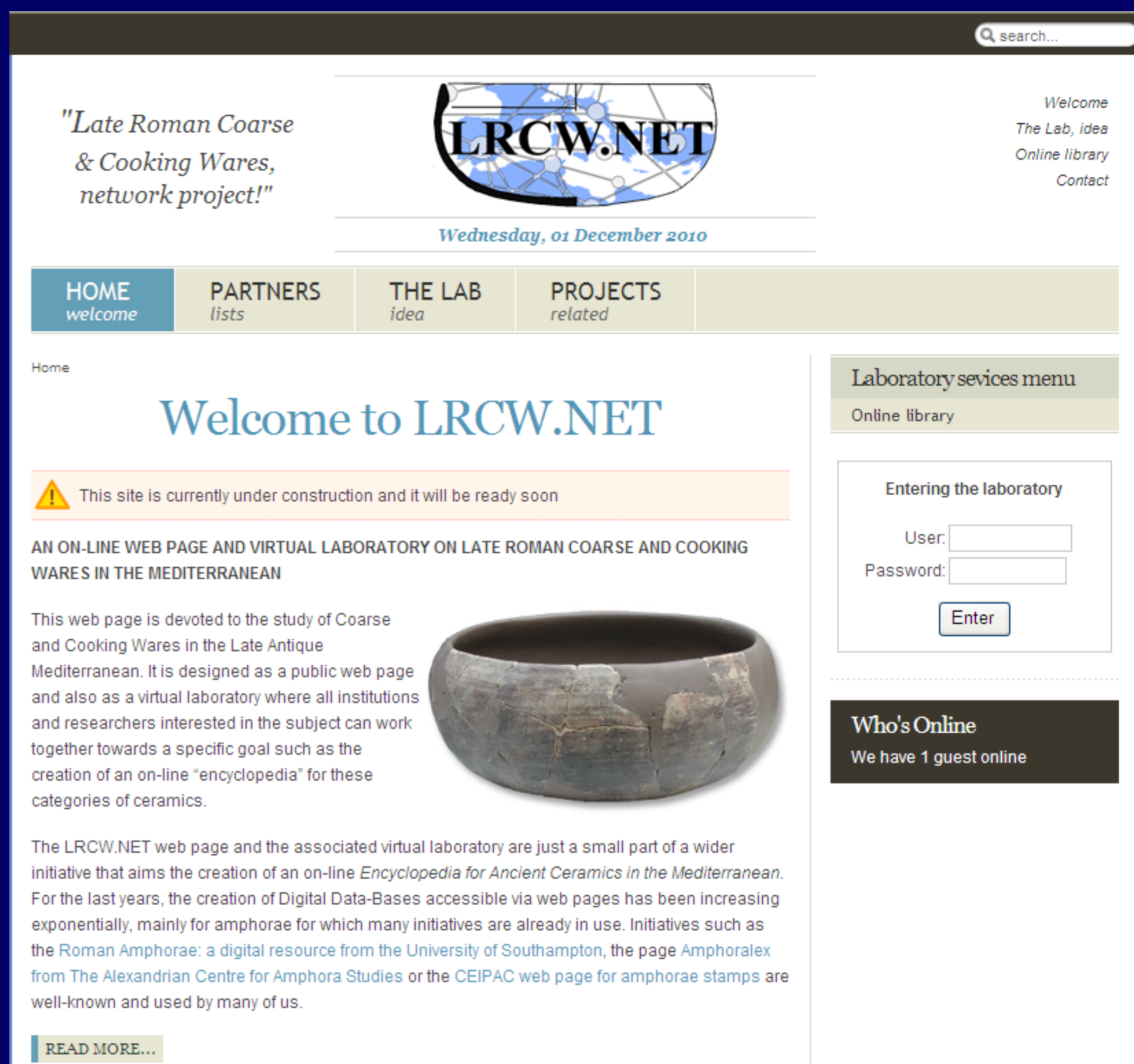
The public website of the research project has three main purposes:

- To show the Laboratory basis and its progress, as well as the associated research projects.
- To spread the knowledge generated in the Laboratory at a didactic and popular level.
- To offer to the Internet public the chance of consulting our databases with the most outstanding services. For example, at this time, we can mention the Online Library about Late Roman coarse wares, from which anyone can download texts of the most of the digital articles.

The website will be organized and widened progressively with time, so the information concerning the project could be extended to anyone interested in knowing the research advances about Late Roman coarse wares. Sections will be open as the project advanced, with the diversified contents: the reason to exist, scientific purposes, participants, methodology applied in different study fields, scientific, technical and human resources, progress in the Virtual Laboratory, news, events, etc.

2. THE IDEA

The idea is to create working groups by regions and/or specific productions. The system is conceived as a virtual laboratory and it will permit on-line work and continuous updating of data. If we all contribute with our "little grain of sand", introducing the local production of our site, or the main production of our region of study or the materials studied in our Ph.D's, or the material from a kiln site that we excavated in a rescue excavation in the past, then the volume of data available will increase considerably. It is important to provide the key to identify production (macroscopic and analytical if possible), typology, chronology and distribution (if known). Trying to clarify all this, we will give a service to the scientific community and we will also be helping the younger generations that find now difficult to follow the discipline as much of the bibliography is disperse and not always of easy access.

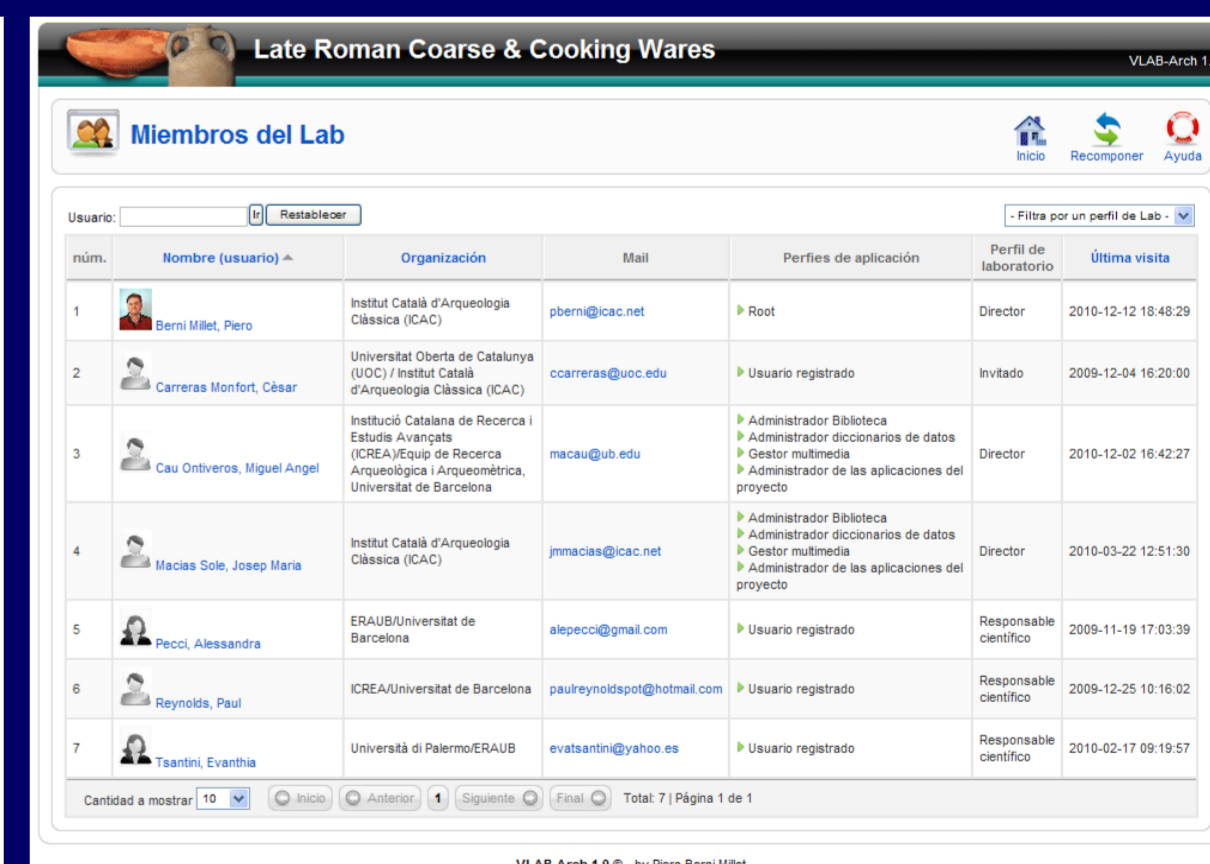
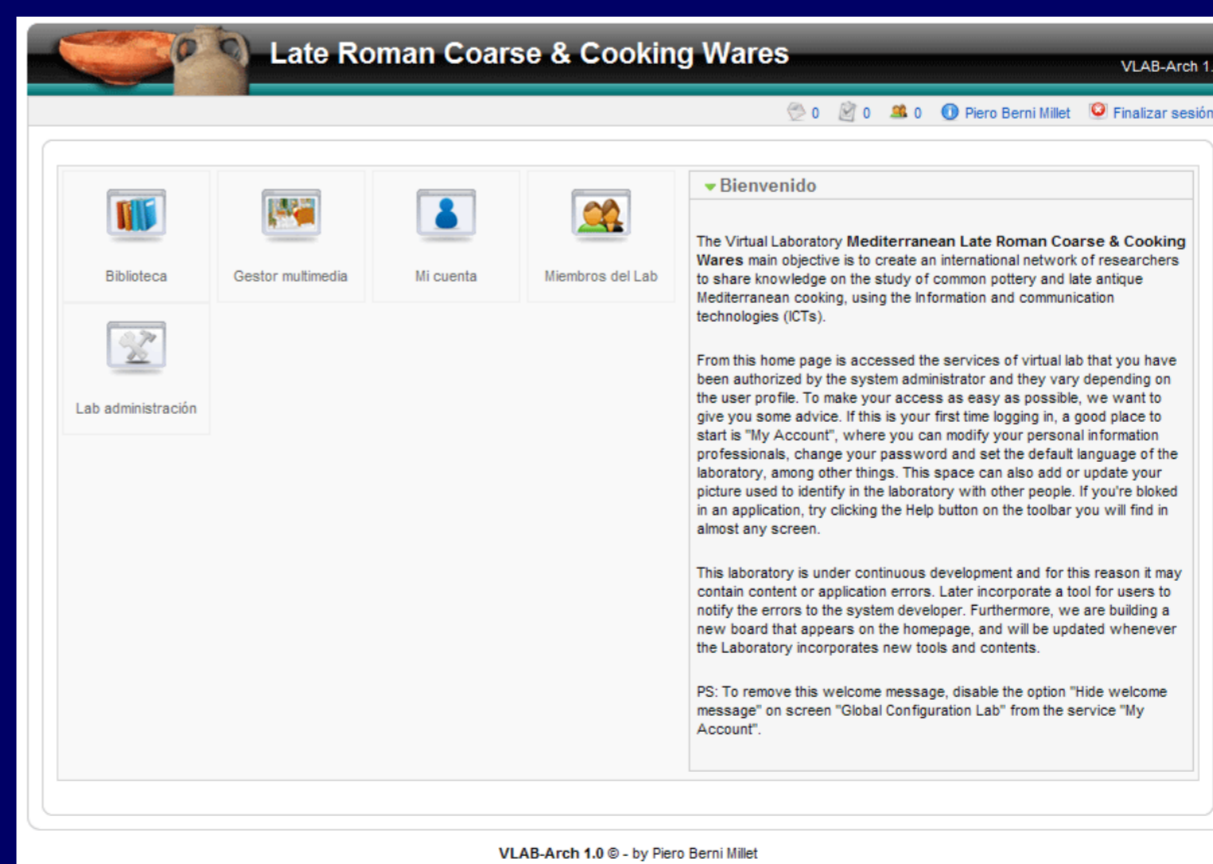
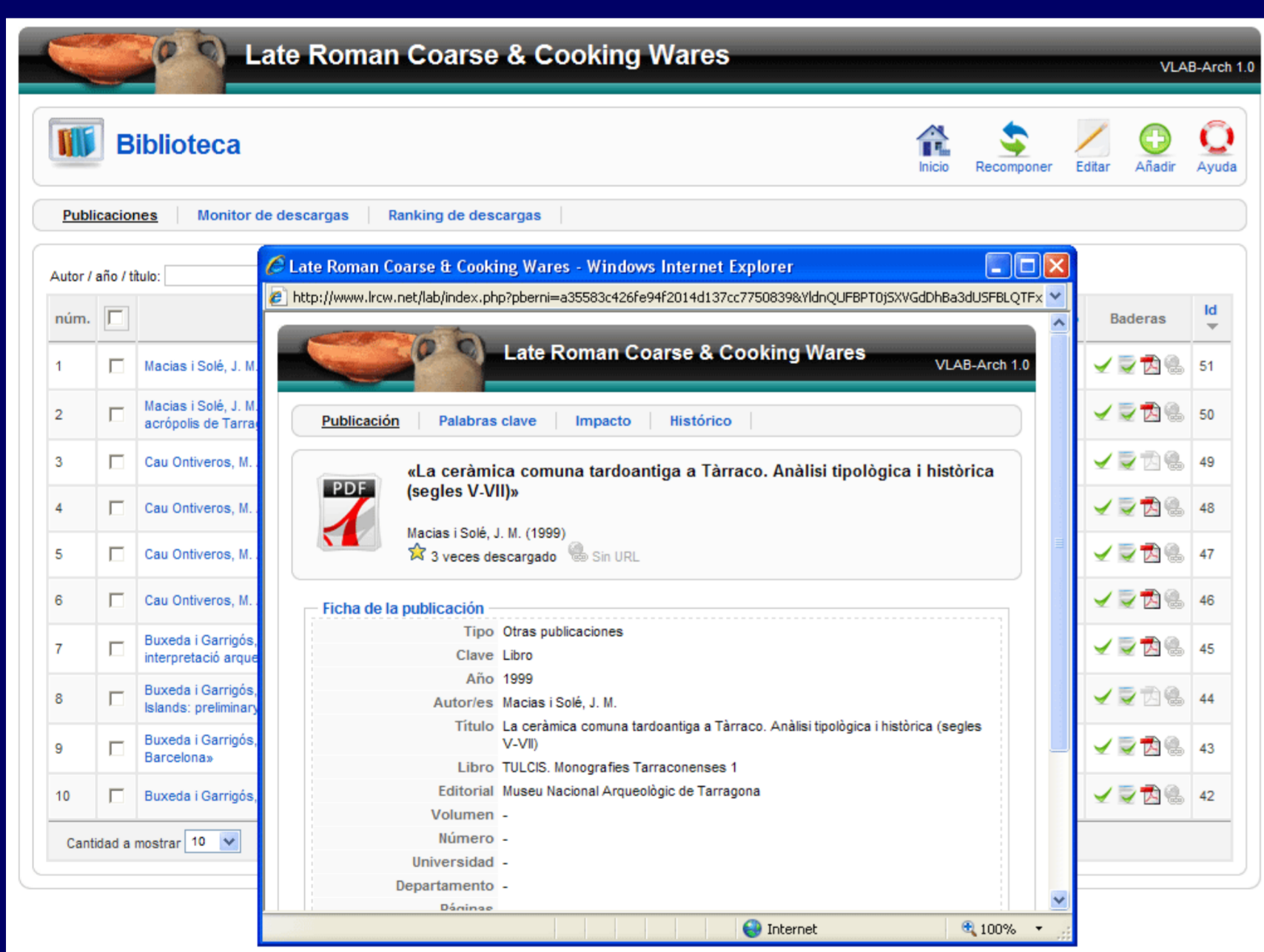


5. VIRTUAL LABORATORY INTRANET

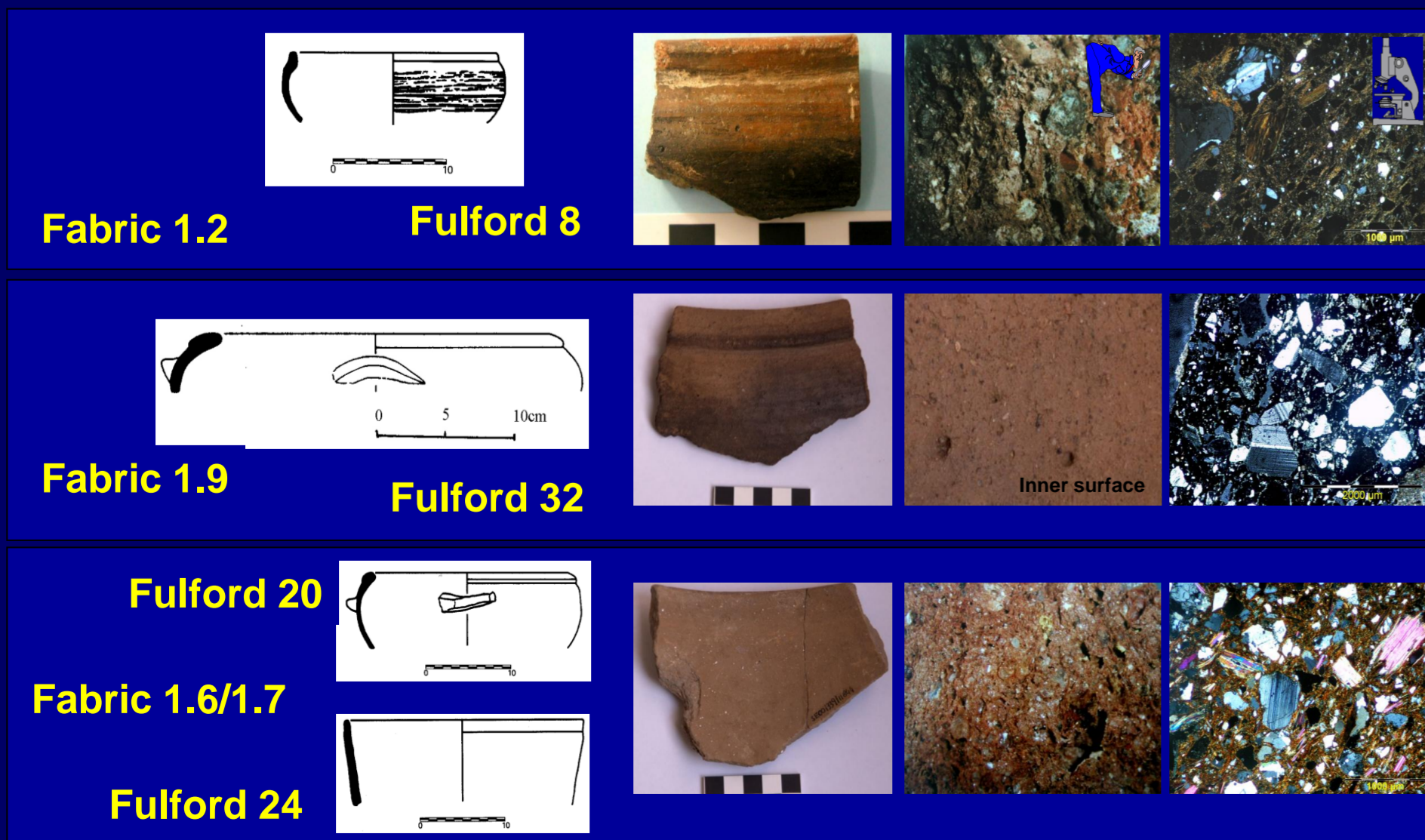
The private space is the intranet of the Virtual Laboratory is accessible from the portal homepage, which has an access entrance for registered users. Right now, this access will be limited to members an collaborators more linked to the technical management of the project, which will get an email invitation with the password in order to enter the Lab. Later, the Laboratory will be open to anyone who could need its services, through a register personalized field and an application that will add the new user to the system.

For the visitor access, the Virtual Laboratory is considered to have four kinds of profiles of registered users (director, scientific consultant, collaborator, and guest), with a different access level to the Laboratory services and database information:

The Virtual Laboratory interface can be configured for many languages (English, Spanish, Catalan, French, Italian, German, Portuguese).

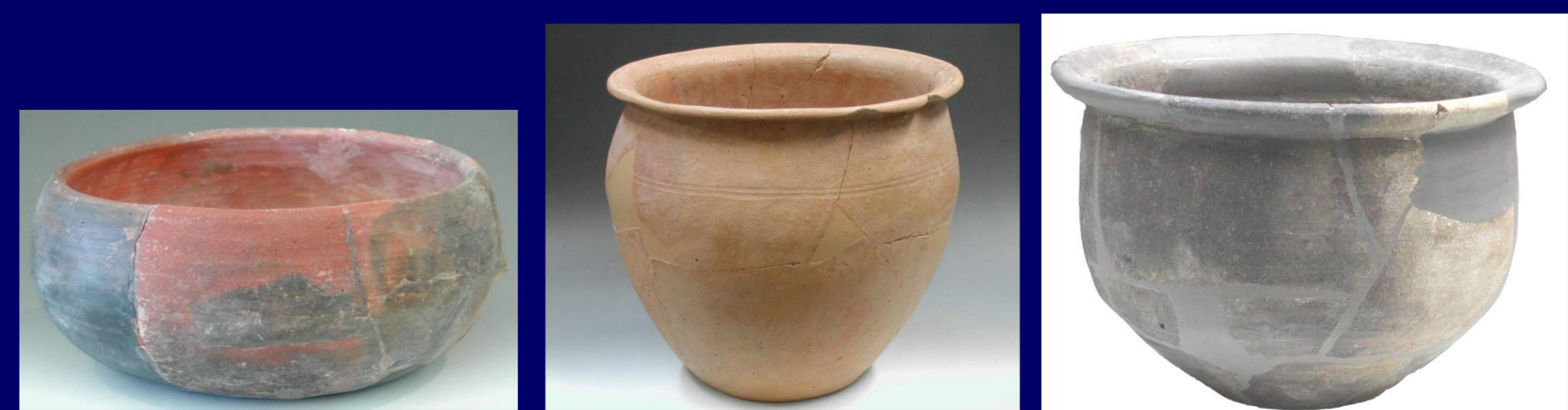


Some representative type for each fabric



6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This web page will be allocated in a neutral server (www.lrcw.net), not identified with any particular institution, as we believe that this project belongs to all those participants willing to contribute to the creation of the data-base with the firm conviction that isolated research is not an option anymore if we really want to advance. We desire to construct a public space that represents all the researchers and their respective institutions.



Ceramics, Cuisine and Culture: the Archaeology and Science of Kitchen Pottery in the Ancient Mediterranean World, Thursday 16 and Friday 17 December 2010, Stevenson Lecture Theatre, The British Museum, London (UK)