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Thomas Aigner

has been President of ICARUS since 2008. After graduating in History and Archival Sciences in Vienna, he took over the management of the Diocesan Archives of St. Pölten in 1995, which have since been a pioneer in the digitization of archival material.

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Milan Augustin

studied History at Prague University. Since 1987 he has been working at the National District Archive of Karlovy Vary, since 1999 as its director. He mainly focuses on the history of the Karlovy Vary region.

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Irmgard Christa Becker

studied History and French at the Universities of Tübingen and Vienna. She became head of the Archives School Marburg in 2010 and has been the chairwoman of the Society of German Archivists since 2013.

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Peer Boselie

studied history, archival science and theology in Heerlen, Nijmegen and Den Haag. Since 1999 he has been director of the Sittard-Geleen City Archives. Between 2010 and 2015 he was founder and director of the "Euregionaal Historisch Centrum" (EHC) as well as the Aezel project.

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Sabine Edith Braun

Sabine Edith Braun (born 1975) studied Political Science, Theatre and German Studies, Journalism and History in Vienna. She works as freelance journalist and publishing editor and also holds yoga and fitness classes.

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Karel Halla

studied History and German Philology. In 2000 he joined the State Archives in Eger, which he has been managing since 2006. He acts as coordinator of several EU projects, among them the web portal "Porta fontium".

Dragana Katić

graduated from the University of Novi Sad, where she is currently writing on her PhD. She started working for the Archives of Vojvodina in 2004, mainly organizing national and international conferences on historical and archival topics.

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Joachim Kemper

is a historian and archivist. From 2011 to 2015 he headed the city archives of Speyer and the Cultural Heritage Department Speyer. Since November 2015 he's been head of collections at the Institute for City History in Frankfurt am Main.

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Timo Kracke

has been a hobby genealogist for over 18 years. He volunteers for several German genealogy societies. Since 2012 he has been the voice of the German Podcast "Der Genealoge"; in 2014 he started the genealogy project for kids, "Die Familienforscher".

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Eva Maria Lang

works as IT project engineer at the Passau Diocesan Archives. She coordinates the electronic assessment and automated transcription of the handwritten church registers within the READ project.

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Oliver Laux-Steiner

studied Constitutional, Social and Economic History, Contemporary History and Educational Science at Bonn University. He's treasurer of the Society of German Archivists and works at the Debeka Archive in Koblenz.

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Vlatka Lemić

is the Director of the Croatian State Archives and holds a Ph.D. in Information Sciences. She teaches archival studies at the University of Zagreb and is involved in various educational programmes and international projects. As Archival Advisor she continuously shares her expertise at professional meetings and international conferences.

© Novak

When Hesse meets Hollywood

The size of the State Archive in Marburg (DE) as well as the bandwidth it covers in terms of time and contents are quite amazing.

by Sabine Edith Braun, photographs by: Luiza Puiu

The threatening letters had to make room for Martin Luther. The glass cabinets with the letters that were found accidently during the re-packaging of some archival objects, among them a note from a citizen who demands the payment of 400 Guilders from the town of Fulda, failing which he would "set fire to the town at all four corners", have been moved to a side corridor for the time being. Under the title "Luther and Europe" the Hessian State Archive in Marburg's southern quarter is now displaying some of the archive's most valuable treasures in its foyer, among them the protocol of the famous "Marburg Colloquy". It was held at the invitation of Landgrave Philipp of Hesse who attempted to solve the dispute between reformers Luther, Zwingli, Melanchthon and Bucer – however without avail.

The bust of Athena, the Greek Goddess of Wisdom, was mounted in the atrium of the State Archive in Marburg after the end of World War II, replacing the bust of Adolf Hitler, which had been there since the building's opening in 1938.

The year 2017, which marks the 500th anniversary of alleged posting of the Ninety-Five Theses, will represent the climax and closure of the Luther Decade.

A functional building from the Third Reich

In the Atrium a bust of Minerva is watching over the Luther exhibition. It was not there from the very beginning, though. In its early days the edifice, which was built as an archive in 1938, housed a bust of Adolf Hitler in that spot. "It is a lovely irony of history, that after the war Hitler's bust was, of all things, ousted by the Goddess of Wisdom", says medievalist Sabine Fees while giving a tour of the house. Apart from 55 kilometres of filing racks, the archive's depots hold some 350,000 charts and maps as well as about 130,000 medieval charters, among them very valuable specimen like a charter by Frederick Barbarossa of 1154 or one by Emperor Charles dating back to 786. And those are not even the oldest objects in the house: A parchment issued by Pippin, Charlemagne's father, which is kept in the archive, is the oldest original charter by a sovereign north of the Alps. The charter dates back to 760 and set the seal on the donation of the Deiningen estate to the Fulda monastery.

Treasures not for sale

How much worth is a 1256 year old royal charter – and can you define its value by age alone? "One cannot put it like that", remarks Andreas Hedwig, who is Head of the Marburg State Archive and, at the same time, the Hessian State Archives with their three locations at Wiesbaden, Darmstadt and, obviously, Marburg. Putting a price on individual archival objects is something Hedwig plainly refuses to do. Even though he admits to know their value: "We had to assess our most valuable items for business reasons. So we combed through the catalogues of auction houses to find out at what price charters are being traded."But no matter how high the price – there is no intention to sell. "Our archival objects are national cultural assets and therefore unsaleable by law. This is written down in the Hessian State Constitution", emphasizes Francesco Roberg, Head of the Marburg Charters Department and in charge of third-party funded projects. If one wanted to sell, one would need a parliamentary resolution first. When assessing the value of an archival object, it is more important to understand what it is that's so valuable about it, says Andreas Hedwig, and such value could be based on its rarity or its uniqueness. In this context Hedwig mentions the Wilhelmshöher Maps, a collection of war maps compiled on behalf of Landgrave Charles in the early 18th century, spanning a period of 300 years.

Hollywood Star with Hessian roots

The maps are unique as they document, among other things, the acts of war at the East Coast, in New York, and Boston during the American War of Independence – with Hessian participation. For under Landgrave Frederick II, an active trading in soldiers had taken place: Hessian troops were sold to the English Crown and had to fight against the American settlers.This is the reason why many US citizens have Hessian ancestors. One of them is Hollywood Star Rob Lowe who several years ago visited the Marburg Archive together with a television team.

A midland is putting out feelers

"Who would suspect treasures like these maps in a Hessian archive?" asks Francesco Roberg and adds: "For a State Archive that is responsible for the northern part of a midland, we are surprisingly international. A business trip to Sweden, like the one we made recently, would have been considered a curiosity in the past.The scope of the archive does not only range from Hesse to all of Europe and the US, it also covers a period from the early Middle Ages to the present. Archiving is ▶

"We are way more exciting than people would think"

One of the 3000 impressive Wilhelmshöher war maps: A map of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, copperplate engraving and partly coloured by hand.

■ **First name, last name:**
Dr. Andreas Hedwig

■ **Job, position:**
Head of the Hessian State Archives at the same time Executive Director of the Hessian State Archive Marburg.

■ **My favourite memories from my professional life:**
My first day as Archival Advisor at the Hessian Main State Archive in Wiesbaden. (September 1993)

■ **What my team appreciates most:**
As I see it, most of all transparent and comprehensible structures and decisions.

■ **When I retire, I'm going to miss most:**
I'm not giving this any thought yet. One thing's for sure, though: I won't get bored.

■ **When I am alone in the archives...**
I can focus very well on complex matters.

■ **Coffee or tea?**
Coffee!

■ **I am impressed, ...**
still impressed, by the diversity and range of the archival records at the Marburg State Archive.

■ **I am proud, ...**
of my position and the privilege to manage this renowned archive and now all of the Hessian State Archives.

■ **I am good at**
– difficult – maybe at establishing contacts to other institutions and people.

■ **My "favourite object" in the Hessian State Archive Marburg:**
I can't answer that, the archive is so rich in prominent objects, especially from the medieval and modern era.

■ **Three things I love about archives:**
The multitude of historical sources, the possibility to deal with them, the chance to gain knowledge, and the benefits for society as a whole.

■ **My connections to ICARUS:**
Having found a forum that wisely and actively promotes international co-operation!

Large wax seal with monarch on the throne from a charter by Frederick Barbarossa of 1154 for the nuns of the St. Marien monastery in Kassel.

A threatening letter to the town of Fulda. The enclosed matches were supposed to be used to set fire to the town at all four corners.

▶ an ongoing business, and that is including approx. 2% of all content produced by the 150,000-some Hessian public officers. "Everything needs to be assessed; that's quite stressful", points out Andreas Hedwig.

Conveying history, not just preserving it!
The State Archive – or as Roberg calls it, this „growing organism"– does not only preserve history, but is busily passing it on, too. Each of the Hessian locations has one archival educator solely responsible for schools. Since Marburg is a university town, there are always many Ph.D. students and scientists around; and last but not least the charters archive helps raising a lot of third-party funds. At any rate, the Hessian history conveyed by the archive is surprisingly alive and can help to improve our understanding of the present, as the example of the Marburg Colloquy goes to show: "Disputes like the ones Luther and the other reformers fought out between them and with the Catholic Church, are in structure very similar to the ones we see today in the Arab countries between Sunnites and Shiites", says Andreas Hedwig. „We are way more exciting than people would think", sums up Francesco Roberg, „because we strive to reproduce reality. Thanks to our collections there's something to say about almost any topic." For instance about Thonet, a furniture manufacturer headquartered in Frankenberg in Northern Hesse. "Everyone associates the company with Vienna because of the famous coffee house chairs", says Roberg and adds: "Hardly anyone knows that the file containing the application for an irrigation plant to manufacture bentwood is kept here in Marburg." It is not only his being a board member of ICARUS that makes Roberg so well connected far beyond Marburg and throughout Europe. As manager of the co:op project which promotes

Centuries-old mail. Paper envelope with closing seal of red wax stamped on it.

An almost two-metre copperplate engraving from the collection of the Wilhelmshöher War Maps shows the troops of Emperor Leopold I battling the Turks outside Vienna in 1683.

the exchange between archives and their users, he invited 160 international guests, among them attendees from the US, Israel, and Egypt, to the first international co:op conference in Marburg in January. The meeting was held under the heading of automated handwritten text recognition (Recognition and Enrichment of Archival Documents – READ).

Project READ: Helping to index documents from home

For this purpose the co:op network of archivists was brought together with the READ network of computer scientists. Over the coming years and equipped with EU funds, both are supposed to set the stage for making archival documents accessible more quickly and easily. After all, not everyone who logs onto an online archive is able to read century-old manuscripts. Thanks to automated handwritten text recognition, documents can also be assigned to certain authors and sorted by criteria such as time of origin or font style.In the manner of typical Citizens Science, all those who are interested can transcribe manuscripts at home. The more manuscripts get indexed that way, the faster the computers will learn. The recently started READ project is intended to run for four years.

Chance find – or urban legend?

By the way - as we learned in Marburg, an archive is not just a place where objects are kept, it's also a place where things are found: „We discover new things all the time", Sabine Fees tells us, "for instance, several medieval tally sticks that were found in a charter's envelope."One thing, however, has not surfaced (again) to this day: A 100-Mark bill from the early days of the Federal Republic. Allegedly, an employee had used it as a bookmark in a file during the fifties and then forgot it there. "There's a veritable competition among the archive staff. Everyone hopes to find the bill", says Sabine Fees.

- Name:
  Hessian State Archive Marburg

- Address:
  Friedrichsplatz 15
  35037 Marburg
  Germany

- Web Address:
  landesarchiv.hessen.de

- Oldest collections:
  Charters 75: Imperial Abbey of Fulda (as of 750); manuscript fragments: Starting from the 5th century.

- Latest collections:
  The announcement of the co:op meeting in January 2016 is going to be included in the archive's poster collection.

- Oddest object / best-known archival item:
  A 110 cm long executioner's sword complete with blood groove from the 16th century.

- Number of digital copies:
  12,2 Million

- First digital copies:
  One of the many at the Digital Archive Marburg DigAM

- Biggest loss should one of the State Archives burn down:
  The chance for historical self-ascertainment.

- Most loyal visitor of the reading room:
  A retired priest who has been working on an edition of municipal account books for years.

A look at historic money transactions: A file from the Hessian Chamber of the 17th century with crude assays of gold and silver as well as a tally stick, a medieval book-keeping tool, on which debts were marked as notches.

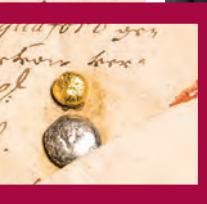# Breadcrumbs from the annual reports of the Hessian State Archive Marburg

2007: The State Archive Marburg participates in the DFG pilot project for the large-scale retroconversion of archival finding aids and successfully submits several subsequent applications, due to which the electronical access to its archival objects rises dramatically.

2007: „At the "Digital Archive Marburg" (DigAM), a project of the Office for Archival Education, more than 3000 maps, plans and drawings of the unique collection of the "Wilhelmshöher War Maps" are being scanned, indexed and made accessible on the Internet.

2008: In co-operation with the DFG the State Archive Marburg starts digitizing its vast collections. The digitized items are easily accessible online and moreover represent sustainable backups of the originals.

2010: Within the scope of a large-scale project at the newly established Hessian Civil Status Archive and in co-operation with the large online portal FamilySearch. org, the civil status registers kept at the archive are being digitized and made available online. The project was successfully closed by the end of 2014.

2011: The three Hessian State Archives launch the "Hessian Digital Archive" with the purpose to archive and preserve digital records. It devises solution strategies for the sustainable storage and readability of electronic documents and for the electronic accumulation of archival records.

2013: The DFG project for indexing and digitizing the documents of the Imperial Abbey of Hersfeld, a collection of almost 2,500 charters with items from the Carolingian and Ottonian era as well as two extremely rare papyrus documents, is being completed successfully.

2014: The new archival information system Arcinsys goes live. It covers the entire archival workflow from the reception to the provision of archival records, and thus offers users an easy and quick way to research and use services that are also retrievable from home or while travelling.

Statements from the team

Annett Eilenberg and **Katharina Rippel** (Restoration workshop): "Maintaining archival records is our most important focus at work. This also goes hand in hand with preserving and passing on old professions, such as traditional bookbinding."

Christine Ried (Archivist and Arcinsys adviser at the State Archives Marburg): "Thanks to our new archival information system Arcinsys, our archival objects are available for the entire world to use."

Erika Laribi (77, honorary temp at the gates): "That my contract was extended for one year has been my best Christmas present."

Sigrun Schaal (member of the housekeeping team): "To me the depot is a maze of hundreds of racks. I admire the archivists for being able to find their way in there and decipher the manuscripts."

Wolfgang Heuser (member of the depot team): "The depot team is the engine of the archives. For us it was great that the READ/co:op Conference took place at our house, as we could demonstrate how the depot team is pouring their hearts and souls into their work."
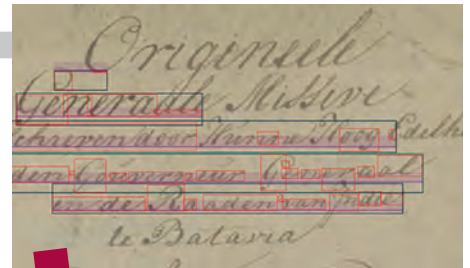
Johannes Hildenbrand (member of the depot team): "When handling the files one sometimes feels like in "Indiana Jones – Raiders of the Lost Ark", only without the many booby-traps and bad guys."

Kick-off: pioneering project „READ"

Handwritten text recognition made easy.

Can you read this? Transkribus can! Screenshot from the prototype software Transkribus.

Within the scope of the EU-aided project co:op – community as opportunity. the creative archives' and users' network, Francesco Roberg (Project Leader co:op, Head of the Manuscripts Department at the Hessian State Archives Marburg and in charge of project management within the three Hessian archives) and Günther Mühlberger (Head of the H2020-funded project of READ - Recognition and Enrichment of Archival Documents) organized an international conference under the heading "Technology meets Scholarship. With a spe-cial focus on biographical data in archives" between the 19th and 21st of January 2016 in Marburg. This meeting of archivists on the one hand and international experts for the automated recognition of handwritten texts on the other, was an important boost to a field that is going to change the everyday work of archivists to a large extent: The automated recognition of handwritten texts and layouts of complex documents as well as improved search logarithms and automated author recognition will take the indexing of archival documents to a completely new level. They will be made available for free on a service platform together with individual technology packages. A first prototype for script recognition has already been put online on www.transkribus.eu for free public testing.

Link:
READ (Recognition and Enrichment of Archival Documents)
transkribus.eu

info

Get people excited about archives

© Dagmar Weidinger

Francesco Roberg is not only one of the great men in the world of archives, he is also one of the major driving forces behind the EU-project co:op with ICARUS. On that note, three brief questions please, Mr. Roberg …

by Dagmar Weidinger and Kerstin Muff

What is the co:op project about?
Francesco Roberg:
co:op is a project within the so-called "Creative Europe" programme. Its purpose is to facilitate the access to archival material for users in different ways as well as to promote their active participation. This will create and strengthen awareness for Europe among the general public and boost cultural diversity.

What does that mean for each individual?
Archives and documents can serve as some kind of anchors. As a historian I would call it "self-affirmation". What I mean to say is that our history gives us a certain identity. By dealing more closely with archival materials we also realize that Europe's nations look back on a highly complex and intertwined common history – a knowledge that can lead to a higher degree of tolerance and openness, even a bonding between nations. After all, we are talking about major EU objectives, such as democratization and public participation.

What specific activities are there?
From the classical Open Archive Day, educational archive projects for students, interactive topotheques, technical developments concerning the indexing of archival documents, to the expansion and deepening of academic education with the help of digital archive portals, and so on. Basically it is about getting people excited about their history and enhance the exchange of ideas by means of reading, observing and indexing historical sources.

The two masterminds Günther Mühlberger and Francesco Roberg.

READ Kick-off meeting at the Archives School Marburg (DE).

all: © HStAM

Archivists explain the specific features of different archival sources to the Digital Humanities experts and computer scientists.

Computers learn to read old handwriting

Future humanists will need sophisticated knowledge of IT in their work. A conference in Marburg (DE) has recently set an example of this new kind of interdisciplinary research.

by Eva Maria Lang

Marburg is the place where the future happens. At least for research in the humanities. That was the goal of the conference "Technology meets Scholarship", held between January 19 and 21, 2016 in the Hessian State Archives. The event was perfectly organised by Francesco Roberg of the Marburg Archive, who has attracted a broad public audience by combining READ, a project aiming at the recognition and enrichment of archival documents, with the EU-level project co:op, set within the ICARUS framework.The READ project, funded by the European Union (Horizon 2020) with a grant of 8,200,000 Euros over a period of 3.5 years, aims at establishing an open virtual platform, which allows the processing of historical documents. In doing so, the access to those frequently hidden treasures of handwritten cultural heritage will be re-defined for both researchers and the general public.

Conference as project kick-off

Besides the detailed presentation of organisational and strategic topics as well as content-related milestones in the work plan, the convention served as a platform for a vivid exchange of information between archivists and humanities' scholars on the one hand and representatives of the computer sciences and technology on the other hand. The future focus has been set on bringing together both worlds and deploying the new technology at the participating archives [Passau Diocesan Archives (DE), Zurich State Archives (CH), National Archives Finland (FL)]. Developed by the READ project partners, the virtual platform „Transkribus" is open to the public and free of charge.

Co-operation at eye level

The convention proved once again that interdisciplinary collaboration at a serious and equal level of exchange between information technology and the humanities is the trend of the future.

Link:
For more information about the meeting results and background of the READ project, please see our blog
coop.hypotheses.org

info

Just follow the QR-Code!