



**ACROSS BORDERS –  
MEETING THE INFORMATION  
CHALLENGE TOGETHER**

# FOREWORD

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In 2001, when we started out digitising the manuscripts of those old monasteries in Lower Austria without any particular further objectives, we could not possibly have foreseen where this project would lead us. Also – and I am very sure about that – we are today, nine years later, even less able to venture a guess at what the coming years will bring.

These past years were characterised in general by quickly changing conditions for the keepers of cultural heritage and by the political upheavals within Europe in particular, due to the many countries moving closer to or entering the European Union. Both developments helped unite areas formerly separated by rigid borders which in regard to archives meant creating awareness for the necessity of cross-border cooperation.

Meanwhile, the formerly small project restricted to the region of Lower Austria turned

- **In terms of technology**, with more than 250,000 records of some 80 archives in 12 countries into the world's largest online platform for medieval and early modern documents,
- **In terms of institutional expertise**, into a network of participating archives and scientific institutions and an invaluable source of experience, knowledge, competencies as well as professional and personal relationships.

At the same time budget cuts and staff reductions in the public sector made it clear that a high level of coordinating administrative support would be needed to unlock the potential of this joint treasure.

In front of this backdrop said institutions joined together in 2008 to establish the „International Centre for Archival Research“ (abbrev. ICARus), whose aim is not only to cooperate in the area of document digitisation but to tackle the challenges of the digital era in general.

ICARUS is a common platform created by its members that can be individually used whenever it makes sense and adds value, either for acquiring knowledge, or handling mutual projects, or raising funds to overcome administrative and financial obstacles.

This brochure is intended to give you an overview of what ICARUS is today: Our vision, our mission, our activities – and: how to become a member...

Vienna, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011

Thomas Aigner,  
President

# ARCHIVES ...

**ARCHIVES** deal with the acquisition, storage as well as the processing and presentation of archival information.

**ARCHIVES** should be seen as society's public memory that should be accessible for everyone.

**ARCHIVES** keep only unique copies that can be found and viewed at one location.



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## CULTURAL HERITAGE

Europe's numerous archival institutions may well be seen as the essential guardians of Europe's historical memory, being as they are the keepers of invaluable documents about the history of the continent and its regions. The source material stored in their depots documents a common historical background that started out in medieval and early modern times and constitutes the historical basis of today's life in Europe. Archival records are evidence of tangible transactions such as administrative dealings, business activities or other kinds of interactions between people.

## UNIQUE DOCUMENTS

All existing archives and the records they keep are unique, as they contain unique and singular source material, no matter whether we talk about a small community archive or a major national institution. The core stock of each archive consists of the documents from those institutions allocated to it. Consequently, each document and each archival record is exclusively stored in one single archive only – as opposed to library material, seeing that a printed book could theoretically be found in other places as well. Since archival records bear authentic witness to dealings in the past, they are used as sources for historical research and as such turn into important cultural assets.

## COMPLEX AND TRANSFORMING ISSUES

An archive's tasks are complex and manifold, however, in the age of IT subject to a fundamental transformation process whose further development is not yet to be foreseen. This also goes for the change from archiving analogue material to exclusively digital material in the future, new collaborative indexing methods as well as moving the presentation of archival material from archive buildings to virtual reading rooms.



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# OUR VISION ...

In light of a fundamentally changing world and all the challenges arising thereof, ICARUS' visions are the following:

## TO OVERCOME BORDERS AND BARRIERS

The political separation of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Europe has caused severe disparities in people's lives and mentalities in opposition to thousands of years of common history with countless similarities in culture, economy and science, deeply manifested in the European archives.

The common historical heritage has to become visible across borders and free from national restrictions for all Europeans alike.

## TO MEET THE INFORMATION CHALLENGE TOGETHER

Information technology has led to profound changes both in the creation of written records away from analogue material towards digital media as well as in terms of presenting archival materials to the user. This entails new and highly complex challenges that can hardly be faced by the individual institutions simply on their own.

ICARUS strives to support archives on their way into and through the age of IT by cross-linking experience and knowledge and assisting in the execution of concrete projects.

## TO GUARANTEE ACCESS FOR EVERYONE

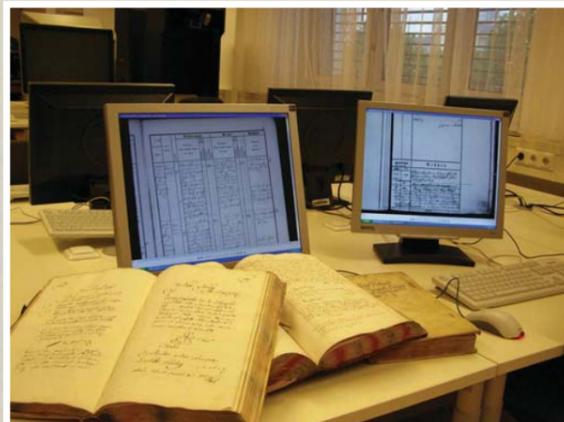
The access to archival material which has so far been restricted to an archive's location and operating hours is rendered independent of space and time – notwithstanding citizenship, social and financial status or level of education. It is a direct contribution to democratising the access to historical information.

## TO ENABLE NEW FORMS OF COOPERATION

Hitherto existing differences in the scientific and professional methods of operation between the keepers of cultural heritage and users will largely disappear. Methods and strategies will cross-link and merge following the Best-Practice principle. The old one-way street of "archive – user" will turn into a highway of bustling two-way traffic: Today's user will become tomorrow's most important partner.



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# OUR MISSION ...



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**I**nternational – ICARUS is an all-open network with the aim to overcome borders and, with mutual respect and appreciation, put what we share above what separates us.

**C**entre – ICARUS is a central contact point for cultural heritage institutions who want to benefit from an international network while at the same time contributing to it.

**A**rchival – ICARUS deals with all aspects and challenges archives are faced with in today's digital times. Among others, this includes digitisation, technical standards, financing as well as new ways of communication.

**R**esearch – ICARUS perceives itself as a link between archives and historical research. Thanks to new ways of presentation researchers have completely new tools at their disposal to get answers to hitherto open questions and uncover so far undetected connections.



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# ICARUS ...

## ... INTER- AND TRANSNATIONAL COORDINATION

ICARUS cooperates with regional and international institutions in the scientific and cultural sector.

ICARUS utilizes the principle of synergy, while at the same time safeguarding its partners' full autonomy and individuality.

ICARUS acts in coordination with national and international archival institutions.

ICARUS fills existing gaps without creating competition or burdening its members in terms of money, organisation or time.

ICARUS promotes cooperation among its members by means of regular meetings and its website [www.icar-us.eu](http://www.icar-us.eu). The continuous admission of new selected members adds to the platform's diversity.

## ... NETWORK AND SUPPORT IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

ICARUS is a non-profit platform for assisting the European archives in coping with the challenges of ever changing frameworks and environments.

ICARUS keeps regular contact to various institutions at national, international and EU level, ensuring its members' competent support in all kinds of activities.

ICARUS is specifically dedicated to opening up alternative ways of financing, one of its particular services being consulting and advice in the area of financial aids and non-commercial outsourcing.

ICARUS offers support in initiating and mediating archiving projects, notably in the IT sector. The assistance provided during a project will depend on the partners' individual needs.

## ... CROSS-BORDER STRATEGIES

ICARUS overcomes obstacles in terms of space, time, language and money that bar the way to the sources of shared history and culture.

ICARUS assists European archives to reposition themselves in a virtual world by establishing sustainable digital libraries. (e.g. [www.monasterium.net](http://www.monasterium.net))

ICARUS joins efforts with its partners to develop cross-border strategies for the electronic indexing and accessibility of archive material.

ICARUS makes geographical borders disappear through its partners' wide international range.

## ... THE NON-PROFIT ASSOCIATION

The non-profit association was established in 2008 under Austrian law, its primary goal being the execution and promotion of archival projects as well as the linking of all participating institutions.

The association is borne by its members out of currently 13 different countries (CH, DE, AT, CZ, SK, HU, SR, SI, HR, IT, BIH, PL, ME), who are represented equally in the decision-making bodies. The management of the association is incumbent on the President (currently AT) and its Vice Presidents, representing each member state.

The management is responsible for the implementation and execution of projects and strategies. The main focus lies in the area of scientific and administrative coordination, public relations and technical assistance and development.



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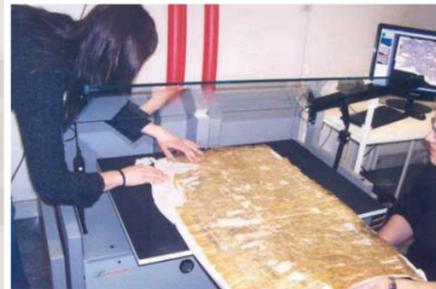


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# OUR ACTIVITIES ...



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## NETWORKING

Semi-annual meetings

Exchange of knowledge and experience

Providing communication platforms

Coordinating international co-operations and strategies

## EDUCATION

Workshop series "ICARUS@work" (2-3 times a year)

Educational programmes with focus on archives and information technologies

Conferences on topics such as "Archives on the web" or "Digital diplomatics"

## CONNECTING PEOPLE

Experts exchange programmes:

Archivists work in other archives for a certain period of time to get to know other methods of work and become acquainted with colleagues from abroad.

Linking the neighbourhood programme: ICARUS members cooperate with non-members in neighbouring countries (workshops, staff exchange, digitisation projects)

Travel Grant Programme: In order to ease the burden of travelling and accommodation costs during meetings, workshops and other events, ICARUS supports its members in that respect.

## PROVISION AND MAINTENANCE OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Bringing special types of separated archival content together by enabling new possibilities of cross-border and cross-institutional research.

Monasterium (www.monasterium.net) for instance is today the most comprehensive online resource for medieval and early modern charters.

ICARUSNet and ICARUSweb will create new opportunities for the transnational provision of archival data and institutional cooperation (starting 2011).

The all-time principle is not to create something new, but to act according to the current relevant developments and strategies in Europe (e.g. EUROPEANA and APENet)

## DIGITISING PROJECTS

Support of partners' digitisation projects by providing equipment and knowledge.

Carrying out digitisation projects to make content available online.

# BECOMING A MEMBER – BENEFITS ...

- ◆ Becoming a part of a European archival network
- ◆ By joining the member meetings and other events, participating in the international discussion on archival matters
- ◆ Participating in international projects (EU programmes)
- ◆ Becoming a part of the digital platforms of ICARUS (Monasterium, Matricula, etc.)
- ◆ Getting support in digitisation projects
- ◆ Participating in expert exchange programmes
- ◆ Getting support regarding travelling and accommodation costs during ICARUS meetings
- ◆ Free use of the ICARUS guestroom during research stays in Vienna



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# HOW TO JOIN ...

ICARUS membership is easy to obtain.

- ◆ The membership form can be downloaded on [www.icar-us.eu](http://www.icar-us.eu)
- ◆ Membership is only open to institutions who appoint individuals as representatives
- ◆ Please send the undersigned form to

**ICARUS – International Centre for  
Archival Research  
Erdberger Laende 6/7  
A-1030 Vienna**

Membership is free of charge!

In case of questions please contact:

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## **MONASTERIUM.NET ([WWW.MONASTERIUM.NET](http://WWW.MONASTERIUM.NET))**

With more than 250,000 medieval and early modern charters from around 80 archives in 12 European countries, Monasterium.Net is the world's most comprehensive portal of its kind. Numerous national, regional and church archives use this platform to make their oldest documents available online free of charge to an interested public 24 hours a day. Thanks to EditMOM, the embedded web 2.0 system, a vast audience is able to participate in the scientific research and processing of the documents independent of time and space.

## **MATRICULA ([WWW.MATRICULA-ONLINE.EU](http://WWW.MATRICULA-ONLINE.EU))**

For most Central Europeans, the church registers of the various religious denominations build the basis for research on family history (baptisms, weddings, deaths). Matricula perceives itself as an inter-denominational and international platform for the online presentation of historical books. The portal was initiated by the Archive of the Diocese of St. Pölten, of whose inventories more than 90% are already available online. With more than 3 million available pages out of several Austrian and German archives, Matricula is one of the largest archival online resources in Central Europe.

## **CADASTRAL MAPS**

The Cadastral Maps Project aims at the virtual consolidation of the cadastral maps drawn up during the 19<sup>th</sup> century of the entire Habsburg territories. Apart from taking stock of the material in all countries involved and clarifying terminological issues, the project focuses on digitisation and the development of common presentation standards.

The Budapest Metropolitan Archive is in charge of coordinating the project with administrative support from ICARUS.

**[WWW.ICAR-US.EU](http://WWW.ICAR-US.EU)**

With financial support by

