

ICARUS-Meeting # 14 Colmar 2014

Project Proposal

Working title: Authenticum

Background

In the transformation from the medieval world into the modern, Europe experienced a rapid development in mass-production of standardized paper and books. The practice of writing changed and in the 15. Century new methods of record keeping emerged. In the chancelleries of the european kings, princes and free city-states Letterbooks became administrative standard.

Letterbooks are the long rows of bound volumes containing fair copies of drafts of outgoing correspondence –also called Auslaufregister or Register.

These collections of outgoing letters, usually organized in chronological order, served as Contra Brevis and were given the legal status of Authenticum. They were used as the source of authenticity in order to establish the rights of the authorities. In many countries these Letterbooks contains the totality of outgoing correspondance from the authorities covering several centuries.

Motivation

The Letterbooks holds a unique collection of documents. They stand as the sole and without any doubt the most important source to the understanding of the early development of the European state building, bureaucracy and society.

Work to do

To create a European project within the framework of ICARUS with the mission to:

- Digitize the European Letterbooks
- Describe the European Letterbooks with metadata according to international archival standards in a shared database
- Make the European Letterbooks available on the internet.

Size of collections

To get a glimpse of the amount of work that are in front of us. The Danish collection of Letterbooks “Danske Kancelli: Registre og Tegnelser 1513 – 1800” amounts to 120 running meters, estimated 480.000 digital objects. The corresponding Swedish collection “Kunglig Majestäts Kansli: Riksregistraturet 1523 – 1715” amounts to 81 running meter.

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