

# insights

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Archives and people in the digital age

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From a deal with the devil  
to railway documents

Focal point | [Conservators without Frontiers](#)

Rescue of cultural heritage II

Interview | [Bernhard Hetzenauer](#)

"Memory is always  
a construction"

# editorial



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Dear readers,

this year **ICARUS is celebrating its 10th jubilee**. Take a look at our section “by the way” for a little anecdote from the founding history. When ICARUS was founded in 2007 as a network of institutions preserving the cultural history, the aim was to face the challenges of the digital age. Since then, much has happened. The variety of users of our services bears testimony. With Matricula and the Topotheque we were able to provide new and by now heavily used platforms for genealogists and people interested in everyday history. Our international network has long outgrown its European perimeters and with the Friends Association ICARUS4all, the users now co-shape the preservation of a shared history themselves alongside the institutions participating in the ICARUS network. The **Czech National Archives in Prague** (Národní archiv, CZ) have been a partner since the beginning. For this issue’s cover story, its director **Eva Drašarová** has opened up the gates to reveal their archival treasures. Our **role model** is **Jitka Křečková**, the safe-keeper of the most valuable charters kept at the Czech National Archives.

The present issue of **insights** offers a glance at the developments since the foundation of ICARUS in 2007. The Topotheque 2.0 and the imminent publication of a brand-new version of Matricula expand the possibilities to work with the manifold materials and services of the ICARUS community for the interested public. How this expansion can affect everyday life can be read in Elisabeth Kultscher’s contribution on her research work as a genealogist and local historian, the text on the Finnish “Bring your history days” in cooperation with the Topotheque and a presentation of the comprehensive activities of the Archives Portal Europe.

Further insight into the expert world is provided by the article on “Monasterium Italy” – a research group at the Department for Humanities in Naples (IT) doing research on monastic everyday life with the help of the Monasterium portal, “Dawne pismo” – a portal developed by the National Archives in Krakow (Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie, PL) that allows users to playfully learn old scripts as well as an enlightening report from the University of Cologne on the progress of digitisation technology.

The interview with the documentary filmmaker Bernhard Hetzenauer on oral history and his film on the psychotherapist and Zen master Vera Kohn takes a look beyond the world of archives. The **focal point** of this issue presents an update on the **aid campaign initiated within the ICARUS network to rescue cultural heritage in the Middle East** – we already introduced this initiative in our 3rd issue (01/2016).

I hope you will enjoy reading!

Kind regards

Daniel Jeller  
Head of IT ICARUS

You can find all  
of our current  
events online at  
[www.icar-us.eu/](http://www.icar-us.eu/)  
events

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insights provides information about the international archival community today, including archival institutions as well as the related user groups.

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Link: [topotheque.eu](http://topotheque.eu)

do you have a question concerning any of the ICARUS platforms, archives or family research related topics for us?

We will find the right experts from within our ICARUS4all community to answer your requests! Simply send your question to [editor@icar-us.eu](mailto:editor@icar-us.eu)

## „I am living my dream!“

Jitka Křečková is the guardian of the religious archival documents of the Czech Republic. With the conveyance of religious institutions in the 1050s, monastery and church archives were absorbed into the governmental archival administration. These archival holdings could be returned to their righteous owners and the locations of revived monasteries only in the 1990s. Today, the archival documents which remained in the National Archives are under Křečková's care.

### Mrs. Křečková, what does your profession mean to you?

I am enthusiastic about the monastery and holy order archives. Many holdings, for example those from the Strahov or Břevnov monasteries, remained in governmental care after 1990 – in today's first department of the Czech National Archives. To me, these documents are of pivotal importance to the European and our national history. Therefore I don't only care deeply about their conservation but also about their (digital) reunion and thus public accessibility. The successful cooperation with ecclesiastical institutions inspires my work. I am living my dream!

### What does the cooperation with ICARUS mean?

I joyfully remember the first meeting with Thomas Aigner and F. Alexius (Subprior of Břevnov monastery) in 2005: The archival holdings of the Břevnov monastery were to be digitised and made accessible via the Monsaterium portal. This day changed everything: A wave of digitisation unfolded in the National Archives. It continues until today and encompasses more than just ecclesiastical documents. The cooperation within international projects of this kind makes the abundance of European history visible.

You have been the head of the 1st department of the Czech National Archives since 1 January 2017. What does this professional change mean to you personally?

For me, the cooperative trust in our department and the international involvement determine our successful work.

I value my predecessor Alena Pazderová immensely and I am thrilled by my young colleagues who infuse creativity into our daily work routines. ■

Jitka Křečková has been managing the collections of ecclesiastical and holy order archives since her studies at the Philosophical Faculty of the Charles University in Prague (CZ). No one knows them better than her.



© Markus Ladstätter

### know how

Dear commity,

on starting my family research I realized pretty soon that I will have to cross the Austrian border in order to find my roots. My ancestors partly come from Northern Germany; and my first impression is that research has to be done differently in Germany than in Austria. I found hardly any documents online. Could you help me with my search? Is it possible that I have to tackle the task in another way in Germany?

Kind regards  
Stefanie Harborth

Dear Ms Harborth,

two years ago I was faced with the same troubles as you are now! My family is from Hallertau, which is a hop-growing area about 70 kilometres north of Munich in Bavaria. When I got started with my family research I thought to myself, "This is a small area, my family only lived in three villages. It cannot be that hard." However, it soon turned out that family research can be quite a challenge in Germany. In the area mentioned the borders of three dioceses meet: Augsburg, Regensburg and Munich/Freising! And as Germany cannot be compared to Austria in terms of size, digitisation has not reached the same level there as it has here. What is more, the denominational variety makes it a lot harder in Germany. As

I do not have any relatives in the diocese of Passau, whose books can be found online via Matricula, I had to visit the archives of the three dioceses personally. On the way I found out that it is advisable to always arrange an appointment when possible and to keep in mind that the assistance with documents in the archives is not free of charge. In comparison, my partner, whose family comes from Austria, Bavaria and Saxony, did not have to face such difficulties. She could carry out most of her research online via Matriucla, Porta Fontium, ANNO and the National Archive of Lower Austria – all from at home and completely free of charge. My conclusion for you thus is to be prepared for more travelling in Germany. However, the digital infrastructure there is currently growing; and people like you are the best motivation for Germany to push their digitisation process.

Kind regards  
Johann Leitmeier



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Johann Leitmeier worked as an air traffic controller. His partner Judith Starke worked as an employee for a German airline. Since 2015 they live in Vienna and passionately follow their family research in Austria and Germany together.

### by the way

## 10 years ICARUS – been lucky?!

A little bit of luck, determination and taking chances quickly. Or: From Monasterium to ICARUS.

The ICARUS story actually started with Monasterium, by now a well-known and world-wide unique portal for charters. The fact that Monasterium is more than an online database for charters from monasteries from Lower Austria is a case of pure luck!

At the same time as the charters from excavated Lower Austrian monasteries were being digitised in the "Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv" (HHStA) in Vienna (AT), the state and province of Salzburg agreed on the (mere) microfilming (!!!) of former collections of Salzburg in the HHStA. The Monasterium team realized that there was the unique opportunity to digitise another important corpus: if the originals already got excavated, unpacked and unfolded for the microfilming, it should be easy to put them on a scanner, too.

This way some of the oldest and most important collections of the Austrian State Archives were made available online and returned to Salzburg – virtually, at least. Monasterium covered the additional expenses of this campaign. Thus, the originally regional project Monasterium focused on the Diocese of St. Poelten turned into a nationwide initiative. The founding of ICARUS was no more a question. The ironic quirk of the story: the money for this digitisation campaign had not been allocated at that point of time and was lined up only in the course of the project – chances have to be seized on the spot! ■

### curiosity

## The Himberg Plough

In 2004, the Topotheque was the source of a wonderful photograph from 1935 discovered by one of the many steam enthusiasts who search for material in this digital age using the web. This photograph caused considerable excitement within the community of the Steam Plough Club as at the time it was the only known image of a Z3 class of steam ploughing engine of which few were built. It shows

a pair of steam ploughing engines manufactured by John Fowler, Leeds, between 1904 and 1905. Only 32 engines of this type were produced and all were sent from the UK to Fowler's branch in Magdeburg (DE) for the European market. Steam ploughing engines of this type have a winding-drum beneath the boiler on which a steel cable of some 500 to 600 yards length is carried. This can clearly be seen between the front and rear wheels. The men in the picture appear to be ma-

king ready for the rear engine to use its winch power to pull free the stuck engine. They have tools, equipment and balks of timber to help the exercise. ■

The Steam Plough Club has over 400 members world-wide.

Links:  
[steamploughclub.org.uk](http://steamploughclub.org.uk)  
[himberg.topothek.at](http://himberg.topothek.at)



© Community archive Himberg

Richard Eastwood is secretary of the Steam Plough Club. His interest in steam cultivation started after retirement from working in the electricity generation business for 28 years in Hong Kong.



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Interview: [Eva Drašarová](#) | [Czech National Archives](#)

## From a deal with the devil to railway documents

Mercedes Benz, Decathlon, KFC: The neighbourhood at the south-eastern periphery of Prague hardly indicates that valuable national treasures are stored close by. Pressed for space, the National Archives had to move to Chodovec where they can accommodate eleven out of twelve departments. Earlier, a total of 18 locations had been spread not only across Prague, but even into the surrounding region. These locations included places such as the monastery of Břevnov or even the prison at Mladá Boleslav.

by [Sabine Edith Braun](#) | Photos: [Markus Ladstätter](#)



Plan – The Area around Carlsbad from the Töpl to the Friendship Seat” from the year 1803.

The project for the construction of a new archive building was started in the early 1990s when the collections held about 92 kilometres of shelving. At first three depositories were built, each of them with 13 levels. Then the remaining parts were added. When you approach the building it seems smaller than it actually is: The top levels of the depositories are painted in the colours of heaven to achieve this optical illusion. The first collections of the archive moved in in the year 1997. In September 2001, a grand opening took place. “At that time, I had been the Director for only a few months”, says Eva Drašarová.

The wall behind her desk holds an oil portrait of Jan Josef Klausers (1705-1771) who was one of her predecessors. Drašarová is the Director of the National Archives (up until 2005: “State Central Archive”) which is headquartered at Chodovec and has a branch location at Dejvice. A total of 160 employees is working at these two locations which are visited by some 11,000 people per year.

### From the middle ages to the present

“We are holding documents from central institutions of the state starting from the early beginnings – the middle of the 12th century – up until today”, says Drašarová. Most of them are on paper. The first digitised material is from the 1990s. “Since 2014 we have an experienced digital archive”, the Director adds. The size of this archive currently is about 4 terabyte. What kind of archival material is most popular? “Material from the central institutions of the Communist Party, concerning the latest history of our country”, says

Drašarová. Documents from the years 1948 to 1989 have been accessible since 2008, just like documents from the intelligence services and the special courts from the end of the 1940s.

### Video footage for fans of the railway

The next item of popularity are – railway documents. Railway fans can watch commented footage from historical instructional and educational films held by the archive of the central transportation institute. This

material is available by the title “Pozor vlak!” (“Attention! Train!”). Third in line of popularity are police records which are primarily important for genealogists. However, private persons are not the majority of visitors. “There are many academic institutions in Prague, and they are our daily visitors”, says Eva Drašarová. Excursions and student projects on historical research also play a role. Students of the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University are taught in “Auxiliary sciences of history” at Chodovec. Let’s move on to the branch location at Dejvice in north-eastern Prague. This building was opened in 1933 and was originally used by the Bohemian provincial archive. It was the country’s first functional building with regard to archives. Today it holds the First Department of the National Archives at Dejvice. The seven special depositories hold numerous documents of the country’s national heritage such as the colourfully painted “Landesbücher” that were declared a cultural monument in 1985. They contain legal matters of the aristocracy as well as civil aspects such as contracts and last wills and testaments. “Unfortunately we only have books from after the year 1541”, says Jitka Křečková, “as there had been a fire and only a single book survived.” This book is now at the National Museum.

At the very top of popularity: Railway documents and police records.



The deal with the devil.  
NA, APA I, Inv. Nr. 5445, Kart. Nr. 4480



Investigation file from 1788 of the midwife Barbara Elisabeth Mayerin with a metal hook made of iron as piece of evidence.  
NA, ČG-Publ., 1786-1795, Inv. Nr. 2404, Kart. Nr. 2237



The Golden Bull of Přemysl Otakar I. on the charter for the Břevnov monastery, dated 24 July 1224.  
NA, ŘBB, Inv. Nr. 10



The upper levels of the archive's depot seem to disperse into the sky seamlessly. The building itself is as colourful as the multifaceted work of the archivists.

For the cover story, Eva Drašarová herself guided us through the depots of the archive.

Anyone with a sensitive nature should rather not indulge in the "bloody" documents of Dejvice.



portrait

**First name, last name:**

PhDr. Eva Drašarová, CSc.

**My favourite memories from my professional life:**

the team work and working with the real, physical, "dusty" archival documents of the "pre-management" times

**When I am alone in the archive ...**

I can finally get things done.

**Coffee or tea?**

Tea. But after an abundant lunch I definitely need a strong coffee.

**I am impressed by ...**

the work we accomplish as a team.  
And: the sight of the hanging charters in the safe.

**I am good at ...**

organizing.

**My "favourite object" in the archive:**

the unofficial correspondence between the prime minister Lord Stürgkh and the governor of Bohemia Prince Thun at the end of the Habsburg monarchy

**Three things I love about archives:**

to satisfy my curiosity, the possibility to immerse myself completely into the secrets of past centuries and the constant hustle and bustle in the archive.

**My connection to ICARUS:**

the friendship and meaningful work we accomplish for the future within an international team

**A bloody deal with the devil**

Besides its many valuable objects, Dejvice also holds some peculiar ones, as Jitka Křečková explains. One of these is the "Commitment to Lucifer" which was written by a beggar student in the year 1635. In

return for his wish to live another 25 years and be given 100 gulden every Saturday he wanted to sell his soul to the devil. "It didn't help", says Křečková, "as he died before the 25 years

were over." This document was probably written in blood and was found at the archive of the Prague archdiocese. In another document from the 17th century, the executioner Jan Mydlář is demanding payment for his services that were still outstanding. He had been executing 27 people who had been involved in Bohemia's Estate Uprising. Mydlář therefore demanded 584 schock of Meissner groschen – 500 for himself and 84 for his helpers.

A further document, dated 1788, is also rather bloody: It deals with an investigation against the midwife Barbara Elisabeth Mayerin. She was supposed to be responsible for the death of a pregnant woman and her child, and as a consequence her license was withdrawn. A small iron hook is attached to this document, which she had used

to pull the foetus out of the womb. This archival material was discovered only recently and by chance in the course of some research. People with a sensitive nature should better keep to the collection of manuscripts. Some of the gems that can be found there are a letter by Ludwig van Beethoven ordering new paper for his scores or a score

People with a sensitive nature should better keep to the collection of manuscripts.

signed by Mozart from the collection of Count Desfour-Walderode who had donated it to the former provincial archive.

**Hanging treasures in their transparent coats**

The most valuable pieces are kept in two underground vaults at 15 degrees centigrade and 55 percent humidity - the same values that are also maintained on the seven floors of the depot. The so-called Old Vault, which has the same door as the Czech National Bank, was constructed in 1933 for the Archives of the Bohemian Crown. Since a renovation in 1986 it keeps church documents such as the charter of the Benedictine monastery Břevnov. Even though the monastery was founded in 993, the charter was

only written in the mid 13th century. In the 1950s, the conditions at the "old" vault had deteriorated because of dampness, moisture and poor restoration and had even led to brown discolouring of documents. For this reason, the so-called "New Vault" was constructed from 1987 to 1990. The documents of the Archives of the Bohemian Crown - declared as a national monument in 1988 - have been stored according to a new system, the "Buijtenen system" developed by Dutch archivists. The documents are now no longer folded but are hung at full length covered in transparent polyester film, the so-called Melinex film. "As soon as there are any changes to the material, we will instantly notice and can counter-act in time", says Jitka Křečková.

The archivists of the Dejvice branch location (from left to right: Jitka Křečková, Alena Pazderová, Pavla Jirková, Kateřina Zenklová and Libuše Holakovská).



**From the team's point of view**

Jitka Křečková (archivist and head of the Dejvice branch location):

"What I really love about my job is that we are so close to the resources. It's important to keep this material! I am helping monasteries and institutes to protect their archival material."

Libuše Holakovská (archivist and conservator):

"I really love my job. It's the small things we are doing on important material. We are keeping it for the future. Cooperation between archivists and conservators is very important."

Alena Pazderová (archivist):

"So much history, and so many historians! The work of an archive is a craft, and everybody needs an archivist. Our motto is «salus documentorum supremus lex». Work is very colourful here, and everybody is specialising on a particular matter."

**Name of the institution:**

Národní archiv

**Web address:**

www.nacr.cz

**Oldest collection:**

Charters from the first half of the 12th century from the archive of the Bohemina Crown and further archival collections

**Oddest object / best-known archival item:**

On the one hand, the deal with the devil (also called "Commitment to Lucifer") written by a beggar student in 1635 and, on the other hand, the Archives of the Bohemian Crown

**Overall volume of digital copies:**

Main building:  
128.936,91 rm | 4.270.683 MB  
Dejvice branch location:  
12.994,53 rm | 278.776 MB

**First digital object:**

Cadastral maps (indication drafts) from the 19th century

**Most loyal visitors of the reading room:**

Archivists from other archives and similar institutions

Sabine Edith Braun works as a journalist and proof-reader. She also teaches yoga and fitness classes at an adult education centre in Vienna (AT).



© Andrea Burchhart

# Rescue of cultural heritage in the Middle East II

In our 1/2016 edition we first wrote on our focus "The cultural heritage of Europe in the Middle East - between danger and salvation" covering the engagement of our network. We are pleased to provide you with an update on the current development in cooperation with "Conservators without Frontiers".



© Julius Engel

Patricia Engel is a conservator who studied, did her doctorate and habilitated in Vienna, Dresden and Warsaw. She teaches at various universities and dedicates herself to research on book and papers restoration-conservation. In 2016 she founded the association "Conservators without Frontiers."

"The impulse to proactively safeguard archival material and books from imminent destruction has been my heart's desire for a long time. When we heard about F. Najeeb's gripping story first hand at the ICARUS meeting in St. Pölten (AT) in 2015, this was a clear sign for me to found the association "Conservators without Frontiers". Our endeavor is clear: The exclusive and imminent rescue of written and graphical heritage with particular regard to technological development in the area of restauration and conservation. The expert team behind "Conservators without Frontiers" offers support in establishing emergency plans across Europe and beyond. In December 2016

we were able to start our first operation of rescuing written heritage in Northern Iraq, in close cooperation with the extremely committed team of Qidenus Technologies, Augias, the Diocesan Archives of St. Pölten and the international network ICARUS. It makes me proud to being able to work with such determined colleagues! I would like to express my special thanks to Nikolas Sarris who visited F. Najeeb in December 2016 in Erbil in order to assess the situation and help out with practical issues of restoring and digitizing manifold documents dating back as far as the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century which F. Najeeb previously rescued on his escape from Mossul to Erbil."



© Luiza Putu

Thomas Aigner studied History in Vienna (AT). Since 200 he is the director of the Archive of the Diocese of St. Pölten (AT) which was the first church archive to go online with their collections.

"I am highly delighted about the first steps our community was able to take to support the Chaldaic Protestants in Iraq to rescue and preserve their written cultural heritage after our ICARUS-Meeting in St. Pölten (AT). Thankfully, such meaningful businesses as Qidenus Technologies and Augias Data contributed with in-kind donations to ensure successful and substantial support. We – and I am talking about the entire ICARUS network – are mainly

concerned to cooperate purposefully with the colleagues in Iraq in accordance with our possibilities and their needs and requirements and therewith integrate them into the solidary international ICARUS community. This cooperation focuses on the areas of preservation/restoration, digitization and indexing. I would like to thank everyone involved for their commitment and support, and I am looking forward to the next steps of proactive cooperation!"

More on "Conservators without Frontiers" available online.  
Link:  
[restauratorenohnegrenzen.at](http://restauratorenohnegrenzen.at)



Sofie Qidenus studied at the University of Economics in Vienna. In 2004 she founded Qidenus Technologies, whose v-shaped scanning technologies have become an international standard by now.

© private

"On my search for pioneers in the field of digitization of archival material in Europe I first met Thomas Aigner in 2015. Before I had been intensely researching for a few weeks, even on an international level, in order to find someone to have an exchange on my plans with. It was thus quite a surprise to find such a person in St. Pölten, only a 60 minute car drive away from my office! Naturally, I got in touch with Tho-

mas Aigner in order to capture his attention for my idea to digitize documents all over Europe with our robotic sanners and publish them on the Internet. To my great astonishment he was neither discouraged by the sheer magnitude of my project nor did he hesitate to share his experience in the area with me. It did not take long until we got the first cooperation on the way. Thomas Aigner's projects are characterized

by his wish to share the same objectives, a common vision and that the outcome is a win-win-situation for everyone involved. I am grateful that we managed to launch this endeavour in the field of digitization and publication of cultural heritage together. Supporting Father Najeeb in his effort so save the cultural treasures of Erbil is a matter of course for me and above all a great honour."

"It has been a long tradition for AUDIAS-Data to support cultural institutions that work on a low budget but with great commitment preserving historical heritage and provide them with affordable or even free-of-charge directory software. Especially in times of tremendous

threat to the work of cultural heritage preservation it goes without saying that we contribute to support the archival work in crisis regions. When Thomas Aigner, who himself has been a user of our services for many years, approached us with F. Najeeb's story, we immediately committed to sup-

port this cause. Our special thanks go out to Nikolas Sarris who made sure F. Najeeb and his team were introduced to the functions of our software. It is a great honour to be part of this highly important initiative and we are looking forward to continue our support according to our possibilities.

Since 1991 AUGIAS-Data has been developing software for archives, museums and management libraries. The aim: practical, easy-to-use, future-proof and affordable software.  
Link:  
[augias.de](http://augias.de)

Karl-Theo Heil is a historian and has been owner and CEO of AUGIAS-Data for more than 25 years.





Nikolas Sarris is a book and paper conservator at the National Library of Greece. He has been a lecturer of book and paper conservation at undergraduate courses and a conservator at the British Library and the monastery of St John Theologian, Patmos (GR). He has collaborated as a freelance conservator and researcher in international manuscript conservation, training and research projects in Egypt, Iraq, Ethiopia, Greece, UK, Turkey and has lectured widely on the topics of manuscript conservation and on historic bookbindings.

© private



© Nikolas Sarris

Together, F. Najeeb and Nikolas Sarris set out to the Nineveh Plains in order to look for further documents. One of their destinations was the Nakortaya monastery from the 4<sup>th</sup> century in Karakosh. Apparently, there had been more than 350 Syrian manuscripts.

"My visit to the Centre Numérique des Manuscrits Orientaux (CNMO) and Father Najeeb Michael in Erbil had three declared aims: Firstly, to assess the state of conservation of the manuscripts and printed books accumulated and preserved at the library formed at the CNMO over the recent years and to offer suggestions for the improvement of the preservation of the collection. Secondly, to deliver training in basic preservation methods for manuscripts and finally, to provide training to the staff of the CNMO on the book scanner donated by Qidenus. This initiative was especially important in view of the ongoing destruction of cultural heritage by ISIS and F. Najeeb's relentless efforts to safe-guard the Chris-

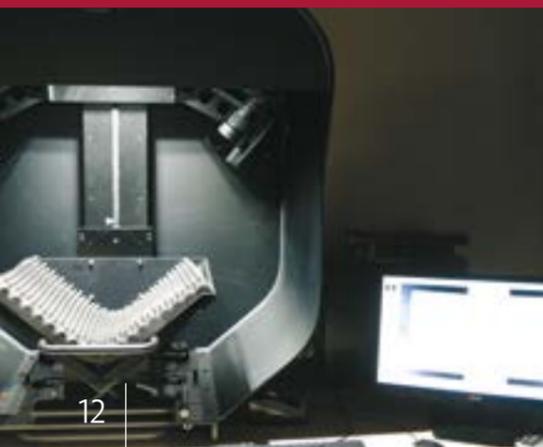
tian manuscript culture of Northern Iraq, which runs back as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century in the Nineveh Valley. F. Najeeb's story on rescuing manuscripts from destruction by fleeing first Mosul and then Qaraqosh, setting up a new base in a two-storey house in Erbil to continue his work and witnessing the conditions with my own eyes is far from anything I expected. The staff of the CNMO, mostly young refugees, had previously received some basic book preservation training by the non-governmental organization "Un Ponte Per" (UPP) but due to lack of funding this supportive project has long been stopped. Only being able to stay in Erbil for a week, I focused on improving the staff's current working methods providing better

alternatives to what was being implemented based on their realistic abilities to carry out the necessary first-aid tasks. During my visit I experienced the process of digitizing an extremely fragile Syrian manuscript, possibly from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which the staff was struggling not to lose fragments from; a near to impossible effort with their limited training and sense of urgency in completing digitization rapidly. This example and the phenomenon of the CNMO receiving and gathering more random material regularly shows how urgently proper training, appropriate tools and material for preservation as well as adequate storage space is needed to rescue this crucial historical heritage.

Towards the end of my visit, a unique opportunity arose: the villages around Qaraqosh were just freed from ISIS fighters, which gave F. Najeeb and me the chance to seek out some of the churches and monasteries of the area and search for any books and manuscripts that might have survived the occupation. On our way, refugee camps dominated the valley of Nineveh, while other parts of it were still covered with land mines. It is beyond any possible description to see a town of 55.000 inhabitants utterly burnt and destroyed. It was a shredded town, the signs of the devastation, the exploded car bombs, the remnants of the battles and the signs of the presence of ISIS where everywhere. All of the churches in the

town, modern or more ancient, had been burned down, but because churches offered a big space, most of them were used as small war factories, to prepare bombs, weapons, rockets, car bombs, in the service of the ISIS war machine. Our findings were shocking to say the least: It was devastating to see fragments of destroyed ancient manuscripts scattered around a monastery's courtyard, soaked from the rain in dire straits to be rescued. This experience made it even clearer on how important it is to support F. Najeeb's dedicated work with every mean possible and thankfully "Conservators without Frontiers" together with ICARUS is bringing about a support network to make a real difference."

Picture series: Nikolas Sarris supported Pater Najeeb and his team to digitize manuscripts and evaluate their status quo. A saddening sight: Tracks of destructions and only remainders of important manuscripts. What could be saved was carried to the CNMO for conservation.



© Nikolas Sarris

© F. Najeeb

© Nikolas Sarris

© F. Najeeb

# "Memory is always a construction"

In his 90-minute documentary film, Bernhard Hetzenauer has captured the life of Vera Kohn, a Jewish woman who emigrated from Prague (CZ) to Quito (EC). The work on the oral history portrait of the 98-year old psychotherapist and Zen master took four years. In its course, he collected archival material in Ecuador and the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In an interview with "insights", Hetzenauer talks about how the filmmaker's perspective can complement that of the historian.

**Your research for the film "Und in der Mitte der Erde war Feuer" ("And in the middle of the earth there was fire") took you to several countries. What kind of archival material did you use to "document" the almost 100 years of Vera Kohn's life?**

I viewed quite a lot of material for the film. In the end I decided that I would only use the material Vera Kohn filmed herself in the 1930s and 1940s on 16mm and Super 8, as well

as some private photographs. My research took me to the Czech Film Archive, the Rolf Blomberg Archive in Quito and the Ecuadorian Film Library. I also got in touch with many foundations and institutions in search of archival photographs for Prague in the 1910s. When I had finished the film, I also went to the Federal Archives in Berlin where I actually found a file on my grandfather ...

**One of the characteristics of the film certainly is the fact that you have included Vera Kohn's own archival material. What kind of material did you use in particular?**

I need to do a little explaining to answer this question. Vera Kohn was born in Prague in 1912. Being Jewish, she emigrated to Ecuador in 1939 together with her husband. She soon found herself to be the family "photographer". Her interest was not limited to personal motives, she also covered anthropological themes such as the life of the indigenous population of the time. In 1939 she started to shoot several 16mm colour film rolls. In those days they had to be sent to Rochester, New York for development. I was told that this was the first material in colour to be shot in Ecuador. At first it was not easy at all to view the films. Fortunately, the Film Library in Quito had a 16mm projector. There I filmed the material with my HDV video camera as they didn't have any professional digitisation equipment in 2010.

**Together, you and Vera Kohn also worked through a part of her history. How important was it for you to hold material from the past in your hands? You also told me that you have been to Berlin in your research of your family's history.**

Yes, I went to the Federal Archives for the file on my grandfather who was a soldier of the Waffen-SS. It was very important for me to learn what he had done during World War II. I wanted to know where he had been deployed to, what rank or

Only when you can find a playful handling of historical material, you can create interesting films, says the documentary filmer Bernhard Hetzenauer.

You can find the full interview with Bernhard Hetzenauer on our European Archival Blog:

Link:  
[coop.hypotheses.org](http://coop.hypotheses.org)



functions he had had, etc. When I found out that he had never been substantially promoted after his conscription, I was somehow relieved. But I also saw several CVs that were handwritten by my grandfather. The way they were written – the choice of words, the mistakes – shattered me. All of a sudden I got to know this young man and his parents who lived under simple conditions in Niederranna in Upper Austria. In one of his CVs, my 16-year old grandfather wrote: "Went to the Parteitag at Nuremberg. Was the most important event so far for me. Could see the Führer from very close. Not all of my colleagues were that lucky. (...)" Dealing with such material makes these things much more real. It is also possible to take a position when you are dealing with something concrete.

"Film is not science but language. It carves out emotional and dramatical meanings."

**In your film you also use photographs from Vera Kohn's collection, and you have shot in front of her Prague apartment. You present them in the form of a loose historical chronology. How do you position yourself as a documentary filmmaker as compared to a historian or archivist?**

Historians and archivists will always try to reconstruct events in an objective and chronological sequence. I think that the task of a documentary filmmaker is wider than that. It can get really exciting once you start to interpret archival material in a new way instead of only depicting it according to the plain facts. With regard to cutting documentary films it is for example standard practice to take pictures out of their strict – historical – context

and place them in another position within the narrative. This is done to put the focus on the actual "narrative truth".

**Historians will now probably cry out loud and immediately doubt the correctness of the results...**

That's possible. But film is not science but a language, namely a different language than science is. Film is always a construction, just like memory. Strictly speaking, a documentary film would be a film that is shot in a single take, without any cuts. But even then the starting point, the composition, the mis-encène, etc. play a decisive role for the so-called "reality". A film usually also aims at carving out emotional and dramatical meanings. Ideally this brings viewers "closer" to the essence of an event or a history. Therefore the "result" is not wrong, it simply works on a different level. ■

Bernhard Hetzenauer, born in Innsbruck, is a filmmaker, author and curator. Amongst others he studied at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna (AT) and the University of Fine Arts of Hamburg (DE) under Wim Wenders. In 2013 he produced the film "Und in der Mitte der Erde war Feuer" which has received several awards. It is a portrait of Vera Kohn, a Jewish woman born in Prague in 1912 who emigrated to Quito (EC) in 1939. In this documentary film the filmmaker is himself the second protagonist who is trying to understand his grandfather's past in the SS with Vera Kohn's help. After her flight to Ecuador and a psychological breakdown in the 1960s that brought her back to Europe for a stay at the therapy centre of Zen Buddhist Karlfried Graf Dürckheim, Kohn studied psychology in Quito (EC). In the end, the film project is a therapeutic process for both protagonists.

The film **Und in der Mitte der Erde war Feuer** (A/D/EC 2013, 78 min.) is available on I-Tunes and Amazon.

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Dagmar Weidinger is art historian and works as freelance journalist and University lecturer in Vienna (AT).

© Markus Ladstätter

Over 5,000 images were gathered during the Finnish "Bring your history" days. These two gentlemen pictured in an image from the topotheque Ikaalinen even made it to be official topotheque roll-up poster boys!



© Pekka Nygård's Home Archives, Ikaalinen (CC BY)

## Topotheques in Finland: Unveiling historical gems

Rare field hospital photographs, notes made at a prisoner-of-war camp, thousands of old images of ordinary neighborhoods – documents that have emerged after decades from someone's drawers. To put it in nutshell, this is what "Bring your history" days in Finland have unveiled.

It was in 2015 that the Kansallisarkisto (Finnish National Archives) introduced the first online archives for private documents, the topotheques. At that time, there had been an ongoing discussion in Finland about the problems of publishing private collections. The end of the story was: The core problem was the lack of suitable digitizing equipment. Therefore, the Archives acquired four scanners to be offered to the public to be freely used for digitizing private archival collections. Immediately, four towns picked up on the idea. In Ikaalinen, Mikkeli, Piikkiö and Mäntsälä, "Bring your history" days were organized in order to set up their individual topotheques.

### Creative commons licenses most popular

Right from the beginning the main goal was to allow people to use creative commons licenses for their material. Using a CC license means that

a document cannot only be seen, but also be used by the online visitors of the topotheque! It soon turned out that people were eager to choose CC licenses for rather old material, whereas rather young material often received the restricted use license. Local heritage organizations have always been very active in Finland. It was therefore only natural to inform them about this opportunity to arrange "Bring your history" days. The active members of these organizations have a solid local knowledge and the abilities to spread the word about the events beforehand.

### How to make "Bring your history" days work

The above-mentioned towns are all situated close to Helsinki. It was thus possible to make everything happen during a single day, driving there with all the scanners as well as the necessary material and carrying out a digitization process.

At this kind of event, the division of tasks between the local hosts and the Archives worked really well. Shortly before opening the event, the hosts learned about the significance of different license categories in practice as well as which information was crucial for the owners of the private archival material to know in this regard.

### Historical surprises on the way

The digitized material mostly consisted of photos, but there were also some official documents relating to farm ownerships or wills. In Mikkeli, we made a particularly noteworthy finding, the notes of a prisoner-of-war camp. Many tiny pages full of writing that had been kept in a small container made of birch bark. After having hosted four "Bring your history" days in almost all parts of Southern Finland, it seems that the introduction of the topotheques in Finland has been received very well – to say the least. They clearly fill the gap between people's private archives and their public presentation online.

Links:

[arkisto.fi](http://arkisto.fi)

[topotheque.eu](http://topotheque.eu)

[coop-project.eu](http://coop-project.eu)

info

A topotheque is a platform for the public to save the local historical knowledge which is kept in private collections. "Bring your history" days are part of the EU-funded project "co:op" and inform the general public about the benefits of a topotheque as an invitation to set up their own.

info

Markku Mäenpää graduated from the University of Jyväskylä in 1984 majoring in Finnish History and minoring in General and Economic History and Philosophy. He has been working at the National Archives for over 30 years.



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## Advanced digitisation: Bringing light into the dark

Digitised archival material has always been limited by its two-dimensionality. Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), a new form of photography and lighting, goes beyond that and brings archival material "to life" on the computer.

The importance of digitisation in the world of archives is manifold. It can be used to preserve collections and also to present particularly interesting pieces to a wider public. The main benefit undoubtedly lies in the fact that researchers from all over the world gain access to material that is relevant to them, which is particularly important for trans-national collections.

### Problems of materiality

Digitisation is reaching its limits when it comes to the materiality of archival material. This is a serious disadvantage which is mainly encountered in the case of content that is difficult to read, such as coins or seals. Since a digital reproduction is a two-dimensional image, it is not easy to identify reliefs, defects or stampings. In these situations research is facing a problem.

Is it possible to solve such problems already during digitisation? One of the possibilities is the use of Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI). With RTI, an object is lit from various angles and photographed with a camera that is mounted in a fixed position. A series of images is captured with differing contrasts. Freeware is then processing a final image that can be displayed in a Viewer.

### Revealing details through RTI images

The technical requirements for such a semi-3D representation are altogether manageable. A camera of high quality is the most expensive item of the equipment as the quality of the camera largely determines the quality of the finalised RTI image. In addition, several sources of lighting and a control unit are required. The archival material is lit from various angles which results in individual

shadowing. A single image is taken for each light source. The control unit then synchronises the lighting control and the camera's shutter release. Taking a series of images is therefore done in a short period of time and works smoothly. The effort required to construct an RTI imaging device in a DIY manner is reasonable, as several projects have already shown. This technology is therefore a worthwhile consideration for larger institutions. The advantages of RTI-based images are obvious: They are much more than just high-resolution digital reproductions. In fact, they make details visible that could otherwise only be viewed if someone saw the real object at the archive. In a certain way the archival material can be experienced, making it much more intensive than simple viewing.

Link:

Cologne Center for eHumanities (CCeH)

[cceh.uni-koeln.de](http://cceh.uni-koeln.de)

info



This before (left) and after (right) comparison of a seal, stemming from the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and showing the Mother of God with Child Jesus on her left arm (Hodegettia type), makes the advantages of RTI technology obvious. Seal SB-17, Collection: R. Feind, Cologne (DE)

Stephan Makowski completed an IT-training and studied "Medieval and Renaissance Studies" at the University of Bochum (DE). He is currently working at the Cologne Center for eHumanities of the University of Cologne (DE) and is in charge of the development of Monasterium there.



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# Palaeography made easy – on the Internet

In 2014, the National Archives in Krakow (Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie) launched an interactive portal on palaeography, the study of ancient and historical handwriting. The website wants to achieve one main goal: Turning the deciphering of historical handwritings into a pleasurable experience.

The interactive portal "Dawne pismo" introduces the history of handwriting playfully to its users.

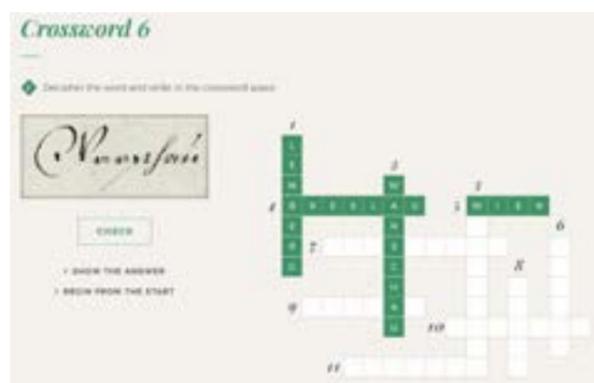
Learning old handwritings in a playful manner – How can this be done? A Polish archival portal shows the way: It is providing self-study material that motivates users to learn in a creative and easy way. The portal "Dawne pismo" – "Old Writing" in English – aims at people who are interested in the history of handwriting as well as those who want to prepare for working with archival material.

### Learning at your own pace

The website is made up of three main parts that comprise theoretical as well as practical aspects. They are accessed via the main menu entries Writing in the Past, Practical Exercises and Word Games and Fun. The theoretical part Writing in the Past contains short articles with many examples on the history and the evolution of handwriting, the writing materials and the organisation of writing in the past. The focus of the website is however on interactive tasks and (word) games that are helping users to read and study historical texts. For that purpose, archival material from different eras has been prepared in Polish, Latin and German. The tasks and games are grouped by their level of difficulty to let users learn at their own pace.

into an entry field. Additional resources for the text in question are also provided. The software then points out the mistakes and shows the correction. It is easy to take a slow approach to learning old handwritings: The exercise material ranges from crosswords to puzzles and other online games animating the users to decipher tricky texts. The portal also lets you enter your own text and turns it into an old handwriting. Learning in a playful manner is fun! The material that is used on the website originates from the collections of the National Archives in Krakow. The website's popularity goes far beyond the borders of Poland. New tasks and games are provided to meet the growing interest in the portal. In 2016, an important enhancement was added: The website is now also available in English and German, meeting state-of-the-art, user-friendly web standards.

Transcribe a historical document on your screen: supporting tools and direct feedback helps out. Or, try to decipher handwriting with help of a crossword puzzle.



Aldona Warzecha and Anna Sokół have studied History and Archival Sciences at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. They are working at the National Archives of Krakow and are the authors of the project "Dawne pismo". They are also responsible for the administration and the further development of the website.

### Learning in a playful manner is fun

In some of the tasks, users can for example have a try at deciphering a text. The transcription is written

Gotten curious to play with words yourself on the portal "Dawne pismo"?

Link:  
[dawnepismo.ank.gov.pl](http://dawnepismo.ank.gov.pl)



# Dashing down the bold track – "Monasterium Italy"

In-situ University courses let you experience history in the here and now. Short breaks and heaps of fun are part of it.

Eight years ago, a small and courageous research group came together at the Department of Humanities of the University of Naples Federico II (Università degli studi di Napoli Federico II). Their project "Monasterium Italy" is a showcase for the free and inspiring dissemination of knowledge through democratic access to European historical documents.



© Angelo Odore

Antonella Ambrosio, Rosalba Di Meglio, Maria Rosaria Falcone, Vera Schwarz-Ricci and Giovanni Vitolo are the names behind "Monasterium Italy". This title reflects the Department's history: Ever since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Department's historical research approach has focused on monasteries as a crucial aspect to understanding medieval Italian society. "Monasterium Italy" has developed a special research interest in the history of Italian monasteries and documents kept in monastery archives. As the goals of their project were closely linked to those of the online portal "Monasterium Italy" started in 2008, the obvious thing to do was to join forces.

portal (MOM-CA), and has developed innovative new educational activities.

### A leap into the international community

"Monasterium Italy" has ventured from research activities that were originally centered on Italy to making their visions and study results known across Europe. In conjunction with EU-funded projects such as "co:op – community as opportunity", the group members have been organizing lectures, seminars and workshops throughout many European countries. On their way, they have met with extraordinary experts, students, researchers and archivists. It has been equally impressive to meet with exceptional individuals from local communities who have set an example for a true European spirit that is aware of the importance of a shared common history and the preservation of historical documents. With the support of the service tools of a topotheque, Italian communities can now easily share and preserve their history.

### Europe's virtual charters archive

"Monasterium Italy" offers a wide range of research functionalities, such as the indexing of charters or using the provided information in educational environments. The group of researchers continually adds to the portal's content by providing digitized archival documents from monasteries. The originals are often difficult to access, in danger of decomposition or scattered across multiple preservation sites. "Monasterium Italy" has also been engaged in international interdisciplinary research teams, will soon publish the very first digital edition of medieval documents with the software behind the Monasterium

### Inspiring enthusiasm beyond the ivory tower

The members of "Monasterium Italy" have grown from being primarily institutional researchers into becoming promoters of real-life traces of history, of discovering monastic archaeological sites fallen into oblivion and the history of dialects, customs and col-

lective identities visible in today's communities. Within the ICARUS network, "Monasterium Italy" will continue to enhance academic research conventions: furthering the knowledge exchange between the general public and academic experts will continue to inspire enthusiasm and progress!

For more information on the topotheques, see the article from the Finnish National Archives on page 12.

To learn more about the activities of "Monasterium Italy", we recommend:

- Links:  
[coop-unina.org](http://coop-unina.org)  
[recruitdigitaldoc.org](http://recruitdigitaldoc.org)  
[monasterium.net](http://monasterium.net)

Antonella Ambrosio teaches Palaeography and Diplomats at the University of Naples Federico II and is co:op project manager for the Department of Humanities. She is also vice-president of ICARUS coordinating didactic activities.



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# The family researcher

“You just look like your Grandma!” A rather doubtful compliment to be paid to a teenager. Fortunately it referred to Grandma as she had looked in her younger years! I used to be annoyed by remarks like this. Today I am happy to know where my facial features are coming from. Personal experiences from four years of intensive family research.

For as long as I can think back, it has always been exciting to look at old pictures of my great-grandparents and find similarities in them. My true passion for family research – and with it inseparably the research into the history of individual houses and regions – was however aroused by stories about the past which my maternal grandmother told me. Raised about 100 years ago at a mountain farm at Kreisbachtal near Lower Austria’s Wilhelmsburg, she had a lot to tell about the farmers’ hard lives, the austerity faced by a family of twelve children, the simple food, the hard work on the fields without the aid of agricultural machines, but also about the joy and happiness we often seem to have lost today.

**Under the spell of the family tree**  
With many Austrian church registers being online in 2012, I took the small family tree that my mother had tediously assembled many years before by visiting the relevant parishes, and naively got started without any structure to my work. What a mistake. I fiercely browsed the registers of Wilhelmsburg and the surrounding parishes and euphorically entered everything that was remotely associated with the names I was looking for – no matter how distant a relation was. Of course I had no time to fill in annotations to the individual records. A few weeks later I had come up with a wonderful family tree with several hundred people in it! Unfortunately it was for the brother of my third

great-grandfather (great-great-great-grandfather). My results were a terrible mess. The reasons were the uncoordinated approach I had taken as well as the fact that some first names occurred very frequently. I had the impression that my family only consisted of people named Johann, Anton, Anna and Maria. Nevertheless: Finding out how things are NOT done is also an important experience! Soon, my wild mix of data turned into a structured and well-developed collection. I took a seminar given by the professional family researcher Felix Gundacker, and what I learned there made things much easier. Furthermore I found out about a regular meeting of family researchers of my region, the Mostviertel, where I got many valuable tips.

**Finding friends through family research**  
I came up with the idea of writing a family book about each of my great-grandparents. These books would be compilations of my research results derived from church registers as well as archives (inventory reports, land records, court records, chronicles, etc.) and presented in a way that was useful to members of my family who were also curious about this subject. My idea was received with much more interest than I had hoped for. It also resulted in a new friendship: I sent the book about my great-grandfather

Heinrich Kühmayer from Klein-Mariazell to the Gschwendnerhof, the farm where he had been born. It has been in the possession of the Kühmayer family since 1719 and has always been passed on from father to son. I did not know the current owners. In a cover letter I explained that I would find it nice if a copy of the book was at the place where the family history had actually happened. I received a warm letter and an invitation in return. Up until today, the writer of the letter Elisabeth Kühmayer and I are in close contact and exchange old pictures. So far I have been to the farm several times, admiring the treasures of many generations that are kept by Elisabeth with much respect and love. There are even coffee mugs bearing the names of my great-great-grandparents! What had originally been an experiment has grown and developed, and has even led to a commission. When I work on a book I always concentrate on the immediate families of my direct ancestors – their parents and siblings. It is fascinating to find out what happened to the brothers and sisters and where they moved to. Their children are dealt with briefly if something really remarkable or unusual comes up. As the data compiled from church registers is a rather dry subject, I also add archival material: Pictures as far as they are available, old views and notes taken from oral reports (always in a

Finding out how things are NOT done is also an important experience!



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At the big family celebration, the numerous relatives were quite surprised about the 15 metre long family tree (right) and the family books that Elisabeth Kultscher produced carefully (left).

Link:  
Regular meetings of genealogists from the Lower Austrian Mostviertel region  
[familienforscher.at](http://familienforscher.at)  
  
In case of questions, Mrs. Kultscher is happy to be contacted at  
[elisabeth@kultscher.com](mailto:elisabeth@kultscher.com)

quoted manner, as one never knows if a story really happened the way it was told), information on the house, the place, the professions.  
  
**The family archive in a topotheque**  
My family database currently holds 5,532 “identified” individuals. I try to make the life of these people more concrete with the help of pictures. To this aim, I am currently working on the setup of a family archive via a private-que, that is to say a topotheque for

private users. Last year in October I invited close as well as distant relatives to a family reunion with the idea of collecting material. I prepared quite a few things: A pedigree chart, a few family books (home-printed with the current research status but not yet finalised) as well as what would turn out to be the absolute favourite – a family tree with a length of 15 metres! Subsequently, I received many pictures and obituaries which I have now incorporated into my collection.

Elisabeth Kultscher was born in 1976 and is a passionate family and regional researcher as well as a dedicated member of the Mostviertler Genealogenverein and an active contributor to GenTeam.



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TOP REFERENCES

## THE BEST YOU SCAN GET.

ImageWare is your partner for total solutions for the digitization and organization of documents. Established in 2003 by experienced professionals, we have already established as a modern and innovative industry leader in the field of high-tech document processing.

In ImageWare's portfolio you will find, in addition to the appropriate hardware and software, the comprehensive services for the professional handling of projects of all sizes. Ask us when it comes to scanning, digitizing or the organization of any digital documents.



Especially captivating is the "Featured Document" of the Archives Portal Europe: This online gallery gives archives the opportunity to showcase their gems. Here you can see the map of the **Belgrade Zoo** from 1939. Signature: Lf Ante Tomić

## Archives Portal Europe – European history in a single digital space

In 2009, archivists from all over Europe launched an ambitious project: the harmonisation and digitisation of all European archives in one single repository and available online. That was the birth of the Archives Portal Europe.

Today the Archives Portal Europe, or APE, is the largest online repository for archive catalogues in the world. It currently holds 253 million descriptive units and is constantly being expanded.

One of the most impressive features of the Archives Portal Europe is the fact that it allows for multilingual research. Following the establishment of the Archives Portal Europe, the national archives of the participating countries also established an Archive Portal Europe Foundation (APEF) in the year 2015. The foundation is based in the Netherlands and manages the budget as well as the responsibilities concerning the ongoing development of the Portal. The philosophy of the Archives Portal Europe Foundation is to guarantee free and constant online access to researchers, and to preserve the historical heritage of Europe while maintaining the cultural differences of the European space.

### A growing collection of European history

The Archives Portal Europe Foundation is constantly seeking new content providers, in other words institutions that are willing to invest time in making their holdings available for research through the online portal. At the beginning of 2017 the Archives Portal Europe held the heritage of hundreds of institutions

from more than 30 countries. The full list of holdings is available on the Archives Portal Europe website. The records range from the largest national archives to the smallest towns, parishes, universities, business archives – just to mention a few categories. This project is not limited to European content providers, it welcomes any collection related to European history from anywhere in the world.

### Technical standards for international team work

The Archives Portal Europe is based on a set of international archival and technical standards (available on the portal's wiki project) that have been defined specifically for the platform and are highly customisable according to the requirements of the participating archives. The conversion of data into the common profiles defined for the Archives Portal Europe is prepared in close



© Historical Archives of Belgrade (Istorijski arhiv Beograda)

cooperation between the individual institutions and the technical team. The content providers retain all results of the data conversion and can manage the publication workflow.

### Ready to join in?

The Archives Portal Europe holds a lot of potential – not only for participating institutions, but even more so for the public recognition of European history. Take a look at the Archives Portal Europe or the Foundation's history, and feel free to get in touch via email! With every institution that participates in this project, the digital landscape of the European archives will grow and diversify, making content available to scholars, researchers and anyone willing to discover European history. Even more importantly, the heritage and culture of more and more European archival institutions will be preserved and passed on to the new digital generations.

More about the Archives Portal Europe and the participating institutions available online:

Links:

[archivesportaleurope.net](http://archivesportaleurope.net)

[archivesportaleuropefoundation.eu](http://archivesportaleuropefoundation.eu)

[wiki.archivesportaleurope.net](http://wiki.archivesportaleurope.net)

**Marta Musso** is an archivist and researcher. She completed a PhD in economic history at the University of Cambridge. After working for several archives in Europe she took the position of the PR & Communication Officer for the Archives Portal Europe Foundation.



Dear readers!

For the **fifth** issue of insights we have again compiled a few press comments on **ICARUS**.

We would also like to invite you to share your feedback with us – the "press comments and letters to the editor"-section is your space!

### Childhood memories and exhibition objects

"Topotheque manager Josef Rögner and his team work as volunteers at the town museum of Großengersdorf in the Weinviertel region of Lower Austria. They scan photos of the town's history – objects and documents – in order to continuously expand the topotheque of Großengersdorf. They went online in January and Großengersdorf became the 100<sup>th</sup> topotheque of Austria. The topotheque is an online archive, making historical material kept in pri-

ivate hands accessible to the public. Everyone is invited to contribute. The topotheque of Großengersdorf is a place where one can discover childhood memories or historical events such as the first car in Großengersdorf that was used to drive to the market together. The objects of the town's museum are now also visible online. Everyone interested is now able to view historical baking troughs, workshops of craftsmen – from upholsterers to blacksmiths – or harvest ma-

chines which are kept at the museum. The founder of the topotheque is the collector Alexander Schatek who takes delightful stock on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> topotheque: With the eager work of the volunteers from the various communities, a highly successful project has developed which today gives fascinating insight into private archives. Citizens can embark onto a journey into the past of their community and people from out of town can discover plenty."

ORF NÖ

08 February 2017  
Sabine Daxberger

The ORF Lower Austria visiting the 100th topotheque in Großengersdorf. There is plenty to discover – from the first car of the town in 1928 and the grape harvest in 1943 up to hundreds of agricultural objects of the town's museum which were also integrated in the topotheque.



© ORF

Dear ICARUS team!

Magazines with interesting information are comfortable to read in print. When wanting to access this information at a later point, the pile of magazines is often overwhelming or only partially existent. Browsing them is a very tedious task. For this reason my question or request: Would it be possible to download your magazine as PDF (in a secured members space), for example? Neatly organized in a directory and accessible for full-text search, valuable information is much quicker to find.

Best wishes,  
Franz Illetschko

Dear Mr. Illetschko,

Thank you for your mail and your idea to make our magazine also available digitally. We really like your suggestion and have therefore decided to make the preceding issue of our magazine accessible online as of now.

Likewise, we have decided to make all of the hitherto published magazines available as searchable PDFs as well. The most recent issue with brand-new and up-to-date topics on archives and people in the digital age will remain reserved exclusively to the ICARUS members and the ICARUS4all community. We hope to meet the wishes of the community

in this way and are looking forward to future input on how to further develop **insights** together.

Kind regards  
Kerstin Muff  
Editor-in-Chief **insights**

On the ICARUS homepage you can now view the preceding issues of **insights**.

Link:  
[icar-us.eu/insights-archiv](http://icar-us.eu/insights-archiv)

We are looking forward to your letters to: [editor@icar-us.at](mailto:editor@icar-us.at)

## Press comments and letters to the editor



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