

insights

ISSN 2413-4600

2 / 2017

Archives and people in the digital age

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Order "under construction"

editorial



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Dear readers,

Have you ever been going against the tide? If you have already done so, you will know that it takes a lot of courage and curiosity. People have always been doing things “differently” – today as well as in earlier days. Archives are keeping proof of such rebellion, resistance and suppression. Join **Priit Pirsko**, the director of the **Estonian National Archives**, on a voyage into the past and find out why a photograph of Joseph Stalin landed Linda Selks in prison for ten years. Similar fates are to be found in the old files of the **Committee for State Security (KGB)** which are kept at the Estonian National Archives and can be accessed online.

The age of digitisation nevertheless calls for the preservation of original documents. Paper is prone to decomposition. A project carried out by the Bavarian State Archives in Würzburg shows how this process can be slowed down and what role de-acidification is playing in it. The archives are keeping about 25,000 files of the Secret State Police that are witness to the catastrophic interrelationship between terror and bureaucracy. “Jardin d’Isabelle”, one of the “Secret Gardens” of the Dutch city of Sitard, bears witness to yet another unfortunate story of a very different kind. It tells a **love story** that is also a part of the city’s history.

Usually there is broad consensus on the objects a society deems worthy of preservation. But people who call themselves “**hoarders**” live by different rules. **Psychoanalyst Elisabeth Vykoukal** is giving insights into what they have in common with archivists and where the two groups differ. They share a sensitivity towards the world of objects – a capacity which is often handed down from grandparents to their grandchildren. These talks from childhood have sparked an **interest in genealogy** in many of our ICARUS4all members. Archivists often place great detail on following the traces of their ancestors. Many members of the ICARUS4all community are also diligent archivists. These family researchers follow every lead to discover their ancestors. Digitisation has made their work much easier, and could only be achieved through a combination of curiosity and courage for openness. **Herbert Wurster, the director of the Archives of the Diocese of Passau**, has been one of the pioneers of digitisation. He saw the necessity of digitisation for the benefit of the users. Change is often initiated by them, as an example from Romania is showing, where a “**Virtual Genealogical Archive**” recently went online. We will also introduce you to the **Centre for Information Modelling of the University of Graz** and tell you more about the development of the Monasterium portal.

The archival landscape is on the move. On the occasion of the **15th anniversary of Monasterium**, Europe’s largest virtual charters archive, ICARUS is taking a proud look back. Because one thing is guaranteed: Courage and curiosity are also paving the way into the future.

Enjoy reading!

Sonja Burger
Management ICARUS4all

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Publishing and distribution: ICARUS – International Centre for Archival Research, Erdberger Lände 6/7, 1030 Vienna · Place of publishing: Vienna · Advertisement sales: Dagmar Weidinger · Art direction: ICARUS | Kerstin Muff · Printing: SAXOPRINT GmbH, Dresden · Editor-in-chief: Kerstin Muff · Translations: Gabi Rudinger · Cover photo © Benno Aavasalu · Cover photo retouch: gs-designlab e. U. · Re-orders: editor@icar-us.eu

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

ISSN 2413-4600

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“I am a technology freak”

Herbert Wurster, the director of the Archives of the Diocese of Passau (DE), has been a digital pioneer early on. For more than 30 years he has been making a case for the accessibility of sources at his archives. Retirement is yet not an issue for the 68-year-old.

What do you regard as the greatest achievement of your time in Passau?

Definitely the centralisation and incorporation of (almost) all parish archives into the Archives of the Diocese – which happened just in time before the parish administrations underwent important changes. Ever since the 1990s, many parishes of the Diocese of Passau have been merged because there has been such a shortage of priests. In the course of this transformation some rectories that were no longer needed were either leased or sold. Fortunately we have been able to prevent the destruction of our region’s cultural heritage.

When and why did you get interested in digitisation?

Here in Passau, the effort involved in the use of church registers had become overwhelming. There were so many requests, in particular from

genealogists, that we were hardly able to answer all of them. It was therefore an absolute necessity that we began to digitise the church registers. We started in the year 2000, and today we have digitised all church registers before the year 1900. They are available in our picture database as well as online.

Why didn't you become a “lock-up archivist”, as you like to call it?

When I was a student at the University of Regensburg, the University library introduced microfiches. This made quite an impression on me. Back in the 1970s, microfiches were a revolutionary technology! Students like myself would save an enormous amount of time. We no longer had to browse all catalogues, since one fiche held 50 pages. This must have been the first

... users from Austria, Germany, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia, the U.S. and Canada have accessed Monasterium since its founding 15 years ago.

time that I was thinking: You have to keep up with technology. But at the same time I have always been cautious. It’s certainly true that I am a technology freak, but I always make sure that the technology fits our system. Archives must be open places in order to keep our Christian-occidental cultural heritage alive.

Herbert Wurster in his element: He passionately and carefully makes sure that his archives stay up-to-date in the digital age.



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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

know-how

Dear ICARUS4all team, I have been a member of ICARUS4all for some time. As an active user of social media I have been looking for information on the community on the Internet. Unfortunately I haven’t found anything on either Facebook or Twitter. The new Matricula website doesn’t have anything about the ICARUS4all community, either. I’d therefore like to ask you where I can actively find information and join discussions. Maybe I am simply looking in the wrong places. Many thanks for your answer!

Kind regards
Anton Paulitsch

RUS4all. For the sake of simplicity, our Facebook page and our Twitter account go by the name “ICARUS”. They list all interesting news from the world of archives along with announcements of our activities. We also have several YouTube channels documenting individual events. On our website, you can filter the events of the general calendar by the category “ICARUS4all”. As far as Matricula is concerned, the online portal is strictly focused on providing content in the form of genealogical data for the purpose of research. Communication with and among each other is taking place via the networks of our social media channels. I hope that this information has helped to answer your question.

Cheerio,
Kerstin Muff
Editor-in-chief “insights”



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Kerstin Muff works as a EU project manager at ICARUS and cooperates closely with Sonja Burger (management ICARUS4all).

Links:

facebook.com/icarus.archiv

twitter.com/icaruseu

YouTube: goo.gl/yemKY6

by the way

10x11?

While the wheels of microfilm devices hardly need to be rolled any more in our age of digitisation, there is one thing that definitely goes on rolling at ICARUS: It’s the football.

Ever since the year 2007, the year ICARUS was founded, playing football has been a mandatory item on the programme of every ICARUS meeting. The rules are simple: The match is always held between a team of the event’s host and a team of the rest of the (ICARUS) world – in a sports hall, on a lawn or on a real football field, in teams of 5:5 or 11:11. In the end, the ICARUS team is usually invincible, even though many hosting teams have tried their luck. The importance of the result is yet a matter to be discussed. But one thing is for sure: The team spirit of the ICARUS team, which has newcomer as well as experienced players, cannot be topped. Archives’ directors and university professors alike struggle for every ball (as well as their breaths) in their ICARUS shirts and short trousers.

Some of the highlights of these matches that have been taking place between Copenhagen (DK) and Zagreb (HR), Dublin (IE) and Vienna (AT) were the sports grounds of the Archdiocese of Poznań (PL), the University stadium with its floodlights in Marburg (2011), Germany, or the Ferencváros Sports Centre in Budapest (HU) in the year 2016.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary, the event this autumn is held at no lesser place than Madrid (ES), home of the current European football champion. An appropriate place for ICARUS to continue on its champion path in many areas.

We are looking forward to many more ICARUS football matches in the future!



© Andrea Siegl

curiosity

The Secret Gardens of Sittard

Sittard is an old city in the province of Limburg (NL) bordering Belgium and Germany. Right in the city centre, 24 public (!) gardens invite to spend time. Together, they tell the history of the city, stories of life and death, joy and sorrow, inspiration and reflection. One of these gardens is called the “Jardin d’Isabelle”: It tells the unlucky love story of the Sittard poet

Charles Beltjens and his muse Isabelle de Borman. Her father forbade their romance, so Charles – disillusioned – escaped to Paris where he became a member of the “Académie Lamartine” and befriended Victor Hugo. Upon his return to Sittard he was mocked as a weird guy, wearing a big Paris “flambard” hat and having strange manners. It is not without a

reason that his best-known poem is called “Le condor captif” (“The captive condor”), as he himself really was a captive in some ways. Today, the “Jardin d’Isabelle” has a statue of Charles Beltjens and – as a symbol of his and every person’s life – a labyrinth that can help people find the right path. His documents are safe in our archives, but his story is also “out there”!

© Katzenbauer



Peer Boselie is the city and region archivist of Sittard-Geleen at the Archief De Domijnen (NL) and a member of the executive board of ICARUS.

More secrets and photos from the secret gardens can be found online:

Links:

geheimtuinen.nl

coop.hypotheses.org



© Peer Boselie



Interview: Priit Pirsko | Rahvusarhiiv

Quite “E”

Estonians had to wait for almost 100 years until their National Archives were finally moved from provisional quarters to a new building. The Archives' director Priit Pirsko is not alone in saying: It was worth waiting for.

by Saskia Blatakes | Photos: Benno Aavasalu

The picture of Joseph Stalin has been tampered with – there is a tack in the tip of his nose. The dictator looks stoically into the distance. The manipulated photograph is held in an envelope that has gone yellow over the years. At the back of the picture, someone has vigorously written down a message. Priit Pirsko is translating the text which is written in Estonian: “I am really sorry, but I do not feel like keeping your generous gift. I am therefore returning it to you.” The archivist is smiling, he does not quite succeed in hiding his pleasure at this act of rebellion that took place during the Soviet occupation of Estonia. He specifically retrieved this object for the visit by “insights”. It paints a tragic love story that

sounds like an epic movie made in Hollywood, but tells a lot about the Estonian past: In July 1945, a young woman named Linda Selks receives a letter without a return address. She opens it and finds nothing but a picture of Stalin. She is convinced that the sender is her lover Endel Koppel who at that time is a soldier of the Soviet Army stationed at the front. Disappointed, she returns the distasteful love letter. But before she does so, she shows her contempt of the communist leader by adding the said tack to his nose. As was to be expected, the occupying power didn't take this as a joke. In August 1945, Linda Selks was arrested for “anti-Soviet” activities and

sentenced to ten years in prison. Here, on the fifth floor of the Estonian National Archives, the old files of the Committee for State Security (KGB) are stored. An essential part of the machinery of oppression which is laid down in great length and detail, as Pirsko explains.

Digital transparency and modern architecture

But the favourite place of the historian who is also teaching archive theory at the University of Tartu is somewhere else, it's on the first floor of the modern building. The reason is simple: “It's public. An archive needs to be open to everyone.” The Estonian National Archives are indeed well on their way to openness by digitising all of

their fonds. One of the oldest object of the collection is a parchment of Erik IV of Denmark that also holds a seal. This document was drawn up in 1240 when the northern part of Estonia belonged to Denmark, and deals with a regulation on church taxes. So far, two percent of all fonds have been digitised. Estonia is a European leader in terms of e-government and digitisation. Voting is possible via smartphone, and with a chip on every identity card Estonians can carry out most matters regarding the authorities while sitting in front of their computers. Discussions on data protection are by far less critical than in many other parts of Europe. The archives are no exception

The Estonian National Archives are indeed well on their way to openness by digitising all of their fonds.



Political disobedience: A tack stuck into the nose of the communist leader Stalin resulted in years of imprisonment.



Pirsko explains the story behind the oldest object of the collection: a parchment with a seal from Erik IV from Denmark.



The archive's building "Noora" offers stunning perspectives and unique architectural features. It skillfully combines art, up-to-date archival standards and enjoyable working conditions.

First name, last name:

Priit Pirsko

My favourite memories from my professional life:

the day we opened the doors of the Noora building to the public – thousands of people just rushed in! Never before has the archive experienced such a crowd ...

When I am alone in the archives ...

I listen to the sound installation.

Coffee or tea?

Coffee in the morning. Tea later in the day.

I am impressed with ...

my highly devoted colleagues.

I am good at ...

learning from mistakes, both my own as well as others'.

My "favourite object" of the archives:

the Peace Treaty between Estonia and Russia from February 2, 1920

Three things I love about archives:

I like the fact that archives are (1) about the past, (2) about us, (3) about the future. Future generations evolve on the basis of those records we decide to safe-guard for them. This way, we are designing the future.

My connection to ICARUS:

I remember the first encounter with the ICARUS team and Thomas Aigner in 2011 in Budapest which continued in 2012 in Cyprus – with an agreement to publish the Estonian charters on the Monasterium portal. Ever since, we've been part of the ICARUS family.

portrait

to this sentiment: "We are quite E", Priit Pirsko proudly says, alluding to e-archiving and the fact that by now 99 percent of all users are visiting the archive virtually.

Which is rather a pity. The building beautifully named "Noora" was opened early this year and is really worth visiting. "Noora" is a neologism and consists of "Noo" (the National Archives are situated on the street "Nooruse" which translates into "youth") and "Ra", an abbreviation of "Rahvusarhiiv", meaning National Archives. The building is as unusual as its name and has been designed by the architects Sander Aas and Illimar Truverk. The dramatically dark exterior with a pattern that reminds of labyrinths is hiding what is behind the walls: Light and openness, fitting in with the archives' philosophy. Cool concrete elements and surfaces made of shiny copper are dominating. Entry into the hall is accompanied by strange, quiet sounds of hissing and pounding. The sound installation of the Estonian artists Jaanus Kivaste and Martin Kikas is changing according to the position of the stars and the movement of the people within the building.

Files in the dormitory

The soundscape is as diverse as the history of Estonia: In the past, the country was governed by Denmark, Sweden, Russia, Poland and Ger-

many. The history of the National Archives of Estonia themselves is just as turbulent: When the country won its independence from Russia in 1920, there was little time to find rooms to store the archival collections left behind by the Baltic Germans who had been the country's upper classes. Quite unceremoniously, the documents were brought to an empty dormitory of the University. A temporary solution that would last for almost one hundred years. Specific plans for a new National Archive had been made in 1939, but those were thwarted by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The country was occupied, private and institutional archives were forbidden. According to Priit Pirsko, this proved to be an advantage to the users of today, as the entire collection with all its genealogical databases and church records was centralised then and is still entirely owned by the state.

Three generations and 97 years later, the National Archives are located at the outskirts of Tartu, and Priit Pirsko smilingly says: "It was worth waiting for." All together construction and moving took ten years.

Noora: Archive, workshops and art in one location

The result is quite impressive: Six floors with a total of 10,708 square metres are holding 43,000 metres of shelving as well as a photo

"It was worth waiting for." All together construction and moving took ten years.

"As archivists we need to explain precisely what we want. Only then the programmers can start their work."

studio, servers – with half a petabyte (500 terabytes) of data – and generously spaced workshops for the conservators. 200 employees are working for the National Archives out of several locations across the country. Their number was much higher when Priit Pirsko first joined the National Archives in the year 2000. Back then he had 350 colleagues. This is one of the consequences of digitisation. Today, the conservation of old maps is one of Noora's priorities. "It is our job to prepare the objects for digitisation", explains Jaan Lehtaru, head of the conservation department. The equipment is brand new, German presses and Japanese paper are

used for the work. This is one of the reasons why the department is very attractive to students from all over Europe. The teams are therefore becoming increasingly international, but also more diverse. Historians are no longer working as a closed community, says Priit Pirsko. Today, Noora's staff also includes many computer scientists. Communication between them and humanities scholars may be the biggest challenge in today's archive management. How does Pirsko address it? "Through talking, talking, and talking. As archivists we need to explain precisely what we want. Before the programmers can start coding, we must talk." After all, it is not totally "E".

From the team's point of view

Liisi Taimre (adviser, marketing manager): "The colleagues of the Rahvusarhiiv are always open to new ideas and approaches. Working with them never gets boring!"

Sven Lepa (archivist): "The move to the new Noora building has given us a substantial publicity boost and even better possibilities to reach a wider audience. It has been such a joy to see a larger public take an interest in the archives."

Birgit Kibal (adviser, public relations): "A superb team with a bunch of fresh and creative activities expands the working areas in the Rahvusarhiiv and makes it more fun at the same time. This might sound odd, but I can confirm it based on 18 years of personal experience."

Name of the institution:

Rahvusarhiiv

Web address:

www.ra.ee

Oldest collection:

the Noble Corporation of Estonia containing the oldest charter from 1240: The Danish King Erik IV repeats his father's order to his vassals in Northern Estonia about the obligation to pay the tithe.

Oddest object / best-known archival item:

too many! Still, the best-known paper-based record is the Peace Treaty between Estonia and Russia from 1920. The oddest objects may easily be two iron sticks to burgle, used as evidence within a court record from the 19th century.

Overall volume of digital copies:

230.000 records or 17,5 million images.

First digital object:

One of the church records from the 17th to the 20th century, digitised between 2001-2002. The first digital collection of the public sector was transferred to our digital archives in 2003 though.

Most loyal visitor of the reading room:

A passionate local history researcher who has read through all the online records and is digging deeper into the content on site.

Saskia Blatakes studies Political Science at the University of Vienna (AT) and the Institute for Advanced Studies. She works as journalist, presenter and editor.



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fact sheet

Order “under construction”

If the passion for collecting objects turns into an addiction, a person can become a hoarder. Vienna psychoanalyst Elisabeth Vykoukal is an expert on this behaviour. In an interview with “insights” she explains why she is nevertheless sceptical about categories such as “sick” and “healthy”, and why hoarders and archivists do have things in common.

Hoarders and archivists share a sensitivity towards the world of objects. Would hoarders actually make good archivists?

It's true, their appreciation of things that are old connects them. Most hoarders have a strong feeling of protecting objects from destruction. They tell themselves: “This is beautiful, I want to keep it.” Hoarders also like to compare themselves to directors of museums or owners of castles. Their self-perception is that of the custodian of a collection which, if only there was enough space, would certainly be valuable. Of course there is some truth in this – just take a look at what is being kept at museums. Some objects there don't have a

Derived from the concept of compulsive hoarding, people who cannot keep order call themselves “hoarders”. They overstuff their homes with objects up until the point of drastically restricting their scope of living. Many also fail to organise their day-to-day lives. Estimates of a German self-help group assume some 300,000 people to be affected, which brings the expected number of people concerned in Austria to 30,000.

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purpose. By social consensus, we keep Celtic fragments. Why are yogurt cups from the 1950s or the first Tetra Paks less valuable? In their fight against impermanence people are collecting all sorts of things. But there is an important difference between collecting and hoarding: While the design museum has two old yogurt cups, the hoarder has fifty of them. It is all about a lack of limits. Hoarders collect in a way that hurts and weakens them.

What exactly is the destructive aspect of the way in which hoarders collect?

Hoarders are excessively assembling the things they come up with. They want to keep them. Quite frequently they believe that they will use them at a later point, and they are incapable of sorting anything out or throwing it away. Hoarders are using objects primarily to fill their lives – with regard to space, time, and emotions. They are filling the empty surfaces of their furniture; they are filling rooms or even their entire homes; they are filling their cars and the bags they are carrying. Rainer Rehberger, who is a psychoanalyst and a specialist on

“There simply is a limit to the number of objects a person can acquire in one life.”

hoarders, would say that this is an anal process. A person is doing everything to make sure that nothing vanishes. But in the end, the result is just a mishmash. Hoarding invariably leads to the destruction of the objects. There simply is a limit to the number of objects a person can acquire in one life.

What are archivists doing differently?

They succeed in establishing a sustainable order which also persists if, for example, the archive's management changes. Of course, reality is showing us that it doesn't always work this way... Everybody knows archives that are not functioning any longer because management has changed. This happens if the predecessor has introduced a classification system that nobody else can decipher. But generally, most archives succeed in establishing an initial order and keeping it. The classification systems of hoarders are always “under construction”, and often colliding with each other. One day, books and magazines may be sorted by year, the next day by subject or the alphabet. A hoarder is never done doing his “work”.

For years, the psychoanalyst Elisabeth Vykoukal has been looking consciously at the line between „healthy“ and „sick“. Collecting and hoarding do have some similarities, she thinks.



© private

Hoarders are often collecting printed objects such as newspapers, magazines, books, etc. Wouldn't it solve their “problems with order” to digitise their printed collections? They could even “tag” each object for various categories.

I have indeed discussed this with hoarders several times, but we've never arrived at a result. In many cases they simply do not have enough time to do it. Hoarders do not accept anybody to help them, and it is just not possible to digitise old “collections” while new items are constantly coming in. In addition, giving something away simply doesn't work, which means that the scanned documents must be kept physically ...

While hoarders take an extreme form, they are nevertheless making an experience we all know.

What makes it so hard to let go?

I think that one of the difficulties is to accept that there are memories that have no material to go with them. Frequently, objects are also a substitute for close relationships. Hoarders often have problems with their negative feelings towards people they are close to. We sometimes feel angry with someone we like a lot. Love and hate lie side

by side. We constantly have to reconcile our emotions. Hoarders find it hard to voice their anger. Instead, they begin to doubt the entire relationship. Sometimes this goes to the point where they even retreat from a person. In this case, objects can become substitutes for a relationship.

At what point do we speak of being a hoarder?

With regard to a psychological disorder, the term applies if day-to-day life is severely restricted. If the kitchen, the toilet and the bathroom can no longer be used. If the hallway needs to be emptied in order to leave the apartment. If it happens time and again that objects must be stored outside of the apartment. An apartment must remain functional for the basic requirements of its inhabitants: daily hygiene, providing for themselves, finding a cosy place.

I do however always find it difficult to draw such a clear line between “sick” and “healthy”. While hoarders take an extreme form, they are nevertheless making an experience we all know. I think that everybody has a place at home where it's not

quite sure what is stored there. This may be a drawer, the cellar, a closet: You put it there if you don't quite know whether to keep it or not. And we all know the days when things are just too much and we can no longer stand being in such an untidy room. It certainly is something one can cope with – as a way of life.

Elisabeth Vykoukal is working as a psychoanalyst in her own practice in Vienna. In the year 2000 she founded two self-help groups for those affected by hoarding disorder and their family members at the Sigmund Freud University Vienna. She is an internationally leading expert in working with hoarders.

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© Luiza Puiu



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

Matricula reloaded

The redesign of Matricula is an important step forward in the digitised world of archives. Almost 20 million pages in more than 200,000 books from close to 3,000 parishes in currently four countries offer many possibilities for research and discoveries in a highly convincing design.

The main page of Matricula already promises that a lot has changed since the online portal for church registers has first gone online in the year 2008. Books can now be searched for in three different ways: Fonds, Map, and Search for Places.

"Fonds" roughly corresponds to the "old" Matricula, it is however much more intuitive. The right side of the page shows the different levels of content. Clicking one entry opens the list of the units it comprises. For example, a click on the entry "Österreich" shows the available Austrian archives and dioceses. By going from one level to another, the required parish is selected.

Locating parishes at a click of the mouse

The map search is opening up entirely new possibilities. We all know the challenge of searching for an ancestor who may have been living in one of the neighbouring parishes.

But how can we make sure that we don't miss any of the likely places? The redesign of Matricula is making it easy: Upon entering the original parish in the Search field in the upper right corner, the map zooms in on this place and shows a red needle for every parish in its vicinity. The map can easily be moved in all directions with the mouse, and zooming can be increased or reduced. Clicking one of the highlighted parishes brings up its main page with all the books that are available.

The third way to find a parish is the Search for Places. Together with a field in which you enter the name of the required parish you can also restrict your search to a particular diocese or date range.

In the end, all roads lead to the desired parish. Improvements are clearly visible there, too: The individual books are no longer divided into separate levels for baptisms, weddings and deaths, but listed together. This

is where the new filtering options for the type of book and the date come in handy. For example, the Vienna parish Alservorstadt Krankenhaus has a total of 573 books. Locating the right one manually would be more than tedious. By choosing the type of book, e.g. "Taufen" (baptisms), and restricting the date range, Matricula is doing the work for you.

Perfectly linked

The main page of parishes shows yet another highlight – a link to the respective map provided by "mapire". While working with individual books will largely be familiar to anyone knowing the old Matricula, two further improvements are well worth mentioning. The time it takes between clicking a page and the page being displayed on your screen has been reduced significantly. Furthermore, the links now use a syntax that makes it easy to uniquely identify a page.

In short – the redesigned Matricula will inspire your research! ■

In case you don't know the new Matricula yet, give it a try!

Link:

matricula-online.eu

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Uniting archival fonds online

The "Virtual Genealogical Archive" is an international project in the field of family research providing unique access to genealogical documents for private researchers, not only in Romania but thanks to the Internet everywhere around the globe. It represents a significant step forward in the age of digital technologies.

In June 2014, the Romanian National Authority for Research, a consortium led by the Faculty of Archival Sciences at the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Academy that also includes a software company, won a national competition to set up a database for genealogical research at the Arhivele Naționale ale României (National Archives of Romania): "The Virtual Genealogical Archive". A pilot project aimed at making access to genealogical documents (mainly parish and civil status collections) from Romania easier. The documents come from two different sources: the Bucharest Municipal Archives and the Brașov County Archives. To reach this goal, the archival documents must be digitised, indexed and implemented into a database accessible via a website which allows users to effectively work with these archival documents online.

From analogous disunity to digital congruity

In Wallachia and Moldavia, the legal obligation to record all births, deaths and marriages was introduced in 1832, and until 1863 the parish registers were administered by the church. After 1863, they were gradually transferred to local authorities and supervised by the Ministry of the Interior. In Transylvania, parish registers had already been used since the 16th century, while the civil status registers were only introduced in 1895. The Bucharest collection is com-

prised of 334 parish registers dating from the period between 1832 and 1865, and 2,095 civil registers covering the period between 1866 and 1912. The Brașov County Archives hold 669 parish registers dating from 1639 to 1895, and 1,570 civil status registers from 1895 to 1968, all organised by parish.

To receive information on parish registers and/or civil status collections, users must normally visit the reading rooms of the respective archives, but the analogous indexing aids often lack congruity and informational value. The project "The Virtual Genealogical Archive" will result in user-friendly digital coherence and make research more productive.

First users welcome!

The complete digitisation of the Brașov collection and the complete digitisation of the finding aids of the Bucharest fonds have already been accomplished. Furthermore, the indexing of births and marriages by name for the Bucharest fonds has been completed as well as the setup of the digital database. At this point, 80% of the Bucharest fonds have been digitised (using 18-megapixel steady cameras) and the project website is up and running.

For the Bucharest fonds, users can search the database by name and view the corresponding digitised civil status records. Within the Brașov fonds, registers can be viewed page by page with the functionality of

searching by locality, parish and year(s). All users can set up their own personal working space and use a tool to easily create their own genealogical tree. ■

Curious to learn more about this project in detail? Head on over to our European Archival Blog to read the in-depth article (in English) on the Romanian Virtual Genealogical Archive: coop.hypotheses.org

Project duration:
June 2014–30 September 2017

Project website:
195.82.131.34/arhgen/web

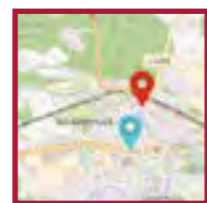
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Rafael Chelaru is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Archival Sciences at the "Al. I. Cuza" Academy, Bucharest (RO) and currently leads the research project Virtual Genealogical Archive.

The new Matricula offers user-friendly search options via fonds, maps or places.



Gabi Rudinger is a freelance translator and technical writer. She has been researching her ancestry and family history for many years.

© Gerhard Rudinger



Acid paper: Saving the Würzburg Gestapo files

Digitisation goes hand in hand with the preservation of the originals, as a project of the Bavarian State Archives in Würzburg clearly demonstrates.

It is a fantastic experience to access the digitised fonds of archives in a quick, uncomplicated and flexible way while we are comfortably sitting in front of our computers. Even though it is certainly legitimate to marvel at the digital world of sources, it is equally important to keep and preserve the original paper records. If they take harm we lose much more than irreplaceable objects of our cultural heritage – we lose the entire foundation of a secure documentation of historical reality.

The bureaucracy of terror

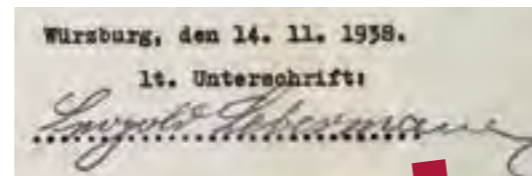
The Würzburg State Archives keep close to 25,000 files that were collected by the Secret State Police at the local State Police office. Most of them deal with investigations into violations of the 1934 Treachery Act, an article kept intentionally blurry with the aim of suppressing real or imagined criticism of the NS regime or its representatives. Many documents provide evidence of the way the Würzburg Gestapo dealt with the Jewish population of Lower Franconia, mainly their detention in connection with the 1938 November pogrom, their attempts at emigration, the confiscation of Jewish property or in the end their deportation to concentration camps. In addition, the files also deal with so-called “work-shy” persons, the persecution of homosexuals and other “moral offenders” or the surveillance

of “undesired”, frequently Catholic priests. The wide scope of the Würzburg files makes them both oppressive as well as unique. These records drawn up by Nazi perpetrators specifically show how a bureaucratic sense of duty and inhuman terror went hand in hand.

Chemical de-acidification

But the records are threatened: Like all modern paper that has been produced from wood pulp, the files from the 1930s and 1940s are endangered to disintegrate as the raw materials and chemicals used in the paper’s production release acids. When the process of decomposition starts, the paper takes on a yellow or brown colouring. Next, the paper becomes stiff and brittle. In the end, all that remains are shreds and fragments. Neither chemical nor mechanical procedures of de-acidification can entirely reverse or stop this process, but they can at least slow it down to ensure that the originals remain intact for generations to come. In our efforts to preserve this fonds we have been using the single sheet procedure which is known by the name “Brückeburger Verfahren” and has been developed specifically for archival material. This procedure is today offered by GSK Conservation. Prior to their de-acidification, the files are submitted to several conservational steps: Remaining metal clips and adhesives are removed, loose and small pieces of paper are

1. Papiergeld: 690 RM,
2. Eine Gelbbüree mit 20, 85 RM Kleingeld,
3. Ein Zigarettenetui mit 4 Zigaretten,
4. Eine Zigarrentasche mit 3 Zigarren,
5. Eine goldene Uhr mit Kette,
6. Zwei Band Schlüssel,



Terror against the Jewish population: A list of personal items belonging to Ernst Lebermann from Würzburg who was arrested during the Pogrom Night on 11 November 1938 and died of mistreatment shortly after. StA Würzburg, Gestapostelle Würzburg 5753.

secured and attached, large cracks in the paper are mended. Anything that cannot be de-acidified – for example photographs or particularly fragile paper – is taken off for a procedural “bypass” and is again included after de-acidification. The actual de-acidification comprises (1) a fixative, (2) the alkaline substance used to de-acidify and chemically buffer, as well as (3) methyl cellulose to reinforce the damaged paper. Once the files have been de-acidified they receive new conservational protective wrapping. The archival material is digitised and (!) microfilmed before the process of de-acidification is started. This method of conservation provides us with a modern and flexible medium of protection and presentation while it equally ensures long-term conservation that still counts as the most durable reprographic medium for archival material.

Link: gda.bayern.de/wuerzburg

Julian Holzapfl has been working at the Bavarian State Archives since 2006. Since 2012 he has been managing the Research and Conservations Department and digitisation projects at the General Directorate of the Bavarian State Archives. This article was co-written by Ingrid Heeg-Engelhart and Julian Sauer.



Strong ties

This year’s celebration of the 15th anniversary of Monasterium has only been possible because of a long-term cooperation. The Centre for Information Modelling - Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities (ZIM-ACDH) of the University of Graz has been an early member of ICARUS, and as such it is at the heart of the technological development of the Monasterium portal.

The long-term partners ICARUS and the Centre for Information Modelling - Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities (ZIM-ACDH) share a common goal: To develop our cultural heritage and to make it digitally accessible to the public. Both partners promote free access to knowledge and educational resources in research and teaching as well as sustainable and open technology. The Centre for Information Modelling is contributing two important aspects to this partnership: Its competencies in Digital Humanities as well as its know-how in the area of long-term preservation.

Know-how in the Digital Humanities

The Centre for Information Modelling was founded in the year 2008 at the University of Graz. Its roots and self-perception go back to the free-spirited “nerds” from two predecessor institutions, namely the “EDV-Subzentrum der Geisteswissenschaftlichen Fakultät” (GEWILAB) and later on the “Institut für Informationsverarbeitung in den Geisteswissenschaften (INIG)”. IT-related research had already been carried out there early in the 1990s. The actual “birthplace” of GEWILAB was in fact – as the long-time director Peter Langmann identifies – a toilet at Mozartgasse 14, where today’s dean put up a Xerox text processing machine and made it available in time-sharing mode. From its humble beginnings, the ins-

titution gradually evolved over a period of 30 years. The establishment of a University professorship in the year 2016 and the introduction of Austria’s first master studies programme in “Digital Humanities” in the year 2017 were important milestones. Teaching has always played an important role at the Centre. A great number of joint research projects with Austrian and international partner institutions underline that cooperations are yet another priority.

Know-how in the area of long-term preservation

Over the years, many projects and cooperations have shown a need for a dedicated software solution. The Centre consequently designed and developed GAMS (Geisteswissenschaftliches Asset Management System, AMS for the Humanities), an open-source software infrastructure for the administration, publication and long-term preservation of digital resources. GAMS is used by university staff from research and teaching as well as by students to administer and publish their resources in compliance with proper quotation guidelines and tag them with metadata. In 2014, GAMS was awarded the “Data Seal of Approval” for long-term preservation and is now an Austrian contributor to the European research infrastructure DARI-AH-EU (Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities). In the future, the cooperation bet-

The event series “Lunch-time Lecture” is an initiative to foster academic exchange.



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In April 2017 the ZIM-ACDH organised the conference “CO:OPYright”: the participants used the workshops for group discussions. -



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ween the Centre for Information Modelling and ICARUS will be intensified to ensure Monasterium’s data security. The archive’s data will be taken over to GAMS for preservation. We look forward to further strengthen the ties between ICARUS and the ZIM-ACDH together!

Links:

- gams.uni-graz.at
- informationsmodellierung.uni-graz.at
- monasterium.net

info

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Martina Bürgermeister is studying History and Digital Humanities and is working at the ZIM-ACDH. Since 2014 she has been developing the Monasterium platform through the project “Illuminierte Urkunden – als Gesamtkunstwerk”. She loves short codes and short texts.



My road to family research...

Curious to peek behind the curtains of the ICARUS4all community? ICARUS4all is the place where young and old, people from Austria, Brazil, Italy and many more countries meet – and they all share one thing: Their passionate interest in family history research. About time to ask the ICARUS4all members about their personal stories and individual approaches to family history research! More stories can be found on our “European Archival Blog”, the online community where archival experts and hobby researchers meet at eye level.



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Barbara Ras Wechsler is 57 years old and lives in Switzerland with her family. She is the divisional manager of the double institution “Herberge zur Heimat” and “Hotel Vadian” in St. Gallen. She started family research in 2011 and has a special interest in the stories that connect families with their local environment. Her research areas currently focus on Southern Germany, Austria, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Italy, Malta, Brazil, Great Britain, Ireland and France. Whenever possible, Wechsler also does research in the Levant and Egypt.

The research into my family’s history started more or less by chance. Due to bad weather, my partner and I couldn’t climb the “Jungfrau” near Interlaken in Switzerland as we had planned. We therefore decided to use our vacation for a visit to the legendary house of my great-grandmother Eugenia Engelhardt. The Engelhardts had always played an important role in the stories my father used to tell. They were said to have owned a large house in Görz in South Tyrol. The house was confiscated during the Great War and was later converted into a police station. The genealogy adventure was about to begin! Görz taught me my first lesson right away: While family legends are a good starting point, they need to be closely questioned and re-interpreted. We learned this lesson

in finding out that “our” Görz was not located in South Tyrol, the former Crown Land “Küstenland”, but rather in Friuli. After several attempts we actually found the legendary Engelhardt house, and with it the partial confirmation of the second family legend – even though the house had not been converted into a police station, but a station of the “Polizia Federale della Finanza”, a tax investigation department. It was a matter of correctly interpreting the story...Görz was the first trip to the origins of our ancestors, and it would not be the last. These very special travels brought us to regions far off the main tourist locations. We encountered the beauty of places and landscapes long forgotten while learning about the history of my family.

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The residential house of the Engelhart family in Görz (IT) which opened the chapter of family research for Barbara Ras Wechsler. The history of a family always has to be seen against the backdrop of historical events and the local environment.

I was very fortunate in being able to spend a lot of time with my great-grandmother during my childhood. Having been born in Bohemia, she lived to the age of almost 92 years. As a child I was fascinated by her stories. I learned a lot about her own childhood, her parents, her seven brothers and sisters, and how she came to Austria’s Waldviertel to work as a maid when she was twelve years old. This is where she met her future husband at an evening dance. I remember well how she once found two portrait photographs of her parents while clearing out the attic. Maybe it was her excitement about finding them that later motivated me to carry out my own research into my family’s history. About ten years ago, I copied my great-grandmother’s

“Ahnenpass” (German war-time proof of ancestry) and got started. My aim was to research all paternal and maternal ancestry lines in their entirety – being completely unaware of how much time it would take to trace my ancestors up until the beginnings of the church records, and how many people I would come up with! My research took me to the Diocesan Archives of St. Pölten (AT) and Würzburg (DE), the Austrian State Archives, the Monastery Archives of Herzogenburg (AT) as well as the archives of various parishes in Austria and abroad. The deeper I delved into my family’s history with the aid of a variety of sources, the more exciting and interesting it all became! So far I have found 2,970 direct ancestors, and I hope that I will find still more.



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Doris Irmgard Zwinz, born in 1982 in Waidhofen an der Thaya (AT), works as a pharmaceutical/technical assistant in the pharmacy “Zum Schwarzen Adler” in Weitra (AT). Since 2008 she has been dedicating her researching her ancestors and the history of her hometown Schlagl (AT).



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Portrait photos of the great-grandparents of Doris Zwinz: Rudolf Wagner, born on 14 March 1870 and his wife Antonia (maiden name Draxler), born in January 1871.

Carl F. Pfaffinger was born in 1957 in Vienna (AT) and lives in Malta and Vienna. He is a lieutenant colonel and entrepreneur, conservator for stonemasonry, publisher and author. In his leisure time he busies himself with genealogy, heraldics and music.

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Family research? This is not a hobby just like any other one. Family researchers are driven by their passion and can best be compared with passionate collectors. They collect people. And destinies. The destinies of people who are their ancestors or who they are related to, even if their stories go back many centuries. Lucky are those who still have letters, diaries or other memories that used to belong to previous generations. What a joy to be given a set of old documents or handwritten texts by a relative, accompanied by the words “I think they are best kept with you”.

How many couples does it take to get together and have children to make our mere existence possible? Family researchers aim at finding as many of them as possible, and to learn about their lives. It was my father who started this endeavour. Early on he showed me his notes and documents, and I was already fascinated as a child. I remember well what he once said: “I have only scratched at the surface. Whoever digs the spade deeper will find more.” I did dig deeper, and I have found more. And who knows – maybe someone who comes after me will dig even deeper than I did.

Feel free to visit our European Archival Blog for more stories from the ICARUS4all community:
coop.hypotheses.org

We are looking forward to your letters to: editor@icar-us.at

Press comments and letters to the editor

The topotheque and its significance to the Austrian museum landscape

"Topotheques are of great help in connection with special exhibitions in a town's museum. We are often facing the challenge of limited space to present a broad subject. In the end, we frequently have to drop pictures or documents. The topotheque now allows us to provide additional material to go along with an exhibition. In 2016, for example, we supported the sports exhibition. There was an abundance of photographic material which we could only handle with the help of the topotheque. At the same time, the donors felt that their pictures were also a part of the exhibition. The administrators of a topotheque can supplement and enrich the history of their town or village through their contact with the population. Sometimes this even brings up rare treasures: Recently we received a

picture of the church of Waidhofen's neo-Gothic interior which is no longer fully preserved. Before the glass windows were destroyed by a WW II bomb, the donor's father-in-law took pictures of the church during a short vacation from the "Reich Labour Service". After the war, the damage was repaired by putting in colourful windows in a theological theme. This picture has been a true godsend, as it is the only one from that time."

Neues Museum. Die österreichische Museumszeitschrift
March 2017
Eva Zankl

Eva Zankl is the director of the City Archives, the library and the museum and the topotheque Waidhofen (AT).

The founder of the topotheque Alexander Schatek together with newly trained topotheque managers from Mank in Lower Austria.



© Gerhard Floszmann
© Stadt Waidhofen



Dear readers!

For the sixth 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!

From the drawer to the digital showcase

"Free access to historical documents needs a threshold of access that is as low as possible. 'In this sense, history becomes an aspect of one's own personality', says Alexander Schatek, 'and does not remain a purely academic narrative. This is particularly important for non-scientific researchers.' After all, there is a private genealogist in almost every second family. Schatek is convinced that a person who knows about the thrilling stories of buildings and their inhabitants will take more care of their environments. He also highlights an important social aspect: 'The topotheques that have gone online so far have shown that they bring people together. They make a useful contribution – culturally, but also socially. Elder people in particular find a new role in their community.' The motto is: 'Safeguard your knowledge for the next generation'."

Die Furche
11 May 2017
Heike Hausensteiner

Dear ICARUS team!

I study Theatre, Film and Media Studies at the University of Vienna and am interested in artistic works that make use of archival material. My aunt, who is an ICARUS4all member, gave me your last issue of "insights" to read the interview with the documentary filmmaker Bernhard Hetzenauer. She knew I would be highly interested in the interview! Indeed,

Dear Ms Gruber!

Indeed, there are a few examples from our international network on how we support and foster the creative use of archival material and pedagogical-creative approaches to archives: For example, within our EU-funded project "community as opportunity" (co:op) we invite students of all ages to participate in our "Adventures in archives" where they are free to ex-

I had already heard about his movie "And There was Fire in the Centre of the Earth" and it was fascinating to learn more about the production background of this film – especially about the significance of archival material, also from private collections, for the story line. My aunt is a passionate family researcher and I, too, am starting to

dive deeper into this topic – I always keep a rather creative perspective though. Now I am wondering if I could learn more through the ICARUS network about how archival material can be used in creative ways? Looking forward to your answer!

Kind regards
Marie-Anna Gruber

plore archives and archival material. The results of these "adventures" are short films produced by the students themselves, creatively capturing their experiences with the archival world. Maybe you might be interested in a performative art project "Poetry exercises": Here, artists improvise a performative archive in synergy with archive visitors. Read up on the whole story on our "European Archive Blog"!

Cheerio,
Kerstin Muff
Editor-in-chief "insights"

Links:

coop.hypotheses.org
coop-project.eu

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