

insights

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Archives and people in the digital age

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Genealogy tourism

editorial

Dear colleagues,

As I am writing these lines, we are experiencing a time that is dominated by the coronavirus: For many people, daily work has changed considerably. Families have to manage the new realities of school and work. We are all experiencing profound changes in our personal way of life as well as in our social interactions. While some may appreciate that everything has slowed down, others see their entire livelihood being threatened and fear for their future.

But one thing is for sure: We are all in the midst of a time in which our reality of life is changing into the unknown, and we have no information whatsoever on where we will stand at the end of this dramatic experience. In these times of radical change, we – insights magazine – are also entering a period of transition: This is the last edition of insights. Starting in autumn 2020 we will **launch a new magazine** to replace it. The articles in the current edition already point into the direction we will be taking. In the future, everything will revolve around “Time Machine”. The ICARUS network sees its future as a part of the Time Machine vision, and we are looking forward to shaping exciting editions together with you!

I hope that you will enjoy the articles in this edition and that they will set you into the mood of discovering the wide variety of topics of our international ICARUS and Time Machine network.

Cheerio,



Kerstin Muff

Editor-in-chief insights



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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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Portrait: Peer Boselie | Archief De Domijnen

The Storyteller

Peer Boselie wants to bring the past to life and has many ideas about how to put this into practice. A conversation about digital visions, analogue walks and very old herb liquor.

by Saskia Blatakes

Photos: Peer Boselie

Peer Boselie often cooks **historical meals following old recipes**. This picture shows the Spanish “War-moes” soup. It mainly consists of herbs and vegetables and can be traced back to the 17th century.

If Peer Boselie were asked to write a job announcement for an archivist, his first sentence would be: “You feel very strongly about two things that seem to contradict each other at first glance: truth and storytelling.”

Today, truth has many enemies. In a world full of fake news and subjective perception it is getting more and more difficult to distinguish between authentic information and manipulation. Stories are also under pressure in these days. Beeping mobile phones, flashing displays and blinking icons are constantly fighting for our attention. It comes with the age of digitisation that we read less ourselves, that we read less to others and that we tell less stories. Some even go as far as to say that storytelling is dead.

But Peer Boselie is an optimist. He believes in the power of stories and is convinced that archives and museums,

the keepers of truth, will ultimately gain in importance in the future. He argues that this requires the willingness to strike out in new and sometimes unconventional directions.

The donkey and the atom

The city archivist of the Dutch community of Sittard-Geleen has therefore founded a museum of a different kind. He is following cooking recipes that have long been forgotten, gives walking tours through secret gardens and encourages people to volunteer in efforts aimed at preserving historical treasures.

Where to start with such a large number of projects? Maybe with his largest one, the Limburg Time Machine which is also known by the term Aezel. This word is the Limburg dialect term for a donkey and at the same time the acronym for “Archief oor

Erfgoed van Zuid-Nederlandse Eindhoven en Leefgemeenschappen” (Archive for the heritage of the southern Dutch communities).

In 2008, Peer Boselie and his team started a project that aimed at presenting historical data in a way that would allow it to be used repeatedly—and most importantly, by everyone: Open source and open data to combine historical data just like atoms, a vision that was carried by his volunteer co-worker Martin Pfeifer.

Volunteers, the prime asset of the project

The project is based on the work of volunteers. In the course of the last ten years they have together performed 170,000 hours of work to process an enormous number of scans. Some of these volunteers are 80 or older, they include patients suffering from

The Dutch community of **Sittard-Geleen** is full of **history**: In addition to the historical city centre, parts of the old city wall have remained intact.



burnout, autistic people, unemployed persons or senior businesspeople. Instead of sitting at home they prefer to help and build something meaningful for the future. Sometimes they meet for coffee and cake. Travel expenses are reimbursed, but they are not paid a salary. Instead they benefit from the feeling of community and of knowing that they are doing something meaningful. With 70 volunteers to date there is already a waiting list. During the financial crisis, many historical institutions were hit hard, but Aezel was even able to grow, as Peer Boselie proudly tells. In the meantime, there have even been several offers from companies that wanted to buy his model.

Commercialising the project is however out of the question: “As soon as money is invested, money also has to be made. And once you only think about making money, everything else breaks.”

Peer Boselie thinks that the volunteers are the true owners of the Time Machine. “The project’s capital does not belong to us, the archivists. It belongs to them”, he says. “Selling Aezel would have been a slap in their face.” This is the only moment during our conversation that a hint of anger

appears in his otherwise friendly and quiet tone of voice. The only time that his cheeky smile is replaced with a frown. “By the way – most Time Machine projects share this view, and I am very glad about that.”

Using data to extinguish fires

He also believes in the practical use of digitisation. His presentations often include the example of a fire fighter who could use old, digitised building permits to help him extinguish a fire more efficiently. “It’s about combining today’s big data with historical data. The project was not developed to put out a fire one day. But it could do that.”

He regards digitisation as one of many possibilities to keep history alive. Peer Boselie is certainly not running out of ideas: During his pilgrimage to Santiago di Compostela he came up with the idea of “Secret Gardens”, public gardens or parks that are well suited as

“The project’s capital does not belong to us, the archivists. It belongs to the volunteers.”

the scenes for urban storytelling.

In these monthly walks he talks for example about Charles Beltjens who came from Sittard and lived in Paris in the 19th century as a poet and friend of Victor Hugo.

Yet another idea focuses on keeping alive the memory of the people who

portrait

First name, last name:

Peer Boselie

My favourite memories from my professional life:

Making inventories of 250 meters of castle archives (and 50 meters of charters) from the 13th - 19th century as a young archivist.

When I am alone in the archive ...

I can finally do some research again!

Coffee or tea?

Tea, please.

I am impressed by ...

the way some people who got hurt can recover.

I am good at ...

having ideas (and some of them even really work)!

Three things I love about archives:

Archives 'breathe': history, emotion, people.

My connection to ICARUS:

A fond bond of professional colleagues and sparring partners.

From the team's point of view

Jan Miltenburg (Culture employee of the city of Sittard-Geleen): “Peer Boselie is an enthusiastic colleague who wants to tackle matters with colleagues and volunteers in a concrete way and also seeks opportunities within his network for financing from the municipality, province or Europe.”

Han Adriaans (Archival inspector/information controller of the city of Sittard-Geleen/Archief De Domijnen): “Peer is a connecting link between government and society and knows how to link emotion to historical sources.”

Kirsten van den Eijnde (Junior archivist at the Archief De Domijnen): “Peer gives young professionals the opportunity to learn and grow in the professional field. He is always willing to share his broad knowledge (Peer truly is a walking encyclopedia and seemingly knows everyone!) and at the same time allows us to explore things on our own.”



In his historical walking tours, Peer Boselie shows exciting parts of the city, such as the “Jardin d’Isabelle” where the secret of a very special love stories lies to be discovered.

do not belong to the rich and famous filling the pages of history books. Boselie’s virtual “Museum of Poverty” for example highlights the history of Nicolas Reubsaet who started out as a poor street musician and became one of the most important tenors in the mid-19th century. “I also want to tell stories that give hope or are simply entertaining, not only ones about tragic fates”, says Boselie. And maybe his secret lies exactly in this way of thinking: He is not taking life or himself too seriously.

Purple carrots and communist dogs

Peer Boselie is interested in everything that would be forgotten without archivists like himself. After his studies of archival sciences, theology and church history he decided on a rather unconventional topic for his doctoral thesis: Forgotten recipes, put into a new perspective from the point of view of modern medicine. Today he is growing “old” herbs and vegetables in his garden. Side by side with parsnip, carrots are flourishing in their original colour purple. With a wink in his eye he emphasises that it was the Dutch who later on bred orange carrots as a symbol of

national unity.

In his spare time, Peer Boselie is experimenting with old meals. Just recently he discovered a historical liquor recipe in a castle right in the centre of the Limburg province. It is from the 17th century and goes by the tingling Dutch name “Roffart’s Sheisse”: The bitter spirit had originally been used as a popular laxative. A friend of Peer Boselie’s modified the composition of the herbs to make the liquor more palatable.

Approaching the end of our conversation, there remains the question of the meaning of the pictures that hang on the walls of his office. One of them is an oil painting showing the Holy Family. It used to hang in the University and finally arrived at his place over several detours. The second one is a photograph of the church of St. Peter which is only a few meters away from the city archives. Peer Boselie tells the story: “When the choir stalls were restored in 1960, several modern adaptations were added to the woodwork, amongst others a small dog named Laika on board of the Sputnik. Now we have a communist dog in a Roman Catholic church!” But this is an altogether different story.

Name of the institution:

Archief De Domijnen

Web address:

www.dedomijnen.nl/collecties

Oldest collection:

Sittard city archives (1276-1794)

Best-known archival item:

The oldest charter in our archives. It relates to the foundation of the Sittard beguinage in 1276 – by a woman, for women. Nice!

First digital object:

I’m not quite sure. I think a digital photo of 50 kb in 2001? We still keep it as a 'warning and lesson'.

Most loyal visitors of the reading room:

Mainly genealogists and cadastre researchers

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Saskia Blatakes studied Political Science at the University of Vienna and the Institute for Advanced Studies. She works as a freelance journalist, presenter and editor.



Naples: The genesis of a Local Time Machine

Right now, the city of Naples sees great cultural, economic and social change. This is the right time to take care about the future of Naples' memory. It's an adventure!

Naples has got three millennia of history. The city, shaped by the sea and Mount Vesuvio, is in the midst of the Mediterranean Basin both from a historical and a geographical point of view. All the great civilisations of the Mediterranean (Greek, Latin, Spanish, Arab, Jewish) came to Naples. Each of them influenced the local population with its own unique social, spiritual and material elements, which were over the time transformed and melted into a complex culture. This rich past is still tangible in Naples' historical centre: 17 km², with 10 km² already having been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1995.

The year 2019 saw the official start of the Naples Time Machine Project. The beginnings of this endeavor were however long before that date. In 2008, the first steps into the use of digital technologies in research were taken. The project was based on a collaboration between the University of Naples Federico II (Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici – DSU/Department of Humanities)

and ICARUS with support from EU funds. Focus of these early activities were written sources from the Italian Middle Ages, especially those from the region of Campania. The disciplines included were palaeography, diplomatics and the history of documentation. One of the goals of the project was to publish archival material on digital web platforms such as Monasterium.Net.

Humanities and natural sciences join forces

The interdisciplinarity of the group has increased over time. The DSU group, currently coordinated by Antonella Ambrosio, Professor for Palaeography and Diplomatics at the University of Naples, has started a successful collaboration with another research group from the same university: The Museum Centre of Agricultural Sciences/Department of Agriculture (MUSA Center), whose activities in this project are coordinated by Antonello Migliozi. This larger research group has already come up with further skills in studying

and digitising documents in order to reconstruct landscape dynamics in Campania. The digitised historical data on various landscape changes is now assembled in digital archives integrating GIS systems standardised at European level. The Campania region is of particular interest since it is one of the regions with the greatest biological and cultural diversity in Europe.

Creating a continuum of cultural and biological information

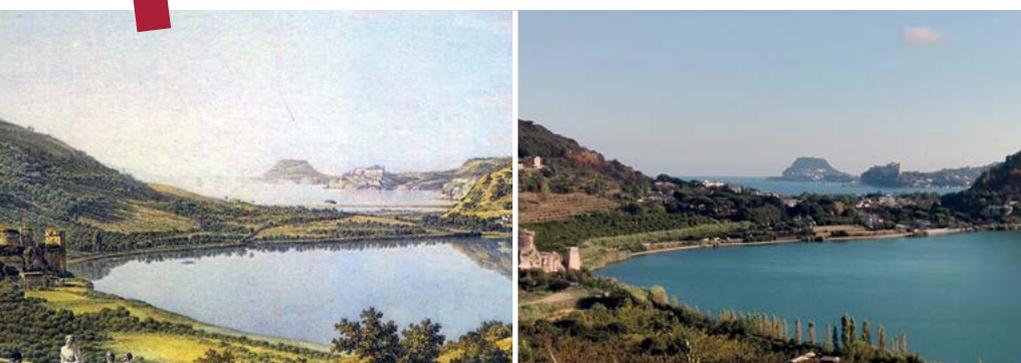
The first steps of the Naples Time Machine are to acquire, organise and spatialise the historical-archival documentation in a digital information system. At the same time, the available cadastral data is digitised in the form of a registry (not mapped) and put on geo-referenced historical maps of the relevant historical period. This cartography intends to represent some substantial dossiers and data from the Middle Ages until today, facing central themes of the history of the city and its surrounding rural landscape.

Time Machine is a great opportunity to share the complex heritage of Naples and its surroundings with everyone. Collaborations with GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) institutions, including the State Archive of Naples or other research groups, are going to be the next step. ■

In ancient mythology, **Lago d'Averno** is said to be the entrance to the underworld. Here you can see a juxtaposition of a painting from the 19th century and a contemporary photo: At the left side, the **ruins of the Apollo temple** are clearly visible.

© MUSA Centre

© Fabio Armillei



Antonella Ambrosio is Associated Professor at the University of Naples Federico II. She is scientifically responsible for the Naples Time Machine and the coordinator of Monasterium Italy and the ICARUS didactic group.

© Michele Innangi

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Antonello Migliozi is a researcher at the University of Naples Federico II. He is a Time Machine ambassador for Southern Italy and scientifically responsible for the MUSA Cartography and Landscape Unit for the Naples Time Machine.



Archives inspiring designers

Archives are known as a primary source of memory. Their potential however goes far beyond that. The European Digital Treasures Project brought together designers from six countries for a workshop in Madrid to come up with a multitude of new business possibilities from an artistic point of view.

In 2018, the so-called Digital Treasures Project managed to receive a grant within the Creative Europe Programme. Under the lead of the Spanish State Archives, six partners took up the challenge of making their archival treasures more visible: The National Archives of Spain, Hungary, Malta, Norway and Portugal as well as ICARUS. Within this framework, the Spanish State Archives held an artistic residency in Madrid in February 2020, bringing together twelve graphic and industrial designers selected by the project partners. The purpose of this activity lasting for a week was to identify creative merchandising products linked to the documents of these archives in order to generate more added value, profitability, visibility and economic return to the European archives.

A week of inspiration and creation

During the residency, the Spanish State Archives organised an incredible programme fostering everyone's creativity. In the morning sessions the designers presented their creative products, showing the archival documents which had inspired them and explaining how they had managed to transform their ideas into a final merchandising product.

The programme also included two master conferences held by Cristina Aloviseti, general manager of the Prado Museum, and designer Alvaro Catalan de Ocón. Aloviseti is in charge of the communication, disse-

mination and commercial exploitation of the image rights of the Prado Museum. Salone Satellite price-winning designer Alvaro Catalan de Ocón welcomed the designers in his own study and workshop.

The afternoons were dedicated to visiting a couple of Spain's best-known museums such as the Prado Museum and the Thyssen Bornemisza Collection, where the designers did some practical exercises in "shopping at museum shops".

From baby toys to jewellery

By the end of the week the designers had created a total of 50 merchandising products for potential commercialisation by the archives. Amongst them were such surprising creations as a mobile baby toy related to a drawing of an 18th century flying machine kept at the Archives of Torre de Tombo (Lisbon), a box of chocolate cigars inspired by a drawing of a tobacco machine kept at the Archives

Cristina Díaz has a degree in geography and history and a master's degree in archival sciences. Since 2002 she has been senior archivist and works as head of the Institutional Affairs and International Cooperation Area of the Spanish State Archives. She coordinates the Digital Treasures project.



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Miguel Ángel Bermejo Alonso has degrees in librarian-ship and IT from the Universities of Salamanca and Alcalá de Henares. Since 2017 he has been working as head of department for the International Cooperation Services of the Spanish State Archives. He is on the board of the Digital Treasures Project.

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Archival documents on the technology of early flying objects inspired designers from Portugal to create **mobilee DIY kits**.

of the Indies (Sevilla) and a necklace inspired by an 11th century inscription on a bone, with the romantic message in rune alphabet of "Kiss me". The original object is part of the collection of archaeological artefacts of the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo.

This outcome represents the starting point of a new business model which exhibits the artistic and economic potential of archival material and the infinite possibilities to create this type of products for any European archive. ■

Further information on this project can be found online:

www.digitaltreasures.eu

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Ludwigsburg collection of parchment documents now fully accessible online

At the Ludwigsburg State Archives, a very special project has reached the finishing line: The digitisation of the entire collection of parchment documents. In some cases, this helped unveil treasures that had previously been unknown.

It took Robert Reiter, the “ICARUS scan man”, exactly 15 appointments over a period of ten years to scan the 30,000 parchment documents held by the Ludwigsburg State Archives. The project had been launched with the help of the DFG project “Virtuelles Deutsches Urkundennetzwerk”, a virtual German documents network. Within the organisational structure of the Baden-Württemberg State Archives, the Ludwigsburg State Archives are responsible for the historical heritage of northern Württemberg. One of the main targets of the digitisation strategy set in place by the Baden-Württemberg State Archives is to improve the research infrastructure. In their role as a cultural competence centre, the archives are committed to protecting and preserving the archival material as part of the cultural heritage, and to making it accessible online. Ludwigsburg therefore prioritised the digitisation of its parchment documents.

Extraordinary funds

Ludwigsburg is storing the heritage of the territories and the formerly free and imperial cities which in the course of secularisation and mediatisation fell to Württemberg at the beginning of the 19th century. These comprise among others the imperially immediate cities of Schwäbisch Gmünd, Esslingen or Ulm. Many monasteries such as the Benedictine abbey of Comburg, the Cistercian monastery of Schöntal or Ellwangen Abbey which dates back

to the Carolingian period have extraordinary funds of documents. The same is true for the Teutonic Order which had made an important contribution to the history of south west Germany during the period of the Holy Roman Empire.

Historical documents come together online

Now that these documents are online it will become much easier to do research on the history of south west Germany. The online parchment documents of the imperial cities can henceforward for example be easily consolidated with the tradition available at the city archives. The additional presentation of the documents of the Teutonic Order together with the fonds from Marburg and Vienna on monasterium.net shows that the virtual reconstruction of the former Archives of the Teutonic Order of Mergentheim is no longer a vision. The digitisation project was financed with special funds from the Higher Education Pact of the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of the state of Baden-Württemberg as well as third-party funds from foundations and organisations. Nevertheless, it would not have been possible to realise these digitisation measures without the enormous support from ICARUS. We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude. Help was not limited to the unbureaucratic implementation but

© Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg



Signet of the imperial notary Jakob Urban from Kaiserslautern on a document of the **Teutonic Order of Mergentheim**, 1538.
Signature: StA Ludwigsburg B 246 U 1

particularly comprised the profound experience in dealing with valuable document treasures, an experience which ICARUS has gained in countless projects across Europe and in which we could participate in Ludwigsburg. ■

Link:

landesarchiv-bw.de

info

Since 2010, **Maria Magdalena Rückert** has been head of the division “Usage” at the Ludwigsburg State Archives where she is among other tasks responsible for digitisation and retroconversion projects. She is also an honorary professor at the University of Mannheim.

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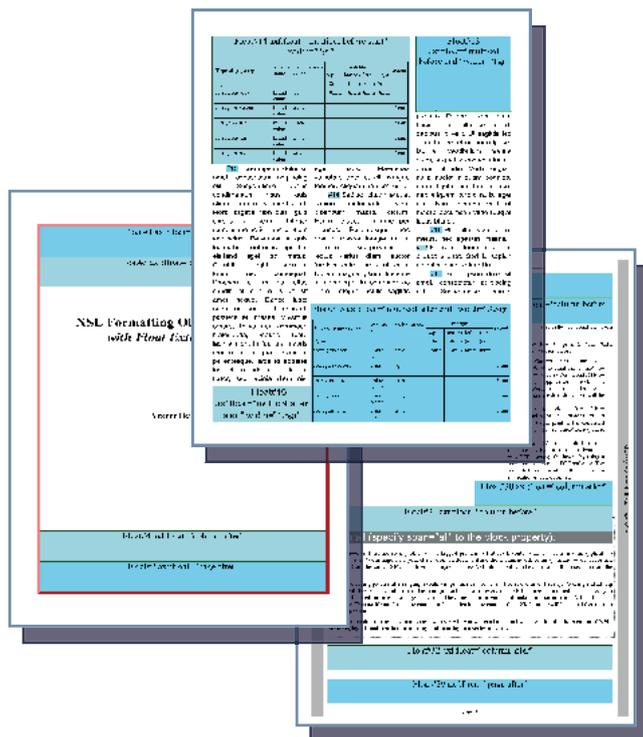


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Time travelling along the traces of your family: Time Machine as a prime source of genealogy tourism

The Upper-Austrian company ViaPatres addresses transnational and transdisciplinary cooperation aimed at planning and holding genealogy travels. Historical geodata is integrated into the individual travel concepts. Tourism of this kind requires genealogical preparations which can efficiently be made even now during the Corona crisis.

The concept of genealogy tourism is fairly new. Neither English nor German have a standardised definition of this type of holiday travel. In English there are several vague synonyms such as “roots tourism”, “legacy tourism”, “ancestral tourism”, “lineage tourism” or the term which has recently been used most often and best describes the variety of this concept: “genealogical tourism”. Carla Santos, professor of sports and tourism at the University of Illinois, USA, describes genealogical tourists as a “quickly growing segment of leisure tourists.” Instead of looking for relaxation, beaches or shopping, they want to discover their own history.

The crisis, an opportunity for genealogy tourism

It is fairly certain that today, nobody would risk a forecast into how the tourism industry will develop in the near and middle future. But it is already quite obvious that our work environment suddenly and urgently needs digital solutions and that a certain distance has to be kept in personal and social contacts in the interest of health protection.

Thanks to the ICARUS community and the team of its president Thomas Aigner, genealogists are already in the position of having a head start when it comes to digital availability. Without this great pioneer work, we would not be able to carry out any genealogical research today.

Travelling in small numbers

In contrast to usual leisure travels, genealogical travels have the important advantage of being limited to a very small number of contacts. The destinations of these travels are neither holiday resorts with many guests nor places where many people gather. Instead, a small group of people deals with a number of places and objects which have been identified through genealogical research. Social contact can be limited to the owners of plots which are in relation to one’s ancestors, and maybe there are some new relatives to meet. In this way, the current rules on social distancing can be maintained. Experience has shown that genealogical travel is often used to advance one’s research. Travellers are visiting the respective archives to expand their research.

Using Time Machine to prepare a trip

The present crisis management of the Austrian federal government currently shows the importance of simulations. With regard to travels inspired by genealogy, this means that the progress of Time Machine can have positive effects on real-life travels and can play an important role in the future of tourism once this crisis is over. Until then, potential travellers can and should use the time to prepare their future trips for the time when travelling will be possible again.

In a very practical sense, the ViaPatres portal is currently in development. The multi-language job platform (English/German/Spanish) will be used to bring together tenders for genealogical research, transcriptions, etc. - basically everything that can be done digitally – and colleagues willing to take over these jobs and manage them via the platform. The portal aims at using the time we have now to be fully prepared once we can again start travelling to some extent. ■



© Wolfgang Stöger

The founder of ViaPatres together with Carolyn Schott, author of "Visit your Ancestral Town". The author has been recognised with several awards from the [International Society of Family History Writers and Editors](#).



© Wolfgang Stöger

ViaPatres staff member [Alba Benavides](#) at the tourist office in Colonia Tovar. In 2018, the Venezuelan town founded by German immigrants was visited in the course of a field study. ViaPatres learned that genealogical services appeal to all age groups. While genealogical travels for the purpose of tourism are preferred by the generation 40+, younger people rather like to emigrate.



© Wolfgang Stöger

Insights into [times gone by](#). Even though the people of Colonia Santa Rita (Bolivia) are usually rather shy, they granted a glimpse into their lives. They refuse modern technology on principle. Some of the community's founders were expellees from German-speaking countries.

The author is currently writing his master's thesis on genealogical tourism at the Johannes Kepler University Linz. Before the Corona crisis he had planned to implement qualitative procedures and use among others live interviews with travellers currently taking a genealogy trip. Given the current conditions, this is no longer possible. He therefore decided to use online interviews and modify the target group to people who have already taken such trips as well as experts who have accompanied them.

Do you know someone who has already taken a genealogical trip? The author is looking forward to any information on potential interview partners.

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Links:

genealogietourismus.at
viapatres.com

info

[Wolfgang Stöger](#) is working as a professional genealogist and tourism manager. He has been appointed as a committee member of the recreational and sports operations group of the Upper Austrian Chamber of Commerce.

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