

The Federal Archives of Germany and the support for the Public History of the Holocaust

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Two main areas of activities

- Projects for the publication of information and documents
 - broadening the knowledge
 - providing of selected sources to deepen the knowledge
- Publication of descriptive information incl. digital reproductions of holdings
 - show diversity of the holdings
 - allow cross boarder comparison
 - support autonomous investigation, discovery and verification by the users
- Both in cooperation with other archives in joint portals and access points

Publication projects

- Gedenkbuch (Memorial book for victims of persecution of Jews; researchable at the Holocaust Memorial)
- Project „Persecution and murder of European Jews“ (publication of documents from European archives, 6 of 16 volumes)
- Project and portal on forced labor (together with many other archives)
- Database of Jewish Residents in the German Reich 1933-1945

Descriptive information about holdings

- Printed finding aids, available in many libraries
 - Holdings guide 1961, new editions 1968 and 1977
 - 120 printed finding aids for record groups since 1970
- Online finding aids, since 2005
 - full text search across the whole (holdings guide + 2000 finding aids)
 - navigation through the whole using the internal structures
 - including an increasing number of digital reproductions of freely available record groups

Joint access points

- Descriptions are available f.i. at
 - Archives Portal Europe
 - Archives Grid (Search engine of OCLC)
 - selected finding aids and digital reproductions: in the „International Research Portal for Records Related to the Nazi-Era Cultural Properties“ at NARA
- Tests are done with
 - German Digital Library
 - Europeana

Paradox effects of the digital form

- Longevity – oblivion
- More and more complex passwords - uncontrolled re-use (“Big Data”)
- Reliability – faked or stolen identities
- These effects endanger the trust in digital information more and more
- How can they be controlled concerning archival information?

Archives need to be trustworthy

- Uniqueness – no redundancy
- No messages to external readers –
 - but created for internal coordination and action oriented communication.
- Needed as evidence and material for interpretations,
 - to reconstruct what happened and why,
 - often found between the lines.
- Discussion about the interpretation must remain possible
 - need for stability of the outer appearance.

Trustworthiness and archival information on the Internet

- For the users:
 - To know the degree of completeness.
 - To know the background about the creation.
 - To be able to retrace any changes of the appearance of the material after their transfer to the archives.
- For the archives:
 - Provide all means to assess the trustworthiness by the users themselves
 - Find ways to support self determined Internet use.

The example of the Archives Portal Europe

- Funded by the European Commission
(Bundesarchiv: two WPLs, scientific and technical coordinators)
- First project: APEnet (2009-2012)
- Portal is operating since January 2011
- Updated and broadened by the project APEx (2012-2015) with 28 membres (27 National Archives)
- www.archivesportaleurope.net

Archives Portal Europe



Welcome to the Archives Portal Europe

The Archives Portal Europe provides access to information on archival material from different European countries as well as information on archival institutions throughout the continent. Within the next years, this installation will develop both technically and in terms of content addition and we welcome your feedback which can be sent using the [contact form](#).

Professional strategies to assure reliability

- Structured presentation in combination with full text search
 - Gives an overview of the whole and the external limits
 - Shows backgrounds and original contexts
 - Allows selection of parts of the whole before a search (->self determined ranking)
 - Three layers architecture: Archival landscape, Holdings guides, finding aids with digital reproduction

Organisation

- No registration required
 - Only freely accessible descriptions and digitisations are presented
 - No rights management
 - No session management (so far)
- Business model: Reduced importance of the central installation
 - Combination of central technical infrastructure and decentralised responsibility for the content
 - Dashboard for content providers with transparent operations, tools for online or offline preparation of data and download possibility of data processed online.

Simple technical infrastructure

- The content is uploaded in the form of XML- files.
 - Findings aids, holdings guides and archival landscape: EAD
 - Records creators descriptions (Holdings guides): EAC
 - Information on Institutions: EAG
 - Digital reproductions or born digital documents (if uploaded): METS, linked to EAD.
- With links between the layers.
- Result: a sort of a Union Finding Aid with overall structure.

Reasons for using EAD

- Files stabilize the sequence of descriptive units - as in text files
 - They show contexts - results are shown together with their non-found neighbors.
- Files can be subdivided into chapters and subchapters.
 - They represent the internal structure of the holdings.
 - They give useful information on their outer borders.
- The meta-information on the file is included in the file
 - Makes it easy to share data from different sources

EAD allows a combination of old and new functionalities

- A data model with low complexity open for highly complex research interfaces, combining:
- Functionalities of the book form:
 - providing whole finding aids instead of isolated descriptive units -> give an overview of the whole
 - keeping everything together in the right order and in its relations -> offer of structures for navigation
- Functionalities of the digital form:
 - fast full text search across borders
 - using links
 - open for use at any time from any place

Summary:

How can digital archival information be made more trustworthy?

- Let users trust their own eyes instead of forcing them to trust automated operations of the computer or the system.
- Create possibilities to assess the reliability of the information by the users themselves.
 - Present the materials in the frame work of their contexts of creation.
 - reduce automated guess of needs (f.i. personalisation, ranking, filtering) which creates uncertainty.

Archives' support for Public History

- Offer selected and well presented material for information.
- Open spheres for finding out new answers in archives.
- Provide the tools for assessing the validity of the answers found.
- Assure the possibility to discuss results with others who can easily access and identify the same sources.
- Enable users of archives to assume full responsibility for their findings.