

No Archive is an Island – A Tale of Exploring a Brave New World

Kerstin Arnold¹

¹ Archives Portal Europe Foundation, Prins Willem-Alexanderhof 20, 2595 BE The Hague, Netherlands

Abstract

For centuries, archives have worked on their own. Their functions of preservation and access were specific to one public body, one organisation, one person or family, thereby often bound to a specific location or region or nation. Following the principle of provenance, there wasn't much of an overlap between documents from one archive and those from another when it came to the actors that had created, worked with, and used the documents held by the archival institutions. And even if there was overlap regarding the persons and organisations that these documents were about, those documents were - in their majority - still unique to a specific archive with no necessity to share with other archival institutions, as researchers would come to the place where the originals were held. Today's archival landscape might not necessarily look that different, even with all the initiatives of aggregating archival descriptions throughout the last 10 to 15 years, but the map of archival research certainly does. Expectations of users have changed with their experience of the Internet and “all things digital”, they want to access the documents they are interested in from where they are, and new connections between archival documents and the entities that one can find within them are surfaced not only from within the archives but also from other sources. This keynote will explore why linking archives is so important, what the challenges are to reaching this goal, how standardisation can help, and which role aggregators such as Archives Portal Europe (www.archivesportaleurope.net) and Europeana (www.europeana.eu) can play in all of this.

Keywords

Archives, Archival description, Standardisation, Linked Data, Linked Open Data, Aggregation

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EMAIL: kerstin.arnold@archivesportaleurope.net

ORCID: 0000-0002-4344-3798



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