TEMAS

Thesaurus of Early Modern Archival Sources

DURATION	BUDGET
15/12/2016 - 15/03/2019	**136.500 €**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The divide between archival science and historical scholarship has been growing for several decades. Many researchers struggle with formal descriptions in archival research aids and often do not take into account the provenance, functions and preservation context of historical records. Consequently, they risk to overlook not only interesting record types, but also essential information to interpret them correctly. The BRAIN project TEMAS (Thesaurus of Early Modern Archival Sources) aims to diminish this so-called 'archival divide' by creating a digital knowledge platform for early modern record types. Building on inventories, typological and historical research, the TEMAS database will bring together the scattered knowledge on serial, prevalent and rich record types for the period 1482-1795 in a structured way.

During the first stage of the project, roughly 500 document types will receive a clear definition. By mapping hierarchical and associative relationships between them, the structure of the database will be designed simultaneously. These key elements will give future users the opportunity to familiarize themselves with archival terminology and to gain insight in the interconnectivity between record types. In the second stage of the project, documentary forms will be linked to the agents or institutions that have created them (e.g. city councils, abbeys, courts…). Essential information concerning the provenance, function(s), nature and chronological reach of each record type will be subsequently added to the database. By combining this contextual information, the TEMAS database will enable researchers to assess more accurately the possibilities and limitations of archival sources, even before entering the archive(s). Vice versa, the database also offers interesting perspectives for researchers who encounter unknown documentary forms in archival research aids.

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This way, the TEMAS platform aims to bridge the gap between formal descriptions by archivists and the content-based questions of researchers. The database will also be enriched with representations of relevant samples in order to facilitate the recognition and contextualisation of records. Links to relevant inventories, source editions and historical research will be added as well in order to enable users to gain more in-depth knowledge if they wish. In a more indirect way, the database will contribute to the standardization of archival terminology, and even more, highlight the richness of early modern archives of institutions, families and persons. The TEMAS interface may thus function as well as a source of inspiration, inducing new archival and historical research. To that end, the research team will also initiate research on patterns in early modern record production – a new and promising strand of research. From the fifteenth century onwards, growing state intervention and processes of bureaucratization led to an unseen increase in record production and the emergence of new documentary forms. The main trends in this evolution can be found in the registration of people, cartography, correspondence, the explosion of court records and the recording of decision-making in general. The TEMAS database will greatly facilitate this research, given that it can be used as a tool for in-depth research on the evolution and impact of patterns of record production in the early modern Low Countries.

The TEMAS platform will be developed with the technical assistance of the ICT department of the State Archives of Belgium and the Task Force Digital Humanities of the University of Leuven (KU Leuven). Frequent consultations with archivists, archive visitors and lecturers in modern history are a crucial part of the project as well. Only by building on their expertise and experiences, the database can be developed as an accurate, user-friendly and useful instrument for researchers, students, archivists and other users.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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LINKS

https://www.kuleuven.be/onderzoek/portaal/#/projecten/3H170224?hl=en&lang=en

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