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# Outcomes from the International Database- Archiving Working Group

Dr. Isabel Taylor

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Foto: UHH/Lutsch

# Agenda

- 1 History and membership
- 2 Presentations to date: some examples
- 3 Burning issues/key challenges
- 4 Plans
- 5 Discussion/questions

# Development

- Germinated at the end of 2021, began officially in January 2022. Then grew at an astounding rate



- Co-chaired first with Brett Abrams and then following his retirement with Rebecca Baker from NARA (our American colleagues are sadly on hiatus)

# Membership

- National archives of Estonia, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Latvia, and Switzerland
- Additional institutional members: the archives of the former State Security in Hungary, the archives of the Max Planck Society, the KOST in Switzerland, the EU Publications Office, the Municipal Archives Institutions Digital Resource Center in Trondheim and the Intercommunal archives for Møre and Romsdal in Norway



# How the group works

- Membership is free
- Meetings c. once a month, no compulsory attendance
- Very laidback: no-one is ever forced to prepare a presentation
- Presentations happen organically when a member wants to share a project or challenge
- Notes of presentations/presentation materials are shared in GoogleDrive
- Otherwise sometimes online coffee meetups to share latest developments in the various archives in database archiving
- If you want to join, send an email to [isabel.taylor@uni-hamburg.de](mailto:isabel.taylor@uni-hamburg.de)

# Some presentations to date

- NARA discussed the use of SIARD to archive datasets of wild horses that had been created by the US Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management
- The Estonian National Archives has presented on a project that used SIARD to archive building registry data
- The question of use has been discussed in depth:
  - The National Archives of the Republic of Slovenia and the Czech Republic have shown us how they use dbDIPview for access
  - The Danish National Archives has presented on the legacy system Sofia to render database content for researchers
  - The Estonian National Archives has shown us a method for using multitemporal databases

# Some presentations to date, continued

- Appraisal has been discussed, but usually only as part of a bigger project
- Presentations on non-SIARD topics: e.g. the Archives of the former Hungarian State Security has reported on experiments with Chronos
- Talks by industry professionals:
  - Presentations from KEEP Solutions on further development of the DBPTK
  - Presentation from Hub4Everybody on geodata

# Burning issues/key challenges

- How to find out which databases actually exist?
- How to appraise? Parts of database, whole database, or whole database without administrative side?
- Data quality: how far should it influence appraisal? How to deal with it in use cases?
- IT security and data protection affecting cooperation from government agencies re: installing SIARD software



# Burning issues/key challenges continued

- Geodata, also LOBs
- Methods of validation (NARA's AERIC tool, DBPTK's built-in validation method)
- How much to document/essential metadata?
- Use: the different ways of making database content available and which one to choose, ranging from generating single use copies for researchers to making some content freely accessible over the internet

# Even more challenges

- Incompatibility of tools with the DBPTK: more investment needed for R & D
- Dealing with databases that are incompatible with SIARD/the SIARD software
- Insufficient human resources, especially on the tech side. (Group enables mutual assistance with technical issues, helps to compensate this issue to some extent)

# Plans

- Keep on trucking!
- Working together on a SIARD handbook for beginning database preservation professionals
- Envisaged audience for the handbook: archivists without significant technical backup
- Aim: to enable archives with limited resources to accession less complex databases on their own
- Handbook will cover entire process of archiving with SIARD, from appraisal to use

# Main takeaways

- SIARD has by this point informally established itself as an international standard for database archiving –different archives in different countries have adopted it
- International collaboration is not only fun, but of tremendous practical help
- The group has also led to spontaneous co-operation in other archival fields
- If you would like to talk about your database archiving projects with other practitioners, join our group!

# Contact



## **Dr. Isabel Taylor**

Co-Chair of the International Database-Archiving Working Group; Head of Unit, Archival Core Functions

University of Hamburg Archives  
Mittelweg 177  
20148 Hamburg

+49 40 42838-1542

[isabel.taylor@uni-hamburg.de](mailto:isabel.taylor@uni-hamburg.de)