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# Cracking digital archival research and metadata: Archives Portal Europe

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## Abstract

Archives Portal Europe (APE) is an aggregator that connects the catalogues and digitised archival material of archives from more than 30 countries in a single research point. It is currently the largest online archival repository in the world, and it aims to connect all archival collections related to the history of European countries, from the large state archives to local and private archives. The portal allows to conduct research with an unprecedented outlook based on cross-country archival comparisons and multilingual search. Thanks to this new tool, the functions indicated by Unsworth as "scholarly primitives" are available to researchers, and expressed in new forms.

This workshop will present APE to both researchers and archivists as a tool that allows new types of historical research. Researchers will learn how to conduct research on APE in the most effective way possible; archivists will be presented with the metadata solutions applied by APE in order to provide the best possible returns to the users' search queries, while at the same time being sustainable and feasible for the partner institutions.

The workshop will consist of two parts: in the first part, an overview of the portal and its research features will be presented to the attendees by Dr Marta Musso, Research Manager for APE and Research Fellow at King's College London.

In the second part of the workshop, a more general reflection on how metadata can inform researchers will take place. The metadata policies and politics of APE will be presented by Ms Kerstin Arnold, technical coordinator of the portal, who will provide insights in the back-end perspective; Mr Johan Van Der Eycken will present the work of DARIAH's Working Group on Sustainable Standards; Prof Frank Fischer and Laure Barbot will present DARIAH-EU involvement in the Social Sciences and Humanities Open Cloud (SSHOC) project. Dr. Klaus Illmayer (t.b.c.) will make the connections to the Parthenos project. Following these presentations, speakers and attendees will be invited to reflect together on the role of metadata and cloud computing in digital archival research, and how archivists and researchers can collaborate to make digital archives as open as possible by improving searchability and retrievability.

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#### Target audience

The workshop is mainly aimed at history researchers, from any period and topic, who include strong elements of archival research and work on primary sources, particularly in a multi-national comparative perspective.

However, the workshop is also open to any archivist who wants to collaborate with archives goes and researchers in order to reflect on how to improve the functions of retrievability and searchability in a digital environment.

#### Deliverables

A document holding the output of the conversation, to become a series of guidelines / best practice for metadata and research.

**Keywords:** metadata, Archives Portal Europe, digital archives, digital history, scholarly primitives, SSHOC