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**The European Diary Archives  
and Collections Network – EDAC**

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## The European Diary Archives and Collections Network – EDAC

Figure 1. EDAC logo.



- 1 In June 2015, a network of collections of auto/biographical writings or – initially defined more narrowly – of diary archives and collections was founded in Amsterdam.<sup>1</sup> It was initiated by Miriam Nieboer, Monica Soeting, and Nina Wijsbek from the *Nederlands Dagboekarchief* [Dutch Diary Archive], and it was agreed to name this European network *EDAC – European Diary Archives and Collections*. Since then, the EDAC network has expanded successfully. Currently it has 11 member institutions in Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, and Hungary, including Philippe Lejeune, the well-known theorist of auto/biographical writings, who founded the *Association pour l'autobiographie et le patrimoine autobiographique* (L'APA France) in France in 1991. Staff members of the Dutch Diary Archive in Amsterdam are in charge of coordinating EDAC's activities.
- 2 After a smaller scale network meeting at the *Deutsches Tagebucharchiv* [German Diary Archive] in Emmendingen in late autumn 2017, the second EDAC network meeting took place in Vienna on 19 and 20 October 2018. The two-day event was organised by the *Sammlung Frauennachlässe* [Collection of Women's Personal Papers] at the University of Vienna's Department of History, and could successfully establish further networking throughout Europe.

Figure 2. EDAC-meeting, University of Vienna, October 2018. © Li Gerhalter.



- 3 The meeting opened with a round-table discussion on the topic ‘What is a diary?’ Representatives of five EDAC member institutions reported their experiences with the collection of diaries and other autobiographical texts, and reflected on genre definitions. During the debate it became very clear that – consistent with the substantial diversity and fluidity of all surviving diaristic texts in various archives or collections – these definitions must be formulated in a wider sense. This is all the more important when looking in detail at the heterogeneous writings of ‘ordinary people’ or those who, in different scientific cultures or literary canons, have long been excluded from the diary genre – such as women, young girls, the peasantry and common soldiers etc. The collections of the EDAC member institutions comprise many fascinating examples that show this.
- 4 Furthermore, the round-table discussion demonstrated that the scale of the collections of diaries or diary-like texts held by EDAC institutions is enormous. However, EDAC archives and collections do not only focus on this particular type of ego-documents, even though some of their names suggest that they do. They also collect various other forms of auto/biographical sources, which was also discussed in the subsequent coordination meeting with all EDAC members. Thus, it was decided to rename the network the *European Ego-Document Archives and Collections Network*, keeping the acronym EDAC. As a result, more archives or collections have the chance to join the network now; an objective which was explicitly mentioned at the meeting.
- 5 Other topics discussed at the coordination meeting included financial aspects as well as questions about the structure and organisation of the EDAC member institutions. It became clear that the framework conditions of these institutions differ substantially; some can rely on remunerated work (paid by communities, overarching institutions) whereas others primarily depend on voluntary work and must organise their funding each year – sometimes in vain. At the same time, all EDAC member institutions face similar problems such as the European Data Protection Regulation and increasing inquiries of researchers, the media, exhibition projects etc.

- 6 Overall, the EDAC meeting in Vienna took place in a very constructive atmosphere. It ended with the presentation of two MA-theses by students of the University of Vienna (Sarah Seidl and Veronika Siegmund), who, under the supervision of Christa Hämmerle, analysed some women's diaries from different historical contexts (birth and childbed during the nineteenth century, the Children's Evacuation Programme of the Nazis during World War II) which were provided by the *Sammlung Frauennachlässe*. The MA theses proved the potential of these sources for historical research. Each of them tells a unique story. However, research on auto/biographical texts in general also has a European dimension, as represented by the EDAC network. It remains to be hoped that its collections will be used more frequently to strengthen comparative European research.
- 7 Due to Covid-19 regulations, the next EDAC meeting will take place online in October 2020. The following meeting is planned to take place at the Dutch Diary Archive ([Nederlands Dagboekarchief](https://www.dutchdiaryarchive.nl/)).

Figure 3. Collection of Women's Personal Papers, University of Vienna: diary tower. © Li Gerhalter.



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## Links

<https://www.dagboekarchief.nl>  
<http://www.edac-eu.eu>  
<http://autobiographie.sitapa.org>  
<https://tagebucharchiv.de>  
<https://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/sfn>  
<http://archiviodiari.org>

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> First published as Gerhalter/Hämmerle 2018.

## Abstract

Li Gerhalter and Christa Hämmerle report on the second *European Diary Archives & Collections-meeting* that took place in Vienna on October 19 and 20 2018. The two-day event was organised by the Collection of Women's Personal Papers at the University of Vienna's Department of History, and could successfully establish further networking throughout Europe.

## Zusammenfassung

Li Gerhalter und Christa Hämmerle berichten über das zweite Treffen der *European Diary Archives & Collections*, das am 19. und 20. Oktober in Wien stattfand. Die Veranstaltung wurde von der Sammlung Frauennachlässe am Institut für Geschichte der Universität Wien organisiert und hat eine wichtige Grundlage für weitere internationale Vernetzungstreffen und Kollaborationen im Bereich der Aufarbeitung von Tagebuchbeständen gelegt.

**Keywords:** diary archives, womens' personal papers, European Diary Archives & Collections

**Schlagwörter:** Frauennachlässe, Tagebucharchiv, European Diary Archives & Collections

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