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correspSearch

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REFERENCES

correspSearch (<http://correspsearch.bbaw.de>). Released September 2014 by TELOTA, the Digital Humanities initiative of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

- 1 Numerous scholarly editions are constituted around the medium “letter“ which is a valuable source for historical and cultural research. The vast amount of scholarly editions of letters, in print and digital, makes it difficult to get an overview of edited letters in general and time-consuming to search for specific letters in particular. Problems of identifying correspondences may for example arise while searching for letters from a specific person, who is just one of many correspondents in an edition and not its central character. It can be even more complicated to retrace correspondence networks of cultural and intellectual movements such as Romanticism or a general collection of letters around a particular historical event such as the French Revolution. A first step to systematize editions of letters and to meet scholars’ needs is *correspSearch* (Correspondence Search), a web service that allows users to search for correspondence in various scholarly editions of letters, by sender, addressee, as well as place and time of origin.
- 2 *correspSearch* is developed and hosted by the TELOTA initiative at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities in cooperation with the TEI Special Interest Group for the edition of correspondences (<http://www.tei-c.org/Activities/SIG/Correspondence/index.xml>) and other scholars.¹ The content of *correspSearch* is user generated, which means hosts of scholarly editions of letters can provide metadata of correspondences via the Correspondence Metadata Interchanger Format (CMIF).² The structure and content of the interchange format is based on the TEI P5 element *correspDesc* (*correspondence Description*).³ As such it involves standardized Identifiers for persons (i.e. VIAF) and places (geonames) as well as a standardized format for dates.⁴ To

participate in *correspSearch*, any printed or digital scholarly edition of letters may provide indexes of letters in a CMIF file via an URL. On the *correspSearch* website a template is provided to simplify the creation of such a file for those unfamiliar with XML/TEI.

- 3 Almost three years after the release of *correspSearch*, approximately 23,000 records of letters of more than 90 editions and publications have been integrated into the database. Even if the numbers are promising, the long-term success of the web-service depends heavily on the continuous participation of editing projects. It is currently promoted mostly throughout German speaking countries. However it seems essential that *correspSearch* should become known throughout the whole international editing community. Another important factor for success will be the adoption of its procedure for creating and providing the indexes of letters as CMIF-file by the users. For those who are not familiar with XML/TEI, this method of data provision might be deterrent at first glance, even if such an interchange format is necessary to standardize the metadata as well as to guarantee synchronization if the content of an edition changes.
 - 4 All in all *correspSearch* is a successful attempt to systematize the large amount of scholarly editions of correspondences via metadata, creating a common registry for the research community. It could be expected that if and when *correspSearch* succeeds in continuously attracting editing projects to participate, it will be of great use to scholars by facilitating complex research queries and will help guide their way through the abundance of scholarly editions of letters both in print and digital form.
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NOTES

1. The Electronic Life of the Academy, <<http://www.bbaw.de/en/telota>>.
2. More information about the CMIF is available at <<http://digiversity.net/2015/perspectives-of-the-further-development-of-the-correspondence-metadata-interchange-format-cmif/>>.
3. See also <<http://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/de/html/ref-correspDesc.html>>
4. The *Virtual International Authority File* (VIAF) is an international service designed to provide convenient access to the world's major name authority files (<http://www.viaf.org>). *Geonames* is a database which provides geographic names (<http://www.geonames.org>).

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