



Preface

Sustainability of data is an aim often neglected if you look at the money and effort invested in digital solutions in research, politics, and industry. In the last 15 years, database technology has continually progressed, performance has scaled and conferences on database technology have flourished. In contrast, there were very few dedicated events on how to secure efficient and effective access to database content for longer periods. Three workshops took place in the first decade of this century, at Berne in 2003 (Erpaworkshop 2003), Edinburgh (PresDB 2007), and Stockholm (van Horn 2007). Discussions continued at preservation conferences like the Digital Curation Conference, iPRES, or Preservation and Archiving Special Interest Group (PASIG) meetings. But it was after a long gap that the “Databases for 2080” workshop of 2021 once again addressed all aspects of this subject.

Society depends not only on database technology, but also on the ability to trust. Trust between humans is not only indispensable across space, but also across time. The signal sent by a certain person in 2020 must be clearly and unambiguously interpretable in 2080. Archivists at different places in the world first started to preserve database content in the 1970s. At the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, we started only in 2002 and in 19 years, we have gathered over 300 million items in about 40 data series, mostly of statistical nature. The subjects include, among many others, museums, criminal justice, and environmental data. We are merely a tiny player in the world of data archives.

All data has been ingested in the DIMAG software suite that we started to use in 2006. Since 2010, we have been developing it with a community of development partners that now comprises over 200 archives in German-speaking countries. DIMAG is suitable for all kinds of digital objects. We have versatile and robust ingest tools and established methods to ensure authenticity. We are working on preservation planning tools that enable controlled format migration. But are our holdings still coded in the most suitable database formats? Did we sufficiently document them? Do we provide efficient ways for re-using database content? Many of these questions have been asked by colleagues worldwide and may be answered.

This is the reason for Kai Naumann’s activities, as explained in the opening chapter. I would like to thank all presenters, minute takers, and discussion hosts, especially Kai and all other people at the Landesarchiv and worldwide who helped in preparing, hosting, and reporting this workshop.

Gerald Maier
President of Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg