Learning through connecting: data management as a basis for meaningful use of legacy data - The African Archaeology Archive Cologne

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Résumé

For more than 50 years the African Archaeology at the University of Cologne has conducted field research in various parts of Africa, particularly in the Eastern Sahara and in Namibia. The focus was on environmental history and on rock art, with internationally renowned research schemes like ACACIA (Arid Climate Adaptation and Cultural Innovation in Africa) and 'Rock Paintings of the Upper Brandberg'. Much of it was published in close co-operation with the Heinrich-Barth-Institut, including six voluminous catalogues of rock art and 26 monographs on African archaeology.
Most of the materials accumulated in the research projects are not digital in origin and are now digitized and made accessible in the digital online archive AAArC (African Archaeology Archive Cologne). Besides being a repository for tens of thousands of pictures, also whole documentations of excavation are made accessible here.

Digitising the repositories of Cologne's African Archaeology within the AAArC project started in 2012, using the DAI (German Archaeological Institute) data-interfaces Arachne, DAI-Gazetteer and DAI-Zenon. Today AAArC opens web access to thousands of fieldwork documentations, pictures and tracings of rock art. Open access interoperability of metadata integrated to picture formats is achieved. Exploiting database management systems of highly varied structure in a digital repository is achieved through collaboration with IANUS (Research Data Centre Archaeology & Ancient Studies), a national long-term preservation digital archive for archaeological data.
AAArC offers participation in digital heritage content management, thus perpetuating the long lasting cooperation of Cologne's African Archaeology with a number of African countries. The AAArC online archive aspires to make the full range of archaeological documentations accessible online and not just pictures. Thus AAArC ultimately enables a digital homecoming of complex research data to their countries of origin.

Mots-Clés: digital archive, open access, African archaeology, rock art, cultural heritage management

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