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## Chapter 2

# Traces of Jewish Hamburg: A Digital Source Edition of German-Jewish History

**German Summary:** Dieses Kapitel erläutert, nach einer kurzen Einführung zur jüdischen Geschichte Hamburgs als räumlichen Fokus, den konzeptionellen Rahmen der vom Institut für die Geschichte der deutschen Juden (IGdJ) herausgegebenen digitalen Quellenedition „Hamburger Schlüsseldokumente zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte“ sowie dessen zentrale Eigenschaften aus der Perspektive der jüdischen Geschichte. Er beschreibt die technische Realisierung und analysiert Umfang, Akzeptanz und Nutzung der Edition seit ihrer Veröffentlichung. Abschließend werden bereits realisierte und noch in Umsetzung befindliche Erweiterungen der Online-Edition an der Schnittstelle zwischen Fachwissenschaft und Public History vorgestellt.

Das jüdische Erbe Hamburgs wurde durch Migration und Vertreibung, am gravierendsten durch die nationalsozialistische Verfolgung, zerstört oder an die unterschiedlichsten Orte weltweit zerstreut. Deswegen hat sich die in diesem Kapitel diskutierte Edition zum Ziel gesetzt, wichtige Teile dieses Erbes digital zusammenzuführen, besser zugänglich zu machen und nachhaltig zu sichern. Seit September 2016 ist das von der DFG geförderte zweisprachige (deutsch/englisch) Digital History-Projekt im Internet frei zugänglich.<sup>1</sup> Ausgehend von mehr als 100 digitalisierten Quellen widmet sich die Edition 400 Jahren jüdischer Präsenz in der Hansestadt, um Veränderungen und Kontinuitäten auch in einer longue durée-Perspektive zu beleuchten. Die Edition setzt einer Verengung der jüdischen Geschichte auf die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus die Vielfältigkeit und Widersprüchlichkeit der jüdischen Vergangenheit entgegen.

In der hypertextuell aufgebauten Edition werden die Quellen als Transkript und digitales Faksimile bereitgestellt und Personen, Organisationen und Orte in den Transkripten und Übersetzungen systematisch mit Normdaten ausgezeichnet. Bei der Digitalisierung, Textauszeichnung und Metadatenerschließung greift die Edition auf etablierte Standardformate digitaler Editionen und der Langzeitarchivierung zurück.

Nutzerfreundlichkeit und Bedienbarkeit sind für die Edition von zentraler Bedeutung. Dazu gehören umfassende Recherche- und Filtermöglichkeiten, mit

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<sup>1</sup> <https://juedische-geschichte-online.net/>.

denen Nutzer\*innen die Inhalte unter anderem über verschiedene Zugänge (Karte, Zeitstrahl, Themen) abrufen können. Zahlreiche Quellen der Themenkategorie „Judenfeindschaft und Verfolgung“ stammen dabei aus dem Zeitraum 1933–1945. Hinsichtlich der Quellengattungen strebt die Edition Vielfalt an. Sie berücksichtigt dabei auch bisher von der Forschung eher vernachlässigte Quellen wie Bild-, Ton-, Videodokumente oder 3D-Repräsentationen von Objekten. Neben einer Vielzahl von neuen Möglichkeiten bietet die digitale Publikationsumgebung jedoch auch Herausforderungen: ein reflektierter Umgang mit der Herauslösung der Quellen aus ihrem Überlieferungszusammenhang – damit verbunden ihre Entkontextualisierung und Entmaterialisierung –, mit dem mehrsprachigen und mehrschriftlichen Quellenmaterial, mit der oft schwer rekonstruierbaren Rechtsnachfolge sowie mit der Notwendigkeit einer gesteigerten Sensibilität bei der Präsentation der Inhalte. Darauf antwortet die Edition mit Interpretations- und Hintergrundtexten, die jede der digitalen Quellen begleiten, in ihre historischen Kontexte einbetten und wichtige Informationen zur Überlieferung, Rezeptionsgeschichte und zu wissenschaftlichen Kontroversen liefern.

## 1 Introduction

Hamburg's Jewish heritage has been destroyed or scattered all over the world through migration and expulsion, in the most severe way due to National Socialist persecution. The online source edition “Key Documents of German-Jewish History,” which is published by the Institute for the History of German Jews (IGdJ) in Hamburg, aims to gather a significant selection of this heritage digitally for wide and easy accessibility and to preserve it in the long term. Since September 2016, the bilingual (German/English) digital history project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) has been freely accessible at <https://jewish-history-online.net/>. Through more than a hundred digitized sources, it covers 400 years of Jewish presence in the Hanseatic city in order to illuminate changes as well as continuities from a longue durée perspective.

Digital projects in the field of Jewish history can be roughly divided into two groups: On the one hand, there are research-oriented projects for digital preservation or metadata generation, on the other hand, there are educational or service projects targeted at a wider audience. The aim of the former, which include projects such as Judaica Europeana or Digibaect, is to provide the largest possible amount of digitized source material.<sup>2</sup> The latter are projects run primarily by

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<sup>2</sup> With respect to German-Jewish history, the report by Gerben Zaagsma on a conference held

museums, foundations, and teaching or memorial sites and which are aimed at a broad public and are accordingly attractively presented. Examples include the projects by the Anne Frank Zentrum,<sup>3</sup> the digital offerings of the Jewish Museum Frankfurt<sup>4</sup>—for example, the app “Invisible Places”<sup>5</sup>—as well as “Jewish Places” by the Jewish Museum Berlin,<sup>6</sup> to mention only a few. Such digital projects often focus exclusively on National Socialism as a period of research and do not always integrate the sources into a wider context. In contrast, our edition shows the diversity and contradictions of Jewish history without narrowing it down to this singular period. As the following section on Hamburg, the regional focal point of the edition, aims to illustrate, Jewish history cannot be reduced to victimization and experiences of persecution and extermination alone. However, despite the ambition not to focus on National Socialism alone, current research trends and public debates are ultimately reflected within our edition. As a project that is primarily based on authors volunteering and freely choosing sources related to their fields of study and professional expertise, a significant share of contributions is directly connected to the period 1933–1945.

By explaining the conceptual framework and the central characteristics of the online source edition, this article aims to present the perspective of Jewish history as well as the practical values regarding standardized file formats, normed data, and a strong focus on usability for a platform with a heterogeneous target group at the intersection of academic research and public history.

## 2 Jewish Hamburg—Past and Present

Recently, Hamburg’s rich and multifaceted Jewish history has received some attention beyond the historiographic discourse, as a glance at the regional and national press reveals.<sup>7</sup> Public interest was mainly raised by an initiative

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seven years ago at the IGdJ is somewhat surprisingly still quite comprehensive: “Tagungsbericht Jüdische Geschichte digital. 13.06.2013 – 14.06.2013, Hamburg,” *H-Soz-Kult*, September 10, 2013, accessed August 25, 2020, <https://www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/tagungsberichte-5011>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.annefrank.de/en/exhibition-berlin/>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.juedischesmuseum.de/en/explore/digital-museum/>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.juedischesmuseum.de/en/explore/detail/invisible-places-frankfurt/>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.jewish-places.de/>.

<sup>7</sup> Among others, the following articles have been published on the topic: Insa Gall and Sebastian Becht, “Hamburg will Wiederaufbau der Bornplatzsynagoge unterstützen,” *Hamburger Abendblatt*, January 28, 2020, <https://www.abendblatt.de/hamburg/article228263907/Hamburg-will-Wiederaufbau-der-Bornplatzsynagoge-unterstuetzen.html>; Eva Eusterhus, “Ein Zeichen allein reicht nicht allen,” *Welt*, February 10, 2020, <https://www.welt.de/regionales/hamburg/ar>

from Anjes Tjarks, leader of the party Bündnis 90/Die Grünen in Hamburg's senate and Hamburg state rabbi Shlomo Bistritzky, with support from all major political parties. Tjarks suggested rebuilding the Bornplatz synagogue on today's Joseph Carlebach square in the Grindelviertel area, in the immediate vicinity of the university campus. Before the Shoah, Grindelviertel was the main residential area for Jews living in Hamburg. Inaugurated in 1906, the Orthodox Bornplatz synagogue, home to the Hamburg uniform congregation, provided space for over 1,000 people and was an impressive architectural example of the neo-Romanesque style. The Bornplatz synagogue was not only the largest synagogue in Hamburg, but at that time the largest in Northern Europe. Only 32 years after its inauguration, it was seriously damaged by the National Socialists during the November pogroms of 1938 and demolished in 1939. A feasibility study commissioned by the Hamburg senate is currently examining the general conditions for rebuilding the synagogue.

Another former synagogue in the city has also been brought back to public attention: the New Israelite Temple. Built in 1844, this synagogue hidden in a backyard on Poolstraße is a testimony to the importance of Hamburg in the development of Reform Judaism.<sup>8</sup> The New Israelite Temple association was founded in Hamburg in 1817 as one of the first reform initiatives. Its prayer book of 1818/1819 then represented a widely noticed novelty, as the established liturgy was changed through various revisions, causing protest by the Orthodox denomination. Shortly before the National Socialist "seizure of power," the association relocated to a newly built temple in Oberstraße, inaugurated in 1931 and serving as a place of worship until the November pogroms of 1938. During World War II, the building in Poolstraße was mostly destroyed; today, visitors to Hamburg Neustadt can discover that only a remnant with the apse has been preserved. In the recent past, the history and significance of the temple has been brought to the attention of the public through a number of press articles and events. Due to the objection of the building's owner, however, these events could not take

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ticle205678747/Synagoge-am-Bornplatz-Ein-Zeichen-allein-reicht-nicht-alien.html; Hanno Rautenberg, "Wie modern muss eine neue Synagoge sein? In Hamburg soll eine Synagoge nach historischem Vorbild rekonstruiert werden. Schon regt sich Protest dagegen," *Zeit Online*, February 19, 2020, <https://www.zeit.de/2020/09/synagoge-hamburg-kirchenarchitektur-bau-modernisierung-bornplatzsynagoge>; all accessed August 25, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> For further information on the New Israelite Temple and the religious pluralization of Judaism see Andreas Brämer, "Religion and Identity," *Key Documents of German-Jewish History*, September 22, 2016, accessed August 25, 2020, <https://jewish-history-online.net/topic/religion-and-identity#section-3>.

place on the site itself, but only on the sidewalk in front of the building.<sup>9</sup> To date there is no consensus on how to proceed with this ruin.<sup>10</sup>

Despite such debates, many people living in Hamburg may not necessarily be aware that the Jewish history of their city and its former adjacent territories Altona, Harburg, and Wandsbek goes back further than the beginning of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the fact that there have been different congregations and groups with different origins, namely Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews, in such close proximity to each other yet in different domains already represents a historically notable situation.

With the migration of Jews from Portugal and Spain in the sixteenth century, the Hamburg area developed into an important site of European Jewry. Hamburg profited from this influx, as it boosted the Hanseatic city's international trade.<sup>11</sup> The Jewish cemetery in Altona, built in 1611, points to this history and is today an important cultural monument. In 1867, the municipal statutes of the German-Israelite Congregation Hamburg established the Jewish uniform congregation, a historical exceptional case that united various religious denominations under a single roof. The peculiarity lies in the fact that it formed an umbrella congregation with three religious associations. It was possible to join the congregation without choosing a religious association.

As a port city, Hamburg was also an important transit location for more than half of the over two million Jews who emigrated from Eastern Europe to the United States between 1880 and 1914.<sup>12</sup> After the Shoah, in the second half of the twentieth century, the importance of the Hanseatic city as a place of worldwide trade came back into focus and new Jewish migration routes developed. In this context, the arrival of Persian Jews from Iran from 1950 onwards should be mentioned: For them, Hamburg with its carpet trade became an attractive place to

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<sup>9</sup> Edgar S. Hasse, "Tempel-Ruine in der Neustadt von Einsturz bedroht," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, November 29, 2019, <https://www.abendblatt.de/hamburg/article227778695/tempel-ruine-denkmalsschutz-judentum-hamburg.html>; Moritz Piehler, "Hilferuf einer Ruine," *Jüdische Allgemeine*, December 12, 2019, <https://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/gemeinden/hilferuf-einer-ruine/>; Andrea Richter, "Wir brauchen eine Synagoge, keine Luxuswohnungen," *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*, December 13, 2019, [https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/liberale-gemeinde-in-hamburg-wir-brauchen-eine-synagoge.1079.de.html?dram:article\\_id=465833](https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/liberale-gemeinde-in-hamburg-wir-brauchen-eine-synagoge.1079.de.html?dram:article_id=465833); all accessed August 25, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Andreas Brämer et al., *Der israelische Tempel in Hamburg*, Archiv aus Stein. Der jüdische Friedhof Altona 7 (Hamburg: ConferencePoint Verlag, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> Michael Studemund-Halévy, "Sephardic Jews," *Key Documents of German-Jewish History*, September 22, 2016, accessed August 25, 2020, <https://jewish-history-online.net/topic/sephardic-jews>.

<sup>12</sup> "Jewish Migration: Location Hamburg," last modified November 16, 2018, <https://juedische-geschichte-online.net/ausstellung/migration#intro>.

live before most of them moved on to the United States. The Jewish congregation of the post-war period was therefore shaped to a significant extent by these new members, a phenomenon that has hardly been researched so far. Fewer research as well as a lack of visibility in today's city landscape can also be noted for Jewish history before National Socialism. Visible are primarily memorials and commemorative plaques dedicated to the persecution and murder of Hamburg's Jews that took place during the time of National Socialism. On the grounds of the former Bornplatz synagogue, visitors now find the "Synagogue Monument" designed by Margrit Kahl (1942–2009) and inaugurated in 1988 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1938 November pogroms. This monument consists of granite stones left in the ground, which trace the destroyed ceiling vault of the synagogue in original scale.<sup>13</sup> Better known than this early "void" representation<sup>14</sup> are probably the more than 5,800 stumbling stones (*Stolpersteine*) that, since 2002, have been laid across Hamburg, in front of the last known homes of deported Jews.<sup>15</sup> This project is based on an initiative of the artist Gunter Demnig, who has been placing stumbling stones throughout Germany and other European countries since 1992.

But what about those traces of Jewish history—and Jewish presence—that are not as easy to find or recognize? Our digital source edition aims to present, among others, sources and contextualizing interpretation texts on the above-mentioned historical developments and specificities of Jewish Hamburg. In its completeness, the transmission of both written sources (from archives and libraries) and material heritage (in the form of Jewish cemeteries and gravestones) that exist for Hamburg is unique in the German-speaking lands. However, they are located in different places, distributed around the world. Archival records are today divided between Hamburg State Archive and the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup> Personal records have been dis-

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**13** Photo Pavement Mosaic Joseph-Carlebach-Platz (Bornplatz), edited in *Key Documents of German-Jewish History*, accessed August 25, 2020, <https://dx.doi.org/10.23691/jgo:source-100.en.v1>.

**14** Probably the best-known realization of architectural "voids" in Germany is the building of the Jewish Museum Berlin designed by Daniel Libeskind, cf. "The Libeskind Building," *Jüdisches Museum Berlin*, accessed August 25, 2020, <https://www.jmberlin.de/en/libeskind-building>.

**15** "Stolpersteine Hamburg," accessed August 25, 2020, [https://www.stolpersteine-hamburg.de/en.php?MAIN\\_ID=4](https://www.stolpersteine-hamburg.de/en.php?MAIN_ID=4).

**16** For further information see Björn Siegel, "Verworrne Wege. Die Gründungsphase des IGdJ," in *50 Jahre – 50 Quellen. Festschrift zum Jubiläum des Instituts für die Geschichte der deutschen Juden*, ed. IGdJ (Hamburg: Institut für die Geschichte der Deutschen Juden, 2016), 26–53, accessed August 25, 2020, [http://www.igdj-hh.de/files/IGDJ/pdf/hamburger-beitraege/igdj\\_50\\_jahre-50quellen-festschrift.pdf](http://www.igdj-hh.de/files/IGDJ/pdf/hamburger-beitraege/igdj_50_jahre-50quellen-festschrift.pdf). In the meantime, a contract was signed between Jerusalem and Hamburg for the digital consolidation of the archival holdings.

persed around the globe. Hence, bringing together scattered written but also visual and audiovisual sources at least virtually on a single site provides a great opportunity for an online project.

### 3 “Key Documents of German-Jewish History”—Goals, Features, and Challenges

The main goals of our edition are on one hand to impart knowledge about Hamburg’s rich Jewish history as briefly outlined above by gathering sources digitally, facilitating access, and thus encouraging new research. Furthermore, it represents a contribution to the preservation and study of Jewish heritage. On the other hand, the sources we selected—we call them “key documents”—provide exemplary insights into historical aspects and events in order to illuminate broader developments and questions in German-Jewish history. The edition aims to address a diverse audience and a wide spectrum of sources. Hamburg always acts as a point of reference, but ideally, every source has the potential to “open doors” to transregional contexts and new questions leading to a better and more vivid understanding of Jewish history beyond the local context.

For the selection of a source to become a “key document” within the edition, it is not important if it was previously published or unpublished. Instead, a source has to fulfill the following criteria

- first, to connect to a broader historical context and pose questions;
- second, to represent a characteristic example from a larger set of sources or tell a “typical” story because of its uniqueness;
- and third, to be clearly identifiable based on extensive information on the source such as time of creation, its author, etc.

Finally, the “key documents” presented in our edition are intended to raise awareness of the long and varied Jewish history of the city of Hamburg, to speak to a diverse target group, and to stimulate new research into the subject. The edition is conceived in such a way that an often-narrow focus on the period of National Socialism is contrasted with the diversity and sometimes contradictory aspects of the Jewish past since the early modern age. Sources from 400 years of Jewish presence in the Hanseatic city are presented to shed light on changes and continuities. In order to explore the full potential of an online edition, “key documents” are not limited to textual sources. Regarding different genres, the edition strives for diversity and therefore explicitly includes sources that have received little attention from the scientific community and the interest-

ed public so far, such as images, sound, audiovisual documents, or, currently at a prototype stage, a 3D-model.

Usability was a central aim while implementing the online edition. This includes comprehensive search and filter options. The edition is structured in such a way that users have, in principle, different ways of accessing the contents of the edition—through a timeline, a specific topic, or a map. There is an overview of the fifteen main topics of the edition. Included among these are, for example, “Migration,” “Religion and Identity,” as well as “Antisemitism and Persecution.” The majority of sources from the latter category cover the period of National Socialist reign. Each source can be assigned to up to three different topics by the editors. Alternatively, the sources can be accessed through search, an interactive map, a timeline, or the extensive registers which indexes all the persons, organizations, and places mentioned within the texts. But even though the edition provides all these options for search and access, we should always be aware that an overwhelming majority of our readers do not start their visit to the site by any of these means. Instead, an online search engine, in most cases Google, will lead them directly to their very individual point of departure within the edition. Thus, an online offer like ours must be accessible from any starting point and cannot assume that visitors will follow any of the suggested paths through the site.

Ideally, the production and presentation of digital sources offers the opportunity for new “layers of knowledge” by adding a virtual dimension that allows for time and location-independent access, linkage, and markup. However, the digital publishing environment also presents a set of challenges. These include, first, dealing with the detachment of the sources from their traditional context of creation and transmission—and the associated de-contextualization and de-materialization. In addition, the need to cope with multilingual and multiscriptual source material, with legal successions that are difficult to reconstruct, and with an increased sensitivity in an online presentation of content must also be mentioned. The edition attempts to respond to these issues with interpretation and background texts for each source which, on the one hand, introduce the different topics and, on the other, discuss in detail every digital source. The introductions as well as the source interpretations are informed by current research. The interpretations are intended to re-embed the sources into their historical contexts and provide important information concerning tradition, history of reception, and scholarly debates. At around 1,500 words, they are relatively short and thus well suited for reading online.

As a collaborative project, the edition has many participants, such as the almost one hundred authors who have so far contributed individual or multiple contributions. In addition, there are fourteen editors who oversee the various

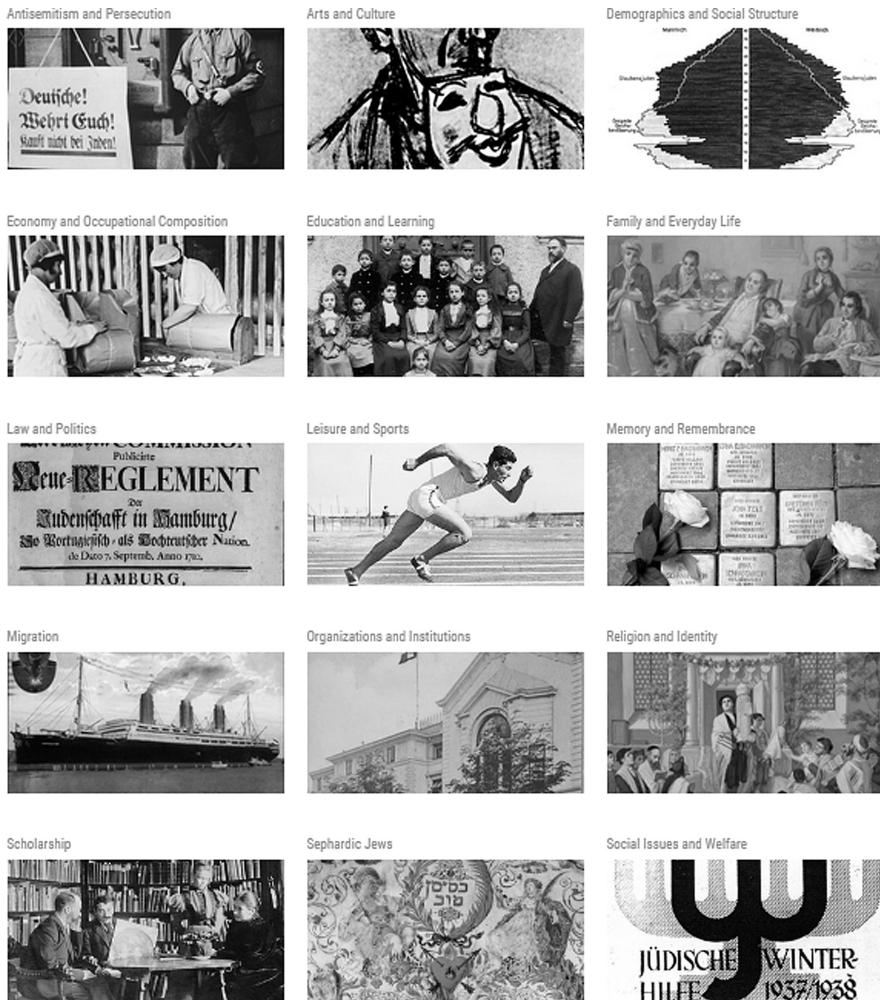


Figure 2.1: Screenshot from the edition's website: <https://jewish-history-online.net/topic>, accessed September 21, 2021.

subject categories, co-review submissions, and write the introductory texts to their subject area. All editorial texts are provided with a permanent URL under a Creative Commons license (mostly CC BY-NC-ND 4.0: attribution: name of the author, article, in: Key Documents of German-Jewish History, date, URL). An info box next to each source presents detailed information on its creation and its current holding institution. Every contribution has undergone

a multi-stage review process by the editors and publishers. The project team<sup>17</sup> regularly meets with its advisory board, which provides crucial feedback and offers thoughtful suggestions on the current focus and new directions of the site.

A further challenge arises from the fact that the edition sees itself as an open platform that strives to explore new modes of presentation. This is the reason why in 2018, the edition started to implement online exhibitions as a new format in addition to the original contributions. Most exhibitions are developed in co-operation with a partner and are presented on the edition's website. The exhibitions are intended to focus on certain themes of the edition and to connect various sources in order to provide an in-depth coverage of specific aspects within a single coherent presentation. Ideally, bringing the various sources together in such a manner will open up new perspectives and questions. To date, six online exhibitions have been realized, on Jewish life since 1945, on the author and scholar Max Salzberg and his wife, the teacher Frida Salzberg, on Jewish migration in Hamburg, on Jewish private photography in the twentieth century, on the history of Jewish school life in Hamburg, and, most recently, on sea travels and the maritime experiences of Ida Dehmel, Joseph Carlebach, and Ernst Heymann in the 1930s and 1940s. Up to now, every digital exhibition has followed the same navigational structure: Vertically arranged chapters present different topics for the users to learn about by scrolling down the exhibition. Horizontally running stations enable an in-depth study of each of these topics by exploring individual aspects and concrete examples.

In collaboration with the HistoriaApp which was developed at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, two city tours along the traces of Hamburg's Jewish past were created: The smartphone app guides a historical walk through the above-mentioned Grindelviertel district as well as a bicycle tour along locations between Neustadt, where Poolstraße is located, and Altona, where traces of Hamburg's Jewish past can be found.<sup>18</sup> Many sites of Jewish life visited on these tours are mentioned in the sources presented on the Key Documents website, so that visitors can find in-depth information about the respective places along their way in the edition's contributions.

The "key documents" target a heterogeneous audience ranging from university teachers and scholars dealing with various topics of Jewish history, to members of an interested lay public. There is an extra module featuring sources particularly suitable for use in high school and college education, complemented by

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<sup>17</sup> <https://jewish-history-online.net/about/team>

<sup>18</sup> For more information on the app, see <https://historia-app.de/juedische-geschichte-in-hamburg/>, accessed October 18, 2020.

information for students on how to interpret sources. The different offers are intended to connect the supposedly separate areas of academic and non-academic engagement with Jewish history. The possibilities of the digital here serve as an enrichment. With regard to the technical implementation, the different aims and skills of such a wide target group have to be taken into account as well.

## 4 Technical Implementation

The main goal when implementing the web-based front- and back-end for the Key Documents edition was to combine well-established formats and best practices in digital editing and long-term preservation such as TEI (encoding source transcripts and translations),<sup>19</sup> METS/MODS (description of digitized sources),<sup>20</sup> and DOIs (persistent addressing) with a user-friendly presentation.

The project aimed to demonstrate that digital editing according to scholarly standards as well as guidelines by funding bodies such as the DFG Practical Guidelines on Digitization<sup>21</sup> do not contradict a form of presentation and contextualization that can also be of interest to an audience outside the core of academic research. Following a well-established subset of the TEI/P5, in our case the DTA “Base Format” (DTABf),<sup>22</sup> provided important guidance on how to record the metadata in the TEI header as well as various formal (typographic) and semantic (meaningful) phenomena within our sources. In addition, the DTABf provides a set of freely available tools such as the DTAoX-authoring extension for Oxygen. This plug-in simplifies the markup process especially for newcomers without prior experience in XML editing.<sup>23</sup>

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**19** “TEI: Text Encoding Initiative,” accessed August 25, 2020, <https://tei-c.org/>. For an extensive introduction by one of the original editors of these guidelines, see Lou Burnard, *What Is the Text Encoding Initiative? How to Add Intelligent Markup to Digital Resources* (Marseille: OpenEdition Press, 2014), accessed August 25, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.oep.426>.

**20** Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek, “METS/MODS für Monografien. Ein Best Practice Guide,” accessed August 25, 2020, [https://pro.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/downloads/public/best-practiceguide\\_metsmods\\_monografien.pdf](https://pro.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/downloads/public/best-practiceguide_metsmods_monografien.pdf).

**21** Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, “DFG Practical Guidelines on Digitisation,” last modified December 2016, [https://www.dfg.de/formulare/12\\_151/12\\_151\\_en.pdf](https://www.dfg.de/formulare/12_151/12_151_en.pdf).

**22** Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, “Introduction to the DTABf,” accessed August 25, 2020, [http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/doku/basisformat/introduction\\_en.html](http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/doku/basisformat/introduction_en.html).

**23** Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, “Hilfreiche Tools und Anwendungen,” accessed August 25, 2020, <http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/doku/basisformat/hilfreicheTools.html>.

The presentation of textual sources in the edition consists of a digital facsimile and the transcript, as well as translations into English and—for foreign language sources—into German. Transcriptions and sometimes transliteration—for example, for Yiddish texts originally composed in Hebrew script—not only simplify the reading of hardly legible handwritings, they also provide an important bridge between the facsimile and a translation into modern German or English. The viewer supports switching and parallel presentations between these different levels—that is, the digitized source or the transcription—and can thereby help to trace the editorial steps back to the original document. This makes the process both transparent as well as educational, and—in case a reader disagrees with the edition's preferred reading—a matter of scholarly debate.

Thanks to our site's reliance on TEI and METS, we were able to easily integrate the user-friendly viewer from the MyCoRe-project into our site<sup>24</sup> and provide an integration with the standardized DFG-viewer as required by the founding agency.<sup>25</sup> All relevant metadata and the rights information from the TEI header are provided in the info box next to the viewer. This same information is used again to assign permanent DOIs through the DataCite-API<sup>26</sup> and is made available in machine-readable form according to Open Archives Initiative's Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH).<sup>27</sup>



**Figure 2.2:** From a source to a document: steps leading from an archival source to an online document. Design: Sandra Morath, edelweiss\* büro für grafik und design.

<sup>24</sup> Sebastian Hofmann and Kathleen Neumann, “Bildbetrachter – MyCoRe-Viewer,” last modified June 2, 2020, [https://www.mycore.de/documentation/frontend/frontend\\_image\\_viewer/](https://www.mycore.de/documentation/frontend/frontend_image_viewer/).

<sup>25</sup> “DFG Viewer – the project,” last modified July 17, 2020, <http://dfg-viewer.de/en/the-project>.

<sup>26</sup> “DataCite MDS API Guide,” last modified March 2020, <https://support.datacite.org/docs/mts-api-guide>.

<sup>27</sup> The edition's OAI-endpoint is <https://jewish-history-online.net/oai>. For more information on the protocol, see “Open Archives Initiative. Protocol for Metadata Harvesting,” accessed August 25, 2020, <https://www.openarchives.org/pmh/>.

The edition features a hypertextual structure. All persons, organizations, places, epochs, and events mentioned in the transcript, translation, and accompanying texts are systematically encoded with authority data. Thereby, additional information from the Linked Open Data cloud can be integrated into the edition's knowledge graph. Among others, we integrate information on persons and organizations from the Integrated Authority File (GND) of the German National Library<sup>28</sup> as well as geographical information from Getty's Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN). Standardized identifiers also provide the basis for mutual linkage with other digital history projects. We both provide GND-BEACON lists and make use of *findbuch.net*'s BEACON service to interlink persons and organizations with a wide range of online initiatives from GLAM institutions and academic research to corresponding Wikipedia entries.<sup>29</sup> In addition, a full bibliography is compiled as a Zotero Group,<sup>30</sup> and linked back and forth from the respective texts. Lesser-known terms are explained and linked to the site's glossary.

Academic offers tend to focus on the quality of their content while all too often neglecting its appearance. By one of TEI's guiding assumptions, the structure of a document can and should be separated from how it is being displayed. But the overwhelming majority of readers of an online edition does not reflect on the form of encoding powering the site. They see the browser's rendition and often decide within a few seconds whether they should look closer at the page or leave immediately.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, a clear message combined with an attractive presentation and an intuitive user experience are key factors needed to draw a heterogeneous group of users deeper into a site. For our project, the decision to involve a professional web designer at an early stage and thus treating content, form, and function equally from conception to initial realization and later adjustments of the project proved to be very beneficial.

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<sup>28</sup> "The Integrated Authority File (GND)," last modified November 26, 2019, [https://www.dnb.de/EN/Professionell/Standardisierung/GND/gnd\\_node.html](https://www.dnb.de/EN/Professionell/Standardisierung/GND/gnd_node.html).

<sup>29</sup> Wikipedia, "BEACON," last modified August 11, 2020, <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:BEACON>, provides an extensive compilation of sites providing BEACON lists, most of which are integrated into the SeeAlso-Service we are using, <https://beacon.findbuch.de/#sect-pnd>, accessed August 25, 2020. For additional information, see Harald Lordick's case study on the value of BEACON lists for German-Jewish history: "BEACON – 'Leuchtfeuer' für Online-Publikationen," accessed August 25, 2020, <https://djgd.hypotheses.org/672>.

<sup>30</sup> The integration into the front-end makes use of "Zotero Web API v3," last modified June 14, 2020, [https://www.zotero.org/support/dev/web\\_api/v3/start](https://www.zotero.org/support/dev/web_api/v3/start).

<sup>31</sup> Jakob Nielsen, "How Long Do Users Stay on Web Pages?," accessed August 25, 2020, <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-long-do-users-stay-on-web-pages/>.

Although online exhibitions by GLAM institutions have found similar acceptance and popularity during the past two decades as scholarly digital editions, no XML format to describe the content of these showings comparable to the TEI has so far been established. Instead, plain HTML or markup and custom tags as defined by the Content Management System (CMS) used by the publishing institution are still the preferred way to implement these presentations.<sup>32</sup> Since this new mode of presentation was integrated into our site at a later stage, we lacked the means to devote ourselves to compiling a proper XML schema for online exhibitions. We thus had to settle on a suboptimal approach with respect to long-term preservation and cross-device presentation by choosing plain HTML-markup according to the site's CSS framework and a JavaScript-library for user interaction.<sup>33</sup>

The code to integrate all these components into a seamless user experience has been written in a popular web application framework and has been published on the GitHub code-sharing platform for inspection and potential reuse.<sup>34</sup> Since certain assumptions of our edition—such as the bilingual presentation, the fifteen main topics, and the decision to provide an interpretation whose function is to “open the door” to every source—are currently part of the code logic, this Open Source publication cannot yet provide a turn-key solution for other scholarly editions. But we are currently busy moving such assumptions from code to configuration and are committed to provide consultation and support to any initiative eager to base their project on this platform.

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<sup>32</sup> Therefore, little has changed compared to Chapter 6 on “Technical Issues: Markup Languages” in Martin R. Kalfatovic, *Creating a Winning Online Exhibition: A Guide for Libraries, Archives, and Museums* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2002). An otherwise very useful Handbook on Virtual Exhibitions and Virtual Performances published by INDICATE, a European Union FP7 project, in 2012 briefly mentions “static web pages in HTML,” “a CMS with dedicated modules software applications designed especially for virtual exhibitions,” or “proprietary platforms, which need to install specific plug-ins” as three possible technologies, “Handbook on Virtual Exhibitions and Virtual Performances,” last modified August 2012, [http://www.dedale.info/\\_objets/medias/autres/indicate-handbook-on-virtual-exhibitions-and-virtual-performances-751.pdf](http://www.dedale.info/_objets/medias/autres/indicate-handbook-on-virtual-exhibitions-and-virtual-performances-751.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> Alvaro Trigo, “fullPage,” accessed August 25, 2020, <https://alvarotrigo.com/fullPage/>.

<sup>34</sup> “Code for the Presentation of the Digital Source Edition Key Documents of German-Jewish History,” last modified January 4, 2020, <https://github.com/igdj/jewish-history-online>.

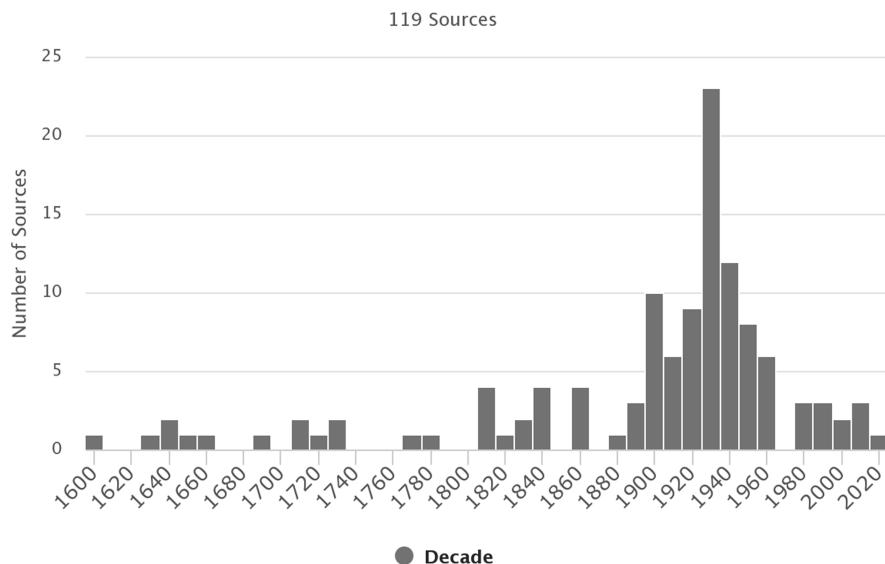
## 5 Acceptance and Results

Editions have a long tradition within the sphere of academic research. Printed editions usually appear in heavy and quite expensive volumes. Distribution is thus often limited to the shelves of specialized libraries where only a small circle of specialists is able to take note. Contrary to their claim, they rarely serve as a basis for new research. However, the shift in media from print to freely accessible online publications has fundamentally changed access to editions and to the materials they contain. Sources can now be accessed remotely, transcripts can be searched in full text, and digital facsimiles may be integrated into the collection of sources created on one's personal computer. Internet search, social media, and online encyclopedias make editions visible to a broader public. This has a decisive impact on the user group, more so for topics of wide public interest, as is the case with Jewish history. Beyond collecting, preserving, and documenting, the presentation and dissemination of the material becomes a central aspect of an online edition.

Compared to a printed edition, a digital publication can be analyzed much more easily with respect to its contents and usage. The following short introspective examination of the current contents of our edition as well as an “extrospective” analysis according to the number, composition, and preferences of our visitors aims to demonstrate the value of such insights for the continued improvement of an online presentation.

For an analysis of content, metadata and textual markup can be queried to visualize the focal points and gaps in coverage, both across time as well as with respect to the topics treated by the sources. When looking at the date of creation, we find that from the 119 key documents published so far, fourteen cover the early modern period (1600 – 1800), another twenty are from the nineteenth century, and six are from the twenty-first. Two-thirds of our sources were thus created in the twentieth century: twenty-five before 1930, eighteen in the second half of the twentieth century, and thirty-five are direct witnesses to the National Socialist period.

Figure 2.3 demonstrates that the edition manages to document over 400 years of German-Jewish history in Hamburg. But this coverage is by no means even or without gaps. For example, for the 1970s as well as for many decades before the 1890s, there is currently not a single source. This uneven temporal focus reveals itself again in the basic biographical information pulled from the 848 persons currently recorded in the edition, a significant percentage of whom were born between 1855 and 1910. Figure 2.4 reflects the sad fact that it



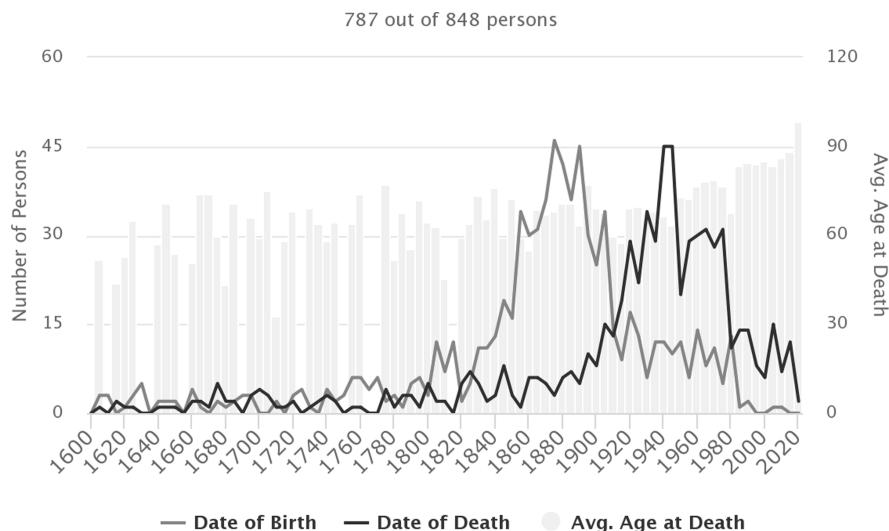
**Figure 2.3:** Temporal coverage of the sources: number of sources by decade. Graphic created by the authors.

was particularly these older generations of Hamburg's Jews that were deported to and killed in death camps before the end of World War II.<sup>35</sup>

Moving from the temporal to the thematic coverage, it comes as no surprise that the topics most frequently assigned to source interpretation reflect the prominent role of the period from 1930 to 1945 within the edition: Over 30% of the more than one hundred source interpretations deal with "Antisemitism and Persecution," around 27% with the closely related "Law and Politics," followed by "Religion and Identity" and "Organizations and Institutions" (both at 22%). Trailing topics such as "Sephardic Jews" and "Education and Learning" are currently underrepresented.

As important as the inward-looking reflection on what is being presented, is an external perspective as documented by explicit and implicit feedback from actual users. In a striking contrast to printed publications, in-depth reviews of

<sup>35</sup> On October 23, 1941, when emigration was prohibited nationwide, Hamburg's Jewish population diminished from almost 20,000 people in the 1920s to only 4,951 people. Of Hamburg's Jews at that time 85% were older than 40, and 55% were above the age of 60, see Miriam Rürup, "Demographics and Social Structure," *Key Documents of German-Jewish History*, September 22, 2016, accessed August 25, 2020, <https://jewish-history-online.net/topic/demographics-and-social-structure>.



**Figure 2.4:** Persons recorded within the edition by dates of birth and death. Graphic created by the authors.

digital editions and resources are still a rare exception throughout the humanities.<sup>36</sup> In our case, we were fortunate to receive a review on *H-Soz-Kult* with helpful suggestions for improvements with respect to presentation of the site and the site's search capability.<sup>37</sup> The edition features a contact form and solicits feedback, but only very few users take the effort to fill in a form or write an email. However, the edition's Twitter account (@keydocuments) enables a low-threshold exchange with the users of the edition as well as their feedback. Currently 481 followers are regularly informed about the developments of the project. Moreover, the Twitter account is used for linking the project with related digital offers.

To get an accurate impression on how, by whom, and through which channels an online offer is being accessed, web analytics provide important guidance, even if the reports are fully anonymized as in our local Matomo installation. The

<sup>36</sup> A set of helpful “Criteria for Reviewing Scholarly Digital Editions” have been formulated by Patrick Sahle in collaboration with George Vogeler and the members of IDE, a review journal for digital editions and resources, last modified June 2014, <https://www.i-d-e.de/publikationen/weitereschriften/criteria-version-1-1/>.

<sup>37</sup> Jonas Jung, review of *Hamburger Schlüsseldokumente zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte. Eine Online-Quellenedition*, *H-Soz-Kult*, June 3, 2017, accessed August 25, 2020, <https://www.hsozkult.de/webreview/id/rezwww-171>.

strongest indicator of the continued demand and increasing acceptance of our site is the constantly rising number of visitors. The number of monthly visits steadily increased from a mere 600 in October 2016, the first month our site was publicly available, to over 6,000 in June 2020. While such numbers might appear minor when compared to commercial online publishers, this number reflects a growing public visibility that a small research institute such as the IGdJ could hardly ever achieve through traditional research and outreach efforts.

The steady rise is mostly due to visitors being directed there by search engines, which are responsible for around three-quarters of all visitors coming to the site. Referrals from social networks such as the edition's Twitter account, Facebook shares, and links from a wide variety of third parties—ranging from the institute's homepage, Wikipedia, or course platforms at various universities and high schools from around the world—constitute a relatively minor share of initial visitors (below 10%). However, due to their explicit interest in the specific links, these users are often much more engaged than users coming from a general search engine. While the latter will often press the back button immediately to leave the site, users coming from [www.igdj-hh.de](http://www.igdj-hh.de) on average stay almost seven minutes and open seven pages during their visit. This is significantly more than the overall average across all visitors: Visits are usually slightly below two minutes long and include the opening of two pages.

For a bilingual offer that spends a considerable amount of time and money on translations, it is important to know if this effort is being honored. Currently, 70% of the site's visits come from Europe (primarily from Germany, followed by Austria, the UK, and Switzerland), while 24% come from North America, and another 5% from Asia and Oceania. Visits from Africa and South America are barely visible. If we differentiate by language, we can see that visitors with a German-language browser (55.8%) visit slightly more frequently than those with an English one (38.8%). For all the other languages recorded (French, Spanish, Dutch, Hebrew, Russian, Italian, Chinese, and Polish), the number of visits is below 1% each. Corresponding to the regional distribution and the language preferences, about two-thirds of the pages visited are in German, one-third in English. There are also significant differences between the sections being viewed: The fifteen thematic overviews constitute the most popular section in English (35% of all English-language page views), where, for example, the overview "Antisemitism and Persecution" by Werner Bergmann serves as an often-referenced introduction for English readers without a specific regional interest. On the other hand, German-language visitors are not as much interested in survey texts; this section ranks sixth in German (10% of all German-language page views). Instead, source interpretations (21%) is the section most viewed, hinting that German speaking users look more closely into the various questions raised by

the “key documents” and the source interpretations. Non-German speakers, on the other hand, seem to appreciate that our site does not only offer sources, but also thematic overviews and introductions.

Online analytics also provide crucial insights into the devices used by visitors to view the site. While the majority of visits still come from a desktop computer (63%), smartphone usage is becoming increasingly prominent (32%)—more than a doubling compared to four years ago, when the site was initially launched (14% of visitors used a mobile device at that time). Mobile usage was explicitly supported from the foundation of the site through a responsive framework, but some sections such as the exhibitions do not yet work on smaller screens. By noticing such trends, it becomes clear that this and similar shortcomings need to be addressed and that regular testing cannot be limited to the project staff’s workplace computers.

## 6 Outlook and Conclusion

The recent past, so significantly shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, has clearly demonstrated the necessity and potential of digital offerings for research and education. At times when even libraries had to close, online resources were still available independent of the time and location of potential users. At the same time, it is important to reflect critically on how to approach the de-contextualization and de-materialization of the sources when detaching them from their conventional—analog—context of creation and transmission.

Digital projects have the advantage that they are in a state of constant flux and can flexibly react to the current demands of the academic community and the interested public. In our case, online exhibitions were introduced at a later stage to address some of the shortcomings mentioned above. In contrast to the individual sources, which stood at the center of the original edition, an exhibition provides the opportunity to present sources in a synopsis and thus emphasizes mutual connections, developments, and dependencies. The attractive visual presentation can appeal to users who do not have much previous knowledge and guides them through a specific topic. At the same time, the exhibitions can specifically present additional source material that has received little coverage so far—in our case, for example, realized by the exhibitions “History of Jewish School Life in Hamburg” and “Jewish Life since 1945.” In a similar way, the city tours in collaboration with HistoriaApp were developed in order to fuse the virtual with traces of Jewish history still visible on-site and thus, at least partially, re-contextualize and re-materialize some aspects of the sources presented online.

Currently, a new format is being developed in order to present extensive source material or entire collections of sources as opposed to the shorter extracts we selected as “key documents.” It will initially be launched with a thematic dossier on the diaries of Martha Glass, written during her time in the Terezín ghetto (1943–1945) to where she was deported from Hamburg at the age of 63. Her digitized diaries will be accompanied by transcripts, their translations, and a comprehensive collection of additional material. An introduction provides an overview of the history of the Terezín ghetto as well as of the role of ego-documents in times of persecution and Nazi terror. As with the regular contributions, all texts and transcripts will be encoded in TEI and tagged with metadata.

These new undertakings demonstrate how our edition tries to question itself critically and sees itself as an open platform that aims to continuously explore new formats of research and education. If the online publication is taken seriously as a presentation medium, there can no longer be a fixed format. Rather, as the project progresses, both the presentation and the selection of the materials must be constantly questioned and reinvented. If corresponding resources are available, such openness offers a great opportunity.

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