

An optimized platform for capturing metadata of historical correspondences

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The **Vernetzte Korrespondenzen** (*engl.* **Networked Correspondences**) project...

- investigates the correspondences and social networks of German scholars which went into exile during Nazi Germany
- processes four- “dimensional” data:
 - *Who* wrote a letter to *whom*?
 - *When* was a letter written?
 - From *where* to *where* was a letter sent?
 - *What* were the topics of a letter?
- tries to answer questions like
 - How did specific topics spread in time and space?
 - How did the authors deal with the Nazi seizure of power?
 - How did they socialize?



But before we can start to investigate, to process, and to answer questions, someone has to capture the metadata of all the letters in our corpus according to our four dimensions.

Author Title:	<input type="text"/>	Select	<input type="checkbox"/>
Author First Name:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author Middle Name:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author Last Name:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author Locality:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author State:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author Country:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Correspondent Title:	<input type="text"/>	Select	<input type="checkbox"/>
Correspondent First Name:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Correspondent Middle Name:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Correspondent Last Name:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Correspondent Street Address:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Correspondent Locality:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Correspondent State:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Correspondent Country:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Date of Writing:*	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> Format: MM / DD / YYYY <input type="checkbox"/>
Date Stamp on Envelope:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> Format: MM / DD / YYYY <input type="checkbox"/>
Number of Pages:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Language:	<input type="text"/>	Select	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rights:	<input type="text"/>	Select	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signature:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Condition:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Location:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Type:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

OK Print... Cancel

Author Title:	<input type="text"/>	Select	<input type="checkbox"/>
Author First Name:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author Middle Name:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author Last Name:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author Locality:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author State:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author Country:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
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Correspondent Street Address:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Correspondent Locality:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
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Date of Writing:*	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> Format: MM / DD / YYYY <input type="checkbox"/>
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Location:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Type:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

OK Print... Cancel

So, who wants to do it?

Author Title:	<input type="text"/>	Select	<input type="checkbox"/>
Author First Name:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author Middle Name:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author Last Name:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author Locality:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author State:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Author Country:*	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Correspondent Title:	<input type="text"/>	Select	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Location:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Type:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment:	<input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

OK Print... Cancel

So, who wants to do it? Nobody?

How can we improve that?

Our goals/requirements

Entering metadata should be...

- **simple:** accept unformatted input as far as possible
- **accurate:** entries have to be correct and unambiguous
- **focused:** no more input fields than necessary
- **intuitive:** nobody likes reading manuals
- **aided:** the system offers suggestions or provides context
- **fast:** it's a large corpus

The biggest challenge

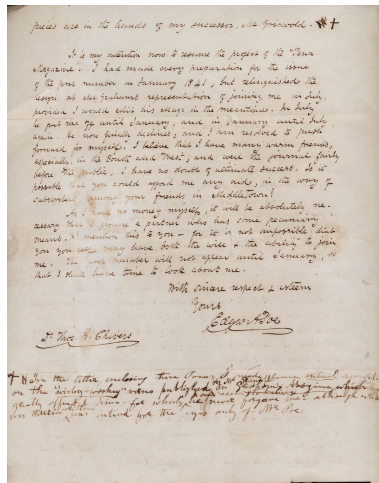
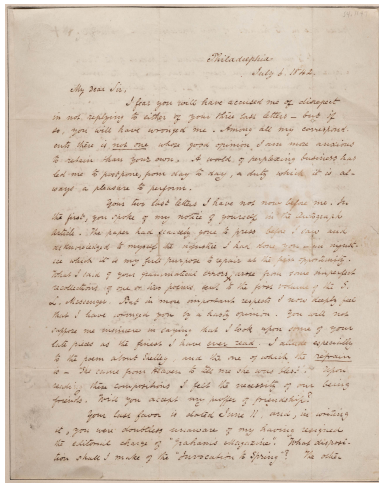
Simplicity



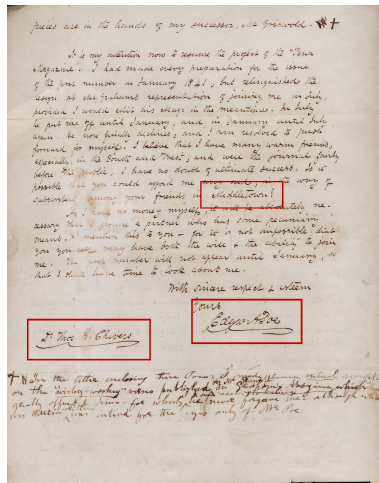
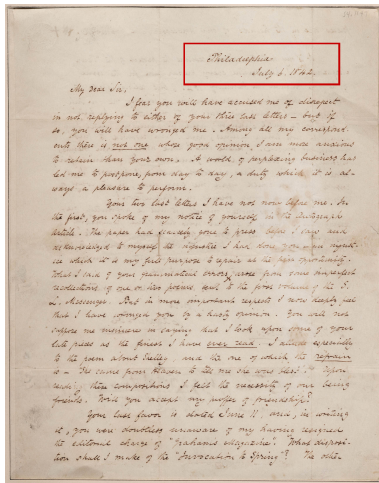
Accuracy

A demonstration.

Example: A letter from Edgar Allan Poe



Example: A letter from Edgar Allan Poe



Example: A letter from Edgar Allan Poe

With sincere respect & esteem
Yours
Edgar Poe

Dr. Thos. A. Chivers

I have the letter, enclosing there
on the "wily-washy" memo pub

Philadelphia
July 6. 1842.

you will have accused me of disrespect
ther of your three last letters - but if
vized me. Among all my correspond.

... and with me
doubt of ultimate success.
me away said, in the w
is in Middletown?
yself; it will be absolutely
who has some pecunia
it is not impossible

Firefox

New Letter - Correspondence Met...

localhost:3000

Google

Add a New Letter

Sender

Sender Address

Recipient

Recipient Address

Date of Writing

Content Summary

Create Letter

Cancel

Add a New Letter

Sender

Sender Address

Recipient

Recipient Address

Date of Writing

Content Summary

Create Letter

Cancel

Add a New Letter

Sender

poe|

Edgar Allan Poe

* 1809, † 1849

American poet, short story writer and literary critic

James Poe

* 1921, † 1980

Screenwriter

Ted Poe

* 1948

American politician

Raymond Poe

* 1944

American politician

William F. Poe

* 1931

American politician

Neilson Poe

* 1809, † 1884

American politician

Anthony Poshepny

* 1924, † 2003

United States Marine

Junior Siavii

* 1978

Player of American football

Richard Poe

* 1946

American actor

Illmaculate

* 1986

American rapper

Add a New Letter

Sender

Edgar Allan Poe

* 1809, † 1849

American poet, short story writer and literary critic

James Poe

* 1921, † 1980

Screenwriter

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Junior Siavii

* 1978

Player of American football

Richard Poe

* 1946

American actor

Illmaculate

* 1986

American rapper



Edgar Allan Poe was an American author, poet, editor, and literary critic, considered part of the American Romantic Movement. Best known for his tales of mystery and the macabre, Poe was one of the earliest American practitioners of the short story and is generally considered the

inventor of the detective fiction genre. He is further credited with contributing to the emerging genre of science fiction. He was the first well-known American writer to try to earn a living through writing alone, resulting in a financially difficult life and career. (Source: Wikipedia)

Born:

January 19, 1809 in Boston, Massachusetts, United States

Died:

October 07, 1849 in Baltimore, Maryland, United States (im Alter von 40 Jahren)

Alternative Names:

- Edgar Poe
- E. A. Poe

Authority Control:

[VIAF](#), [LCCN](#), [Worldcat](#), [GND](#), [Wikipedia](#)

Add a New Letter

Sender

Edgar Allan Poe



Sender Address

wester

Wester, Lubbock, TX, USA

Wester, Columbia, MO 65201, USA

Wester, Vanceburg, KY 41179, USA

Wester, 48607 Ochtrup, Germany

Wester, 97253 Gaukönigshofen, Germany

Wester, 49740 Haselünne, Germany

Wester, 99955 Bruchstedt, Germany

Wester, 48351 Everswinkel, Germany



Create Letter

Cancel



Add a New Letter

Sender

Edgar Allan Poe



Sender Address

Wester, Lubbock, TX, USA

Wester, Lubbock, TX, USA

Wester, Columbia, MO 65201, USA

Wester, Vanceburg, KY 41179, USA

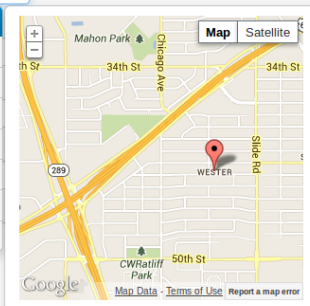
Wester, 48607 Ochtrup, Germany

Wester, 97253 Gaukönigshofen, Germany

Wester, 49740 Haselünne, Germany

Wester, 99955 Bruchstedt, Germany

Wester, 48351 Everswinkel, Germany



Create Letter

Cancel

Add a New Letter

Sender

Edgar Allan Poe



Sender Address

Philadelphia, PA, USA



Recipient

Thomas Holley Chivers

Thomas Holley Chivers

* 1809, † 1858

19th century American poet

Edgar Schiferli

* 1976

Dutch cricketer

Martin Chivers

* 1945

English footballer

Gary Chivers

* 1960

Professional footballer

Frank Chivers

* 1909, † 1942

English footballer

Basil Chivers

* 1939

English cricketer

Ian Chivers

* 1964

English cricketer

Nathan Chivers

* 1976

Australian Paralympic alpine guide skier



Thomas Holley Chivers was an American doctor-turned-poet from the state of Georgia. He is best known for his friendship with Edgar Allan Poe and his controversial defense of the poet after his death. (Source: Wikipedia)

Born:

October 18, 1809 in Georgia,

United States

Died:

December 18, 1858 in Decatur, Georgia (im Alter von 49 Jahren)

Authority Control:

[VIAF](#), [Wikipedia](#)

Add a New Letter

Sender

Edgar Allan Poe



Sender Address

Philadelphia, PA, USA



Recipient

Thomas Holley Chivers



Recipient Address

Middletown, CT, USA

Middletown, CT, USA

Middletown, OH, USA

Middletown, NY 10940, USA

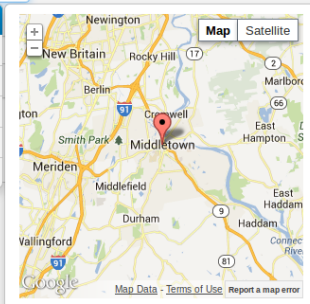
Middletown, NJ, USA

Middletown, DE, USA

Middletown, RI, USA

Create Letter

Cancel



Add a New Letter

Sender

Edgar Allan Poe



Sender Address

Philadelphia, PA, USA



Recipient

Thomas Holley Chivers



Recipient Address

Middletown, CT, USA



Date of Writing

July 6, 1842



Content Summary

Create Letter

Cancel

Filter: History Births Deaths Holidays

Sunday, 3. July 1842

- Thomas J. O'Brien, American politician, is born.
- James Marsh, American philosopher, Congregational clergyman and president of the University of Vermont, dies at age 47.

Monday, 4. July 1842

- Independence Day

Tuesday, 5. July 1842

- Charles Henry Morgan, American congressman for Missouri, is born.

Saturday, 9. July 1842

- Charles H. Tenney, American businessman, is born.

Add a New Letter

Sender

Edgar Allan Poe



Sender Address

Philadelphia, PA, USA



Recipient

Thomas Holley Chivers



Recipient Address

Middletown, CT, USA



Date of Writing

Independence Day 39



Content Summary

Create Letter

Cancel

Filter: History Births Deaths Holidays

Tuesday, 2. July 1839

- Twenty miles off the coast of Cuba, 53 rebelling African slaves led by Joseph Cinqué take over the slave ship Amistad.
- Henry Lumpkin Wilson, Georgian politician, is born.

Wednesday, 3. July 1839

- The first state normal school in the United States, the forerunner to today's Framingham State College, opens in Lexington, Massachusetts with 3 students.
- Hans Larsen Saakvitne, Norwegian politician, is born.

Thursday, 4. July 1839

- Independence Day

Saturday, 6. July 1839

- Jonathan Dixon, American politician, is born.

Add a New Letter

Sender

Edgar Allan Poe



Sender Address

Philadelphia, PA, USA



Recipient

Thomas Holley Chivers



Recipient Address

Middletown, CT, USA



Date of Writing

Independence Day 39



Content Summary

Create Letter

Cancel

Edgar Allan Poe



American poet, short story writer and literary critic

Born:

January 19, 1809 in Boston, Massachusetts, United States

Died:

October 07, 1849 in Baltimore, Maryland, United States (im Alter von 40 Jahren)

Add a New Letter

Sender

Edgar Allan Poe



Sender Address

Philadelphia, PA, USA



Recipient

Thomas Holley Chivers



Recipient Address

Middletown, CT, USA



Date of Writing

Independence Day 39



Content Summary

Address

Country: United States

Administrative Area Level 1: Pennsylvania

Administrative Area Level 2: Philadelphia

Locality: Philadelphia

Latitude: 39.95234

Longitude: -75.16379

Create Letter

Cancel

Add a New Letter

Sender

Edgar Allan Poe



Sender Address

Philadelphia, PA, USA



Recipient

Thomas Holley Chivers



Recipient Address

Middletown, CT, USA



Date of Writing

July 6, 1842



Content Summary

Dating

Date(s): 07/06/1842

Sorting Date: 07/06/1842

Certainty: 100%

Notes: --

Click the green icon to edit this dating.

Create Letter

Cancel

Add a New Letter

Sender

Edgar Allan Poe

Sender Address

Philadelphia, PA, USA

Recipient

Thomas Holley Chivers

Recipient Address

Middletown, CT, USA

Date of Writing

July 6, 1842

Content Summary

Create Letter

Cancel

Edit Dating



Date of Writing

July 6, 1842

Recognized Date(s)

07/06/1842



[Add Single Date](#) oder [Add Date Range](#)

Certainty: 65%

65%



Supplementary Notes

Apply Dating

Cancel

Add a New Letter

Sender

Martin Andert



Error

Unrecognized name.

Click the red icon to create a new person.

Sender Address

Philadelphia, PA, USA



Recipient

Thomas Holley Chivers



Recipient Address

Middletown, CT, USA



Date of Writing

July 6, 1842



Content Summary

Create Letter

Cancel

Add a New Letter

Sender
Martin Andert

Sender Address
Philadelphia, PA, USA

Recipient
Thomas Holley Chivers

Recipient Address
Middletown, CT, USA

Date of Writing
July 6, 1842

Content Summary

Create Letter

Cancel

Add New Person

×

Name

Martin Andert

Description

Date of Birth

1963

January

1

Place of Birth

Date of Death

Place of Death

Create Person

Cancel

Add a New Letter

Sender



Sender Address



Recipient



Recipient Address

Date of Writing



Error

Sender died before date of writing.

Content Summary

Outlook / Next steps

- As stated earlier, this is a proof-of-concept application.
- Things on our to-do list:
 - support for the fourth dimension (“*what*”)
 - multiple recipients; organizations as correspondents
 - customizable inputs
 - configurable relevance ranking
 - more output formats (JSON, XML, RDF, OA, etc.)
 - availability as a web-service endpoint
 - provide a programming interface (API)
 - ...

What do you think?