

LEGACY DATA: USING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

Legacy data present an immensely rich and varied body of largely unstudied information and allow present-day scientists and researchers to further our understanding of Turkey and the Black Sea region. The BIAA's own historical collections, including paper and photographic archives as well as archaeological collections, offer insights into the evolution of the topic or material under study as well as information about assets now lost. The British Institute at Ankara owns collections of squeezes and ceramic sherds as well as large photographic collections and archives that offer excellent study material for scholars in many disciplines, including archaeologists, historians, anthropologists and specialists in epigraphy and ethnography. This strategic research initiative aims to promote interdisciplinary academic research that relates to legacy data concentrating on Turkey and the Black Sea region. Work on the BIAA collections will be an important component, but research on other legacy data available in Turkey and the Black Sea region is also supported.

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The BIAA digital repository

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The British Institute at Ankara is happy to announce the launch of its digital repository office. The office is devoted to the digitisation, preservation and long-term accessibility of various types of archaeological and historical data originally produced in Turkey and the wider region (including the Black Sea littoral and the Middle East).

The repository will have the capacity to host a variety of digitised and born-digital archives and data produced across several disciplines: any type of primary archaeological record (excavation documentation and reports, drawings, tables, etc), new types of digital records, such as 3D scans, and also collections of historical maps and photographs of archaeological, historical or ethnographic interest.

Offering both digitisation and repository services, the BIAA aims to become a digital hub for the promotion and accessibility of legacy data that will serve the international academic research community and promote knowledge sharing and preservation.

Step by step, from the physical to the digital

The establishment of the repository office is the culmination of a long process that dates back to the meticulous archiving procedures introduced by the BIAA's former Director David French during the 1970s and 1980s. This resulted in the transformation of the Institute into a regional resource centre for archaeology. By the 1990s the BIAA was an exemplary host to physical collections of pottery sherds, squeezes, historical maps, photographs and reference collections of bones and seeds as well as a herbarium.

The next crucial step was the transition from the physical to the digital world, a task that was initiated during Hugh Elton's directorship in 2004 and given significant impetus under Lutgarde Vandeput's supervision since she became the BIAA Director in 2006. During this phase of the process, up to 2015, the BIAA invested heavily in the digitisation of the majority of its physical collections and the creation of a tailor-made digital infrastructure to host the data collections and provide accessibility to the wider research community.

The BIAA's Information Technology Manager, Hakan Çakmak, designed the first generation of the Institute's bespoke online database, which offered public access to the digitised collections, with significant input and scientific advice from several BIAA staff members, fellows and researchers. He also undertook the demanding tasks of setting up the first BIAA digitisation station and organising the digitisation of the squeeze collection. Yaprak Eran, the BIAA's Librarian and Resources Manager from 1984 to 2009, contributed greatly to the process by providing practical help and overseeing the relation between the physical archives and the digital records. Toby Wilkinson (BIAA Research Scholar 2007) created the metadata structure for the pottery collection, while Michele Massa (BIAA Research Scholar 2011) worked meticulously on the establishment of metadata sets for the photographic collection and the organisation of the digitisation of both the photographic and ceramic collections. Since then, many research scholars and assistants have helped with the digitisation of the collections, including Riley Snyder, Emma Baysal, Benjamine Irvine, Martina Massimino.



Hakan Çakmak and Yaprak Eran digitising the BIAA squeeze collection during the first phase of the development of the Institute's digital services.

Since September 2015 a major upgrade and restructuring of the BIAA digital interface and database has been undertaken. Under the scientific supervision and management of the Institute's Assistant Director, Leonidas Karakatsanis, the project was again implemented by Hakan Çakmak. The aim was to produce a new generation of the BIAA's bespoke digital infrastructure that would align with international standards in data management and offer a much faster and more user-friendly digital interface; at the same time, we intended to offer richer information and increased searchability. After meticulous work and continuous testing, a brand-new system was introduced in early 2017. Initially it hosted the BIAA library records, but has expanded since to host all BIAA collections. At the same time, under the Assistant Director's supervision, a team of researchers has worked toward the completion of the digitisation of these collections. The final results are a showcase of the capacity of the BIAA as a digital host to legacy data and can be fully accessed and searched via the portal <http://biaatr.org>.

The new vision: the BIAA as a regional digital repository

In June 2017 the BIAA invited an expert team from the UK-based Archaeology Data Service (ADS) to assess the new system and the wider capacity of the Institute as an archive management institution. The results of this assessment paved the way for the transformation of the BIAA's resource centre in Ankara into a regional digital repository for archaeological and other legacy data. The ADS team found that the BIAA's bespoke system and general infrastructure presented significant potential since they were tailor-made to respond

to the needs of the wider academic and research communities of the region, offering a highly specialised service. This assessment phase also resulted in the establishment of a long-term connection between the BIAA and the ADS. A series of training programmes for BIAA staff at the ADS base at the University of York was launched and the ADS will offer regular consultation and advice regarding the operation and development of the BIAA's regional repository office.

On 1 November 2018, Nurdan Atalan Çayırmez took up the position of BIAA Repository Office Manager. Nurdan, who is a member of the Association of Experts of Culture and Tourism, the Association of Museum Professionals and ICOM Turkey, previously worked – from 2004 – for the General-Directorate for Cultural Assets and Museums of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism as an expert on culture and tourism. She was the Project Coordinator for the National Museums Digital Inventory System Project.

The Institute's digital repository office is now preparing all the necessary documentation to offer its services to the academic and research communities with the support of and in consultation with UK experts in digitisation and archiving. Our aim is for the office to be ready to accept its first deposits by late summer 2019.



BIAA Research Scholar Sergio Russo digitising the pottery sherd collection with the latest generation of digitisation equipment at the new BIAA premises at Atatürk Bulvarı 154.