

Datafication & interoperability in historical archives

Financial archives workshop

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The European Association for Banking and Financial History (*eabf*)

in cooperation with Mediobanca

Milan, Italy

Call for Papers

Financial and business archives are undergoing a quiet but profound transformation. As institutions increasingly digitize their holdings, new opportunities for datafication, interoperability, and cross-institutional research are emerging. At the same time, these opportunities bring complex technical, methodological, and ethical challenges—especially concerning data quality, metadata standards, and long-term preservation.

This workshop aims to bring together archival practitioners, data specialists, historians, and digital humanists to discuss how to make historical archival data fit for purpose in an interconnected, digital research environment. The focus is on practical experience, lessons learned, and forward-looking strategies for ensuring that data quality and interoperability remain central to archival work.

The digital turn has enabled archives to move beyond static catalogues toward dynamic, structured datasets that can be linked, analyzed, and reused, thus serving both the archives themselves and their users. But realizing this potential depends on addressing crucial questions:

- How can archives ensure accuracy, consistency, and completeness when transforming historical records into data?
- What metadata frameworks and standards support interoperability across institutions, collections, and platforms?
- How can archival practices adapt to enable cross-border and cross-sector research in financial and business history?

We particularly welcome contributions that engage with these issues from hands-on archival perspectives—including both successes and challenges.

We invite proposals that address (but are not limited to) the following themes:

1. *Datafication in Practice*

- Experiences digitizing and structuring historical financial or business records.
- Balancing historical complexity with the need for structured data.

- Manual vs. automated datafication methods (e.g., OCR, NLP, crowdsourcing).
 - Datafication of artefacts (e.g. coins), photographs and audiovisual media.
2. *Interoperability & Metadata Standards*
- Implementing and adapting paradata and metadata standards (e.g., EAD, Dublin Core, Linked Open Data).
 - Interconnecting heterogeneous archival collections across institutions.
 - Persistent identifiers, ontologies, and authority control.
3. *Data Quality: Challenges and Solutions*
- Approaches to detecting, documenting, and correcting errors in digitized archival data.
 - Dealing with gaps, inconsistencies, and uncertainty in historical sources or technological solutions.
 - Developing workflows and tools for sustainable data curation.
4. *Collaboration & Capacity Building*
- Cross-institutional initiatives and consortia to harmonize data practices.
 - Training, skills development, and knowledge exchange for archivists.
 - Involving researchers and users in improving data quality and interoperability.
5. *Future Directions*
- Emerging technologies and their potential impact (AI, machine learning, knowledge graphs).
 - Ethical considerations around data reuse, privacy, and representation.
 - Visionary projects that rethink archival data infrastructures.

We particularly encourage case studies, practical demonstrations, and reflections on real-world projects (not just theoretical discussions), with a view to sharing hands-on experiences and learning from peers facing similar challenges. Your contribution will help shape emerging standards and best practices in archival datafication and advance the quality and usability of historical financial data for future generations. Let's build connections across archives, research institutions, and digital initiatives.

Submission Guidelines

- Please submit a proposal of max. 300 words, outlining the topic, context, and relevance of your contribution.
- Include a short biographical note (max. 150 words) with your name, affiliation, and contact details.
- Deadline for submissions: 31 December 2025
- Proposals should be sent to: c.hofmann@bankinghistory.org

Accepted participants will be notified by January 2026. The format will include short presentations, roundtable discussions, and interactive sessions to maximize knowledge exchange among practitioners. Limited travel costs support is available.