

Managing archives with basic MS Access databases

This paper presents the databases built with Marie-Hélène de Bengy (archivist) on the archives of a nineteenth century female congregation in Paris and explains the operating method of this form of computing.

Having been asked for an effective support for the computerization of inventories, our goal was to provide a reliable and easy to handle tool helping to manage archives (specifically designed for requests), adapted to the needs of small congregations. We wanted to give meaning to the knowledge at our disposal by migrating it into a networked environment.

The designed MS Access relational databases establish fields (characteristics of the document, based on ISAD(G) standards) in records (one record for one document) in tables (persons, objects, document, etc.). There is an explicit step-by-step procedure to help with the encoding (and fields dedicated to everything we failed to anticipate). Once it has been filled, requests allow any combination of the elements in its tables and facilitate certain kinds of archival research (by existing relationships between elements of different tables).

These links between archives (for example a field in the database mentioning a person and the relation of the person to the archive document) are also updated and created (if not there yet) by researchers. The databases can be consulted on site in the archives reading room.

The presentation will focus on an explanation of the operating method and its key benefits.

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