

International conference  
»Data Ethics for historical research in a digital era.  
Critical reflections and best practices«

Mainz, 10-12 November 2025

Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG) Mainz, Research group »Digitality in Historical Research: Methods and Research Data« | DH Lab

in cooperation with  
NFDI4Memory and the Academy of Sciences and Literature Mainz

### Call for papers

The use of data, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data science techniques are becoming increasingly pervasive in daily life and research activities, attracting many scholars to adopt them in historically oriented research with promising results. However, neither data nor computational techniques are neutral tools. Historical archives and datasets are themselves the products of selective curation reflecting underlying biases and power dynamics of the context of their creation and collection as well as inequities in access, infrastructure, and perspective. The datafication of historical sources risks to amplify these issues, introducing further challenges related to taxonomy, categorization, and conceptualization. This may lead, if not countered, to the standardisation of diverse historical experiences into rigid categories, further entrenching existing biases as well as the underrepresentation of marginalized genders, cultures, social groups and identities, thus erasing pluralities in historical narratives. Since archives and data repositories in Europe often originated within imperial or colonial frameworks, shaping both the content and the perspective of the historical records they contain, these challenges are especially prevalent within European historical research and demand specific attention and ethical responsibilities.

Ethical concerns arise at **every stage of the data lifecycle**, from collection to dissemination, and it is necessary to consider them carefully in order to guarantee the fair, equal and non-discriminatory treatment of sensitive data. These challenges create the need for a **critical reflection on the ethical implications** of the handling of data and technologies in historical research and for **actionable solutions**. While data ethics, ethical AI, and critiques of data colonialism practices are widely discussed within the data and computer science communities, historical researchers have engaged with these issues more sparingly. A cross-disciplinary dialogue, focused on the **unique challenges** and needs within **historical research**, is therefore essential. In particular, there is an urgent need for collaborative efforts to define, seek, and implement shared ethical guidelines and solutions.

This conference seeks to examine the ethical dimensions of data usage within historical research, fostering discussions among scholars that provide practical tools and strategies to navigate these challenges. Thus, the objectives of the conference are:

- raising **awareness** in historical research of the ethical components of data use and data-driven research
- fostering **dialogue** among researchers who encounter ethical issues in their work
- increasing knowledge of **strategies and best practices** for ethical data use and enable participants to share their experiences, strategies and tools to address ethical issues in historical research.

To allow a worldwide participation, the language of the conference will be **English**. The conference will be a hybrid event, although the physical attendance of presenters will be preferred.

### Themes and topics

The conference aims to cover a range of themes and topics related to data ethics, unequal access to IT infrastructures in historical research, and representations of power, in the broad sense of every kind of historically-oriented disciplines (e.g., history of science, archaeology, history of art). We therefore invite researchers to submit papers on, but not limited to, the following topics, as applied in historical research:

- Sensitive data
- Discriminatory language in databases
- AI ethics
- Unequal representation of marginalized genders, cultures, social groups and identities
- Data storage and infrastructure
- Environmental aspects

### Submission

To foster the sharing of solutions and good practices, contributions that propose a concrete solution for the ethical issues encountered during the research are particularly encouraged. In order to encourage a cross-domain dissemination of common reflections and strategies, we welcome contributions from scholars in history and historically-orientated disciplines, computer sciences and digital humanities as well as from practitioners in GLAM institutions.

We invite researchers at all career levels to submit proposals, written in **English**, on, but not limited to, the above topics, in the form of abstracts of 500 words.

Two types of submissions are welcomed:

- **Presentations:** participants submit proposals for a 20-minute presentation (plus discussion). **Abstract length max. 500 words, references excluded.**
- **Hands-on sessions:** participants submit proposals for hands-on sessions that show how to tackle the ethic-related topics when applied to practical historical research as outlined above. The application should include the desired length of the session and further material support needed. The maximum length of each session is 90 minutes. The sessions should be designed in a way that prior knowledge of the topic is not required. **Abstract length max. 750 words, references excluded.**

The deadline for submissions is the **19<sup>th</sup> January 2025, 23:59 CET**.

**Submissions must be presented through the following link:** <https://data-ethics.sciencescall.org/> (registration required).

## Conference proceedings

The conference proceedings will be published as an open-access edited volume. Authors of selected presentations will be invited to submit a full paper (maximum 45,000 characters including spaces, including footnotes but excluding the bibliography) within three months after the conference. Submitted papers will undergo a peer-review and editorial process to ensure high-quality contributions. Additional details regarding publication and formatting guidelines will be provided to authors following the conference.

## Travel funding

To encourage global participation, we aim to provide travel funding to support the selected speakers. However, we can only apply for travel funding once we have a clear understanding of the expected conference attendance and speaker demographics. Therefore, we ask applicants to indicate in their submission if they would like to apply for travel funding. We will make every effort to secure this support.

## Conference venue

Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Geschwister-Scholl-Straße 2, D-55131 Mainz

## Concept and organisation

The conference is conceived by **Constanze Buyken M. A.** and **Dr. Sofia Baroncini**, DH Lab – Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG) Mainz and co-organized with **Elena Suárez Cronauer M. A.**, Digital Academy – Academy of Sciences and Literature Mainz.

## Contact and further information

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you might have at [digital@ieg-mainz.de](mailto:digital@ieg-mainz.de)

For further information please visit: <https://ieg-dhr.github.io/Data-Ethics/>



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