# LivArch Final Conference 2027 (Marburg/Lviv/online, 27–29 Apr 27)

Marburg, Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe / Lviv, Center for Urban History / Online, Apr 27–29, 2027
Deadline: Dec 15, 2026

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LivArch Final Conference 2027.

Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine has generated a wave of documentation initiatives, almost unprecedented in scale, speed and diversity of actors, ranging from grassroots citizen archives and scholarly collections to hacktivist projects, open-source (OSINT) investigation networks, and efforts by judicial and human rights actors. Created amid ongoing violence and uncertainty, these initiatives collect audiovisual, textual, and material records to preserve lived experiences, document war crimes, support transitional justice, and shape future historical narratives, among other aims.

Some of these initiatives have already ceased their activities, while new ones continuously emerge, raising the question of the sustainability of their collections, which are threatened by loss and oblivion.
Many of these initiatives operate natively in the digital realm or have digital media forms as their defining feature. Documenting, preserving, accessing, (re-)contextualising and consuming information have thus become practices considerably shaped by technical infrastructures. They affect at different moments in a collection’s trajectory and therefore mediate between digital archiving as practices of documenting and preserving the present and digital infrastructures. As knowledge infrastructures they are active forces in shaping future knowledge, by defining what can be preserved and how, and what can be found and accessed under which legal, institutional, and technological frameworks. The digital mediation of such collections is therefore not simply a technical choice for preservation but one of memory’s very conditions of possibility.

This conference approaches such collections that have been discussed under diverse frameworks such as “living archives”, “archives as process”, or “participatory archiving” as a broad spectrum of practices that are continuously produced and reshaped through social, technical, and epistemic factors. It focuses both on the dimension of "becoming archive" (capture, appraisal, custody) and on sustainability, access and reuse. It discusses furthermore the emergence of many of these archives through collaborative, often networked practices on digital platforms, thereby making questions of infrastructure, metadata, interoperability, governance (data sovereignty), data ethics inseparable from the processes of memory production itself.
While the Ukrainian experience forms the backbone of the conference it aims at a global contextualization, positioning Ukraine’s documentation practices within broader debates on community

archives, digital infrastructures, the documentation of human rights violations and participatory knowledge production. It also seeks to shed light on the insights that can be gained from using these relatively new kinds of collections and archives, and on the source-critical approach required by historians, including digital source criticism and tool criticism.

We invite scholars of archival studies, digital humanities, digital history, art history, memory studies, science and technology studies (STS), and information science, as well as practitioners involved in documentation initiatives for ongoing or recent conflicts and crises, to join us in reflecting on digital archiving as a living practice. We aim to explore how documentation initiated in moments of crisis can become enduring infrastructures for research, justice, collective memory, and democratic knowledge production in Ukraine and beyond.

The conference will address questions such as the following:
- How can we conceptualize archives emerging from ongoing conflicts as a global phenomenon? How are they shaped by different positionalities, technologies, and temporalities?
- How do archival practices such as grassroots documentation, digital activism, and collaborative metadata production shape digital collections?
- Whose knowledge do these collections produce?
- How do collections as epistemic infrastructures shape academic research, transitional justice, education, journalism, public history, and other forms of knowledge production? And how do the evidentiary logics of justice and human-rights work (verification, chain of custody, admissibility) relate to the source-critical and archival logics of historians and archivists, and can the same collection serve both
- How can future digital solutions navigate ethical and political challenges around trauma, privacy, data security, the right to erasure, and AI-mediated reuse (e.g. machine transcription, model training, and automated annotation), and what impact do critiques of power and coloniality have?
- What makes digital archives, collections, and their infrastructures sustainable? And how can long-term preservation be aligned with the dynamic, autonomous and community-driven origins of such collections?
- How do dependencies on commercial platforms and short-term project funding shape the survival of these collections?
- What roles can post-custodial or community-controlled models play in sustaining collections and what role can and should the state, as a traditional memory agent, play?

The event is part of the LivArch (http://www.livarch.org/en/welcome/) network's activities and is designed in dialogue with a sister-conference at the Center for Urban History, "Archiving for Uncertain Futures: Making, Using, and Preserving Collections from Within the Events" (1–2 April 2027) (https://www.lvivcenter.org/en/conferences/livarch-conference-2/). While participation in both conferences is welcome, applications for the Marburg Conference will be considered independently.

Submission:
We welcome proposals for individual presentations, as well as submissions that experiment with more collaborative formats. In particular, we encourage proposals for roundtable discussions engaging with shared theoretical, conceptual, or methodological questions, as well as joint submissions that bring together several contributions around a specific theme or research question.

Researchers may either apply for:
- Marburg only (link to the form: https://forms.gle/YELpN1uaaj3Pn3Qe7)
- Lviv only (link to the Center's CfA: https://www.lvivcenter.org/en/conferences/livarch-conference-2/)
- or both conferences (hybrid participation is possible)

Please submit:
- Paper presentation: Abstract (300-500 words), Short Bio
- Presentation of a documenting initiative: Abstract (300-500 words), Short Bio
- Participation in a round table discussion: Abstract (300-500 words), Short Bio of the chair, if possible: names of participants and short descriptions of the individual contributions
- Interest in participation for the Edited Volume: Long abstract (up to 1200 words), Short Abstract, Short Bio

Submissions should be sent via forms by December 15, 2026. Notifications regarding conference participation will be sent by the end of January 2027.

The conference's working language is English. Simultaneous interpretation to and from Ukrainian will be provided for selected sessions. The organizers will cover travel (up to 300€) and accommodation expenses for all participants who are not funded by their institutions.

Timeline:
- 15 Dec 2026 - Application with abstract or chapter proposal
- January 2027 - Notification of acceptance
- 20 March 2027 - Extended abstract (3–5 pages) submitted for commentators and conference preparation
- 1–2 April 2027 - LCUH Conference (Lviv)
- 27–29 April 2027 - Marburg Conference
- May 2027 - If applicable: invitation to contribute to the edited volume
- July 2027 - First full chapter submission
- August–November 2027 - Editorial feedback and revision
- December 2027 - Final manuscript submitted to the publisher

Programm Committee (Marburg):
- Simon Donig, Herder Institute
- Tabitha Redepenning, Herder Institute
- Ian Kisil Marino, Federal University of Juiz de Fora & Leibniz Institute for European History
- Natalia Otrishchenko, Center of Urban History
- in collaboration with Iryna Sklokina, Center for Urban History
- Katherine Younger, University of Glasgow

Further Information:
Conferences in Lviv and Marburg are connected to a planned edited volume, "Archiving on the edge: The lives of collections from wars and emergencies," that will further develop some of the themes and questions explored during the event. Several prospective contributors to the volume are expected to present their work at the conference. At the same time, participation in the conference is independent of publication in the edited volume and does not in itself entail an invitation

to contribute. The editors nevertheless hope to draw on the discussions and insights emerging from the conference and may invite selected participants to further develop their work for inclusion in the volume.

LivArch is a Leibniz Collaborative Excellence project involving the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe, Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG) in Mainz, Center for Urban History, Lviv, Luxembourg Center for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH), Marburg Center for Digital Culture and Infrastructure (MCDCI) at University of Marburg, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, and the Giessen Center for Eastern Europe (GiZo) at Justus Liebig University Giessen.

Reference:
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