

*Digital Humanities and Reparative Practices: From Primary Digitization to New Forms of Narrative*

This presentation is about an integrated digital humanities approach to accessing globally fragmented knowledge archives, using the historical holdings of the Moravian Church in South Africa as an example. Since German was the main language of communication in the Moravian Church a long time, archive holdings in former Moravian mission areas (and colonies) are inaccessible to the local community today. The aim is to break down this barrier to access through a reparative DH practice and to open up access to marginalized narratives (e.g., Lasch 2024). The focus is on two interlocking DH methods that are being developed and tested in the Moravian Knowledge Network (MKNetwork): (1) Primary digitization with ImagoFolio (e.g., Lasch 2025a) can be used decentrally and is cost-effective, as commercially available and easily replaceable components are used to create high-resolution and reproducible digital copies of fragile paper manuscripts in international collaboration. Standardized recording techniques (e.g., using color charts) ensure quality. With the possibilities offered by generative AI, (2) mass OCR, annotation, and translation of historical text collections, including automatic content extraction and cataloging (e.g., Lasch 2025b), are possible. Supported by generative AI, digitized manuscripts are automatically transcribed, normalized, and translated into various languages. These practices are intended to enable new forms of storytelling that lead away from the monological, colonial archive (cf. e.g. Akpome 2022) to a polyphonic, collaboratively generated narrative by not only making de-archived knowledge (e.g., Assmann 2015) accessible again, but also using it as a basis for active, local engagement and for repairing historical gaps, thereby creating a new and shared contemporary narrative (with the support of virtual excursions, cf. Hetjens, Lasch, Rummel & Schuppe 2022).

Aghogho Akpome. 2022. What we can learn from EU top diplomat's racist metaphors. [Mail&Guardian](#).

Aleida Assmann. 2015. Formen des Vergessens (Historische Geisteswissenschaften. Frankfurter Vorträge 9). Göttingen.

Alexander Lasch. 2024. (Er)Zählen im Netz-Werk: Die Herausforderung der Autoplausibilität der Netzwerk- Metapher am Beispiel konstruktionsgrammatischer Narrativik. In: Matthias Attig, Katharina Jacob, Marcus Müller & Friedemann Vogel (Hg.). Netz und Werk. Zur Gesellschaftlichkeit sprachlichen Handelns. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter. 137-148. DOI: [10.1515/9783111086514-011](#).

Alexander Lasch. 2025a. ImagoFolioPlus – Praxiserfahrungen und erweitertes Setup. MKNetwork. DOI: [10.58079/13jgd](#).

Alexander Lasch. 2025b. Automatische Transkription (OCR), Annotation und Translation mit Generativer KI (GenKI). MKNetwork. DOI: [10.58079/157ms](#).

**Biographical note:**

Alexander Lasch is a linguist whose research focuses on construction grammar of German, Digital Humanities, functional and regional varieties as well as forensic linguistics, corporate communication, and simple and easy language. Since 2017, he has been a Professor of Germanic Linguistics and Language History at the Institute of German Studies at Dresden Technological University. He is a co-founder of the Moravian Knowledge Network (MKNetwork).