

St.Gall State Archives



Quod non in actis, non in mundo

(That which is not on record, does not exist in the world)

Man has forever explained his doings and his thinking in written form, knowing that personal remembering or verbal agreeing alone is often fleeting and not very reliable.



Johann David Gonzenbach, textile merchant in Triest

Due to their 'long life' and due to the consequences of their decisions state entities are particularly interested in putting their actions in writing and in afterwards saving the important documents - mostly originals - for preferably an unlimited time. The task of preserving records falls to the state archives, who in so doing are contributing a vital part to safeguarding law and justice.

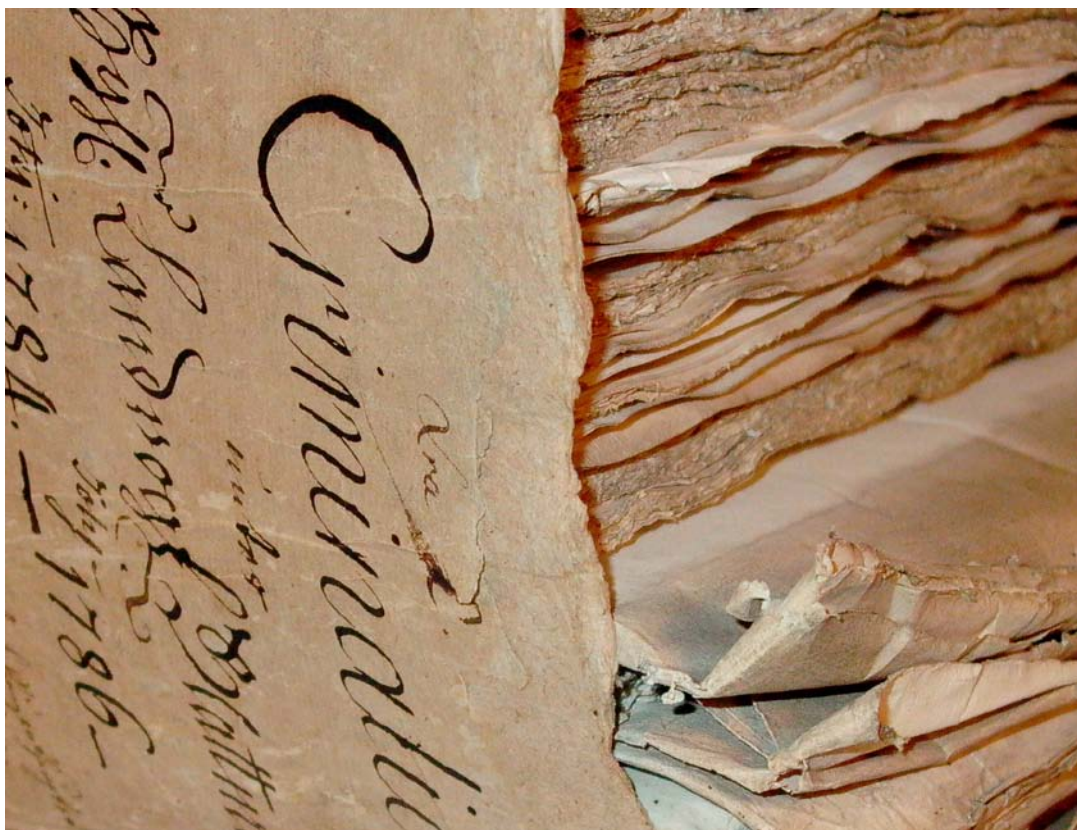
In addition historical research understands that archives are an indispensable key to gaining insights into the past. This makes public archives focal points of historiography.

Today there is growing awareness of the constitutional state (Rechtsstaat) having to remain evidential and verifiable at all times. This is part of the reason, why important data are to be kept accessible to controlling bodies and to the constituency. Providing access to archival records is an essential task of state archives.

Stefan Gemperli, Head of the St.Gall State Archives

Archival Heritage in St.Gall Canton

Before 1798 the territory of today's St.Gall Canton consisted of twelve independent administrative entities.



'Criminalia' from the subject territory of the Rheintal (18th century)

The Princely Abbey (Fürstabtei) and the Confederate Cantons (Eidgenössischen Orte) were the most prominent landlords. This territorial fragmentation has left its permanent mark on the archival landscape. With the creation of St.Gall Canton in 1803 a cantonal archives, the State Archives, was established. The state archivists made special efforts to collect records of the St.Gallian history prior to 1803 but they succeeded only in parts. Therefore the history of the regions, that make up the modern Canton, can oftentimes be reconstructed via the archives of the former ruling cantons as well. The Princely Abbey's clerical and secular legal documents and records on the other hand are located in the Abbey Archives, an independent institution carried by both the Canton and the Catholic Community of the Canton (Katholischer Konfessionsteil).

What are the Responsibilities of the State Archives?

Memory of the Canton

The St.Gall State Archives serves as Memory of the Canton. It wants to document history and to make governmental actions accountable.

Preservation of the cantonal heritage is the prime responsibility of the State Archives. It safeguards, arranges, describes, and makes available preservation-worthy documents (either conventional or electronic) of the Canton Council (legislative), the State Government (executive), the State Chancellery, the departments and their agencies as well as the courts and the state institutions under public law.

Preservation of Information

The State Archives advises authorities and state agencies already at the records creation and management stage, thereby contributing to modern, transparent, and efficient administrative procedures. In this phase valuable information can be secured for archival custody later.



Processed records of the administration

It is part of the State Archives' core competency to select and permanently retain records with exceptional evidential and informational value among the cantonal heritage.

In addition the State Archives preserves records from private institutions, organisations, families, and individuals, in as much as they are of importance to the history of the Canton and its population and are transferred to the Archives either as property or as deposits.

Arrangement and Description of Information

The State Archives arranges and describes acquired records with the help of modern means allowing its clientele efficient access to fonds, files and even single documents if need be.

Provision of Information

The State Archives makes the descriptive records unbureaucratically accessible to governmental organs, to science, and to private individuals. It assists its patrons and responds to both domestic and foreign inquiries.

The State Archives explores its own holdings in publications, through exhibitions, at conventions and via the internet.

Within the Canton the State Archives regards itself as the center of expertise for historical as well as archival issues.

(In accordance with the mission statement of the State Archives)

Visiting the Archives

The holdings of the State Archives can be inspected in the reading room (advance reservation required) in keeping with the Archives policy for the use of records. Each user conducts her/his research independently and on her/his own responsibility. Access to records of the most recent past are partly subject to viewing restrictions.

Finding aids provide access to the archival material. Large parts of these catalogs can be queried on the internet.

Holdings Overview

Records, which the State Archives saves permanently due to their historical and legal significance, constitute only a fraction of the total 'records production' by authorities and by state agencies. Yet the mile-long fonds keep growing steadily and in sizeable amounts.

Materially the collections are for the most part paper-based. But parchment, celluloid as well as glass plate negatives are also represented. The longevity issues of electronic data and their media are becoming increasingly more important.

Archival Material of the State Government

The Old Archives (until 1798)

Public records, files, and books from the confederate subject territories of the Rheintal, the Sax-Forstegg, the Werdenberg, Sargans, Gaster, Uznach as well as the town of Rapperswil. Individual records of and books about the history of the Toggenburg and the Fürstenland.

The Helvetian Archives (1798-1803)

Records and books from Säntis Canton and from the St.Gallian parts of Linth Canton.

The Archives of the Canton (1803-1931)

Records, books, and departmental prints from the cantonal administration arranged by subject content (principle of pertinence).



View into the state government archives

The Archives of the Cantonal Council and of the State Government

Protocols and records of the parliamentary and governmental resolutions.

The New Archives (since 1931)

Records of the cantonal administration processed in the order of their receipt and according to their origin and their context (principle of provenance).

The Court Archives (since 1803)

Decisions and records of the regional and the cantonal courts.

St. Gallian Departmental Prints (since 1803)

Publications by state agencies.

Independent State Institutions and Organisations with Substantial State Interest.

Archives of the Gebäudeversicherungsanstalt (Cantonal Building Insurance), the Bodensee-Toggenburg-Bahn (Bodensee-Toggenburg-Railway), the St.Gallisch-Appenzellische Kraftwerke (St.Gallian-Appenzellian Power Company) and the University of St. Gallen.



*Landammann Ernst Rüesch (Chief Governor)
congratulates the newly-elected Bundespräsident Kurt Furgler (Federal President) in 1976*

Non-Governmental Archival Material

Archives of Corporate Bodies

Archival depots from corporate bodies which are governed by either public or private law.

Private Archives

Estates and depots from parties, organisations, firms, families and individuals.

Collections of the State Archives

For example photographs, maps and plans, coins and medals.

How to Contact Us:

Staatsarchiv St.Gallen
Regierungsgebäude (Nordflügel)
CH-9001 St.Gallen

Telephone: +41 71 229 32 05
Telefax: +41 71 229 34 45

Internet: www.staatsarchiv.sg.ch
Darin: Kontaktformular

Translation: Markus Poltera