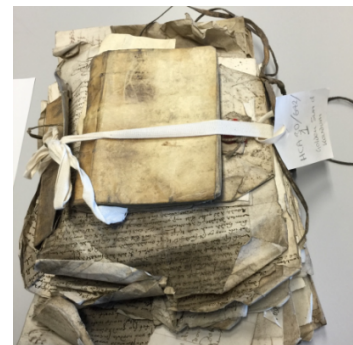


Prize Papers. Cataloguing – Digitisation – Presentation

The project “Prize Papers” is led by the historian Prof. Dr. Dagmar Freist. With its international team of early career-researchers, it is based at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany. The project cooperates closely with The National Archives, London; the German Historical Institute London and the IT Experts of the VZG Göttingen; and is in close exchange with international scholars working with the prize papers. The project is assigned to the Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Göttingen, and, as part of the German Academies’ Programme, it is financed by the German state and the federal state of Lower Saxony.

The *Prize Papers* trace back to the practice of prize-taking on sea which was part of the early modern sea powers’ war strategy. Martial Law required that the lawfulness of a capture be established in front of a Prize or Admiralty Court; to that end, the entire shipload (including private and commercial documents, ship’s papers, newspapers, personal effects, trading registers etc.) had to be seized by the capturing party. In the High Court of Admiralty (HCA) collection at the National Archives, Kew, London, these captured documents and objects from the period between 1664 and 1817 have been preserved, together with the corresponding process files, largely untouched and unsorted as the only surviving collection of its kind in Europe.



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This accidental preservation stretching over more than two centuries has created a global archive which has not been subjected to any selection or revision by the historical writers themselves, their descendants, or archivists. Thus, the Prize Papers allow unique insights into past worlds and cosmologies, historical self-concepts and interpersonal relationships, language acquisition, knowledge transfer, political and economic practices and processes of juridification in the context of the global interweaving of Europe and the world.

The aim of the project is the complete digitization of the Prize Papers including the preservation of the collection’s material dimension, the initial and in-depth cataloguing, the creation of research-oriented metadata and finally the presentation of the digital copies and the metadata in an open access research database. Not only will the entirety of the material thus be made accessible to researchers; the contextualisation and synchronization of all the documents and the information they contain, which is so vital for

research, will become possible for the first time.

Contact: dagmar.freist@uni-oldenburg.de