The JDCRP Archival Platform:
How It Works and How to Use It

Thanks to steady advancements in computer technology, JDCRP is bringing to fruition a long-harbored dream of experts: The creation of a central international registry for archival documents on Nazi-era looted art. To do so, JDCRP works with its worldwide network of archival partners to create broad accessibility to relevant sets of records from a single digital platform. By bringing together physically scattered source documents on a single platform, it will help chart a much fuller scope of the theft. The archival information assembled on the platform can help rewrite the neglected history of the Jewish cultural contribution to European heritage.
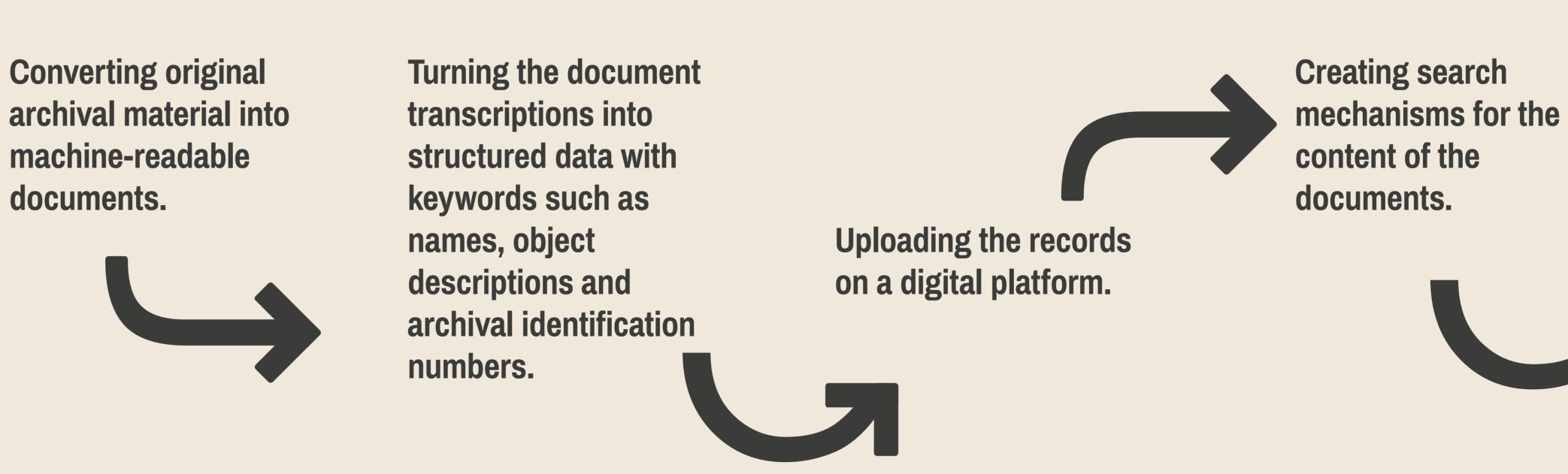
WHAT THE PLATFORM OFFERS

The JDCRP platform opens up exciting new possibilities for users to identify documents relevant to the objects they are researching:

- Linkage of documents from various archives
- Cross-archival search functionality
- Fully searchable content within documents
- Transcriptions of original records true to the source, with unchanged content
- Online access to previously unavailable source material

MAKING THE DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE
PUTTING ORIGINAL SOURCE MATERIAL ONLINE REQUIRES A MULTI-STEP PROCESS:

Converting original archival material into machine-readable documents.

Turning the document transcriptions into structured data with keywords such as names, object descriptions and archival identification numbers.

Uploading the records on a digital platform.

Creating search mechanisms for the content of the documents.

Enabling users to have digital access to documents physically scattered in various archives.

Once the documents are uploaded on the platform, a user interface known as the front-end, helps users access the material they are seeking.
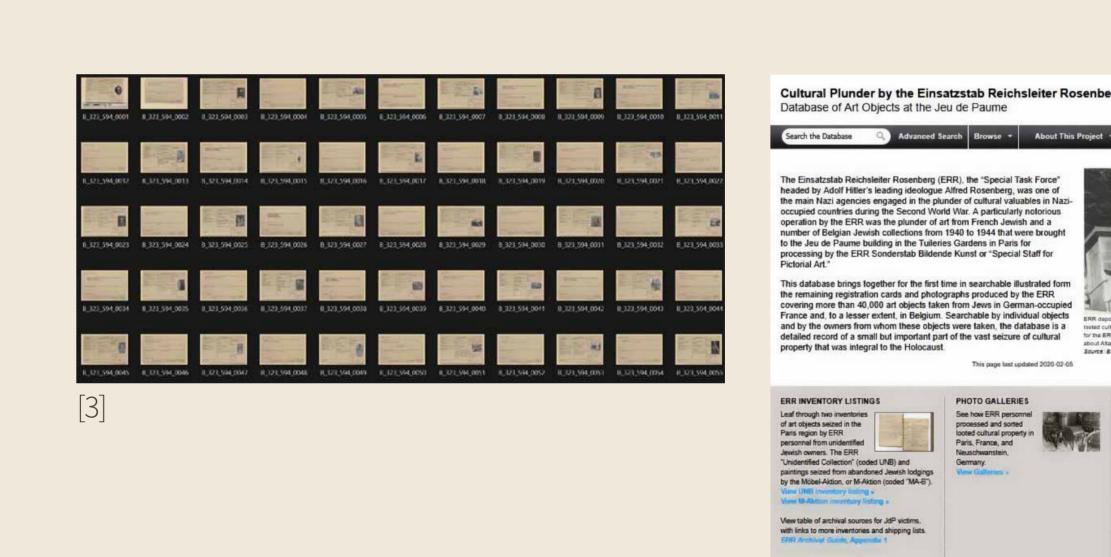
The JDCRP platform interface, designed by Norday, is intended as a user-friendly go-to research tool. It offers low-barrier steps to search for information and match records from various archives. Content searches will be possible using keywords, such as names, locations, and object descriptions.
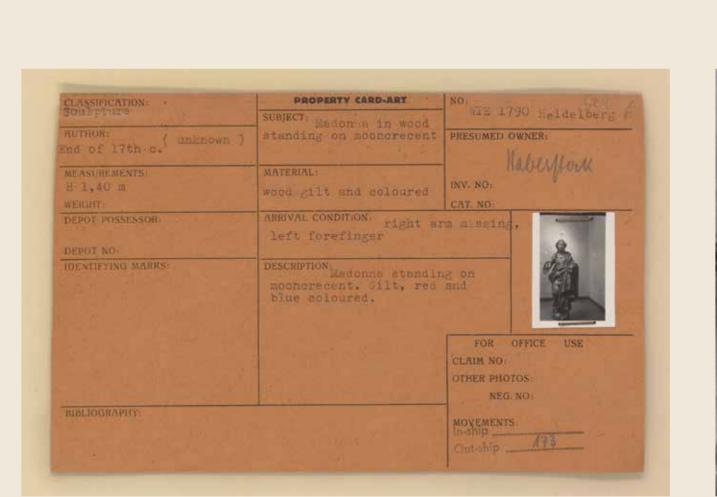
The first archival sets selected for testing, development, and user evaluation of the interface are four groups of documents, three of which are from the U.S. Armed Forces "Monuments Men" looted art recovery unit. Some of these documents are already available online but have now been made searchable on the document level, namely the property cards of the Wiesbaden and Marburg Central Collecting Points. The platform also includes archival material that has not been previously available online, the images that were preserved on Leica film rolls at the National Archives and Records Administration. The fourth group is the records of ERR looting agency activities in France. [1] [2] [3] [4]

Linking these four archival sets has already yielded discoveries, such as the missing parts of a wooden sculpture. On the property card of the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point of a wooden Madonna sculpture, a note indicates that parts of the sculpture are missing. JDCRP later discovered a photograph from the U.S. National Archives and Record Administration that depicts the broken off pieces. The matching of these two documents provides new information about the fate of an object, an example of the benefit of cross-archival research with documents. [5] [6]

[1]
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The property cards from the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point, Bundesarchiv Koblenz.

[2]
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Photographs that were taken at the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point, National Archives and Records Administration.

[3]
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The property cards from the Marburg Central Collecting Point, Bundesarchiv Koblenz.

[4]
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The records of the looting agency Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, Jeu-de-Paume database.

[5]
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Property Card WIE 1790 Heidelberg, Bundesarchiv Koblenz.

[6]
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Photograph that was taken at the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point of object WIE 1790 Heidelberg, showing all broken off pieces, National Archives and Records Administration.

[1]

[2]

[3]

[4]

[5]

[6]

HOW THE PLATFORM WORKS

For art and provenance specialists, the data platform offers advanced tools to support in-depth research, such as domain-specific filters and tailored recommendations on documents of potential interest. Non-experts can explore documentation without domain-specific knowledge. For general users, the platform will provide a simple and intuitive way to find relevant archival documents. All users will be able to find results on specific search terms that may not come from one source alone but from several of the archival sources linked on the platform.

The expanded research possibilities of linked data can support rightful owners and their heirs in determining the magnitude of their losses and the fate of some of the missing property. The greater the integration of relevant documents on the JDCRP platform, the more possibilities users will have to explore, decode and uncover evidence of the theft and the subsequent fate of objects and their owners.

BACK - END FLOW > *HOW THE REPOSITORY SEARCH WORKS*

REPOSITORY	SORT	MATCH

Archival record 1

Archival record 2

Archival record 3

Match in records 1 and 3

Return archival records 1 and 3

FRONT - END FLOW > *USER SEARCH EXPERIENCE*

SEARCH	MATCH	VIEW

The user searches for documents related to a name, artist, location, reference number, etc..

The platform then automatically sorts through all documents it contains and recommends possible matches.

The user clicks on the suggestions and selects the material of interest.

Search for

The user can then read the content of individual documents.

JDCRP