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Dutch archaeological data depositing, processing, archiving and accessing at DANS

Gilissen, V.

2014

document version

Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication in KNAW Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

Gilissen, V. (2014). *Dutch archaeological data depositing, processing, archiving and accessing at DANS: A repository with ten years of history, setting its sails to the future.*

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Dutch archaeological data depositing, processing, archiving and accessing at DANS

A repository with ten years of history, setting its sails to the future

Valentijn Gilissen, MA

2014 marks the ten-year anniversary of the e-depot for Dutch Archaeology (EDNA) at Data Archiving and Networked Services (DANS); a moment to reflect on a decade of development with satisfaction while building on experiences for on-going and future initiatives.

Eleven years ago, there was no coordinated effort to preserve or share digital archaeology in the Netherlands; data was scattered throughout inaccessible formats and archives. When DANS was established as the national data archive for sciences, the EDNA project found its place within the larger organisation to develop itself towards the successful present-day archaeological data archiving service.

Close collaboration with archaeological organisations enabled the ingest of large collections of reports and datasets, a workflow which became the standard for ensuring long-term reusability of research information, as incorporated in national regulations for conducting archaeology.

Involvement in international projects facilitated further means for data accessibility and interoperability. Through the CARARE project, thousands of publications were made available via Europeana. As a partner in ARIADNE, DANS is presently aiming to establish a European infrastructure which integrates archaeological datasets and provides new tools for accessing data.

Additionally, the Dutch archaeological sector has been working towards a solution for national standardisation and exchange of research data, to which end an XML structure was developed for storing project metadata and basic material and artefact descriptions. The archiving workflow greatly benefited from the successful incorporation of this so-called 'Digital Packing Slip' at DANS early 2014.

On-going archiving, ARIADNE project initiatives, further dissemination of the 'packing slip' and similar (inter)national collaborations in the present day all mean to ensure that the knowledge of the past will be preserved for research in the future.