OpenAtlas
An Open Source Application to Map
Historical data with CIDOC CRM

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OpenAtlas

https://openatlas.eu

- Open source, browser based database software
- Acquire, edit and manage research data
- Historical, archeological and prosopographic projects
- Developed by a small core team

https://demo.openatlas.eu/overview/network/
Model

CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model

- International standard (ISO)
- Developed by CIDOC CRM Special Interest Group
- Entities with classes like actor, source, event, place connected via links
- Stored in an object oriented network

https://demo.openatlas.eu/overview/model
Names in Historical Projects

Challenges

- Different or uncertain spelling
- Name parts with meaning
- Ambiguous names
- Possible duplicates
- Changes over time

Patrick McKenzie: Falsehoods Programmers Believe About Names
Names in Historical Projects

Names in Forms

- Classical approach
  - Title
  - First Name
  - Last Name

- This approach gets quickly problematic if:
  - A former name exists
  - A middle name exists
  - It’s uncertain what was the first and what was the last name

- Would be adding more fields be a viable solution?
Names in Historical Projects

Names in OpenAtlas

- Only one free text field
- Unlimited aliases
- Supports a wide range of Unicode characters
- Title/function/profession via relations
- Tools to manage names

https://demo-dev.openatlas.eu/entity/10743
Names in Historical Projects

Title, Function, Profession

- Always in a relation to a group or institution
- Multiple relations possible
  - Can differ in time
  - Can differ in context
  - Can differ in function
- Allows more detailed data and analysis

https://demo.openatlas.eu/entity/144#tab-relation
Names in Historical Projects

Tools for names in OpenAtlas

- Links to external reference systems
- Display aliases in table overviews
- Also search in aliases
- Find name duplicates
- Find orphaned data

https://demo-dev.openatlas.eu/admin/similar
Names in Historical Projects

Open Challenges

- There isn’t one right solution, no silver bullet
- (Many) anonymous persons
- Track uncertainty if one name identifies one or more persons
Thank you for listening

https://openatlas.eu