

In 2023, OASIS Group joined forces with 2dA to support the National Archives of the Netherlands in their ambitious “War in Court” digitisation project. This was a huge undertaking, with the entire archive containing around 32million records, spanning over 3.8km. Together, OASIS Group and 2dA are meticulously scanning in the region of 12million of these documents, many of which are fragile, so the teams involved have to be both efficient and extremely careful.

## Case Study

# National Archives

OASIS Group and 2dA Digitise special WW2 Archive for the National Archives of the Netherlands



## Context

At the heart of this project is the Central Archive of Special Jurisdiction (CABR), which holds significant historical importance. Post-World War II, special legal proceedings were established to address suspicions of collaboration and treason among Dutch citizens. The CABR element comprises approximately 700,000 files from 249 archival institutions and documents the trials and convictions of individuals accused of ‘unpatriotic attitudes’. These records come from a range of official bodies, including political investigative services, municipal police departments, tribunals, and the special Court of Cassation. Together they provide a significant snapshot of this important period in Dutch history.

## Project Background

- The War in Court project was established following several years of assessment through multiple pilot launches
- Partnership and collaboration among four organisations was key to the success of the project
- Currently, accessing CABR requires people to file a request form for specific information, with approvals taking up to six weeks
- Access is currently restricted due to the fragile nature of the documents however, thanks to this project, as of 2025 the archive will be open to public access.

## Project Goals & Objectives

- Digitise over 1.4km of sensitive and fragile archive material
- Create a searchable and accessible digital repository
- Enrich digital files with the help of partner organisations\*
- Ensure preservation, contextualisation, and dissemination of the stories within the Netherlands’ most important war archive.

*\*Supplementary information is given within the text to help readers better understand CABR events and place them within a broader context. For example Oorlogsbronnen (War sources) has among other things 5,000 descriptions of World War II themes along with 2,000 autobiographies of well-known figures during the war. If a term from their sources appears in a CABR document, background information is provided. References are also provided for sources on the same topics from collections outside of the CABR.*

## Challenge

This project presented some unique challenges. The delicate physical state of the documents required meticulous handling to prevent damage. The nature of the content added another layer of complexity, as they contained historically significant records, potentially detailing political collaboration, and as such require sensitive and discreet handling.

OASIS Group and 2dA were able to ensure that both the physical preservation and ethical handling of the documents were prioritised throughout the project.

## Outcome

The digitisation process has generated remarkable outcomes so far, both in terms of the volume of information uncovered and the insights into individuals' roles during the war.

12M

Scans in total



Data democratisation

■ By making these archives available online, the project has democratised access to cultural heritage. Individuals worldwide will soon be able to explore and engage with these historical documents, fostering greater understanding and appreciation of a shared history, and ensuring their long-term preservation.

150K

Scans weekly



Improved accessibility

■ The digitisation project not only preserves and documents but also ensures its accessibility for future generations, contributing to the enrichment of historical knowledge and cultural understanding on a global scale. Digitisation also ensures ease of searching and allows wider use of the content.

## Uncovering Hidden Histories

One fascinating aspect of the scanning process has been the sheer volume of information uncovered. The discovery of documents has also shed new light on individuals' roles during the war, challenging some previously held assumptions.

The project underscores the importance of preserving and documenting cultural heritage, particularly regarding complex and sensitive historical issues. By ensuring the accessibility and preservation of these archives, future generations will have access to a more comprehensive understanding of the past.

## Timeline

The project involves scanning 150k documents weekly, with a quarter of the work expected to be complete by 2025 when the archives become open to the public. In total approximately 32 million documents will be digitised. The project is set to conclude in 2027.

## Next Steps

**Meeting Milestones:** The immediate focus for the project is meeting the 2025 deadline for digitising a significant portion of the archives and this remains on track. We continue to deliver meticulous attention to detail and meet the quality standards required for such a critical project.

**Preserving Cultural Heritage:** The project underscores the importance of preserving and documenting cultural heritage, particularly regarding complex and sensitive historical issues. By ensuring the accessibility and preservation of these archives, future generations will have access to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the past.

# Solution

The digitisation project employs a sophisticated array of technologies to transform fragile archival materials into digital archives.

## Specialised Scanning Environment

01

Documents are meticulously handled and scanned to preserve their integrity and ensure clarity in digital format. Fragile documents undergo specialised procedures in climate-controlled facilities before being digitised by certified professionals.

## AI and OCR Indexing

02

Following digitisation, AI (Artificial Intelligence) and OCR (Optical Character Recognition) technologies are utilised to convert scanned documents into easy and accessible searchable formats. This advanced technology enables users to search and filter information within documents based on criteria such as names, dates of birth, organisations, and locations.

## Information Enrichment

03

The digitised documents are further enriched by integrating additional sources, providing context and supplementary information to enhance understanding. Partnering with accredited organisations ensures the inclusion of reliable sources, enriching the digital archive with valuable context and supplementary data.

## Easy Retrieval & Accessibility

04

One third of the entire archive should be made available online by 2025. They will be accessible anywhere at any time by anyone with an internet connection.



Records Management



Scanning & Digitisation



Shredding & Destruction



Vault Storage



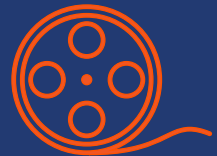
Tape Restoration & Conversion



Regulatory Compliance & GDPR



Cloud Storage & Business Continuity



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