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While the thought of losing data stored on a computer or documents terrifies all academic employees, it represents a true nightmare for university archivists. The two-day Archives in Union: Networks and Cooperation ([Archive im Verbund: Netzwerke und Kooperationen](#)) international conference, taking place from 14-15 March on the grounds of Charles University, is attempting to find a solution for the improvement of archival work in (not only) crisis situations.

The spring meeting of the working-group for the archives of German universities and scientific institutions was begun on 13 March on the premises of the Patriots' Hall by CU Rector Professor Václav Hampl together with the Rector of Leipzig University, Professor Beate Schücking, and the Chairwoman of the Czech Archivists' Society, docent Marie Ryantová. Before the actual start of the conference, the rectors took time to examine one of the most precious documents contained in the archive of Charles University – a period copy of the Decree of Kutná Hora. It was this decree, issued by King Wenceslas II in 1409, that led to the departure of a number of scholars from out alma mater to Leipzig, where they founded Leipzig University.

In his opening speech, [CU Rector Professor Václav Hampl](#) highlighted the contribution made by, primarily, the current generation of Czech and German university archivists and historians in the re-evaluation and cultivation of the image of the past of both sister institutions. This is in accordance with the latest trends in archiving theory and practice, university historiography, and also the needs of the society in which these universities function. In the conclusion to his speech the Rector touched on the important role played in academic and cultural life by the university insignia and called upon the present archivists to consider the possibility of organising an exhibition or preparing a publication on the traditional symbols of academic autonomy in Central Europe.

In her speech the [Rector of Leipzig University, Beate Schücking](#) , emphasised that while archives were in previous times the arsenals of nationalistic prejudices, shared history ought not to be a dividing barrier for the nations of Central Europe. In her view, archivists and historians ought to focus on emphasising shared features. In this context Prof. Schücking announced in public for the first time that, thanks to a generous private donation, Leipzig University shall, from next year, award the international Ludwig Weickmann Prize for work in the history of universities and the sciences.

The working meeting of archivists at the Carolinum in Prague shall also address cooperation with and the forging of ties between archives at home and abroad. The agenda also included representatives of Czech and Austrian archives and other information storage institutions, giving the group the opportunity to discuss existing projects based on mutual cooperation, and consider the form that might be taken by future projects.