

CEGESOMA NEWSLETTER

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RESEARCH

The results of the MADDLAIN project are available. They include suggestions for new ways to provide support to users in terms of access to digital information and to help the institutions to better understand their audiences. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/rech_encours_en.php?article=3614)

INTERVIEWS

It is now possible to consult in our Pallas database the digitized descriptions of the interviews with resistance fighters, collaborators and witnesses of the Second World War. Also available is the new collection of interviews on the period of the occupation during the Second World War originating from Ghent University. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/actu_en.php?article=3612)

KEYWORDS

When there is a problem to conduct research by keywords and the importance of the quality of metadata... [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/actu_en.php?article=3610)

READING ROOM

We have read your views and drawn our conclusions ! Different types of improvements have been made to facilitate access to the collections of CegeSoma. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/actu_en.php?article=3608)

The results of the MADDLAIN project

After two years, the MADDLAIN project has come to an end. Six researchers have analysed a large number of data, including the results of a survey answered by 2,300 external users. Additionally, numerous interviews have been examined. Today, the three associated institutions behind MADDLAIN – the Belgian State Archives, the Belgian Royal Library, and CegeSoma – are happy to present the results of their investigation.

MADDLAIN has brought together a panel comprised of IT specialists, archivists, library experts, information scientists, and historians, with the aim of understanding the needs and practices of those who use digital data in their research. Moreover, we have tried to find out which instruments and methods can be used to get a better view of our users. The project was financed (2015-2017) by the BRAIN programme of the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office. The project, in which participated the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* (Department of Information and Communication Sciences) and IMEC (Ghent) was coordinated by CegeSoma.

Apart from undertaking a general survey, MADDLAIN followed two tracks. On the one hand, we have analysed the online mediation tools used by persons searching the collections. On the other hand, we assessed the expectations of an important group among those users: the academic researchers. Two types of data were used: the browsing data of catalogues, and the non-structured or partly structured responses given in interviews and questionnaires. In general, users have played an important role: in the spring of 2016, some 2,300 persons have answered the online survey. Due to this interaction, we have been able to formulate highly relevant conclusions.

The results of the project can be retrieved in various ways:

- A brochure and a poster containing a summary of the main issues that need to be realized.
- Three reports containing:
 - the results of the survey and the web analytics data;
 - the results of the in-depth study concerning the expectations among researchers;
 - the results of the investigation concerning mediation tools.
- Statistics of the raw data concerning the survey.
- The report of the workshop held on 22 February 2017.

Results of the MADDLAIN project

1. Publications

- [Brochure](#) (FR/NL-PDF-9 p.)
- [Poster](#) (FR/NL-PDF-1 p.)
- [Report audience](#) (written in English-PDF-48 p.)
- [Report VRE](#) (written in English-PDF-61 p.)
- [Report digital tools](#) (written in English-PDF-14 p.) + [annexes](#)
- [Report of the workshop](#) (written in English, Dutch and French-PDF-143 p.)

2. Raw data of the general public survey

- The Belgian State Archives

- o [All user categories](#) (PDF-73 p.)
- o [Genealogists](#) (PDF-47 p.)
- o [Those who use the collections of the State Archives for personal reasons](#) (PDF-39 p.)
- o [Those who use the collections of the State Archives for professional reasons](#) (PDF-38 p.)
- o [Summary of the comments](#) (PDF-5 p.)

- CegeSoma

- o [All user categories](#) (PDF-41 p.)
- o [Those who use the collections of CegeSoma for personal reasons](#) (PDF-36 p.)
- o [Those who use the collections of CegeSoma for professional reasons](#) (PDF-35 p.)
- o [Summary of the comments](#) (PDF-3 p.)

- Royal Library

- o [All user categories](#) (PDF-56 p.)
- o [Those who use the collections of Royal Library for personal reasons](#) (PDF-46 p.)
- o [Those who use the collections of Royal Library for professional reasons](#) (PDF-41 p.)
- o [Summary of the comments](#) (PDF-4 p.)

3. Raw data Maddlain WebAnalytics (written in French - PDF-198p.)

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The collection of interviews of CegeSoma largely accessible

CegeSoma manages a large and varied collection of interviews carried out since the early 1970s, either by researchers of the Centre or in the context of external initiatives such as the programmes Jours de Guerre produced by the RTBF or also those by Maurice De Wilde by the VRT.

In view of the increasing interest for this type of archives in Belgian and international historiography, CegeSoma has made a particular effort this year to make these oral sources available in digital format.

They concern in particular:

- **The 1,800 recordings made by the researchers of the Centre** with former resistance fighters, former collaborators and other witnesses of the period of the Second World War, but also of other periods of Belgian contemporary history. Until now, these recordings were registered in an [Excel list](#), available on the website of CegeSoma. This list has been updated and the interviews have been introduced in Pallas. You can access them by entering "archives sonores" and by clicking on the icon of the archival tree directly in the data sheet obtained. Then select the file "Interviews réalisées par des chercheurs du CegeSoma".

The screenshot shows the Pallas website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Pallas logo and the CegeSoma logo. Below the navigation bar, there is a search bar and a list of search results. The search results are displayed in a table with columns for 'Contexte' and 'Archives'. The search term 'Archives sonores' is entered in the search bar. The search results list various categories of archives, including 'Archives et documents de et concernant les mouvements de jeunesse', 'Archives et documents de et concernant les formations de collaboration militaire', 'Archives et documents de et concernant les prisonniers de guerre', 'Archives et documents de et concernant les institutions belges et les Belges en Grande-Bretagne et en France', 'Archives et documents du gouvernement militaire allemand, d'institutions allemandes civiles et concernant la Wehrmacht', 'Archives et documents en provenance de et concernant les organisations belges de Résistance', 'Archives et documents de et concernant les services de renseignement et d'action fra - eng', 'Archives et documents de et concernant entreprises et organismes financiers belges, principalement sous l'Occupation', 'Collections de documents, fonds de recherche et enquêtes', 'Séries et documents d'archives de l'étranger concernant la Belgique et ses pays étrangers (à l'exception de l'Allemagne) et archives d'organisations et tribunaux internationaux', 'Archives personnelles', 'Archives sonores', and 'Interviews réalisées par des chercheurs du CegeSoma'. The 'Interviews réalisées par des chercheurs du CegeSoma' entry is highlighted with a red circle.

- **The 1,200 interviews on daily life in Belgium during the occupation**, made between 1984 and 1998 in the context of a survey conducted by professor Jacques Lory of the UCL. These have been digitized in the context of the programme digit03, funded by the Federal Science Policy Office. They are now available on request in the reading room. The inventories by name, subject and locality are available [here](#).

Furthermore, in the course of 2017, CegeSoma has acquired the transcriptions of the interviews made in the context of the course of historical methodology of Ghent University on the subject of the Second World War occupation in the collective memory. These have been digitized and described in Pallas. You can access them by typing the keyword "archives sonores" and by clicking on the icon of the archival tree. Then select the file "Interviews réalisées par des chercheurs extérieurs", then on the corresponding sub-file. The digital versions are available on request in the reading room.

Apart from the audio archives and the transcriptions available in a digital format, CegeSoma also has in its collections:

- **Transcriptions of interviews made by the journalists of the programme Jours de Guerre, produced by the RTBF.** These are accessible in paper form in the reading room. The inventory in a pdf version can be downloaded via Pallas by introducing: "interviews jours de guerre". Attention: this inventory can be found at the end of the long list of keywords with the names of the interviewed persons.

- **Transcriptions of interviews made during the broadcasts of Maurice De Wilde on the collaboration and the repression produced by the VRT.** These are accessible in paper form in the reading room. The pdf inventory can be downloaded via Pallas by introducing: "interviews Maurice De Wilde".

To contribute to the preservation of the audio heritage and to valorize the work of the researchers, CegeSoma particularly encourages students and researchers who have carried out interviews in the context of their research to deposit them at CegeSoma. Thus, they can be preserved in good conditions and are available for future research. If you wish to be informed of the conditions of this kind of deposit, please contact [Florence Gillet](#).



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Submersion in the question of keywords

For more than 20 years, the online Pallas catalogue has allowed to search documents in the collections of CegeSoma. Pallas proposes different ways of navigating to the users, among others the search by keywords.

From the results of the [MADDLAIN](#) project, we know that the success of a search by keywords is directly dependent on the way in which the documents have been indexed. For example, if all the keywords have not been translated in a systematic way, a French-speaking user and a Dutch-speaking user entering their request in their respective languages will not obtain the same documents in the results list. Moreover, if many similar keywords have been created during the cataloguing, the user may be bewildered when finding that his query for the words "Belgian resistance" results in dozens of suggestions of longer keywords, containing his two original words but also other, more precise, terms.

These examples take us to the question of the quality of the metadata. In the context of the research projects [ADOCHS](#) and [UGESCO](#), an analysis of keywords used by CegeSoma has been initiated with the aim of improving the digital access to the collections. The goal is to find short-term solutions for optimizing the search results, but also to conduct an in-depth reflection on the way in which the quality of the keywords can be controlled and improved within the institution. For instance, the short-term solutions include the translation of the 100 most frequently used keywords that have not yet been translated in Dutch or French. The ADOCHS project also examines how the development of the linked data can, in the longer term, allow to improve the quality of the keywords, particularly by using databases such as Wikidata, GeoNames or VIAF.

By focusing on the question of keywords, CegeSoma wishes to respond to a clearly expressed need by the users with regard to the improvement of access to the collections.

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We have read your views and drawn our conclusions: CegeSoma facilitates the access to its collections!

The question of the access to our collections was one of the key points that was examined in the context of the MADDLAIN project. Although the tools and means of communication used by our readers have changed considerably in the digital age, the main reason for different publics to turn to an institution such as CegeSoma remains the consultation of our archives and our rich library which is made accessible to them.

In the MADDLAIN survey, the question of "Access" has been considered in terms of paper documents as well as digital documents. In both cases, it would seem that the users combine different approaches to access documents by linking the research in the digital catalogues and the paper inventories. Moreover, professional researchers point out that they use not one, but several strategies in their search for information: keywords, hierarchical tree, quotations, waterfall method, documentary monitoring, exchanges with experts, etc.

The majority of the users are satisfied with the digital catalogues. With more than 2,000 single visitors each month, the Pallas catalogue is widely consulted. Yet, the answers to the questions of the survey suggest that several improvements could be made to it. The main grievances concern the not very clear interface, the too complex general structure, the difficult usability for inexperienced users, the description of inappropriate or incomplete documents and the lack of communication on which documents are encoded, or not, in the catalogue.

The results of the MADDLAIN project have led to the identification of different types of possible improvements to facilitate the access to the collections of CegeSoma for the user. The goal was to respond rapidly and efficiently to the complaints concerning problems that can easily and quickly be solved with a realistic investment of time and money.

Here are some of the first actions undertaken since the end of the MADDLAIN project:

- Direct access on the home page of the website of CegeSoma to the main catalogue of the institution
- The renaming of certain tabs of the menu of the website that allow to access the collections
- The translation of almost 2,000 descriptions of photographic collections in Pallas
- An article by Karla Vanraepenbusch and Jill Hungenaert which proposes 3 tools to find sources and references in the catalogue of CegeSoma. Available on the blog of the [Memex project](#) and on the [website of CegeSoma](#).

More steps are being prepared for the beginning of 2018. We will keep you informed via our Newsletter. Stay tuned!

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