
synapsen – A hypertextual card index

User's Manual

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www.synapsen.ch

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1 Connections to Counter Oblivion

‘One needs not only to make and store
a record but also to be able to consult it.’
(Vannevar Bush, *As We May Think*)

»However, you cannot recall everything.«
(Niklas Luhmann, *Learning Reading*)

In the year 1769, on a ship travelling between Riga and Nantes, a 24-year-old scholar imagines titles and themes for future books, and his hastily outlined bibliographies are almost like the surface swaying beneath his feet – an all but untamed flood of references that bespeak the universal library. ‘How much can yet be searched and salvaged in this! . . . What a work about mankind! the human spirit! the culture of earth! of all spaces! times! nations! powers! mixtures! shapes! asiatic religion! and chronology and police and philosophy! Egyptian art and philosophy and police! Phoenic arithmetic and language and luxury! Greek everything! Roman everything! Nordic religion, rights, customs, war, honour! Papistic times, monks, scholarship! Nordic-asiatic crusaders, pilgrims, knights! Christian pagan awakening of scholarship! Century of France! English, Dutch, German shape! – Chinese, Japanese politics! Natural sciences of the new world! American customs etc. –’¹ This range of themes is found to be as wide as the starlit sky that helps the helmsman navigate across the “sea of knowledge”, as well as the real Baltic and North Seas. ‘Concerning this, I want to collect plenty of data from the history of all times: each should procure the picture of its own customs, uses, virtues, vices and bliss, and therefore I want to reduce everything to our times.’² 18th century Johann Gottlieb Herder does not suffer from an information deficit any more than we do in today’s times of boundless knowledge. But the challenge today, just as it was then, is to transform our abundance of collected information into structures that protect it from short-livedness and oblivion. How can we save our data, how can we make it retrievable? How can our knowledge be converted into a suitable system supplying not only the answers we require, but associations and chains of argumentation, too? *synapsen – A hypertextual card index* aims at software-controlled answers to these questions. Finding, saving and processing literature data serves as a basic operating mode in any science that works with texts. So next to the programmatic attempt to preserve text passages and texts, *synapsen* enables and automatically generates new connections that create new links among entries as time progresses. The idea of massive connectivity is not new; nor that of the card file as a scientific instrument. What *synapsen* tries to do, though, is to draw a connection between two examples of these proven concepts. On the one hand, there is Vannevar Bush’s 1945 MEMory Extender³ whose structure is known from

¹ Herder (1846/1971), p. 192. ² Herder (1846/1971), p. 202. ³ Cf. Bush (1945).

1965 on as Hypertext; and on the other hand, Niklas Luhmann's scholarly machine⁴ which forms a highly intricate network structure, albeit originally conceived on the basis of paper and handwriting. Fifty years later, synapsen seeks to electrify these concepts⁵ in order to increase the processing rate (in both senses) by means of higher CPU-speed, and perhaps even to accelerate impulses to prevent acquired knowledge from sinking back into the sea of words, and into oblivion.

⁴ Cf. Luhmann (1993), and also Krajewski (1998) for the historical reference of this machine.

⁵ For a detailed description of synapsen and the concept's foundation in Bush and Luhmann cf. Krajewski (1997).

2 Installation Instructions

Thanks to its consistent use of software standards, *synapsen* runs on all current operating systems. It has been optimised in particular for *macOS*, but it works with no great effort under *Windows*, under *Linux* and on other *Unix* systems as well.

There are two installation files, and both are the same for every operating system. The first, `SynapsenInstaller.jar`, sets the card index up for the first time; the second, `SynapsenUpgrader.jar`, brings an existing installation up to date without touching the data you have already entered. Both can be downloaded from www.synapsen.ch/download.html. In either case they are *JAVA* programs that start with a double click, provided *JAVA* is installed on your system.

Two installation files

In principle *synapsen* requires one single component to be present on your system: a so-called *Java Virtual Machine* (JVM). You need not concern yourself with the database – *synapsen* brings its own along and sets it up during the installation. Should you nevertheless prefer to work with a database server of your own, see Section 2.5 below.

2.1 System Requirements

A *JAVA* runtime environment, version 26 or later. To find out whether one is present on your system, and which, open a terminal or command prompt window and type:

```
java -version
```

The program then prints a version number, which must read 26 or higher. If no *JAVA* is installed at all, or if it carries a lower number, download a current release – for instance the free *OpenJDK* from adoptium.net or Oracle's edition from www.oracle.com/java/technologies/downloads/.

macOS: Unlike in earlier days, the system no longer ships with *JAVA*; it has to be installed once in any case. Apart from that, no preparations are needed.

Linux: The most convenient source for the runtime environment is your distribution's package management (something like `openjdk-26-jre`); otherwise take it directly from one of the addresses above.

Windows: Use one of the distributions named above; the installation routine checks for a suitable JVM when it starts and tells you if none is found.

For the *knowledge graph* (see Section 3.9) there is a second, optional requirement: a *Neo4j* database. It is not part of *synapsen* and is needed only if you

actually want to use the knowledge graph; everything else runs without it. Section 2.6 describes how to set it up.

2.2 The First Installation

Start the file `SynapsenInstaller.jar` with a double click and follow the instructions in the individual dialogue windows. Should the installation routine refuse to start despite a working `JAVA`, call the program manually. To do so, open a terminal or shell window, change into the directory that holds the installation file, and type at the command line:

```
java -jar SynapsenInstaller.jar
```

Either error messages will appear, or the installation routine will open its first window after a few moments.



Fig. 1: The language comes first

At the very beginning the routine asks for a language (Fig. 1). German, English, French, Italian and Czech are on offer. The choice made here does not apply to the installation alone: it also determines the language in which synapsen will later come up.

Language of the installation

Five steps follow, which the window counts off in its lower right corner. The welcome screen (Fig. 2) names the version you are about to install – worth a glance, should you ever need to ask a question about it later.

The installation path (Fig. 3) is preset to `/Applications` under macOS, to the program directory under Windows, and correspondingly under Linux. As a rule you can accept the suggestion. Only the program itself goes there; your data reside elsewhere (see Section 2.4), which is precisely why the card index survives any later reinstallation unharmed.

Where the program goes

In the selection of installation packages (Fig. 4) the program files for your operating system and the documentation are fixed; packages shown in grey belong to other systems and cannot be selected. Two ingredients are yours to decide:

What is installed alongside

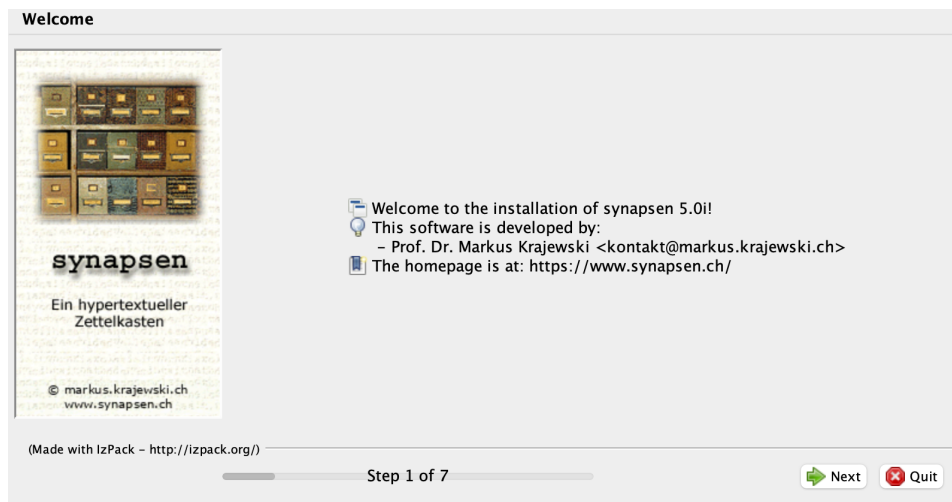


Fig. 2: The welcome screen names the version

- Support for OpenOffice installs a document template together with the necessary libraries, with which synapsen can write bibliographic data straight into an open *LibreOffice* or *OpenOffice* document (see Section 3.12).
- Support for MS Word does the same under Windows for *Microsoft Word*.

Both can be added at any later time by running the installation routine again. Along the bottom edge the window keeps a running total of the space your selection requires.

The routine then copies the files into place (Fig. 5) and reports completion (Fig. 6). Do take note of any warnings arising from difficulties during the installation. Once all has gone well, you can start synapsen: under macOS from `Synapsen.app` in the applications folder, under Windows and Linux from the icon named ‘card index’ or the start script in the installation directory.

2.3 The Update

For moving to a newer release there is a routine of its own: `SynapsenUpgrader.jar`. It takes the same course as the first installation – language, welcome, installation path, packages – but behaves differently in one decisive respect: it replaces the program and leaves the data where they are.

Updating
without losing
data

Important: For the installation path, give the same directory in which the previous release resides. Only then is the old one replaced by the new; otherwise you end up with two releases side by side, both of them working on the same data.

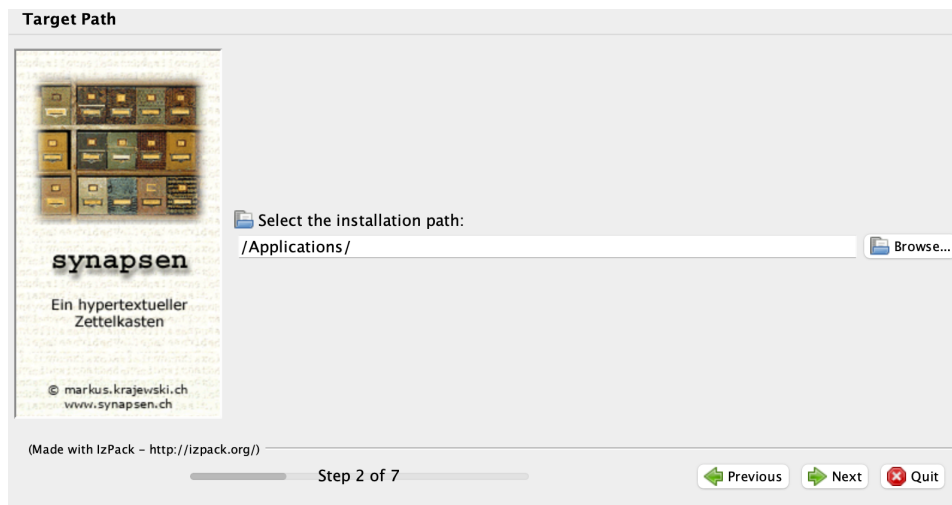


Fig. 3: The installation path

Your card index, your settings and all assignments to the electronic text archive remain untouched. This is no accident but expressly arranged: the update creates the empty database it brings along only where none is present yet, and does not touch an existing one. The same holds for the file in which the connection to the database server is recorded. Anyone working from a server of their own (Section 2.5) will therefore find that setting unchanged after the update as well.

Occasionally a new release calls for an extension of the database structure – when a new field has been added, for instance. *synapsen* notices this by itself at the first start after the update and tells you what to do. The current instructions can always be found at www.synapsen.ch/faq_e.html.

2.4 Where the Data Reside

Since version 2.1 *synapsen* uses an internal database server of its own by default. Which is to say: you need install no further package, start no service and assign no credentials. The installation routine creates the empty database, and at the first start it begins to fill with your entries.

The database
that comes
along

Where exactly it resides depends on the operating system:

macOS: in the folder `~/Library/Application Support/Synapsen/`, in the subdirectory `syndb`.

Windows and Linux: in the installation directory, likewise in the subdirectory `syndb`.

For backups this yields a pleasingly short instruction: copy the folder `syndb` and you have secured your entire card index (see Section 3.14 for the details).

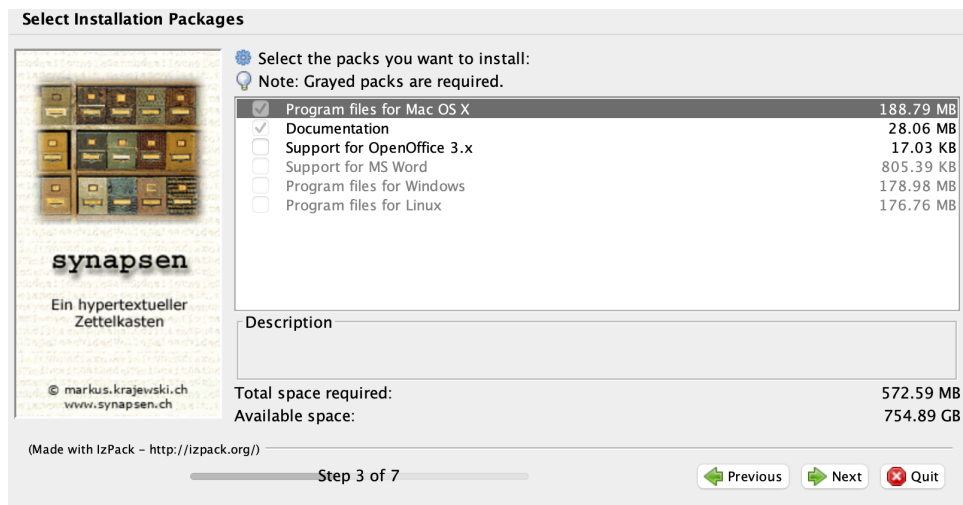


Fig. 4: Selecting the packages

Two further files in the same directory are of occasional interest: `syndb_host` records which database the program works with, and `Synapsen.log` collects the program and error messages of the running session.

2.5 For Experienced Users: a MariaDB of your own

The internal database is entirely sufficient for everyday work. There are, however, two reasons to run a database server of your own instead – *MariaDB* or *mySQL*: you work with very large holdings, or you access the same card index from several computers. Both presuppose that you are familiar with setting such a server up; *synapsen* will not do that part for you.

Once server and database are in place, there are two ways of pointing *synapsen* at them. The more convenient one leads through the program itself: under Information you will find the database server setting, where you enter address, user, password and database name and confirm. *synapsen* then closes all open cards, saves them and carries on with the new database. If it cannot be reached, the previous one remains in force – a wrong turn therefore costs you nothing.

The other way leads through the file `syndb_host` in the directory named above. It holds four lines: address, user name, password and database name. If the first line reads `internal`, the program uses the database it brings along. The password may alternatively be kept separately in the file `synapsenPW.sin`, whose first line holds it.

Should the server entered there fail to answer at start-up, *synapsen* offers the internal database as a temporary shelter of its own accord, so that you can carry on working.

When a server
of one's own
pays off



Fig. 5: The installation in progress

2.6 Preparing the Knowledge Graph: Neo4j

The knowledge graph (Section 3.9) draws persons, titles and headwords as a network. The graph database *Neo4j* it requires is not part of *synapsen* and has to be installed separately – which is simply explained by the fact that the two stand under different licences. What is needed is the *Community Edition*, available from neo4j.com/product/community-edition. Under macOS, three lines with *Homebrew* suffice:

Setting Neo4j
up

```
brew install neo4j
neo4j-admin dbms set-initial-password YourPassword
neo4j start
```

The middle line is needed only before the very first start. You then tell *synapsen* the credentials in the window of the knowledge graph itself, using the Neo4j... button; they are kept in the file `syn_neo4j`, again four lines after the pattern of `syndb_host:` address, user, password, database name.

If no *Neo4j* is running, the rest of the program notices nothing of it; only the Knowledge graph button then remains without effect and tells you why.

2.7 Starting the Program, and Error Messages

Normally you start *synapsen* like any other program. There are, however, a few special cases for which calling it from the command line pays off. The first argument determines either the language of the interface or a particular mode of operation:

Command line
arguments

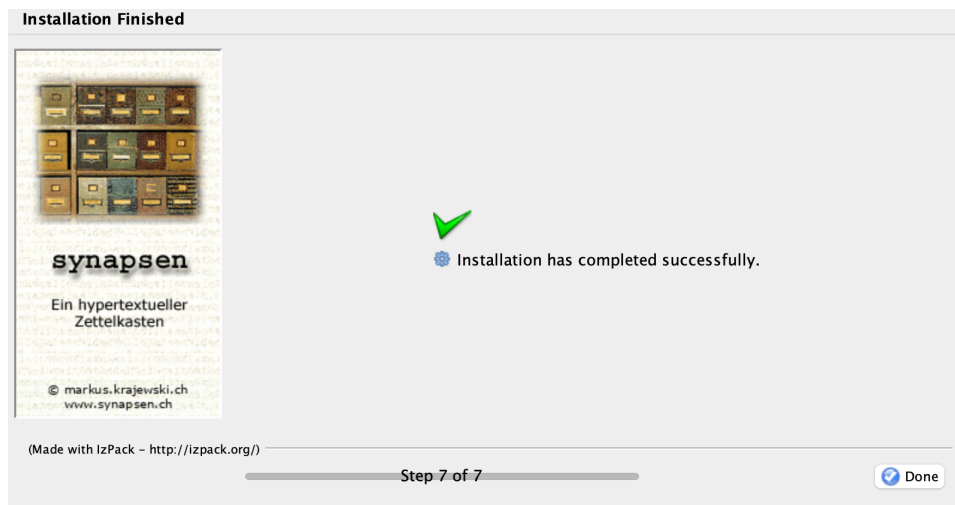


Fig. 6: Done

deu	German interface (default)
eng	English interface
fra	French interface
ita	Italian interface
cze	Czech interface
-log	writes all messages into the file Synapsen.log
-clear	starts with the settings reset
-center	fetches the window back onto the main screen

The last case occurs now and then when you last used synapsen on a second monitor that is no longer attached: the main window then appears outside the visible area, and -center brings it back.

The program and error messages of synapsen during operation are collected in a file of their own named Synapsen.log. It resides in the working directory of synapsen, or under macOS in ~/Library/Application Support/Synapsen/. If you wish to report an error, please enclose this file.

Consulting the
error messages

2.8 Troubleshooting in Case of Difficulty with Installation

In case there have been problems with the installation that have not been covered here, please consult the “Frequently Asked Questions” of synapsen at www.synapsen.ch/faq_e.html.

3 First Steps with synapsen

‘Card Indexes can do everything!’
(*Zeitschrift für Organisation*, 1928)

3.1 The Main Window

By starting synapsen, the main window of the program appears on your virtual workplace (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7: synapsen's Main Window

you can set and change certain values as well as get an overview of the actual size of the card-catalog. Quit ends the program.

Two buttons have been added with version 5.0, and both lead out of the card index and into a view of it: TimeLine plots persons and titles along an axis of time and shows what was contemporary with what (Section 3.8); Knowledge graph draws the connections between persons, their titles and their headwords as a network (Section 3.9). What the list of connections does for a single card, these two undertake for the holdings as a whole.

In the following sections the individual actions will be described in detail, in order to introduce you to the working method and also to make you aware of special features and effects.

3.2 New Entries

synapsen differentiates primarily between two categories of cards; on the one hand are all the cards that make reference to publications, which, in addition to gathering bibliographic information, citations and personal commentary, also enable the attribution of personal keywords for categorization or type of text.

On the other hand, there is the category of *Notecard* (the specified Author in specified Font), that operates as a thematically differentiated grouping of thoughts. That is to say that a *Notecard* contains ideas and thoughts around a specific theme, which can then be connected to other cards with the usage of

keywords. This separation embraces two different working methods: one is the exacting philological citation methodology, which always associates texts published within a network and accords for argumentative processes (Notes as text snapshot); and the other is the process of emancipating thought-material from published texts, in order to record ideas, develop them further and to catalyze the genesis of one's own ideas (*Notecards* as argumentational fermentation).

If it is only important to record your own idea, create a new *Note-card*. If you, however, want to document a published text – regardless of the form that it has, you must differentiate between the different types of publications: Articles contain the bibliographic data for a journal entry,⁶ Book for a monography,⁷ Inbook for a part of a book or an essay,⁸ however, Incollection records one essay from a collection of essays,⁹ and finally, Website describes the necessary notes and comments for a document in the *World Wide Web*.¹⁰

All entries must possess unique identification, the so called *Keyword*, which makes certain that no new indexes can overwrite existing ones.

It is not only for mnemotechnical reasons that it is highly recommended for the keyword be constructed according to the following scheme. Because the bibliography is always arranged alphabetically according to the keyword, the following scheme should be adhered to:

keyword = *author's surname:year of publication*

For the example from the footnotes, 6, 7, 9 the keywords would be baker:1994, nabokov:1962 and hughes:1989. It is especially important that keywords have neither diacritics nor empty spaces!



Fig. 8: Select Entry

Keyword Given

⁶ E.g.: Nicholson Baker, 1994, Discards, *The New Yorker*, no. 4, p. 64–86. ⁷ E.g.: Vladimir Nabokov, 1962, *Pale Fire*, Everyman's Library, Alfred A. Knopf, New York. ⁸ E.g.: Pat Rogers, 1985, Gulliver and the Engineers, in: —, *Eighteenth Century Encounters. Studies in Literature and Society in the Age of Walpole*, The Harvester Press, Barnes & Nobles Books, Sussex, New Jersey, p. 11–28. ⁹ Thomas P. Hughes, 1989, The Evolution of Large Technological Systems, in: Thomas Hughes, Trevor Pinch, and Wiebe Bijker (Eds.), *The Social Construction of Technological Systems*, MIT Press, Cambridge, p. 51–82. ¹⁰ E.g.: Lev Manovich, 1998, Database as Symbolic Form, www.nettime.org/199812/msg00041.html.

In order to guarantee that it is unique, synapsen checks during the submission of a new entry if the keyword already exists. If the card-catalog recognizes an entry with this keyword, the new entry will be extended with a short alphabetic index, such as in foucault:1993a (presuming that no author publishes more than 27 works in a single year and that they all land in your card-catalog). Please observe that, in order to guarantee the consistency of the database, once you have created a keyword, it cannot be changed at a later date. As soon as you use Save to commit a new entry to the database, this entry must be addressable by all new and old cards.

3.2.1 Notecard

Even a *Notecard* must have a unique identification that does not follow the usual scheme of *author's surname:year of publication*, rather in this case – and different from the standard – is accounted for as *card:thematic description*. A *Notecard* about *fireworks* will then be categorized as *card:fireworks* (see Fig. 9). Simply enter the respective thematic description – however just one word – and confirm with Return and synapsen will automatically complete the keyword as *card:thematic description*.

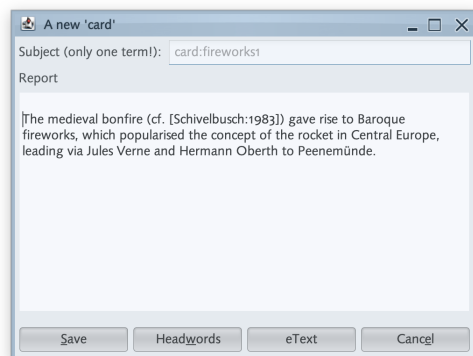


Fig. 9: New *Notecard*

As soon as the topic of the *Notecard*, which is to be entered with only a single term, is confirmed with Return, synapsen attempts to verify that the keyword is unique. This keyword then appears, perhaps with a modified index, in a display field that cannot be changed. Meanwhile, the cursor will be in the commentary field, ready to record your thoughts. In the formulation of these thoughts, more terms can

Recording and
Linking Ideas

appear that you might want to use as headwords, which is to say that these headwords can be used to create links to other cards. If one of these words seems 'headwordy', with a double click on your mouse and by pressing "F1", it will be added to the list of headwords. This list of terms or headwords can be called up by pressing the Headwords button, and you can even expand or edit the list at a later point in time. After being entered into the list, names should be modified in the form *Surname, First Name*, as in the example: Melville, Herman, which assumes that you selected Hermann Melville and added it to the headword list by pressing "F1". It is very important to remember: the words added to the list with "F1" will first be saved when you confirm with Indexing... the entry-window of the headwords (see the section 3.3 'Headword Allocation', S. 21).

After you have entered thoughts and headwords, you can transfer the new entry with Save into the card catalog. If you wish to expand the notecard with further ideas or headwords, you will need to call up the notecard with the help of the search engine (see Section 3.5).

3.2.2 Article

The **Article** serves to record a newspaper column or magazine article – or general periodicals. The entry process begins exactly as with *Notecard* as regarding the keyword, however it should be used here in accordance with the general scheme of *Author's Surname:year of publication*, which will then be examined for its uniqueness.

Of the following fields – including the keyword – Author, Title and Year are obligatory, which means that these fields cannot be empty. The name of the author should always take the form of Surname, First Name, because otherwise a correct, alphabetically-sorted bibliography cannot be created. Furthermore, the field Year allows more than a purely numeric entry of four digits. Valid year entries such as 1748/1994 can be used, in order to combine the year of first publication with the edition used. Should you attempt to save the entry without filling all obligatory fields with a value, the cursor will jump to the field to be filled and will wait for the required information.

The screenshot shows a software window titled "erman+simon:1892 edit...". It contains several input fields and buttons. The fields are: Keyword (erman+simon:1892), Author (Erman, Wilhelm and Heinrich Simon), Title (Ueber die Verwendung von Schreibmaschinen für bibliothek), Journal (Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen), Volume (9), Number (4), Month (April), Pages (180--185), Location (MKR-Arc/AUF 102), Notes (empty), and Year (1892). There are also buttons for "Select journal", "Select location", "Published", "Import", "Get text", "Save", "Headwords", "Delete", and "Cancel".

Fig. 10: New Article

In addition to the form of indexing using the headword-Function already introduced (see 3.3 and 3.2.1), synapsen enables you to include complete comments regarding the published text in the form of a Report. The respective button delivers an entry window in which you can mention citations, long excerpts, your own commentary and other notes. This window also has the feature of highlighting text and copying them directly to the headword list by pressing "F1", where you can edit them (see section regarding editing the report 3.6).

Literature
Report

Tip: In order to minimize the risk of false usage by ('clicking away') your data, it is recommended practice during the creation of a new card for which you wish to enter extensive literature reportage, at first to create only the bibliographic data for the card, in order to save the card immediately. Then you should call up the card with the search function, in order to enter the data in the window for the literature report. In this way, synapsen automatically saves the entries as soon as you close the window. This is the

more secure way of preventing the unintentional loss of data resulting from a power failure or the unintentional closing of a window.

Special mention should also be given to the selection window with the description: “Select Location” (in Fig. 10 »MKR-Arc/AUF 102«). With the help of this selection, you can carry out the allocation of the abbreviation representing the libraries you use most commonly,¹¹ whereby the respective demarcations appear in the location field, which can then be used to expand the signature of the respective text.

Since not only those texts to be recorded are those that remain in libraries or lending institutions, but often tend to wander into one’s own paper archive as a copy, synapsen manages a counter, that according to the *numerus currens*-process attaches a signature and the running number for the respective copy. This signature that the card catalog creates by the selection of »Your Archive« (such as ‘Arc/AUF 102’), is not only a link to the copy (‘AUF 102’) but also a reference that should be noted on the spine of your binder (‘AUF 85–120’). In this way, synapsen makes it possible for you to simplify the management of your real stacks of paper, which categorizes the existing and future materials in order to make a targeted and quick location of your materials on the basis of its signature. You can choose the name of the signature individually, it is important, however, to use only one signature for the counter.

3.2.3 Book

With the entry of a Book – as in all of the other entries except for *Notecard* – the following fields are mandatory: Keyword, Author, Title and Year.

Furthermore, in the Book-Entry you will find two further selection windows. The first selection discerns whether or not the author is actually the legal author of the text or if that role is taken on by the editor. This will lead to the addition of »(Ed.)« after the author’s name in the bibliography. The second selection window makes it possible – similar to the abbreviation list of common libraries –, to keep the information regarding commonly cited publishing houses in a list.¹² Select one of the publishers from the window, and the fields Publisher and Publisher Location will be filled with the respective information.

Tip: If you want to use more specific fields like an abbreviated title, an entry for the translator of a text, or an additional title for a series, you can click the »-symbol which is located next to the title field of a new entry. The window will expand and shows the additional fields which you can also choose in the layout of the bibliography. If you typeset your bibliography with $\LaTeX$, synapsen also supports the biblatex-package which makes use of these fields as well.¹³

Additional fields
for shorttitle,
translator, main
title

¹¹ To create the abbreviation-list see Section 3.10. ¹² See for the creation of a publishers list Section 3.10. ¹³ See www.ctan.org.

3.2.4 Inbook

The entry form Inbook is an expanded type of the Book-category (see Fig. 11). Fields added here are the fields for the Book title, which takes on the title of the publication, and pages, which expects the page numbers of the section of the text. In the entry field for the Title, the title of the chapter or section should be noted. Data regarding the edition does not expect – due to rationalization – the same word »Edition«, which is automatically added to the bibliography. In a similar fashion, the field Pages doesn't expect more than the numeric values and hyphen between the values. You should pay attention to the fact that all Umlaute in the keyword are changed (like "ö" to "oe") and then a short index is added. (For detailed information see Section 3.2).

In Fig. 11 you can see a button called Import, which in the entry types Inbook and Incollection, enables you to carry over bibliographic data from existing entries. The execution of this function will then ask for the keyword of the entry that should serve as the donor for the bibliographic data. This function can be very helpful with entries for essays that came from the same collection or book.



Fig. 11: New Inbook

Import from
Other Cards

3.2.5 Website

In order to catalogue a document from the *World Wide Web*, choose the Website type. Rather than the publisher's location, an internet address (URL) is asked for. In addition to the URL, the Website also records the date, in order to store the point in time at which the Document could be found at that address.

3.2.6 Incollection

Incollection serves to record an entry in a collection of essays. The distinction between Inbook and Incollection is the presence of an additional field for the publisher of the collection, as this usually differs from the author of the respective essay.

The screenshot shows a dialog box titled 'foucault:1993 edit...'. It contains the following fields and values:

- Keyword: foucault:1993
- Author: Foucault, Michel
- Title: » Andere Räume
- Editor: Barck, Karlheinz and Peter Gente and Heidi Paris and Stef
- Book title: Aisthesis. Wahrnehmung heute oder Perspektiven einer ar
- Publisher: Reclam Verlag
- Publisher's place: Leipzig (with a 'Choose publisher' dropdown)
- Series: (empty)
- Volume: (empty)
- Edition: 5., durchgesehene
- Pages: 34--46 (with a 'Select location' dropdown)
- Location: MKR-Arc/AUF 103 (with an 'eText' dropdown)
- Notes: (empty) (with a 'Published' dropdown)
- Year: 1993

Buttons at the bottom: Save, Headwords, Delete, Cancel. There is also an 'Import' button and a 'Get text' checkbox.

Fig. 13: New Incollection

In the entry of the information it is generally important to observe the practice of not ending any fields with periods or other types of punctuation, because during the process of composing the bibliography the punctuation is automatically inserted at the appropriate location. Furthermore, it is recommended during the allocation of personal names as headwords to follow this scheme: Surname, First-name Middle-name [Title]. »Norbert von Hellingrath« would

No Interpunctu-
ation

then appear as the man who founded the critical edition of Hölderlin in the field of Editor from Incollection with first name and supplementary names, however as a headword in the headword-window it would be in the form of Hellingrath, Norbert von.

3.2.7 Proceedings

The only difference between an Incollection entry and an Inproceedings is: instead of two fields containing series and volume of a book, Inproceedings offers one field for the organisation which has been responsible for the conference, accompanied by another field containing the date on which the conference has taken place.

3.2.8 Image

The category "Image" provides entries for electronical copies of pictures and paintings, photographs, reproductions of works of art or digital images. In analogy to the other categories an image also needs a keyword in order to clearly identify the card later. The artist's surname together with the year of production compose the keyword. Furthermore, you will find additional fields which are necessary to identify and describe the image like title, the

artist's technique, measures, the place of location (a museum, for example) etc. The usual functions like headwords and a report are, of course, also available.

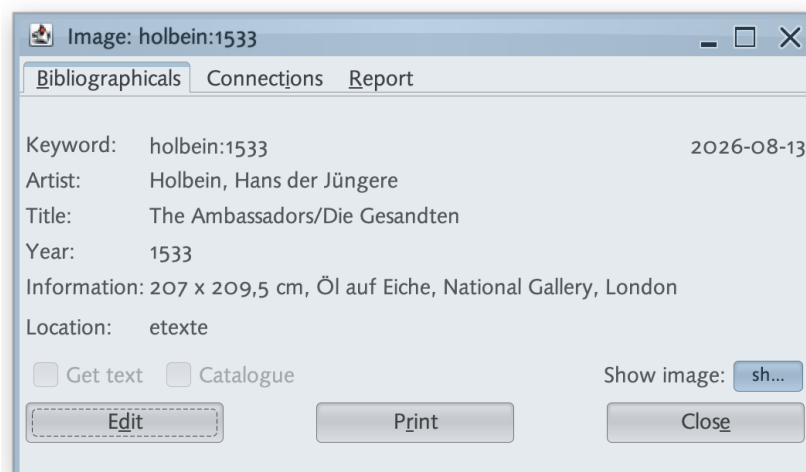


Fig. 14: New (electronic) image

While entering the new image you can also assign an electronic file which contains a representation of the image. Click the button named Choose and select the appropriate file from your hard-disk. The image file will be treated like an entry of the textual archive, i.e. synapsen only saves the path and the file-name, not the file itself. You can later change this assignment any time by clicking with the right mouse button the green square on the card, which represents the image. From the card the image is easily available for viewing: like the handling of documents in the textual archive you click on the two arrows >>, located right from the green square. Then, a browser shows up depicting the image, in which you can zoom in or out with the buttons on top.

3.2.9 Movie

In opposite to printed publications the keyword of the Movie category is composed from the director's surname plus the year of the movie's release. E.g., movies like the Coen brothers' *The Man Who Wasn't There* results in coen:2001.

Together with the other fields you can collect all the typical information which are necessary to describe a motion picture.

3.2.10 Audio

Similar to movies the question arises how to compose the keyword of an audio record. Instead of choosing the composer's name it is recommended to take the name of the artists resp. interpreter. The Goldberg Variations usually do not appear as bach:1741, but as, for example, gould:1955.

Furthermore you find several additional fields in order to store all the relevant information for an audio recording.

3.2.11 Person

Since version 4.0 there is a new category supplying information for persons. Here, you can add information for either living or historical persons which you need for your collection. The GUI of a person's card is a bit different in comparison to the usual index card. You can add a passport photograph. Furthermore, an automatic generated list is provided at the bottom of the card. It contains entries by the author which are already listed in the card index. With a click on the green link the card is opened.

person:walser:1878

Personal data | Connections | Biography

Surname: Walser

Given name: Robert

Title:

Alternativ name: Kutsch

Date of birth: 15/04/1878

Place of birth: Biel

Date of death: 25/12/1956

Place of death: Herisau

Profession: Schriftsteller, Kommiss, Spaziergänger

Electronic Text: >>

Author of: [walser:1986](#) (Die Gedichte), [walser:1985-2000](#) (Aus dem Bleistiftgebiet), [walser:1979](#) (Briefe), [walser:1921](#) (Das Alphabet), [walser:1919a](#) (Das letzte Prosastück), [walser:1919](#) (Das erste Gedicht), [walser:1917](#) (Der ...)

Headwords Delete Print Close

Fig. 15: Extract from the author's catalog

The entry is divided into three tabs. Person's data holds what can be put into fields: surname and first name, title, an alternative name (under which the person is listed elsewhere), dates and places of birth and death, and the occupation. Both date fields expect the form 23.12.1745 and check whether the day given actually exists. Connections shows – as with a card – the links computed from the headwords, and Biographical offers room for a continuous text about the person.

The dates of life are more than a piece of information: they are what makes a person appear on the timeline (see Section 3.8). Anyone recorded without a date of birth remains invisible there.

Three layers of a person

3.2.12 Additional Fields for Shorttitle, Translators etc.

Additional
Fields

If you want to add further information to an entry, click the » symbol next to the “title” field. The window will be expanded and shows some additional fields in order to store, e.g., a short title, translators, or the main title of a multi volume work. You can also add these fields to your bibliography. The categories *Movie* and *Audio* allow the description of a genre, material or the recording quality.

Users of $\text{\LaTeX}$ can choose the setting for the *biblatex* package which also makes use of these fields (like short or main title).¹⁴

3.3 Headword Allocation

In order to add headwords to a card, you can transfer the term directly out of the report window into the headword window with “F1”. Or you can manually enter the terms into the headword list. However you do it, it is important to remember that you confirm your entry with “Return”, so that it joins the list underneath the entry field. Only those words in the list that have a sandy-colored background will be saved as headwords for the respective card. If you would like to change any of these terms in this list, simply double-click on it. It will then appear in the entry-field, where it can be edited and then returned to the list with “Return”. Headwords that you entered at a previous point in time will then appear in the list with a darker background. If you would like to delete one of these headwords from an entry, a double-click on this word will call up a small window where the deletion must be confirmed. If you answer with “Yes”, the headword will be deleted.

As soon as you have modified, added or deleted a headword, you have to leave the dialog window by confirming with “Indexing...”. Otherwise the changes will *not* be carried out.

In order not to lose supervision of the headwords already in use, press the *ESCAPE* button. A small window will appear which lists all headwords which the database contains. If you enter one or more characters into the text field the selection will be reduced according to the entered letters. By selecting one of the proposed terms via *Return* or by double clicking the headword will be added to the list of newly entered terms. You can toggle between the two windows by pressing *F1*. The window containing the proposed headwords can be closed by pressing *ESCAPE* again.

Overview of
headwords in
use

3.4 Leafing through the Entries

»Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard / Randomness never arises in the resting of the dice«. ¹⁵ The pressing of the *Shuffle* button opens up a random card. The opening of the catalog and exposure of a random card offers the

¹⁴ See www.ctan.org/tex-archive/help/Catalogue/entries/biblatex.html. ¹⁵ Mallarmé (1992).

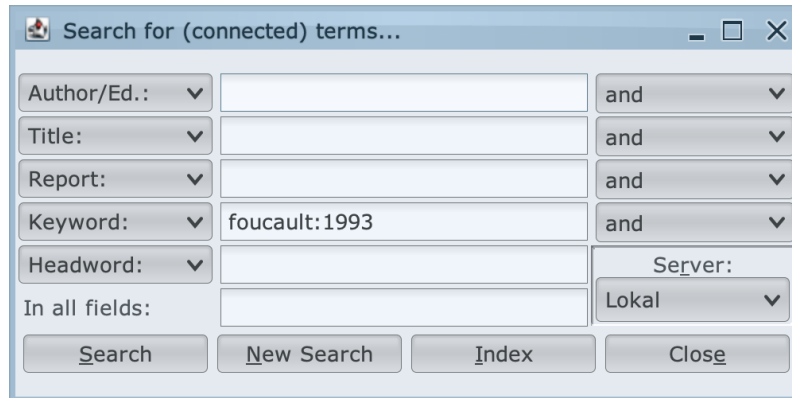


Fig. 16: Searching for a Card

chance to begin a reading journey across links beginning at some point. In contrast to a normal machine-search, this method of randomly-controlled selection is a different strategy that not only ignores the traditional method of searching for the needed information, but rather – as a mnemotechnical memory aide – calls up surprising effects.

3.5 Cards: Search ... and Find

As a complementary strategy to Shuffle, the Search-engine (see Fig. 16) allows you to search through the entire database for strings of letters or terms. You can search through specific fields, in multiple linked fields, combined with boolean operators And, Or and Not. The search engine then finds the desired expression in every desired location of an entry. Furthermore, the term searched for will also be looked for as a component of other words. Were you to look for the word Post in the titles, among the results – as long as you have titles like these – would not only be *Postmodern Knowledge*, but also *Neopost for the Modernists*.

A special case is manifested in the combined search for two headwords. In this scenario, the search engine will not look for the terms as parts of the words in the list of headwords, and therefore you must enter the headwords exactly as you wish to find them. Change both of the respective selection menus in the search window to “headword:”; the entry of ‘travel plan’ and ‘handbook’ will then deliver only those cards that have both the headwords ‘travel plan’ *and* ‘handbook’. Please pay attention: after such a search as described in this paragraph, the selection menu will revert to its standard value of “Keyword:”. For further combined headword searches you must reset the selection window to “Headword:”.

Combined
Search for
Headwords

The results of the search will be shown in an alphabetically-ordered list of keywords and the respective entries will show the section of the entry that contains the items searched for, which can, with a double-click, show the respective keyword. After a moment, in which the respective links are

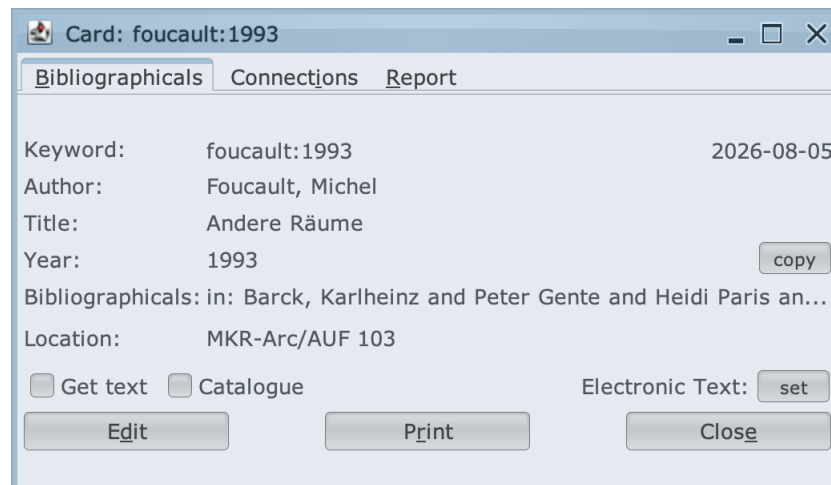


Fig. 17: Note found

calculated, the representation of the card is then displayed on the monitor. (see Fig. 17).

As an alternative to searching within your dataset, you can – as long as you are online – search through various OPACs (*Online Public Access Catalog*) and connected library systems with the so-called z39.50-Protocol for books catalogued there. The benefit is that you can accept all bibliographic information of the relevant titles in your local database, which means that you practically never need to enter bibliographic data again. Simply set the desired server in the respective selection window. While Local searches your local hard-drive, the setting GBV (*Gemeinsamer Verbundkatalog*) searches one of the largest German Library Coalitions or LoC searches the catalog of the *Library of Congress*. As search criteria you can choose between author, title and a combination of both. As soon as your search has found specific entries, these will be displayed in a mask, where you can edit specific information and finally import the information into your synapsen database (compare 3.11, p. 41).

This card, represents a previously entered text or a *Notecard*, which is to say the collection of thoughts. A text-representative has three layers, the first is the bibliographic layer including the date of its publication, then the directory of headwords and their links to other entries, and finally the collection of texts, summaries of texts, citations, excerpts, comments and notes.

The list of links serves – similar to the list of hits from a search – as a connection to other cards: with a double-click on a *Keyword*, that is shown under the respective *Headword*, the desired card will then be opened and displayed. It enables you – automatically calculated – therefore, to arrive at old entries with forgotten connections. A double-click on a keyword appearing under a headword pulls the respective card out of the card-catalog and displays it on your monitor. In this way, every newly uncovered card offers new possibilities for further different linkages.

Online-Search
im OPAC via
z39.50

The Result:
A Card

Automatically
calculated links

In order to prevent you from getting lost between cards on the monitor, there is a small navigational aide that you can call up from the main window by pressing “F2”, which displays an overview window, which shows you a list of the keywords of all cards that are currently open. A double-click on any keyword will bring that card to the front, should it have perhaps become hidden behind others or even forgotten. Furthermore you can shuffle all the frames of the program by pressing cmd- resp. ctrl-^ and the next window will be brought to front.

Navigation Help
with “F2”

Shuffling
windows

3.5.1 Changing Bibliographic Information

The third layer of the card, the area for notes, excerpts, and reports about the contents can be immediately edited, which is to say that all changes or additions to the notes or reports will be saved, see Section 3.6.

Acquiring Text
vs. Current
Bibliography

The layer of the bibliographic data also offers the possibility of placing the card in a list of texts that need to be acquired or even placing in the current bibliography.¹⁶ Data entry mistakes can be corrected with the help of the Edit-Button, or new information can be inserted: by pressing this button, the already familiar data entry window will be called up, filled with the current data which can then be modified as desired, and these changes will be made to the current card as soon as you save them.

In edit-mode, there is also the possibility of deleting a card and its entire contents including headwords. Where the button for the reports can usually be found is the delete function, which should only be used in real emergencies.

In order to delete individual headwords, you must open the headword-window, and in the list of the previously entered terms, double-click on the term to be deleted. You will be asked if you really want to delete the term. However, it will first be finally deleted when you close the window with Indexing...!

Delete headword

3.5.2 Electronical Archive

synapsen contains its own electronic text-archive in order to organize text files which you may keep in digital form on your hard disk. Initially you have to add a new card for each electronic text file you want to administer with synapsen depending on its format, i.e. website for an internet site or another appropriate category, e.g. for a pdf file containing a chapter of a book.

Then, you call the card which you have just added. After clicking onto the small square, which is located right to the string called “Electronic Text”, with the *left* mouse button a file dialog requester appears. Choose the text file you want to organize with synapsen. The program now analyzes the file

Text association

¹⁶ See regarding these lists Section 3.7.

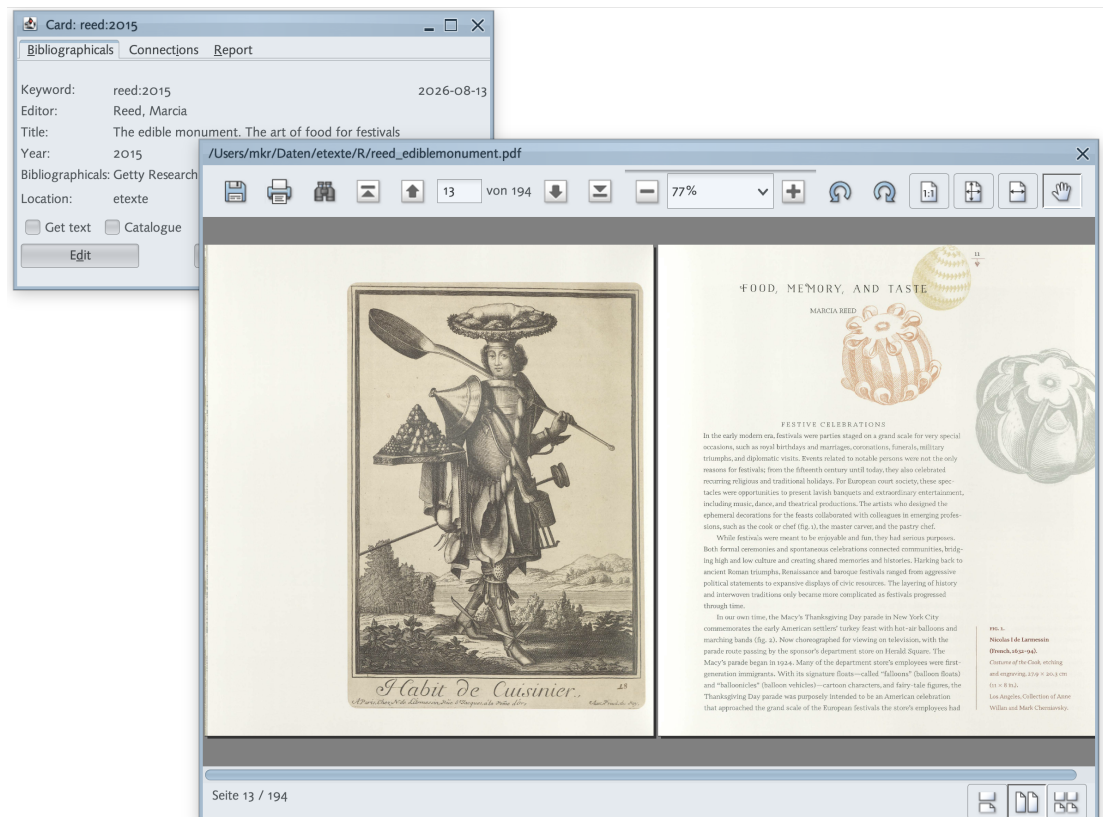


Fig. 18: The Electronic Text-Archive

and copies the whole textual content (without the images) into the database, in order to keep it for further requests. This process might take a while, depending on the size of the text and your processor's speed. Currently, synapsen can handle digital texts saved in HTML, PDF or ascii/txt format. After completing the analysis successfully, the small square is illuminated green and the text file is associated with the card.

You may directly display the associated text within synapsen. Just click onto the small arrows **»**, located right of the green square. A simple browser shows up which offers a basic functionality like browsing, zooming, copy / paste and searching. Searching a string is, at the moment, limited to the current page; the results are highlighted in a red frame.

As long as the file contains nothing but images, you can operate with text blocks within the displayed file by choosing the copy button from the menu above. You may select single words as headwords by marking them and pressing F1 like you do in the card's report. Please consider that you have to confirm new headwords – like during the usual headword allocation (see section 3.3, p. 21).

You can search the electronic text-archive for specific words or whole phrases with synapsen's usual search function. Choose "Textarchive" instead of "Report" within the search window and enter the term you want to find into

Show Text

Headword
Allocation

Search Text

the remaining text field. synapsen now digs the contents of all associated digital texts and retrieves the cards which contain the entered term. Open the digital text itself in order to go to the location where the term can be found.

During the initial association of the digital text with its card you will be asked if you like to copy the contents of the digital text file. If you confirm, synapsen copies the file's pure text into its database, in order to keep it for future search queries. The advantage is: you can browse with synapsen's search routine through vast texts, no difference if they are HTML-, Ascii- or PDF files. The disadvantage is: every new text increases the size of the database according to the length of the text (for the size of the database see the remark below). If you are not sure whether to add the content right now or later, decline the question and proceed with your usual work. You can add the content later at any time by selecting the appropriate paragraphs (or the whole text which is displayed) and pressing the Copy content-button. Please consider that old contents relating to this card, which are probably in the database already, are always overridden by this function.

Copy content

Please pay attention: if you enter many large digital texts into synapsen's database the size of the database increases, as well. This is no problem, however the time needed for the search process will extend.

Size of
Database

However, you can decrease the size of the database again. You simply have to delete the existing association between the digital text and synapsen. Click the green square with the *right* mouse button and confirm that you want to delete the connection. synapsen then deletes only the content of the digital text in the internal database. The original digital text is untouched, of course, and is still being kept on your hard disk.

Delete
Association

3.5.3 Printing cards

Since version 3.0 synapsen offers an extensive printing interface which allows both, the printing of solid cards as well as lists of projects or all (visible) cards on screen.

First of all, you can choose between two printing modes: on the one hand you can print the entry in graphical mode as a index card in different paper formats. On the other hand you can select the list mode, in order to print a solid card, or all cards which are visible on screen. Together with the "card arrangement" (see p. 38) you can conveniently compose bibliographies for different topics or projects.

While printing in graphical mode you can also decide, whether the index card should be drawn with a frame, with delimiters around the fields, or with small signs indicating where to cut the card ("cutting marks"); this will print the card without the appearance as a bureaucratic form.

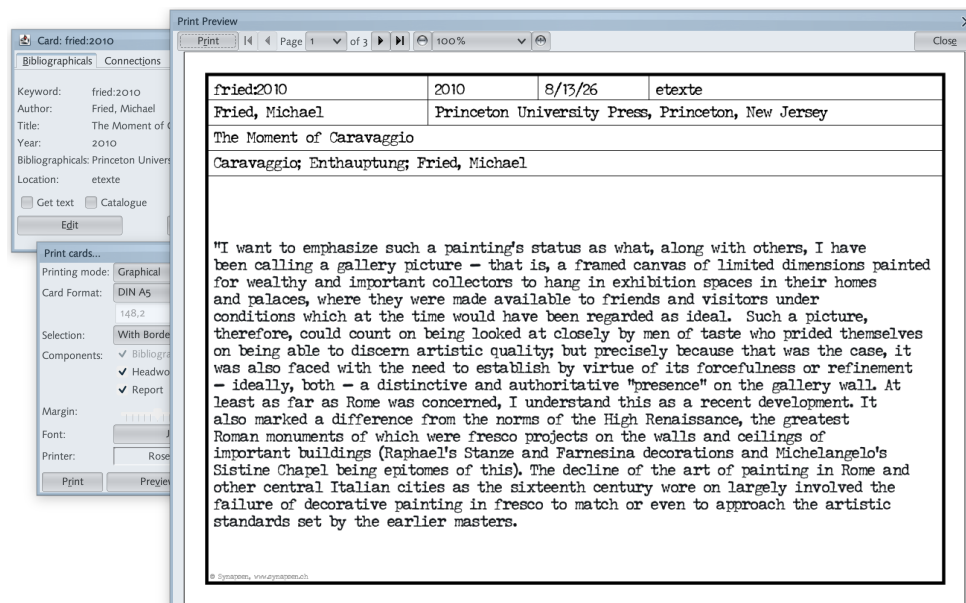


Fig. 19: A card and its printed proof (in preview mode)

You can set the paper size independently from the printing mode you have chosen. A selection of usual formats are preselected; however, you can set your own dimensions as well.

Furthermore, you can determine which information should be on the print: bibliographical data is obliging (at least in graphical mode); additionally, you can include the headwords of each entry or the report. Consider that a report might be printed twice if you have selected this option as well as in the arrangement of the bibliography. In this case, it is recommended to set the style of the bibliography with "no report".

Last but not least, you can set the margin size as well as the font which should be used during print. Both parameters have direct influence concerning the individual appearance of the information on the card, especially while synapsen tries to fit the information into the given fields on the card. If small overlappings should appear it is recommended to vary the font's size or type.

The printing dialog also informs you which printer is currently selected. And finally, you can choose between direct printing or previewing how the print will be on paper.

3.6 Editing the Literature Reports

The article report of a card contains all excerpts, comments about important passages in the text, citations and personal comments to the article. The format of this report can be controlled by Mark-up and Menus. With the entry

of a new text via the report window, you will see the menu in the header-bar of the window. When you edit an existing entry in the note-window of a card, you can call up the pop-up menu with the right mouse-button (in Mac OS X with single button mouses or trackpads, this can be emulated by simultaneously pressing the ctrl key and the mouse / trackpad button). Alternatively, you can press Ctrl/Cmd-1. The Menu function Format offers the usual options for giving a text color and form, e.g. by turning it green, or by highlighting, the latter, however would be only temporarily displayed. In order to format all the text of the report with the same font press F9. Under Edit you can find, on the one hand, the usual Copy & Paste¹⁷ and marking functions, while on the other hand you can create an explicit link to an existing card. This function is especially important, because it specifically enlarges the automatically calculated list of links, since some links between different texts should be set explicitly.

Highlight

Manual Linkage

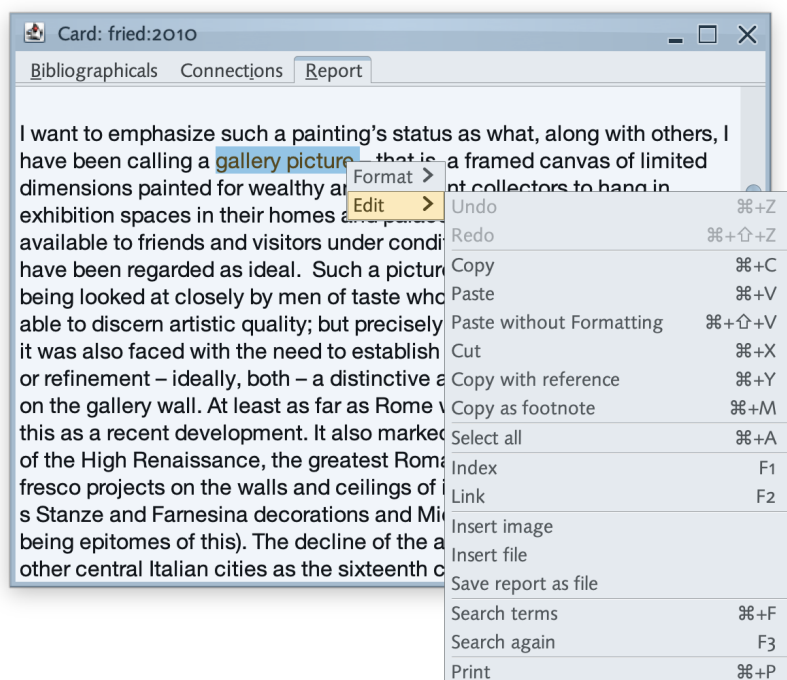


Fig. 20: Edit report

Click on the respective part of the text where the new link should be inserted. Then press the right mouse-button in order to select the menu function Edit | Link auszuwählen. A small window will appear, that asks you to enter the keyword for the card for which the link should be made, e.g. '[see [walser:1908](#)]'. Only valid keywords for existing cards will be accepted. If the keyword is not recognized, the window will reappear and expects a valid entry. If synapsen can create a link, in the report you will see brackets

¹⁷ When you place or take text with Copy & Paste, the format of your text will not be copied. In order to import or export formatted text, you should choose the input or output as an *.rtf file.

with the link in blue text, which you then only have to click on, and should you click on it then the card being referenced will appear. You can also simply press the function key “F2”, which also calls up the window for entering the link.

It is even easier to drag&drop one item onto the other: Open the link list of the card which should be linked to, choose the first entry (usually beginning with ‘Connections with...’) in order to drag this entry into the report of the card which should contain the link.

Drag'n'Drop

Furthermore, there is the possibility to save reports from the card-catalog in *Rich Text Format* (*.rtf) and even add rtf-files to the report. Thus, it is possible to comfortably format your excerpts in other text-programs, e.g. *Microsoft Word*, or place formatted texts in the card.

Import and
Export of Texts
with *Word*

If you select “Save Report as File” with a click with the right mouse button in the window of the literature report, a window for selecting the file will appear. In this window you can create a name and choose a location for the file in order to use it in other programs. If you select “Insert File” you will also see a window for selecting the file. In this window you must choose an appropriate file with the text that you wish to insert. It is mandatory that you have previously saved the file with the text to be imported in the *Rich Text Format-Format* (*.rtf). The data will then be placed in the report at the position where the cursor can currently be found.

In extensive literature reports it is sometimes important to be able to search for specific terms. For this purpose in the menu-function Edit there are two functions: first Search Terms, and second Search Again. When you select the first function, (either with the menu or the simultaneous pressing of Ctrl/Cmd-f), a window will appear that asks you to enter the term you are looking for. Should the string of characters be found in the report, the program will highlight all occurrences and jump to the first location where this text is located. If it cannot be found, the cursor will remain at the position where it last was. It will always search forward in the text, based on the current cursor position. Should you like to search for the same term again, simply choose Search Again or press the function key “F3”. The cursor will then jump to the next occurrence of the term, should it exist.

Search in the
Literature
Report

Since literature reports often tend to contain citations, the function keys F5 and F6 have been prepared with double and simple quotation marks, respectively. By pressing “F5”, for example, opening and closing Guillemets will be entered, and the cursor will jump directly between these characters, so that you can immediately enter your citation. You can set the style of the quotation marks in the information section of synapsen.

Entry of
Citations

The literature report also possesses a special workflow simplifier. If you would like to use a text passage from synapsen, e.g., for a $\text{\LaTeX}$ -Text, simply highlight the respective passage as usual in the literature report. However, instead of pressing Ctrl-C or Apple-C for the copy command, press Ctrl-Y or Apple-Y. This will attach source information directly to the copied passage. The text passage ‘This is not a pipe.’ from the card with the keyword

Copy & Paste
for $\text{\LaTeX}$ and
other processors

‘margritte:1929’ will appear when pasted in your $\text{\LaTeX}$ -Editor as ‘This is not a pipe.\cite{margritte:1929}’. Depending on the current set of your bibliographical format, the shape of the source information varies: if, e.g., Rich Text Format is set, synapsen inserts a tag, following the pattern author, year. In order to insert a complete bibliographical record into the system clipboard, check the description in section 3.12, p. 42.

Finally, you can add whole images to your report. Place the cursor at the position where the image should be inserted, go to menu item Edit|Insert image and select the image from the file requester. Please note that synapsen only saves the link to the image file, not the file itself, i.e., if you move the file to another location on your harddisk the image would not be displayed anymore. However, you’ll see the name and path of the original file written in the report.

Images in the
report

3.7 Bibliography Creation

The Bibliography is the output system of synapsen, that offers you various possibilities for exporting the data gathered and sorted in the card-catalog. With its help, the various bibliographic lists of gathered entries can be saved in different file formats.

3.7.1 Format of the Bibliography

In this area you can set the desired format of the bibliography you wish to create. First, with the use of the respective button, you must enter the name and directory of the file for which you wish to create a bibliography. The name you give the file will then be shown after it has been successfully selected, and can be changed at any point. Please be aware that when selecting a name you should not enter a data type extension such as *.rtf, because this will then be added by synapsen depending on the data type you choose.

Data Format There are six different file formats that you can choose from, into which the bibliography will be exported. If you have used styles such as italics, bold or colors in your literature reports, then the appropriate choice is the Rich Text Format (*.rtf). It is supported by all popular text-programs and is as stable as it is broadly used. You can use synapsen to create your bibliography as an rtf-file, and then build it directly into the text you are writing as a literature list. If you do not have the urge to edit your bibliography, you can also use the Portable Document Format (*.pdf).

If you don’t need or haven’t used marked up text in your literature reports, then the Ascii-Format (*.txt) is appropriate.

However, for users that prefer $\text{\LaTeX}$, the bibliographies can be created in two different variants, one is as a $\text{\LaTeX}$ -File, and the other is as $\text{\LaTeX}$ -source code. For the first variant, the $\text{\LaTeX}$ -file incl. the folder must be given as the location present in the $\text{\LaTeX}$ -source code you have entered per

`\bibliography{<file>}`-Command as well as the `\bibliographystyle{<...>}` that you must set.¹⁸ If you want to use a more specific and elaborated package to typeset your bibliography with $\text{\LaTeX}$, you can use the `biblatex`-package.¹⁹ You can store shorttitles, as well as translators or main titles of series by clicking the $\gg$ -symbol which is located next to the title field of a new entry. If you intend to use the `biblatex`-package, choose the option `biblatex` instead of `BibTeX` for the data format.

The second variant enables you to work around the creation of a bibliography with `BibTeX`, by letting `synapsen` directly generate the $\text{\LaTeX}$ -source code, which enables you to further process the document with traditional methods (compiling, editing, etc.) in your preferred $\text{\LaTeX}$ -environment.

Form of the List With this function, you can select the contents of the bibliography, which functions by the selection of your desired contents from three different lists. Putting together the entries for the various lists is something that you should have been doing for some time by marking the respective cards. For this purpose every card has two fields, “Get Text” and “Catalogue”. By selecting the field you can submit the card to one or both of the lists. A further click will remove the card from the list.

Find Text vs.
Create
Bibliography

The first list called Currently Selected Bibliography contains all the cards where you have marked the field Create Bibliography. The mark remains even after the session of `synapsen` has been ended. You can clear this selection with a single click of the button “Delete Selection” under the program field Information in the main window.

The second list, that looks like a shopping list or research agenda for work in the library, is created in a fashion similar to the first list. Entries can be removed from this list by deactivating the field “Get Text” in the respective card.

The third list is a complete alphabetically ordered literature list of *all* entries in the card catalog – including the internal cards, whether or not they are appropriate for the bibliography.²⁰ The generation of this list can – depending on the size of your card-catalog – take some time.

Filter / List’s subject If you’ve chosen a list of gettings you can filter it in relation to your preferred libraries. Now, the program, e.g., shows only those item which are on the list of gettings and at the same time have their location at the *Library of Congress*, assuming you have added the label of LoC to those items before. Instead, if you want to get those entries related to one or more headwords, select the choose box to Currently selected bibliography (Attention, previous items on this list will be overwritten) and press the Filter-button. Now, you can select from a list of all headwords. In order to select more than one hold the Ctrl/Cmd-button), then confirm with “return”.

Filter list of
gettings

Filter
bibliography in
relation to
headwords

¹⁸ See. Goossens (1994), Chapter 13. To create your own `bibliographystyle`, the `Makropaket custom-bib` is a good method that can be downloaded from www.ctan.org.

¹⁹ See www.ctan.org. ²⁰ In order to further manipulate the report of an internal card, it is better to save or place the text of the literature report as an `rtf` file.

Display of the File After a list has been created as a file, you can have this file shown in a text-editor on the monitor. For this function to work, you must first inform synapsen as to which program you prefer to see this display with. This can be set in the menu under Information of the main window (see Section 3.10, Page 36). The most appropriate is a program that can show all data types that can be generated by synapsen for the lists, such as *WordPad* in Win32 or *kwrite* in Linux/KDE. With the help of this display program you can modify the bibliography, print it or put it in your texts.

If you should not wish to see the bibliography file after its creation with a preselected editor, deactivate the field “Directly show file”.

Reset If you discover a corrupted layout of the bibliography, or if you simply want to set the default layout, press the Reset button.

3.7.2 Composition and Layout of the Bibliography

In order to set the layout of the bibliography, you must create an editable table out of the checkerboard made of yellow and white fields, by adjusting the width of the respective window. (see Fig. 21).

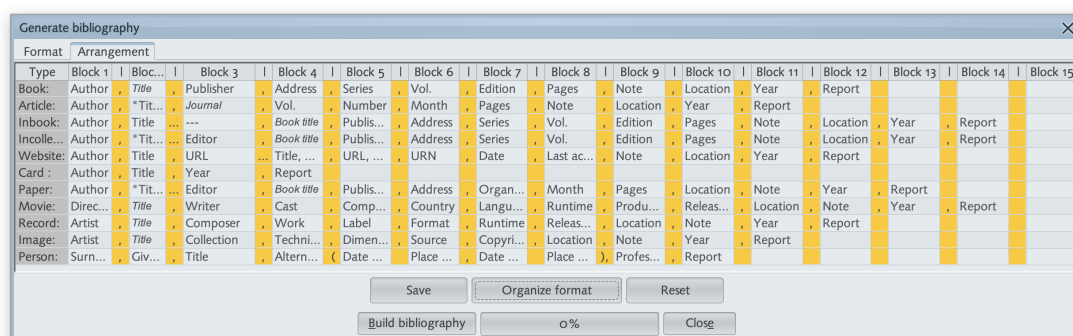


Fig. 21: Create the Layout of the Bibliography

You can now change the individual white and yellow fields as you desire, the white fields offer single bibliographical categories and the yellow fields allow for punctuation and spacing. Simply click on the respective field in order to select the desired category from the context menu that appears. Each field can also be set to ‘empty’.

synapsen automatically saves the changes that you have made to the layout of the bibliography, so that the next session will continue where you left off. Should you – for any reason whatsoever – wish to reset the table to its original setup, you must delete the file `BibTab.ser` in the working-folder of synapsen.

Reset the bibliography

If you wish to work with various bibliography-layouts, for example one with literature reports and one without literature reports, you can manage these different layouts in the menu Informationen (see the following section 3.10).

And as a final note, even though you can move the individual columns within the table, this rearrangement has no effect on the exported series of the bibliography. The sequence of the individual categories should therefore be explicitly selected in individual fields/table cells.

3.8 The TimeLine

‘One sees at a glance what was contemporary.’
(Joseph Priestley, *A Description of a Chart of Biography*, 1764)

A card index orders by headwords, not by years. That is precisely its strength – and now and then a shortcoming: whoever follows an argument across time wants to know what lay beside what. Since version 5.0 synapsen answers that question itself. The TimeLine button in the main window opens *Synchronapsen*, a rendering of your holdings along the axis of time (Fig. 22).

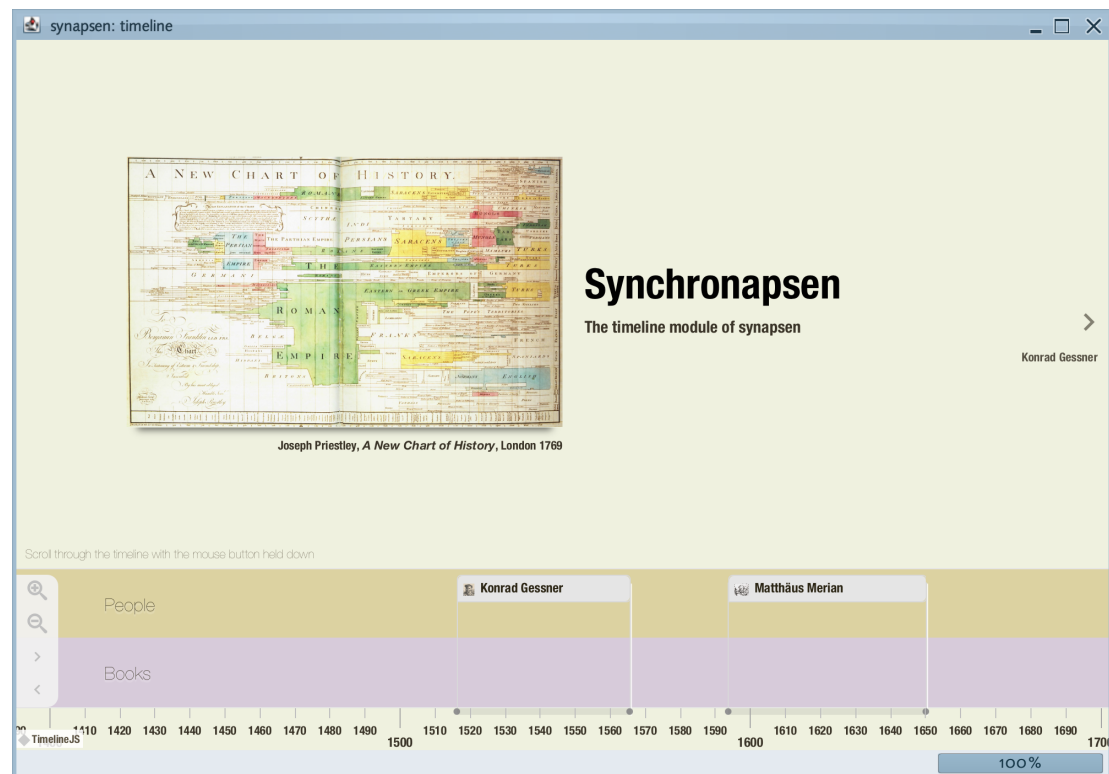


Fig. 22: *Synchronapsen*, the timeline

The window falls into two parts. Above stands the slide currently selected, with picture, heading and explanation; below runs the axis of time, on which the entries sit as markers. The axis is divided into two lanes: the upper one carries the persons, the lower one the books. A person appears there not as a point but as a stretch – from the date of birth to the date of death. This makes visible at a glance who was whose contemporary, and which titles fall within a lifetime.

Persons and
books

The timeline is moved by dragging it sideways with the mouse button held down; the two magnifying glasses on the left compress and stretch the scale. A click on a marker brings the corresponding slide to the top.

Moving and zooming

Where the entries come from: The persons are taken from the author's catalog (see Section 3.2.11); whoever carries a date of birth is included. The titles, by contrast, are *not* taken from the whole of your holdings but from the ›currently selected bibliography‹ – from the same list, that is, which the bibliography window assembles (see Section 3.7). This is deliberate: twelve thousand titles would yield no timeline but a black wall. If you wish to examine a particular constellation, assemble it as a bibliography beforehand. The upper limit lies at 1200 titles.

A double click on a person narrows the timeline to their surroundings: it then shows all titles connected with that person – as author, as editor, or as headword (Fig. 23). A further double click on the title slide leads back to the complete timeline. An œuvre can thus be surveyed as a whole, without the detour through the search.

The titles of a person

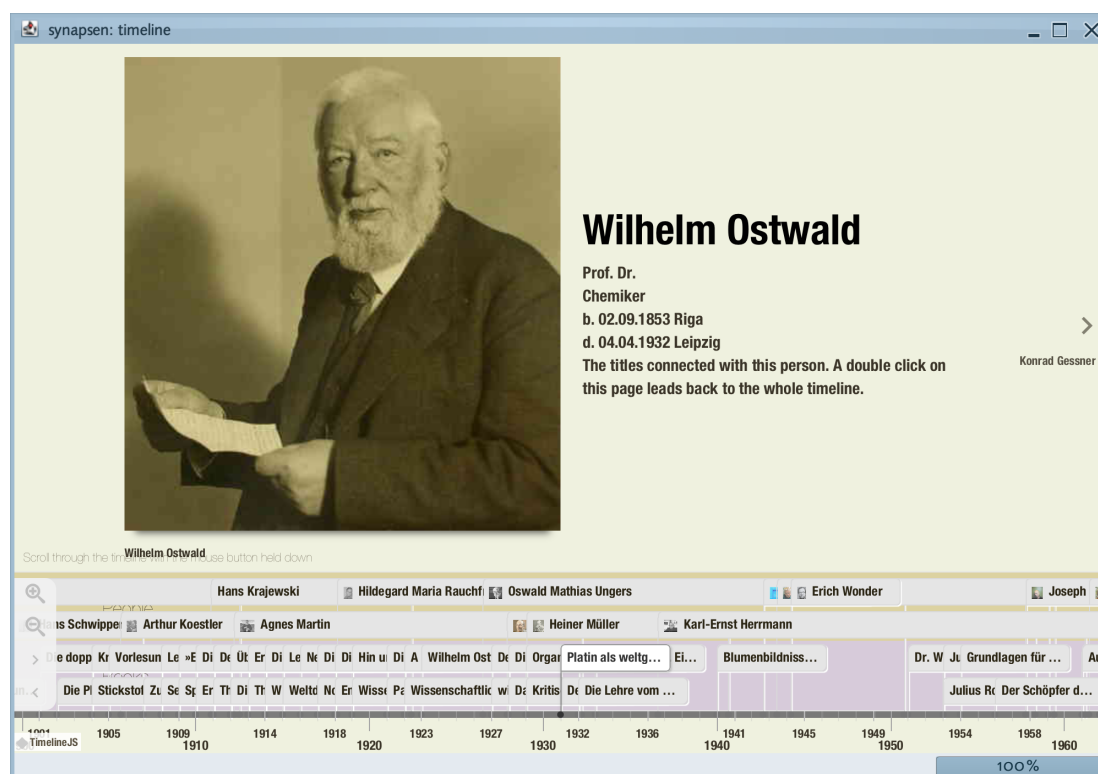


Fig. 23: The titles connected with a person

For books synapsen looks for a cover image where it can and places it at the head of the slide. *Open Library* is asked; whoever holds an access token for the German *Verzeichnis lieferbarer Bücher* may deposit it in the file `v1b.sin`

Cover images

in the working directory, and that source will be consulted as well. Both presuppose that the entry carries an ISBN; without one the slide remains without a picture. If a title carries an electronic full text (see Section 3.5.2), the slide notes that expressly.

Under Information, finally, you will find the setting TimeLine dimension. It decides between the flat rendering described here and a spatial variant in which the axis of time extends into depth.

Two or three dimensions

3.9 The Knowledge Graph

The list of connections on a card shows what a single entry hangs on. The knowledge graph puts the same question to the holdings as a whole: who has written with whom, which titles belong to a person, which headwords surround a term? The Knowledge graph button in the main window opens a window of its own for this purpose (Fig. 24), in which the answers can be drawn as a network – persons as nodes, their relations as edges.

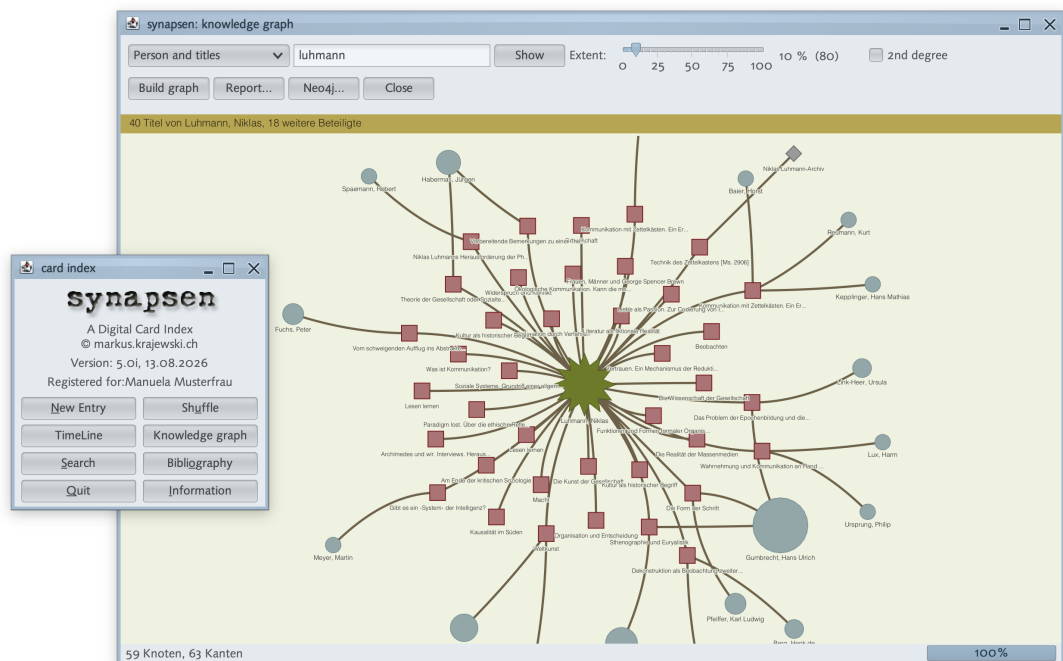


Fig. 24: The knowledge graph: the principal authors and their co-authorships

Unlike everything else, this view requires a second program: the graph database *Neo4j*, which is not part of *synapsen* and has to be installed separately (see Section 2.6). If it cannot be reached, the program tells you so and lets the button rest for this session; the rest of the card index notices nothing of it.

Neo4j as a prerequisite

Building the graph The first time round the network is still empty. The button Build graph reads the entire holdings and creates the nodes and edges from them – for twelve thousand records this takes some two minutes. The run writes exclusively to *Neo4j* and does not touch your card index; it can be repeated at will without anything arising twice. To the question whether the old graph should be removed beforehand, answer Yes if you want to build afresh, and No if only additions are to be entered.

Building the graph

While building, synapsen has to take the name fields apart, and in doing so it notices what is inconsistent in the holdings: doubtful name entries, differing spellings of the same person, connections without a corresponding record. Two spellings are merged only when the holdings prove it; everything else is reported rather than guessed. The button Report... shows these findings, and the same list is afterwards to be found in the file *graph_bericht.txt* in the working directory. It is, incidentally, an excellent instrument for tending the holdings.

The report

The four views What gets drawn is determined by the selection box in the upper left:

Principal authors shows those persons of whom the holdings carry the most titles, and between them the co-authorships. This is the overview one begins with.

Co-authors of a person starts from a name and shows with whom that person has published. The box 2nd degree additionally brings in the co-authors of the co-authors – and thereby makes the surroundings of an œuvre visible.

Person and their titles places a person in the middle and groups their titles around them.

Surroundings of a headword starts not from a name but from a term and shows which titles and which further headwords hang on it (Fig. 25).

For the last three views you enter the name or the headword into the field beside the box and press Show. The slider Extent determines how much of the largest possible network is actually drawn; to its right stands the number of nodes that amounts to. A small extent shows the main lines, a large one the ramifications – and with extensive holdings soon becomes impenetrable.

Extent of the graph

The nodes can be moved with the mouse, the network as a whole dragged and zoomed; the status line at the bottom names the number of nodes and edges. The button Neo4j... , finally, opens the small dialogue in which address, user, password and database name of the graph database are deposited.

3.10 Information / Settings

The window Information not only gives information about the current quantity of entries, but also makes it possible to modify settings. For example, you

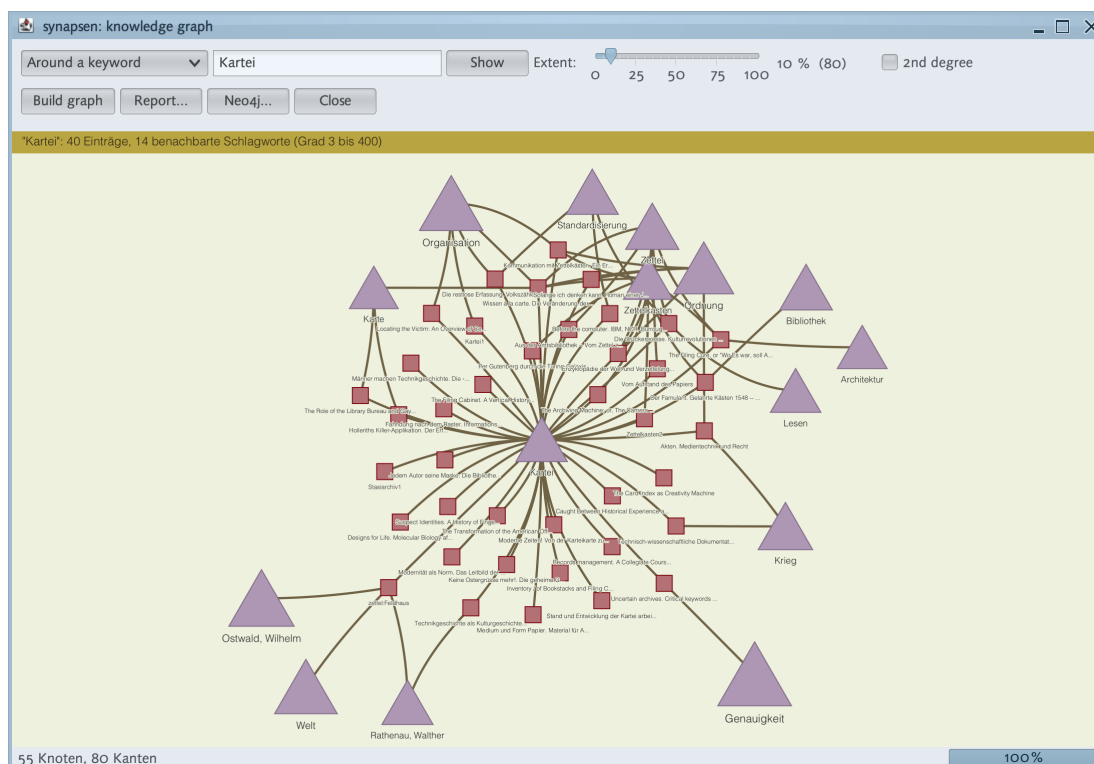


Fig. 25: The surroundings of a headword

can set the counter of your paper copy's signature. In this way, the value within the signature of your paper-copies will be modified.²¹

Editor: An important setting is the program with which the data exported by synapsen should be shown. The information window has a line called Editor. Here you can select the respective program with the help of a selection window above the button Adjust. Simply click through the folder-tree of your system in order to find a program such as *WordPad.exe*. Other programs that are appropriate are *WinWord.exe* in Win32 environments, *kwrite*, *kedit* with Linux or *TextEdit* or *Word* with Mac OS X. synapsen uses this program as soon as you create a bibliography.

Editor Settings

Publisher: Further settings can also be made for everything that is often repeated. This tends to be publishers and library locations, and the respective abbreviations. In order to add a publisher to the list for new entries,²² you only need two entries – publisher name and location – which are to be entered into respective lines of the entry-window of Publisher. In order to make the Ashgate Publishing London available in the list of choices, you must record "Ashgate Publishing" in the *first* line and in a new line you should add "London".²³ Pay attention that the second field in the window is *not* shown,

Publisher Settings

²¹ See Section 3.2.2. ²² See Section 3.2.2. ²³ See Fig. 26

even though it will appear in the selection in the line in a new card.

Library Abbreviation: The entry of library identifiers is done much like setting up publishers. There are two entries necessary. The first defines the library with its full name, such as Library of Congress, whereas the second creates an identifier for this library, such as LoC:, which is modified with the name of the book during the creation of a new entry. It is important that the library and identifier is always entered as a pair, because otherwise the sorting of the information breaks down.

Identifier
settings

Journal Abbreviation: In analogy to the preferences of the libraries and publishers you can enter the names of journals which will appear frequently in your daily work. Again, there are two insertions necessary. First, the complete name of the journal. Second, enter the year of the journal's first publication, i.e. the year of its first volume. According to this information synapsen automatically calculates the right volume value each time you choose this journal.

Resetting the Bibliography List: This button allows you to delete the list of the current bibliography, which basically means that the field "Catalogue" is deactivated in all windows (see also Section 3.7, S. 30).

Bibliographical Arrangement: With this setting you can organize the layouts created in the Bibliography window. If you have arranged the setup according to your needs, then you can save the layout here in order to, for example, have a variant bibliography "Without Report" that omits the field for the literature reports.

In order to call up one of the layouts you have saved, select the title from the list with a mouse click and press the button "Call". Then the Bibliography-Window will pop-up and you can create your bibliography with this template.

To remove an entry, select it with a mouse-click and press the button "Delete".

Card Arrangement: An important advantage of synapsen is to bring individual cards, their arguments and keywords together via (visual) relationships, which means to bring them into specific relationships with one-another on your virtual desktop in order to arrive at new exciting lines of argumenta-

Card
Arrangement

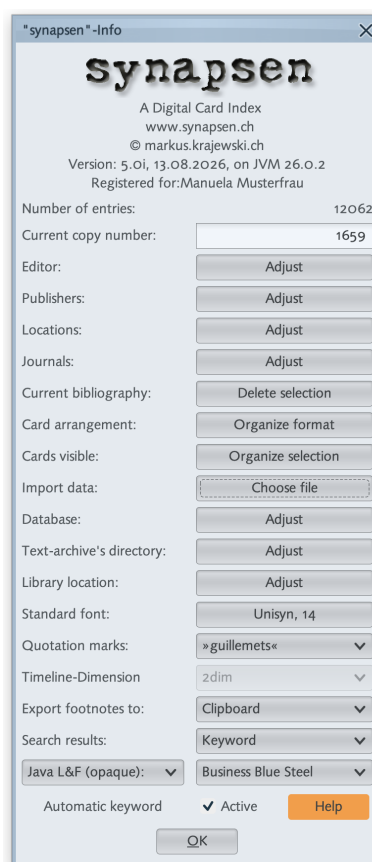


Fig. 26: The Information window

Manage the
Bibliography
Layout

tion. If you have put the pieces of such argumentative puzzles together, you can save the arrangement of cards with an appropriate description. Arrange the cards as you would like to have them and then with the Information-window call up the menu Card Arrangement. Press the button “New” and give it a description that characterizes this arrangement of cards. You can update your current selection by pressing “Save” and all the cards added or removed will be saved to this selection.

If you wish to call up a saved layout of cards, select the description from the list with a mouse-click and press the button “Call”. Then the respective cards will appear at their respective positions and recreate your argumentative constellation.

While pressing the Hide-button all the cards spreaded over your desktop will disappear by one click.

To delete an entry select the description with a mouse-click and press the button “Delete”.

Furthermore, here you can manage your bibliographies which you might need for working on several projects simultaneously. Simply choose the wanted arrangement from the list and press the right mouse button. Behind the entry a tag will show up indicating in brackets: “current bibliography”. Now, all the cards belonging to the specified arrangement are automatically selected for the current bibliography which you can organize as usual in the Bibliography window.

Managing
bibliographies

Data Import: For a detailed description see the following section 3.11.

Database: This feature allows you to switch from synapsen’s default internal database server to a database server of your own – *MariaDB* or *mySQL* – and back again (see Section 2.5). Enter address, user, password and database name; the prerequisite, of course, is that you have this specific database already functioning on your system. Unlike in earlier releases no restart is needed for this: synapsen closes all open cards, saves them and carries on with the new database. If the new server cannot be reached, the previous database remains in force – a wrong turn therefore costs you nothing.

Database
management

If you work with the internal database server you can backup and restore your data via this menu as well. After pressing Backup you will be asked for a file name which will be used as the backup file. It should carry the extension *.hsq1. Save this new file to a secure location.

The restore process works analogue. After pressing Restore you will be asked for the backup file. Please consider that *all the information which is currently in the database will be overridden by the backed up data!* Therefore, be careful with this restore operation. After a successfully restoration of the data, synapsen again terminates, and you have to restart manually.

Text-archive’s directory: This setting allows to assign the root directory of the text-archive. synapsen stores all files and their paths relatively to this root directory. In case of pressing the ‘Cancel’-button of the file requester during the assignment no root directory will be set, i.e. synapsen stores the

Setting the root
directory of the
text-archive

absolute path of the file given. You can check the current setting of the root directory by placing the cursor over the button; the setting will appear as a tool-tip.

Library Location: This feature is only of interest if you search the GBV-OPAC. After setting the town of your favourite library, synapsen tries to figure out the signature/call number of the book and add this information into the location field. This feature, of course, works only for towns and libraries which are supported by the GBV (= Federal Library Catalogue, comprising most libraries of northern and middle Germany). If more than one copy has been found, a dialog shows up, and you have to decide which signature will be added.

Quotation marks: Here you can set the type of quotation marks which are inserted when you have pressed F5 or F6 within the report.

Export footnotes: With this option you can choose the format how the bibliographic information should be exported. The export is started by clicking the »-symbol on a card (see Fig. 17). Currently, three different export possibilities are supported; check section 3.12 on p. 42 for further information.

Java Look & Feel: Here you can change the program's optical appearance, the so called "Look and Feel". A whole range of colour schemes comes with synapsen – the figures in this manual all show Business Blue Steel. The change takes effect during runtime, no restart is required for it; windows already open take on the new appearance as well, frames included.

Changing the
Java Look &
Feel

Window decoration: With this you determine who draws the window frames – synapsen itself or your operating system. In the first case title bar and frame fall in with the chosen colour scheme and look the same on every system; in the second the windows take on the familiar appearance of your own system. This setting, too, takes effect at once.

Who draws the
window frames

Font: The corresponding button, which always shows the font currently set together with its size, lets you determine in which typeface the interface is set. This does not concern the literature reports – their formatting you determine there yourself – but labels, lists and entry fields. Anyone who reads a great deal will want to set the size somewhat higher.

Font of the
interface

Translate: A small service on the side: a window takes a text and returns it in another language. It is meant for those passages of foreign-language literature that one would like to check quickly while excerpting, without leaving the program.

Translation
window

Automatic keyword analysis: With the help of this setting, you can determine whether or not the keyword will be analyzed with the creation of a

new card. That means that synapsen fills in the blanks of already existing information such as the last name of the author and the year of publication of the text, so that you only have to add the first name, foreign characters and the year of this publication. A small data-entry time-saver.

3.11 Data Import

You can – in addition to making a new entry with the button New Card – import data into synapsen in two further ways: either with a search via the z39.50-Protocol in various Online-Catalogs, or import data from a different literature management program.

Online-Import via z39.50-Protocol: Simply choose the OPAC/Server in the search window of synapsen and search for the desired title or author. For German language books, the GBV is recommended, for English language books the Library of Congress (LoC) is recommended. After you have found something, you can leaf through the individual titles and modify the contents of individual fields. You can even add headwords for the entry you are going to import. As soon as the dataset meets your expectations, simply press the button Import, and synapsen will automatically allocate a keyword for the dataset, save it and go to the next hit on the list of results, at which point you can continue as usual.

Import via
z39.50 of
OPAC-Data

Import from File: The most appropriate format to exchange bibliographic data between various programs is BiBTeX.²⁴ This format is especially supported by synapsen; you can, for example, output your bibliography in the BiBTeX-Format (see 3.7.1) or direct as a Bibtex-file. After you have selected the BiBTeX-formatted file in the menu ‘Data Import’ in the Information window, the entry window will be displayed (Fig. 27) and lists all entries in the BiBTeXfile that are supported by synapsen (these are the types BOOK, ARTICLE, INBOOK, BOOKLET, INPROCEEDINGS and INCOLLECTION).

So that “foreign” data, such as from programs like *EndNote* etc., can be imported into synapsen, the file must be in Ascii-format, and have the file type ending of .bib and the individual entries must be listed according to the following pattern:²⁵

```
@BOOK{alpers:1988,
KEY = {alpers:1988},
AUTHOR = {Alpers, Svetlana},
TITLE = {The art of describing.
Dutch art in the seventeenth century},
PUBLISHER = {University of Chicago Press},
ADDRESS = {Chicago},
EDITION = {1.},
NOTE = {},
```

²⁴ More about BiBTeX can be found in Goossens (1994), p. 370–420, or in the Internet, such as at www.din1505.informationskompetenz.net. ²⁵ For further examples, please see the bibliographies that you can create with synapsen in the BiBTeX-format.

LOCATION = {??},
 YEAR = {1983},
 ANNOTE = {Here you can add your remarks
 and notes to this book. This field should
 always be the last item of this entry, ending
 with a double bracket!}}

Fig. 27: Importing from other programs

synapsen reads the data, analyzes it and puts the information into respective fields, which will then be shown in the entry window. Similar to importing from online sources, you can change the fields before you import the individual entries. synapsen will create the keyword automatically, after it has checked to make certain that all obligatory fields such as author, title and year of publication are available. If something is missing, then you must enter information here. Furthermore there is also the possibility to import the entire `BIBTEX`-file without further chance for editing *en bloc*. This makes particularly good sense when you have a very large dataset to import when you know that the quality of the entries is adequate, so that you don't have to press the Import-button 400 times. Please be aware that each entry can have various fields in differing sequences, but it should always be closed with two curly brackets `}}`. Otherwise difficulties can arise during the analysis of the `BIBTEX`-file with synapsen.

Should you possess information from other programs, that are not in the `BIBTEX`-format, there are many tools available from the Internet that make it possible to convert your files to the correct format, see e.g. www.ctan.org/tex-archive/biblio/bibtex/utils/.

3.12 Connection to word processors

Since version 2.5 synapsen supports direct communication to the word or text processor of your choice. You can directly insert bibliographical information of the currently opened card into *MS Word* or *Open Office*. In

order to start the export of the card you must click the »-symbol, which is located on the right of the card, above the information of the electronic text archive (see Fig. 17). You can choose between three types of export methods, which are set in the Information window of synapsen:

Clipboard: This options writes bibliographical information of the card, taking the layout from the bibliography window, into the system clipboard. You can now paste the bibliographical information of the card into other applications. synapsen uses the rtf-Format, which means all emphasizing of the text will be kept.

MS Word: synapsen tries to connect to a running instance of *Microsoft Word* and inserts the bibliographical information into the opened document as a footnote at the location of the cursor. If *MS Word* is not opened yet, synapsen tries to start the application, opens a new, blank document and inserts the information as a footnote. It is necessary, in order to establish the communication between *MS Word* and synapsen, to choose the appropriate option during the installation or updating of synapsen. Currently, the connection to *MS Word* works on *Windows* platforms and on *Mac OS X*.

Open Office: synapsen tries to connect to a running instance of *Open Office 3.0* and inserts the bibliographical information into the opened document as a footnote at the location of the cursor. If *Open Office* is not opened yet, synapsen tries to start the application, opens a new, blank document and inserts the information as a footnote. It is necessary, in order to establish the communication between *Open Office* and synapsen, to choose the appropriate option during the installation or updating of synapsen, where you have to determine the location of the *Open Office* executable on your system. This is usually a path like

- /usr/lib/openoffice/program on *Linux*
- /Applications/OpenOffice.org.app/Contents/MacOS/ on *Mac OS X*
- C:\Program Files\OpenOffice.org 3.0\program on *Windows*

Problems while
MS Word and
synapsen
communicate
with each other

Since synapsen connects to *Open Office* directly via *JAVA*, using the *UNO*-Interface, the communication to *MS Word* uses the *COM*-Interface, in order to start a *VBA-Macro* (Visual Basic) within *MS Word*. For a working connection between the two applications, it is required on the one hand to allow your system the execution of *VBA macros* (see *Windows-Help* for detailed information on this topic). On the other hand it is necessary, that synapsen finds a file named *synapsen.dot* on your system. This file contains the *VBA-Macro* and it must be located either under the following path: <YourUsersHome>/Application Data/Microsoft/Word/StartUp or, on *Windows Vista*, under the path <YourUsersHome>/AppData/Microsoft/Word/STARTUP. During the installation resp. the updating synapsen tries to install the file *synapsen.dot*. Please ensure that the file can be located there, otherwise the communication is disturbed.

3.13 Quit

At the end of the functions is, luckily, the shortest description: Ending the program. All changes that you have made and new entries created are continuously being saved during your working progress, so that even in the worst case scenario (»Crash«) – there is no danger of losing any of your work.

3.14 Backup

The most valuable information are your entries in the card catalog. Therefore it only makes good sense to backup this information at regular intervals and definitely before applying an update of synapsen.

The usual case: If you work with the internal database that comes along – and most people do – then the backup is simplicity itself: copy the folder syndb and you have it all. Section 2.4 says where it resides; under macOS that is ~/Library/Application Support/Synapsen/syndb, under Windows and Linux the installation directory. Make an archive of it with zip or a similar compression tool and put it in a safe place – best with the date in the name, something like syndb-2026-08-05.zip.

Quit synapsen before copying. A running program keeps the database open, and what is saved then need not correspond to what was last entered.

Besides this a second way leads through the program itself: under Information, at the item Database, you will find the buttons Backup and Restore. The first asks for a file name – it should carry the extension .hsql – and writes the entire holdings there; the second reads them back in. Please note that in doing so *all data are overwritten* that are in the internal database at that moment. Handle this function with care.

With a MariaDB of your own: If you run synapsen against a database server of your own (see Section 2.5), then save it with that server's own means. The usual way is the so-called 'dump' method. Open a terminal window and type:

```
mariadb-dump -B Mbeya2 -r synapsen-2026-08-05.sql -usynapsen -p
```

The program then asks for the password. With a *mySQL* installation the command is called `mysqldump` and takes the same arguments. The resulting file can grow quite large, so that it is worth compressing it:

```
zip -9 synapsen-2026-08-05.zip synapsen-2026-08-05.sql
```

The holdings are played back with:

```
mariadb -usynapsen -p Mbeya2 < synapsen-2026-08-05.sql
```

3.15 Synchronising Data Between two Computers

In principle you can run synapsen on several computers – with different operating systems, too – and there are three ways of keeping the data together. They differ above all in effort.

One server for all (recommended): The simplest and safest way consists in not synchronising at all, but in accessing the same database from both machines. To that end set up a *MariaDB* on a computer that both can reach (the workstation at home, a small server, a rented machine), and enter that address on both systems under Information | Database. The question of reconciliation then no longer arises: there is only one set of holdings. Anyone regularly working in pairs or in a team should consider the network version instead (see Section 4).

Do not
synchronise in
the first place

Taking the folder along: If you work with the internal database and always at one machine at a time, it suffices to copy the folder *syndb* from one system to the other. That is uncomplicated, but has a catch you need to know about: nothing is compared and nothing merged; the one database replaces the other *as a whole*. So do take care to write into one set of holdings only and to overwrite the other afterwards – otherwise you lose whatever you entered on the second machine in the meantime. A synchronisation service such as *Dropbox* or *iCloud* takes the copying off your hands, but not the care.

Copying the
whole folder

Reconciling two servers: If you run a *MariaDB* of your own on both machines, these can be reconciled with the means of the database system – through its built-in replication, for instance, or with one of the usual administration tools such as *Navicat* or *MySQL Workbench*. This is the most laborious way, but also the only one on which entries are actually compared and merged.

4 Network Version for Workgroups

For workgroups and group-based research projects, it is very likely that a literature database is created and maintained by several people. For this purpose there is a special network version of synapsen, with which you and your colleagues can enter bibliographic data and notes from various computers (*clients*) that resides in a central database on a computer (*server*) connected to the internet. The special network version functions almost exactly the same as the version for an individual person, except that there are additional control-functions that make it impossible for two people to work on one card simultaneously and then lose data. Details about the acquisition and setup of this version are available on request.

It differs from the possibility described in Section 2.5 – reaching *one* database from several computers – in precisely this: the latter lets you work on the same holdings in different places; the former lets *several* people work on them at the same time.

5 Things to pay attention to: Licensing

synapsen has two various modes, one for unregistered users testing the software and the other for personally registered users who wish to maintain a professional literature management system. The modes can be distinguished by a small difference: The unregistered mode has a limited search-function and a limited list of links: only a portion of the theoretically unlimited list of links will be shown. This effect will only limit your work if you have already spent a large amount of time working with synapsen and have gathered so many entries that the amount of hits rises above the limit.

As long as you are not registered, you can work with the program – for an unlimited time – in order to test it completely and let yourself be convinced that it is the perfect tool for your needs. The strengths of synapsen show themselves not only at first glimpse, but also after a number of entries have been gathered and you have learned to appreciate automatic connections between texts.

Should you decide to seriously work with synapsen over a longer period of time, it is recommended that you register it in order to have a personal license. With a successful registration you will receive a key file that contains your personal code and immediately removes all limits present in the test version.

6 Registration and Contact Address

Since synapsen follows the ShareWare-concept, it may – except for the personal registration – be copied. The distribution or recommendation to third-parties is expressly desired, as long as the copyright regulations are adhered to, which means that no personal registration is shared and no attempt is made to reverse engineer, patch or otherwise put it back into an uncompiled state.

At the moment, synapsen distinguishes between three types of licenses: the standard license, the student license with reduced fee and full features (in order to benefit from the student license you are obliged to send a copy of your valid student id card to info@synapsen.ch), and a license for workgroups, using the network mode of synapsen. The network mode comprises full features of synapsen and furthermore the support of one central database in which all the clients of the workgroup feed their information.

If you have decided to use synapsen as a literature management system, you must purchase a licence. How that is done and what it costs is stated on the website www.synapsen.ch/lizenz_e.html, where you will also find the currently valid ways of payment. As soon as the registration has been completed you will receive an email for the code to enable the license. This registration code allows you and only you to work with synapsen.

Should you decide not to purchase a license and work with synapsen anyway, you are not only limiting the further development of the software by holding back your support, you will also be working with a test-version of the software that has a limited potential: Only some of the keywords will be shown during searches and only some of the potential links.

7 Bug Report

The program has been in a stable condition of its development. However should you become aware of previously unknown errors, please communicate a description of the details. Furthermore, the synapsen team believes in suggestions and comments that could make working with the program easier or better. Send your comments to:

info@synapsen.ch

www.synapsen.ch

At this website you will find new information about the status of development of new versions of synapsen. Please enclose the file `Synapsen.log` with an error report; it resides where your data reside (see Section 2.4) and often saves a whole series of further questions.

8 Roadmap to Future Development

The two undertakings announced in this place for years – the timeline and a graphical rendering of the connections – have been redeemed with version 5.0 (see Sections 3.8 and 3.9). What comes next:

- Improvement of the import interface, in particular further exchange formats beside BiBT_EX, RefWorks and Citavi.
- The knowledge graph shall not only show but also lead back: a double click on a node will open the corresponding card.
- The timeline shall draw its titles not from the current bibliography alone, but from a freely assembled selection.
- A more careful treatment of the spelling variants of personal names – the report of the graph building (Section 3.9) already shows today where the inconsistencies sit in the holdings.

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