At the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), we have been looking at how we could use handwritten text recognition (HTR) on our World War II (WW II) prisoner-of-war archives. While the technology is promising, our pilot has shown that applying it to this specific collection is more complex than it seems.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?
The ICRC’s WW II archives contain data on more than 36 million prisoners of war. Even today, members of the public still ask ICRC archivists for information on family members.

HOW HTR WORKS

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED SO FAR

FUTURE SCENARIOS

- Return to traditional manual indexation
- Use HTR in conjunction with crowdsourcing
- Use HTR with minimal training by humans