Transkribus – AI Handwritten Document Recognition
https://www.transkribus.org/

Transkribus is a website that allows you to upload handwritten or typed documents and generate a transcription of those documents. They have already trained several models to be able to recognize older handwriting in various languages. This site can be particularly helpful for transcribing a large number of files and transcribing documents in different languages that are difficult to read.

The site does not do translation. If you transcribe a document that is in German, you then have to use another service such as Google Translate or ChatGPT to get the document into another language. Transkribus is only for transcribing documents.

Transkribus has a large number of public models for transcription. A model is an AI that's been trained to transcribe specific documents. The documents could have a specific format or a specific language or similar handwriting. A model that has been trained on French handwriting will not do well when trying to transcribe a German document. It is best to select the model that most closely applies to what you want transcribed.

Getting Started
To get started with a free account, you simply click on "Try Free" at https://www.transkribus.org/ . You fill in the necessary details and voila you have an account! You can now start uploading documents. With a free account you can upload and transcribe up to 100 documents per month. If you need more than that you can get a subscription for as little as $21/month.
There are 3 parts to the Transkribus interface: Desk, Models, and Sites. We'll cover each of them separately.

Desk
This is where you keep and transcribe all of your documents. The bulk of your time will be spent here. On your desk area you have a list of recent documents, recent collections and a quick transcription window. Across the top are links to Home, Collections, and Tags. There is a hierarchy to how all the documents are viewed.
It goes Collections->Documents->Pages.

Each Collection can have multiple documents. Each document can have multiple pages. Take for example a land record. Depending on how it was digitized, it might be a single page or multiple pages. You **can** have a document that has a single page. You can setup a **document** per land record with a single **page** in that document. Then you might put together a **collection** of all or your ancestors land records by grouping all the documents

into a single **collection**. You upload one **document** at a time, whether it be a single page document or a multipage document.

Once you setup a collection and upload documents, then you can use Transkribus to automatically transcribe each page. In a new collection you click on "Upload Documents" in the middle of the screen. In an existing collection, click on "+Create New" in the upper right corner to add new documents.

After uploading a document, Transkribus will show you the job as it uploads. Once it's done you can exit the job display, refresh the web page and then see the document. Now the fun begins – getting it transcribed.

Beneath a photo of the document, there is a check box. Once you check this, you can "Recognize" the document. Clicking Recognize allows you to select the model you want to apply to the transcription and have the job start.

There are a variety of models. If you want to use the "Super Models" you'll need to pay for a scholar subscription for a month. To get the best transcription with the least errors, I recommend doing this. The "Super Models" typically contain multiple languages. This can be helpful when dealing with a document that may contain multiple languages. "Super Models" also contain lower error rates which can make transcription go faster when you have a lot of documents.

Once you've selected the model, click recognize and a job will be started for the transcription. Depending on the number of pages you've selected it could take a few seconds or a few minutes to transcribe the documents.

When working with pages, note the color code on the top of the page icon. When it's first uploaded, it starts out as gray. Once you've transcribed it, it will change to orange for "In Progress". You can change the color code to match the status of the document. If you complete editing the page and are satisfied with the results you can change the color code to done (Yellow) or Final (green). This helps keep track of where you are at in transcribing documents. There is also a status of ground truth (dark green) – this is used when creating pages that can be used for training a model.

Transkribus will not be perfect in its transcription. You may have to edit the document. Transkribus gives you a variety of options for this including looking at the layout and seeing where the transcribed lines are in the document. Use the editing function to get it to a document you would be happy exporting for translation if needed.

Editing Options
When editing you can add/delete regions, add/delete lines, change the line order in the layout and a variety of other things. You should play around with all the settings. You can turn on/off viewing of the regions and lines in the settings. You can adjust the thickness

of the lines to make them easier to see. The settings are accessed through the settings cog in the lower righthand corner. For more in-depth discussion of editing check out the following information: https://help.transkribus.org/editor-overview

Keep in mind when working in the editor, image controls are on the left and transcription controls are on the right. This can be helpful to remember when determining what you need to do. Also, don't forget to save early and often.

Models

This is where you can train new models and see all the models that are available to use for transcribing your documents. If you have a large number of documents (hundreds) that you want to transcribe and they are unique, then you may want to train your own model. You'll need at least 75-100 pages of transcribed documents to even start training your own model.

There are 4 type of models you can train.

- Text Recognition Model – this if for recognizing handwriting in a specific set of documents.
- Baselines Model – this can be used if your document is very unique and the models have a hard time distinguishing the lines of text in your document.
- Field Model – this can be used if your document has specific fields that the default model has a hard time identifying. You can train a model to recognize specific fields.
- Table Model – if tables are consistently present in your documents you can train a table layout model to make extraction of data easier.

Sites

You can use this area to share your transcribed documents with other people. Please keep in mind any copyright or use restrictions when sharing transcribed documents. This is only available if you have a subscription.

Sites can be setup to allow users to easily search your transcribed documents. If you are collaborating or working on a document set of interest to many family members or a community, this is a great way to share your transcriptions. For more information about setting up and editing a site, you can start here: https://help.transkribus.org/transkribus-sites

Helpful Links
Beginners Guide - https://help.transkribus.org/beginners-guide-to-transkribus
Help Center - https://help.transkribus.org/
YouTube videos - https://www.youtube.com/@transkribus

Training Text Models - https://help.transkribus.org/training-text-models
Training Layout Models - https://help.transkribus.org/training-layout-models
Transcribing Manually - https://help.transkribus.org/transcribing-manually