GATEKEEPERS TO THE PAST?

An Archival Guide

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Introduction: Teaching the Archive

Riley Linebaugh & Bettina Severin-Barboutie

Piles of old papers with hard to decipher handwriting, as depicted on the cover of this guide book, is the image that might come to mind when one thinks of an *archive.* Dusty cellars, rolling stacks, and idiosyncratic catalogues could follow. Or, perhaps one is reminded of the bodies of theory arising from the *archival turn*, wherein the 'archive' stands as metaphor for the 'archaeology of knowledge', the constructed orders that regulate society, the entirety of the historical record and/or the facade of history.[1] However, the ubiquitous use of the 'archive,' as symbol, metaphor, fantasy, or as an umbrella term, overlooks the work of archivists and other preservation workers.[2] Furthermore, the 'archive,' in these senses, appears static and detached from historical processes. Examining archives as dynamic institutions, practices and relationships that are (re-)constructed over time enriches the historical discipline and demystifies the *archive.* Despite the importance of archival research and the reliance on archivists within the discipline of history, archival studies literature is often omitted from history curricula. Likewise, while students of history train to analyze primary sources through contextualization, rarely does this consideration extend to the archive (i.e., Why, how and by whom has this item been preserved? What conditions its access? What logics structure its description?).

Addressing these gaps was the starting point for the advanced seminar "Archives: Gatekeepers to the Past?", which resulted in this guide. The course was taught by us, Riley Linebaugh and Bettina Severin-Barboutie, at Justus Liebig University in Giessen during the winter semester of 2020/2021. It took place virtually during the second pandemic semester and included a highly engaged and curious group of bachelor, master and doctoral students based in Germany and Colombia whose level of participation was tremendous given the difficult circumstances. We conceived of the class as a curricular intervention for students of history in order to address practical, intellectual and political dimensions of archives. Throughout the semester, we dealt with archival concepts and practices that recur throughout this guide, such as *preservation*, *provenance*, *access*, *selection*, *appraisal*, *custody*, and *use*.

To address these concepts and practices, we relied on both theoretical and practical

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[1]   See for example, Jacques Derrida. "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression." *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 9–63; Michel Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge, 1969; Carolyn Hamilton. *Refiguring the Archive* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013); Niamh Moore-Cherry, Andrea Salter, Liz Stanley, and Maria Tamboukou. *The Archive Project: Archival Research in the Social Sciences* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2020).
[2]   Brian M. Watson, "Please Stop Calling Things Archives: An Archivist's Plea," *Perspectives on History,* January (2021): https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2021/please-stop-calling-things-archives-an-archivists-plea.

contributions. Our syllabus featured a range of literature emanating from archival science (Bennet, Bischoff, Caswell, Cook, Cooper, Drake, Ghaddar, Ketelaar, Lowry, Rimkus, Skokan, Sutherland and Underwood), history (Burns, Cobain, Eckert, Grimsted, Guldi, Hartman, Hitchcock, Laite, Milligan, Moravec, Patel, Story, Weld and Zinn), and inter-disciplinary studies (Manoff and Stoler). Our discussions of this literature were complemented by questions of their practical applicability. In order to make more transparent the work *on the other side of the desk*, we invited archival practitioners to present in the course. For example, we hosted a panel in December 2020 comprised of archivists from the Wellcome Collection, Lloyds Banking Group, and the British Library Qatar Foundation to discuss how these institutions each deal with archival selection, access, and description. Furthermore, representatives from *Coronarchiv* and *We Refugees Archive* attended course sessions to discuss issues specific to digital preservation and community archives.[3] It was through the generous input of our guests and student engagement with them, that the political and historical dimensions covered by literature came alive.

Framed around "gatekeeping," our course paid special attention to notions, practices, consequences of, and challenges to archival control. We began with an intellectual history of archiving as a modern profession wherein we examined foundational principles such as *respect des fonds* and professional self-perceptions of truth, objectivity, and duty. We traced these positivist underpinnings to the deconstructive projects of post-modern and post-colonial theory, calling into questions concepts such as *custody* and *provenance*. These theoretical debates accompanied our objective of historicizing state archives as a device of political power, in service of administration, oppression, and liberation. Our discussions considered the extent to which archival control begets political control and vice versa. To this end, Patricia Grimsted's work on Lenin's Archival Decree of 1918 and Eric Ketelaar's seminal text, "Archival Temples, Archival Prisons," helped historicize the pursuit of archival control as both a form of nation-building and self-determination.[4] We also examined archival control and gatekeeping practices from non-hegemonic perspectives. For example, Jamila Ghaddar and Michelle Caswell's work on decolonial archival praxis resulted in discussions on the redistributive potential of expanding archival access, representation, and custody.[5] These themes were especially pertinent in our course's focus on archival mobilities and the processes of dislocation and concealment that accompanied other historical episodes of state succession. Jarrett Drake's diversity-critical

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[3]   The *Coronarchiv* is an online portal that collects, archives, contextualizes and exhibits "personal memories and memorabilia from the time of the coronavirus pandemic." More information can be found at https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/. The *We Refugees Archive* is a digital archive "on refugeedom" that focuses on related cities and topics, past and present. More information can be found at https://en.we-refugees-archive.org/.

[4]   Patricia Grimsted, "Lenin's Archival Decree of 1918: The Bolshevik Legacy for Soviet Archival Theory and Practice," *The American Archivist* 45, no. 4 (1982): 429–443; Eric Ketelaar, "Archival Temples, Archival Prisons: Modes of Power and Protection," *Archival Science* 2, no. 3–4 (2002): 221–38.

[5]   Jamila Ghaddar and Michelle Caswell, "'To Go Beyond': Towards a Decolonial Archival Praxis," *Archival Science* 19, no. 2 (2019): 71–85.

scholarship challenged us to think of the limits of reforming existing archival structures and normative practices that are grounded in Eurocentric hierarchies, especially structures of White supremacy.[6] Finally, our course addressed the mammoth set of questions arising from 'the digital' and the archives of the future.

Towards the end of the course, we experimented with integrating systematic archival reflection as a feature of historical research. In doing so, we looked to the work of Saidiya Hartman and Julia Laite, who have each advocated the merits of speculative history to compensate for the myriad of gaps and untruths found in archival collections, especially in relation to women's, working peoples' and Black histories.[7] By focusing on the conflicts, dynamics, and histories surrounding archival creation and preservation, this course guided students to debates core to the discipline: the making of archival absence, the problem of hegemonic perspectives, the pursuit of alternative sources, etc. While these historiographical debates and methodological questions do not appear explicitly in the pages that follow, they formed the context for our ongoing consideration of archives and at each step, affirmed the rich interstices between history and archives.

Conceived of as a guide book, this publication is an invitation to join our ongoing reflections on the power of archives and those who guard them. Each chapter deals with a different theme and introduces the key concepts and questions on that theme that arose from our course as well as the interests and ideas of its author(s). Chapter 1 provides an overview and analysis of "The Astonishing Career of the Archive," in which the authors take on the impressive task of historicizing the human practices of documentary preservation. From ancient times during the Bronze Age to the media revolutions of the twentieth century, this contribution highlights key episodes in the history of archival praxis, with an analytical focus on the socio-political conditions in which they arise. Chapter 2 addresses archival dynamics directly and situates the guide in present global circumstances, i.e., globalization, pandemic, the endurance of fatal White supremacy. Whereas chapter 1 provides a political history of archival development, the intellectual and theoretical history of the discipline is explored at length here. Chapter 3 identifies and analyzes the role of key archival actors, such as record producers, archivists, record subjects, and users. The authors apply an actor network analysis in order to contextualize these actors in various power structures, with particular attention to the imperial origins of the Archive of the Indies in Spain and the increasing changes in self-documentation spurred by social media platforms. Chapter 4 investigates various values associated with archives, including the social, legal, historical and economic values and costs of archival preservation. In doing so, the authors assess the power of individuals such as archivists and archival institutions

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[6]   Jarret M. Drake, "Diversity's Discontents: In Search of an Archive of the Oppressed," *Archives and Manuscripts* 47, no. 2 (2019): 270–79.

[7]   Saidiya V. Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019), xiii–xvi; Julia Laite, "Radical Uncertainty," *History Workshop,* Features, Histories of the Present (2020): https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/radical-uncertainty/.

in generating different levels of archival value through their unique appraisal powers. Finally, chapter 5 elaborates several outlooks, taking into consideration various challenges that archives currently face, namely, accessibility, transparency, representation, and digitization. The authors end with ambivalence: on the one hand, the task of digitization requires much resource and the consequences of further delay are dire but that on the other, there is potential for further diversification and enhanced accessibility.

This is not a comprehensive overview. Ideally, the contents of this guide will encourage your own thinking, resulting in a proliferation of reflections and thought. Like the archives we studied, we see this guide as *dynamic* and *contingent.* We are its stewards, eager to facilitate access and see to its use. As a digital publication, it is easier to change, modify and grow – in case you'd like to leave an imprint of your own.

Chapter 1: The Astonishing Career of the Archive

Celine Rosalie Derikartz, Isabella Sophie Pianto

and Filip Emanuel Schuffert

Introduction: The Human Urge for Preservation?

Weimar, Germany, 2 September 2004. It must have been a grim scene for the eyewitnesses that evening. A simple technical problem had led to one of the biggest, if not the greatest, library burnings of the German post-war era. The famous *Herzogin Anna Amalia Library* was on fire. It took hours to get the fire under control and save the library from complete destruction. Even after the flames had died down, the ashes of burnt books were still raining from the sky.

The library, which reopened after extensive restoration in October 2007, was founded in 1691. In 1998, it was listed as a UNESCO world heritage site as a part of *Classical Weimar* and contains some of the most important books and manuscripts in German history dating from the ninth century, such as those of Luther and Goethe. A total of around 50,000 manuscripts, handwritten works and printed books were lost that memorable night. A further 118,000 books were severely damaged by fire, smoke and water. Quite remarkable were the people who desperately tried to save some of the books and documents from the flames while the fire still raged inside the library. Citizens and firemen formed a human chain to pass the books from inside the destroyed building to people out on the street.

There must be something about these materials from the past that evokes strong feelings and triggers the urge to preserve and save them for the future. Losing them is tragic, a loss that cannot be compensated – that means that an irreplaceable part of our history is gone forever.

Throughout human history there have always been conflicts and destruction. Consequently, there has also been a strong tendency to collect and preserve evidence – material and documentary traces of human life and human action. Apparently, it is an integral part of human nature to hold on to heritage and history. Humans have always produced documents in a wide range of formats, records that allow us to remember, a window through which to explore the past. Perhaps having to face an unknown future motivates human beings to maintain a link with the past, one that promises to explain how we became what we are now. What is it that humans want to preserve throughout history and continue to store?

It is a common assumption and a genuine hope that we can learn from our past and avoid repeating the same mistakes. This presupposes we have information about the past. In archival contexts, this takes the form of records we have access to and can work with in order to make sense of them. Archives, along with libraries and museums, offer a wealth of knowledge and shed light on human experience and the public mind.

Taking these thoughts into consideration leads us to some basic questions: How can we define

the term *archive*? What constitutes an archive? Archives seem to be more than just storerooms for documents and records. How did archives and their concepts develop over time and shape the image that comes to mind when we think of archives today?

Books that endeavour to answer these questions would fill vast halls. Clearly a few pages could never do justice to the history of archives in its entirety. This chapter will nonetheless attempt to provide a brief overview and basic understanding of this complex and diverse subject matter. Although archives are a global phenomenon, the chapter will highlight general tendencies with a few (mainly) European examples. Furthermore, the examination concentrates on written records and out of necessity neglects the oral and visual traditions that are both so vital to history and memory. This chapter will outline how archives developed from assemblages of seminal documents to tools of political rule for those in power, who not only formed them into symbols of power and knowledge but also into factors of oppression and freedom. This evolution is linked to a range of ideas that accompanied the archives over time in an effort to optimize their suitability for a particular purpose, such as criteria for the selection and preservation of records. Today probably more than ever we have to deal with these questions and introduce new concepts for record preservation, given the increase in record production in times of globalization, digitalization, mass and social media.[8] Taking these aspects into consideration, the following chapter intends to raise awareness about archives, which – far from guaranteeing completeness – may have gaps for several reasons.

I.   Ancient Roots

Archives in the Near East and the Bronze Age Aegaeis – the impact of literacy

> *To explain what an archive is,*
> *it is important to say what an archive was and how it became.[9]*

Is there an actual starting point to the history of archives? According to the concept of four media revolutions postulated by Michael Gisecke, without either writing or written documents, there would be nothing to archive. The first media revolution, the invention of language, can be seen as a precondition for the development of literacy, as it made complex communication possible and distinguished humans from animals.[10]

The tendency to preserve the knowledge we produce and/or evidence of our activities can be traced back to prehistoric times. Objects such as pictographs, stone steles and totem poles

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[8] Throughout this text, a distinction is drawn between "digitization" and "digitalization." The former refers to converting something into a digital format, such as by scanning a physical document and creating a digital file, and the latter to the conversion of analogue processes into digital equivalents, such as replacing letter-writing with email exchange.

[9]   Translated from German: "Um zu erklären, was ein Archiv ist, muss gesagt werden, was ein Archiv war und wie es geworden ist". Dietmar Schenk, *„Aufheben, was nicht vergessen werden darf": Archive vom alten Europa bis zur digitalen Welt* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2013), 38.

[10] Michael Giesecke, *Sinnenwandel, Sprachwandel, Kulturwandel: Studien zur Vorgeschichte der Informationsgesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 36–42.

carried meaning through visual or symbolic content for those able to interpret their message. Taking this into account "we have had archives […] since before we have had records as we define them today."[11] The beginning of the archive almost inevitably coincides with the second media revolution, the invention of writing, which made complex data processing possible. Human memory as the only, albeit highly transient, data storage medium was supplemented by the more durable stone, clay, papyrus, and later paper. Records that had previously been stored in the psyche via *oral traditions* were now physically accessible – a basic condition for archiving them. Fixing something onto a specific material for future reference was a key step in record production and closely connected to the upturn of an early archival practice. The invention of writing brought the prehistoric era to an end.[12]

Records for economic purposes

The oldest documentary evidence originated in the ancient Near East, around the period from the third millennium BC. Approximately 400,000 clay tablets with writings were found at archaeological sites in Babylonia, Mesopotamia and Assyria. The principal achievements of early Near Eastern cultures were soon adapted by Mediterranean cultures, first and foremost by ancient Crete. Crete was the first region in the Aegaeis to form a stricter hierarchical society and, relatedly, to erect monumental palace buildings. The most famous of these palaces were located at Knossos. In the Minoan palace culture, named after the mythical king Minos of Knossos, a unique style of writing based on the Near Eastern cultures evolved. The so-called Linear A style probably had administrative functions, but scholars are still dealing with interpretation approaches to it and have not yet properly understood it. Later, researchers discovered the decipherable Linear B style from the ancient city-state of Mycenae located on the Greek mainland.

The findings from the different sites north of the Persian Gulf, along and around the Euphrates and the Tigris, are predominantly economic texts that functioned as orders and receipts or copies of receipts. They document the processing, storage and transfer of goods, livestock, tax payments or payments for labourers.[13] These early Near Eastern archives – if we can already call them that – seem to have been a storage place specifically for selected economic records. On the other hand, there may well be other types of records that have not yet been found. That some of these tablets have survived is a result of their highly resistant material rather than the human urge to preserve them.[14] There is evidence that at least some of these tablets were made for a limited period of time and updated regularly.[15] In other words, when it comes to archival theory there was no demand for the preservation of a record in its original form or indeed of every single record regardless of whether it was considered useful enough for

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[11] Laura Millar, *Archives: Principles and Practices* (London: Facet, 2017), 37.
[12] Giesecke, *Sinnenwandel, Sprachwandel, Kulturwandel*, 37.
[13] Maria Brosius, ed., *Ancient Archives and Archival Traditions: Concepts of Record-Keeping in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5.
[14] Eckhart G. Franz, *Einführung in die Archivkunde* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993), 7.
[15] Brosius, *Ancient Archives*, 5.

permanent conservation. Moreover, given their economic purpose, clay tablets were probably quite mobile. That is, they were moved elsewhere when needed and were not stored permanently in one place.

'Working' archives or an 'accumulation of documents'?

While literacy and archiving are interrelated, they should not be understood as identical or as an automatic co-development. It takes human effort to create archives. Different needs and aims, which change over time, determine the content of the archive. It would therefore be difficult to define these early record collections as archives from a current perspective, since they have little in common with the institutions we have in mind when we talk about archives today. Some scholars use more descriptive terms instead, such as 'accumulation of documents' or 'assemblage'. Terms such as 'active' or 'working' archives are more suited to their constantly changing states and their use of Maria Brosius.[16]

In any case, we do find sites similar to those in the Near East when looking at the Minoan and Mycenaean palace culture of ancient Crete around 2000 to 1200 BC, which was written in Linear B style. This is not surprising, since trading connections had emerged around the Mediterranean and the tablets found in Mesopotamia basically served economic purposes. Rooms in the massive palace complexes found on Crete are referred to as storage space for documents. There is a gap in surviving written forms from the collapse of these palace cultures around 1200 BC up to 800 BC – a period referred to as the Dark Ages, characterized by few cultural contacts and loss of the ability to write. Migration led to re-urbanization, a new alphabet and the comeback of written documents, although not much has been preserved from the seventh and sixth century BC. Unlike stone, organic materials such as papyrus, wood or parchment are far less resilient and can only be preserved under specific conditions. They are prone to climatic factors, natural soil characteristics and erosion processes. Hence whatever documents we find depends not only on what was meant to be kept, but also on material, time and environmental conditions. Moreover, archaeological findings are often a question of chance due to their topographical siting. Mountain regions or woodlands, for example, are less easy to access than agricultural areas. We have to remember that the material we are dealing with today might just be a small part of a much larger whole, and that clarifying whether the survival of a record was intentional or not is nigh to impossible.

Graeco-Roman periods – institutional origins

The Archaic period from around 800 BC onwards came up with some important achievements, such as the Homerian epics and the first historiographic sources, for example from Herodot and Thukydides. Given the same cultural background, language and writing, urbanization processes arose all over ancient Greece and the first *poleis* emerged. Social life

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[16] Ibid., 9.

within the *poleis* no longer revolved in a strictly hierarchical manner around a *basileus* as was the case in the palace culture of Crete. Society was still hierarchically organized but more developed and complex due to the emergence of law and taxes, and the rising importance and meaning of terms like public life and citizenship. These achievements developed further from 500-350 BC, which is referred to as the Classical period in Ancient Greece. Economic texts from this period, which were frequently written on less durable materials such as papyrus, are rare. Record producers may well have selected materials according to how long they wished the record to exist. In contrast to legal texts, which were frequently inscribed in stone, economic texts were perceived as fulfilling short-term purposes.[17] Therefore Greek public archives contained collections of official legal documents and decrees, private contracts, records of loans, gifts, the liberation of slaves, and finance and taxation, rather than economic texts. This could indicate a shift in document preservation. The preserved records dealt with the granting of privileges and contained documentary evidence of legislation as well as trial and literary documents. Similar to public buildings and emerging political structures, they were controlled by political units such as the state, the council or the *demos* and their institutions.[18]

The institutional origins of the archive can be traced to this period at the latest, as the term itself stems from ancient Greek. The Greek *archaion/άρχειον* is related to the term *archē/άρχή*, which means authority or office. The Latin word *archivum*, on the other hand, derives from *archeion*, but the modern term is based on the Latin form. It describes the institution itself or the official documents of authorities and offices rather than a general collection of old documents. Official documents were first of all produced for a specific purpose, illustrating that today's image of the archive does not correspond to what was originally associated with the term archive.[19] Furthermore, these documents clarify a key archival aspect: they were and still are instruments of power and empowerment, of political rule and of an active assertion of interests. The documents produced and kept by the political authorities were those assessed as vital to this unit. In other words, archives could simultaneously legitimize those in power and marginalize those without.

Places of knowledge

The Roman author Plutarch describes in minute detail the great fire that shook the ancient city of Alexandria and its inhabitants in 48 BC during the civil war.[20] One of the buildings affected by the fire was the Library of Alexandria, a place that attracted savants from far and wide. At least this is what Plutarch and several other authors tell us.[21] Today it is difficult to

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Franz, *Archivkunde*, 1–2.
[20] Plutarchus, *Vitae Parallelae: Große Griechen und Römer. Caesar*, trans. Konrat Ziegler (Mannheim: Artemis & Winkler, 2010), 49.
[21] Plutarchus, *Vitae Parallelae. Caesar*, 49; Seneca, *De tranquilitate animi: Über die Ausgeglichenheit der Seele*, trans. Heinz Gunermann (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2006), 5, 9; Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae. Attische Nächte*, trans. Hartmut Froesch (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2018), 7, 17.

determine what really happened and, for instance, whether there was a fire at all. Even after the *annus horribilis* of 48 BC, Alexandria remained a magnet for the educated and a destination for scholars. Neither do we know the real extent of the library, although Plutarch gives us a rough idea by stating that years later Marcus Antonius donated Cleopatra the Library of Pergamum, which consisted of approximately 200,000 scrolls, maybe to compensate for the loss of the old library.[22] As research has shown, this figure is most likely exaggerated[23], but it gives us an idea of the importance of writing and remembering. Creating libraries and other places of knowledge was a key aspect of imperial power when it came to demonstrating prestige to the polity's own public, as well as to competing empires. Loss of the library and its treasury of ancient knowledge was not only a tragedy in itself. Ancient states, in this case Pergamon and Egypt, seem to have competed for the most extensive library, since it meant owning *the* place of knowledge.[24] In other words, knowledge was power.

Powerful manuscripts

The archive of ancient Rome was located in the temple of Saturn, which also contained the state treasury until a fire in 78 BC made a change of location necessary. It contained only records of high legal status. Records of basic administrative operations were stored at the relevant institution or agency. As administration of the Roman Empire complexified, the production of records and official documents increased and gained in significance. We know that several emperors systematically used censuses to enumerate Roman citizens. Acquiring and recording such information was elementary to raising taxes, awarding citizenship and conscripting the Empire's inhabitants to the army.

Archives were repositories of manuscripts, but also agents to legitimize those in power and marginalize those without. Emperor Justinian decided that it was the duty of each city of the Roman Imperium to create their own archives. This continued in the course of the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, notwithstanding changes that emerged in the process.[25]

II.   The Medieval Chancery Archives: Record-Keeping at Royal and Ecclesiastical Courts

A mobile kingship with a monarch travelling from place to place within his kingdom meant that reference to information in written form was of growing importance and a tool to intensify power. From the tenth century onwards, the production and use of written material multiplied,

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[22]   Plutarchus, *Vitae Parallelae. Antonius*, 58.
[23]   Roger Bagnall, "Alexandria: Library of Dreams," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 146, no. 4 (2002): 353–356; Rudolf Blum, *Kallimachos: The Alexandrian Library and the Origins of Bibliography*, trans. Hans H. Wellisch (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014).
[24]   Plinius Secundus, *Historia Naturalis: Naturkunde, Sammlung Tusculum*, trans. Roderich König (München: Artemis & Winkler, 1973–2004), 13, 70.
[25]   Franz, *Archivkunde*, 8–9.

although there had already been phases of intense writing at the turn of the ninth century.[26] North of the Alps, in the early and high Middle Ages, monasteries became crucial pillars of the monarchy by taking over administrative work. They had the monopoly on writing, through their rare abilities to read and write. Furthermore, the technology to create documents was concentrated in the royal and ecclesiastical courts in the hands of scribes and clerics. Ancient and early Christian knowledge was preserved in monasteries and cathedral schools in written form and through practical use. Monks and clerics in these institutions also selected the texts to be stored long-term and those to be reproduced by hand. The great majority of medieval records and their creation must therefore be seen in an ecclesiastical or imperial context. They served sacral and symbolic purposes and were produced as evidence of legal and business transactions. The years after 1100 show evidence of a rapid growth in these legal documents, causing Italian city states to quickly reorganize their archives. Medieval certificates, donations to private individuals or a particular monastery or abbey, and any other sort of documents all contain figures and events considered worthy of preservation in the context of their time. Since these records fulfilled a particular purpose, information about the "common man" was negligible. The latter was neither a member of the social elites, nor of importance according to either a political or administrative perspective.[27] In other words, those responsible for preserving records selected them on the basis of their own interests and perspectives, which were frequently at odds with the rest of their societies.

Literacy facilitated imperial expansion and led to the granting of rights, privileges and possessions. This in turn led to notarial practices in the twelfth century, underlining the importance of written documents for personal interests. There was a growing tendency to see these documents, so vital to different groups in political and social life, as objects in need of special guardianship. A claim without document proof could expire, as in the case of King Jaume I of Aragon in the thirteenth century, who lacked specific documents and was obliged to withdraw his territorial claims. Carrying important documents around was risky and the growth in document production called for geographically stable institutions.[28]

III.   Pre-Modern History – Facing the Paper Avalanche

New material, impulses and ideas

Periodization problems are commonplace for historians. Epochal boundaries can vary or disappear altogether as a result of shifting parameters, such as a region or a thematic field. In the context of archival history, the concept of a feudal-centralist(-absolutist) pre-modern era seems practical in the sense of Dietrich Gerhard's concept of "Alteuropa" (or "traditional" or

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[26]   Markus Friedrich, *Die Geburt des Archivs: Eine Wissensgeschichte* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2013), 31–32.
[27]   Millar, *Archives*, 38.
[28]   Friedrich, *Geburt des Archivs*, 34, 40.

"pre-industrial Europe"). This would extend from around 1200 to 1800, instead of the habitual division into the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period with the epochal boundary at around 1500 (which originates from the Renaissance) – given that the term "Alteuropa", which is neither entirely defined nor drawback free, has led a marginal life in recent years.[29]

The unity of the High Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period offers a sharper perspective on the continuities in archival development and the break in these processes that occurred at the beginning of the modern era. The focus in archival development is not on historical events, but on the continuities or discontinuities in political and structural history, as well as in social history. The pre-modern archive as a control mechanism with the beginnings of bureaucracy and an administrative system differs from the modern archive, which despite its strong link to the administrative system represents a repository of the past. This allowed for examining new concepts of meaning – also in terms of modernity.

The rediscovery in the early Middle Ages of the archival concept and the usefulness of writing in administration made it possible to build on this body of knowledge from the thirteenth century onwards. The beginning of the thirteenth century saw a surge in writing all over Europe. While up to this point merely a scattering of individual documents had been found, countless written documents have been preserved since then. An Aragonese document from 1198 states that anything not put down in writing would simply be forgotten.[30]

The precondition for this explosion of written material was the "paper revolution". Since its invention in the third century and wider distribution in the tenth century in China, Egypt and Ethiopia[31], paper-making knowledge gradually reached Europe at the end of the eleventh century via Islamic Spain.[32] Paper was cheaper to produce than parchment and gave an extra boost to the trend in writing and record production. The invention of the book press in Europe in the fifteenth century – the third media revolution according to Giesecke, as it marks the beginning of a technical and industrial shift in European societies – and the ability to duplicate writings mechanically accelerated record production, although handwritten manuscripts continued to account for the majority of written material in the archives. While libraries became places for printed books, the role of manuscript repository fell to the archives, which were visited with a view to writing new books based on the records.[33]

Even more significant was the emergence of state-building processes – as described by

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[29] Cf. e.g., Thomas Bauer, *Warum es kein islamisches Mittelalter gab: das Erbe der Antike und der Orient* (München: C. H. Beck, 2018). The term "Long Middle Ages", which was defined by Jaques Le Goff and extends this period from the third to the nineteenth century, seems inappropriate.

[30] Friedrich, *Geburt des Archivs*, 32–33.

[31] Robert I. Burns, *Diplomatarium of the Crusader Kingdom of Valencia: The Registered Charters of Its Conqueror Jaume I, 1257–1276* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 9; Millar, *Archives*, 38.

[32] Burns, *Diplomatarium*, 9.

[33] Giesecke, *Sinnenwandel, Sprachwandel, Kulturwandel*, 38. The basic technique of printing was well-known in East Asia as early as the eighth century – about 600 years before Gutenberg. This invention, however, had no influence on European book production and European archives, making it irrelevant for us at this point. Cf. Helen Cooper, "The Origins of the Early Modern," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 13, no. 3 (2013), 134.

Michel Foucault – with new institutions and the accompanying organizational structures in the sense of "staff discipline", which spread from top, the military as a disciplinary institution par excellence, to bottom, all segments of society.[34] (We still see the impact of nation and state units today, as almost every country has a national archive.) According to Foucault, all of these processes demand constant control, idealized in the physical conditions of the panopticon. One basis for controllability is the preservation of written records – in archives (as a memory of the panopticon). The new controllability of all areas of life made it possible to form the centralized state of modernity.[35]

The affordability of paper encouraged the proliferation of administrative structures, which became more distinctive. In this context, the growth in the number of institutions also led to an increase in the number, spread and complexity of archives. New positions were no longer filled by clerics, but by professional scribes and officials who had been trained for this purpose at universities since the twelfth century – pre-modern officials and archivists were usually lawyers by qualification. This long process began at the large courts and gradually extended to smaller courts and the bourgeoisie. It took until the end of the pre-modern era to spread pragmatic writing to all European regions. Hence archival history is closely linked to administrative history.

Large quantities of paper were required as a result of the rediscovery of Roman law, which spread from Italy across the whole of Latin Europe. This led to new practices in the collecting and careful analysis of evidence (*fides instrumentorum)*, which consequently had to be preserved for later judgement. Every step was documented, since ordinary trial records legitimized official judgements and the archival documents in question could be used later in the case of political conflicts. Notaries produced written documents that were simpler and cheaper than the previous costly deeds. As a result, notarial writings were produced more often, even in less important cases. Here, the beginnings of banking and preserving of evidence of money transactions played a decisive role in the increase of these documents.

The growing attraction of the archive – a tool to control and organize

Over time, more and more documents were preserved. While up to the late Middle Ages only deeds were considered worthy of preservation, a growing number of records, such as notes on everyday life, were preserved *ad perpetuam rei memoriam*. The one-time use of tax lists common in the past gave way to new thinking about the future, so that documents were now being kept as a form of proof. This made administrative processes traceable and controllable for the future.

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[34] For the transfer process cf. e.g., Michel Foucault, *Überwachen und Strafen: Die Geburt des Gefängnisses* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), 227–229. The process character is more pronounced in Gerhard Oestreich, "Strukturprobleme des europäischen Absolutismus: Otto Brunner zum 70. Geburtstag," *Vierteljahreszeitschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 55, no. 3 (1968), 329–47.
[35] Foucault, *Überwachen*, 184.

It is not surprising that the early and high medieval practice of storing all manner of documents in the state treasury soon reached its limits. Storage shifted to central locations, as in the case of France, where documents were kept close to the (former) treasury.[36] The many everyday documents of the chancelleries and agents, and the rapidly growing amount of correspondence called for new techniques. Handling the growing mass of records across Europe demanded the professionalizing of archives and archivists. The process got under way in France in 1307, when King Philip IV handed letters and documents of donations and privileges over to Pierre d'Etampes for storage and conservation – the beginning of the so-called *Trésor des Chartes*. Up to the fifteenth century, this was the central institution for documents produced by the French monarchy.[37]

Responsibility for archival records was transferred to professionals like Pierre d'Etampes or to chancelleries. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, various finding aids such as indexes or registers, which were ordered by different parameters, were created throughout Europe. These inventories mark a central step towards modern archives, the orderly structuring of heterogeneous documents. This continuous professionalization of archives made it possible in a second step to separate the archive from the chancery. Thus, numerous archives have been created since the sixteenth century, separating older holdings from their producing institutions and storing them at a central location. These institutions formed a complex system and while differences between them were blurred at first, they soon began to differentiate and became more precise with reference to their collected documents.

The orderly preservation of documents in archives not only facilitated their retrieval, but also increased their authenticity and probative value in legal disputes, where the principle in *dubio pro authentica* applied. In the case of conflicts, this *authentica* was crucial. The disputes following the Peace of Westphalia, for example, were not conducted with weapons but as *bella diplomatica* with deeds. Both sides tried to expose the opposing documents as forgeries.

Throughout the pre-modern era, the archive remained a place of (state) administration. *Zedlers Konversationslexikon* from 1732 defines an archive as "a certain place where the *instrumenta publica* and other important and secret things concerning the state and law of the prince and his country are kept". Documents kept in a pre-modern archive pertained to the ruler. This basically remained the status quo from the twelfth to the eighteenth century. The collections consisted of legal titles, deeds, court records and correspondence – in other words, everything created by or concerning the sovereign. Only a sovereign, Zedler continues, had the privilege of setting up an archive. In addition to such genuine archives, there were also special depositories and *scrinia* (shrines), where legal titles and court records were stored. The primary task of the archives was to enhance the value of the records deposited there through order and to guarantee legal certainty for the owner. Although historians and scholars were permitted to

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[36] The *Chambre des Comptes* was located on the *Ile de la Cité* in the centre of Paris close to the *Saint Chapelle*, where the state treasury was stored in the Middle Ages.

[37] Friedrich, *Geburt des Archivs*, 54.

search for sources in the archives, they were unfree in their research. It was not until the modern era that the archive as we know it today became the workplace of historians.[38]

IV.   The Long Nineteenth Century – The Impact of the French Revolution

Centralization and inter-state approaches

In the early modern period, a fractured system of small, even contradictory, archives emerged. The first archival centralization processes were set in motion in the eighteenth century, notably in centralized states, albeit these attempts were somewhat inadequate. A catalyst for this development was the French Revolution. Initially, archives faced enormous challenges – during uprisings, for example. Some were stormed and disagreeable documents found their way into the fire. Within a short time, however, a shift took place and the documents of the *Ancien Regime* were centralized in the *Archives Nationales*. The bond between these records and the respective sovereigns was largely lost in this process. The right of use was strengthened and the arcane character of the archives overcome. Historians were able to write a new history with free access to the files. This created the nucleus for the *archival human rights* proclaimed later by Wilhelm Wiegand, although this freedom was to be severely restricted again with the Restoration. A distinction was made between archival records relevant to contemporary politics and those that were irrelevant, whereby only the latter were freely accessible. In Prussia, for example, the year 1700 was considered the limit for political relevance in 1898. 1910 saw this limit raised to the reference year 1800. That said, a liberal approach prevailed when it came to the inspection of the irrelevant files: archives in Prussia were open to students if they could produce a recommendation from their professor. The opening up of the archives was a long slow process and is not over yet.

Napoleon Bonaparte accelerated the centralizing process of the archives by consolidating the smaller German states. As in the case of France, however, this led to a crisis. Many documents lost their significance under radically changed social and political conditions. Mediatization and secularization meant that archives lost their holders and consequently collections lost their protection. Important archival collections were transported from the conquered territories to France, where a vast central archive was to be created. As a result, a key challenge in the nineteenth century was to find the holdings after the war and arrange them in new archives.[39]

Between politics and history

New interest in archives was stoked by historians, whose scepticism of previous narratives in the archives motivated them to look for new and reliable answers by applying empirical

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[38]   *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon Aller Wissenschaften und Künste, ed. Johan Heinrich Zedler, vol. 2. (Halle: 1732)*, https://www.zedlerlexikon.de/index.html?c=blaettern&seitenzahl=644&bandnummer=02&view= 100&l=de.
[39]   Schenk, *Aufheben, was nicht vergessen werden darf*, 87.

techniques "d'écrire une histoire enfin 'vraie'".[40] After the first approaches in sixteenth-century France, *historical Pyrrhonism* took hold of Europe in the eighteenth century. Archival records were perceived as the only reliable sources. Archivists were given the new role of checking archival documents for authenticity and reliability, thus leading to the emergence of the *diplomatica* discipline. Historians were able to use archives in the early modern period but were dependent on their patron's favour. The open archives of the nineteenth century, on the other hand, offered almost unlimited opportunities, heightened by the growing mobility that made extensive archive journeys possible.

Changing use patterns also reshaped the demands on archivists and how operations worked in the archives. Archivists were no longer actors in a legal and administrative system, but primarily those who facilitated the work of historians. Their historical competencies gained currency. While archivists had previously been lawyers and administrative specialists, the profession was now increasingly filled with historians, who continued to act as such in their positions. This development ultimately led to the emergence of an independent archivist education. An early example is the *École des Chartes* in Paris, founded in 1821 out of *diplomatica*, which became a prototype for the rest of Europe.[41]

Equipped with historical competence, archives began to investigate themselves. In other words, they explored the provenance of their own holdings. The Dutch manual developed in the Netherlands in 1898 was decisive for the provenance principle, which instructed the archive staff to arrange files according to their origin.

The term "saddle period" used by Reinhart Koselleck would perhaps be appropriate here, as it describes the period as a transitional phase between pre-modernity and modernity. New developments in the archival system occurred during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars but were renegued during the Restoration. But in the sense of Goethe's "from the spirits that I called" the seed had already been sown and archivists were asserting themselves successfully, so that we can assume a negotiation phase between the pre-modern and the modern archive up to the middle of the nineteenth century.

V.   The (Post-)colonial Archive

Colonizing the globe

From the sixteenth century onwards, a number of European powers attempted to conquer and assert sovereignty over other parts of the world for economic, political and/or missionary reasons. The first bases and landmarks along foreign coastlines soon developed into colonies under the control of a so-called mother country. As a means of gaining and maintaining control over a distant land, archives were crucial to long-distance ruling. Shortly after arrival in the said

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[40]   Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 144.
[41]   Schenk, *Aufheben, was nicht vergessen werden darf*, 109.

colonies, the colonial powers created archival structures. The French Crown had maintained a naval and colonial archive since 1699, as did the Spanish Crown upon arrival in the Americas, in the Caribbean and in Central America. In 1674, for instance, the Netherlands set up archives on the island of what was then Ceylon and in New York. The conquest of the East by the Russian Empire in the eighteenth century was also accompanied by archival construction. Europe's early modern archival system had meanwhile spread across the entire globe.[42]

Archives – in most places – became central to colonial administration. The colonial powers collected all kinds of documents in their archives. These ranged from administrative and legislative records, to civil and personal records of colonial staff and colonized civilians, and highly intimate intelligence records (including financial and military records). In the case of the Spanish colonies of New Spain, records even included reports of sexual *misbehaviors*, or *sins*.[43] Archives were instruments of the so-called mother country and collected records that were seen as useful to the colonial power. It is important to note that archives also contained records that incriminated the colonial administration in question. These include, for example, records documenting war crimes committed by colonial governments.

The aftermath

During processes of decolonization, many of the former colonial powers sought to destroy or displace certain sections of their colonial archives. This left former colonized countries with incomplete records from the colonial era. Since archives are not merely sites to accommodate sources of historical and cultural value, but contain civic sources as well, removing parts of an archive can have immense consequences. Many archival theorists have argued that an archive – in contrast to a library – should be understood as a whole. It simply cannot (and should not) be torn apart into separate pieces. It functions as a comprehensive body of sources.[44] Another crucial development during decolonization, apart from the removal of records, was the removal of those who had worked with the records.

On leaving their colonies, German administrators had clear instructions about archival records regarding which ones to destroy, hide or ship to Archives in Germany. Optimistic that the colony would be regained in the near future, they simply buried many of them in the ground and left them there. For the most part, these records included financial, budget and inventory files, lists of native chiefs (*Häuptlingsverzeichnisse*) and property files. Other records deemed of greater immediate value to the Empire were shipped to Hamburg. This applied notably to intelligence records linked to the ongoing war. From Hamburg they made their way to the *Reichsarchiv* in Potsdam, where they were largely destroyed by bombs and the subsequent

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[42] Friedrich, *Geburt des Archivs*, 59.

[43] Zeb Totorici has published a noteworthy book on his work with these records. Most of which have survived to this day. See Zeb Totorici, *Sins against Nature: Sex and Archives in Colonial New Spain* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

[44] James Lowry, "Introduction: Displaced Archives," in *Displaced Archives*, ed. James Lowry (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 1.

burning of the building in 1945. Other records of little value to Germany were quite simply left behind (seldom destroyed) in the chaos of decolonization, and have largely remained in the former colonies to this day. The 1970s saw the launch of a vast intercultural project between Cameroon and the Federal Republic of Germany. The aim was to reassess archival records from the colonial past. Antoinette Burton declared the archive a "contact zone" between the past and the present. So, one could argue that efforts in the 1970s to recollect, reassess and reorganize these archival records were the trigger for both countries to explore their enmeshed colonial history in more depth. The project was developed as a long-term partnership, with Germany training Cameroonian archivists in its archival schools for years.[45] Similar bilateral projects were set up in other former German colonies in the 1960s and 1970s – foremost in Togo and Tanzania. These projects had certain aspects in common: after a two-week assessment phase, a German archivist was sent to the former colony to work with African colleagues for a two-year period. The African archives also received material and technical support. In the case of Togo, the Federal Republic financed the construction of an archive building in 1984, exactly 100 years after its colonization. Although this can be seen as one of the more positive developments in terms of colonial archives, it should be remarked that the absence of certain records (and of course colonization itself) continues to have a substantial impact on the people of former colonized countries. Today, for example, the *Bundesarchiv* still receives enquiries about colonial records from African government officials wishing to retrace the development of African state lines, the vast majority of which were drawn in the colonial era. Another example is Namibia, where the absence of person-related records in archives has had and continues to have a discriminatory impact on its non-white population.[46] Therefore, it should be kept in mind when working with colonial archives that these records were initially created from a distinct perspective – that of the colonial power, the suppressor.

Although there is still much work ahead – especially in scientific research – the German example can be seen as one of the more inclusive handlings of colonial archives. Some former colonial powers are still unwilling – or less willing – to cooperate with their former colonies on the matter of archival records. A bleak example is the United Kingdom. In the course of a lawsuit in 2009, it came to light that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) was still holding Kenyan archival records under lock and key.[47] In the context of Commonwealth countries, the term "migrated archives" is commonly used to describe records that made the journey to the United Kingdom from former colonies in the course of decolonization – hence *migrated*. These records were deemed *embarrassing* to the then colonial governments and often contained information that would incriminate the UK government or government officials. In

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[45] Sabine Herrmann, "Koloniale Amnesie? 100 Jahre Archive zur Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien," *Bundesarchiv Koblenz*, 2019, https://www.bundesarchiv.de/DE/Content/Publikationen/Aufsaetze/aufsatz-s-herrmann-koloniale-amnesie.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.

[46] Ellen Ndeshi Namhila has published an impressive article on this subject. See Ellen Ndeshi Namhila, "Content and use of colonial archives: An under-researched issue," *Archival Science* 16, no. 2 (2014), 111–23.

[47] Riley Linebaugh, *Curating the Colonial Past. Britain's 'Migrated Archives' and the Struggle for Kenya's History* (forthcoming).

recent decades, many of these migrated records were destroyed. Some are still *missing*.[48]

VI.   The Twentieth Century

Archives for eternity

It would be nothing short of impossible to give a *brief* history of archival developments in the twentieth century. Too much changed in the life of the archives in the course of that century. Countless archival theories were produced, numerous storage opportunities emerged, and the very function of the archive itself has been amplified. A gradual shift in the meaning of the archive – from the purpose to support governance to the will to construct history, as stated above – came about between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This newly found value of the archive was demonstrated in the construction of new archival buildings in Europe in the first third of the twentieth century. Archives were now housed in impressive structures that reflected the political and socio-cultural importance of the institution. Since worldly destruction such as wars, particularly World War II, did not spare these buildings, countless archival records were lost. In order to protect *valuable* records, some countries came to a pragmatic conclusion: meta-archives. In the second half of the twentieth century, several nations launched projects that aimed to permanently safeguard archival records from destruction. They host records that are considered particularly valuable to national culture and history. One of these so-called meta-archives can be found in the German Black Forest region close to Freiburg. In 1975, the *Barbara-Stollen*, a former supply tunnel, began to accommodate a plethora of film and photo material, manuscripts and literature by accomplished German writers and poets, paintings, legal certificates and other historical documents. In the hope of protecting the archive in the case of armed conflict, the *Barbara-Stollen* is under the special protection of the UNO and UNESCO. Air traffic in the area of the tunnel is strictly prohibited. The *Barbara-Stollen* is the most extensive project of its kind in Europe, but there is a similar example in Sweden. Since the end of the 1960s, Sweden has housed its most valuable archival sources beneath a thick layer of granite under the sea.[49] Projects like these revive the question of what is seen as valuable enough for safekeeping. Given that the principal aim of meta-archives is to preserve the profile of a nation's culture and history, we have to ask what and above all who determines the sources to be kept in the archives. Maybe the more important question is what is not considered valuable enough to be preserved in such highly secure places. Who and what is remembered, and who and what has been forgotten or silenced?

Archives and control

These questions are crucial, since the twentieth century has proved numerous times that

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[48]   Ian Cobain, Owen Bowcott and Richard Norton-Taylor, "Britain destroyed records of colonial crimes," *The Guardian*, April 17, 2012.
[49]   Nicolas Berg, "Geschichte des Archivs im 20. Jahrhundert," in *Handbuch Archiv: Geschichte, Aufgaben, Perspektiven* , ed. Marcel Lepper and Ulrich Raulff (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler Verlag, 2016), 72–73.

archives can be (mis)used in a highly dangerous manner. In the case of genocide, for instance, archival content can decide between life and death. Moreover, autocratic regimes were often meticulously bureaucratic. They cultivated vast archival systems by collecting civilian intelligence and recording their victims with high precision. The archive itself became a central part of the panopticon of those in power by storing intelligence data pertaining to the population.[50] Furthermore, in cases of extreme violence, citizens sometimes had to rely on the content of archives for their lives. One example is people under Nazi rule having to prove their heritage. Although autocratic regimes frequently sought to destroy their archives on the brink of their demise, in most cases they left subsequent governments with a stunning number of records pertaining to their crimes. The Stasi intelligence archives of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) are a more recent example of this. Archivists are still trying to puzzle their way through halls filled with shredded documents left behind by the GDR regime. Today, the Stasi-Unterlagen-Archiv is in the process of digitalising these records in order to provide digital access to interested parties. This particular archive intends to simplify the use of the records and above all to guarantee long-term conservation through digitalization.[51]

Archives and the new media

The fourth media revolution – the invention of film, audio records and the Internet – brought about a sea change in the archive. With the introduction of new media, the very meaning of archive shifted from a physical place where written sources were stored to a place – in the broadest sense – where all manner of sources are kept. This shift away from exclusively written material began in the first half of the twentieth century. In many western countries the first national film archives emerged in the 1930s, of which the *Cinémathèque Francaise* and the *British Film Institute* were the most prominent. In Soviet Russia the *Gosfilmofond* was founded as early as 1926. Yet these archival beginnings were not without pitfalls. Archivists found it difficult to store films adequately due to the sheer nature of the material. Many were lost to fires caused by inadequate storage of the sensitive and flammable film rolls. There were, however, also theoretical questions to be answered: What should the purpose of a film archive be? Should it simply collect and conserve film-related sources? Or should it also promote and encourage contemporary productions? It seems that each institute found its own way of dealing with these hitherto unknown archival challenges. Since many of these archives also house film museums and host public cinematic events, they are no longer just sites of academic reflection, but have become major landmarks in our cultural landscapes.

With the development of the Internet, today's archives are faced with new opportunities and challenges. Due to immense digitization efforts on the part of numerous archives, the Internet has, on the one hand, enabled a greater number of people to access the archives. On the other hand, the Internet itself produces a vast number of records every second of every day. How can

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[50] Foucault, *Überwachen*, 259–65.
[51] For further information on this project see "Startseite," Stasi-Unterlagen-Archiv, accessed March 21, 2021, https://www.bstu.de/archiv/.

archives and archivists preserve such a gargantuan quantity of records? Considering the sheer mass of possible archival records produced by the Internet, is it even humanly possible to live up to archival standards that evolved in the course of the last 5000 years?[52]

Conclusion – The Astonishing Career of the Archive

Collecting information has always been an integral part of human history, as we seem to prefer to keep rather than destroy evidence. It took a long time for archives to become the institutions we refer to and have in mind today. That said, as we pointed out, defining archives and their non-linear and disorderly trajectory is not an easy task. Rapid evolutions were often volatile and regressed, only to evolve again at a later point. Hence archives have a rich history that is laced with constant change.

They developed alongside us, occasionally without our even knowing or recognizing the reciprocal relationship between us and our creation. Archival research means dealing with gaps, since archives have never been neutral spaces. Indeed, all records are living systems with an inner logic based on the knowledge of the individuals and groups that made sense of them at the time. The question of what there is and what can be found is therefore always the question of what might be missing. In other words, there is always an uncontrollable element to archives that forbids reducing them to mere by-products of human history.[53] Oriented not only to human needs and demands but actively developed and shaped by social elites and seats of power, they have always been mirrors of society and are more than just the sum of their parts. Their long and diverse history has revealed their many facets. They were – and still are – collections of specific records, administrative and bureaucratic tools, instruments and symbols of power and control, and also places and topics of research.

All in all, archives have had an astonishing career because our requests to them directly or indirectly changed over time for multiple reasons. These shifts in society impact heavily on archives, which in turn shape society's relationship to the past. Archives develop through humans because a source is not a source until we make it one. Making sense of these sources is an active and ever-changing process, as is the creation of archives – work that will probably never cease. In today's fast-moving society with increasing demagogy and fake news, archives and archivists have a major role to play. The archive has the onus of performing on a tightrope: on the one hand, it must keep an eye on the past and, at the same time, worry about the present and the future.

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[52] See the outlook in the final chapter.

[53] The archive as a by-product is something that Hilary Jenkinson, Theodore R. Schellenberg and further archival thinkers of the mid-20th century assumed concerning the appraisal of records. Based on works – e.g., Foucault, *Les mots* and ---*L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008) or Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'Archive: Une Impression Freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995) – postmodern archival thinkers began to question this idea in the late 20th century.

Chapter 2: Keep(ing) the archive dynamic

Linda Heintze

Introduction: Dynamics as Characteristics of a Modern World

Our present times can perhaps best be described as dynamic: Increasing transnational relationships are the result of ongoing globalization, while a growing resurgence of white supremacist rhetoric has called international cooperation and democratic tendencies into question. A pandemic has pointed to greater multilateral cooperation but also revealed tense transnational relationships and caused a revival of nationalist rhetoric. Rapid digitalization reflects new technologies that have made communication and intercultural exchange more immediate than ever, but also highlighted disadvantaged communities around the globe. Social, economic, religious and cultural forces have changed certain values, attesting to a postmodern worldview that sees various interpretations of these dynamic times as equally justified. At the same time, this is a contested worldview.

Guidance in what has become an increasingly incomprehensible world is often found by consulting the past to understand why things have turned out the way they are. Seeking advice from records that can reconstruct the past of a nation or society, people turn to (national) archives where these are usually stored. They look for a past preserved in records they perceive as containing sound knowledge, an act that lends stability in dynamic times. Despite the solid appearance of archives – vast buildings – they are neither stable nor static. On the contrary, the archive is just as dynamic as the world that surrounds it, as will be shown in this chapter.

With reference to the dynamic nature of records, I argue, firstly, that archives are in fact inherently dynamic and, secondly, that power relations constitute another kind of dynamics active in the archive. Thirdly, I show why it is important for people working in and with the archive to consider and understand these dynamics in order to keep the archive dynamic.

I.   The Inherent Dynamics of the Archive: Records in Motion

For a very long time, archives were considered static and persistent claims that arose early on about archival principles are still sometimes seen today as undoubted truths.[1] Yet, a consideration of archival theory development with a special focus on the perception of records will show that archives are in reality inherently dynamic and why they will remain so.

Up until 1930, archives were usually perceived as buildings where records were stored and safeguarded by archivists. Primarily concerned with government and administrative records

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[1]   Michelle Caswell, J.J. Ghaddar, "'To go beyond': towards a decolonial archival praxis," *Archival Science* 19, no. 2 (2019): 77–78.

from older periods, archivists highlighted the need to preserve the original order that supposedly represented a one-to-one relationship between records and their creating organization. Once the administrative body had no further use for these records, they were collected and preserved in mainly centralized archives, where they offered immediate access to the past. At least this was the feature attributed to historical records in the positivist approach to historiography common at the time, when the first archival guidelines, such as the so-called 'Dutch Manual' or the major treatise on archival theory by Hilary Jenkinson, were produced.[2] But radical societal and political change soon rendered modern records more complex than those from the earlier periods referred to in the first guidelines. More intricate administrative structures in an increasingly globalized world led to a flood of documents entering the archive, now making selection indispensable. Records were (re-)defined according to their value, justifying appraisal of some and the destruction of others perceived as less valuable.[3] Theodore R. Schellenberg, for example, pointed to their secondary value, i.e., the subsequent use of the sources by scholars, as a key aspect to be considered in the appraisal process by the archivist. In the long run, this led to the fundamental recognition that archivists and their selection processes ultimately alter the sources, which in turn has serious implications for the writing and interpretation of history.[4]

The surge in global democratic tendencies after World War II altered the ways of dealing with the past and telling history. Beginning in the 1960s, scholars across disciplines with "a postmodern suspicion of the historical record"[5] reconsidered the notion that there is no unmediated access to the past. Rather, records allow us to see that certain people, usually those in power, perceived the world through a subjective lens. In other words, records represent only one possible interpretation of the past and are by no means neutral or innocent, but a product of their time.[6] They are representations of 'truths' deemed to be accurate at the time, but not necessarily valid today. By reinterpreting sources and retelling the past with multiple perspectives and narratives that were – in a postmodern sense – equally 'true', scholars adapted to social change and ultimately altered the sources, adding a new contextual layer of meaning to them by stating what they did not tell.[7]

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[2]   Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift," *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997): 20–26.
[3]   Cf. Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," 26; and the chapter on values of the archive.
[4]   Schellenberg discerned a primary value in records relevant to their creator and a secondary value attributed to their subsequent use by scholars; cf. Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," 27–29. See also Sue McKemmish, "Placing Records Continuum Theory and Practice," *Archival Science* 1, no. 4 (2001): 346–55; and the chapter on archives and their actor networks.
[5]   Marlene Manoff, "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4, no. 1 (2004): 14.
[6]   Cf. Giulia Battaglia, Jennifer Clarke, and Fiona Siegenthaler, "Bodies of Archives / Archival Bodies: An Introduction," *Visual Anthropology Review* 36, no. 1 (2020): 11–12. See also Manoff, "Theories," 14–16.
[7]   Ibid, 13; e.g., Michelle Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory, and the Photographic Record in Cambodia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 16–17. For a more detailed consideration of postmodern approaches in the archive, see Tom Nesmith, "Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives," *The American Archivist* 65, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 25–29.

This development and new media in the form of comic books, films and photographs that entered the archive as a result of the scholarly focus on society and everyday life, and the surge in electronic records following rapid digitalization has called into question the mere physicality of the records that archivists supposedly safeguard and has caused massive changes in the perception of records as a whole.[8] By the 1990s, archivists were actively debating established theories and practices, and gradually began to recognize the dynamic nature of records and incorporate this into archival practice. One approach is the so-called 'records-continuum-model', an ideal way of showing tendencies in the reconsideration of the nature of records and archival principles in general.[9] Instead of focusing on the fixed nature of records as earlier approaches concerned with their content and informational value were wont to do, this model focused on the intent and functionality of records, emphasizing their dynamic nature and thus the changes in meaning and use evoked by the contextualization of the records as pointed out above. Frank Upward, strongly influenced by international discourse, and Sue McKemmish suggested a model of interrelated concentric circles encompassing the stages through which records travel:[10] Records are *created* and show traces of contexts referring to social and organizational activity; they are then *captured* as evidence, meaning they are dis-embedded from their immediate context of creation and made usable for several purposes outside of the creating organization; records are *organized* into record systems as memory, and thus stored in an archive; lastly, they are *pluralized* as collective archives or memory, and (re-)used by archive users for multiple purposes.[11] The representation of these 'stages' in circles points to the notion that they do not proceed in a linear process and that not every single record travels through all stages, as studies using and elaborating on this model have been able to show.[12] But herein lies its strength. The circles are deeply intertwined and interrelated, rendering the context of the records multidimensional and ever-changing. Although the content and structure of a record may be fixed, "in terms of its contextualization, a record is always in a process of becoming".[13]

This seemingly complicated model, which can only be touched on here, focuses on one thing: the human activity involved in each of these processes.[14] As scholars have long since

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[8]   Cf. Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," 40–43. See also McKemmish, "Placing Records Continuum," 336–340.
[9]   Although this example alone is certainly insufficient to incorporate all of the newly defined approaches, e.g., the macroappraisal acquisition strategy, David Bearman's influential study on electronic records, the general reconsideration of provenance in Canada and Australia, and much more. For an overview, see Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," 30–43.
[10]   Cf. McKemmish, "Placing Records Continuum," 335–45. For a full consideration of the continuum-scholarship, see Heather Ann Soyka, "Records as Force Multiplier: Understanding the Records Continuum as a Framework for Examining the Role of Records in a Community" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2015), 40–55.
[11]   Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable*, 12–13. Cf. McKemmish, "Placing Records Continuum," 335–36.
[12]   Caswell elaborates the principle by referring to the social life of records approach that, according to her, makes it usable, exemplified by her study of Tuol Sleng mugshots. See Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable,* 14–22.
[13]   McKemmish, "Placing Records Continuum," 335.
[14]   Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable*, 13. Soyka describes the influence of Anthony Giddens's structuration theory on continuum thinking, which centres it around human activity. See Soyka, "Records as Force Multiplier," 48–50.

recognized, however, human activity is always subjective and "consciously or unconsciously influenced by cultural and social factors"[15], meaning that the contexts assigned to records are likewise always subjective. This has had profound implications for archival principles and practice: The concept of provenance, once referred to simply as the origin of a record, preserves the record's contexts and should be included in the description process in order to understand the subjective lens through which the record in question was initially created.[16] The concept of custody was redefined accordingly, since the archivist plays an active role in altering the records via subjective selection, description and cataloguing processes. As already mentioned, scholars who use records add a new subjective layer of meaning by interpreting them. And it has recently been said that the subjective contexts of the diverse record uses – ranging from evidence and background information for entertainment to education at exhibitions – must also be preserved[17]; in short, this calls for interrogation of the "semantic genealogy" of all the "social, cultural, political, religious contexts of record creation, maintenance, and use".[18]

The responsibility of the archivist, then, is to preserve these contexts, actively knowing that they are subjective, to carry their meaning through spacetime in order to make them accessible to a future society that, because it is ever-changing, will probably use them for different purposes according to their own (dynamic) needs.[19] This refers to a changed perception of the function of the archive as a whole and points to the power dynamics involved, which will be explored in the next chapter. But for now, one thing is important to notice: If records and their contexts are dynamic, as has been shown, then the archive, which is comprised of an ensemble of records, is by nature *inherently dynamic* as well. And if this holds true, archival theory and practice – as the short reference to the development of the perception of records illustrates – are also *inherently dynamic* and always subject to change because the world and its people are and will continue to be dynamic. Furthermore, this re-consideration of records was and still is an international, interdisciplinary endeavour, which it has to be, since society is multifaceted. As Terry Cook reminds us, "what is past is prologue"[20]: truths – even seemingly established truths codified in archival theories and principles – do not hold true forever due to the intrinsic dynamics involved in society, and should thus constantly undergo critical reflection in order to understand and adapt to these inherent dynamics of human activity, of which the archive is a product and at the same time a source for its analysis.[21]

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[15]   Eric Ketelaar, "Tacit Narratives: The Meanings of Archives," *Archival Science* 1, no. 2 (2001): 136.
[16]   Cf., for example, Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," 35–40.
[17]   Cf. e.g., Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable*, 20–25.
[18]   Ketelaar, "Tacit Narratives," 141.
[19]   Cf. McKemmish, "Placing Records Continuum," 346–50, and Ketelaar, "Tacit Narratives," 140–41.
[20]   Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," 43–49.
[21]   Cf. Grimsted who concludes her study of the ideological underpinnings of archival theories in Russia by stating: "Archives may well be perceived as a mirror of a society as well as a mirror of the past"; Patricia Kennedy Grimsted "Lenin's Archival Degree of 1918: The Bolshevik Legacy for Soviet Archival Theory and Practice," *The American Archivist* 45, no. 4 (Fall 1982): 440.

II.   Records on the Move: Considering Displaced Archives and Power Dynamics

That the institution archive is indeed a product of its time and thus not stable can perhaps best be shown by the fact that records are not only in motion metaphorically, they are physically on the move, too. The complete archive of the German foreign ministry, for example, was transferred to the United States after World War II and hence displaced from its origin of creation. The Allies and Germany fought over the righteous ownership, a dispute that remained unresolved until the 1950s, when the first calls to return the files were answered but negotiations continued until the 2010s.[22] Similarly, many colonial administrations took records created in the colonies back to the 'mother country' after decolonization and numerous calls for repatriation have since been made. This is especially true for the once vast British Empire as well as for France and many other, mainly western states that deprived, for example, Indigenous peoples in Africa of their land and their history.[23] Since records as static objects cannot physically move on their own, the displacements and subsequent often long-term disputes over the righteous ownership point to the different values attributed to the archive and the power relations involved that caused the movement in the first place. These, too, constitute another kind of dynamics involved in the archive.

Displaced archives, defined as "removals that are arguably not illicit thefts but somehow legitimized or defensible by virtue of the fact of their being removed"[24], are evidence of the uneven distribution of power in the creation of records, archives, history and memory.[25] In the case of colonial archives, for example, the colonizers collected information on the colonized, incorporating their imperialistic and racialized view into the records at the moment of their creation, effectively silencing the colonized. They then used the records to confirm their perceived supremacy and their own identity as distinct from the colonized "other", as a number of scholars have already discovered.[26] Hence, they were of huge value to them. At the same time, by taking these records, the people they had colonized were deprived of the chance to engage with the records, prevented from holding the former colonial administration accountable for certain crimes and, especially, foreclosed the telling or retelling of history from their perspective. Consequently, the records are crucially important to them, too. The value of the records affects questions of national boundaries, which are increasingly being discussed and

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[22]   Astrid M. Eckert, *The Struggle for the Files: The Western Allies and the Return of German Archives after the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1–12.

[23]   In general, cf. James Lowry, "Introduction: Displaced Archives," in *Displaced Archives*, ed. James Lowry (Oxfordshire/New York: Routledge, 2017), 1–11. For a specific example of a displaced archive in a colonial context, see Todd Shepard, "Making Sovereignty and Affirming Modernity in the Archives of Decolonisation: The Algeria-France 'Dispute' between the Post-Decolonisation French and Algerian Republics, 1962–2015," in *Displaced Archives*, ed. James Lowry (Oxfordshire/New York: Routlegde, 2017), 21–40.

[24]   Lowry, "Introduction," 4.

[25]   This finds expression in Michel-Rolph Trouillot's concept of how silences become embedded in the archive, which he concludes is a result of uneven power relations, cf. Caswell, Ghaddar, "'To go beyond'," 76. For a short overview, see Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable*, 10–12.

[26]   Caswell, Ghaddar, "'To go beyond'," 77–79.

redefined, rendering such issues highly political, since they tend to revolve around who has the legitimate authority to interpret history.[27] The various contexts associated with the colonizers and the colonized complicate repatriation because different people attach different values to the records, using them as evidence or for purposes of memory and identity.[28] In many instances, the former colonizing countries justify solution delays with the security of the state and the protection of the records themselves, indicating in turn the perpetuation of old power relations.[29]

Numerous cases of displaced archives remain unresolved even today and evidence the power relations still at work within mainly national archives and how persistent they seem to be. There are even intranational claims, as in the case of Portugal, whose autonomous region of Madeira requested the central government "to transfer archival holdings to their local communities".[30] Hence displacement as such is characteristic of every archive. Centralizing a national archive can lead to the removal of sources from local communities, leaving the latter with no immediate access to consult them, to write their own history, and ultimately to form their own identity, which may well differ from the state perspective.

The centralized national archive model was developed during the revolutionary period in France and spread throughout Europe. It is frequently used to describe the heroic story of the creation of national archives as encompassing democratic accountability of the state, as Caswell says. However, Caswell and other archival scholars have since revealed the imperialist, nationalist and colonial underpinnings that were incorporated into the institution archive at that time.[31] James Lowry has pointed to the early infrastructure that served the state as a mechanism to control its people;[32] Eric Ketelaar noted that even archival buildings and their methods of surveillance and control are products of those earlier power relations at a time when archives were primarily designed, used and controlled by the government as a method of collecting information about its people and of holding them to account.[33] That this notion was likewise embedded in the records has already been discussed. Thus, imperialism, colonialism and racism prevail in archival studies to a greater degree than is usually recognized, rendering the heroic

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[27]   Cf. Lowry, "Introduction," 5. The case of the files removed from Germany, for example, was in essence also about disputes over the interpretation of (German) history, see Eckert, *The Struggle for the Files*, 3.

[28]   This aspect will be more thoroughly discussed in the chapter on values of the archive. For a short consideration of archive values, see Lowry, "Introduction," 1–2.

[29]   Cf. e.g. Eckert, *The Struggle for the Files*, 4–5. See also Ketelaar, who speaks about the perpetuation of these arguments within archival institutions, which are thus still exerting (imperial and colonial) power by surveillance, rituals and discipline. He characterizes these arguments as "rationalizations of appropriation and power"; Eric Ketelaar, "Archival Temples, Archival Prisons: Modes of Power and Protection," *Archival Science* 2, no. 3/4 (2002): 221–238, especially 235–36.

[30]   For ongoing disputes cf. James Lowry, "Disputed Archival Claims: An International Survey 2018/2019. Report to the International Council on Archives' Expert Group on Shared Archival Heritage," International Council of Archives, accessed March 19, 2020, https://www.ica.org/en/disputed-archival-claims-an-international-survey-20182019, 5–38. For the Portuguese case cf. 13–15, quote 13.

[31]   Caswell, Ghaddar, "'To go beyond'," 77–78.

[32]   Lowry, "Introduction," 2.

[33]   Ketelaar, "Archival Temples," 221–238.

story of the archive a myth that calls for deconstruction and consequently consideration of the history of the institution itself.[34] As the examples of displaced archives show, power in the archive is dynamic rather than stable. Sources such as the Nazi files, originally used to identify certain groups of people for extermination, were later used to hold the regime accountable for war crimes and continue to be used to make sense of the past and construct societal values, distancing society from the crimes committed. Power has shifted from the state to the people, a manifestation of dynamic processes around the world, many of which led to (developing) democratic tendencies. Today, this justifies the existence of archives. They have undergone a sea change from a juridical-administrative institution centering the state to a socio-cultural model where society and thus public use and public policy take centre stage, making it possible to hold governments accountable.[35] That being said, certain circumstances, notably access, are a prerequisite.

As Michelle Caswell among others has claimed, a theoretical consideration of these problems is no longer enough. Action is needed in what she calls a "radical decolonial praxis", in order to change these power relations.[36] The latter are currently stable in some cases and, with reference to the first part of this chapter, arguably incapable of accurately representing a dynamic society now aware that access to cultural heritage relates to human dignity and human rights.[37] Consequently, archivists bear a heavy social and democratic responsibility. Instead of being passive keepers of both records and a position of power, given that they once held sway over the records and their subjects, archivists must use this power to empower others by providing *access*, the key to finding solutions to displaced archives.[38] Access distribution or the sharing of copies occasionally offered solutions by embracing social dynamics such as electronic records. But the complex contexts and values assigned to records in these disputes make solutions complicated endeavours and indicate the need for a case-by-case evaluation that can only be achieved by action. As a first step, the context of records that have physically travelled needs to be considered theoretically, for example by defining displaced archives in scholarly unison across disciplines, but also by changing practices: The archivist's neutral custodial role should be redefined as a postcustodial role that sees the constant shift in their meaning rather than their physicality as the most important aspect of the records they preserve. Since custody "only serves an archival purpose in the long term if it accommodates the people and events to whom the records relate as well as the collective memory that the records foster"[39],

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[34]   Caswell, Ghaddar, "'To go beyond'," 78.
[35]   Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," 43–44.
[36]   Caswell, Ghaddar, "'To go beyond'," 71–85.
[37]   Ketelaar, "Archival Temples," 230–31.
[38]   Lowry, "Introduction," 6–8; Ketelaar, "Archival Temples," 238. Jeanette A. Bastian therefore argues for making access an integral part of the concept of custody and discusses a postcustodial role in detail; Jeannette A. Bastian, "Taking Custody, Giving Access: A Postcustodial Role for a New Century," *Archivaria* 53 (Spring 2002): 76–93.
[39]   Bastian, "Taking Custody," 91.

archivists need to understand that they are no longer required to protect the record for state purposes, but rather as an obligation to society.

The catalogue is the primary key to access.[40] Its record descriptions facilitate finding the records required, whether in a physical or electronic environment. Preserving the various contexts of the records was a first step in this direction, albeit they sometimes preserve the power dynamics involved by including western cultural prerequisites: the written word remains dominant, although some cultures preserve their history orally; language barriers between former colonizers and those they colonized, for example, should be effectively countered in the description process; finally, electronic distributive access needs to consider whether or not Internet is available in the first place. In short, a postcustodial role takes into account all aspects of the record creating communities.[41] This can only be achieved by actively engaging with the communities in question, whether it is to understand their view of older records and incorporate their voices into history or to actively create new sources by including them in the description process. This is what alternative conceptions of archives, such as community or participatory archives, have recently tried to do. By engaging with Indigenous people and distributed electronic access, they have in some cases successfully altered the relations of power, making them dynamic and thus more representative of modern times.[42]

Conclusion: Keeping the Archive Dynamic

Records in a dynamic format such as electronic records have the power to open up new avenues to the archive, but they also carry risks: issues related to ownership of the records vis-à-vis the server concerned and who ultimately has the power to delete them is just one example.[43] Archivists are bound to protect these records, confirming their role as safekeepers – not for the state, but for a broader, international society, enabling it to hold the state accountable if the need arises. Even democratic states, as the recent resurgence of nationalistic and white supremacist rhetoric reminds us, are not stable. On the contrary, they are subject to change and thus require the active engagement of their citizens. The archivist's societal role, then, and that of people who engage with the archive in order to educate others about the past and furnish society with knowledge, is highly political and should be recognized and embraced as such.

The various contexts of the records – their creational, custodial, management and usage history – must be studied thoroughly and preserved in the description, because they will not be considered accurate forever and could well be challenged by a future society that has the power

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[40]   Lowry, "Introduction," 8.
[41]   Bastian, "Taking Custody," 80–81, cf. 91–92.
[42]   For a detailed study with examples of participatory archives, including and using participatory description, see Lauren Haberstock, "Participatory description: decolonizing descriptive methodologies in archives," *Archival Science* 20, no. 2 (2020): 125–138. For a thorough consideration of community archives and how they change access possibilities, see the chapter on values of the archive.
[43]   Manoff, "Theories," 13.

to impose different requirements on the archive according to its needs. Much the same is true for archival theory and practice, which constantly need to be reconsidered in order to ask questions of power and its function within the archive. All of the real and potential changes mentioned here are certainly not the last of their kind. Since the world is dynamic, they are a mere precursor of what is still to come. Such considerations must therefore precede the selection process in the archive, extending the archivist's role from simply a safekeeper to an active creator of sources outside the archive, as well.

Consequently, only if archivists and users of archives are aware of these dynamics, can they – in an interdisciplinary, international and intercultural endeavour – succeed in making the archive a place that adequately reflects our modern times, thereby extending the archive into the future. If the role of the archivist is to remain relevant, the archive as a subjective product of human activity needs to engage with current dynamics, actively embracing and incorporating them into archival work. Only by preserving the meaning of the past as we see it in the present, with all its subjective implications and interpretations, will future generations be able to do the same and in turn adapt to dynamic processes we cannot even imagine yet, again preserving the meaning of the past for the future. This approach makes the archive and its meaning infinite – but it can only be achieved by considering and embracing the dynamic roles of the people who work in and with the archive.

What needs to be done, then, is to keep communicating, to keep engaging, to keep questioning established theories, practices and truths, to keep adapting to the dynamics of modern times; in short, to do one thing: keep the archive dynamic!

Chapter 3:
Archives and their Actor Networks

Marie-Luise Schreiner and Mónica Páez-Sierra

Introduction: Archival Actors – Hidden Figures in the Fonds

Although countless actors converge in archives, not all are recognizable. This may be due to the document creators and their substantial agency over the identity, structure and description of archive collections. What we need to understand, however, is the nature of archive creation and how some identities have been silenced or portrayed in biased ways. Furthermore, it is essential to recognize the power relations involved in the original construction of archives. This calls for an understanding of the traditional position of archival actors and how some actors have been relegated to a secondary status or even rendered invisible. We use a network analysis approach to discuss these actors, their relations, and their impact on archives.

In the first instance, the *record producer*, a public or private person or organization, creates records to control or facilitate their work with the information stored in the archive. The public field covers the government and its institutions; records are produced as part of their legal duties and according to their government system. Private organizations, on the other hand, pursue a particular interest when they make, collect and preserve records. Another traditional actor is the *archivist*, the professional who controls the information flow and organizes it in line with the administrative structure and duties of the organization. Finally, there are the *users* who work with the archives and whose abilities and knowledge play a key role in finding information.

Up until now, most of these actors have been recognized. As mentioned earlier, however, the archive encompasses many more actors, of whom the following are the least known. The first actor not easily recognized as such in the archive is the *person subject of the records* described in the files. In the public ambit, they are the inhabitants of the territory controlled and administered by the government through a bureaucratic system whose primary source is the record. The Archive of the Indies in Spain, for example, is managed according to the role Spanish Empire institutions played in the Americas, reflecting how the empire governed and controlled its overseas territories. Here the fonds[1] do not immediately draw attention to the original and *marginalized communities* of the time. Instead, they show them as administrative problems. In the private case, records respond to particulars directly linked to an organization or to a specific interest in documenting certain processes. In other words, *subjects* vary

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[1] The Dictionary of the Society of American Archivists defines fonds as "the entire body of records of an organization, family, or individual that have been created and accumulated as the result of an organic process reflecting the functions of the creator".

according to these needs. In this case, there are two types of archives: corporate archives that produce and preserve records associated with their economic activity, and community archives that work on filling the gaps in *marginalized communities*, whose voices and representations are not regularly depicted in the government archive.[2] Some use *social media platforms*, which are gaining traction as new actors in the archival realm. In a few cases there are memory initiatives or projects from public authorities aiming to facilitate autonomous actions of communities to reconstruct and represent their memories from different identities and territories.[3]

Archival processes and tools[4] are also uncommon actors and refer to various procedures that govern the archive, such as tools pertaining to arrangement, description and access; the latter are highly relevant as access intermediaries and help to produce or maintain archival power structures. The principle of provenance and the original order based on the source creator are examples of these structures. Provenance refers to management of the document collection according to the *record producer*, that is, separate from other collections so as to preserve its creation context. Implied is the control and sovereignty of the records. The original order principle is based on maintaining the authentic arrangement of the records as the producer intended.

This chapter aims to illustrate the wide variety of actors that converges within and outside of the archive. It will also look at new types of archives that emerged as a result of the biases and silences found in classic archives. The chapter builds on the dynamics of the archives, drawing attention to the people, power structures, and processes that form the actor networks associated with archives.[5]

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[2] Government archives, also known as public archives, are conceived of here as the institutions whose records are created, preserved and managed by an official organization or agency as part of their official/legal function. The structure of this archive usually depends on the territorial organization of the country and the political system (federal or central). Generally, includes federal, state, and municipal archives (among other territorial typologies), and commonly depicts the matters and concerns in the way government performs the administration of the country.

[3] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, CNMH, "Construcción de la memoria histórica desde las voces de los pueblos indígenas en Colombia: un camino que acompaña el CNMH," *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* (blog), 2021, https://centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/construccion-de-la-memoria-historica-desde-las-voces-de-los-pueblos-indigenas-en-colombia-un-camino-que-acompana-el-cnmh/.

[4] Elizabeth Yakel tackled this as *archival representations*. See Elizabeth Yakel, "Archival Representation" in *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, ed. Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 151–63.

[5] Actor network theory or ANT analyses the configurations and connections involved in the co-production of a specific context, so it considers the role of all the agents concerned: from humans to material objects as agents in constituting a social order. This approach allows us to understand and make visible the configurations that exist in the archive, the role of material objects and processes in stabilizing master narratives, thereby diminishing the idea of archives as neutral agents. For a deeper understanding of ANT, see Bruno Latour, *Reensamblar lo social: una introducción a la teoría del actor-red* (Buenos Aires: Manantial, 2008).

I. How did the actors change?

Numerous factors have caused a shift in the perspective on archival actors. One is the issue of sources and their creation context, which shows evidence of other actors in their production. Michelle Caswell, for example, introduced the idea of "the social life of records" to archival discourse in 2013, an approach that considers the significance, uses and values of a record in diverse settings.[6] Another factor refers to the archives' political awareness of being a government technology, where power relations facilitate the preservation of master narratives and control populations. The archival amnesty concept suggested by Tonia Sutherland shows that questioning official voices in the traditional archives allows us to see that minority groups are kept silent.[7] She illustrates how neglect of certain documents and preservation of others is a violation committed by state forces to actively create gaps in the archive collections and endorse presumptions about the *communities* concerned, adding insult to injury. One example of this is the case of the remains of Indigenous children found in Canada. Some of the children could not be identified due to lack of records,[8] causing even greater pain to their relatives and the community. As Patricia Kennedy Grimsted shows, some governments have issued norms to control national narratives with a decree that regulated them through record management and state control of documentation, in turn leading to ideological and political implications for the archives and the legitimate histories of the countries concerned.[9] This is evident in centralized record management systems or authoritarian governments, where control of the documentary legacy is executed through practices and policies that have a direct impact on archival theory and practice.

II. The Original Actors: Archivists

Considering the above, the first actor figures in the classic conservative archives that come to mind are the archivists themselves. In the traditional understanding, they are the people who look after the records, act as gatekeepers to the past and help visitors find documents in a veritable treasure trove. This seemingly naïve interpretation of the archivist's job is widespread but could not be further from reality. They decide who to let in and can also prevent people or records from getting a seat at the archival table.

The problem here, however, is not just the archivist. It is also the archive itself and its link to the prevailing power structures of the time. As shown in the first chapter, these were either imperialist or nationalistic, but have become more and more community-oriented. This means

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[6] Michelle Caswell, "Rethinking Inalienability: Trusting Nongovernmental Archives in Transitional Societies," *The American Archivist* 76, no. 1 (2013): 113–34.
[7] Tonia Sutherland, "Archival Amnesty: In Search of Black American Transitional and Restorative Justice," *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 2 (June 2017): 1–23.
[8] Holly Honderich, "Why Canada Is Mourning the Deaths of 215 Children," *BBC News*, June 2, 2021.
[9] Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, "Lenin's Archival Decree of 1918: The Bolshevik Legacy for Soviet Archival Theory and Practice," *The American Archivist* 45, no. 4 (1982): 429–443.

two things:

1. Record narratives are the reflection of a certain perspective, which almost always coincides with the position of those in power.

2. Records from other perspectives are absent.

The colonial origins, the absence of specific sources in archives, and the impact of the said absence have all been widely discussed in contemporary archival studies. The discourse ranges from concepts to decolonize archives to articles on the social and emotional impact of belonging to a group that is absent or misrepresented in the sources used to write history.

III.   Archival Subjects and Users

Michelle Caswell uses the term *symbolic annihilation* to describe the realm of archival studies. The term was created by scholar George Gerbner to discuss the television representation of the effect of absence on social life. While representation is equal to social existence, absence is equal to the symbolic annihilation of certain groups in society that are ultimately marked as eternal outsiders with no place in the world. In the archival field, where history is written, being absent through symbolic annihilation means to be non-existent in major areas of world history. The absent lives of Africans in medieval Europe or Native Americans tapered down to a footnote in American history are merely two examples. It makes sense to use the term symbolic annihilation to describe the impact on these groups of being absent in society. At the same time, it also conjures up the attendant emotions. Caswell specifically uses the term in archival studies to depict the emotions that absent, silenced, or misrepresented groups must feel and how this affects their self-esteem.[10] It also distinguishes another point: classic archives are not the place for everyone. Migrants, immigrants, Indigenous people, women, and several other groups are underrepresented (or worse: misrepresented) in these archives.

The discourse on diversity and inclusion in society and in the archives shows why new paths must be tread. Society as a whole is becoming more and more diverse, and archive audiences are likewise shifting as a result. They will come as historians, activists, educators or private individuals and introduce new questions, viewpoints and approaches that the archive will have to answer. Without change, this new generation will visit archives and find itself either misrepresented or not represented at all. In other words, the archival audience primarily served today will be a minority in the future. Yet most archives seem unable to implement new strategies and techniques for a changing audience and instead are as undynamic as a shellac record stuck in a groove. This not only refers to the practical work, but it also means that the same narratives are being retold and the same cultural norms represented. For decades, cultural

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[10] Michelle Caswell, Marika Cifor, Mario H. Ramirez: "To suddenly discover yourself existing: Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives," *The American Archivist* 79, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2016): 58–59.

organizations such as archives or museums were the institutions that specified the standards and norms of what and what isn't historically or culturally relevant. While cultural objects usually gain their importance inside the cultures they exist in, these institutions re-evaluate the objects or materials they get for their collections. Some objects may lose their cultural importance because the institutions they are brought to do not register them as an object of importance. This must be differentiated because objects and records can have a value beyond their designation as culturally or historically important objects or records by institutions named above.

While all the above are recognized in the theoretical sphere of archival studies, it has yet to be acknowledged in the actual archive, where a shift in archival practice is still in the making. Diversity is mostly seen as some kind of top-down gift, whereas in reality, and this is what most corporations fail to grasp, it is a strategy to ensure the relevance of an organization in the future. If the archive has no users, what then is its use? If it fails to deliver records for a diversifying audience, why not create new ones that do? The time to adjust to our new world is already here. This need for more diversity and inclusion has given birth to two methods of altering the status quo: change the internal structures of the archives or build new archives from scratch. The latter has seen the emergence of multiple community and digital archives. The former has not yet come to fruition. Cultural organizations are stubborn and continue to work as they always have. This notwithstanding, the new generation is demanding and it is loud. Remodelling these organizations would be an option if they were to discard "diversity" and start with inclusion. This calls for a new generation with novel approaches and the power to convert these into practice. In the following, we address specific examples to illustrate these points.

IV.   Archival Shapers

In his keynote address from 2017, Chris Taylor spoke of the need for diversity and inclusion in archives, not just in theory and practice.[11] He saw inclusion as a strategy to become more relevant to a more diverse group of users and thus in the long run more successful. While this is true, it is also true that inclusion must have a place in the future of the institution. Cultural organizations cannot simply continue to exist as they have done for decades: the flaw lies in how they work. As a result of their elitist roots, they became a privileged institution that excluded non-dominant cultures and *communities*. While diversity is often hailed as the solution, it is not the panacea for all their ills. Diversity primarily begins and ends with new staff, new staff from different backgrounds and different *marginalized groups* or *communities*. That said, the situation calls for much more than changing the system from within. What is needed now is a new work environment with more creative space to embrace multiple perspectives and experiences. Instead of expecting assimilation into existing work norms, these

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[11] Chris Taylor, "Getting Our House in Order: Moving from Diversity to Inclusion," *The American Archivist* 80, no. 1 (March, 2017): 19–29.

work norms need to be changed if a more inclusive work culture is to be achieved. Progress on this front, however, does not begin at the bottom. It is the onus of those in leadership positions to take the first step and acknowledge that the organization has a problem, even if the solution is not yet entirely clear. Leaders need to develop a new set of skills to make the work environment more inclusive and consequently the organization as a whole. The point of inclusion should see archives becoming spaces of diverse cultures where each can tell their narratives.

V.   Citizen Archivists and Community Archives

Another approach to more diversity is new archives. The latest technologies and the internet mixed with the do-it-yourself mentality of the digital natives[12] have led to new archives outside the traditional institutions. These new archives frequently spring from dissatisfaction or frustration with the representation of certain groups in conservative archives. In many instances, the groups teamed up to build new archives by themselves for themselves. SAADA.org, for example, collects, preserves and even creates records to keep the stories and oral histories of its community alive. The other archival form digitalization has spawned is the digital archive. While this type is not always rooted in dissatisfaction with representation or independent of an elitist background, it still offers certain groups the independence to tell their own stories or contribute to expanding the horizon of the archival landscape. Additionally, digital archives tend to see themselves as collectors of material pertaining to current events in order to preserve what will become history in the future. Examples such as the *Coronarchiv*[13] are the various archives that began collecting material about the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, understanding that this event will be history for future generations.

VI.   Power relations changed with new actors

In order to explain the power structures incorporated in the archive, we need to understand how these structures are mediated by aspects such as recognition, materiality and access in the government network.[14] The first of these refers to the ability to be identified as a member of a community of actors that has specific features and possibilities respected and distinguished by all. Materiality is the way in which the record is created and structured, and gives attention to content form standards so that it can be preserved. Access is a means of administering power through common barriers (legal restrictions, raw archives, state secret, etc.) so as to avoid uncomfortable questions about the information stored in the archives for instance. These aspects regulate the government network in terms of trustability and interest. In this sense, it matters

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[12] Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, s.v. "digital native," accessed March 18, 2021, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/diccionario/ingles/digital-native.
[13] See "Coronarchiv: sharing is caring – become part of history!", coronachiv, accessed March 18, 2021, https://coronarchiv.geschichte.uni-hamburg.de/projector/s/coronarchive/page/welcome.
[14] This refers to the set of institutions, actors, and relations in government, supported by legal status. Individuals or Institutions not recognized in the government network become non-legitimate actors, whose records are not considered preservable in the network.

who is legally accountable for a certain activity, what is acceptable for preservation, and whose level of trust leads to access.

Two kinds of actors appear in the network: those who are recognized by the government and those who are not. This aspect is far from trivial. If recognition exists during record creation, the records are considered preservation-worthy. On the other hand, if institutions and people are not recognized, the tendency is to silence them or portray them according to the government networks own interest. Hence, if there is neither a community base nor a special archive initiative to support the collection, preservation and outreach of such records, it is highly unlikely that an alternative record collection of people's self-representations outside of government depictions would survive in the archives.[15]

This is what we call a conflict between legitimized and non-legitimized actors within the government network with reference to credibility and who can or cannot create trustable records. This distinction again raises questions: who creates the record? Is it an accepted content form? What level of accessibility does the record have? Thus, in the appraisal process, one considers the author of the record (among other things) and their reliability in the network to decide on record preservation. Recognition becomes a battle for a voice in the political and historical realm, where specific characteristics and purposes limit the social and institutional recognition of groups outside of traditional notions of legitimacy. It can be seen as a memory dispute in which master narratives consolidate one voice only and relegate others to second place. Transitional societies in particular face the challenge of reaching a consensus on memory, given the different actors and approaches involved in what happened, what people remember, how they remember, and how much of what is remembered needs to be preserved to avoid repetition.

In the realm of materiality, it is essential to consider the degree to which the structure, goals, and tight standards of the archive determine what is to be archived, making it problematic to preserve items beyond those norms. This creates gaps in collections and leads to the delegitimization of alternative forms of records (or content forms). Tonya Sutherland argues that the lack of recognition of various objects in the archive results in loss of memory and credit on the part of those who do not produce standardized records[16]. Additionally, "[…] methods for transmitting information shape the nature of the knowledge that can be produced,"[17] meaning that record materiality should also be considered an actor in the analysis of silences

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[15] There are some examples of *communities* that have created to fill the gaps about themselves or situations that affect their community. See "A People's Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland", accessed March 18, 2021, https://archivingpoliceviolence.org/, and "Coronarchiv: sharing is caring – become part of history! ". In Colombia, a number of armed conflict victims set up their own archives to share their personal stories of the conflict and preserve the memory of their loved ones.
[16] Sutherland, "Archival Amnesty".
[17] Marlene Manoff, "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4, no. 1 (2004): 12.

and gaps in archives, particularly when written sources have a preponderance for government stewardship. Thus, some traditional archives decline to collect records that fail to fit their acquisitions and permanence policies[18]. *Technical tools* such as retention schedules are likewise determinants of material to be excluded from archive collections due to appraisal process policies.

Lack of trust in public authorities and records lead *communities* to raise their voices through community archives, as we have seen above, to document other perspectives with diverse material as a means of pluralizing memory and perspectives otherwise excluded from master narratives. In the long term, however, their efforts will face the test of sustainability. The only way to overcome the dilemma of not having government recognition of their archives is through a solid and supportive community that engages with the archive and the material they collect to depict their stories. Finally, although the latest technologies have enhanced the access to and outreach of archive collections, they also face materiality concerns due to media expiration. Reading devices call for substantial investment in preservation and digitalization plans for all kinds of formats, material, and platforms.

Accessibility and openness of the archive depend on the distribution of power and the decisions taken on what is open to the public. Some collections are merely available as a privilege, not as a right for everyone. In other words, policies, laws and vast institutional structures intervene to control access. In this sphere, the government plays an active role in managing and transferring information to the archives. Furthermore, intermediaries such as description guides, information system organization, and the software used to reach the document also play a part. Access tools designed by archivists, librarians, historians among other professionals are crucial, since their academic and political background are instrumental in describing a collection or implementing technology. One example is the library classification system, which is seen as a neutral tool, although it can affect information access in libraries and archives in local and specific contexts. The above has led to some classification concerns in the context of local knowledge production, particularly with categories not included in these standard systems. To avoid this, specialized and national libraries have developed local classification systems that integrate international metadata description standards and local context scenarios to guarantee interoperability between librarian systems and recognized local knowledge production. Another essential aspect to consider is heritage collections. These require the expertise of the archivist. Archivists have to address a cultural and academic background that will lead them to appropriate descriptions to enhance information access. The above portrays how archive collection analysis reflects the dominance of some of the actors concerned. Power relations can change in terms of recognition, materiality and access, which in turn rely on archive dynamics and how they are mobilized in society.

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[18] This practice involves the nature of the institution that keeps the records, the budget, space, and other aspects concerning preservation and the underlying aims of the said institution.

VII. Privileged vs. Public Users

The change of actors brought about change in the records. For example, surveillance records comprise a portion of records in classic archives and, in the case of *marginalized groups*, tend to be about rather than from them. The new records are more diverse. We see community archives interviewing members of their environment in a bid to preserve their stories or oral history. Migrants and immigrants tell their stories, creating a parallel provenance from their perspective. New technologies also contribute to creating new actors and a new type of record. For a time, these were mostly written or recorded files similar to those in the traditional archives, that is, the record category not its content. With social media and the habit of sharing personal content with the world, 2021 might be the time for archival science to ask when a record is a record. *Social media* are used to share community-based content. Apart from Twitter and YouTube, which are well established, apps such as Instagram and Tik Tok can be regarded as contributing to some sort of record. For example, the content of Native American user posts on these apps often refers to their heritage and their culture. While users like @notoriouscree showcase their traditional dances in full regalia in their videos, @shinanova posts videos of her throat singing with her mother and educating others about Inuit throat-singing traditions and beliefs. User @tiamischik posts videos of her family singing traditional songs, on how to put on her tribal clothing, and on cultural appropriation. @indigenous_baddie makes videos about moccasins and the jingle dances of her people. All of these users post other kinds of content such as selfies and dance videos, but also speak of their heritage and their culture, and the struggles they entail. These users can be seen as creators of records, too. Songs and dances are best preserved on video or as a recording, but there is more to it than that. These people preserve the culture and general content of their community, so that the records are not just *about* them, they are created by them, their tribe, their community and their cultural environment. In this sense, they are similar to community archives, records created by the community. One could argue that the only thing missing in the social media posts above is the archival environment to finally make them a record. Would they be recognized as a record? The provenance of the record is key to its recognition as valuable enough to be preserved. Although the origin is frequently vital to its recognition as a record, it does not always mirror its potential value. Colombian lawyer Carolina Botero tackled this concern: the challenge that digital memory faces due to lack of preservation policies on content issued on *social media platforms* (such as Facebook or Twitter) was specifically related to the Colombian Peace Process, government accounts, and other actors involved.[19] She notably addressed the role of platforms in regulating content and how regulation cancelled out the possibility of preserving the voice of those

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[19]   Carolina Botero, "La memoria también es digital: Conflicto armado derecho de autor y otros de sus retos," III Seminario de archivos, derechos humanos, memoria histórica y transparencia, August 8, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YppQLUwjPTY.

considered terrorists, in this case the FARC group[20], or even the former presidential account, which was removed following the government switch in 2018. *Social media platforms* function as archival actors, since they regulate content. Furthermore, because they each have their own policies, it is vital to recognize these and be aware of how the content is managed.

Today it is possible to share everything at any time, a development that archival players use to their advantage. Digital archives like the already mentioned *Coronarchiv* use Instagram, Facebook and Twitter to post their content. While it is easy, fast and communicative to build online archives on existing *social media platforms*, they do not come without snags. Facebook co-owns the rights to every photograph posted; Instagram has a worldwide license to re-use posted content. All of this ends once someone deletes their account, which leads to the next issue: How are social media archives preserved? Will they simply be dead accounts one day or vanish from the Internet? What if the platform these archives use shuts down? This may seem a strange thought, since Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are currently the key players, but do we know what will happen in two or three decades?

VIII. Future Archival Actors

The provenance of both new and existing records has become a topic of discussion. The question of record provenance began with the discussion around the colonial heritage of archives and merged with the discussion on diversity, inclusion and silences in the archives. Archival collections claim to be the keepers of collective memory and the source for the writing of history. But again, whose history and society are depicted in the records? The pluralist provenance approach questions the profession's understanding of the role of creator and subject of a record. Archival records have traditionally been described as having one creator and one provenance. A pluralist provenance stretches this concept, allowing for several perspectives and a broader historical context. This new concept of creatorship allows the different actors involved in the making of records to enjoy co-creatorship. It not only applies to the creators of the original, but also to those involved in the life cycle of the records, that is, the archivists. Why should the provenance of a record be expanded? This approach is best explained with an example: In his text on pluralist provenance, Nathan Sowry presents practical examples of single creatorship that should be pluralist[21]. Is the creator of a police file on a case of assault the sole creator of the record or is the person interviewed about the attack likewise a creator? Are the participants in the assault and those attacked creators or *subjects* of the record? Sowry sees every single one of these individuals as creators, since all of them were actors in creating the record. Privileging one perspective renders others less legitimate, which is why these actors

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[20] The FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) were once considered a terrorist group. In 2012, however, they began a peace process with the Colombian government that culminated in a peace agreement in 2016.
[21] Nathan Sowry, "Viewing Subject(s) as Creator(s): The Need to Reexamine and Redescribe Civil Rights Collections for a Pluralist Provenance," *Archival Issues* 35, no. 2 (2014): 99–114.

should be included as creators. Given the colonial heritage of archives, the plural provenance can be used to widen a record's colonial viewpoint from the eyes of a white colonizer only to a more diverse one. It includes not only the previous objects as *subjects* but also recognizes the records (colonial) history and origin. With this new approach, *subjects* become active creators of records and have some form of ownership. They also take an active part in record life cycles. Previously seen as mere objects, records are now in the process of becoming more dynamic. New archival actors are interested in the history of the record itself and become active participants of history.

Plural provenance has the same origin as the discussion around diversity and inclusion mentioned earlier, the world has changed in recent decades and so have archives and historical research. A more inclusive approach to archives re-examines archival structures, the role of the activist in interpreting and altering records, the *subjects* and the users, and the people whose histories archives tell.

Conclusion

This essay sprang from a seminar entitled Archives – Gatekeepers of the Past?. The seminar heading was an ironic suggestion that the archive represented some sort of guardian of records, a place not everyone could enter. The Cambridge dictionary points out the ambiguity of the word gatekeeper, noting that it can also mean someone who has power over others, particularly the power to decide who gets resources and opportunities, and who does not. In Internet language, it is used to describe someone who devalues other opinions by claiming they are not entitled to have one because they are not sufficiently qualified or not part of a particular group. In this sense, the ambiguity of the term gatekeeper is a perfect match for the light and dark sides of the archive.

For a long time, archives have sustained the illusion of neutrality. As this chapter has shown, however, there is no such neutrality. One way or another, each element and each person plays a part, making it crucial to recognize the situated voices on which the archival sources are based. In this sense, archives have both preserved and shaped history. We should bear in mind that preserving history calls for a broad cultural perspective on all of the performers and dynamics present in the archive, without exception.

Finally, society and the government network are challenged to recognize and integrate other perspectives into the archive to prevent biased depictions and silenced voices. This is not an easy task given society's many interpretations of a single experience. There is always a dominant narrative, making a democratic consensus process indispensable if we are to ensure multiple narratives and plural provenance in cultural and historical institutions. Furthermore, professionals, *communities*, and other actors are challenged to reconsider and learn about their own culture and that of others in order to enhance their knowledge of different lifestyles and be

aware of master narratives as a control mechanism for the regulation of society and dissent against power structures.

Chapter 4:

Plural, Changeable and Dynamic: Values of the Archive

Louisa Schulz and Lara Stoller

Introduction: Defining Value

"Values are the embodiment of what an organization stands for […]"[22] as Mark A. Greene states. That is why we have to look at the values that modern archivism holds in high esteem and the kind of values associated with the archive. Defining the term value is not an easy task. The Cambridge Dictionary gives three principal meanings for the word "value"[23]:

1. the monetary worth of something, or an amount of money,

2. the importance or worth of something for someone, and what they consider important,

3. the ideals people believe in.

What does this mean for archives? Is there a way of measuring the value of memory, for instance the degree of importance people attach to collections and archives? Can the ethical and moral beliefs of archives and archivists be seen as values?

These are the questions addressed in this chapter. We first of all discuss the archive's capitalist appraisal, secondly, its sociocultural value and, thirdly, the archivist as its key figure. We argue that the value of the archive depends on the adopted perspective and hence not only differs but is also changeable and as dynamic as the archive itself.[24] We see values in this case best defined as the ethics of archives but also as the meaning and purpose of the archive in society.

I.   The Capitalist Appraisal

Although the financial worth of the archive is not the key value by which it is appraised, it is nonetheless a dimension to be considered when painting the whole picture. Money is a measurement of value and frequently used to assess the worth of cultural institutions. In the UK, for example, governmental funding for archives is justified by a so-called "cost-benefit-analysis" (CBA), whereby the cost of an institution is weighed up against its impact on and meaning for society. In most countries a visit to the archive is free of charge, whereas people

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[22]   Sarah Davy, "When good archivists go bad: the role of ethics and values in everyday archival decision-making," *Archifact*s (October 2013): 16.

[23]   *Cambridge   dictionary*,   s.v.   "Value,"   accessed   March   22,   2021, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-german/value.

[24]   See the chapter on dynamics.

are required to pay for admission to a museum or an art gallery.[25] Public archives are often governmental institutions and funded by tax-payers. The CBA asks about the willingness of archive customers and visitors to pay for a visit to the institution, in this case: "What would you like to pay if you had to visit the archive?" Some economists question this approach, however, since the hypothetical fee would not match the real fee if this strategy were executed.[26]

The financial value of archives can also be estimated by looking at digital heritage research sites such as Ancestry or MyHeritage. Numerous archives have sold their collections to these platforms, around which a "multi-billion-dollar" business has evolved. Across the globe, people pay a monthly fee to use these sites for family heritage and DNA research.[27] Another method is to assess the benefit of an archive to expenditure in the area surrounding the institution: whether visitors buy food, coffee or souvenirs during their stay or spend the night at a local hotel. The impact on the local labour market is measured by looking at staff wages. The CBA also takes into account the revenue from a cultural or media product, for example when an archive is used in the research process of a TV series.[28]

Similarly, the archive itself as a keeper of records provides or secures monetary value. Archives owned by private companies are of value to them as the basis of their legitimization. Here the preservation of important documents guarantees "legal protection" by keeping documentation accessible and allowing the company to refer to this should it be questioned.[29] Another starting point would be to evaluate the physical worth of records and artefacts stored in the archive. If sold on the market, rare documents could be priceless. Some might be expensive for their material worth alone, others because they are unique or simply written or signed by some renowned figure. Most public archives are unlikely to sell their records, however, because their value in the body of a collection is far greater. Neither do records belong solely to the archive itself. They are of interest to the public and kept in the archive for use by interested parties. Which is why this measurement as an indicator – for the most part – is highly improbable.[30] Having said that, the monetary value of the archive can be assessed in one particular field: entertainment. Archival information is the basis for cultural productions such as documentaries, TV programmes, films and books, whose impact and financial value can be measured. In the UK, for example, historical TV shows and films, as well as other cultural

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[25] In some, however, a research permit involving a fee is required to visit public archives and in almost all cases of public archives, tax money partially funds their services.
[26] Cf. Michael Moss, David Thomas, "Introduction," in *Do Archives Have Value?*, ed. Michael Moss (London: Facet, 2019), XVII–XX..
[27] Swapan Chakravorty, "Memories of the Future: Archives in India," in *Do Archives Have Value?*, ed. Michael Moss (London: Facet, 2019), 147, 160.
[28] Cf. Moss, Thomas, "Introduction," XXI–XXVI.
[29] Paul Limoha, "Valuing Oral and Written Texts in Malawi," in *Do Archives Have Value?*, ed. Michael Moss (London: Facet, 2019), 26, 27.
[30] Cf. Daniel German, "A Search for Truthiness: Archival Research in a Post-Truth World," in *Do Archives Have Value?*, ed. Michael Moss (London: Facet, 2019), 180, 181.

productions in the same field, are one of the largest national exports. In turn, these are an indicator of archival impact, since they show the degree of public interest in history from a financial perspective and frequently rely on archival collections for research.[31]

In a broader sense, there is also a connection between archives and public health improvement, as in the case of people researching heritage or personal histories. They find out this way about health issues that have been passed on in their family, for example, and can now take action against a potentially impending illness. There is likewise a positive impact on mental health when people find long-lost relatives, siblings or parents. This translates to a benefit to public health expenditure. One way of measuring the impact of archives on health is the so-called well-being indicator that "aims to evaluate a number of factors that contribute to subjective well-being; for example change in income or improved health. Currently there is considerable attention on assessing the contribution that documentary heritage collections can make to the health and well-being of citizens."[32] This is quite a recent and highly interesting approach, since it provides evidence of the financial impact of archives but also of their effect on society as the providers of memory. As we can see, there are many factors to be considered when assessing the monetary value of an archive. That being said, the value of the archive in matters of public interest must be seen in a broader sense beyond the direct link between the archive and the market.

II.   The Socio-Cultural Value of the Archive

Today, archives are seen as a means of shedding light on various histories and narratives. As previously mentioned, public interest in history, especially family history, has gained currency in the last two decades. The popularity of archives as the key provider of sources for research on public and professional history has also grown and in the process become more integrated into society and people's lives, although the place of the archive in society has been questioned.[33]

What are the benefits of the archive to society? On the one hand, archives can help society to evolve, to reflect on its own history, to accept the past and to learn what paths it took and should perhaps avoid in the future. On the other hand, if carefully maintained, archives support long-term memory. Archives provide collective memory and resources with respect to past societies. Community archives have been under broader discussion lately, since they allow minorities to

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[31]   Cf. Lihoma, "Valuing", 20, 26.

[32]   Nancy Bell, Michael Moss, and David Thomas, "Building an Evidenced-based Culture for Documentary Heritage Collections," in *Do Archives Have Value?*, ed. Michael Moss (London: Facet, 2019), 28.

[33]   Cf. Jeannie Hill and Victoria Lance, "Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going? Situating the Archive and Archivist," in *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader,* ed. Jeannie Hill, (London: Facet, 2010), 23,; cf. Cherly Avery and Mona Holmlund, "Introduction," in *Better Off Forgetting? Essays on Archives, Public Policy and Collective Memory*, ed. Cheryl Avery (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), XII.

create collective memory and provide the opportunity to form an identity separate from that of the nation.[34]

The popularity of social media has led to a number of different narratives about a single topic. Researchers have begun calling the twenty-first century the post-factual age. Non-historians have simultaneously started to access archives, turning family research into a multimillion-dollar business, as described above. Archives are a site of knowledge preservation and evidential sources for society, one that people turn to in their search for evidence. Archival records allow both historians and private individuals to view history "through a new lens".[35] Archivists today define their record material as a documented source that may well be evidential. It can "prove rights, confirm obligations, verify events and substantiate claims".[36]

Accordingly, records must be secured, and it is the archivists who provide a "safe haven" for the material they preserve. How evidence is interpreted, however, is the prerogative of those who consult the records rather than the archivist. The latter provides material that can be used as evidence by researchers, historians or private individuals. A good example of the importance of preservation is the Hillsborough football disaster of 1989. In 2012, a group of medical experts, researchers and archivists revisited documentation of the tragedy, which in turn led to legal proceedings in 2019 against those held responsible.[37] Equally, documents – and the silence of what is not documented – can be evidence of government actions and sometimes oppression. Archives can play a significant role in holding the government accountable and as a basis for law. "The rule of law and natural justice cannot be maintained without appropriate evidence, which is precisely what archives provide,"[38] as Michael Moos declares in the introduction to his anthology on establishing and measuring the value of archives. Transparent decisions and the option of being held to account by the people are intrinsic to the legitimacy of a democratic government. Democracy can only be carried out securely if the decisions and actions of those in charge can be retraced. Archives play a huge role in the availability and preservation of government documents. Libraries and archives were and still are funded by legislation, which they also legitimize by defending democracy and creating evidence for state institutions. For example, public archives preserve documents about peoples' votes and opinions and political occurrences. These documents can provide evidence in case of any misuse of laws or political abuse towards citizens. Archivists are torn between loyalty to their institution, social needs and

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[34] Cf. Elisabeth Klett, *Creating Value in Archives: Overcoming Obstacles to Digital Records Appraisal* (Sundsvall: Mid Sweden University, 2019), 54, Mid Sweden University Publications eBook; Laura A. Millar, *Archives: Principles and Practices* (London: Facet, 2017), 264. See also the chapter on archives and their actor networks.

[35] Millar*, Archives*, 68.

[36] Ibid, 67; cf. Richard Ovenden, "And Finally... The Value of Libraries and Archives in Preserving the Truth," *The Expository Times* 132, no. 3 (2020), 151.

[37] Cf. Sarah Tyacke, "Trusting the Records: The Hillsborough Football Disaster 1989 and the Work of the Independent Panel 2010–12," in *Do Archives Have Value?*, ed. Michael Moss (London: Facet, 2019), 64–69; Millar, *Archives*, 25, 44.

[38] Moss, Thomas, "Introduction," XXVI.

the people. It is they who decide whether the importance and democratic use of a particular document weighs more than the need for privacy of the person concerned in the document.[39]

Archives not only provide evidence of government activities; they also constitute the basis of identity narratives that emerge from the idea of who we are and who we have been. Consequently, archives take part in creating communities, and their narratives. Records preserved in the archives give people a "sense of identity, locality, history, culture and personal and collective memory".[40] Narratives can only be formed on the basis of what is preserved and can be accessed. Which is why, in recent years, interest has been shown in "decolonize[d]" archives, and efforts made to get rid of old structures and provide new, more open ways of accessing documents and arranging collections. Unlike colonial archives, the "decolonized" archive seeks to be more representative of minorities and less a reflection on patriarchal and imperial structures. It has become even more important "[a]s the study of history has expanded beyond that of the "winners" to everyday social and applied histories, including the stories of the marginalized."[41] Archives can have an impact on people's personal lives by providing material for research on their ancestry and detangling their family history, and in this way "assist to restate pride in family experiences"[42]

One example of rendering silenced history visible and creating new narratives based on archival records is the 'Australian Women's Archives Project' established in the year 2000, a joint effort by the National Foundation of Australian Women and the University of Melbourne. Its aim is to preserve and document material referring to Australian women, since "[i]n the same way that women have been marginalized in history, evidence of women, their activities and contributions"[43] is often poorly preserved and sources still have to be excavated.

III. Creating Value in the Archive

If archives can be used to hold evidence about history and all that has happened – why can we not just keep everything? An archive utopia for us would be an endless storage hall that registers records automatically, dispensing with decisions on what should and should not be preserved. A perfect archive would store everything. In other words, whenever the need arose, people would find records to question and receive answers. Sadly, this is not the case in reality: space is confined, the time archivists require to take in and look after records is limited, and the financial means are not endless. At some point in the archival process the archivist has to decide what is worth preserving and what is not. Their task is to value the worth, future meaning and

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[39] Cf. Mark A. Greene, "The Power of Archives: Archivists' Values and Value in the Postmodern Age," *The American Archivist* 72, no.1 (2009): 31, 35; cf. Helen Morgan et al., "Value in Fragments: An Australian Perspective on Re-Contextualization," in *Do Archives Have Value?*, ed. Michael Moss (London: Facet, 2019), 152, doi:10.29085/9781783303342.004.

[40] Greene, "Power," 36.

[41] Morgan et al., "Value," 40.

[42] Ibid., 42; Cf. Millar, *Archives,* 44; cf. Greene, "Power", 36.

[43] Morgan et al., "Value," 44.

significance of the record in front of them. By evaluating this future meaning of a document, an archivist already endows value to the object that is to be preserved. So how do they guard against "throwing out" records that are valuable?

The archive cannot be the site of all the documents ever produced in relation to a particular issue. Some documents are lost, others are destroyed prior to making their way to the archive or have been eliminated by the archivists themselves for the above-mentioned reasons. If, of course, only one record of an event exists and this is known to the archivists, it is more than likely it will be preserved. But what if that is not the case? One parameter to determine whether a record stays or not pertains to its relevance for a specific archive. Archives are frequently established for one specific purpose. If, for instance, they are given an entire collection or inheritance, they may include a number of records out of the archival context. If the inheritor of the material is linked to the institution or archive, they might keep all of it for research. They might also turn down a legacy so that the collection is not disassembled and instead look for an alternative solution. Sometimes, however, a decision to discard irrelevant records and merely keep the core has to be made.[44]

By deciding to keep a record, archivists assign a (non-monetary) value to the said record. This decision creates immediate value, whereas other records in the same process are stripped of their estimated meaning. Records preserved in the archive are proof to the archivist – even a hundred years later – that the content had value for the archivist back then. Measuring the value of a record for current audiences is a difficult task. But then again, what about future audiences? What will things look like in two-hundred years? Think of a shopping list, for example. Today historians learn a great deal about people in the past from the items they bought one or two hundred or even two thousand years ago. In the same vein, what seems unimportant to us now will provide our descendants with information about what we ate and the ingredients we combined or the status certain items had. If, on the other hand, you were to send last week's shopping list to a random archive today, they would probably thank you politely and send it back.[45]

The value of a record does not take monetary worth into account but focuses instead on three main factors: content, context and structure. If you were a famous person whose inheritance was given to an archive, things might be different and maybe the archive would make it part of its collection. And if you handed a shopping list over with a menu, saying you had "dinner with Julie Andrews", the record could suddenly gain currency.[46] Value sometimes accumulates in the collective. One record alone might not be very powerful but have a certain value within a collection when other records provide the context. A single photograph of an unknown person somewhere on the streets of Berlin in the early nineties, for example, might not be valuable on

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[44] Cf. Millar, *Archives*, 55, 58.
[45] Ibid., 59; cf. Morgan et al., "Value," 39.
[46] Cf. Millar, *Archives,* 9–12.

its own. If, on the other hand, it is part of a collection dealing with the "Wiedervereinigung" and aligned with a dozen other photographs of people at that time, its value will be assessed differently. It is therefore vital to ask what goal the archive pursues. Does it want to be a source of evidence or a provider of historical and antiquarian material and information?[47] A decision has to be made as to whether, and if so, when a record is to be released and made accessible to the public. Due to personal information or their relevance to recent events, records can be held back for up to fifty years. In this case, the archivist is often legally bound to refuse or at least limit access to the records. Under certain circumstances, archivists have a choice when it comes to releasing a record. They can allow access to the general public or merely to those in a specific field of research. Likewise, they may see it fit to only allow access to parts of a collection in order to protect those involved.[48] In Germany there is a blocking period of ten years following the death or one hundred years after the birth of the person concerned.[49]

Archivists look at numerous perspectives and consider the criteria before deciding the fate of the records: "what is to be kept and what is destroyed, what is to be remembered and what is forgotten."[50] The selection, or *appraisal*, process itself gives meaning and value to the records that are kept – or abandoned. This value may be above and beyond the monetary value of the document under review.

IV.   The Archivist as Key Figure[51]

"Values are the mental concepts that make meaning possible; they provide us with motivation to act and a framework for decision-making."[52] This quote by Michael Henderson demonstrates the importance of ideals in professional archivism. In recent decades, the archivist has undergone a shift from passive observer to recognized shaper of the archive. Mark A. Greene defined the archivist as "someone who identified, appraised, preserved, arranged, described and provided access to historical material".[53] In his view, archivists hold enormous power in their hands. They decide and influence how, when, if and to what extent researchers access a record, in what light they see it – physically and metaphorically – and how they work with the material. Derrida and others questioned the archive being seen as a reflection of reality, which it had been considered for the best part of history, claiming that the archive was heavily influenced by the archivists themselves.[54] In this "new" position, archivists – like most professionals – must

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[47] Ibid., 43; cf. Morgan et al., "Value," 37.
[48] Cf. Millar, *Archives*, 98.
[49] Cf. "Bundesarchivgesetz: Gesetz über die Nutzung und Sicherung von Archivgut des Bundes," Absatz 11: Schutzfristen, Bundesarchiv, accessed March 22, 2021, https://www.bundesarchiv.de/DE/Content/Artikel/Ueber-uns/Rechtsgrundlagen/rechtsgrundlagen_bundesarchivgesetz.html.
[50] Morgan et al., "Value," 39.
[51] See also the chapter on archives and their actor networks.
[52] Davy, "Good Archivists," 15.
[53] Greene, "Power," 18.
[54] Cf. Millar, *Archives,* 43; cf. Hill, Lance, "Where Do We Come From," 5; cf. Greene, "Power,", 26.

always strike a balance between personal values and professional decisions. They risk making unprofessional choices if they "prioritize our personal human needs [...] over safe professional boundaries."[55] This concept is challenged when archivists face political pressure or are part of political change. One example in this area of conflict is Johannes Papritz, the founder of the Marburg Archive School, who also established the Herder Institute in Marburg and was the leading lecturer on archival studies in the early days of post-war Germany. Papritz had been the head of multiple archives from 1938 to 1945 in the Third Reich. During his time in Nazi Germany he legitimized the state and was responsible for the registration of so-called "Others". He supported the dictatorship by keeping its archives and after World War II trained generations of young archivists in the newly established Federal Republic of Germany.[56] In other words, he taught the people who were to become the future keepers of the West German archives, and supporters of democracy. This example shows why archivists today hold value and work ethics in high esteem, in order to prevent such misuse of archival work in present and future. But values are not set in stone. "They need to constantly be thought about, discussed, reviewed and reflected"[57], as Sarah Davy declared. Archivists have a duty to be self-reflective about their own power and how they influence the archive. Personal values should never cross their professional decisions. They are required to constantly improve their work, learn about new theories and, if necessary, seek the help of other professionals: "The best archivist will keep her mind active, his or her knowledge current and skills sharp"[58].[59]

Like Derrida and several archivists in the twentieth century, Natalis de Wailly (1805-1886) called for changes in archival practices as early as 1841. According to his ministerial report for the royal archives of France, archivists should always keep the individual collections of different agencies together and not take them apart. Nor should records produced by different agencies be grouped together and stored in one drawer because they happen to fit the subject. Furthermore, archivists should maintain the order of the collections themselves. Intermingling and destroying collections in archives is still seen as a violation. Respect for the rights of past, living and future persons in the records must be guaranteed, and at the same time the law has to be followed. In this regard, archivists always answer to two leaders: the public and the institution or nation they work for. The two will occasionally come into conflict. If, for example, someone wants to view a document not yet released to the public because it is still a matter of current diplomacy or events, the archivist is legally bound to hold it back, although it may provide crucial knowledge. Archivists must also decide whether a person's safety is of greater

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[55]   Davy, "Good Archivists," 13.
[56]   Cf. Fritz Wolff, "Johannes Papritz," *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 20 (2001): 56–7, accessed March 22, 2021, https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd116157585.html#ndbcontent.
[57]   Davy, "Good Archivists," 16.
[58]   Millar, *Archives*, 96.
[59]   Ibid., 65.

importance than opening a files, such as that of a politician.[60] They are obliged to balance the two sides while trying not to "cover too many sins with calls to protect privacy".[61] The question at the heart of each archivist decision should be: "What serves the records best?".[62] Personal values should be kept apart from the values of the institution in which they are active. The overall goal should always be to estimate the importance of each record and make informed decisions. Archivists should constantly bear in mind that they, in Mark Greene's words, "hold too much power not to be humble".[63] They have the opportunity to step up against the cultural chauvinism of future generations when they put the security and integrity of their records at the core of their work and thus provide evidence of their time for future records, while at the same time serving the needs of the present.[64]

Conclusion: The Value of the Archive

So, what is the value of the archive? Archives are providers of income to their staff, hold evidence, right past wrongs, present lost narratives, and are a window to the past for almost anyone who wants to take a closer look at it. In this position "principles and theories provide a valuable map, helping us find our way to some destination. But that is all they are: the map, not the destination."[65] In fact, the value of the archive depends on the adopted perspective. For an auctioneer, archives might be seen as a source of countless treasures. For archivists, on the other hand, the monetary value of the archive is secondary. They must first of all value and assess the meaning of their records for an audience they may never meet. After all, they possess considerable power, since "archives in their many guises remain our primary tool for documenting what happened."[66]

The value of records for historians lies in the story they tell about the past. They are the material that allows us to explore times gone. For human rights activists, an archive can provide material to hold a government accountable. For society, the archive and its records can legitimize its national identity and, at the same time, keep the door open for the creation of new narratives if it is kept with due diligence. Finally, for private individuals with no political agenda, the archive is a site where they may discover a long-lost friend or relative, or the answers to questions that have haunted them their whole life. Consequently, the archive has not one and the same value, but several. The closest we can come to answering our concluding question is possibly how archivists define the archive for themselves. As its keepers, they must always find a balance between their own personal ideals and their professional decisions, and evaluate the importance of a record for current and especially future generations.

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[60] Cf. Millar, *Archives*, 45, 50, 97; cf. Greene, "Power," 32–35.
[61] Greene, "Power," 38.
[62] Millar, *Archives,* 96.
[63] Ibid., 265.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 264.
[66] German, "Search for Truthiness," 188.

Chapter 5:

Outlook

Xenia Fink and Ron Heckler

Introduction: A Future Full of Challenges and Chances

Following Aleida Assman's concept of memory, an archive can be seen as a "Speichergedächtnis" ("memory storage") where everything is saved that is not needed at the moment but could be relevant to cultural memory later on. Because it is stored, it can be revived. Bearing that in mind, the archive is not only an institution related to our past, it is also closely linked to our future. In fact, it is the "Voraussetzung zukünftiger kultureller Gedächtnisse" ("precondition for future cultural memories")[67]. The success of an archive always lies in its future. Or, as Terry Cook puts it, "What is past is prologue"[68].

Some questions and the ever-evolving media still pose a challenge for archivists and users alike. On the one hand, specific issues such as source accessibility and the representation of social minorities in and the transparency of the archive have so far met with unsatisfactory answers. On the other hand, the digital revolution has changed the classic form of the archive and although digitalization comes with technological hiccups, it tackles some of the issues that archives have to face. Yet, can digitalization really be viewed as the "ultimate panacea"?

In this last chapter of the Archival Guide, we focus on some of these challenges and their meaning for the future of archives: several aspects referring to archival access are analysed in *Accessibility*. *Transparency* links archives to their image in and value for society and briefly discusses how to minimize the distance between the institution and society. *Representation* explores concepts of how to challenge the traditional archive in the future. Despite the reference to digitalization in the Archival Guide prior to this chapter, the final section here is dedicated to *Digital archives*. Based on the online collection of the "Museumsstiftung für Post und Telekommunikation" (Museum Foundation Post and Telecommunication, in the following sections MfPT), opportunities and weaknesses of digital archives are analysed before reaching a short conclusion.

I.   Accessibility

It is the obligation of every public archive in a democratic state to ensure access to their

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[67]   Aleida Assman, Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses (München: Beck, 2010), 345.
[68]   Terry Cook, "What is past is prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift," *Archivaria* 43 (February 1997), 17.

records. How this access is provided differs greatly. Accessibility is not a question of house policies, it can vary between records in the same institution: Access is always subject to "institutional, cultural, and individual privacy concerns."[69] The restriction on government records must be questioned, as these cannot serve as immediate evidence. What (or who) is protected by such a restriction? Who decides what should be inaccessible and why? Who do the archives serve?

We should also keep in mind that access is defined by the media that holds the source: saving a file alone does not solve problems, since technology evolves quickly. What was saved on floppy disks, for example, must now be reviewed and saved on another media before the disks become illegible. No technology can guarantee infinite *usability*. This is currently not an issue, as we work with these programmes every day, but it could well become one in the future. Contrary to analogue media, we could, however, lose our knowledge of how to use or read a source in the future if we are unable to open digital sources because technology has raced ahead. We could lose these sources for ever. This has already been addressed by archivists, given that archives may one day receive digital documents only. These "digital born" sources demand further consideration: In what format are they received? In what format should they be kept? Where and especially when should they be reviewed, reformatted and resaved? They cannot simply be stored on shelves and produced on request.

Of course, this also works vice versa. Digital sources can be used as backups or models for restoration should the original be damaged or destroyed through unfortunate incidents, e.g., fire or water damage. An example of this is the collapse in 2009 of the archive building in Cologne containing the City Archives. Some sources would have been lost forever had they not already been saved in digital form.[70]

Digitization offers new possibilities for universal and easy record access. Journeys become superfluous, all that is needed to view the records is an internet connection. This uncomplicated and speedy access gives archives new relevance for ordinary citizens who might "stumble" across records they find interesting and engage with them. While new media give archives the technical opportunity to do so, the question of whether *universal access* should be permitted has been voiced. There is no way I can "stumble" across an analogue record. That would involve engaging with the archive, its history and the particular records I wish to explore. I would know the background and may even have contacted the archivist. None of this would occur if universal access to records online were granted. Referring to universal access, Michelle Caswell and Ricardo L. Punzalan conclude that "while archivists value access, such access cannot

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[69] Michelle Caswell, Ricardo L. Punzalan, "Archives and Human Rights: Questioning Notions of Information and Access," *Advances in Librarianship* 41 (February 2016): 294.
[70] Andreas Berger, "Digitalisierung: Zukunft des Archives?" in *Gedächtnisort: Das Historische Archiv der Stadt Köln*, eds. Bettina Schmidt-Czaia, Ulrich S. Soénius (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2010), 84.

ethically be provided in a universal, open, or unhindered sense."[71] It should in fact be limited to "referential access based on ethnic identity, community membership, and/or survivor status."[72]

Furthermore, legal issues such as contracts are vital to the accessibility of both analogue and digital records. Copyright and privacy issues currently tend to be unclear or ignored, a legal issue that will have an impact on future archives, for which a regulation must be found, since it involves not only digitalized records but also digital archives, which only exist in the digital world.

This chapter has shown that although universal access is key to democratizing society and technically possible online, it has been questioned. But how could universal access be restricted in the digital world? We should bear in mind that future generations of archivists and users alike will have grown up with digital media, where everything is supposed to be available everywhere at all times. They will naturally search there. (And what about those, who do not have an access to the internet or that do not have the technical devices? Are they simply left out?) Not finding something online might suggest that it does not exist. We also have to be aware, that it is quite easy to hide or destroy digital born sources without anyone even noticing.

Archives carry considerable social responsibility, given their function as the hinge between research – by a scholar or layperson – and the sources. This makes successful communication between researchers and archivists all the more vital. According to medievalist Klaus Graf, public relations is a core archival task.[73] This applies, for example, to the presentation of the archival content, of a new exhibition or of alterations in the use of the archive, all of which can be promoted through the archive's public relations channels, provided they meet the required high standard. Archives are still sparsely represented in social networks and researchers consider it a huge asset when archives have their own website in tune with the standards of the twenty-first century.

II. Transparency

It has been shown that archives have the power to grant or deny access to records. Another of their decision powers is selecting records, since not everything that is produced can be kept. The archivist selects what and who is to be remembered. If, however, selection and accessibility are not adequately communicated, society will not understand. This calls for transparency. Researchers might want to know what has been destroyed and why access to certain records is restricted or even denied. Digitization has added another layer: What will be/has been digitized and why or vice versa, why particular records have not been digitized. Other aspects of

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[71]   Caswell, Punzalan, "Archives and Human Rights," 296.
[72]   Ibid., 288.
[73]   Klaus   Graf,   "Öffentlichkeitsarbeit   als   archivische   Kernaufgabe,"   accessed   July   28,   2021. https://archivalia.hypotheses.org/4345.

digitalization will also be further discussed later on in this chapter.

The problem of the archive seems to be that in a democracy it has a twofold obligation: to serve the paying institution (e.g., the government) and the public, which in turn can mean a conflict of interest. Archives are bound to adhere to the legal rights, instructions, wishes and values of the financing entity. This impacts the process of selection, accessibility and even digitization projects when, for instance, the digitization of certain records is financed to serve the current politics of remembrance. Still, it is crucial that archives are transparent about this matter and about their inconsistent role in society. If they are not sufficiently transparent, they risk losing the trust society places in them as keepers of the past and in the records as evidence. Are we not confronted daily with what "fake news" can do? How everything is either too easily believed or not at all? Unfortunately, viewing sources online would increase this problem, not least due to the distance between source and viewer, which leaves room for suspicion as to whether the sources are genuine or not. It is essential for users to have a basic understanding of how to work with digital documents and how to understand them. Lack of trust in the archive is far worse than being denied access and would lead to a loss in the meaning of the archive for society. Contemplating what would happen if everything society is built on were called into question is quite disturbing.

All in all, transparency is key to dealing with tensions that evolve from serving power structures, on the one hand, and social goals, on the other. Archivists and society still need to understand that "archival practice is never neutral" and that "archival labor is always political".[74] Yet, citizens can feel involved in the process of recordkeeping. Today, most people can be reached on social platforms, so why should archives and archivists not use them? They are the easiest way to communicate with the public, to be transparent and to provide societies with a means of participating in ongoing processes. And although they are already used here and there, broader usage in the future would be desirable. In the specific context of research, archives should be more present in university teaching and include cooperation with the relevant institutes. In turn, this would give archives a better understanding of research topics and questions, enhance digitization projects and reduce the distance between future researchers and archival work. Minimizing the distance between archives and society is a task that needs to be worked on in the future. Transparency could go a long way to solving this just as representation could.

III. Representation

In addition to accessibility and transparency, archives have a responsibility towards society, not unlike academic scholarship. As Howard Zinn puts it: "Scholarship in society is inescapably

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[74]   Caswell, Punzalan, „Archives and Human Rights," 298.

political."[75] Zinn goes on to say that archivists always emphasize their political neutrality. According to him they contribute to maintaining the (political) status quo.[76] In other words, changes in the archival sphere if at all progress at a snail's pace or are even prevented. If change does not occur, the participation and public representation of social minorities or politically weaker groups will ultimately continue to be more or less absent in the future, despite all efforts to the contrary.

As part of post-colonial society, traditional archives have to open up to diverse social groups and their memories. As Jarrett M. Drake points out, it would contradict our understanding of modern scholarship if every social minority created their own archive instead of being "integrated" into existing research institutions.[77] For this, according to Zinn, archives must also stop clinging to their collections, which consist primarily of written and pictorial sources, and focus instead on opening up to new forms of memory culture such as oral history.[78] Important steps have already been taken here in recent decades, as the example of "Colonia Dignidad", a Chilean-German oral history archive funded and supported by the Federal Foreign Office demonstrates.[79] Only if the diversity in society is integrated into established collections, can archives function as the mirror of an era.[80]

IV. Digital Archives

Digital archives fall into two different categories of records: those which are retro-digitized and those which are "digital born". Given the growing digitalization in public institutions as well as in every-day-life, the number of these "digital borns" is increasing. In fact, there will be more and more digitally born material, a process rarely addressed by historiography. In contrast to traditional archives, digital archives can only be accessed through the web. Hence, Richard J. Cox asks whether we will need both traditional and digital archives or if digital archives will eventually become the main research institutions in the future.[81] The following paragraphs address the topic of "digital archives", highlighting potential problems of fully digitalized archives, and discuss the difficulties associated with preserving digital sources.

The collections in most archives still largely consist of written sources. As Barbara Reed points out, however, paper documents will most likely not be the main sources in the future, as

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[75] Howard Zinn, "Archives, and the public interest," *The Midwestern Archivist* 2, no. 2 (1977): 20.

[76] Zinn, "Archives," 20.

[77] Jarrett M. Drake, "Liberatory Archives: Towards Belonging and Believing (Part 2)," accessed March 22, 2021, https://medium.com/on-archivy/liberatory-archives-towards-belonging-and-believing-part-2-6f56c754eb17#.4hky7zcjt.

[78] Zinn, "Archives," 21.

[79] "Colonia Dignidad: Ein chilenisch-deutsches Oral History-Archiv," Colonia Dignidad: Ein chilenisch-deutsches Oral History-Archiv, accessed July 28, 2021, https://www.cdoh.net.

[80] See also the chapter on archives and their actor networks.

[81] Richard J. Cox, "Appraisal and the future of archives in the digital era," in *The future of archives and recordkeeping*, ed. Jennie Hill (London: Facet, 2011), 214–15.

many digital resources cannot be represented on paper.[82] Gorman and Shep are certain that collections can no longer be a static and fixed collection of items housed in a single institution.[83] Hence, archives will gradually become a hybrid of the physical storage of tangible, often paper-based artefacts and the online provision of digital sources stored on servers worldwide. In order to provide users with a one-stop-shop solution, archives will have to digitalize their collections, and at the same time make it available online. That being said, such a move poses an additional challenge, given that archives have to decide on a file format that will be computer readable for many decades to come.

One example of the retro-digitization of sources is the MfPTs and their website, where a large proportion of certain collections can already be found digitized. The online database consists of approximately 3,000 letters written between the late eighteenth and late twentieth century. This impressive collection provides users with an insight into that period of German history through the eyes of the ordinary people. The letters are enriched with additional information, such as short biographies of the authors and references to their other letters. The *digital archive* also contains a modern search function enabling users to categorize the letters into periods, thematic subjects and locations. According to Cox, working with digital archives is more akin to the user's experience with modern search engines than to the slow and steady search in the traditional archive.[84] Besides being user friendly, the digital archive is free of charge. All of this contributes significantly to the accessibility of archives, including for the less academically inclined population.

These benefits notwithstanding, there are inherent downsides to digital archives. One is that no archive digitizes all its documents, which reduces the diversity of sources otherwise available in traditional archives. The entire collection of MfPT, for example, consists of circa 120,000 letters. So far only 2.5 per cent of the original collection has been digitized. While the figure is still remarkable – bearing in mind the huge amount of work involved in digitizing often very fragile original sources – the current digital archive comes nowhere near the traditional archive in terms of representativeness.

In addition to the fact that a large part of the paper documents still has to be digitized, dealing with digital borns also calls for a solution. Nicole Convery warns that the majority of modern social media-based communication ends up in the black hole of the web – never to be seen again.[85] Recent years have seen a dramatic change in the means of communication. People have stepped up their communication, for example, via social networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp

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[82]   Barbara Reed, "Challenges of managing the digitally born artefact," in *Preservation management for libraries, museums and archives*, edited by G.E. Gorman, Syney J. Shep (London: Facet, 2006), 120.
[83]   G.E. Gorman, Syney J. Shep, "Redefining 'the collection' in the 21st century," in *Preservation management for libraries, museums and archives*, edited by G.E. Gorman, Syney J. Shep (London: Facet, 2006), 191.
[84]   Cox, "Appraisal and the future of archives," 214.
[85]   Nicole Convery, "Information management, records management, knowledge management: The place of archives in a digital age," in *The future of archives and recordkeeping*, ed. Jennie Hill, (London: Facet, 2011), 191.

and Clubhouse, and upload videos on YouTube or TikTok. Even governments and politicians are now opting for tweets rather than press statements or press conferences to communicate the newest political decisions.

While it would be almost impossible to archive the epic amount of existing online communication, digital communication will be crucial to future generations when it comes to understanding the socio-economic and political developments of the twenty-first century. If, for example, researchers do not have to rely solely on newspaper articles about the rise in GameStop shares, they will need access to the conversations of young investors on the Reddit social network.[86] Consequently, securing knowledge for future generations essentially requires collaboration between the traditional record-keeping institutions and the operators of social media platforms. For the moment, cooperation of this kind seems unlikely and could, according to Cox, lead to competition between archival and non-archival websites in the matter of storing knowledge.[87] There are, however, some examples of fully digital archives created by historians and archivists such as the *Coronarchiv*, a fully digital collection of documents and objects solely accessible via its website – although they are not all digital borns.[88]

In the digital age, dependence on the functioning of the technology used is a constant companion and a source of error on standby. Data storage and technological modernization are all prone to difficulty with regard to the establishment, maintenance and usability of digital archives. Furthermore, to ensure that a digital archive remains state-of-the-art, it has to be frequently updated. Such technological developments can impact significantly on the user's utilization of the digital archive. When the MfPT modernized its website, for instance, older links were not redirected and hence, users no longer found the documents they were looking for. Instead, the user now has to manually search the (new) MfPT homepage in order to find that same source again. So, even minor alterations to a digital archive can complicate the research of historians substantially. To ensure that users will always find the documents they are looking for – after major updates have been conducted – providers of digital archives should implement redirection functions and offer a well-staffed helpline. Because, as Convery states, engagement with the user in the digital world is important and indispensable.[89] If researchers do not enjoy working with a certain website because it is unreliable, they will not use it again until the issues have been resolved.

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[86] Ian Carlos Campbell, "GameStop's stock was on the rise again, until it wasn't: A wild Wednesday for GME," The Verge, March 10, 2021, https://www.theverge.com/2021/3/10/22323839/gamestop-stock-price-dramatic-rise-fall-stonks-return.

[87] Cox, "Appraisal and the future of archives," 220.

[88] See "coronarchiv: sharing is caring – become a part of history," accessed March 22, 2021, https://coronarchiv.geschichte.uni-hamburg.de/projector/s/coronarchiv/page/willkommen.

[89] Convery, "Information management," 199–200.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that archives will eventually be digital. The shift to the digital archive seems inevitable, but it will not come without potential hiccups. Archives must become more modern, develop technical systems with low susceptibility to errors, whose use they can guarantee after possible updates. In this context, new ways of preserving digital sources must also be found. This should be labelled with a high degree of urgency, otherwise millions of archivable materials will disappear in the maelstrom of the Internet. In doing so, archives must not neglect their responsibility towards society and should use modern information channels for their public relations work. At the same time, access must be ensured for social minorities, both in terms of using the archives and of recording their memorabilia.

The future of archives, however, is not completely gloomy. Digital archives and digital collections could give researchers access to international sources, while the handling of websites and digital data will feel more natural for future historians and other archive users. Change in archival institutions could well pave the way for a more diverse, technologically enhanced and extended research experience.

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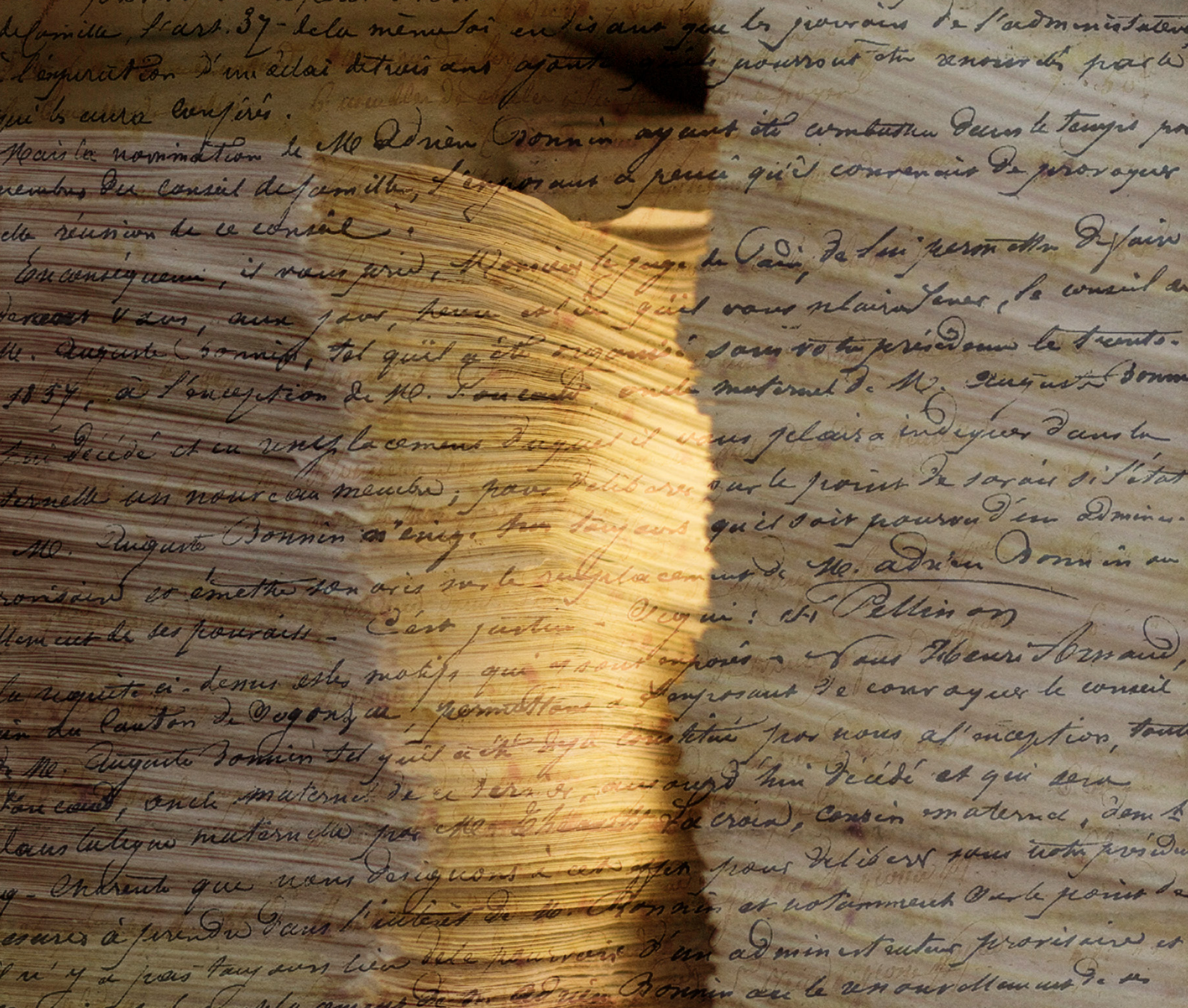
About this book

This book is the result of the advanced seminar, "Archives: Gatekeepers to the Past?" taught by Riley Linebaugh and Bettina Severin-Barboutie at Justus Liebig University in winter 2020-21. The course examined archives as dynamic institutions, practices and relationships that are (re-)constructed over time. We critically studied key terms such as provenance, appraisal, respect des fonds and in doing so, students discussed central debates in the historical discipline, such as: the making of archival absence, the problem of hegemonic perspectives, the pursuit of alternative sources, etc. Envisaged as a teaching resource and introduction to archives, this guide documents the authors' engagement with the political and historiographical power of archives and those who guard them.