



Routledge Studies in Archives

THE MATERIALITY OF THE ARCHIVE

CREATIVE PRACTICE IN CONTEXT

Edited by
Sue Breakell and Wendy Russell



The Materiality of the Archive

The Materiality of the Archive is the first volume to bring together a range of methodological approaches to the materiality of archives, as a framework for their engagement, analysis and interpretation.

Focusing on the archives of creative practices, the book reaches between and across existing bodies of knowledge in this field, including material culture, art history and literary studies, unified by an interest in archives as material deposits and aggregations, in both analogue and digital forms, as well as the material encounter. Connecting a breadth of disciplinary interests in the archive with expanding discourses in materiality, contributors address the potential of a material engagement to animate archival content. Analysing the systems, processes and actions that constitute the shapes, forms and structures in which individual archival objects accumulate, and the underpinnings which may hold them in place as an archival body, the book considers ways in which the inexorable move to the digital affects traditional theories of the physical archival object. It also considers how stewardship practices such as description and meta-data creation can accommodate these changes.

The Materiality of the Archive unifies theory and practice and brings together professional and academic perspectives. The book is essential reading for academics, researchers and postgraduate students working in the fields of archive studies, museology, art history and material culture.

Sue Breakell is Archive Director and Principal Research Fellow at the University of Brighton Design Archives, UK. She was formerly head of Tate Archive, London and War Artists Archivist/Museum Archivist at IWM London. Her research bridges critical archive studies, twentieth-century art and design history and material culture.

Wendy Russell is an independent researcher and Special Collections Archivist at the British Film Institute, UK. She has formerly worked at the Archives and Special Collections Centre at the University of the Arts London, and as a freelance archivist. She was Secretary and then Chair of the ARLIS/UK & Ireland Committee for Art and Design Archives (CADA) between 2011 and 2018.

Routledge Studies in Archives

Series Editor: James Lowry

The following list includes only the most-recent titles to publish within the series. A list of the full catalogue of titles is available at: www.routledge.com/Routledge-Studies-in-Archives/book-series/RSARCH

Archives, Recordkeeping and Social Justice

Edited by David A. Wallace, Wendy M. Duff, Renée Saucier, and Andrew Flinn

Producing the Archival Body

Jamie A. Lee

Ghosts of Archive

Deconstructive Intersectionality and Praxis

Verne Harris

Urgent Archives

Enacting Liberatory Memory Work

Michelle Caswell

Archiving Caribbean Identity

Records, Community, and Memory

Edited by John A. Aarons, Jeannette A. Bastian, and Stanley H. Griffin

Exhibiting the Archive

Space, Encounter, and Experience

Peter Lester

The Remaking of Archival Values

Victoria Hoyle

The Materiality of the Archive

Creative Practice in Context

Edited by Sue Breakell and
Wendy Russell



ROUTLEDGE

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK



An electronic version of this book is freely available, thanks to the support of libraries working with Knowledge Unlatched (KU). KU is a collaborative initiative designed to make high quality books Open Access for the public good. The Open Access ISBN for this book is 9780429262487. More information about the initiative and links to the Open Access version can be found at www.knowledgeunlatched.org.

First published 2024

by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2024 selection and editorial matter, Sue Breakell and Wendy Russell;
individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Sue Breakell and Wendy Russell to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The Open Access version of this book, available at www.taylorfrancis.com, has been made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 license.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-367-20601-7 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-54209-6 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-0-429-26248-7 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9780429262487

Typeset in Times New Roman

by Newgen Publishing UK

Contents

<i>List of contributors</i>	viii
<i>Series introduction</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xii

Introduction: materiality as connective tissue	1
SUE BREAKELL AND WENDY RUSSELL	

PART I	
In the archive: practices and encounters	13
1 <i>‘Material evidences surviving in the form of writing’:</i> materiality in archival theory and practice	15
ALEXANDRINA BUCHANAN	
2 <i>‘The true object of study’:</i> the material body of the analogue archive	33
SUE BREAKELL	
3 Archival finding aids and perceptual frames: extending material contact points through Stephen Chaplin’s <i>Slade School Archive Reader</i>	48
LIZ BRUCHET	
4 Archiving with scissors: materiality and cutting practices in photographic archives	64
COSTANZA CARAFFA	

PART II

With the archive: energy 87

- 5 Valentine's jacket 89

MARYANNE DEVER

- 6 The archive as a site of making 106

PETER LESTER

- 7 Applications of energy: a study of artists and entropy
in the material 122

LISA CIANCI

- 8 Archival endings: erosion and erasure in the film archive 143

ELODIE A. ROY

PART III

About the archive: technologies 157

- 9 The material archive everyday: technologies of the
filing system 159

SARAH CAIN

- 10 The materialism of techno-archival memory 174

WOLFGANG ERNST

- 11 Paper tensions: from flipbooks to scanners – the role of
paper in moving image practices 186

AMANDA EGBE

- 12 Expressing materiality in archival records 199

ATHANASIOS VELIOS

PART IV

Beyond the archive: expanding the frame 217

- 13 *Lost Unities*: the materiality of the migrated archives 219

JAMES LOWRY AND FORGET CHATERERA-ZAMBUKO

14	Fabrications: the quilt as archive CLAIRE SMITH	231
15	Performing gestures towards the archive: queer fragments and other ways of mattering BEN CRANFIELD	245
16	‘That’s special, we’ll keep that’: a conversation about counter archiving and socially engaged practice at Tate Exchange SARAH HAYLETT, LUCY BAYLEY, CARA COURAGE, JULIA LEPLA, PIP LAURENSEN, HÉLIA MARÇAL AND KIT WEBB	259
	<i>Index</i>	275

Contributors

Sue Breakell is Archive Director and Principal Research Fellow at the University of Brighton Design Archives, UK. She was formerly head of Tate Archive, London and War Artists Archivist/Museum Archivist at IWM London. Her research bridges critical archive studies, twentieth-century art and design history and material culture.

Liz Bruchet is a researcher, archive curator and oral historian, and currently Senior Lecturer in Archival Studies in the Department of Information Studies, UCL. Her research focuses on the interconnections between archives and curation, with a particular focus on biographies of archives, and the records and record-keeping practices in visual arts organisations.

Alexandrina Buchanan is Senior Lecturer in archive studies at the University of Liverpool and Director of the Liverpool University Centre for Archive Studies. An art historian by background and professional archivist by training, her research is situated at the interface between archival studies and architectural history.

Sarah Cain is a fellow and director of studies in English at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. She has research and teaching interests in American literature and transatlantic modernism, aesthetics and the history of science. She is currently writing a book about the cultural history of the filing system, including chapters on offices, indexes, photocopies and databases.

Costanza Caraffa (PhD Berlin 2003) has been Head of the Photothek at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institut, since 2006. With initiatives such as the 'Photo Archives' open conference series (started 2009), the *Florence Declaration for the Preservation of Analogue Photo Archives*, and her publications, she has been contributing to the international and transdisciplinary debate on the current roles of photo archives in twenty-first-century research and societies. She co-curated the exhibition 'Unboxing Photographs' (Berlin 2018).

Forget Chaterera-Zambuko is an assistant professor in Records Management at Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi. She previously lectured at the National University of Science & Technology and Midlands State University in Zimbabwe. She is a rated researcher by the National Research Foundation of South Africa and a co-editor for Archives and Records Journal. Her research interests include displaced archives, access to archives and the application of emerging technologies in records and archives management.

Lisa Cianci is a multidisciplinary artist, archivist and digital media developer from Melbourne, Australia. Lisa's work is a study of [an]archival possibilities, entropy in the material, unexpected artefacts in both digital and analogue media, and the unsettling spaces where systems and structures break down. Intersections of art, archives and digital media technologies and the artist's role as cultural worker are her research interests. Working and engaging with experimental archival practices and *wild archives* are ongoing pursuits.

Ben Cranfield is Senior Tutor in Curatorial Theory and History on the Curating Contemporary Art programme at the Royal College of Art. His research is focused on the relationship between the curatorial, the contemporary, the archive and forms of instituting, asking what it is to produce queer and non-normative ideas of timeliness and history. Articles include, 'On (Not Being with) Time (Queerly) in Post-War Britain', *Performance Research* (2018); 'Mind the Gap: Unfolding the proximities of the curatorial', *Performance Research* (2017); 'All play and no work? A "Ludistory" of the curatorial as transitional object at the early ICA', *Tate Papers* (2014); 'Not Another Museum': The Search for Contemporary Connection', *Journal of Visual Culture* (2013).

Maryanne Dever is Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Digital) at the Australian National University. She researches on literary archives and she is joint editor-in-chief of *Australian Feminist Studies*.

Amanda Egbe is an artist, researcher and Senior Lecturer in Media Production at the University of Bedfordshire. Her artistic practice and research, concerns archives, new technologies, race and activism.

Wolfgang Ernst is Full Professor of Media Theories at the Institute for Musicology and Media Science at Humboldt University in Berlin. His current research covers 'radical' media archaeology as method, the theory of technical storage, the technologies of cultural transmission, micro-temporal media aesthetics and their chronopoetic potentials, and sound analytics ('sonicity') from a media-epistemological point of view.

Peter Lester is an archivist and researcher. He completed an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Midlands3Cities funded PhD at the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. The research explores the exhibition and display of archives and encounters with archival material, and wider

reshaping of physical archival spaces. His forthcoming book *Exhibiting the Archive*, based on this research, is due to be published by Routledge.

James Lowry is Assistant Professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, Queens College, City University of New York. He is an honorary research fellow at the University of Liverpool, where he was formerly co-Director of the Centre for Archive Studies. He is the author of the 2020 report on disputed archival claims for the International Council on Archives and is the editor of the forthcoming book, *Disputed Archival Heritage*, with Routledge.

Elodie A. Roy is a media and material culture theorist, with a specialism in recorded sound. She is the author of *Media, Materiality and Memory: Grounding the Groove*, the co-editor (with Eva Moreda Rodríguez) of *Phonographic Encounters: Mapping Transnational Cultures of Sound, 1890–1945* and is currently preparing a monograph entitled *Shellac in Visual and Sonic Culture: Unsettled Matter*. She is a Research Fellow at Northumbria University working on the project ‘Anonymous Creativity: Library Music and Screen Cultures in the 1960s and 1970s’ (PI: Jamie Sexton).

Claire Smith is Senior Curator of Special Collections at the British Film Institute, UK. Her research interests span text, textiles and design, as they relate to domestic and visual histories. She is currently editing a publication on the archives of filmmakers Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger.

Athanasios Velios FIIC is Reader in Documentation at the University of the Arts London. He was trained as a conservator in Athens and completed his PhD on computer applications to conservation at the Royal College of Arts. He has written, supervised, reviewed and led research on conservation documentation, artists’ archives and Linked Data for memory organisations. He is one of the editors of the CIDOC-CRM and contributes to several groups on issues around documentation.

Tate Exchange was founded in 2016 and works with the public to explore what happens when art and society meet. Working on a yearly themed programme of events, Tate Exchange is led by Cara Courage.

Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum (2018–2021) was a Tate research project that sought to interrogate forms of art and art making that challenge the practices and definitions of the museum and its collections. Information about the project and the team can be found here: www.tate.org.uk/research/reshaping-the-collectible

Series introduction

Routledge Studies in Archives publishes new research in archival studies. Recognising the imperative for archival work in support of memory, identity construction, social justice, accountability, legal rights and historical understanding, the series extends the disciplinary boundaries of archival studies. The works in this series illustrate how archival studies intersects with the concerns and methods of, and is increasingly intellectually in conversation with, other fields.

Bringing together scholarship from diverse academic and cultural traditions and presenting the work of emerging and established scholars side by side, the series promotes the exploration of the intellectual history of archival science, the internationalisation of archival discourse and the building of new archival theory. It sees the archival in personal, economic and political activity, historically and digitally situated cultures, subcultures and movements, technical and socio-technical systems, technological and infrastructural developments and in many other places.

Archival studies brings an historical perspective and unique expertise in records creation, management and sustainability to questions, problems and data challenges that lie at the heart of our knowledge about and ability to tackle some of the most difficult dilemmas facing the world today, such as climate change, mass migration, and disinformation. *Routledge Studies in Archives* is a platform for this work.

Series Editor: James Lowry

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to all the members of the ARLIS (Art Libraries Society) Committee for Art & Design Archives (CADA) at the time of the event 'Matter and Meaning: Materiality and the Visual Arts Archive' held at the University of Brighton in 2016, from which this book evolved, and subsequently: Alan Crookham, Andrew Gray, Daniel Heather, Carys Lewis, Kirstie Meehan, Alice O'Hanlon, Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski and Dr. Nayia Yiakoumaki. We thank also our speakers at the Brighton event: Dr. Alexandrina Buchanan, Professor Matthew Cornford, Dr. Ben Cranfield, Professor Maryanne Dever, Dr. Althea Greenan, Sadhna Jain, Dr. Claire Smith, Dr. Deborah Schultz, Rebekah Taylor and Jim Walker. Their contributions to the event began a conversation that evolved into this publication.

We also express our warmest thanks to colleagues from the University of Brighton Design Archives, past and present, who contributed to the event in the form of preparations, hosting and speaking. These include Debbie Hickmott, Sirpa Kutilainen, Professor Catherine Moriarty, Barbara Taylor and Dr. Lesley Whitworth; thanks are also due to Professor Anne Boddington, former Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities at Brighton. Sue would also like to thank colleagues at Brighton who supported her work on the book, and those readers from whom her writing benefited, particularly Professor Annebella Pollen and Professor Lesley Murray. We are grateful to the University's School of Humanities and Social Science Research Support Fund for assistance with the final stages of the manuscript preparation. Wendy would also like to thank her colleague, Claire Smith, for her support throughout, and numerous helpful discussions on the topic.

We are immensely grateful to our successive editors, Heidi Lowther, Emmie Shand and Amy Davis-Poynter, and editorial assistants Kangan Gupta, Manas Roy and Heeranshi Sharma, and to Sujeesh Krishna for project managing the book's production; and to the Studies in Archives Series Editor Dr. James Lowry: our publication proposal arrived with Routledge just as this series was being initiated. Thanks also to Rich Cutler at Helios, for assistance with the manuscript preparation.

Last but certainly by no means least, we record our immense gratitude to all our contributors, who stayed with us through the long gestation period of this book, so that it survived to a material form despite the immeasurable impact of a global pandemic on all our personal and professional lives.

Introduction

Materiality as connective tissue

Sue Breakell and Wendy Russell

The origins of this volume lie in a symposium in September 2016, a collaboration between the University of Brighton Design Archives, who hosted the event, and the then ARLIS (Art Libraries Society) Committee for Art and Design Archives (CADA), who organised its content, and of which both this volume's editors were then members. The event was part of a strand of programming developing interdisciplinary exchange and reflection on archival practices in visual arts contexts. Its call for papers was driven by extensive recent attention to materiality across a range of disciplines, including anthropology, archaeology, art history, literary studies and material culture, and a recognition that, as yet, archival theory and practice had given limited consideration to materiality as a distinct approach. We wanted to reach across and between these various bodies of knowledge, considering materiality as a framework for analysing, interpreting and engaging with archives of art and design. What research, we wondered, might we find that considered archives through a lens of materiality in other disciplines? What might the particular perspective of the archive and the archivist contribute to existing scholarship, and how might connecting such work with critical archive studies be mutually enriching?

The event attracted speakers from a broad range not only of approaches to materiality, but also of understandings of the archive: in some cases broadly coterminous with the notion of the *collection*, in others denoting those parts of collections which are not on display and therefore unseen, or elsewhere associated with the non-specialist digital process of *archiving* or putting out of current use. From the co-editors' perspective as practising archivists as well as researchers it was clear that, while there was wide-ranging interest in the theme, a publication proposal required greater focus in its framing of the *archive*. We conceived a publication that would clarify and refine ideas of materiality starting from a practitioner's definition of the archive: 'materials that have been created by individuals, groups or organisations during the course of their life or work and deemed to be worth keeping permanently for the purposes of research and as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator'.¹ From such a definition we hoped to push boundaries of archival materiality more usefully than by assembling too many disparate notions of the archive with their associated conceptual slippages. A starting point for this volume, then, is the distinctiveness of the archive in its disciplinary

and epistemological history, and in its materials and its inherent organic structures. Here we follow the framing of critical archival studies as ‘using archival studies to disrupt the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the humanities’ (Caswell, Punzalan & Sangwand 2017).

In parallel with the archival and material turns in the humanities, interest in the archive as subject as well as source (Stoler 2009) has expanded exponentially in recent decades, with a particular mobilisation of the archive identified in contemporary art and curating (for useful surveys of these literatures, see Bruchet 2019 and Callahan 2022). Yet within this phenomenon, limited attention was paid to the theories that underpin archival studies as a discipline and a practice, an imbalance that began to be redressed by archivists (Breakell 2008, Vaknin et al. 2013). By its focus on the archive, this volume seeks to contribute to such a rebalancing and to map a developing shared terrain. Bridging the gap between archival and non-archival bodies of knowledge, the collection places the archive, through a series of grounded case studies, at the heart of the enquiry. It brings together a range of innovative methodological approaches to the materiality of archives, as a framework for their engagement, analysis and interpretation. Its focus on archives of creative practices, including fine art, design, craft, film, performance and literature, reaches between and across existing bodies of knowledge, unified by an interest in archives as material deposits and aggregations, in both analogue and digital forms, as well as in the material encounter.

This introduction cannot claim to offer a comprehensive history of materiality: its purpose is rather to note some points of connection and commonality across associated disciplines, which generate productive interactions and intersections. It highlights a set of themes and ideas which underpin this volume, primarily from the sibling pairings of archives/conservation studies and material culture/design history. Responses to the elusive physical qualities of objects, as seen in material culture and other disciplines, do not have such rich equivalents in archives, despite the distinctive ‘allure’ (Farge 2015) ascribed to the archive, that very particular pleasure of the archive which is, in fact, founded in the material encounter. Broadly speaking, archival thinking has tended to focus on function and meaning, and the conservation approach on physical properties, or discussions of material literacy on the encounter with an individual document (Rekrut 2006).

Ideas of materiality have received considerable creative and critical attention in the visual arts over recent years (Lange Berndt 2015), but questions of materiality in particular relation to the *archive* of creative practice – residues of the creative process, or the social documentation that surrounds it – have, until recently, received less consideration. A wider exchange of ideas between archives and art has been deeply enriching (Stuckey et al. 2013, Breakell 2015, Bruchet 2019, Callahan 2022) and a conduit into the wider archive literatures. Indeed, this field has benefited materially from a shared concern with materials and media which is not always seen in other areas of archival practice, as it follows its descriptive practices for drawings in archives, from those of the museum art object, and considers the archival nature of performance relics. Archives of creative practice have made

a particular contribution to expanding notions of the archive through the blurring of boundaries between archives and the art objects that may accompany them, challenging what we might call the paper-based assumptions of the archive.

Scholars within and outside the discipline of archive studies have noted a tendency for archives to be disregarded materially, too easily dismissed as primarily supporting documentation for other kinds of material culture (Dever 2013, 176; Hugh Taylor quoted in Rekrut 2006, 35). Conservation science is a corollary discipline from whose material lens archives may benefit: trained as both conservator and archivist, Ala Rekrut's perspective naturally tends to the material qualities of records, and to notice that 'where text is present, the rest of the physical record is usually marginalised' (Rekrut 2006, 35). A growing body of literature indicates how technological innovations in conservation science make possible new historical research drawing on otherwise inaccessible knowledge held in the material of documents: patterns of handling different pages of manuscript volumes bear witness to the fear of bubonic plague (Rudy 2010), while biocodicology (analysis at a molecular level) uses DNA, microbial and protein analysis 'to enrich understandings of ... objects and the people who use them' (Brown 2021). Such projects embody the potential of material analyses to open up sources of information for cultures and communities whose histories we can't access in other ways; new narratives that can mobilise marginalised voices, unacknowledged in the written record, thereby making visible 'previously unnoticed ... participants' (Gansky 2013, 134). Other archival scholars have explored archival materialities beyond the document and modes of articulation which link to affect studies (Lee 2021; Cifor & Gilliland 2016) for new forms of archival knowledge. It is important to acknowledge the significance of contributions made by scholars whose work combines both academic and practice-based engagement, such as photographic historian and curator Elizabeth Edwards on the materiality of photographs (2004, 2009).

Such immaterial properties of the material archive are paper's 'emergent capacities—what it can *do*' (Dever 2014, 290) and can only be understood through handling the paper and the experience of 'being-in-the-archive' (ibid, 285). Of course, the experience of material encounters is no longer the only way to access the information held in archives, as the proliferation of digital surrogates attests. Pierre Nora famously declared that 'modern memory is archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace' (Nora 1989, 13): yet such reliance is both transformed and obfuscated by the emergence of digital technologies. Scholars have highlighted that discussions of materiality in archives emerge from a binary of digital/analogue (Dever & Morra 2014), mirroring a similar tension in contemporary art between materiality and immateriality 'its perceived opposite' (Callahan). Burton argues that the digital gives the material 'a new kind of sacral character' (Burton 2005, 5), while Callahan suggests that the archive's critical role in contemporary art in recent decades is attributable to its analogue properties such as 'material authenticity', as artists turn away from the ubiquity of the digital in daily life. While acknowledging these tensions, this volume's concerns are weighted towards the analogue, while others attend to digital materialities (Goudarouli & Prescott forthcoming).

The relationship between archives and material culture is most often seen in a distinction between the document and the object, which we seek at once to confirm and to avoid. While there are many discussions of the definitions of object and document in the literature, their commonly understood definitions indicate of object – ‘a material thing that can be seen and touched’ (Oxford Languages) – highlights its haptic or perceptual qualities, while that of the document – ‘a piece of written, printed or electronic matter that provides information or evidence that serves as an official record’ – focuses on its evidential or informational qualities; but both definitions may apply to both nouns, in terms of what each can convey. Material culture has often focussed on ways that objects embody and convey meaning through their use-value, seeing textual documents as merely *conveying* meaning (Hannan & Longair 2017), though there are material histories of typewriting (Acland 2006). The literature on object-based materiality has begun to permeate archival literature, but in general, there has been less traffic in the opposite direction, despite the proximity of their concerns with material remains and their informational content. This may be due to the richness of material culture’s own literature, and the different yet parallel disciplinary histories. Archival materiality has the potential to bridge this gap. Through a material culture lens, it may seem self-evident that archives are a form of material culture. Here, we seek to enrich and nuance such a framing, by foregrounding the particular materialities of the archive, treating material culture and archival studies on more equal terms and beginning to map the territory at their intersection. Both, in Hans Schouwenburg’s words, ‘Focus on *stuff*’, and documents meet Schlereth’s definition of stuff as

objects made or modified by humans, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, reflect[ing] the belief patterns of individuals who made, commissioned, purchased or used them, and by extension the belief patterns of the larger society of which they are a part?

(Schlereth, cited in Schouwenburg 2015)

Arjun Appadurai’s work on objects as commodities focussed on the *thingness* of objects, suggesting that ‘their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and circulations that enliven things’ (Appadurai 1986); the role of things in human relationships was further explored by anthropologist Daniel Miller, for example (Miller 2010). By these definitions, documents, too, are things, mobile through time, whose stories are understood through their cultural biographies (Kopytoff 1986). Archives and objects reflect the dynamic interaction of people, things and, even, natural forces. Design history has similar concerns, though differently articulated and oriented: Judy Attfield ‘locates design within a social context as a meaningful part of people’s lives [which] means integrating objects and practices within a culture of everyday life where things don’t always do as they are told nor go according to plan’ (Attfield 2000, 5). We might also add the document to Attfield’s integration, to consider the behaviour of archival documents

in the different social contexts where they have agency: contexts of creation and of re-use, both by their creators and by subsequent readers and users.

Space does not permit a full account of the complex relationships between text/word/document and functions/things/object, or the many ideas from material culture which might be enriched by the inclusion of archives: the contents of this volume offer lead to further ideas and sources. For historians, the object-based approach offered by material culture, through the material turn, opened up new forms of knowledge as alternatives to the traditional textual sources, based on the distinction between object and document, drawing from object-based disciplines such as archaeology and anthropology which work with few textual sources; for some, objects offered richer and more inclusive forms of embodied knowledge (Glassie 1999). Others reject any distinction between supposedly active objects and more critically distant documents (Harvey 2017, 7); for Dan Hicks and Mary Beaudry, ‘written sources represent simply another, albeit distinctive, form of material culture rather than a revolutionary change in the human past’ (Harvey 2017, 7). There is continuity across the work that objects and documents are doing, in recording, witnessing or expressing. Documents and archival records have an object life as well as a text life; they interact just as objects do: they have social agency and voice, beyond the mere embodiment of their texts into voice. Catherine Richardson points to a circularity in the way that documents and objects enrich each other: text sources in the writing of material culture history show ‘how language conjures things into being’, evoking the material objects they describe, such as the material goods listed in inventories, which testify to status in life and death. For her, reading archival sources is ‘a performance of objects in itself ... a reanimation of the relationship between language, materiality and the imagination’ (Richardson 2021). If objects may be read both *through* (Richardson) and *as* texts (Tilley 2002; Glassie 1999), we may usefully complete the circle and read documents not simply as sources for understanding objects, but as objects themselves, both individually and in their sets and aggregations. As Tilley writes:

Neither language or the production, reception and use of material forms can be claimed to have any ontological primacy. As differing modes of communication the linguistic forms of words and the material forms of artefacts play complementary roles in social life. What links together language use and the use of things is that both arise as products of an embodied human mind.

(Tilley 2002, 24)

In short, there is a shared interest in texts in context, with people – actors – always central to the equation.

Broadly speaking, then, a distinction between the material potential of documents and objects is unhelpful. We locate this volume in this area of potential connectivity between the text-based ontology of the archive and the object-based ontology of material culture, and in the overlapping area between archive studies, materiality and creative practice. In doing so, we seek to let go of conventional

distinctions, to focus rather on connectivity and to accelerate exchange. We frame the archive, not as a site for evidence to support or refute an externally generated proposition, but as an affective encounter that, through a phenomenological engagement, generates propositions through the material encounter. If the archive is a means of approaching the creative practitioner who generated it, as many writers in this volume agree, such an approach is made not just through the documents/objects that provide evidence of the lives that produced them, but through the embodied material representation of the subjects themselves. As such, the volume considers archives not as ‘mere things in themselves’ but for ‘their complex role in the relationship between objects and subjects’ (Attfield 2000), or, in a phrase familiar to scholars of both material culture and archive studies, texts in context.

Materiality is a connective tissue not only between disciplines but also across a range of creative practices, and their complex materialities and immaterialities. The performance of materiality witnessed in this volume takes a broad view of the archive’s agency. By implication also in the material archive are the immaterialities, those things which do not have a material presence, but which can be felt, inferred or performed *from* the archive, through its ‘leaky economies of generative and persistent acts in time’ (Clarke et al. 2018, 11). Given the vast reach of such connectivity, the volume can but indicate the richness and range of material-based methodologies. It presents a varied yet coherent range of perspectives, rooted in case studies which frame the archive as a real place as well as a theoretical construct. Further, its focus on archives of creative practice heightens a particular emphasis on the generative possibilities of the archive foregrounding the fluidity, blurred boundaries and expanded notions of the archive, that are characteristic of creative practices.

Petra Lange-Berndt proposed ‘a methodology of material complicity’, asking what it means ‘to give agency to the material, to follow the material and to *act* with the material’ (Lange-Berndt 2015, 13). Materiality offers a means of engaging with the archive differently, beyond convention – Elodie Roy here suggests that ‘materiality prompts us to touch and not to read’. The volume moves out into a range of innovations and expansions, stretching the work that the archive is doing, critically and practically, to support ‘multiple and provisional interpretations’ (Pringle et al. 2022, 1). Harvey notes a distinction between two historical positions in the material turn: materiality, and materials as distinct areas of thought. Both are represented in this volume, as we put the material archive to all kinds of work and ‘mattering’ (Cranfield, this volume). Articulating its interdisciplinary frame in four sections, moving outwards from the archive itself, yet always held in relation to the archive, its structure is a ‘diagram of active forces’ (Yaneva 2020), part of an anthropology of the archive.

Part I begins our journey, as might be imagined from this introduction, ‘**In the archive: practices and encounters**’. In the opening chapter, archivist and architectural historian **Alexandrina Buchanan** primes us for the following chapters with a detailed account of materiality in the historiography of the archive profession and the discipline of archive studies. She argues that certain material considerations – integral to contemporary discussions of materiality – have always been

central to the discipline, and to the broader realm and approaches – the ‘craft knowledge’ – of the archivist and conservator, but that its presence has been implicit, latent, taken for granted, undervalued or directed to other ends. From here, archivist and researcher **Sue Breakell** considers the materiality of the fonds, or individual archive collection, often only experienced through the privileged access enjoyed by the archivist, as itself a primary unity of production with a distinct material presence and identity. She explores the triangulated relationship that develops through this encounter, involving the ‘viewer-participant’, the archive and its creator, a version of whose presence is materialised by the archive. She uses material culture scholar Jules David Prown’s functional approach to object analysis as a means of analysing the tacit knowledge generated through this encounter. Curator and researcher **Liz Bruchet** presents a careful close analysis of the multi-layered materialities of a volume generated in the course of earlier phases of history-making in the archive of the Slade School of Art at University College London. Applying biographical and ethnographic approaches to both the archival object and its creator, the artist and educator Stephen Chaplin, she explores his complex positionality and his relationship with both the material object and the institution whose story he tells through it, all unfolded from this single volume. Finally in this section, photographic archivist and historian **Costanza Caraffa** identifies a range of ‘cutting practices’ in and on the institutional photographic archive, in this case specifically on the large aggregations of photographs created for documentary and comparative purposes in disciplines such as art history and archaeology, such as the Photothek of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max Planck Institut, of which Caraffa is Director. She discusses how these practices ‘materially transform’ the archive, reflect and record changing values ascribed to the photographs, individually and collectively, and shape our encounter with, and understanding of, these photographic documents, which are ‘produced by the technologies of the archive and ... [its] actors’.

Part II, **With the archive: energy**, brings together a number of evocations of vital forces at play in material encounters with the archive, reminding us of Jane Bennett’s notion of ‘vibrant materiality’ (2010). First, literary scholar **Maryanne Dever** presents a close and nuanced reading of a patchwork jacket, made for poet Valentine Ackland by her lover Sylvia Townsend Warner, held, along with Ackland and Warner’s joint paper archives at Dorset Museum, UK. Asking ‘what happens when traces of bodies collide with more conventional knowledge’, Dever’s careful analysis of the multiple material and immaterial traces and references held in the jacket, specifically in an archival context, suggests ways to bring out new understandings from its material forms and their extrapolation into its making, wearing and wider social contexts of fashion and modernism, as well as the intimate spaces of domestic life. Picking up on similar themes, archivist and researcher **Peter Lester** presents the archive as a process of making: not a fixed object but a ‘working tool’ which records an evolutionary process. Encouraging us to work *with* not *from* the archive, he reflects on material culture scholar Tim Ingold’s notion of meshwork, the entanglements emanating from individuals during the course of

their life, and from the objects and documents that they create or engage with. Applying these ideas to the archive of the playwright David Campton, Lester ‘follows the contours of the archive’ to demonstrate the function of materiality as an indexical relationship between writer and reader. The two remaining chapters in this section address forces of waste and decay in the archive. **Lisa Cianci** brings her distinctive perspective as artist, archivist, digital media developer and educator, to a consideration of the ‘inevitable entropic tendencies’ of the archive. She uses three case studies of artists whose practices apply energy to resist entropy and to sustain the content and materials of the archive. Here, creative energy continually regenerates spaces, relics and records of artistic practice; brings out ‘dark and hidden stories’ from Australia’s colonial archive; and, through ‘anarchival practices’, breaks down the original meanings and narratives of the archive. This section concludes with media and material culture theorist **Elodie Roy**’s lyrical consideration of materiality as a form of ‘surplus meaning’ offered by the inherently ‘dying footage’ of the film archive. Framing the archive as a ‘waste-site’, where time is at work in a natural process of erasure, Roy proposes this as a ‘laboratory of decay’, where decay radiates an energy that is its own ‘haunted dimension’, and offers rich yet elusive new understandings of what film seeks to present, when seen through the archive’s ‘grain, surface noise and asperities’. In this way, materiality makes us more aware of layers of temporality embodied in the process of decay.

Part III, themed **About the archive: technologies**, unites a diverse set of chapters about the material/immaterial underpinnings of the archive. It begins with literary scholar **Sarah Cain**’s analysis of the filing system in both analogue and digital forms. Cain charts its historical development across the administrative settings of the office, the archive, and later the home, the duality of the acts of storing and retrieving marking ‘the moments of transition and transformation, when writing both disappears into, and appears out of, the object-world of the material archive’. What, Cain asks, does this mean for the labour of writing, the labour of filing and retrieving and the labour-to-come out of the archive? The analogue and digital imaginaries of the filing system are seen on screen – including in the visual filing graphics of the computer, where ‘skeuomorphic’ design emulates the aesthetics of physical files in the digital space, cementing the imagistic overlap in the way we imagine the storage of digital information as like our experience of the material archive, so that the physical and digital management of the archive develops as ‘two interconnecting fantasies’. Crossing Cain’s bridge to the digital, we are next reminded by **Wolfgang Ernst** of a very different kind of material framing of archival data. In view of the complexities of the material-immaterial nexus, Ernst focuses on the technological archive, reminding us that with digital records ‘media-archaeology still matters’. Where the analogue record is stored as a static object, the record in its digital form, ‘a matrix of “bits”’, is configured through modes of fluidity and latency, but, Ernst argues, this does not mean that digitisation is synonymous with dematerialisation. Instead, the digital record is a composite, whose elements encompass both the material and the immaterial, the hardware and the software: ‘the techno-archive’s “two bodies”’. How then are we

to understand the operation of memory within this distribution? As Ernst points out, in cyberspace ‘the archival rule that only what has been substantially fixed can endure and be located does not count any more’. **Amanda Egbe** considers the connected technologies of paper and moving image, with a specific focus on the process and outcomes of reproducing and duplicating film, addressing a criticism of media archaeology that it fetishises technology or ‘at the least relegates human agency’. Through an analysis of the interweaving of technology, paper and culture in a ‘new mapping’ of the history of film, Egbe identifies where the material and immaterial traces of the subject appear. Finally in this section, conservator and researcher **Athanasios Velios** contributes an important perspective too often under-represented in discussions of materiality: how the knowledge produced by conservators and their practices might be reflected in the archive catalogue. Outlining the limitations of current archival software tools for capturing materiality, he discusses the potential of the CIDOC (International Committee for Documentation) Conceptual Reference Model (CRM), an ontological model created for cultural reference organisations, to rectify this, and encourages new, materially focussed descriptive practice. The model is a response to some of the challenges raised by Ala Rekrut to make materiality visible, and ‘to balance the current bias towards *content* [as opposed to material, my italics] description’.

Part IV **Beyond the archives: expanding the frame** concludes the volume by reaching outwards beyond the conventional boundaries and emplacements of the archive, reflecting contemporary concerns about what materials and materialities are accepted into the archive, whose stories are told there, and to whom they belong in material form. These chapters show how expansions of the concept of what, and where, the archive is, can not only bring new forms of knowledge into play but also more voices in its ownership and formulation: what it is allowed to say. They consider what constitutes the archive at this moment in time: what we need it to be doing, and for whom. **James Lowry and Forget Chaterere-Zambuko’s** photo essay draws on their *Lost Unities* exhibition in the online Museum of British Colonialism, to foreground material aspects of the so-called Migrated Archives, displaced archives taken from 37 former British colonies as they became independent, which were only acknowledged to exist by the British Government in 2010. Now held at the UK National Archives, in which context they ‘confirm a colonial fantasy’, physical and catalogue access to the records is limited, especially for those in whose countries they originated. The essay and the exhibition highlight the significance of space and place as physical manifestations of power through archives, through a material response to their physical expatriation, de- and re-contextualisation, a distance which the supposed potential of digital surrogacy serves only to increase. These displaced archives are, as the authors show, ‘a symbol of the unfinished business of decolonisation’. Next, curator **Claire Smith** takes us through the complex materialities of the quilt as not only a ‘textile document’ but also a ‘record system for largely anonymised and hidden histories’. Among the multiple layers of transactions held in the quilt are the paper templates of the piecing technique, which repurpose other paper forms, themselves bearing

fragments of text, ‘papery transactions that move beyond reading’. Like Dever, Smith connects the roots of textile and text, and their figurative as well as their constructive applications, testament to ‘a shared drive between textile, text and paper towards a consistent narrative’. Drawing on Agamben and Husserl’s work on gesture, and Lepicki’s ideas of the archival nature of the body, **Ben Cranfield** uses an analysis of performance work by Trajal Harrell to present the archival fragment as both evidence and persistent materiality. He proposes that all archival fragments can be framed as gestures, performative pieces of ‘radical materiality’ which create new possibilities as a form of queer archive or ‘queer (dis)order’. In this way, gesture is a ‘material support’ in the re-imagining of the present. The volume closes with a collaborative chapter, with archivist and researcher **Sarah Haylett** as lead author, in which a project team captures moments from their own real-world considerations of archives and material manifestations of socially engaged art practice. The team brings together the Tate research project ‘Reshaping the collectible: when artworks live in the museum’ with Tate Exchange, a programming stream exploring what happens ‘when art and society meet’. The collaboration offers a participative approach to archive-making, between the museum and its communities, with the opportunity to challenge conventional boundaries between the record, the archive and the artwork and who is authorised to decide. Cara Courage’s vision of ‘a really beautiful living, breathing, dynamic archive [that] has relevance and use for people’ brings together not only the ideas in this final chapter, but the ambitions of all the volume’s contributors, ‘exploring what our archive may be’.

Note

- 1 For more on definitions, see Breakell (2008); for an account of the archivist’s work on the archive, see McNally (2013); for a practical guide to understanding professional framings of archives as encountered by researchers, see Archives Hub <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/guides/whatarearchives/#definition>

References

- Acland, C.R. (ed) (2006) *Residual Media*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Appadurai, A. (1986) ‘Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value’, in Appadurai, A. (ed), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Attfield, J. (2000) *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Bennett, J. (2010) *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Breakell, S. (2008) ‘Perspectives: negotiating the archive’, *Tate Papers*, 9. www.tate.org.uk/research/tate-papers/09/perspectives-negotiating-the-archive [accessed 1/08/2022].
- Breakell, S. (2015) ‘Archival practices and the practice of archives’, *Archives and Records*, 36(1), pp. 1–5.
- Brown, N. (2021) ‘The makings of manuscripts: more than what’s written on the page’. <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/the-makings-of-manuscripts-more-than-whats-written-on-the-page/>

- Bruchet, E.A. (2019) *Curation and the Archive: Entanglements of Discourse and Practice*. PhD Thesis, University of Brighton. https://cris.brighton.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/21322446/Bruchet_Thesis_final_full_version_Redacted.pdf
- Burton, A. (2005) 'Introduction', in Burton, A. (ed), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Callahan, S. (2022) *Art + Archive: Understanding the Archival Turn in Contemporary Art*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Caswell, M., Punzalan, T. and Sangwand, T. (2017) 'Critical archival studies: an introduction', *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies*, 1(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v1i2.50>
- Cifor, M. and Gilliland, A. (2016) 'Affect and the archive, archives and their affects: an introduction to the Special Issue', *Archival Science*, 16, pp. 1–6. DOI: 10.1007/s10502-015-9263-3
- Clarke, P., Jones, S., Kaye N. and Linsley, J. (2018) 'Introduction: Inside and Outside the Archive', in *Artists in the Archive: Creative and Curatorial Engagements with Documents of Art and Performance*. Abingdon (Oxon): Routledge.
- Dever, M. (2013) 'Provocations on the pleasures of archived paper', *Archives and Manuscripts*, 41(3), pp. 173–182. DOI: 10.1080/01576895.2013.841550
- Dever, M. (2014) 'Photographs and manuscripts: working in the archive', *Archives and Manuscripts*, 42(3), pp. 282–294. DOI: 10.1080/01576895.2014.956322
- Dever, M. and Morra, L. (2014) 'Editorial: Literary archives, materiality and the digital', *Archives and Manuscripts*, 42(3), pp. 223–226.
- Edwards, E. (2009) 'Photography and the material performance of the past', *History and Theory*, 48, pp. 130–150. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2303.2009.00523.x>
- Edwards, E. and Hart, J. (2004) 'Introduction: Photographs as Objects', in Edwards, E. and J. Hart (eds), *Photographs, Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*. London: Routledge, pp. 1–15.
- Farge, A. (2015) *The Allure of the Archive*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Gansky, P. (2013) 'Severed objects: spellbound, archives, exhibitions, and film's material history', *Film History*, 25(3), pp. 126–148. <https://doi.org/10.2979/filmhistory.25.3.126>
- Glassie, H. (1999) *Material Culture*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Goudarouli, E. and Prescott, A. (forthcoming) *Materialities of the Archive in a Digital Age*. Proceedings of the British Academy, Oxford: University of Oxford Press.
- Hannan, L. and Longair, S. (2017) *History through Material Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Harvey, K. (2017) *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*. Abingdon (Oxon): Routledge.
- Kathryn, M.R. (2010) 'Dirty books: quantifying patterns of use in medieval manuscripts using a densitometer', *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art*, 2, pp. 1–2.
- Kopytoff, I. (1986) 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditisation as Process', in Appadurai, A. (ed), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lange-Berndt, P. (2015) 'Introduction: How to be Complicit with Materials' in *Materiality, Documents of Contemporary Art*. London, Whitechapel/Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lee, J.A. (2021) *Producing the Archival Body*. Abingdon (Oxon): Routledge.
- McNally, A. (2013) 'All that Stuff: Organising Records of Creative Processes' in Vaknin, J., K. Stuckey, and V. Lane, (eds), *All This Stuff: Archiving the Artist*. Faringdon, Oxon: Libri Publishing.

- Miller, D. (2010) *Stuff*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Nora, P. (1989) 'Between memory and history: Les Lieux de Mémoire' *Representations*, 26, pp. 7–24. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520>
- Pringle, E., Mavin, H., Greenhalgh, T., Dalal-Clayton, A., Rutherford, A., Bramwell, J., Blackford, K. and Balukiewicz, K. (2022) Provisional Semantics: Addressing the challenges of representing multiple perspectives within an evolving digitised national collection (Version 2). Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7081347>. <https://zenodo.org/record/7081347#.ZFT5ruzMKbQ>
- Rekrut, A. (2006) 'Material literacy: reading records as material culture', *Archivaria*, 60 (September), pp. 11–37. <https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/12513>
- Richardson, C. (2021) 'Written Texts and the Performance of Materiality', in Gerritsen, A. and G. Riello (eds), *Writing Material Culture History*. London: Bloomsbury, pp. 43–58.
- Schouwenburg, H. (2015) 'Back to the future?', *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity*, 3(1), pp. 59–72. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18352/22130624-00301003>
- Stoler, L.A. (2009) *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Tilley, C. (2002) 'Metaphor, Materiality and Interpretation: Introduction', in Buchli, V. (ed), *The Material Culture Reader*. Oxford: Berg, pp. 23–26.
- Vaknin, J., Stuckey, K. and Lane, V. (2013) *All This Stuff: Archiving the Artist*. Faringdon, Oxon: Libri Publishing.
- Yaneva, E. (2020) *Crafting History: Archiving and the Question of Architectural Legacy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Part I

In the archive

Practices and encounters



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

‘Material evidences surviving in the form of writing’

Materiality in archival theory and practice

Alexandrina Buchanan

Introduction

Both within the discipline of archival studies and in research using archives, either as sources or as objects of study, there have been recent calls for a ‘material turn’ (Cifor 2017; Dever 2013, 2014, 2017, 2019; Lester 2018; Rekrut 2006). Meanwhile, scholars whose work has been characterised as ‘new materialist’, including Karen Barad and Jane Bennett, have sought to contest a human-centred definition of agency, redefining the interactions between human and non-human matter in ways that have obvious significance for our understanding of the role of archives in events. Whilst these enterprises and their theoretical underpinnings are unprecedented in their emphases, it can be posited that ‘thinking through paper’ (Dever 2013) is not a wholly original exercise and that the agency of archives has already been recognised within archival theory and practice. In its focus on documents *per se*, rather than as sources for history or other constructive practices, archival studies is – or could be – essentially materially orientated. As Terry Eastwood once suggested,

Banal as it is to say, the focus of archival studies is the nature of archives, not even the nature of the archivist’s duties, for everything flows from an understanding of the nature of the things unto which things are done.

(Eastwood 1988, 245)

Whilst this statement implies the passivity of archival materials, their role as an ‘artificial memory’ and as ‘an actual part of the activities which gave them birth’ (Jenkinson 1922, 23 and Jenkinson 1948) potentially situates them as an active agent in events. My argument therefore is that an appreciation of materiality has always been integral to archival discourse, but that this can be hard to trace, for various reasons.

Looking primarily at the UK, my approach in this chapter will be both archaeological in the Foucauldian sense, looking through history to explore operational paradigms and how these tended to occlude discussion of materiality, and assertive, calling upon those within both the academic discipline and the profession of

archives to identify and acknowledge the (often tacit) expertise of their own practices, not simply modelling their theories on those borrowed from other disciplines.

When looking for evidence of attention to archival materiality, I have considered the following aspects: documents' and archives' form, materials, manufacture and meanings(s) (considered in both empirical/formalistic terms and in terms of social and cultural significance); their physical presence and occupation of space; their material temporality – their capacity to transcend their moment of production, which exists alongside their vulnerability, and the bodily materiality of the archivist. I have looked both for discussion of these aspects and associated practices.

Early history

In complex societies throughout history, whilst oral traditions remain vital for cultural transmission, material inscription was considered the most reliable means of authenticating and communicating information across space and time. Materiality and archival creation therefore go hand in hand. Materials which were difficult to obtain or expensive to produce became associated with more prestigious documents and, particularly in pre-literate societies, the material dimensions of documents – their structure, the symbolism of their textuality and physical elements like seals – could be more important in asserting their authority than the textual content (Mauntel 2015). We also see general awareness of the longevity of materials as a consideration for documents intended to be preserved for posterity. In ancient Greece and Rome, archival information deemed important by rulers was published for preservation and wider access by being engraved on stone *stele* or on the walls of public buildings (Delsalle 2017, 18, 26). Although printing on paper transformed the availability of information, Abbot Trithem (1462–1516) continued to recommend parchment for long-term preservation (Tribble & Trubeck 2003). The choices involved in selecting materials and the understanding required to interpret the significance of documents therefore presuppose considerable material literacy, acquired both by training (learning the rules) and personal experience. As with much cultural knowledge, however, it often remained tacit, only requiring explication to anyone unfamiliar with the issues and codes involved.

The early modern period

The materiality of documents came under scrutiny alongside attempts to understand and explain the materiality of alien recordkeeping systems. Such discussions may have occurred whenever one culture had to engage with another and are particularly a feature of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe, resulting from colonialist expansion, renewed interest in the ancient world and attempts to manage the medieval legacy to benefit the new *status quo*. These centuries therefore saw a body of scholarship emerge to meet these challenges, generally characterised as 'antiquarianism' which is where we first find clear evidence of scholarly sensitivity to documentary materiality.

As Arnaldo Momigliano has argued, antiquarianism, although based on earlier materials-based investigations, was first articulated and practised as an approach from the sixteenth century (Momigliano 1966). Antiquarians distinguished themselves from historians by their focus on material objects, offering both a means of authenticating or critiquing literary accounts and a source for periods and places not discussed by Classical authors. Moreover, just as modern concern with materiality has emerged alongside the digital turn, so its early modern counterpart emerged alongside the rise of new techniques of print and engraving (Boehm & Mills 2017). In both, the developments have been symbiotic: through the wide circulation, systematisation, recontextualisation and discussion of textual and visual representations of objects (including textual objects), the absences from such renditions become more evident, and object-orientated scholarship can emerge.

Developed as a branch of antiquarianism, a new methodology termed 'diplomatic[s]' was likewise concerned with using the past's material traces as an alternative source of evidence, for legal as much as historical purposes. Diplomatic method examines the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of a document, the latter defined as 'those which constitute the material make-up of the document and its external appearance' (Duranti 1998, 134). In the first volume of *De Re Diplomatica*, which first codified diplomatic methods (Mabillon 1681; McDonald 1979), Dom Jean Mabillon studied the materials from which documents were made, while the fourth book, by Michael Germain, looked at the places where documents were created. The materiality of individual documents was an essential element, with close attention being paid to documentary media, seals, styles of handwriting and so on. Although diplomatic was not synonymous with archival literature (Friedrich 2018, 65), the two were clearly allied and modern archival scholars have identified diplomatic scholarship as a point of origin for archival theory (Duranti 1998; Williams 2005), building material analysis into the field from the outset.

Although antiquarianism established a set of tools and a rationale for studying materiality, to detractors, its focus on the material traces of the past could be seen as a distraction, sometimes even an obsession. Antiquaries were decried for their love of the rust and dust of Antiquity, the mouldering materiality of manuscripts, the dirt of potshards and tarnished medals. Francis Bacon expressed disdain for its methods: in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), he defines antiquarianism as 'Historie defaced, or some remnants of History, which haue casually escaped the shipwreck of time', and which are brought forth

when industrious persons by an exact and scrupulous diligence and obseruation, out of Monuments, Names, Wordes, Prouerbes, Traditions, Priuate Recordes, and Euidences, Fragments of stories, Passages of Bookes, that concerne not storie, and the like, doe saue and recouer somewhat from the deluge of time.

(Bacon 2000, 65–66)

Here the focus on the material (monuments, private records and evidences) is subsumed within a list of topics whose significance, rather than their physicality, was