Making Archives in Early Modern Europe

European states were overwhelmed with information around 1500. Their agents sought to organize their overflowing archives to provide trustworthy evidence and comprehensive knowledge useful in the everyday exercise of power. This detailed comparative study explores cases from Lisbon to Vienna to Berlin to understand how changing information technologies and ambitious programs of state-building challenged record-keepers to find new ways to organize and access the information in their archives. From the intriguing details of how clerks invented new ways to index and catalog the expanding world to the evolution of new perspectives on knowledge and power among philologists and historians, this book provides illuminating vignettes and revealing comparisons about a core technology of governance in early modern Europe. Enhanced by perspectives from the history of knowledge and from archival science, this wide-ranging study explores the potential and the limitations of knowledge management as media technologies evolved.

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Proof, Information, and Political Record-Keeping, 1400–1700

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Preface
Writing the History of Archives

> "Archivorum quoque animam nihil aliud quam ordinem esse, jure dixerimus."
>
> We would rightly say that the soul of archives, too, is nothing else than order. Baldessare Bonifacio, *Liber de Archivis*, 1632[1]

In 1337, the city of Siena in Italy purchased a cat to protect its archive from mice.[2] The most interesting feature of this minor transaction is the fact that we know about it at all. What possessed the city fathers of Siena, like political actors all across Europe in the late Middle Ages, not only to begin recording seemingly trivial transactions, but also to provide so well for the careful organization and preservation of the resulting documents that we can still unearth them more than 600 years later? Towns and princes all over Europe began preserving and managing an astonishing number of records in the fourteenth century, produced by various authorities and by their citizens or subjects, so that we can today leaf through a register, browse a document bundle, or consult a manuscript index to find out about every kind of public business from the distant past – even about public cats. The proliferation of written records organized and stored for posterity that took off in late medieval Europe continued at a rising pace through the following centuries, and accelerated even more from the nineteenth century right to the present. This "birth of the archive," as Markus Friedrich calls it, amplified the scope of governance through secretarial practices that recorded a wide variety of information, kept the resulting records in more or less organized repositories, and then drew on these repositories to support political authority in various ways. Access to ordered archives allowed rulers to guide their future actions by learning about past circumstances, thus engaging more effectively in contestations over power, privilege, and property.[3]

[1] Bonifacius, *Liber de Archivis,* 10. The entire text is translated in Born, "Baldessare Bonifacio."
[2] Koch, "Die Archivierung," 64.
[3] Friedrich, *Birth.* This study complements Friedrich's important synthesis, which situates practices of record-keeping among multiple social contexts.

This book concentrates on one aspect of this sustained development, which became a cornerstone of state power in Europe and in the European colonial world (as it was in many other political systems around the globe): how European secretaries and archivists sought to establish order among the ever-growing mass of stored records, and how their efforts could fail. It examines how those responsible for public records from about 1400 to 1700 developed tools for managing documents and the information they contained, including inventories, storage architectures, and indexes, all taking place within an emerging institution, the state archive. The chapters that follow begin by investigating the work that political authorities imagined that stored records could do, and the enterprises to which such records were relevant. I then turn to a series of detailed case studies of secretarial practice and archival organization to demonstrate the growing differentiation of functions and of spaces that were key to the developments involved.

From about 1400 to about 1700, practices of organizing documents traversed a trajectory, with many variations, that began with repositories imagined as hidden treasuries of material proofs, continued through a phase during which archivists sought to organize records according to their content (a project that turned out to be fraught with difficulties), and began converging around 1700 in new approaches that categorized stored information primarily according to its place in the transaction of political business. This arc of development always proceeded in close correlation with evolving practices of government in Western Europe, referred to by historians as the rise of the early modern state. Changes in archival practice also permeated Europe's larger systems of knowledge as they developed – although with substantial autonomy, as I will argue. Both erudite and popular knowledge horizons were transformed after 1400: Technological changes such as movable-type printing, global changes such as new routes of commerce and conquest beyond Europe, and cultural changes that are captured under the terms "humanism" and "scientific revolution" all had an impact on what and how Europeans knew about their world. Archives were one distinctive site where such changes became manifest.

The arc I have just sketched out was anything but smooth, and a second important finding of this book is that information management practices in archives from the fourteenth to eighteenth century were extremely heterogeneous, even though they rested on a remarkably stable foundation of fundamental media technologies that included the loose-leaf paper or parchment document and the bound book. Manuscript books will play a particularly prominent role in the story laid out in the following chapters, because in the High Middle Ages, they represented a

channel through which a sophisticated suite of knowledge tools moved from the world of scholarship to the world of administration. Changing conceptions of what made stored records authentic and authoritative once again drew on the world of erudition in the seventeenth century, ushering in the transformations around 1700 that represent the endpoint of this study, as pathways opened toward the emerging world of administrative states resting on systemic control and deployment of information.

Author's Note and Acknowledgments

The research presented here began with a chance encounter in an archive. While working on an entirely different project on Swiss political culture, I innocently asked a Zurich archivist whether any inventories from the sixteenth or seventeenth century survived. The archivist pointed me toward Johann Heinrich Waser's remarkable *Index archivorum generalis* of 1646, which was so captivating that I have been working on archival history for more than 20 years since. I could never have come this far without the enthusiastic support I have received from many directions. It is a pleasure to thank every person and institution who contributed, though the passage of time and the fallibility of my own archive means that the record here is surely incomplete. I am also grateful to the many scholars of medieval Europe, early modern Europe, and archival science that I cite, and I apologize in advance for every time I have missed their point or overlooked their contribution.

Professional archivists across Europe answered my questions with insight and enthusiasm, and occasionally bent their rules so that I could work more effectively with the material they preserved. Many stepped beyond the requirements of their position to lead me to resources and to help me along my path, and deserve my personal thanks. José Luis Rodríguez de Diego welcomed me to Simancas early in this project, and personally led me on a tour through the spaces of this remarkable facility, in continuous operation since 1540. His enthusiasm convinced me that I might be on to something, while his publications, including his priceless edition of Philip II's *Instrucción* for the operation of Simancas, provided invaluable insight and theoretical depth at a critical phase. Christoph Haidacher in Innsbruck welcomed me for two substantial visits in Innsbruck, and enabled me to inspect materials in the archival stacks. On the second occasion, when unanticipated construction closed the archive's reading room, he went far beyond the call of duty to set up a private reading room with staff on hand. When I met Leopold Auer, director of the Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv in Vienna, he invited me to come to his archive, and once I was there, directed the

staff to help me in every way possible. Finally, during my work in The Hague, Eric Ketelaar not only connected me with a remarkable team of scholars working on Dutch archives, but invited me to his study for penetrating questions and invaluable insight, which has continued since. The following archivists also provided warm welcome and support: Dr. Jens Martin (Würzburg), Dr. Silvester Lacerda (Torre do Tombo), Franziska Mücke and Dr. Jürgen Kloosterhuis (GStA-PK, Berlin), and Dr. Anton Gössi (Lucerne).

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A team of high-powered scholars whose own research is about archives was particularly important. Eric Ketelaar has supported my research since we met at a Radcliffe conference, organized by Ann Blair. Arndt

Brendecke's scholarship has shaped my own in many ways, while Simon Teuscher in Zurich and Regula Schmid in Bern discussed Swiss and medieval matters. During an early phase of the project, Roger Sablonier provided me with workspace and library access at the University of Zurich. Filippo de Vivo and his remarkable ARCHives team at Birkbeck College, University of London, let me learn from their work. Maria de Lurdes Rosa in Lisbon invited me to become an outside member of the Digit.ARQ team on Portuguese family archives. Markus Friedrich and I have been trading ideas and papers for a decade, and he has often corrected me. Anthony Grafton lent me his office at the Princeton University Library one summer as I read up on German registry.

Colleagues, staff, and students at the University of California, Riverside also deserve thanks. Over the years, Michael Cox, Benjamin Esswein, Russell Fehr, Josh Lieser, Colin Whiting, and Katrin Boniface served as research assistants; Colin Whiting, Conrad Rudolf, and Juliette Levy provided assistance in translating particularly thorny passages in Latin and Spanish; and the Interlibrary Loan Department of the Tomás Rivera Library has reached far and wide to fulfill my requests.

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I have enjoyed many opportunities to speak about my work. Parts of this project have been presented in England (Birkbeck and University Colleges, University of London), France (Institute Universitaire de France), Germany (Herzog–August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel; Centre for Manuscript Cultures, University of Hamburg), Portugal (Universidade Nova, Lisbon), and Switzerland (Schweizerische Akademie der Geisteswissenschaften, Monte Veritá). I have spoken at conferences including the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference, the American Historical Association Conference, the German Frühe Neuzeitstagung, and the Renaissance Studies Conference. Several American universities have extended a welcome, including the University of California, Berkeley; University of California, Los Angeles; University of California, Riverside;

University of Arizona; University of Chicago; Duke University; Princeton University; Radcliffe Institute; and University of Virginia. In addition, I thank audiences at conferences sponsored by various research institutions for hearing me out, including at the American Philosophical Society, the British Academy, the Clark Library, the Huntington Library, the Institute for Advanced Studies (Princeton), and the Newberry Library.

Material from this project has previously appeared in print in the following venues: Michael Böhler et al., eds., *Republikanische Tugend: Ausbildung eines Schweizer Nationalbewusstseins und Erziehung eines neuen Bürgers* (Geneva: Slatkine, 2000); André Holenstein, Wim Blockmans, and Jon Mathieu, eds., *Empowering Interactions: Political Cultures and the Emergence of the State in Europe, 14th–19th Centuries* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Robin Barnes and Marjorie Plummer, eds., *Ideas and Cultural Margins in Early Modern Germany: Essays in Honor of H. C. Erik Midelfort* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009); Karin Friedrich, ed., *Opening Spaces: Constructions, Visions and Depictions of Spaces and Boundaries in the Baroque* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014); Arndt Brendecke, ed., *Praktiken in der Frühe Neuzeit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015); Maria de Lurdes Rosa and Randolph C. Head, eds., *Rethinking the Archive in Pre-Modern Europe: Family Archives and Their Inventories from the 15th to 19th Century* (Lisbon: Instituto de Estudos Medievais, 2015); Anne Gilliland, Sue McKemmish, and Andrew Lau, eds., *Research in the Archival Multiverse* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2016); and Liesbeth Corens, Kate Peters, and Alexandra Walsham, eds., *Accessing the Past: Archives, Records and Early Modern History, Proceedings of the British Academy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). I have also published articles related to this project in the *Journal of Modern History* (2003), *Archival Science* (2007), *The Historical Journal* (2013), and *European History Quarterly* (2016).

This project has required long absences from home for travel across the Atlantic and around Europe, as well as to many conferences and workshops. My entire family has helped bear these burdens. My mother was patient even when a fellowship took me away from Southern California just after she moved there, and has not only supported me but constantly expressed her fascination in the project and her pride in my work. Throughout it all, my partner and spouse Chih-Cheng Tsai undertook everything needed for me to get as far as I have. I dedicate this book to him.