

—Samuel Edquist—Archival Divides:
Archives as Contested Realities and
Metaphors—

Introduction

Archive is a highly ambiguous word, meaning different things for different people, in society at large as well as in more scholarly and theoretical contexts. Already within the sphere of archival institutions where people work as archivists, the term *archive(s)* has at least three meanings. The first one – also called *fonds* – follows the principle of provenance that has dominated since the late nineteenth century: a delineated group of records created or received by a specific creator and kept together afterwards. A second, and older, meaning is a concrete place, a repository – a building or room – that contain archives in the first meaning.¹ Thirdly, the archive can also denote organisations, such as the National Archives, which might hold several archives-as-repositories and thousands of archives-as-fonds. However, within a larger cultural field, the term *archive* has further connotations. It is used metaphorically, as well as more concretely for gatherings of remaining stuff that also contain published books, art and other kinds of objects. In academia outside the field of archival science, there is a corresponding tendency to use wider notions of the archive, especially in the general humanities following the tradition of the so-called archival turn.

In this article, I will further elaborate on the multifaceted meanings of the archives, by arguing that the inherent paradoxes of archives have fostered a number of concrete archival divides. The divides will be presented as a set of concrete examples in which various groups in society have profoundly dissimilar views on archives, both in its concrete sense as gatherings of certain physical objects, but also in its more conceptual senses, for example, what the word is supposed to mean. I argue that recent technological, professional and academic developments have led to deepening

divides in different arenas in the latest decades: within the sphere of professional archivists, between archivists and researchers, and within the academic field. Apart from the aim of mapping these divides, which apply both to concrete and conceptual archives, I wish to suggest new directions for transdisciplinary cooperation in academia. I argue that such deepened crossbreeding might both broaden traditional archival science and give new perspectives to archival studies in the general humanities, where there is often a tendency to over-emphasise the historical aspect of archives – as more or less hidden and mysterious remnants of the past.

Archival paradoxes

In the following, I will first dwell on some of the inherent *paradoxes* of archives. These paradoxes come to existence in everyday archival practices, but, since they are paradoxes, they tend to make both actual physical archives and metaphorical ‘archives’ exciting and mystical for many. They are the breeding ground for the concrete divides which I will discuss afterwards.

Keeping and destroying, looking backward and forward

Most people, especially those who are not familiar with archives, associate archiving with keeping and retention. Archives are saved for the benefit of memory and history-writing, and archiving is then easily regarded as the very antithesis of disposal, destruction, and forgetting. However, all archives are the results of constant negotiations between keeping and destroying, and most documents and pieces of information never end up as archival records for long-time preservation. It has therefore been aptly put, that archives are rather characterised by *silence* than its opposite: most aspects of life

never end up in archival records, and when there are records, the information we want to see is not there to be found.²

Another way of seeing this is that archiving is a process that both look backward and into the future at the same time. Records are delineated, ordered and stored for future use – normally for a very near future, for the benefit of the person or organisation that creates its own archive, or for obeying laws and regulations. But the very act of archiving is to *record* things as evidences or potential sources of information – hence the aspect of constant creating things that will immediately function as traces from the past.

The rationality and irrationality of archives

One of the most fascinating paradoxes of archives is that between extreme orderliness and seemingly randomness or contingency. The orderliness lies in legal regulations, filing plans, and archivists’ and records managers’ efforts to demarcate archival holdings and control record-making as well as record-keeping. But, actual bodies of records often demonstrate the opposite of rationality. The randomness is most visible when looking at past archives when the archival rationalities of the creator are not possible to reconstruct, when the internal structure of an archive as well as the border between archive and non-archive seems haphazardous. This paradox, I guess, is maybe the most important breeding ground for the “romance of the archive” that figures as a cultural stereotype in literature and art,³ but which also can be more or less sensed in scholarly works by historians investigating archives.⁴

But also contemporary archive-making can be virtually impossible to fully map, unless you have access to the minds of all people involved in the creator’s handling of information. Many personal archives or archives of private sector associations totally lack any

archiving plan during the time of creation, and therefore consist of the largely accidental amassment of those records that for some reason were kept and stored in certain locations. Most such archives are therefore (re)constructed afterwards, when being handed over to an archival institution.

But even when there is the most well-planned archiving, in a larger organisation or government agency, the end result will have elements of being something left behind. The contemporary digital development has only enhanced the levels of contingency, and they might grow even larger.

Consequently, archiving is normally hard to plan. Legislators and archivists of larger organisations may have the possibility to set out principles, filing plans and the like, but they normally have limited control over their actual implementation. There is a vast amount of informal, organic, and unintentional destruction – or non-keeping – of documents that occurs with few or no traces. Things are destroyed since the officials are not aware of archiving rules, and if records are never registered and/or kept in some kind of common repository, they often disappear totally when officials quit their jobs. There is also the opposite phenomenon – the informal keeping of documents that archival authorities find unnecessary and expensive. So-called “archival care” has to a large extent included how to get creators to be better in not handing over doublets, copies and drafts to the archival institution.⁵

In most times, in most countries, archives are created by the will of the creator, with the usefulness argument as the driving force. This development of archives, governed by the will of the creator, was also strongly recommended by archivists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, in harmony with the principle of provenance. According to the influential British archival theorist Hilary

Jenkinson, the archivist’s role was to respect the will of the creator, and guard and keep the integrity of the archive. It was thus seen as anti-archival to include possible future uses of archives in appraisal processes. Jenkinson put it bluntly: “Archives were not drawn up in the interest or for the information of Posterity”. Only such archives could be regarded as “impartial”, developed organically from the creator.⁶

Jenkinson’s view on archives as not created for posteriority should not be taken too literally. There are plentiful examples of the contrary, that creators actively form the archives with external (contemporary or future) users in their minds.⁷ Rather, Jenkinson’s view should be seen as normative, echoing a historian’s mindset, that future historians might find sources that are reflections of their creator, not defiled by vain attempts of looking into the future. By regarding archival records as pure traces of transactions, they could be seen as “impartial” and therefore possible to use for future historians as untouched traces from the past.

The question whether archives are developed as the largely unintended by-products after the fulfilment of the primary interest – time-limited record-keeping for pragmatic reasons – or if they are created for other concerns, cannot find an absolute answer. Only in a relatively small number of cases, archives are *primarily* constructed for heritage and identity purposes. That is often the case with “community archives” and similar efforts by marginalised groups – for example ethnic minorities – that collect records as a way of keeping control of what is perceived as their own history.

Most archives, however, are mainly formed by administrative and legal transactions, deeply influenced by documentary cultures, and material factors regarding writing, storage and reproduction. Archives are also generally reflecting the needs and interests of the

creators, but normally for contemporary purposes rather than for future historiography. It was only in the early-modern age that external interests – for the benefits of history-writing and even later for freedom of information interests – became important in archival policy.⁸ The conscious adding in the nineteenth century of the “historical” target for archives was of course also a reflection of the state interest of the time.⁹ In the public sector, archiving regulations have since then been partly steered by premises that have future users – for long primarily in the academy – in the sight. Archival *institutions* are also to a large extent developed as heritage institutions, that gather various archives within a certain political or social movement, or geographical region, or national or ethnic category. Also national state archives can be seen as such, as *collections* of archives for the benefit of national identity.¹⁰ But the archives as *fonds* were not mainly created for identity purposes.

Archives as emancipatory and oppressive

Another paradox lies within the power aspects of archives. In certain concrete cases it might be disputed whether oppression lies in being *excluded* from the archives, or on the contrary, if it is oppression to be *part* of the archival holdings. Or to put it differently: is it favourable to be included in the archival records, or should we have the right to be forgotten? These aspects are particularly burning when it comes to sensitive personal information in archives. The same archival record might be used as an evidence on maltreatment and abuse, and as a source of information on a marginalised group, but it can also be potentially dangerous, if it comes into the wrong hands, leading to new forms of abuse or public shame.¹¹

The relation between archives and power has been the subject for many studies over the last decades. A dominant current in these

discussions have been that of identifying archives with power, and hence, powerlessness as being outside the archives. The general radicalisation of the 1960s onwards paved way for increased discussions on the circumstance that most archives have documented the elites of society, the wealthy and powerful, rather than the broad masses, the minorities, the marginalised. When the latter appeared in archives, it was generally as the objects of government implementation of politics, as clients of hospitals, prisons, or welfare systems, not as independent subjects speaking with their own voices. When professional archivists have suggested ways to handle this, the general solution has been to broaden the archives, with ideas about “filling the gaps” by “activist archivists”, by strategies aiming at documenting society at large rather than merely the state, and in recent years with the upspring of “community archives” where marginalised groups take control of their own archives, often holding broader views on archiving than the traditional nineteenth century principle of provenance, gathering physical records originating from specific organisations.¹²

Originating outside the traditional field of archivists, the question of power of archives have also been heavily influenced by (post) structuralist and deconstructionist theories. In particular, Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever* (1995, in English 1996) immediately became heavily influential in academic discussions on archives, both in the general humanities and within archival science. It has become regularly noted that archiving as such is always happening in a context of power relations, in which all processes of creating, delineating, ordering, appraising and describing archival holdings – just as everything else happening in society – must be interpreted as (re) producing and/or combatting existing hierarchies and dominant discourses and ideologies.¹³

By definition, deconstructionist and post-structuralist perspectives stress paradoxes, ironies and inconsistencies. Even so, it might be claimed that archives and archiving is a largely paradoxical phenomenon, also when regarded outside the theoretical contexts of post-structuralism.

Multiple archival divides

Since the very phenomenon of archives is full of paradoxes, there is an inherent tendency that different groups within society mean different things when they deal with archives. The paradoxes of archives therefore lead to divisions between people doing things with archives. With the recent changes of technology, along with an increasing interest for the archive among scholars and in the arts, I argue the archival field as a whole is characterised by *multiple archival divides*. The concept of “archival divides” has been used before. For example, Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg convincingly argue in their book *Processing the Past* (2011) that such an “archival divide” has developed between historians and professional archivists during the last decades.¹⁴ In my following discussion, I wish to further elaborate some thoughts on that archival divide, and also discuss some other archival divides: within the profession of archivists, as well as within academia.¹⁵

The archival divide between archivists and historians

Blouin and Rosenberg argue that until the 1960s and 1970s, archivists were often historians by training, and both categories had largely similar views on how to conceptualise archives and what measures that were appropriate in archival appraisal. After that, they have gone different directions. Historians have departed

from an earlier positivist methodology where largely inductive analyses based on written archival sources dominated. They have increasingly come to use other sources and thereby questioned the former reliance of written archival sources, hand in hand with an appropriation of theories from other disciplines.

Meanwhile, archivists have increasingly left the earlier aspirations of trying to appraise information in records by predicting the research needs of future users. Instead, the emphasis has come to focus on preserving evidence of things that have occurred within the record-creating bodies, forced by the growing complexity of today’s digital information structures. In the words of Blouin and Rosenberg, archivists lean towards a new essentialism, away from the authority of history. If anticipating future use is not seen as outright impossible, such aspirations must anyway step aside for the more urgent needs of trying to save the necessary evidential information from creators.¹⁶

Blouin and Rosenberg’s picture is only partially applicable. For example, in Swedish archival practice, archivists often still aim at preserving for future researchers. The theoretical stance that it is *impossible* or *uncalled-for* to predict future use and that one therefore should go alternate ways such as concentrating on records as evidence of occurrences within the creator, has been discussed but not implemented.¹⁷ The existing appraisal policy is formulated in the tradition of leading North American archivist Theodore W. Schellenberg, which in the 1950s proposed that decisions on what records that would end up for long-time preservation in archival institutions should put great weight on the possible interests of researchers and citizens other than the creator, and furthermore that records should be preserved not only as evidences of the creator’s deeds, but also as sources of information on any other aspect that might be collected

from the records (for example information on the people that came into contact with the creator). The existing practice in Swedish government archives might be described as pragmatic and a form of itinerant guess-work. In the absence of clear-cut and uncontroversial alternatives, it is impossible to judge that as a failure or a conservative inability to adapt to contemporary archival theory.¹⁸ Also in archival handbooks aimed at an international audience, such a pragmatic strategy is still explicitly proposed.¹⁹

However, Blouin and Rosenberg's divide is more appropriate for describing actual records creation and the archival profession, which now mainly recruits non-historians. Most Swedish archivists today work with contemporary records management, rather than with historical archives. They face a sometimes Sisyphean struggle to challenge masses of information and the existence of disparate digital information systems with few or any functions for long-time preservation. There are signs that the core of archival work – keeping fixed records containing evidence and (potential) information – is under pressure in a digital age where public authorities prioritise contemporary business usage and information interactions with citizens, rather than the long-term focus on archiving records.²⁰ When the work consists in trying to save at least those records that are absolutely necessary in order to avoid scandal and economic loss, only the lucky can have time for guessing future use.

Archival divides within the archival world

There is also a divide inside the arena of traditional archives and record-keeping, which I have already touched upon in the previous sections: between those who mainly handle (analogue) historical records at archival institutions, and those whose main task is to plan the (almost exclusively digital) record-making structures of creators,

largely for shorter-term retention purposes. In some countries, both categories are called 'archivists', but for example in the Anglophone world, the latter are labelled 'records managers'. The main interest of the latter is to guard authenticity, integrity and fixity of records for the overall target of keeping evidences of previous transactions, and to at least prepare some of the records for future long-time preservation at proper archival institutions. It is a matter of dispute whether the division between "historical" archivists and "contemporary" archivists/records managers will diminish or be enlarged. The proponents of the first view argue that the complexity of the present digital world of records and information makes it necessary to be proactive and plan long-time preservation already when records are created.²¹ On the contrary, some fear that the archival mind will be totally put aside when those handling contemporary records wish to heighten their status by distancing from the traditional concepts such as *archives* and/or *records*, instead adopting identities such as specialists of information or information managers.²²

There are also partly corresponding divisions within the scholarly field that is often (but not exclusively) known as archival science,²³ an epistemological area in the crossroads between archival institutions and academia. It has evolved in the last decades as a largely practice oriented field, particularly centring on an older tradition of archival theory – for example the principle of provenance – that for a long time was largely focused on record-making and record-keeping in archives of public authorities. For a long time, most archival theorists were also historians, but in later decades, archival science has gradually been academically organised around those institutions where archivists get their training, which have largely resulted in distancing from historical departments. Instead, archival science is now often conducted in connection to (library and) information

studies and other fields aiming at analysing contemporary structures of data, records and information.²⁴

Still, archival science mainly centres on issues closely connected to the archival profession, besides discussing key concepts and areas such as records, documents, appraisal and description. The technical development has also turned the focus to, for example, developing viable methods for digital preservation and conceptualisations on how to reinterpret classical archival concepts such as authenticity, provenance and integrity in complex digital surroundings. However, the field is divided on the consequences of the digitisation of society. A popular but contested view is that records – the basic units of archival holdings – should be seen as a type or subset of *information*, which would imply that archival theory and scholarship should be integrated into a wider field of information science. That perspective corresponds with the view that archival and/or records management ought to be regarded as a form of information management.²⁵

A different example of the multifaceted outlook of archival theory is the tendency since the 1960s and 1970s to discuss wider social, political and cultural aspects of archiving: power structures within and around archives, including questions of identity and memory. Still here, the approach has been mainly normative, identifying methods on how to make the archives better reflect society as a whole, or how to strengthen archival pedagogy or community archives. Furthermore, since the 1990s, there is a substantial subgroup in archival science, which often explicitly labels itself “postmodernist” – probably one of few disciplines that regularly do so in an affirmative manner – especially by making references to Derrida’s *Archive Fever*. Representatives for this current, such as Terry Cook, Verne Harris and Eric Ketelaar, often focus on the omnipotent

power aspects of archiving in all its aspects: description, access, and appraisal.²⁶

To sum up, archival science is a heterogeneous field, largely held together by the connection to archival education and the professional field of archivists. Some are exploring viable practical solutions for everyday archival work, some are theorising on archival concepts, some discuss legal issues, and further some lean toward more general streams in the social and human sciences even though archives is the empirical object of study.²⁷ If the “core” of archival science consists of theories and methods on actual record-making and record-keeping, the archival scholar has to use theories and methods from other disciplines when studying the wider societal contexts of archives, such as power aspects, professionalisation, identities and ideologies. That leads us to a wider academic field, in particular the general humanities.

Archival divides within general humanities and culture

There are additional archival divides within the academic world as a whole. This is particularly true after the so-called archival turn that took off in the 1990s, when many scholars – especially in the humanities such as in philosophy, literature studies, art history and film studies – began engaging in archives. The turn has been described as a move from seeing archives as *sources* to archives as *subjects and processes*, as well as increasingly regarding archives as symbols and metaphors.²⁸ Also in the cultural sphere – in film, literature and visual arts – there is an increased interest in the archive (in its various meanings), which also nourishes scholarly research on such phenomena in corresponding disciplines.²⁹ Put shortly, *the archive* today has contradictory meanings in academia, where the more traditional hands-on conception of archives connected to

professional archivists and archival science, is complemented with more metaphorical and/or philosophical ones.

Consequently, the academic field covering archives can be experienced as confusing and disparate, stretching over a vast field of disciplines and subdisciplines, that tend to speak their own languages and with their own key concepts, theoretical bases and citation habits.³⁰ The deepest divide is between archival science on the one hand and the ‘archival turn’ scholarship mainly in the humanities, and both these main groups are in themselves rather disparate. Apart from the multitude of perspectives within archival science, which I touched upon in the previous section, there is a general difference in the ‘archival turn’ humanities between studies on actual archival holdings such as early modern colonial archives or contemporary artist archives, and studies elaborating on the archive as a metaphor.

For some, the archive is conceptualised in Michel Foucault’s wide metaphorical notion in *The Archeology of Knowledge* – as the utmost framework of all discourses at a given time and space. The metaphorical archive is furthermore a common concept in heritage studies, albeit in a somewhat less abstract level than in Foucault. Apart from sometimes analysing archives as concrete memory institutions, heritage studies also indulge in treating the archive as a metaphor for a cultural endeavour to almost obsessively store remnants of the future past. Thus, the tendency is to emphasise the ‘backward-looking’ aspects of the archive, such as in Aleida Assmann’s distinction between *canon* and *archive*, where the former is the “past as present” which is actively revered in society, while the archive consists of more passive and hidden cultural layers, the “past as past”.³¹ Pierre Nora poses the “archive-memory” as a modern tendency to keep material forms of memory instead of pre-modern oral memory.³²

Archival institutions are for Nora typical modern *lieux de mémoire*, explicit efforts to produce traces from the past, replacing a lost “spontaneous memory”.³³ Furthermore, Paul Connerton commented in *How Societies Remember* that increased archiving creates its anti-reaction to forget and destroy information, which was thereby regarded as the opposite of archiving. Claiming that destruction of information may be a central theme in the future, he seemed to neglect that actual archiving in modern organisations has had appraisal as a central theme for very long, and that archiving is the combination of keeping and destroying, not just the former.³⁴

Such conceptions of the archive as connected to the past, tend to put a shadow on the side of archives as always being created in the contemporary, normally for pragmatic purposes here and now. They may strengthen the general societal prejudice of archives as something left behind, dusty, signifying the old, origins, passivity. And consequently, of archivists as those shadowy figures in the cellars. There are examples of the contrary, for example media archaeology in the Friedrich Kittler tradition, which stresses the importance of the interests of the creator, the technological preconditions, and the legal and cultural contexts of records management and documentation. For example, Wolfgang Ernst partly echo Hilary Jenkinson’s archival theorem that archives are the results of administrative transactions, not by any intentions to create memory objects for future historiography.³⁵

Even so, it is hard not to sense a tendency that studies on concrete archives in general humanities in the archival turn tradition avoid what might be seen as “normal” or “grey” archives; the archives of governments, government agencies and large corporations. When contemporary archives are treated, most often it is archives after authors, artists or various collections of images and films that are

discussed and analysed.³⁶ Some archivists and researchers within archival science have commented that “ordinary” archives, archivists and previous insights of archival theory are absent from scholarly works or conferences on archives in the humanities.³⁷ They also tend to defend a traditional definition of archives, criticising tendencies in other disciplines to blur the boundaries towards other kinds of collections of past objects in libraries and museums. They argue that to understand actual real world archives, it is also necessary to understand the actual developments and implementation of archiving principles and techniques, such as organising and demarcating archives, filing plans, appraisal habits, archival descriptions and so on.³⁸ Canadian archival scholar and geographer Joan M. Schwartz typically addressed these sentiments, when commenting a conference on “Archiving Modernism” at a department of English at a Canadian university in 2003:

One is compelled to ponder what was said about archival history and methods; call me a sceptic, but I doubt very much that foundational writing by the Dutch Trio, Jenkinson or Schellenberg, or more recent work by Samuels, Taylor, Bearman, Brothman, or Cook took centre stage. Yet, here were some of the leading cultural theorists and, presumably, the next generation of scholars, debating, discussing, dissecting issues central to our profession, but with no recognition or understanding of principles or practices, history, or theory of the archival profession. Where were the archival professionals, theorists, and critics to set the record straight? Where is any citation to a now very large literature by archivists on the very same postmodern archive these scholars debate, but from inside the archives?³⁹

Schwartz’s outcry signals a sense of being an underdog, both professionally and academically. For archivists, archives are a place of work, not the somewhat mysterious etheric place to visit for scholarly adventures or philosophical essays. Scholars of archival science sense that their field is in the academic margin, if it is at all known to exist. They have mixed feelings to see their field suddenly become trendy, with scholars from other disciplines that make few if any references to existing archival theory or empirical research on archival history.

Schwartz, however, argued that archivists must be aware of the discourses on the archive in other fields, in order to gain new insights – even though they might find many single arguments to be simply wrong. She and others have rightly pointed out that archival science is isolated from other disciplinary fields, since its main focus has been on developing practices for concrete archives.⁴⁰ Even though there have been occasional examples of cross-cooperation between archival scientists and other scholars within the “archival turn”, as well as with those engaging in archives as an art form,⁴¹ the situation at the time of writing is essentially the same as at the beginning of the archival turn in the 1990s.

Finally, there is also a divide between archival studies in all its meanings discussed above, and those academic fields that actually analyse archival phenomena but who never or seldom present themselves as dealing with archives. For example, most of the existing research on privacy-sensitive information in records has been conducted outside the realm that explicitly focus on *archives*, but rather in contexts of privacy and freedom of information in law studies,⁴² or by focusing on political and/or general societal reactions to computerisation and digitisation, in disciplines such as history or political science.⁴³ It has also been an important research object for

what has come to be called surveillance studies, which analyse the power aspects of today's digital information society. The perspective is often normative, aiming to expose the control and menace to privacy that is conducted by the state and/or large corporations, through increased gatherings of personal information and other "surveillance techniques".⁴⁴ While older research tended to focus on the government gathering information on the individual, later surveillance studies largely adopts a Foucauldian perspective where surveillance is conceptualised as a power function of society at large.⁴⁵ Generally speaking, there is in surveillance studies a tendency to regard mass storage of personal data as something inherently negative, a perspective that is largely absent in archival science, where there is a predisposition to favour retention – keeping archives intact and saving evidences of the future.⁴⁶

Conclusion: bridging the divides?

In this article, I have discussed at least some of the differing conceptions on the archive that exist today. The academic and cultural/intellectual fields that deal with archives are partly connected to each other, but to a large extent they act separately. I have had no intention to capture that utmost framework that make the different discourses on the archive possible – the Foucauldian *l'archive* behind it all. If one likes to play with words, one might argue that the inherent aspect of archives of being full of paradoxes is that Foucauldian *archive* of archives. And a somewhat more grounded argument would be that the deepening of the divides is due to the rapid development of digital techniques that has made the paradoxical elements of archives even sharper, for example that constant double-sidedness of records as tools for everyday business action

but also as evidences and sources of information from different perspectives, in the near or distant future.

The archival divides are, then, largely an effect of the fact that archives have many dimensions and meanings. To bridge all divides would be as meaningless as trying to eradicate the differences in usages of concepts such as 'culture' or 'society'. However, at least in academic and cultural discourses and practices on the archive, increased crossbreeding between the separate discourses of the archive can and should be encouraged.

Academic research on archives spans over all the spectre of human and social sciences – increasingly also the natural sciences when concerning digital archives. Therefore, scholars writing on archives act in very different contexts with varying norms on how to write academic texts, how to best put forward an argument, and what forms, languages, and rhetoric styles that are appropriate. For example, a person within archival science that leans towards information science might think that a literature scholar writes too essayistic and with no distinct method. And the latter might find the former's articles too formalistic and lacking deeper intellectual content, or that improving a certain technique of digital archiving even is not a scientific question at all. Those differences will not disappear, but within the field of archival studies, one should aim at trying to understand one another, making use of results and perspectives made by the other side. The academic divide will probably remain, but more bridges should be built over the divide, since that might benefit research on both sides.

As Joan W. Schwartz emphasised more than a decade ago, archivists and scholars in archival science must be less inward-looking and try to take part of the discussions of the archive in the humanities.⁴⁷ As already mentioned, the core of methods and theories in

archival science concern directly archival phenomena such as records and fonds, while there is no specific “archival science perspective” if we want to understand, for example, what societal processes that ultimately governs archival appraisal or the ideological structures of archival descriptions systems. Such studies, in which “real” archives are put in general societal contexts, can be conducted not only in archival science but just as well in history or cultural anthropology. But just as the archival scientist in such cases must apply general theories and methods (be it Marxist, post-structuralist, phenomenological, grounded theory or something else) for the social and historical analysis, and consult existing research on similar phenomena from researchers in other fields, the hypothetical historian or cultural anthropologist would have to make efforts to grasp the concrete contexts of archival appraisal or description by studying literature specifically on those phenomena. There is a vast archival literature that should be relevant both from a theoretical and empirical standpoint for scholars in other disciplines, aiming at understanding archives both in the past and today.

Would this mean that archival science as we know it could best be integrated into a vast field of archival studies? Probably not. Even though I might agree with those who question whether archival science should be regarded a separate academic discipline in the sense that it has its own methods and theories, as well as sharp boundaries towards other disciplines, archival science can still function as an interdisciplinary academic field that is focussed on how concrete archives and records are managed, stored and used. That presupposes some kind of demarcation of the objects of study: for example, what an *archive* or a *record* is. Such demarcations should in its best ways capture what characterises actual record-keeping and record-making in society. Archives and records as defined by

the principle of the provenance and the archivist profession are not rooted in timeless principles, but they are still historical and institutional realities of large importance within society. Definitions like these would most probably exclude the more metaphorical definitions of archives, but the latter could still be of interest for deepened analyses of those concepts that are used within the archival profession, including possible extensions of the more orthodox definitions. Such discussions are already there, for example by questioning whether archival records must necessarily be mediated by physical objects.⁴⁸

So, the academic divide still exists, even though there have been occasional calls for increased contacts. Among scholars in the general humanities, names like Hilary Jenkinson or Luciana Duranti are still more or less unknown, and relatively few archivists have read Cornelia Vismann or Aleida Assmann. Events like the conference *From Dust to Dawn* are still exceptions from the rule. Hopefully, more contacts between fields that have much to gain from each other should follow.

Endnotes

1 Geoffrey Yeo, *Records, Information and Data: Exploring the Role of Record Keeping in an Information Culture* (London: Facet, 2018), 11 and 13.

2 See e.g. David Thomas, Simon Fowler and Valerie Johnson, *The Silence of the Archive: Principles and Practice in Records Management and Archives* (London: Facet Publishing, 2017).

3 Suzanne Keen, *Romances of the Archive in Contemporary British Fiction* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

4 E.g. Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives* [1989] (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

5 E.g. according to the Swedish Archives Act: Ulrika Geijer, Eva Lenberg and Håkan Lövblad, *Arkivlagen: en kommentar* (Stockholm: Norstedt juridik, 2013), 158–179.

6 Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration: Including the Problems of War Archives and Archive Making* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), 11. See also John Ridener, *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archival Theory* (Duluth, MN: Litwin Books, 2009).

7 E.g. Ciaran B. Trace, “What is Recorded is Never Simply ‘What Happened’: Record Keeping in Modern Organizational Culture”, *Archival Science* 2, no. 1–2 (2002): 137–159; Kathryn Burns, *Into the Archive: Writing and Power in Colonial Peru* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

8 Cornelia Vismann, *Files: Law and Media Technology*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 99–100.

9 Wolfgang Ernst, “Archival Action: the Archive as ROM and its Political Instrumentalization under National Socialism”, *History of the Human Sciences* 12, no. 2 (1999): 15–16; see also Hugh Taylor, “Information Ecology and the Archives of the 1980s”, *Archivaria* 18 (1984): 26.

10 See e.g. Stefan Berger, “The Role of National Archives in Constructing National Master Narratives in Europe”, *Archival Science* 13, no. 1 (2013): 1–22.

11 This duality has been noted e.g. by Eric Ketelaar, “Archival Temples, Archival Prisons: Modes of Power and Protection”, *Archival Science* 2, no. 3–4 (2002): 229. See also, for a concrete case: Samuel Edquist, “Ethical destruction? Privacy Concerns Regarding Swedish Social Services Records”, in *The Right of Access to Information and the Right to Privacy: A Democratic Balancing Act*, ed. Patricia Jonason and Anna Rosengren (Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 2017).

12 Randall C. Jimerson, “Archives for All: Professional Responsibility and Social Justice”, *The American Archivist* 70, no. 2 (2007): 252–281; Terry Cook, “What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift”, *Archivaria* 43 (1997): 30–35; Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens and Elizabeth Shepherd, “Whose Memo-

ries, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream”, *Archival Science* 9, no. 1–2 (2009): 71–86.

13 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For influential texts within archival science in the poststructuralist and Derridean/deconstructivist tradition, see e.g. Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, “Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory”, *Archival Science* 2, no. 1–2 (2002): 1–19; Verne Harris, “Archons, Aliens and Angels: Power and Politics in the Archive”, in *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader*, ed. Jennie Hill (London: Facet, 2011), 103–122.

14 Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg, *Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and the Archives* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

15 The “archival divide” concept has been used for one of these; Joan M. Schwartz, “Reading Robin Kelsey’s *Archive Style* Across the Archival Divide”, *Journal of Archival Organization* 6, no. 3 (2008): 201 and 209.

16 Blouin and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*.

17 Reine Rydén, “Hur ska nutiden bevaras?”, *Arkiv, samhälle och forskning* 2011, no. 2 (published 2014): 6–21.

18 Theodor R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles & techniques* [1956] (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2003); Riksarkivet [Swedish National Archives], *Bevarandet av nutiden: Riksarkivets gallrings- och bevarandepolicy* (Stockholm: Riksarkivet, 1995); Samuel Edquist, *Att spara eller inte spara: De svenska arkiven och kulturarvet 1970–2010* (Uppsala: Institutionen för ABM, Uppsala universitet, 2019).

19 Laura A. Millar, *Archives: Principles and Practices*, 2nd ed. (London: Facet Publishing, 2017), 197–198.

20 Maria Kallberg, “*The Emperor’s New Clothes*”: *Recordkeeping in a New Context* (Sundsvall: Mid Sweden University, 2013), 29–30.

21 In particular, proponents of the so-called *records continuum model* contrast themselves to the life-cycle model, according to which records have a typical linear development from active, semi-active to inactive stages, where records managers typically handled the middle part. See

e. g. Frank Upward, “Modelling the Continuum as Paradigm Shift in Recordkeeping and Archiving Processes, and Beyond – a Personal Reflection”, *Records Management Journal* 10, no. 3 (2000), 115–139.

22 E. g. Yeo, *Records, Information and Data*, ch. 3.

23 The term *archival science* is not the only one; sometimes *archivistics* or *archival studies* occur. I use *archival science* simply since it seems to be the most common in the English-speaking world.

24 Carol Couture and Daniel Ducharme, “Research in Archival Science: A Status Report”, *Archivaria* 59 (2005): 41–67; Ridener, *From Polders to Postmodernism*.

25 For an argument against the integration of archives and records into the information umbrella, see Yeo, *Records, Information and Data*, especially chapter 3.

26 Verne Harris, “Postmodernism and Archival Appraisal: Seven Theses”, *South African Archives Journal*, 40 (1998): 48–51; Terry Cook, “Archival Science and Postmodernism: New Formulations for Old Concepts”, *Archival Science* 1, no. 1 (2001): 3–24; Millar, *Archives*, 43–44.

27 Cf. Terry Eastwood, “A Contested Realm: The Nature of Archives and the Orientation of Archival Science”, in *Currents of Archival Thinking*, 2nd ed., ed. Terry Eastwood and Heather MacNeil (Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2017), 3–23.

28 Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance”, *Archival Science* 2, no. 1–2 (2002): 87–109; Marlene Manoff, “Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines”, *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4 (2004): 9–25; Eric Ketelaar, “Archival Turns and Returns: Studies of the Archive”, in *Research in the archival multiverse*, ed. Anne J. Gilliland, Sue McKemmish and Andrew J. Lau (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Publishing, 2017), 231–240.

29 E. g. Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).

30 Cf. Mathias Friman, “Understanding Boundary Work through Discourse Theory: Inter/disciplines and Interdisciplinarity”, *Science Studies* 23, no. 2 (2010): 5–19.

31 Aleida Assmann, “Canon and Archive”, in *Cultural Memory Studies:*

An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2008), 98.

32 Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”, trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* no. 26 (1989): 13–16.

33 Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 9 and 12. Cf. Vismann, *Files*, 99–100 and 117–20.

34 Paul Connerton, “Seven Types of Forgetting,” *Memory Studies* no 1 (2008): 65 (“Taken together, the great archivalization and the new information technologies, the one centralizing, the other diffusive, have brought about such a cultural surfeit of information that the concept of discarding may come to occupy as central a role in the 21st century as the concept of production did in the 19th century.”) For a similar description, see David Lowenthal, who conceptualise archiving as an “anal-retentive obsession” for storing information. David Lowenthal, “Archives, Heritage, and History,” in *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, ed. Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 195.

35 “The archive is not the place of collective memories in a given society but rather the place of classifying, sorting (out) and storing data resulting from administrative acts [...]. Archived data are not meant for historical or cultural but for organizational memory (such as the state, business or media); [...].” Wolfgang Ernst, “The Archive as Metaphor: From Archival Space to Archival Time,” *Open! Platform for Art, Culture & the Public Domain* no. 7 (2004): 47.

36 An example is the recent end product of a large Swedish research program on conceptions of time, heritage and history, with contributors mainly from philosophers, archaeologists, art historians, and literature scholars, which in many articles – often brilliantly – treats archives both as a metaphor and as a concrete object but then mainly in the mentioned forms, while e. g. government archives or archivists are almost entirely missing: Hans Ruin, main ed., *Historiens hemvist*, 3 vols., (Göteborg: Makadam, 2016). For an example of explicit marginalisation of (traditional) archival theory in other fields that deal with archives, see

e. g. Jussi Parikka, *What is Media Archaeology?* (Cambridge (UK): Polity Press, 2012), 115.

37 Joan M. Schwartz, “‘Having New Eyes’: Spaces of Archives, Landscapes of Power”, *Archivaria* 61 (2006), 4–9; Alexandrina Buchanan, “Strangely Unfamiliar: Ideas of the Archive from Outside the Discipline”, in *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader*, ed. Jennie Hill (London: Facet, 2011), 51–54; Blouin and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*, 140–143.

38 E. g. Sue McKemmish and Anne Gilliland, “Archival and Recordkeeping Research: Past, Present and Future” in *Research Methods: Information, Systems, and Contexts*, ed. Kirsty Williamson and Graeme Johanson (Prahran, Victoria: Tilde Publishing and Distribution, 2013), 86; cf. Ketelaar, “Archival Turns,” 238–40.

39 Schwartz, “‘Having New Eyes’”, 7.

40 On the concept of memory in archival science compared to other disciplines, see: Trond Jacobsen, Ricardo L. Punzalan and Margaret L. Hedstrom. “Invoking ‘Collective Memory’: Mapping the Emergence of a Concept in Archival Science” *Archival Science* 13, no. 2–3 (2013): 217–251.

41 Not the least, this is the case with the self-labelled “post-modernist” group within archival science. See e. g. Carolyn Hamilton et al., eds., *Refiguring the Archive* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002). Ketelaar claims that archival science (or “archivistics”) made a similar archival turn at the same time, the 1990s, from regarding archives as simple gatherings of documents, to the archive as “a process”, “from the actual archival document to its functional process or context of creation.” Ketelaar, “Archival Turns”, 236–237.

42 See e. g. Anna-Sara Lind, Jane Reichel and Inger Österdahl, eds., *Information and Law in Transition: Freedom of Speech, the Internet, Privacy and Democracy in the 21st Century* (Stockholm: Liber, 2015).

43 For example, in Sweden, this topic has been analysed in doctoral dissertations in history (Lars Ilshammar, *Offentlighetens nya rum: Teknik och politik i Sverige 1969–1999* (Örebro: Örebro universitet, 2002)), library and information science (Åsa Söderlind, *Personlig integritet som*

informationspolitik: Debatt och diskussion i samband med tillkomsten av Datalag (1973:289) (Borås: Valfrid, 2009)), political science (Sten Markgren, *Datainspektionen och skyddet av den personliga integriteten* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1984)), and education (Lina Rahm, *Educational Imaginaries: A Genealogy of the Digital Citizen* (Linköping: Linköping University, 2019)).

44 E. g. Alan F. Westin, *Privacy and Freedom* (New York: Atheneum, 1967); David H. Flaherty, *Protecting Privacy in Surveillance Societies: The Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden, France, Canada, and the United States* (Chapel Hill, NC and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

45 E. g. James B. Rule and Graham Greenleaf, eds., *Global Privacy Protection: The First Generation* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2008); David Lyon, Kevin D. Haggerty, and Kirstie Ball, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Surveillance Studies* (London: Routledge, 2012).

46 See e. g. Danielle Laberge, “Information, Knowledge, and Rights: The Preservation of Archives as a Political and Social Issue”, *Archivaria* 25 (1987–1988): 44–50.

47 Schwartz, “‘Having New Eyes’”, 9.

48 Michelle Caswell, “Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse: Lessons From Community Archives”, *Archival Science* 14, no. 3 (2014): 313.