



Universität Hamburg
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CENTRE FOR THE
STUDY OF
MANUSCRIPT
CULTURES

International Conference

Manuscripts and Archives

Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures

Hamburg

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Archives are collections of administrative, legal, commercial and other records or the space where they are located. They have become ubiquitous in the modern world, but came into being not much later than the invention of writing. Following Foucault, who first used the word archive in a metaphorical sense as ‘the general system of the formation and transformation of statements’ in his *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), postmodern theorists have tried to exploit the potential of this concept and initiated the “archival turn”. In recent years, however, archives have attracted the attention of anthropologists and historians of different denominations attempting to treat them as historical objects and “ground” them again in real institutions.

The archive is traditionally considered the counterpart of the library, the one storing records, the other housing literary works or “books”. There is evidence, however, that this institutional division of labour is neither natural nor necessary, but reflects certain historical and social constellations. In societies with elite literacy, for example, records, letters as well as books and even artefacts may be kept together in the same place, or books may be used for recording important events and legal acts in the margins and in the blanks. On the other hand, complex organisations such as courts, states, temples, monasteries and others as a rule develop institutional ways to deal with the documents they produce, from exclusive places of storage to employment of professionals whose only task is to guard them and to keep them in order for eventual use.

The conference will explore the complex topic of the archive in a historical, systematic and comparative dimension and try to contextualise it in the broader context of manuscript cultures by addressing the following questions: How, by whom and for which purpose are archival records produced? Is there any observable difference from literary manuscripts concerning materials, formats, producers (scribes)? Where are they stored, how organised? Are there other objects stored together with the records? Which practices are involved inside the archive, how and by whom are they used? Is there a term or a concept of archive as opposed to library, museum, cabinet (of curiosities) and the like? Is there a relation to historiography? Is there an archival science (archivology)?

Programme and registration:

www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/register_archives.html

Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)

www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de