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FRIEDRICH, Markus. 2018. *The Birth of the Archive: A History of Knowledge*. Translated by John Noël Dillon. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Pp. 296. ISBN 9780472130689, Hardback \$75.00.

*The Birth of the Archive* is a delightfully engaging and erudite monograph. At times it reads like a who-done-it of the documentary evidence world from the late Middle Ages through the Early Modern period. The book begins dramatically with the story of a Parisian break-in at the *Chambre des Comptes* archives in May 1682. The theft was not, however, motivated by the value of the manuscripts, but by the resale of the parchment.

Markus Friedrich has filled the book with such incidents too numerous to mention. There is a parade of kings, religious figures, minor civil servants, and archivists all vying for the right to control, catalogue, and safekeep the written word. As Friedrich notes early on, whoever controls the archive has a singular access to memory and social history, to not only write history but to shape it. One of the joys of this book is Friedrich's ability to traverse centuries, making archival history relevant and offering precedents for today's practice.

What one learns from this impressive volume is just how fragile the documentary record has always been. This fragility is not due simply to the elements, such as fire and water, but to a growing realization in the Early Modern period that the written word is a source of power. King Philip II of France travelled with his archive — even into battle. This was an unfortunate decision when in 1194 his entire baggage train was captured by Richard the Lionheart's troops and carted away, along with the state secrets it held.

*The Birth of the Archive* is excellent at storytelling: dramatic yet scholarly, and full of detail about the birth of individual archives throughout

central Europe. Yet Friedrich does not lose sight of the bigger narrative: “the need to preserve the memory of past things in a generally credible way” (67). For those in power, archives reinforced their claim to power, be it social, legal, political, or religious. Laws could only be upheld if they were written down and legal disputes could only be solved upon examination of the written record. Archives upheld the social order, or so the ruling establishment thought (and expected).

By 1600 archives were recognized as key elements of control and authority which were as important as arsenals and granaries. They underpinned society and were as powerful as armies and navies. Friedrich makes the point that it is almost taken for granted today that “the gathering of knowledge for administrative and political purposes is an expression of a specific form of power” (139), with the beginnings of that understanding emerging during the centuries covered in this volume.

And it was not just jurisprudence that owed its birth to the archive, but cartography. Those who controlled the maps controlled the territory. Maps and words became the new technologies of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. Archives could become the bridge between knowledge and power, not simply by their existence, but through what Friedrich terms a complex “activation” process that could be abused and misused, especially through the “ploys of power-hungry early modern princes” (140). Pierre Camille Moine’s attempt in 1765 to explain the role and use of archives makes clear the significance that archives held in the delicate balance of power that the elite were fighting a rearguard action to defend:

Since parishes and whole communities rebelled against their lords and refused to pay dues [and since] inferior groups, casting off the yoke of subordination, attempted to subvert the old regime [ . . . ] then, to defend one’s demesnes, it was necessary to rummage through the archives, leaf through cartularies, registers, and disturb old papers that had long been buried in dust. (143)

Some twenty years prior to the French Revolution, this passage is of its time. By 1789 the old order in France and Germany had collapsed and the archive took on a new role, one that is more recognizable today, that of a historical and not a legal depository. Now archives became the domain of historians, writing the history of the new nation states. The archives became a place from which national identity could be argued and established. New (secular) institutions were established to house the archives,

and new roles and training were established for those who cared for them. Toward the end of the monograph, we see the genesis of our own relationship to the archive: as housing contested histories, as physical structures that are at risk from both natural and political causes, and as a place in which the pull of archivists to protect and safeguard what has been placed in their care can be met with the equal pull of historians who wish to utilize the documents in a complex telling and retelling of our past to better know ourselves and our times.

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SHILLINGSBURG, Peter. 2017. *Textuality and Knowledge: Essays*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press. Pp. xii + 222. ISBN 9780271078502, Hardback \$115.00. ISBN 9780271081076, Paper \$44.95.

This book emerges from a long career spent tussling with the many theoretical and methodological issues that scholarly editing raises. It ducks none of them. It is a richly reflective work consisting of thirteen “essays” (the book’s subtitle) rather than chapters, nearly all of them revised from their original conference paper or lecture forms, most of them during the period 2005–11.

The range of topics is attractively broad — from “The Evidence for Literary Knowledge” to “Responsibility for Textual Changes in Long-Distance Revisions” to “Work and Text in Nonliterary Text-Based Disciplines” to “Cultural Heritage, Textuality, and Social Justice”. Given the origin of the essays there is some overlap among them; nevertheless, each one gradually comes into focus as a thought-experiment in its own right.

Rather than being closely argued and systematic the essays are truly *essais*: each one tries out ideas, taking the form of a tissue of connected thinking, looking at the matter first in this way and then that, circling around the given topic till it be better understood. There is a generosity, an intellectual openness and a tolerance for divergent editorial practices continuously on offer. The tone is often relaxed and conversational, with the reader addressed directly, not just recalling the original occasions of the papers’ oral delivery but also, now in the new moment of engagement, enmeshing the reader in the speaker-writer’s idiosyncratic, personal habits of thought.