

Machines of Memory.

The Archival Technologies and the Genealogy of “Datapower” (17th- 20th century). A Workshop at the Max-Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin

Organized by the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG)

www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de

Location: MPIWG, Boltzmannstraße 22, 14195 Berlin, Germany

Dates: 15-16 October 2010

Archives are apparatuses of socialized memory, organizational tools of memorizing and remembering. The aim of this workshop is to study the history of their machinery, to consider them as operating systems, in their very functioning.

The principal reason for this retrospective study is to be found in the present. Archiving technologies have encountered an unprecedented global extension today. The hypothesis is that we are experiencing the unprecedented deployment of an archival kind of power - a “datapower”- that operates through the recording, storing and retrieving of data, on a gigantic and ubiquitous scale. The general goal of this working group would be, to draw the link between the history of techniques of archiving and the formation of new ways of managing men, animals, and things - an attempt to sketch a genealogy of datapower by means of its technological history.

The scope of this workshop encompasses the history of diverse archiving technologies heterogeneous fields of practices, from the archives of cattle management to the use of archiving devices within the arts of governance. It includes, among other possible objects, the history of the card-filing systems, census reporting, traceability devices, inventory techniques, the architecture of archive buildings, classification and indexing, or the science of archive management.

This workshop aims at trying to make the connection between the history of archiving technologies in diverse fields and the history of the power relations, key concepts and rationalities that were shaping them, and rendered them necessary for their own ends. This includes also a close focus on the contradictions, frictions and failures of historical archiving

systems. Its main focus is on the modern era, from the “archive fever” of the 17th century to the beginning of computer science. Each contribution should focus on the link between a given archiving technology and the forms of power relations in which it has been used.

The workshop will pursue such questions as:

- What kinds of mutations have occurred within archiving technologies during that period? Along with what innovations? To what purposes?
- How did archiving technologies migrate between different fields of practice and diverse locations ? Through what channels? Under which common rationalities?
- What frictions, structural problems or failures did these machineries encounter? With what array of effects?
- To what kind of power relations have these technologies been historically linked? How would a technological history of archiving practices change the narrative about governmental rationalities?

The workshop will take at the Max Planck Insitute for the History of Science, Berlin.

Please send a 500-word proposal by **15 February 2010** to Dr. Grégoire Chamayou

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Papers will be pre-circulated. Selected participants will be asked to send their papers (ca. 3500 words) for internal circulation by **September 15, 2010**.

Travel and accommodation will be covered by the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science.