

Situating Practices: The Archive and the File Cabinet

Matthew Kurtz

Suspects

Substantially, this paper is about a small collection of records about the Stockbridge Library Association (SLA), located in a small metal filing cabinet. Stockbridge is a prosperous, predominantly white, “historic” community of some 2,500 people in the Berkshire mountains of western Massachusetts. Ambassadors, artists, congressmen, and writers of national fame have called the town home. The Historical Room in the town’s public library on Main Street—a space of about 1,300 square feet in the basement of the library’s west wing addition—houses the filing cabinet and its records. The more valued documents are kept in a 50-square-foot, fire-proof vault, with other manuscript material in three small storage rooms elsewhere. A long table for visitors occupies the north side of the Historical Room. On one side of the table is the curator’s desk along with several wooden filing cabinets. On the other side of the table is a bookshelf collection of early edition books with local authors or themes. Paintings of notable figures in Stockbridge history inhabit the upper wall space, and numerous glass display cases contain artifacts and inventions. The little metal file cabinet sits underneath one of these display cases.

In pages that follow, I will address some of the archiving practices that have operated through the Stockbridge Library Historical Room, practices that have informed my own research for this paper and others. Recent literature has suggested that archives are broadly related to issues of representation and power in society. With the one small example from Stockbridge, I will point particularly to the power and importance of the “organization” in the life of an archive. Organizations are often instrumental in the creation and maintenance of archives, particularly for government depositories, corporate records centers, and local archives. I also submit that organizations are, in substantial part, a product of a particular, historically constituted filing system that helped to create the archives. After a literature review, my argument proceeds by tracing a history of filing systems as a set of social and institutional

practices and technologies associated with business firms, associations, and archives. Then, using mostly the material available in the small metal filing cabinet in the Historical Room, I undertake a historical account of the Stockbridge Library Historical Room, in order to suggest both its particularity as well as the embeddedness of this collection in larger contemporary forms of social and spatial organization.

On an abstract level, this essay is part of a larger, highly problematic endeavor to address how some material has been made to count as authoritative evidence. My objective in these pages is to provide an example showing how an aspect of this endeavor—contextually situating some practices of documentation and classification—might possibly proceed. Rather than trying to verify a theory, therefore, I am instead trying to illustrate an approach that draws from post-positivist epistemologies and methodologies.

Sources in the Library

“Let us not begin at the beginning, nor even at the archive. But rather at the word ‘archive’—and with the archive of so familiar a word.”¹ Jacques Derrida thus introduces his printed ruminations on the politics of the archive. In assuming a brief literature review on the subject—a fragmented and quick library tour—I begin with Derrida. Regarding the word *archive*, he writes that its meaning comes to it from the Greek *Arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded. ... On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that *place* ... that official documents are filed.”²

The guardianship and localization of the archive, he suggests, are both essential for the legal, authorial, and hermeneutic significance of these material collections, such that:

There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion—the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.³

Derrida’s remarks effectively point to the complex social and political importance of those spaces and materials that we might call “the archive,” an importance that others have touched upon as well.

In a tour of a library using the Dewey Decimal system, Derrida’s book would be found under “philosophy and psychology” in the 100s section. On the journal shelves in the 300s, classed as “sociology,” two recent issues of the quarterly publication *History of the Human Sciences* have been dedicated to the social and political importance of the archive. Within the covers of this journal, Joyce for example outlines the creation of a “liberal public” with the free library and public archive in 19th-century England within a Foucaultian framework of governmentality. George Marcus suggests that the notion of the archive

played an important role in defining anthropology in 20th-century North America, where it served to unify otherwise disparate ethnographic texts into a cohesive disciplinary field.⁴ Other articles in the journal address the socialization of subjects through their use of archives. Drawing on Foucault, Thomas Osborne speaks of processes of “forbidding” archival-historical expertise through which private and mundane everyday life is charged with public significance. As an “interpreter” of the past, Harriet Bradley undertakes a phenomenological account of her own encounters with archives—spaces that she considers seductive rather than forbidding. Bradley structures her experience through four forms: the official government depository, the more “random, higgledy-piggledy collection” of the local archive, a file of professional field notes, and her mother’s personal records.⁵ Not least is an article by Carolyn Steedman. Using accounts of two historians, she reflects on the spatial practices that engender their loneliness and imagination, writing about their “untying the string on the bundles” in the archives.⁶ Steedman’s essay is not congenial to summary, but she does eloquently present historical research as a mode of being that is historically and culturally peculiar. She associates the habits and activities of contemporary historical work (particularly its use of cloistered spaces like the archive) to modern developments such as letter writing, print technologies, the invention of the novel, and the narrative historical mode. In contrast to storytelling and the presumed communal immediacy of oral memory techniques,⁷ Steedman suggests these methods of retelling the past have socialized a modern individuality, as they were undertaken in solitude, alone.

If one moves from “sociology” to the “archival studies” section in a library’s collection—coded in the 020s under the Dewey Decimal system—one may find that limited critical attention has been given to the history of American archival practices. Victor Gondos has written about the national archives movement in the United States from 1906 to the 1930s. Donald McCoy has carried that project forward with a history of the National Archives, established in 1934, and its association with the Society of American Archivists and the *American Archivist*, both started in 1936.⁸ Yet these two monographs offer little in regard to the social and political significance of these movements. Richard Cox, a prolific scholar in archival studies, has made note of this and advocates for more historical work in the field. Though there are many biographies and archival program histories, he suggests that there is little in the way of “broader, more substantive histories of record keeping, archival development, and archival theory and practice.”⁹ Indeed, he cites a piece by a “non archivist” in *American Archivist* as one that might remind archivists of their own broader historical, social, and political significance, as their work affects “society’s collective memory” and selective forgetting.¹⁰

Back in the *History of the Human Sciences* journal, Richard Brown and Beth Davis-Brown focus on the political-economic context of modern archives. The authors suggest that an archival profession has created technical-rational processes for the collection and management of historical records. For example, collection development is couched in terms of the value of particular

historical materials, which is weighed against the limited resources and priorities of the institution.¹¹ This leads to the question of the foreseeable value for whom? Accordingly, Brown and Davis-Brown argue that the technical-rational procedures of the archival profession are thus always political, although not always ostensibly so. Along with collection development, their claim includes practices of classification that “never emerge solely from the material to be classified since our ways of defining the material itself are shaped by the dominant intellectual or political paradigms through which we view it.”¹² As an example, they discuss the recent creation of the category “underground homeless persons” within a cataloging system, which served “to officialize the identity and status of mole people and render their plight more publicly visible.”¹³

There is a substantial literature that critiques a widely used classification system—the Dewey Decimal system—for its marginalization of women and minorities as subjects.¹⁴ Reviewing this literature is beyond the scope of this article, but for my purpose it is useful to consider how existing specific classification systems came into being. To this end, I wish to focus on filing systems as social practices and an institutionalized technology, particularly as these systems have been commonly employed in archives in the U.S. This topic might lead us elsewhere in the library, to shelving in the 650s range under the Dewey Decimal system, where business technology is grouped. Here one might find a volume by JoAnne Yates, titled *Control through Communication: The Rise of System in American Management*.¹⁵ I draw from this book for the substance of the next section.

Fingerprints on the File Cabinet

Absent a theory of the file cabinet, let me propose a quick working definition: the *file cabinet* is a mass-produced, gray metal object that contains records of the SLA in its two drawers, helping to constitute the latter without due credit.

File cabinets now inhabit archives and small corner office spaces around the world, having diffused like dandelions from their introduction in 1893. Again, the etymology of their name points to some moments of importance for theory. The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces the word *file* (perhaps a little too securely) to the Latin word *fila*, which can translate as “thread.” Thread was used to bind parchments together, so that *fila* provided the binding that brought diverse elements into a single “file” for Roman magistrates.¹⁶ Metaphorically and literally, the function of *fila*, a “file” or thread, was unification.

The Library Bureau designed and introduced the file cabinet as it is known today to the market at the end of the 19th century. Prior to the use of the file cabinet, the predominant practice among northeastern U.S. business firms was to archive outgoing mail within press-books, ordering them chronologically. An index in a cross-reference catalog linked clients to dates so that items with the press-books could be located. Incoming mail was archived in a pi-

geonhole system, not unlike the mailbox systems in the central office of some larger academic departments today. Papers were stored or “filed” horizontally, and often grouped by the client or company name. Retrieving a page meant removing a stack from its slot and lifting pages until the desired document was found. Inserting a new grouping in a sequence of pigeonholes often meant reconfiguring the whole system.¹⁷

Melvil Dewey had been a librarian at Amherst College early in his career. With publisher Frederick Leyboldt and editor Richard R. Bowker in New York City, he had helped to establish the *Library Journal* and the American Library Association in 1876.¹⁸ In the same year, Dewey introduced the Dewey Decimal Classification, a coding system that organized books by subject within a hierarchical scheme. In 1877, he founded the Library Bureau in Boston in order to promote the system and to market the card catalog equipment commonly seen in libraries not long ago, with their narrow drawers holding index cards vertically. As opposed to papers laying horizontally, vertical storage meant that cards could be viewed and accessed easily by “thumbing,” and additions to the file—an index card for a new book or a client’s response to a letter—could be quickly and easily inserted within any given ordering system: alphabetical by author, title, subject, or company. As a later variation on the card catalog, Dewey’s Library Bureau introduced the file cabinet to the business world at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago. Again, vertical filing facilitated the practice of thumbing, and new documents could be easily inserted into a file. The manila tabbed folders could be marked with a range of categorizations such as personal names, organizations, places, dates, and activities. New folders could easily be inserted. The file indices could be grouped within a larger hierarchy of drawer labels. Long before the Stockbridge Library Historical Room was constructed in 1937, the use of this new technology in American firms had institutionalized the file cabinet through a proliferation of texts and experts instructing secretaries and file managers on the most efficient techniques of sorting, indexing, and filing documents.¹⁹

As archival practices began to be professionalized and “modernized” in the mid 1900s, library cataloging techniques and corporate filing procedures became well established. However, some differences occurred with this new application. The U.S. archival profession was in its infancy during steel rationing because of World War II, and during this time easily handled cardboard boxes began to replace steel boxes and supplement the filing cabinet as basic archival hardware.²⁰ Moreover, rather than group documents by subject, project, or client, scholars associated with the newly created National Archives suggested that records be organized and classified by “provenance” or origin, following the French national model and terminology. Near the top of this archival system of divisions were a limited number of “record groups,” as archival scholars stressed the need for small and easily surveyed lists at each level of a cataloging system. Yet there were usually far too many authors in an archival collection for record groups to be sorted and cataloged by writer. The organizations with which such authors were affiliated were usually far fewer.

Aside from widely notable historical figures, or slightly less notable contemporary donors, archivists have thus assigned the provenance of record groups quite frequently to organizational entities.²¹

So far, I have been struggling to address the social significance of the organization of the archive such as what material resides there and how it is classified, ordered, and indexed. In this context, organization can be taken to mean a state, a process, or a practice that selects, categorizes, and relates small moments out of an infinite past as a historical record. Which moments? Out of all of the practices of everyday life, only some were deemed valuable, worthy of being traced, and capable of being represented in a durable, visible form and stored somewhere. But it helps to connect with another meaning of the word *organization* where it is roughly synonymous with the corporation, association, agency, or club.²² If it is common sense to assume that the organization—the social group—is the agent that creates the ordered set of documents, I would also suggest the converse, that the organization is a product of a particular, historically constituted filing system²³ that helped to create the archives. Documents give body to an organization through their icons and letterheads, their symbolic struggles on standardized sheets of paper to represent, differentiate, organize, and interrelate significant activities in everyday life. To *overstate*: files make the organization, rather than the reverse.²⁴

But with my next breath, I do not want to trivialize organizations as little but textual fictions. Rather than let it remain as such, organizations are better theorized as the influential effect of a dialectic between a filing system and the social power of actors. Within a complex network of social relations around the turn of the century, actors reconfigured some of the methods and details of representing, printing, organizing, filing, and archiving. This in turn helped to reconstitute the social power embodied in particular actors, such as the personal property of a CEO and their ability to mobilize other resources. As social power and filing systems mutually constituted each other in a dialectic, the “organization” became manifest as a familiar, coherent, and powerful entity in itself.

The Account of an Archive

In this section, I outline a historical trace of the Stockbridge Library Historical Room, an institutional space that Bradley would call a local archive with its somewhat “random and various documentary deposits.”²⁵ The account uses documents in the metal file cabinet and little else as its empirical source material. Drawing on local particularities and larger networks of social relations, my aim here—though my effort may not well achieve it—is to illustrate how the trajectory of actors and a filing system were interwoven in such a way that the SLA was reconstituted and its archival space produced.

On 11 April 1919, the governor and state legislators of Massachusetts endorsed an act to formally incorporate the SLA. The legislation facilitated

the purchase of land adjacent to the small library for an extension to the building. The association had first been formed in Stockbridge in 1789, when 25 town “worthies”²⁶ signed their names to a document chartering a voluntary library association. Local histories boast that the Stockbridge Library was accordingly “one of the earliest—if not the very earliest—libraries in western Massachusetts.”²⁷ From then on, the organizational structure of the library was always an unusual one in New England, never operating under the administration of town government as was common elsewhere. Until the Civil War, it operated intermittently as a bookshelf housed in various private residences together with an agreement for the purchase of shares and the exchange of books. In 1862, a donor offered \$2,000 to construct a building, a separate space dedicated to function solely as a public library. For the benefit of a library, a number of residents formed a trust that could use this and other gifts to build a structure on a lot on the central business block of Main Street.²⁸

Around the beginning of World War I, the state of the Stockbridge Library concerned a number of local residents. Foremost among them was R.R. Bowker, who had retired to Stockbridge. His career had included founding and editing the nationally prominent *Library Journal* with Melvil Dewey, and acting as the corporate manager for a New York utility company.²⁹ Bowker had developed an intense interest in guiding the local library and had been voted president of the SLA in 1904. With his guidance, in the following year the association’s trustees hired their first assistant librarian who, “studying modern methods, started reclassification of the books on the Dewey decimal system” that Bowker had helped to establish as a widespread national standard.³⁰

During the next 24 years of Bowker’s SLA presidency, discussion began among “honored citizens” about building an extension to the old library for a museum.³¹ In a 1917 letter, Bowker outlined the geographical scope of such a museum.

Mrs. Crowninshield’s scheme for a museum should be carried thru [sic], provided it can be confined to local historical collections and exhibits of an educational character, regarding the geology, birds, animals and insects, trees and flowers in our neighborhood, and in this Mr. Choate was also interested.³²

The will of Joseph Choate, a former U.S. ambassador and a summer resident in Stockbridge, had recently conferred \$10,000 to the association for the purchase of a lot adjacent to the library on Main Street.³³ Regarding the ownership of the library property, Bowker consulted a lawyer who, in 1918, advised him that “the legal title, subject to that [1862] trust, is now in the heirs of the original grantees. These are, of course, scattered and remote.”³⁴ Rather than chase down the heirs of the deed, Bowker obtained support for new legislation to transfer the property from the heirs of the trust to the association. In 1919, by Special Act of the State of Massachusetts, Chapter 133, the seven officers of the voluntary library association were vested as a non-profit

corporation, empowered to own and purchase land under the name, "Stockbridge Library Association."³⁵ The act changed the form of the organization from a voluntary association into a corporation.

Chapter 133 is important for three reasons. First, the act centralized the responsibility and domicile of legal documents under the care of a succession of corporate officers rather than heirs. A significant organizational record from about this period onward—with little from Bowker's predecessors—resides today in a file cabinet devoted topically to the SLA. Chapter 133 and Bowker's own biography are not incidental among the many reasons for this. Second, the charter served to constitute the organization in a permanent and material form, as had previous SLA constitutions before it. But here I suspect charters and constitutions are only the most forthright material; letterhead has had a similar, if less obvious, effect. Third, Chapter 133 and the bylaws that accompanied it once again defined the purpose and structure of the organization, demarcating by function which persons, activities, and statements were pertinent to its record, leaving the rest most likely to be excluded as irrelevant.

Soon after the passage of the Chapter 133, the SLA officers purchased the lot adjacent to the library. However, the lot remained undeveloped through the remainder of Bowker's tenure as the president. In his 1928 farewell address, Bowker again revisited his vision for a library extension to contain a museum, "which should be purely of local and educational character."³⁶ Documents from 1936 indicate an increasing dissatisfaction with the state of the library, including its increasingly obsolete book stock, its lack of a subject index, its deteriorating roof, and not least, its lack of extension.³⁷ In 1937, Mary Bement, a New York city resident formerly of Stockbridge, donated \$50,000 for the construction of a duplicate wing on the property. The west wing was designed to be identical in size and structure to the existing library with a lobby connecting the two structures, thus preserving the library's overall "historic" character. The wing has continuously housed a large reading room on its upper floor and the Historical Room below. The latter opened on 12 February 1938, with several hundred people attending from the small town and the surrounding area.³⁸

Grace Wilcox, the first curator of the Historical Room, served from 1938 to 1966. She began working for the Stockbridge Library on a part-time basis in 1928. With the resignation of the head librarian in October 1937, SLA trustees engaged Wilcox full-time as assistant librarian, but continued to "look around for a person trained in library work" for several more months.³⁹ Wilcox made arrangements to obtain such training in 1942.⁴⁰ Yet, despite any such professional discipline, records suggest that the scope of the Historical Room consistently defied attempts to delineate its boundaries. From the start in 1938, the room operated both as a museum of art and artifacts, and as an archive of written documents and rare books. Meetings of the Board of Trustees and the Saturday children's story hour took place in the room.⁴¹ In October of 1943, a new board-appointed Historical Committee considered the prospect of "defining the scope of the collection and records and a weeding out of extraneous

items ... which have no connection to Stockbridge or its history.⁴² Like Bowker, vocal committee members wanted to strictly limit the range of material, the extent of the documented human practices, to be preserved within the walls of the Historical Room. It was voted that “the Historical Room offer sanctuary for the historical records of all organizations in Stockbridge.”⁴³ Organizations were thus proposed as the key to organizing documents in the collection. Within the 24 square miles mapped as the official Town of Stockbridge, only small parts of daily life—snapshots from organizationally sponsored events, words spoken and recorded within the space of a committee meeting, letter writing on organization stationary, or monetary accountings—fell within the proper subject headings of the Stockbridge Library Historical Room.

On the other hand, the practices of the archivists were not always consistent with the system that members of the Historical Committee had voted for in 1943. For instance, immediately after the vote, the very next recorded item of business had little to do with Stockbridge-based organizations. Instead, it concerned the progress of a project to record the pre-war occupation and training of soldiers from Stockbridge, who were currently engaged overseas, to be kept on file in the room.⁴⁴ Nor is locality strictly delimiting, as contributions were regularly accepted with material from neighboring towns. Points of origination go even farther. Although only for a temporary display, the annual report for 1954, for example, records a plan for “two exhibits—wood for the month of April and woven American textiles for July and August. ... Miss Hague is lending this hardwood bowl, made in Ecuador.”⁴⁵ Given numerous contingencies, archival practices frequently seemed to overflow any system of authoritative identification and classification. This perhaps is best witnessed not just in this local archive, but in the occurrence of a folder labeled “miscellaneous” common to many file cabinets.

Case Closed?

The previous account derives almost entirely from documents in a two-drawer file cabinet within the Historical Room. For me, this gray little object unified and categorized the activities of SLA, threading material together into a common subject. Its two drawers were full of material such as newspaper clippings, minutes, reports, newsletters, and correspondence. These were all gathered together into a file cabinet some time ago from the files of various people associated with the SLA and organized into folders by date, document format, committee, and the like. Here, the labels on the folder tabs in the file cabinet insinuate a coherent identity for an organization no less than a constitution or charter.

I have suggested that the archive and file cabinet have played significant roles in enabling a mode of representation where the powerful abstraction of coherent, organizational identities could be more readily imagined and naturalized. Archival filing systems have helped to constitute organizational interrelationships by making them visible, so that the traces of people from an-

other time or place repeatedly appear in signatures at the bottom of documents found in a file—a thread—that bore a date and the name of that organization. The structure of the files, in this instance at least, makes the organization a familiar subject group heading, whereas other social groupings that may cut through the same organizational identification—like shared love, or the livelihood strategies of a local low-income population—remain obscure in these files.

My objective in this paper was to illustrate how one might possibly contextually situate some practices of documentation and classification, however problematic this endeavor may be. Surely it takes more work to learn to hear other stories, to read between the clearly separating lines of a filing system—be it that of others or my own—and to better understand the complex effects of organizations, knowledge, and power. The archive and the file cabinet leave me still thumbing, searching, sorting, and trying to imagine the gaps. The social and material aspects of the archive and the file cabinet work through my eyes and hands, and I have constructed a story that cannot be anything other than partial. But like Rose in her interview-based work, I want to remain vigilant in the research process, asking how difference is constituted before me and through me, perhaps even “tracing its destabilizing emergence during the research process itself.”⁴⁶

Notes

1. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995): 1.
2. *Ibid.*, 2.
3. *Ibid.*, 4.
4. Patrick Joyce, “The Politics of the Liberal Archive,” *History of the Human Sciences* 12:2 (1999): 35-49; George Marcus, “The Once and Future Archive,” *History of the Human Sciences* 11:4 (1998): 49-63.
5. Thomas Osborne, “The Ordinarity of the Archive,” *History of the Human Sciences* 12:2 (1999): 51-64; Harriet Bradley, “The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found,” *History of the Human Sciences* 12:2 (1999): 107-122, 112.
6. Carolyn Steedman, “The Space of Memory: In an Archive,” *History of the Human Sciences* 11:4 (1998): 65-83, 70.
7. For an accessible and widely cited account of orality, literacy, and consciousness, see Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982).
8. Victor Gondos Jr., *J. Franklin Jameson and the Birth of the National Archives, 1906-1926* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981); Donald McCoy, *The National Archives: America's Ministry of Documents, 1934-1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).
9. Richard Cox, “The Failure or Future of American Archival History: A Somewhat Unorthodox View,” *Libraries and Culture* 35:1 (2000): 141-154, 141; see also his “American Archival History: Its Development, Needs, and Opportunities,” *American Archivist* 46 (Winter 1983): 31-41; and *American Archival Analysis: The Recent Development of the Archival Profession in the United States* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1990).
10. Richard Cox, “The Concept of Public Memory and Its Impact on Archival Public Programming,” *Archivaria* 36 (Autumn 1993): 122-135, 123. The work he cites is Kenneth Foote, “To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory, and Culture,” *American Archivist* 53:3 (Summer 1990): 378-392. Foote is a geographer.
11. Further, the value is to be determined by professionally trained archival staff. See for example, Theodore Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956); Maynard Brichford, *Basic Manual Series—Archives and Manuscripts: Appraisal and Accessioning* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1977). Note that efforts have been made to ameliorate the difficult position that professional archivists must then negotiate. See for example, Richard Cox,

- Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscript Curators* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1996) for a community “working group” approach to appraisal and community documentation.
12. Richard Brown and Beth Davis-Brown, “The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries, and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness,” *History of the Human Sciences* 11:4 (1998): 17-32, 25.
 13. Brown and Davis-Brown, “The Making of Memory,” 26.
 14. See Hope Olson, “Mapping Beyond Dewey’s Boundaries: Constructing Classificatory Space for Marginalized Knowledge Domains,” *Library Trends* 47:2 (Fall 1998): 233-254, for a brief review of this literature.
 15. JoAnne Yates, *Control Through Communication: The Rise of System in American Management* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
 16. *Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “file”; see also Yates, “From Press Book and Pigeonhole to Vertical Filing: Revolution in Storage and Access Systems for Correspondence,” *Journal of Business Communication* 19:3 (1982): 5-26.
 17. Yates, *Control through Communication*.
 18. E. McClung Fleming, *R.R. Bowker, Militant Liberal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952).
 19. Yates, *Control through Communication*; see also Yates, “From Press Book.”
 20. McCoy, *National Archives*.
 21. See, for example, Oliver Holmes, “Archival Arrangement: Five Different Operations at Five Different Levels,” *American Archivist* 27:1 (January 1964): 21-41; Theodore Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965); David Gracy II, *Basic Manual Series—Archives and Manuscripts: Arrangement and Description* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1977).
 22. For a history of the development of this form of social organization in New England, see Peter Hall, *The Organization of American Culture, 1700-1900: Private Institutions, Elites, and the Origins of American Nationality* (New York: New York University Press, 1984).
 23. By “filing system” I mean both the materials—documents, equipment—and a somewhat circumscribed range of practices whereby people put these materials to a fairly common use.
 24. Should this claim sound a little odd, two references may help. First, writing the majority opinion in a landmark case in 1819, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall considered the corporation a fiction of legal documents, “an artificial being, invisible, intangible, and existing only in contemplation of law.” He was writing at a time when corporations were chartered only by special act of a state legislature, before they became naturalized in everyday practices and empowered with extensive privileges in law. Marshall is quoted in Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982): 83 and in Scott Bowman, *The Modern Corporation and American Political Thought: Law, Power, and Ideology* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996): 44. Second, in his book *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay* (New York: Random House, 1986), Yale sociologist Charles Perrow suggests that organizations generally are best conceived as instruments (rather than entities) that are constructed and used by the real subjects in his analysis, who are people. See Charles Perrow, Albert J. Reiss Jr., and Harold L. Wilensky, *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay* (New York: Random House, 1986).
 25. Bradley, “Seductions of the Archive,” 109.
 26. The word is borrowed from R.R. Bowker, *The Stockbridge Library: Address by R.R. Bowker, President of the Association, at the Annual Meeting, September 30, 1905* (Pittsfield, Mass.: Sun Printing, 1905): 3. On the special act of the legislature, see R.R. Bowker, *The Stockbridge Library, 1904-1928* (Pittsfield, Mass.: Sun Printing, 1928).
 27. Harry Lydenberg, *The Berkshire Republican Library at Stockbridge, 1794-1818* (Worcester, Mass.: Davis Press, 1941): 3.
 28. Walter Hawkins to R.R. Bowker, 7 December 1918, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.19/8, Stockbridge, Mass. See also Bowker, *Stockbridge Library 1905*.
 29. Fleming, *R.R. Bowker*.
 30. Bowker, *Stockbridge Library 1904-1928*, 3.
 31. *Ibid.*, 10.
 32. Stockbridge Library Association (SLA) president R.R. Bowker to SLA treasurer Edward B. Owen, 22 May 1917, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.17/14, Stockbridge, Mass.
 33. Bowker, *Stockbridge Library 1904-1928*, 6.
 34. Hawkins, letter, 7 December 1918.
 35. Bowker, *Stockbridge Library 1904-1928*, 5.
 36. *Ibid.*, 8.

37. Report to President Laine for SLA Annual Meeting, 25 September 1936, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.9/1, Stockbridge, Mass.; Minutes of SLA Annual Meeting, 26 September 1936, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.9/1, Stockbridge, Mass.; E. Louise Jones, Division of Public Libraries, letter to SLA Trustees, 21 October 1936, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.34/1, Stockbridge, Mass.
38. Stockbridge Library Association, *August, 1938: Bulletin*, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.14/1, Stockbridge, Mass.; Minutes of SLA monthly meeting, 3 May 1937, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.12/13, Stockbridge, Mass.; Elmer Purington, SLA Building Committee, letter to Elizabeth Heath, SLA Secretary, 7 February 1938, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.12/14, Stockbridge, Mass.; "Library to Have Addition," 27 April 1937, *Berkshire Eagle*; "Many Attend Opening" 13 February 1938, *Berkshire Eagle*.
39. Minutes of SLA monthly meeting, October 1937, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.12/13, Stockbridge, Mass.:1; Minutes of SLA monthly meeting, 6 December 1937, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.12/13, Stockbridge, Mass.; Stockbridge Library Association, *1966 Annual Report*, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.14/3, Stockbridge, Mass.
40. "Mrs. Wilcox to Attend Library School," 5 May 1942, *Berkshire Eagle*.
41. Minutes of SLA monthly meeting, 7 February 1938, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.12/14, Stockbridge, Mass.; "Many Inspect Addition to Library," 14 February 1938, *Berkshire Eagle*.
42. Minutes of Historical Committee meeting, 5 October 1943, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.42/1, Stockbridge, Mass.: 2.
43. *Ibid.*, 3.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Historical Room Annual Report, 8 October 1954, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, m72-6.42/2, Stockbridge, Mass.: 3.
46. Gillian Rose, "Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivities, and Other Tactics" *Progress in Human Geography* 21:3 (1997): 305-320.

