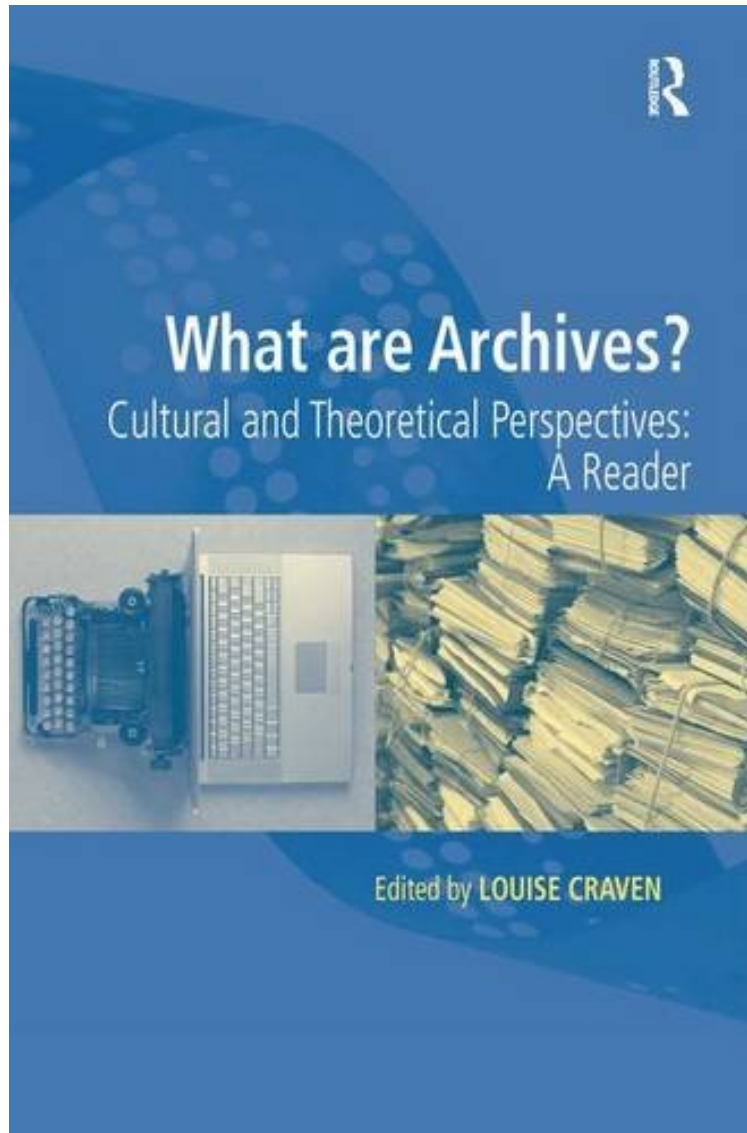


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This collection of essays breaks new ground in archival studies in the UK where professional archival texts have traditionally concentrated on the how, not the why, of archival work. Studies of the theoretical role of, for example, the archive and the text or the archive and political power, have meanwhile been undertaken in other academic disciplines where there is an established forum for the discussion of related issues. This book invites the archivist to join that arena of debate, whilst appealing to all those interested in archives from other disciplines; the authors encourage archivists to step away from the practicalities of keeping archives to consider what it is they actually do in the cultural context of the early 21st century. The wider context of technological innovation and the internet form the backdrop to this collection. The book explores change and continuity in the archival paradigm, the textual nature of archives and asks if views of manuscripts and personal papers are changing; it looks at specific developments in community archives, at concepts of identity and culture in archives and it presents the fruits of innovative studies of users of archives. Taken together, these essays, written by leading experts in the field, provide a new understanding of the role of the archive today.

'This fine collection at last brings British thinking about archives onto the world stage. It admirably fills a gap in English-speaking international archival discourse where, in recent decades, the leading voices have been American, Australian, Canadian, Dutch, and South African. What are archives? offers welcome theoretical and cultural perspectives indeed, in British contexts and textures that are always illuminating. The book should be embraced by archival educators, students, and reflective archivists everywhere.' Terry Cook, University of Manitoba, Canada 'I very much welcome this new book, which seeks to address some of the cultural and philosophical questions now surrounding the "archive" and the "archivist". Leading British thinkers, academics and professional practitioners are brought together here for the first time to reflect on theoretical and conceptual developments in the field of archives and to set these into wider social, political, technological and epistemological contexts. Archives enable us to understand community identities and they support accountability, transparency and citizen's rights: but this book examines the more fundamental question, "What are archives?".' Elizabeth Shepherd, University College London, UK 'Not so much the definitive theoretical treaty on the future of archives as much more a fascinating kaleidoscope of particular archival issues - and well worth having a look at.' Bulletin '... as an introduction to British archival theory, and current practices in the country, the book does provide a valuable addition to the important discussion of what archives are from a British perspective.' Library Management, Vol 30, 2010 'This is an exceptionally interesting, stimulating and challenging collection of essays. You do not have to agree with them to find them valuable and thought-provoking.' Australian Library Journal November 2009 '... a valuable addition to the library of anyone who has an interest in the current upturned state of historiography and epistemology, and who wishes to begin to get a grasp on what theoretical as well as practical challenges need to be faced in order to provide a robust future for both.' Records Management Journal, Volume 19 No. 2, 2009 'This book, where archivists are actively participating in advancing a theoretical understanding of the work of archiving, is a welcome contribution to the literature on the epistemology of the archive ...and will be of particular interest to archival educators and to any professional interested in thinking more deeply about the broader function of archives in society.' Journal of Archival Organization, Vol 8 No 1, 2010 About the Author Louise Craven is Head of Cataloguing at the National Archives, UK.