

Archives and the Public Good: Accountability and Records in Modern Society

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ARCHIVES AND THE PUBLIC GOOD

*Accountability and Records in
Modern Society*

Edited by
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Accountability and Records in Modern Society:

This volume widens the perspective of the roles that records play in society. As opposed to most writings in the discipline of archives and records management which view records from cultural, historical, and economical efficiency dimensions, this volume highlights that one of the most salient features of records is the role they play as sources of accountability a component that often brings them into daily headlines and into courtrooms. Struggles over control, access, preservation, destruction, authenticity, accuracy, and other issues demonstrate time and again that records are not mute observers and recordings of activity. Rather, they are frequently struggled over as objects of memory formation and erasure. The 14 powerful case studies focus around four closely related themes: explanation, secrecy, memory, and trust. They demonstrate how records compel, shape, distort, and recover social interactions across space and time. The diverse range of case studies includes the ownership of the Martin Luther King, Jr. papers, the destruction of records on Nazi war criminals in Canada, the politics of documents in the Iran-Contra affair, the failure of records management in the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, the publication of tobacco company documents on the World Wide Web, access to records associated with the U.S. government's infamous Tuskegee syphilis study, the role of the U.S. National Archives in identifying assets looted by the Nazis in the wake of the Holocaust, the destruction of public records by the South African government during apartheid's final years, the construction of foreign relations of the U.S. documentary histories, the forgery corrupting recordkeeping systems, and the collapse of foreign indigenous commercial banks.

"[C]ox and Wallace have produced a book that will surely become a standard text for archive and records management students around the English-speaking world."-Journal of the Society of Archivists "[a]n excellent overview of the subject...[f]or students preparing for careers in archives and records management. The wider audience includes all of us who are dependent upon records and, to a very substantial degree, that includes all of us in modern society, wherever we may find ourselves."-College Research Libraries "The introductory essay is an excellent overview of the subject, giving context to the overlapping themes developed in the case studies. The book has a very detailed index, and the copious set of citations will lead readers to sources used, but also to other areas of study for students preparing for careers in archives and records management. The wider audience includes all of us who are dependent upon records and, to a very substantial degree, that includes all of us in modern society, wherever we may find ourselves."-College and Research Libraries "[T]his volume would compliment any classroom discussion of archival accountability and ethics. It is certainly a must-read for archivists and other records professionals because of the immediacy of its content....Historians, librarians, educators, lawyers, and political scientists would find points of intersection with the variety of cases explored within this volume....[T]his volume is worthy of attention for its wealth of examples illustrating the value of records in our global society and it is highly recommended."-Technicalities March/April 2003 "Cox and Wallace have produced a book that will surely become a standard text for archive and records management students around the English-speaking world."-Journal of the Society of Archivists "an excellent overview of the subject...for students preparing for careers in archives and records management. The wider audience includes all of us who are dependent upon records and, to a very substantial degree, that includes all of us in modern society, wherever we may find ourselves."-College Research Libraries "This volume would compliment any classroom discussion of archival accountability and ethics. It is certainly a must-read for archivists and other records professionals because of the immediacy of its content....Historians, librarians, educators, lawyers, and political scientists would find points of intersection with the variety of cases explored within this volume....This volume is worthy of attention for its wealth of examples illustrating the value of records in our global society and it is highly recommended."-Technicalities March/April 2003 "[C]ox and Wallace have produced a book that will surely become a standard text for archive and records management students around the English-speaking world."-Journal of the Society of Archivists "[a]n excellent overview of the subject...[f]or students preparing for careers in archives and records management. The wider audience includes all of us who are dependent upon records and, to a very substantial degree, that includes all of us in modern society, wherever we may find ourselves."-College Research Libraries "The introductory essay is an excellent overview of the subject, giving context to the overlapping themes developed in the case studies. The book has a very detailed index, and the copious set of citations will lead readers to sources used, but also to other areas of study for students preparing for careers in archives and records management. The wider audience includes all of us who are dependent upon records and, to a very substantial degree, that includes all of us in modern society, wherever we may find ourselves."-College and Research Libraries "[T]his volume would compliment any classroom discussion of archival accountability and ethics. It is certainly a must-read for archivists and other records professionals because of the immediacy of its content....Historians, librarians, educators, lawyers, and political scientists would find points of intersection with the variety of cases explored within this volume....[T]his volume is worthy of attention for its wealth of examples illustrating the value of records in our global society and it is highly

recommended.?-Technicalities March/April 2003?The editors have archived their aim of creating a valuable tool to support the teaching of accountability issues to archival students and, in so doing, they have assembled a collection of fascinating stories which can be read for general interest, especially by those who wish to understand what records and archives mean and how they support the attainment of organisational and societal goals....[p]rovides ammunition for records managers and archivists to use in their dealings with those politicians, bureaucrats and managers who have little time for record-keeping function, who regard records management as relatively unimportant in the face of other pressing operational priorities, as something which can be left to lower-level, untrained staff. It shows that they neglect at their peril the proper organisation and management of the records for which they are ultimately accountable.?-Journal of Documentation"The editors have archived their aim of creating a valuable tool to support the teaching of accountability issues to archival students and, in so doing, they have assembled a collection of fascinating stories which can be read for general interest, especially by those who wish to understand what records and archives mean and how they support the attainment of organisational and societal goals....[p]rovides ammunition for records managers and archivists to use in their dealings with those politicians, bureaucrats and managers who have little time for record-keeping function, who regard records management as relatively unimportant in the face of other pressing operational priorities, as something which can be left to lower-level, untrained staff. It shows that they neglect at their peril the proper organisation and management of the records for which they are ultimately accountable."-Journal of DocumentationAbout the AuthorRICHARD J. COX is Professor in Library and Information Science at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Information Sciences. He is the author of several books, including *Managing Records as Evidence and Information* (Quorum, 2001), *Closing an Era: Historical Perspectives on Modern Archives and Records Management* (2000), and *Managing Institutional Archives* (1992). He is also editor of the *Records Information Management Report*.DAVID A. WALLACE is an Assistant Professor at the School of Information, University of Michigan.