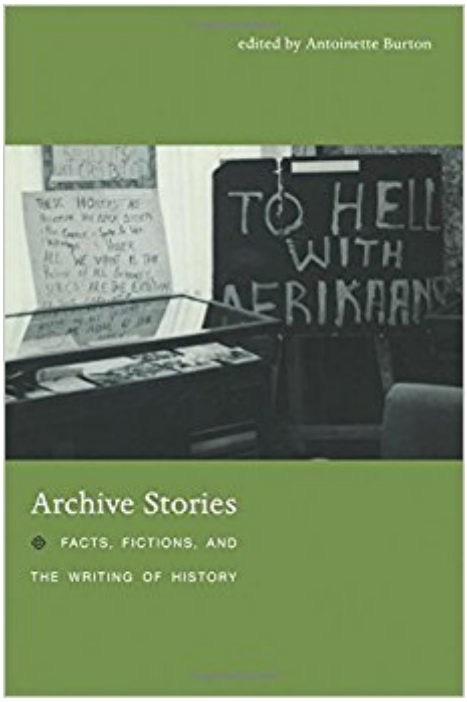
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Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, And The Writing Of History



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Synopsis

Despite the importance of archives to the profession of history, there is very little written about actual encounters with themÃ¢â ¬â •about the effect that the researcherÃ¢â ¬â„¢s race, gender, or class may have on her experience within them or about the impact that archival surveillance, architecture, or bureaucracy might have on the histories that are ultimately written. This provocative collection initiates a vital conversation about how archives around the world are constructed, policed, manipulated, and experienced. It challenges the claims to objectivity associated with the traditional archive by telling stories that illuminate its power to shape the narratives that are Ã¢â ¬Å“foundÃ¢â ¬Â• there.Archive Stories brings together ethnographies of the archival world, most of which are written by historians. Some contributors recount their own experiences. One offers a moving reflection on how the relative wealth and prestige of Western researchers can gain them entry to collections such as UzbekistanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s newly formed Central State Archive, which severely limits the access of Uzbek researchers. Others explore the genealogies of specific archives, from one of the most influential archival institutions in the modern West, the Archives nationales in Paris, to the significant archives of the Bakunin family in Russia, which were saved largely through the efforts of one family member. Still others explore the impact of current events on the analysis of particular archives. A contributor tells of researching the 1976 Soweto riots in the politically charged atmosphere of the early 1990s, just as apartheid in South Africa was coming to an end. A number of the essays question what counts as an archiveÃ¢â ¬â •and what counts as historyÃ¢â ¬â •as they consider oral histories, cyberspace, fiction, and plans for streets and buildings that were never built, for histories that never materialized.Contributors. Tony Ballantyne, Marilyn Booth, Antoinette Burton, Ann Curthoys, Peter Fritzsche, Durba Ghosh, Laura Mayhall, Jennifer S. Milligan, Kathryn J. Oberdeck, Adele Perry, Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, John Randolph, Craig Robertson, Horacio N. Roque RamÃƒÂ-rez, Jeff Sahadeo, ReneÃƒÂ© Sentilles

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“Archive Stories is path-breaking in its subject matter, methodology, and up-to-date reflection on the status of historical knowledge. It is hard to see how anyone can avoid using this important anthology in methodology and historiography courses.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Bonnie G. Smith, author of The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical PracticeÃ¢â ¬Å“Important and timely, this fascinating collection of tales from a multitude of repositories and record offices removes all sorts of archives from the historianÃ¢â ¬â„¢s grasp (though there are many extraordinary and brave historians writing here) and restores their meaning to politics and society, to the telling of individual and collective pasts.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Carolyn Steedman, author of Dust: The Archive and Cultural History

"Archive Stories is path-breaking in it subject matter, methodology, and up-to-date reflection on the status of historical knowledge. It is hard to see how anyone can avoid using this important anthology in methodology and historiography courses."— [RR; PP] Bonnie G. Smith, author of The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice

As the title suggests, this book is a collection of essays written by historians who have, to use the expression, been there and done that. Although these stories come from all over the world and take up a wide variety of topics, they are held together by a common theme: it is unrealistic to think that any archive contains merely the raw materials of history. Why? Because even the archive itself has a history, a history that dictates factors like what the archive contains, how its contents are arranged, how items are labeled, access to materials, and the unpredictable experiences of researchers. A second and related theme is that historians these days are bound to sense a tug-of-war being waged. On the one hand are those positivist ideas about the high level of precision one can supposedly achieve as a result of archival research. (Perhaps such notions have been inspired by recent advances in forensic science popularized by television crime dramas). On the other hand is a postmodern view according to which not only history but even the archive itself is

understood to be an interpretation. People who aspire to become historians, and armchair historians who want to know what it's like to dig around among the primary sources, should read this book.

A critical piece for any interested in historiography.

Any graduate student of history should read this book.

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