

CHAPTER 7

The archives

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Throughout time human societies have built memory palaces, including keeping-places for the collective archives of a tribe, dynasty, political or commercial empire, city state, religion, community, industry, family, or nation. Drawn from the records that form the personal and corporate archive of the individuals and groups that make up the particular society, records are selected for permanent preservation on the basis of prevailing ideas about their continuing value. In chapter 2 Adrian Cunningham explores how the keeping of such records has been institutionalized in different times and places, and how 'the nature of the prevailing power relations and the particular roles archives play as contested sites of power struggle ... determine the forms and functions of archival programs'. Chapter 2 also canvases the societal purposes behind this institutionalization. Impulses to institutionalize records of continuing value as archives are also explored in chapters 9-12 with reference to issues of governance, accountability, power and memory.

Beyond the boundaries of organizations, and individuals, archiving processes are involved in the transformation of the individual or corporate archive by 'placing' them into a larger archival framework that enables them to function as accessible collective memory. In chapter 1 we explored how, in relation to the Children Overboard affair, the archive of a ship, department of state, office of a minister, media company, individual and family might become part of the collective archives of the government of Australia, the business archives of Australia, or a state or national collection of the personal archives of Australians. They are thus transformed from 'evidence of me', the corporate entity or individual, into 'evidence of us' – components of our collective memory. Chapters 4-6 concern the creation, management and use of documents, records and the archive, and the way in which they function as evidence and memory of individual and corporate entities. This chapter focuses on the archives and the role of the archivists who manage them (styled collective archivists in this chapter).

Societies institutionalize their collective archives according to their own evidence and memory paradigms, which also shape archival notions of reliability, authenticity, and