

Abstract to the session “Archives, Accountability, and Democracy in the Digital Age”

Archives and Reflexivity in the Modern Society

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What is "archives" for? In more general question, why does organizations keep records? The answer varies depending on "how" and "to what extent". In principle, organizations are motivated to keep records just because of economic benefit. e.g. financial records, customer list or transaction records.

Then what about records without economic benefit, i.e. what if in case keeping certain kind of record does not lead to their commercial interest though it leads to society's interest? Legal enforcement will be needed. Carrying out the audit will be typical case when we talk about mandatory record keeping.

For example Sarbanes Oxley act (SOx; the Public Company Accounting Reform and Investor Protection Act of 2002) came into force in response to a number of major corporate and accounting scandals by Enron, WorldCom and so on. SOx requires companies to achieving SOX compliance in order to protect stakeholders and citizens. [TITLE VIII of SOx "Corporate and Criminal Fraud Accountability" obliges publicly-traded company to preserve whole records about his activity concerning audit for more than 5 years.]

Here many aspects of recordkeeping come up. It is fact that originally SOx is to protect stakeholders and citizens, but at the same time, Sox could be self-defense measure to protect board members themselves from personal charges of the unintentional accident as long as they observe the SOx conditions.

Taking more case for example, presenter would like to look for the sociological analysis inspired by the concept of reflexivity [by A. Giddens] stretching to archives in modern society.