The Established Archives: A Bibliometric Overview of Archival Research

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Background

"The archival multiverse [encompasses the] pluralism of evidentiary texts, memory-keeping practices and institutions, bureaucratic and personal motivations, community perspectives and needs, and cultural and legal constructs with which archival professionals and academics must be prepared, through graduate education, to engage." (McKemmish & Piggott, 2013, p.113)

Archival research is not a monolith; it is composed by a diversity of methods, theories, concepts, and practices. Our goal is to trace the history of the archives field and the archival multiverse by analyzing published archival scholarship.

Methods

Journals were collected in the archival science field which were searched in different bibliometric data sources including Web of Science (WoS), Microsoft Academic Graph (MAG), Dimensions, CrossRef. and Library and Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA).

Bibliometric coupling, direct citations, and co-citations were used to create a network of archival literature that was as complete as possible.

The Louvain community detection algorithm (Blondel et al., 2008) was used to cluster the 532 archival papers in different research sub-communities within the field.

Results

Most frequent words

archival, data, records, digital, research, curation, approach, community, recordkeeping, services

study, resins, corrosion, fading, humidity, relative, adhesives, bronze, chemical, deteriorated, pest, soluble

preservation, investigation, records, solvents, strategies, biochemical, combination, faience, gallery, gowns, ground, ladies, silk

dyes, fibers, identification, pigments, blue, mordant, textile, chromatographic, gas, microscopy

archives, disaster, plan, fire, libraries, recovery, royal, Saskatchewan, time, war
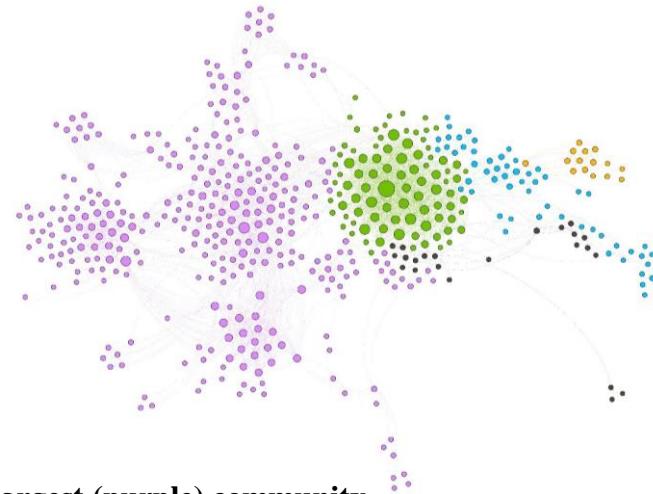
Zooming in on the largest (purple) community

Most frequent words

archives, memory, identity, personal, rights, decolonizing, provenance, colonial, continuum, justice

archival, south, user, Africa, aids, finding, genre, Botswana, controlled, generic, keeping, subject, world

data, digital, curation, research, management, education, standards, sharing, designing, lifecycle

Egyptian, deterioration, limestone, overview, adhesive, American, book, Boston, Canada, determining, en, global, interview, inventory, mutilation, porous, problems, region, retrieval, salts, silicone, stone, structural

conservation, treatment, intent, artists, examination, fine, lacquer, preventive, technology, workflows
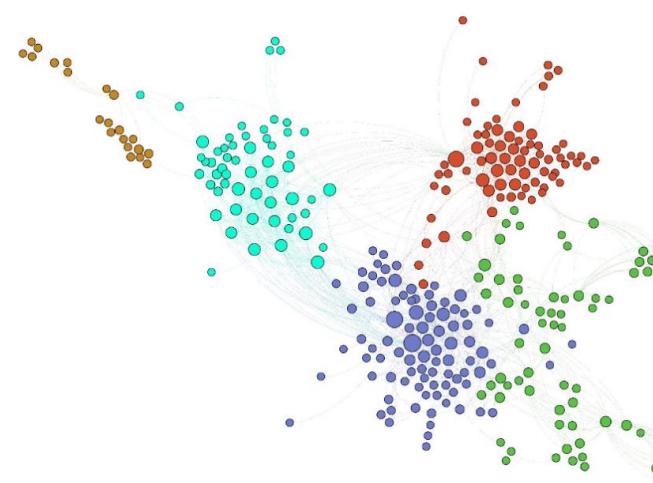
Discussion

Our preliminary results provide an overview of the structure of the archival field in recent decades.

The maps can provide a new perspective on the archives as both a concept and as a field of research.

Preliminary analysis of the citations to and from other fields (not shown) point to an archival field that is slowly developing its own identity with a decreasing share of references and citations coming from non-archival journals.

Next Steps

Our next steps include using alternative methods to map the field that rely less on citations to include a wider scope of literature, such as the article abstracts.

We aim to further explore the interactions between archives and other fields beyond its traditional relationship with history.

References

Blondel, V. D, Guillaume, J., Lambiotte, R. & Lefebvre, E. (2008). Fast unfolding of communities in large networks. *Journal of Statistical Mechanics, 2008*(10), P10008-12.

McKemmish, S., & Piggott, M. (2013). Toward the archival multiverse: Challenging the binary opposition of the personal and corporate archive in modern archival theory and practice. *Archivaria, 76*, 111–114.