

## PRESENTATION NOTE Rethinking the archive(s)

## NOTA DE APRESENTAÇÃO Repensar o(s) arquivo(s)

ABEL RODRIGUES

PhD grant holder of Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia  
(IEM, IHC - NOVA FCSH; Centre Jean-Mabillon, École nationale des chartes-PSL)  
[abelrodrigues@fcsh.unl.pt](mailto:abelrodrigues@fcsh.unl.pt)  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1254-4112>

FILIPA LOPES

Researcher, IEM - NOVA FCSH  
[filipa.lopes@fcsh.unl.pt](mailto:filipa.lopes@fcsh.unl.pt)  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2300-4106>

MARIA DE LURDES ROSA

Assistant Professor NOVA FCSH (IHC - NOVA FCSH)  
[mlrosa@fcsh.unl.pt](mailto:mlrosa@fcsh.unl.pt)  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2027-4485>

The seminar series *Rethinking the Archive(s)* was held from October 2023 to April 2024 and was organized by the VINCULUM project — funded by the European Research Council and based at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Universidade Nova de Lisboa<sup>1</sup>, — as well as by the Institute for Medieval Studies (IEM) of the same institution<sup>2</sup>. For the VINCULUM project,

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<sup>1</sup> VINCULUM - Entailing Perpetuity: Family, Power, Identity. The Social Agency of a Corporate Body (Southern Europe, 14th-17th Centuries) - ERC Co.G. 819734. <https://www.vinculum.fcsh.unl.pt/>

<sup>2</sup> Instituto de Estudos Medievais. <https://iem.fcsh.unl.pt/en/>

the seminar was part of a broader set of activities reflecting the theoretical reconsideration of historians' archives and materials, a key aspect of its scientific framework. This perspective guided the documentary research conducted and the development of the associated database and information system. Related initiatives included the seminar *Open Source Archival Databases for Historians* (July 2022), the Postgraduate Programme in Historical Archivistics (which led to two issues of this magazine)<sup>3</sup>, the elective course *Proof, Information, Memory: Training in Archival Science and Atom*, and the International Conference *History and Archival Science: Common Issues in the Construction of Complex Knowledge*<sup>4</sup>. From the IEM's side, the seminar series formed part of its long-standing research activities in Historical Archivistics, an area it has focused on since 2010. These efforts have resulted in projects such as INVENT.ARQ and ARCHIFAM, numerous doctoral dissertations, extensive publications, and the organization of scientific conferences<sup>5</sup>.

Within the framework of these two productive models, it was deemed both timely and engaging to organize a series of debates featuring leading figures in scientific thought on archives and archival studies. These experts, representing diverse epistemological and disciplinary traditions, were invited to Portugal, with the National Archive serving as the fitting venue. The goal of the series was to position archives — understood as social constructs — at the heart of the discussion, examining their origins, functions, structures, material aspects, and evolving roles over time, while also evaluating the impact of the digital transition on the formation of collective memory.

By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, the initiative sought to create a space where Historical Archivistics, History, Information Science(s), and Archival Science could intersect, enriching theoretical and methodological reflections on the concept of the 'Archive' and its connections to various fields of knowledge. This effort aimed to address a growing need within Portugal's scientific community.

Held at a pace of one session per month, the series explored a range of preselected topics. Each session featured analysis and commentary from

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<sup>3</sup> Caminhos da Arquivística Histórica I: materialidades, contextos de produção de informação, representações documentais (2023). *Boletim do Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra*, 36(2). [https://doi.org/10.14195/2182-7974\\_36\\_2](https://doi.org/10.14195/2182-7974_36_2); Caminhos da Arquivística Histórica II: epistemologias, práticas, propostas (2024). *Boletim do Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra*, Extra 1. [https://doi.org/10.14195/2182-7974\\_extra2024\\_1](https://doi.org/10.14195/2182-7974_extra2024_1)

<sup>4</sup> Information on these events can be found on the project website mentioned above.

<sup>5</sup> The results can be consulted on the IEM website for the INVENT.ARQ project (<https://iem.fcsh.unl.pt/en/projects/>) and, in their entirety, on the ArqFAM website ([https://arqfam.fcsh.unl.pt/?page\\_id=2269](https://arqfam.fcsh.unl.pt/?page_id=2269)).

esteemed researchers in Portugal, with the overarching goal of bridging any remaining disciplinary divides on the global scientific stage. A plan was set in motion to publish the lectures, along with optional transcriptions of the commentators' insights, in a more accessible format.

The volume now presented is the outcome of this initiative, compiling all conference texts along with commentaries on two of them. Given the richness of these contributions, we provide only a brief introduction, as the works speak for themselves. The collected texts reflect multiple thematic areas, though we refrain from treating them as rigidly distinct — after all, resisting compartmentalization was a key objective shared by the organizers, speakers, and commentators alike.

On the one hand, we have the question of the social contexts of archives, explored by Olivier Poncet — who examines them as 'instruments of power' and engages with the historiography on the subject — and by Randolph Head, who delves into the very notion of 'context,' tracing its historical development over an extended period. Moving closer to historical theory, yet still addressing the intersection of the documentary and archival turns, Joseph Morsel's contribution focuses on concepts and knowledge production. Through a critical analysis of metaphors — specifically 'sources' and 'voices' — he interrogates their naturalisation and implications.

On the other hand, Eric Ketelaar and Geoffrey Yeo, while rooted in archival studies, extend the discussion beyond the field's traditional boundaries. In *Celebrating Change in Archives*, Ketelaar takes an optimistic view of the discipline's evolution, even as he highlights future challenges, such as the ecological sustainability of digital preservation and access. Yeo, meanwhile, investigates the intricate relationships between archives, documents, and information, exploring how these concepts vary across linguistic and cultural contexts and questioning the dominant role of information. L. S. Ascensão de Macedo's comprehensive commentary situates Yeo's arguments within broader archival traditions, particularly regarding the relationship between records and archives.

Turning to the colonial archive and its role in addressing 'epistemic injustices', Charles Jeurgens highlights the significance of archival activism. His work critiques the imposition of Western archival frameworks and examines how colonial systems exercised power through archives. Ana Canas' commentary extends this discussion into the Portuguese context, an especially relevant contribution given the emerging nature of this discourse in Portugal.

We now invite you to engage with this compelling collection of articles, which we have had the privilege of assembling, and to participate in

discussions with the authors and commentators. We hope these contributions will help further the dissemination of rigorous, insightful, and progressive understandings of archives — particularly in these uncertain times, where ethical concerns around information use, and the role of human intelligence in shaping fairer societies remain more pressing than ever.

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We extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to making this special issue of BAUC possible: the authors and commentators of the conferences; the Director of the National Archives of Torre do Tombo and his team; the institutions that funded the VINCULUM project and IEM (ERC and FCT); and the engaged, enthusiastic audience who actively participated in the various sessions of the cycle. Finally and crucially, we deeply appreciate the generous support of BAUC and IUC in accepting our publishing proposal, which enhances the value of this initiative.

### **Note of the scientific coordinators:**

This volume was funded by national funds through FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P., under the project UID/00749 (Institute for Medieval Studies) and by the VINCULUM project, with funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 819734) (Institute of Contemporary History and IN2PAST, funded by National funds through FCT — Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P., under the projects UID/04209 and LA/P/0132/2020 (DOI 10.54499/LA/P/0132/2020)).



Coord. Filipa Lopes,  
Abel Rodrigues, Maria de Lurdes Rosa  
IEM/FCSH-UNL; Projecto VINCULUM

## CICLO DE SEMINÁRIOS: RETHINKING THE ARCHIVE(S)/ REPENSAR O(S) ARQUIVO(S)

**Sala de Conferências  
da Torre do Tombo**



Este evento científico foi financiado com recurso a fundos nacionais através da FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., no âmbito do Projeto Estratégico do Instituto de Estudos Medievais - financiamento UIDB/00749/2020

\*Project VINCULUM has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement n° 891734)\*

**1ª SESSÃO: 4 DE OUTUBRO DE 2023, 14:30**  
**Tema: Les archives comme outils de pouvoir/ O arquivo como instrumento de poder**  
 Conferencista: Olivier Poncet (École nationale des chartes-PSL)  
 Comentários: Pedro Cardim (CHAM; FCSH-UNL)

**2ª SESSÃO: 9 DE NOVEMBRO DE 2023, 14:30**  
**Tema: New epistemological frameworks and horizons/ Novos enquadramentos e horizontes epistemológicos**  
 Conferencista: Eric Ketelaar (Prof. Emérito da Universidade de Amsterdão)  
 Comentários: Fernanda Ribeiro e Armando Malheiro da Silva (Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto)

**3ª SESSÃO: 6 DE DEZEMBRO DE 2023, 14:30**  
**Tema: Épistémologie des sources / A epistemologia das fontes**  
 Conferencista: Joseph Morsel (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)  
 Comentários: Maria de Lurdes Rosa (IEM; FCSH-UNL)

**4ª SESSÃO: 8 DE FEVEREIRO DE 2024, 14:30**  
**Tema: Context(s) of the Archive(s)/ Contexto(s) do Arquivo**  
 Conferencista: Randolph Head (University of California, Riverside)  
 Comentários: Diogo Ramada Curto (IPRI, FCSH-UNL)

**5ª SESSÃO: 6 DE MARÇO DE 2024, 14H30**  
**Tema: Archives, records and information/ Arquivos, documentos e informação**  
 Conferencista: Geoffrey Yeo (University College London)  
 Comentários: L. S. Ascensão de Macedo (Centro de Estudos Clássicos - FLUL)

**6ª SESSÃO: 4 DE ABRIL DE 2024, 14H30**  
**Tema: Colonial archives: spaces of knowledge and power / O arquivo colonial: lugar de saber e de poder**  
 Conferencista: Charles Jeurgens (Universidade de Amsterdão)  
 Comentários: Ana Canas (Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino/ DGLAB)

**Maio - VINCULUM Project's Archival colloquium - Palácio Fronteira, Lisboa (datas e programa em breve)**

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