

Call for Papers

Workshop on Archival Secrecy in Early Modern Monarchies and Republics

5-6 September 2024, University of Berne, Switzerland

Website: www.republican-secrets.ch

Submission Deadline: 3 November 2023

Over the past three decades, the "archival turn" has reshaped historiographical notions of archives, transforming them from mere repositories of sources into objects of historical inquiry. This shift in how historians view archives has contributed to a deeper understanding of archives as sites of memory and power. Studies of the early modern "information state" have emphasised the role of archives as tools of government, while the study of "archival practices" has revealed a wide range of uses of archives, from symbolic representation as state treasuries to administrative practices and early modern historiography. The question of access to city, court, or state archives has been addressed in these studies, but rarely in a systematic-comparative way. This workshop aims to fill this research gap by providing a space for discussion of the accessibility of early modern archives to different social groups and its connections to political organisation.

In particular, the workshop will be interested in conceptions and practices of archival secrecy in early modern Europe. In the late medieval and early modern period, so-called secret chanceries and archives were institutionalised in many parts of the European political landscape. Stored in closed boxes behind thick walls, government documents were supposed to belong to an exclusive sphere of the *arcana imperii*. However, as recent research has shown, this did not necessarily mean that these archives were completely inaccessible to non-governmental actors. The aim of this workshop is to discuss the rules and material arrangements that were supposed to allow records to be kept secret, and who was or was not allowed access to documents from the past. Were there certain records that were more public than others, and to what extent did their age determine whether they belonged to the secret sphere of government or were considered more "historical" documents? And to what extent did the political system shape the way in which archival secrecy was organised and debated: was access to "public" archives organised differently in early modern republics and monarchies, and in which cases was the monopoly of rulers on information challenged by groups outside the ruling elite?

The main aim of the workshop is to facilitate the exchange of innovative methodologies and to promote networking among researchers interested in archives, republicanism and secrecy. We will discuss how different methodological approaches, such as praxeology and cognitive history, offer new perspectives for the study of archival practices and secrecy. Participants are invited to submit proposals for papers that address one or more of the following topics:

- Concepts and representations of archival secrecy: When were archives described as secret? To what extent was secrecy as such a symbol of power, and how did this role relate to everyday practices of record keeping? How did the *arcana imperii* shape the iconography or discourses of early modern archives?
- Organisation of archival secrecy: Who was responsible for access to government records? How did secrecy influence the architecture and material culture of early modern archives and the way documents were arranged? To what extent did secrecy also shape the structure of contemporary inventories?

- Ways and benefits of access to the archives: Who could use the archives and to what extent? What opportunities arose from access to state documents - how important was it for advancing political careers?
- "Public" vs. "private" archives: What was the relationship between state archives and collections of documents held by individuals or families? Were family archives a challenge to archival secrecy in state archives or were they considered even more secret?
- The cognitive aspects of archiving: How did material and mental practices of knowledge preservation influence each other? Can material and textual sources shed light on the cognitive processes behind the organisation and use of early modern archives? Was personal memory a medium of archival secrecy?

This is not an exhaustive list, and other approaches related to the topic are also welcome. Proposals of approximately 500 words can be submitted in either German, English, or French, together with a short cv, to jan.haugner@unilu.ch and nadir.weber@unilu.ch. The deadline for submissions is 3 November 2023. Invited participants will be expected to submit a paper of 6-10 pages by early June 2024, which will be read by all participants and discussed at the workshop. For the invited participants travel, accommodation and meals during the workshop will be reimbursed thanks to funds from the Swiss National Science Foundation.

For further information and updates, please visit the project website: www.republican-secrets.ch. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact Jan Haugner (jan.haugner@unilu.ch).