Narcotic City Archive

Archival Research

(Document, Object, Poster, Audio-visual Material etc.)

Contribution Guidelines

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Method suited for	- Everyone who is interested and curious. - Collectives, organizations, associations. - Experts with background in humanities and social sciences
Aim of the method	The aim of archival research is to identify, find, and extract relevant information and materials from collections. Using archival research to contribute to the Narcotic City archive can inform new histories of narcotic cultures. Collections may be held by museums, libraries, or official archives. There are also informal collections, held by businesses, organizations, families, and other groups. Materials in such collections are known as primary sources, and they can be heterogeneous, including for example personal letters, newspaper articles, statistical records, flyers, protocols, photos, posters, memos, audio material, and much more. Looking into such material can lead to new knowledge, insights, and historical trajectories. Archival inquiry lies at the center of historical research. This method is potentially available to everyone, from scholars in the humanities and social sciences to interested individuals, political groups, etc.
Themes	History, Public Space, Gernder, Governing, Activism, Tourism etc..
Contents	

How to do archival research towards new histories of narcotic cultures?

Archival inquiry is the foundation of historical research, dating back centuries. In recent decades, is has also become a primary or secondary research method in many other disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. Looking into historical sources can offers new perspectives on past events, structures, actors, and conflicts related to narcotic cultures and other topics. Archival research can contribute to a critical perspective on current socio-cultural formations by offering insight into deeper historical trajectories and actor-networks.

In particular, materials from informal archives or collections held by NGOs, local communities, or other collectives can often enrich or challenge established historical narratives and assumptions. These sources can provide other perspectives from actors who are often marginalized in official discourse or archival practice. Archival material can also provide important contextualization and background information on factors that shape the research topic. This method can be used in conjunction with *secondary research* of literature and secondary sources, as well as other methods of empirical investigation such as ethnographic fieldwork, oral history interviews, etc.

Archival research is deeply relevant for a critical history of narcotic cultures, lying at the center of all historical research and curiosity. It can (and should) be undertaken by everyone who is interested, from scholars in the humanities and social sciences to individuals, political groups, etc.

Strengths	
	▪ Archival research can help researchers create new ideas for research questions and hypotheses. For example, based on the archival find of newspaper photographs of heroin users, a researcher may design a study on categories of representation and the circumstances surrounding shifts in media portrayal of drug use.
	▪ Archival research has an empirical component: primary source materials are identified and described in different ways (in terms of date or place of origin, type of material, and many other categories). Such empirical information can be analyzed as part of the process of building theories related to the material at hand.
	▪ If archival material from different historical periods can be found, this material can be compared in order to highlight shifts in historical dynamics that affect narcotic cultures, urban development, conflicts in public space, or other topics of interest.

Narcotic City Archive

- Frequently, material that might be regarded as irrelevant in its original context can become an important historical source offering knowledge that is not documented elsewhere, such as neighborhood complaints or party flyers.
- Archival data is very plentiful and many collections already exist. This makes archival research easier and often less costly than alternative research methods.
- Archival research minimizes the response biases of subjects, because the researcher is not present when the source material is produced.

Limits

- Depending on the research questions as well as archive structure, archival research may be easy and quick, or complex and time consuming. Some archives, especially those that are publicly funded, are easily accessible, with finding aids and personnel available for assistance. Other archives might be more difficult to access, or contain material that is more difficult to analyse. This is often true of private collections, but these may offer extraordinary finds.
- Archival records are always selective and biased to some extent. For example, letters to the police that are saved in an archive may not accurately reflect all letters that were submitted. Government records that are presented as an accurate reflection of activity in parliament may have been edited to appear more politically correct.
- Not all archives endure, and some materials are lost on purpose. When the survival of records is selective, there may be bias in the remaining archival material.
- People make mistakes when entering data in archives, which can make it difficult to locate material.
- Sometimes definitions change, so that the material included in a particular category may change over time. For example, the definition of "family" may change from families with a mother, father, and children to include same-sex couples or single-parent families.
- There may be biases when material is collected. For example, letters to the editor related to corporate ethics or terrorist activities may not have been published in a newspaper ten years ago, but now they are considered important enough to publish. The increase in the number of letters on these topics in newspaper archives may reflect changes in editors' biases and not changes in the actual number of letters sent to the newspaper.
- Many contemporary issues might be hard to research in an archive, as materials may not have been gathered yet. This is not always true: many governments, for instance, hold records of their parliamentary

debates about ongoing social issues. Many news media provide access to materials as they are published.

Getting Ready

What do you need	▪ Time, patience, and curiosity. ▪ A good understanding of the archive's structure and finding aids (information about the material provided by the archive). ▪ Resources to travel to the archive (if not accessible online) and money for reproductions (if required by the archive). ▪ A good camera or scanner (even on your phone) if allowed by the archive and precision in citing findings.
Requirements	▪ While most archives are open to everyone, at least officially, some require registration, specific institutional affiliations, or other qualifications (see "getting ready"). Online archives sometimes have similar requirements, or accessibility may depend on the location or configuration of the user's computer. ▪ Access to informal collections often depends on personal networks, trust, and confidentiality. In all cases, attention to data protection and usage rights is important (see below).
Bibliography	▪ Samuel J. Redman, Historical Research in Archives: A Practical Guide, American Historical Association 2013. PDF avariable under: https://cbpotter.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/aha-archives_final-08-07-13.pdf ▪ Moore, N., Salter, A., Stanley, L., & Tamboukou, M. (2016). The Archive Project: Archival Research in the Social Sciences. New York /London: Routledge. ▪ McKee, Heidi A., and James E. Porter. "The Ethics of Archival Research." College Composition and Communication, vol. 64, no. 1, 2012, pp. 59–81. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23264917. Accessed 21 June 2020.

Finding Relevant Archives	▪ Read widely in reference works and secondary sources related to your topic and time period to learn about archives that are relevant to your research. ▪ A growing number of archives can be found in online portals, such as *Europaeana* (Link: www.europeana.eu). ▪ Look closely at the websites of archival repositories to learn about their collections, finding aids, and procedures. ▪ Contact an archival repository before you visit. Often, they can help to identify relevant material. ▪ Archival research takes time. Be sure to plan ahead.
For a Specific Archive	▪ In some cases, you may need to make an official request, stating why you want to use this archive. You may also need a letter from your school or institution. Feel free to contact us in such cases as we might be able to help. ▪ Finding aids are reference tools created by archivists for locating materials. They come in a variety of forms, such as registers, card catalogs, or inventories. Many finding aids for archival materials are now online as websites or uploaded as documents. However, the level of detail in finding aids can vary from granular item-level descriptions to coarse collection-level descriptions. If an archive has a large backlog of unprocessed materials, there may not be any kind of finding aid. ▪ In an archive that has a lot of unprocessed materials, it is essential to speak to archive staff who have an understanding of collections and their organization. They are often a crucial source of information regarding unprocessed materials or related materials in other archives and repositories.

In Action

Steps	During your time in the archive:
	    ▪ Try to identify potential sources
	    ▪ Keep a running list of the relevant people, organizations, events, places, dates, and themes you discover in your reading, and keep a research journal of the catalogues and databases you search and the keywords you use. This will help you stay organized for later research steps.
	    ▪ Take careful, detailed notes when using unpublished materials, in particular.
	    ▪ If possible, make photographs of the materials or order reproductions of the most important documents.

- Speak with archive staff about your topic to fine-tune your research strategy and learn about related materials.
- Closely follow the instructions you are given at the repository, which may include some or all of the following guidelines:
- Follow any specific instructions you receive regarding archive use (for example, how to handle materials carefully).
- Do not take photographs without inquiring about permission first. If you have permission, photograph each document you find relevant. If you don't have a proper camera or scanner, the scan and photo options provided by most smartphones often are a pretty good alternative.
- Be sure to alert archives staff if you encounter damaged or extremely fragile material that may need special attention before it can be safely handled.

Ethics

As with all research, ethical issues in using archival materials are relevant throughout the process. For example, it is important to consider questions of consent, accessibility, and copyright (see also section on Data Protection below).

Most public archives provide helpful guidelines to how to deal with archival material. For private or informal archives, the owner or guardian of the archive should give informed consent for the use of material. If possible, the owners of the material should be identified and asked for permission to use the material.

For more, see the Research Guideline Rules here

https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/19791859/24.+Archival+Research+-+FINAL+25+09+18.pdf/93ce4b93-2573-b701-6514-ad474d8809ed

See also: Heidi A. McKee and James E. Porter, "The Ethics of Archival Research." College Composition and Communication, 64, no. 1, Research Methodologies (September 2012), pp. 59-81.

Data Protection

Archival material may involve personal data (defined as "any information relating to an identified or identifiable living individual") (UEA Data Protection Policy, 24 May 2018). If the person in question is alive, the researcher must insure that the use of personal data is in accordance with UEA policies. For more, see.

It is generally recommended that when a person is still living and can be identified in the archival material, the person should not be named unless there is a good reason to do so. For example, if the person concerned was a crucial actor in the issue being researched, or if the person is the author or

Narcotic City Archive

guardian of an archival collection being used. Living persons belonging to the general public should normally not be named.

Prepare the donation of your files

Finalize the file

At the end of your archival research, you will probably have a bunch of notes as well as a lot of scans or photos. Our advice is to be as detailed and accurate as possible when recording the origin of the material in the archive. If available, make sure to note down the object's identification number or archive code. Make sure to sort and clearly label your materials and files as soon as possible after your archive visit: this will be a huge help for the next steps in your research.

Consent for non-anonymous contents or anonymizing the source

Frequently, materials in archives are already anonymized, or these procedures are not required. Official archives usually have clear regulations on how their sources can be used. In private collections, the owners or guardians can often give more information.

In general, the people who created the source material – or who are identifiable in it – have to consent to the material being used or published, but several exceptions apply. Anonymizing or acquiring consent is generally not required if the person is deceased, a public figure, part of a demonstration, or in the background of a photo. Generally, a good practice is to ask yourself whether the publication of this material could endanger the safety of some individual or group. See also sections on Ethics and Data Protection above. There are no formal requirements for obtaining consent. It does not necessarily have to be given in writing; oral consent or even implicit consent may be sufficient. For example, implicit consent for photographs in an archive is acceptable if a person sees that she is being photographed. When the file you are going to upload contains personal data (any information relating to an identified or identifiable living individual), the best solution is to acquire a consent form from each person whose personal data, picture, or voice is contained in the file.

In addition, it is possible to make the people depicted in sources unrecognizable, for example by means of blackening, bars, blur filters, or similar. If the interest in publishing the photos is in conflict with the

interest of the depicted persons in remaining unidentified, this can be a good solution.

If you are unsure about how to obtain consent or anonymize data, please free to reach out to us and we can provide assistance.

Contact

For questions and feedback, please contact :

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