The Bentley Library and Eisenberg Institute Archive Seminar
A workshop series on archives that aims to pose intellectual questions and offer practical advice about the meanings and uses of archives in historical research and writing.

Fall Semester 2008

September 19, 2008
What Is an Archive?
1014 Tisch 12-2pm
This workshop explores how historians locate and define their archives. Panelists and participants will examine the boundaries and openings implied in the term “archives,” including the relationship between archives and libraries. Considering the wide range of possible archival structures and systems, the workshop will probe the sources of archival authority and authentication, their written and unwritten rules and the ways in which the languages of archives shape how their holdings are assembled and organized. Finally, we will ask whether the archive is inert, pointing to the dynamic relationship between researcher and archive.

October 24, 2008
Search and Discovery in the Archive
1014 Tisch 12-2pm
This workshop sets out to explore the national contexts and frameworks of archives. Is it possible to discern common rules across national differences in archival practices? Participants will examine the archival systems they have encountered and the ways in which they are represented to users and in legacy finding aids and inventories. We will probe the limitations of these representations and the broader cultural issues that underpin our ability to understand archives and their representations. Are archives organic or constructed? Are they essentially textual or visual in nature – or both?

Winter Semester 2009

January 23, 2009
Archives as Expressions of National and/or Social Memory
1014 Tisch 12-2pm
This workshop investigates what happens when the archives turn from a place of study to an object of study. In seeking to define the grain of the archive, we will explore the broad socio/political/cultural forces that shape the archive. Workshop participants will probe the role of archives in the study of post-colonial societies, in transnational histories of human rights, of the environment, and of gender. It will also be important to identify the historical authorities that exist outside of the archive and to examine the place of archives in the shaping of social memory.

March 6, 2009
Archives in the Digital Age
1014 Tisch 12-2pm
This workshop aims to identify digital records and digital archives and to analyze how they are compiled, understood, and accessed. Workshop members will attempt to define the cyberinfrastructure and to probe its relationship to the humanities and the social sciences. How might we understand the differences between paper archives and digital archives and the ways in which they are represented to users? What are the limits of online descriptive systems and might users eventually have a role in constructing descriptive systems? What is the importance of the archival image in a post-photographic era, for digital teaching and learning.