Teaching with Archives (online, 19 Mar 27)

Online, Mar 19, 2027
Deadline: Nov 20, 2026

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Teaching with Archives: Material Entanglements in Design Education.

In "'The Archive' is Not an Archives" Michelle Caswell recalls archives on fire, "books, archival records, manuscripts, newspapers, maps, and journals were burned to a crisp" to insist on the actuality of archives: individual, specific, physical spaces populated by workers, documents, catalogues, budgets, infrastructures, and competing systems of value. Against the tendency within the Humanities to dissolve the archive into a Foucauldian or Derridean abstraction, Caswell argues for attention to the intellectual and practical contributions of archivists and archival studies, and to archives as sites of material encounter, preservation, and power.

This symposium takes Caswell's provocation to consider how archives are discussed, mobilised, and experienced in design education. In particular, we are interested in how design historical knowledge is examined, constructed and shared in the classroom through an engagement with archives and collections – both physical and digital. In a moment of increasing digitalisation and automation seemingly disrupting design education, this symposium seeks to uncover ways in which a direct, embodied engagement with archival materials - documents, collections, ephemera, records, libraries, oral histories, and institutional repositories - can inform a more nuanced and critical understanding of design practice and its multiple histories.

Rather than seeking to map references to the archive as a metaphor, methodology, aesthetic strategy, this symposium seeks to document and explore engagements with 'actually existing archives' - as Caswell calls them – to question how those encounters might instigate new dialogues and forms of knowledge across design history and practice.

The symposium invites contributions from design and architecture historians, art historians, educators, researchers, archivists, librarians interested in exploring the role of archives in design education. We are particularly interested in approaches that foreground hands-on encounters with historical materials and reflect on the challenges and possibilities of teaching Design History through archival engagement.

Possible themes may include, but are not limited to:

- Archives and design history pedagogy.
- Histories of the use of archives in design and design education.
- Object-based learning and material encounters in design history teaching.
- Teaching with special collections and institutional archives.

- Archivists and educators as collaborators.
- Tacit and embodied knowledge within archives.
- Oral histories, lived experience, and alternative forms of design knowledge.
- Archives as sites of critical and speculative design practice.
- Teaching with archives in relation to sustainability, repair, reuse, and material afterlives.
- Decolonial and queering approaches to archival practices.
- Archival absences, silences, gaps, and contested histories (in relation to design).

Dates
Deadline for submissions: 20 November 2026 (1000-word extended abstract).
Notification of outcomes: 18 December 2026.
Symposium: Friday 19 March 2027, 10:00–17:00 GMT.

Submit your application online here:
https://forms.cloud.microsoft/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=xClkjH8We0e4y3fugnWNESyyhSy1-aBOlSrg97FOeYdUMVMzOE5QTlg1U05MUlZDWUlCU0lPUDVaNC4u&origin=lprLink&route=short-url

Reference:
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