

# Scientific archives revisited: leftovers of science and histories of knowledge-making

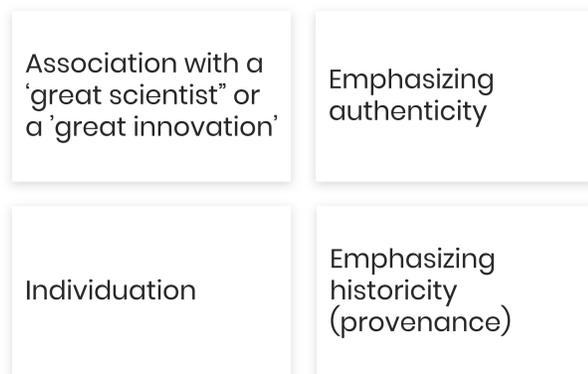
## Archives of science:

a particular kind of scientific collections, made up of the **leftovers of science**, e.g. drafts, photographs, obsolete instruments, outdated documentation.



## Scientific leftovers as heritage

Value of artifacts is produced through:

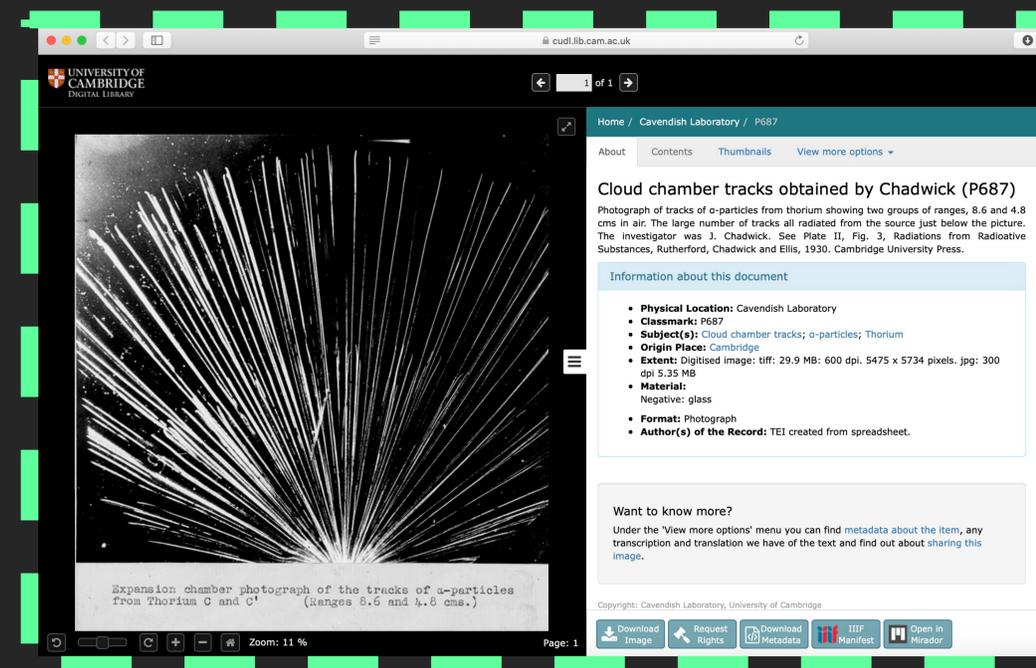


## From the STS perspective, scientific leftovers form part of the history of knowledge-making:

- These are *made* objects designed to look into the phenomenon under study (mediate 'epistemic objects');
- They have biographies – histories of usage, circulation, transformation.
- They have an agency, i.e. perform certain acts and engage in assemblages with human & non-human agents;
- Through such social interactions, they become invested with meaning and shape the modes of inquiry.

In order to represent scientific artifacts as part of the history of **knowledge-making**, the archive is to be recognized as a **creative agent**.

## Archives represent scientific leftovers as 'natural objects'



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Priority is given to the 'objective' characteristics of artifacts. Interpretation is excluded from the description.

## Archive

conceived as a storage facility

- is grounded in the idea of representing things as matters of fact;
- is objective and transparent;
- gives direct (unmediated) access to the past.

understood as an agent of creativity

- is a medium that *performs* and *constructs* histories;
- situates the artifact by (re)creating its relations with other agents
- provides objects with multiple interpretation frames

## Practical considerations

- Multiplying connections of the object with other (archival) records and forms of testimony;
- Crafting ontologies for archives of science;
- Reflecting on the limits of standardization;
- Adopting participatory approaches.

## Related literature:

Gell, Alfred (1992). "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of technology." In: J. Coote & A. Shelton (eds.), *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Knorr Cetina, Karin (1999). *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kopytoff, Igor (1986). "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process", In: A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Latour, Bruno (2005). "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public", In: B. Latour & P. Weibel (eds.), *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.