

McKenzie L. Long. *The Delicate Art of Portraying Your Archivist: A Textual Analysis of Mass Media Portrayals of Archives, Archivists, and Archival Materials in the Twenty-First Century*. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. May, 2020. 82 pages.  
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This study describes a mixed methods textual analysis of forty-five media texts featuring archives, archivists, and archival materials, produced during the first two decades of the twenty-first century. The media texts examined include fifteen examples of each of the following mass media types: books, traditional audiovisual media, and media formats popularized or emergent since 2000. This analysis was conducted to identify the archival images offered to the general public during their consumption of contemporary media, particularly in light of the professional push to craft a public image of archives as both an open and valuable resource during the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. The results show a divide between portrayals of the profession as positive, open, forward-thinking, and community-oriented, and portrayals reliant on older stereotypes of archival experiences as restricted, confusing, boring, and uncomfortable, although almost all cases emphasize the value and usefulness of archival materials and archival work.

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THE DELICATE ART OF PORTRAYING YOUR ARCHIVIST: A TEXTUAL  
ANALYSIS OF MASS MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF ARCHIVES, ARCHIVISTS, AND  
ARCHIVAL MATERIALS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

by

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## Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	1
Introduction.....	3
Literature Review.....	11
Evolving Attitudes Towards Archival Identity and Outreach.....	11
Narrative Media and Identity Creation in the Public Consciousness .....	16
Archival Portrayals in Popular Media as Discussed in Past Research.....	18
Methodology .....	28
Media Selection .....	28
Textual Analysis .....	30
Results.....	32
Quantitative Results .....	32
Qualitative Results .....	45
Conclusion .....	62
Bibliography .....	64
Appendix A. List of Sources Analyzed .....	69
Appendix B. Bibliography of Sources Analyzed.....	72
Appendix C. Work Sheet for Quantitative Content Analysis.....	77

Appendix D. Code Book for Qualitative Analysis ..... 80

## Introduction

In 2018, Dr. Alice Dreger published an opinion piece titled “The Delicate Art of Dealing with your Archivist” in the online journal, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. In it, she claimed that “we can break archivists down by [a] basic taxonomy.” Dreger’s taxonomy featured markedly negative stereotypes, including the exclusionary and condescendingly intellectual “snob,” the overly helpful yet cat obsessed “distractor,” the manipulative “mooch,” the efficient but unconcerned “bureaucrat,” and the item-obsessed “heiress” who resented researcher intrusion.

The response of archivists to this article was swift and biting, and much of it came back to the article’s reliance on popular and reductive stereotypes that already surrounded the profession. Archivist Libby Coyner responded with an open letter to Dreger, decrying that “in a time when we are having discussions about how our work is frequently made invisible by researchers and writers, you choose to boil us down to a few demeaning stereotypes” (2018). Similarly, fellow archivist David McCartney wrote a letter to the editor of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* wherein he argued that although Dreger “has categorized our profession’s ranks — and there are thousands of us — into a precious and handy-dandy short list of a half-dozen personality types for her fellow academics to understand better,” her list nonetheless “falls short in its comprehensiveness,” and suggested a list of seven new and comparatively more positive categories “to supplement her at-present inadequate study” (2018).

The controversy even prompted a response by Society of American Archivists (SAA) president Tanya Zanish-Belcher. In her own letter, Belcher criticized Dreger for “reducing us to six caricatures who variously impede researchers’ use of historical records.” Most notably, Belcher argued that “(stereo)typing can be funny. But it can also spread misinformation, especially in this case as it concerns an important collegial relationship” and emphasized the idea that archivists were actually “passionate stewards of the collections we keep...committed to providing access to the records in our care and assisting researchers in discovering records” (2018).

On some level, neither the article itself nor the rapid and widespread archival response were particularly surprising. The archival profession has had a serious and long-standing public image problem, and since the end of the twentieth century archivists have attempted to proactively combat widespread negative stereotypes and portrayals. As early as 1984, the Levy-Robles report was drawing attention to the existence of an image of archivists as a “quiet” and “practically frivolous” group whose collections are “objects rather than sources of information” (1984, p. 1-2). Much like Dreger more than thirty years later, the subjects interviewed for the report had constructed a mental image of archivists as potentially very helpful figures, but also potentially “territorial and possessive, ambivalent about sharing and serving,” as well as “introverted,” “quiet,” and “mousy” (1984, p. iii). As late as 2016, surveys of public opinion still classified archivists as being restrictive and lacking in both “social skills” and a “sense of humor,” and favored terms like “‘secretive,’ ‘mysterious,’ or ‘confusing’” as adjectives to describe archives over “‘welcoming’ or ‘friendly’” (Patterson, 2016, p. 350-351).

These stereotypes can have concrete, potentially detrimental effects on archivists and archival institutions. Levy and Robles (1984) observed that stereotypes can impact the willingness of administrators to allocate resources towards archives, arguing that “we are respected for our service, and service is by implication reward enough; we are admired for our curatorial ability, meaning we are quiet, pleasant, and powerless” (p. 4). Because archives and archivists are seen as passive and backward looking, the researchers argued, they are a much lower budget priority than what are seen as “more current, ongoing, aggressive demands on the budget (p. ii). Stereotypes of passivity have similarly been shown to noticeably reduce the role of archivists in policy formation (Jimerson, 2014, p. 44).

Using these stereotypes as a basis, the Levy-Robles report claimed that there needed to be a professional shift in focus from technical aspects of archival work to more user-focused aspects, and that this shift needed to include making archives more accessible to the general public (p. 2-3). This included promoting an accurate understanding of archives as a place of engagement and access, on the basis that “more people must know what we do” (p. 3). That idea of actively creating a more positive public image continued to gain greater traction in the following decades. In 1998, Maher argued that there needed to be a greater recognition of archives and the archival profession from society as a whole if archives hoped to successfully promote their own value (p. 252). In particular, he emphasized the importance of ensuring that the public understands the active and crucial role that professional archivists play in preserving materials for future use (p. 255).

With these efforts to project a more positive, open image of archives to the general public came corresponding efforts to engage critically with those aforementioned damaging and negative stereotypes, with a focus on the importance of archivists building a firmer understanding of their own users (Theimer, 2011, p. 65). An awareness of negative or even simply incorrect stereotypes, in particular, were noted as an important first step in attempting to remedy them. For example, archivist Maher argued that even the common misuse of the term “archives” actually represented both an opportunity to begin a conversation about archival realities and a chance to gain wider societal recognition of the profession in general (1998, p. 253, 255).

Many twenty-first century archivists have similarly theorized that an increase in the size of audiences engaged in discussions about the nature of archives can directly increase the strength of archival advocacy as well (Theimer, 2011, p. 68). Aldred et al. in particular made a strong case for the idea that “by examining how [archivists] are being portrayed to the public, [archivists] can work to counteract any negative stereotypes that affect us and present a better, more positive image of [the profession]” (2008, p. 59). More generally focused research has supported the idea that forming an understanding of existing negative stereotypes is a foundational step in the process of counter-stereotyping, which can then be used to undermine negative impressions through the careful exposure of counter-examples (Oliver et al., 2014, p. 88).

Yet despite modern efforts to actively construct a more open professional identity internally and in the public consciousness, at least one force has consistently proven to be more powerful than archivists themselves in creating an archival public image and influencing prominent archival stereotypes, at least for the many members of the public

who have not had the opportunity to interact with archives personally—mass media. This phenomenon is not exclusive to archives. Media in general has been shown to play an important role in stereotype creation and reinforcement. Such stereotypes generally originate from the “repetition of specific images, and popular media such as books, films, and television are all important tools in the dissemination of information and images” (Schmuland, 1999, p. 26).

As Buckley observed, “relatively few individuals from the general public are familiar with archives. Parents do not take their children to an archive on Saturday mornings to browse the shelves...few of them will have the need, the occasion, or even the desire to visit an archive” (Buckley, 2008, p. 99). In such cases, where audiences lack direct contact with the group or entity in question, media influence is especially key as the only source of information for stereotype development (Oliver et al., 2014, p. 87). This appears to be particularly true in the case of archives, as Patterson’s 2016 survey revealed that traditional stereotypes of archives as “‘dark,’ ‘mysterious,’ ‘musty,’ ‘old-fashioned,’ and ‘quiet,’” were at their highest rates among individuals whose primary encounters with archives came from fictional portrayals in TV, books, and movies (p. 356).

Most research into the nature of media portrayals and stereotypes surrounding archives and archivists was either conducted prior to the twenty-first century or focused largely on works that were produced in the twentieth century and earlier. As a result, only media types popular during this century—print media, such as books, and audiovisual media, such as films and television shows—have already been explored extensively over the course of previous research (Aldred et al., 2008; Buckley, 2008; Schmuland, 1999).

Additional focus needs to be given to web-based media and interactive media, which have emerged or at least been popularized as major sources of media interactions since the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Web-based media refers to media produced and distributed via the internet that does not fall under the purview of any of the other extant media categories. Of particular note are podcasts, a uniquely twenty-first century form of media that has experienced a massive growth in popularity over the last two decades. Recent statistics released by Edison Research (2019) show that podcast listenership in the United States has steadily grown from eleven percent to fifty-one percent of the total population between 2006 and 2019 (p. 48). Meanwhile, interactive media refers to media through which consumers act as active participants, especially video games and general role play games (RPGs). Video games are also of particular note, given that research conducted by Nielsen (2017) suggested that around sixty-four percent of the U.S. population over the age of thirteen plays video games, and that around seventy percent of those players also spend time watching game-relevant content on streaming sites such as YouTube (p. 5, 18).

Due to previous studies' lack of attention to these twenty-first century media forms, and twenty-first century media texts overall, they fail to capture the thematic images of archives that characterize the contemporary media environment experienced by today's users. More focused research is needed in order to evaluate the stereotypes that have emerged considering late twentieth and twenty-first century archival efforts to both create a more open, user-centric professional identity, and to actively project this image into the public consciousness. Such research can then be used to gauge the overall effectiveness of these efforts in shaping the public consciousness. It can also be used to

create a fuller understanding of the stereotypes that are being communicated to the wider public through the contemporary media that they are most likely to encounter in their everyday lives.

This study seeks to address this existing research gap by examining popular media featuring archives, archivists, and archival materials produced since 2000. It focuses on examining fictional media that has been produced or otherwise created from 2000 onward. Important to note is that 2000 was chosen as the initial year for analysis despite technically being considered the end of the *twentieth* century due to it being the year in which Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons* was originally published. Although the book was only moderately successful upon first publication, its 2004 sequel *The Da Vinci Code* was massively popular, spending fourteen consecutive weeks as number one on the New York Times bestseller list. *Angels and Demons* experienced a massive surge in popularity as a result, taking the first-place spot on the New York Times paperback bestseller list in 2004 as well (Charles, 2004). Given this work's prominent portrayal of the Vatican Archives and the massive cultural impact of the series that it began, it would be disingenuous to create restrictions that exclude this work from a discussion of media portrayals that have shaped popular images of archives in the twenty-first century.

This study evaluates these works using a mixed methods approach to textual content analysis under the framework of cultivation theory. Originally designed as a framework for studying the effects of television on the public consciousness, cultivation theory and cultivation analysis in particular refers to the idea that "media cultivates our conceptions of social reality: What we watch influences how we understand the world," implying a strong causal relationship "between exposure and various relevant beliefs"

(Ewoldsen & Rhodes, 2012, p. 190; Mastro & Tukachinsky, 2012, p. 54). With this underlying understanding, this study seeks to answer the following research question: What are the major thematic stereotypes and images that characterize portrayals of archives, archivists, and archival materials and techniques in narrative media produced during the first two decades of the twenty-first century?

## Literature Review

### Evolving Attitudes Towards Archival Identity and Outreach

Focusing on twenty-first century portrayals of archivists is especially important, given that the last two decades have seen the full realization of the information and digital age. The effects of this shift have been powerfully felt by archival institutions. Even more significantly, the last two decades have seen the culmination of the archival community's commitment to the idea of constructing and projecting a more open and researcher-focused professional identity, which had first been proposed in the late twentieth century. That said, the extent to which archivists have been able *successful* in their efforts project this image of archives as both accessible and useful to the public at large has still been the subject of much debate and comparatively limited research.

The 1980s in particular saw a crisis of underfunding for archival institutions that sparked a research movement into issues of perceptions surrounding archives (Jimerson, 2014, p. 38). This movement led to the 1984 publication of the results of the Levy-Robles report "The Image of Archivists: Resource Allocators' Perceptions." This report heralded a significant shift in the way archivists related to their public image and in the very nature of their professional identity. At the very least, this report was one of the first to posit that such a change was necessary if the archival profession was to survive and thrive long-term. The report surveyed resource allocators in institutions that included archives, and primarily argued that

Archivists need to determine whether or not it is really the technical aspect of their job (arrangement, preservation, and description) that ought to come first. It seems clear that responding to clients' needs ought to be encouraged. Archivists can never forsake their collections, but the profession must sanction attitudes that relate archival work to the expectations of others and assess archival value in terms of service. (p. 2)

Moreover, the report contended that these "clients" needed to include more than simply the narrowly defined "serious researchers," and that archives as a whole should become a "more common and accessible concept" (p. 3).

Alongside this push for a shift in archival identity came the related push for efforts to shift *public perceptions* of archival identity. The report claimed that the creation of a public image was inevitable, but that efforts needed to be made to make this image as accurate and useful as possible, as "great products which suffer poor images whither" (p. 6). As it stood at the time of the report, the most prevalent images ranged from helpful, to introverted, to outright territorial (p. iii). The report also placed the responsibility for changing these images directly at the feet of archivists themselves, positing that if resource allocators had formed incorrect views of archives, it was archivists who "have not disabused them of their misconceptions." Moreover, as a result of these views, the report reasoned that allocators have no vested interest in helping to promote archival interest and use (p. 2). Thus, they argued, archivists themselves needed to make active promotional efforts if they hoped to promote their relevance.

The Levy-Robles report became the cornerstone of a larger research focus in the 1980s that emphasized the general ignorance among the public to the nature and purpose of archives (Jimerson, 2014, p. 38). Thus, the ending of the 1980s saw the beginnings of efforts to broaden the ways in which archives interacted with the public, as well as a growing awareness of the importance of creating and maintaining good public relations

(Maher, 1998, p. 252). This largely involved efforts to create a consolidated public image for archives, which at the time entailed an increase in professionalization and a strengthening of theoretical foundations (Jimerson, 2014, p. 33). Major strategies proposed at the time included not only taking steps to become more user-friendly, but also conscientiously and deliberately marketing archives as a service and approaching archiving in general with an “outward-looking attitude” (Jimerson, 1989, p. 338-340). Most importantly, this approach included an emphasis on the importance of engaging with difficult stereotypes to increase visibility and support (Jimerson, 2014, p. 37).

Archival attempts to respond to the challenges of both ignorance and doubt included not only those direct efforts to craft a public image, but also indirect efforts to improve community and user relations, including increased activism and improved reference services (Jimerson, 2014, p. 41). The 1990s in particular saw the creation of a number of outreach projects that would become long-standing staples in the field in the decades to come, including the establishment of “Archives Week” and National History Day (Grabowski, 1992, p. 466, 469). Other engagement efforts that began to be encouraged during this period involved courting non-scholarly research groups, such as genealogists and grade-school aged students (Grabowski, 1992, p. 467-468). This shift towards active public engagement was solidified with the advent of the twenty-first century and the accompanying societal shift towards more widespread information access and use that emerged as internet use became more commonplace. The urgency of these efforts likely increased with the turn of the century as well, given the markedly poor public opinion of the profession that continued to be observed during the early 2000s (Jimerson, 2014, p. 49).

The prevailing attitude in the archival profession over the past two decades has thus become firmly entrenched in the idea that archives must be both user-centered and publicly viewed as such (Theimer, 2011, p. 60). In an extension of this attitude, archives throughout the twenty-first century have become even more deeply active in efforts to be engaged in their user communities and to generally act as more effective advocates for archives and the archival profession as a whole (Theimer, 2011, p. 60). As part of their continuing outreach and public relations efforts, archivists have taken significant steps to construct a specific image of their profession in the mind of the public. The major traits of this new, twenty-first century archive as constructed by archivists includes archival openness, transparency, user-focus over record-focus, the facilitation of use, an engagement with modern technology, and a focus on doing over knowing (Theimer, 2011, p. 61-64).

As of 2016, these efforts among archivists to project a more open and accessible image of themselves had met with mixed levels of success, at least according to a survey of the public conducted by Patterson. On the one hand, access appeared to be seen as a prominent aspect of archives, with access as a goal appearing in 43.5% of described archival services and 18.1% of tasks ascribed to archivists (2016, p. 349). In fact, access was the goal mentioned most frequently in these descriptions overall (2016, p. 352). Moreover, there appeared to be a correspondingly positive impression of archival value, with the most prominent adjectives used to describe archives after “historical” and “organized” being “valuable,” “useful,” “important,” “interesting,” and “relevant.” Very few selected “useless” or “unimportant” (2016, p. 350).

On the other hand, the images associated with archivists themselves tended to align more closely with older images of archivists as serious and antisocial, with at least one of Patterson's survey respondents describing an archivist as a "person in charge of keeping track of everything in the archive, organizing it, and being lonely," another saying that they "imagine an older person, sitting at a desk doing a crossword puzzle in the sub-sub basement of an old building most don't know the use for," and still another saying that an archivist's job is to "be mysterious" (2016, p. 358, 355). This impression might be due at least in part to archivists themselves, given that another of Patterson's respondents who had actually visited an archive previously mused critically that "what they do when they're not giving me dirty looks for touching their things, I'm not sure. I assume it's important, because I always seem to be keeping them from something they'd much rather be doing" (2016, p. 350).

That said, Patterson's evidence showed that those who encountered archives personally actually tended to have more positive impressions than those who had not. This group generally chose the adjectives "friendly," "welcoming," and "high tech" to describe archives the most often, although they also chose "confusing" more often than any other group as well (2016, p. 356). Among those who had not interacted with archives before—a group who has long been the intended target of archival outreach efforts—the most popular adjectives instead included "dark," "mysterious," "musty," "old-fashioned," and "quiet" (2016, p. 356). This group generally did not imagine real-world archival spaces, which most often tend to be open, transparent, and accessible, but instead pictured iconic yet foreboding images such as "the warehouse pictured at the end of Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark, while yet another pictured 'a big

warehouse with many isles [sic] of alphabetized file cabinets” (2016, p. 355). At the same time, this unexposed group of Patterson’s respondents viewed the materials contained within these imagined archives as old but nonetheless extremely valuable, with at least one respondent describing archival materials as “mostly fantastic things, like obscure information that leads to solving a murder case or uncovering a villain’s weakness” (2016, p. 356).

### Narrative Media and Identity Creation in the Public Consciousness

The idea that media-formed stereotypes can have a significant impact on real-world perceptions has been supported by a large body of empirical evidence. This evidence provides explicit support to the idea that media, specifically narratively-based media, plays a significant role in both creating and reinforcing stereotypes about groups and images in the public consciousness, especially for groups like archivists that the public may not encounter regularly in their everyday lives. According to this line of theory, media acts as an important primer in the creation of social stereotypes, particularly in cases where there are little other interactions between the audience and the subject population, and these stereotypes in turn influence interpretations of and behavior towards these populations (Oliver et al., 2014, p. 85-87).

In this case, stereotypes are defined as generalizations about a social group, and there is a tendency for such stereotypes to be more negative than positive (Bodenhauser et al., 2007, p. 940). These stereotypes emerge over the course of normal, everyday informational accumulation, and arise from a set image that has been reinforced overtime through repetition (Bodenhauser et al., 2007, p. 940-941). These images can form over the course of actual interactions with other groups, but as already mentioned, media

portrayals act as the most prevalent image source for groups that an individual encounters infrequently (Bodenhauser et al., 2007, p. 941). The more frequent the exposure to such portrayals, the more prominent the associated stereotype becomes within the consciousness of the viewing audience (Oliver et al., 2014, p. 86). In the same vein, the more media that individuals consume, the more likely it is that media-created stereotypes will have a significant effect on their everyday social judgements (Mastro & Tukachinsky, 2012, p. 52). These social stereotypes can later have dramatic real-life consequences, as they are psychologically engaged upon encountering actual members of portrayed groups, which can in turn affect the way in which those group members are treated and perceived (Bodenhauser et al., 2007, p. 941).

Media-produced stereotypes tend to be most powerful when they emerge over the course of a media narrative. Narratives act as the basis for cognition and understanding, and are thereby crucial in inducing recall (Bradley & Matthews, 2012, p. 216). Indeed, narratives play a crucial role in allowing audiences “to comprehend events and issues encountered through the media and to construct a broader network of meaning” (Ross, 2011, p. 7). This type of stereotype formation based on narrative is not unique to media portrayals—much of human knowledge is accumulated as the result of second-hand story reception—but media massively centralizes and standardizes this process (Morgan, 2009, p. 71). In turn, stereotypes can also be useful in the creation of narrative media, as they can act as “shorthand for character descriptions,” with physical traits functioning as signifiers for character traits (Schmuland, 1999, p. 34). In general, “images play a central role in the mental processes involved in constructing a network of meaning” (Ross, 2011, p. 7).

## Archival Portrayals in Popular Media as Discussed in Past Research

In recognition of the fact that stereotypes do not exist in a vacuum, but rather are constructed from and informed by a series of ongoing encounters and repeated, a discussion must be had of the stereotypical landscape created by pre- and early-twenty-first century media narratives surrounding archives before discussing these stereotypes as they exist in an exclusively twenty-first century context. Past research has identified an eclectic mix of themes and stereotypes throughout various forms of media, but it has also identified a number of unifying commonalities.

Schmuland's 1999 study, "The Archival Image in Fiction: An Analysis and Annotated Bibliography," is an excellent exemplar of the diverse and even thematically disjointed portrayals of archives that emerged from different types of media. A variety of different types of archives were featured in her analysis of 148 fictional books. The "archives" she observed were primarily manuscript and rare book collections, but other archival types included collections of personal and family records, institutional and government records, corporate files, and fantastical materials, with the materials often being grouped together by subject rather than by the real-world practice of grouping by creator (p. 27-28). Almost ten years after Schmuland's study, Aldred et al.'s study "Crossing a Librarian with a Historian: The Image of Reel Archivists" drew from and elaborated upon the conclusions of "Archivists in Fiction" through the analysis of nineteen films (2009, p. 59). Much like Schmuland, Aldred et al. noted a wide range of archival types--academic, religious, private, business, and government. Yet unlike Schmuland's predominantly manuscript and rare book focused collections, Aldred et al.'s archives were oriented predominantly towards the government (2009, p. 78).

The archivists themselves that Schmuland's original article analyzed were somewhat more consistent in terms of typology and the images that they projected. One common physical attribute was the inclusion of glasses, which Schmuland theorized was due to the common equivocation of glasses with ideas about intelligence (1999, p. 34-35). There was also an emphasis on sloppiness and a lack of attention to appearance, with attention towards fashion marking a substandard level of competence (1999, p. 36). Another common theme was that these archivists tend to be elderly or at least middle-aged (1999, p. 35). There was also a fairly even mix in terms of gender representation—58% male, 42% female—but according to Schmuland there was a much wider delineation in professional level between gendered representations (1999, p. 35). Women were typically portrayed as holding clerical-level positions while men tended to appear in more supervisory roles (1999, p. 35). In general, archival positions were depicted as being “low status” with “no professional mobility” (1999, p. 38-39).

There was a much wider gender disparity observed in Aldred et al.'s research, although men still made up the majority of the sample at 67% while women only represented about 33% (2008, p. 71). In contrast, there was a far more even divide between glasses and non-glasses wearers than in Schmuland's study, at 52% and 48% respectively (1999, p. 73). There was, however, more continuity in terms of age of the featured archivists. Aldred et al.'s samples were weighted far more heavily towards the elderly and the middle aged (1999, p. 72). The study also expanded upon Schmuland's described dichotomy between the sloppy but competent archivist and their more fashionable but less skilled counterparts. Aldred et al.'s data in regard to fashion showed that the majority of archivists in their sample tend to be portrayed as being dressed in a

“conservative” way, with only about 5% fitting into the “sloppy” category. Aldred et al. also added a new feature for physical observation and analysis—hairstyle. The study noted that roughly half of represented archivists had short hair, while there was also a fairly even mix of archivists with long hair, hair styled into a bun, or a head that is bald or balding (2008, p. 73).

In terms of personality, Schmuland’s original archivists generally proved to be lacking in some aspect of social competency. This ranged from existing as relatively benign figures that were nonetheless quiet, meek, and socially inept, to being more actively helpful keepers of knowledge who remained “secluded” from the so-called “real world,” to obviously negative representations who were condescending and demonstrated a marked sense of superiority (1999, p. 38-39). These figures were largely, although not exclusively, passive players within their respective narratives, but they also often demonstrated a sense of curiosity and a desire to search for knowledge (1999, p. 39-42). There was also some attention given to these archivists’ professional training, and their educational background tended to be closely associated with libraries and library science, although a historical education was occasionally included as well (1999, p. 40).

Less attention was given in Aldred et al.’s study to the personality of the depicted archivists than in Schmuland’s older research, but much more emphasis was given to the actual professional tasks completed by featured archivists. Only three main personality traits were identified, falling along very similar lines to those described by Schmuland—“knowledgeable,” “disgruntled,” and “isolated/solitary” (2008, p. 76). Possibly those limitations in personality analysis resulted from limitations in the portrayals from which they were drawn. The archivists explored by Aldred et al. played extremely minor roles

within the narratives, with less than a fifth of all portrayals being main characters and more than half only appearing as cameos (2008, p. 77). When archival work was featured, much of it fell into the administrative sphere, particularly research assistance (2008, p. 76). This research assistance and protagonist archival interactions in general were overwhelmingly positive (2008, p. 79).

Some attention in Aldred et al.'s studied works was also paid to the technical aspects of archival work, but those cases were almost exclusively limited to basic technical retrieval (2008, p. 76). Much as in Schmuland, women were more heavily involved in the clerical aspects of archival work while men made up the majority of administration roles (2008, p. 77). Yet perhaps the most important facet was that almost all of Aldred et al.'s archivists acted as keepers of knowledge and the archives themselves acted as collectors of the important and influential, with a recurring theme being that "someone was searching for something - be it an artifact, person, or information - and they used the archives to find their answer" (2008, p. 84).

In a similar vein, Schmuland's archives were generally portrayed as being representative of history. Sometimes, these representations were specifically of organized history and "usable memories" (1999, p. 28). In these cases, archives acted as a method of "communication between past and future" (1999, p. 29). There tended to be a great deal of attention given to the general importance of the future use for archival materials (1999, p. 40). But in some cases, Schmuland's archives were not facilitators of information expression, but instead keepers of secrets and hidden information. Many of the portrayals examined by Schmuland featured break-ins in order to retrieve important records, often for the purpose of theft, copying, or destruction (1999, p. 29). For these

portrayals, the history in archives went beyond the merely useful to the potentially influential and even harmful (1999, p. 28). In other cases, Schmuland's archives were depicted as "catch-alls," places of storage for useless pieces of data (1999, p. 29). Archives in these depictions acted as places for "indiscriminate storage" (1999, p. 28).

In terms of depictions of actual physical spaces, however, Schmuland's portrayals favor that latter, more negative slant. Dust was a very common motif, with the archives themselves often being represented as dirty and ill-lit basements, with only occasional mentions of the practical realities that often necessitate basement placement (1999, p. 42-43). Although Schmuland noted that ostensibly these physical descriptions could simply be a manifestation of the ongoing themes of history and age, they were compounded by associations with death, burial, and the tomb—possibly also indicating an idea of archives "as deliberate burial" for information and records (1999, p. 44-45).

Also published in 2008 on the subject of mass media images of archives was Buckley's article "'The Truth is in the Red Files': An Overview of Archives in Popular Culture." Unlike Schmuland and Aldred et al., this article focused on a combination of films, novels, and television shows (2008, p. 95). There were several thematic similarities between these results and those observed by Schmuland and Aldred et al., namely interactions with archives and archival records were closely associated with themes of searching and discovery, and both archives and archivists were likewise closely associated with ideas about libraries, to the point that libraries often acted as a stand-in for archives and fulfilled archival roles (2008, p. 98). Also, much like Schmuland's archives, there was a great deal of importance lent to information organization as a tool for discovery and to the idea of a great deal of power and authority resting in individual

records in Buckley's research, while those featured archival records were likewise closely connected to images of the "buried" and there is a sense that what they hold is deliberately "hidden knowledge" (2008, p. 101, 98, 102).

The archives that Buckley analyzed were similarly "closed," with the paths for access facing that thematic burial behind a "veneer of professionalism" required for use (Buckley 99). Accessing archives in these depictions could also be a complex and time-consuming experience (2008, p. 106). The spaces themselves were often closed and claustrophobic, and portrayals of archival break-ins were almost as common in Buckley's research as they are in Schmuland's study (2008, p. 107-108). In short, despite the real-world emphasis on openness and transparency in archives, Buckley's archives were definitely *not* places for housing "accessible knowledge" (2008, p. 99). Instead, there was an emphasis on the image of the "panoptical archive" in which users faced continuous scrutiny and examination (2008, p. 106). Buckley also identified an additional theme with important implications towards ideas about "realism" in depictions of archives in popular culture. Buckley's depictions often favored dramatic and sensationalized portrayals of the archival experience, but realistic facets of archival guidelines and administration seeped into these portrayals whenever they could play a role in building narrative tension (2008, p. 98). That sense of sensationalism also tended to be enhanced by the distinctly and deliberately menacing names given to the archives (2008, p. 100).

In contrast to the sensationalized nature of the portrayal of archives as institutions, Buckley's archivists often held a narrative insignificance reflective of the generally cameo-based characters studied by Aldred et al. Specifically, Buckley's archivists were "often physically absent from the narrative" (2008, p. 100). When they did appear,

Buckley argued that it was as “a flattened and telescoped stereotypical image” (2008, p. 101). They often showed personality traits similar to those noted by Schmuland and Aldred et al., with a proclivity for introversion, obstructionism, and professional preoccupation (2008, p. 102). Unlike the depictions in Aldred et al. in particular, however, these characters were not at all helpful in terms of research assistance, although they did continue the ongoing trend of archivists acting as “guardians” or “keepers” of evidence and knowledge (2008, p. 102).

This trend contributed to the close association between archival records and concepts of evidence and authentic knowledge in Buckley’s article, not unlike the connection observed by Schmuland (2008, p. 104). Like with Schmuland, Buckley’s archival records were connected to concepts of truth, and oftentimes hidden or concealed truths at that (2008, p. 104). Buckley stated openly that “there is a wealth of popular culture examples where records are deliberately destroyed or hidden to keep the truth from those desperately seeking it” (2008, p. 104). In other cases, records were “lost” within an archive, or “buried” in language similar to that observed by Schmuland, and it was through the actions of the protagonists rather than the archivists that these materials became truly accessible--despite an emphasis on information organization, typical tools for organization and discoverability were shown to be confusing, outdated, cryptic, or overly complex (2008, p. 109, 115). Other verbal and pictorial parallels to the results of Schmuland’s study in Buckley’s research include motifs of dust, dirt, and death (2008, p. 110). There was also an extension of Schmuland’s emphasis on images of history and age, expounded upon with a demonstrable disdain for the emergence of computers and other instances of modern technology in archival spaces (2008, p. 116-118).

While Buckley, along with Schmuland and Aldred et al., focused on archival portrayals in a wider mass media context, other research has been done with an eye towards the facets of archives portrayed in era- or genre-specific contexts. Murphy (2015), for example, studied the Victorian, science-fiction based perspective on archives in “Archivization and the Archive-as-Utopia in H.G. Wells's ‘The First Men in the Moon’ and ‘The Empire of the Ants.’” He argued that in these Victorian portrayals, archives acted not only as places where information was collected, stored, and transmitted, but also as places where meaning was constructed (p. 1). Murphy’s research also demonstrated how long-standing many of the most prominent thematic continuities in archival portrayals have been, with the Victorian texts that he examined presenting archives as “instrumental conductors in the very matter of conceptualizing and organizing information,” not unlike the focus on information organization explored by Buckley and Schmuland (2015, p. 1).

Thematic continuities across time were similarly examined in Gillis’s “Of Plots, Secrets, Burrowers and Moles: Archives in Espionage Fiction,” which analyzed spy fiction from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1980s. The similarities that existed between the patterns in archival portrayals identified by Murphy and those explored by more widely oriented research include an archival association with the past and, specifically, with a “haunting of the present”; illustrations of archives as holders of powerful and influential truths, many of which must then be suppressed; and an importance given to material records and the idea that “the record itself is incriminating” (2015, p. 4, 6-7, 8). Murphy’s archivists were themselves extensions of institutional memory (2015, p. 12). However, unlike the theme of sensationalized archives that

emerged in other research, Murphy argued that archives acted as a device to add a sense of realism to works of spy fiction (2015, p. 4). Another new theme that Murphy explored was that of archives as potential facilitators of privacy reduction, wherein “various series of documentation can be used to reconstruct the personal identity and career of an individual” (2015, p. 5).

The thematic homogeneity that exists despite these differences nonetheless supports the concept of continuity among archival portrayals across time and genre. Keen’s “Romances of the Archives in Contemporary British Fiction” likewise not only explored spy and detective fiction in a discussion of this continuity, arguing that these works focus on producing evidence and reconstructing the past, but also explored archival portrayals spanning as far back as Gothic literature. In these works, Keen observed the existence of one of the most common archival themes that have emerged from examinations of more contemporary media—the existence of critically important secret documents that must be destroyed as a safety measure (cited in Scanlan, 2004).

But Keen also discussed much more modern works that feature archives, which she presented as the legacy of these older, document-oriented portrayals. Specifically, she primarily examined novels of the 1980s and 1990s which she deemed “romances of the archives”—works in which a researcher retraced history through the use of documents found in library, museum, or home archives (cited in Scanlan, 2004). Published in 2000 and written in the closing years of the twentieth century, Keen’s work posited that these presentations of archives were based in nostalgia and a desire for an idealized past, and sought to “restore to history its glamorous, consoling, and admonitory powers” through the employment of the idea that “[t]he endogamous Englishness of the past discovered

within romances of the archive can add to a celebratory narrative of homogeneity, continuity, native virtues, and cultural survival” (pp. 61, 215, cited in Scanlan, 2004). Keen’s work, like Schmuland’s before it, was restricted in its ability to fully capture contemporary understandings of archives in media due to their inevitable but exclusive focus on the twentieth century and earlier.

But even twenty-first century research such as Buckley, Aldred et al., and Murphy also had a focus on twentieth century fictional materials that ranged from prevalent to also exclusive. As a result, they failed to take into account the attitudes that have emerged in primarily twenty-first forms of media, such as web-based media and interactive forms of media such as video games. Nor do they fully represent the media as it exists today, given that they were written in only the first decade of the twenty-first century, and encompassed even older works that are less influential in the current mass media environment. This study seeks to fill this gap by building upon their research with a focus that is exclusively focused on twenty-first century mass media forms and entities.

## Methodology

### Media Selection

The unit for analysis is an individual media text. A text in media analysis has been formally defined as “a unit of meaning for interpretation and understanding...Within media studies, a text could be a TV program, film, video game, website, book, song, podcast, newspaper article, tweet, or app” (Gray 2017, p. 196). The criteria of selection for the texts is a direct adoption of the criteria previously established by Schmuland in her 1999 study of archives in fiction. In order to be considered, a text must exhibit at least one of the following features:

1. The mention of the word "archives" or "archivist"
2. A description of activities that might be associated with the archival profession
3. A story emphasis on the subject of original documents (Schmuland, 1999, p. 27).

There are four main sources for this identification of potential texts: personal experience, the recommendations of acquaintances, materials analyzed in previous research that falls within my chosen time frame, and searches of blogs and other web content that have a focus on archives in popular culture.

The previous research in question refers to the 2008 studies conducted by Buckley and Aldred et al., respectively. The blogs and web content reviewed include the “Pop Culture and Archives” tag in The American Archivist Reviews Portal for the SAA website, *The Fictional World of Archives, Art Galleries, and Museums* database, the “Reel Archivist” articles published on the *Reel Librarian* website, the *Archives@PAMA*

webpage, the *POP Archives* blog on Wordpress, the 2014 web articles “Undying Archives: Representations of Archives in Video Games” and “Scrolls, Vikings, and Dragons: Representations of the Archive in Children’s Television” hosted by the site *Turbulent London*, the “Books that feature archives or archivists” thread on *LibraryThing*, and the *Reading Archives* blog.

Important to note for all four of the main sources of texts used in this study, media was primarily identified either by archivists themselves or by individuals with extensive experience or interest in archives. This group will most likely interact with specific forms of media and, most importantly, identify archival representations in specific ways that do not necessarily reflect the general population of potential users. This has potentially biasing implications for the results, but it is also in many ways a logistical inevitability given the nature of the study itself.

Given the relative scarcity of archival representations and the additional limitations of the two-decade time frame, the method of selection was reliant on a form of convenience sampling. Only fifteen examples of the “new” media types were identified as matching the established criteria, and all were used. These examples included podcasts, YouTube series, video games, and player materials for other interactive games, including online resources such as forum posts and Wiki pages compiled by fans and creators. Fifteen examples each of print media and traditional audiovisual media were then selected, as well. For media with multiple parts such as virtual resources or episodes, one to three resources were evaluated based on adherence to the selection criteria. (For a full list of selected media, see Appendix A. For a full bibliography of these sources, see Appendix B).

## Textual Analysis

The major data analysis framework for this study will be the concept of textual analysis. Textual analysis has been used by media scholars as a major toolkit for identifying, analyzing, and understanding messages in media texts since the 1960s (Bainbridge, 2011, p. 224). Media scholar McKee best summarized the importance of textual analysis in understanding the implicit meaning of media messages, as well as the wider cultural impact and implications of those messages, in his 2003 argument that:

Textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. It is a methodology—a data-gathering process—for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live. (cited in Bainbridge, 2011, p. 224)

According to Bainbridge (2011), there are three primary tools that can be used in all forms of textual analysis: encountering the text and taking notes documenting this first encounter, breaking down the text into units of meaning and using those units as evidence for analysis, and encoding the text for larger messages (p. 227-228). He also presents multiple potential approaches for organizing these tools to conduct effective textual analysis. This study employs the content analysis approach, which focuses on the presence or absence of certain phrases or categories within a text as either a quantitative count of frequency or a larger breakdown of meaning construction (Bainbridge, 2011, p. 235). This study employs both quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods.

Quantitative coding was used to collect non-numerical data into groups for the purpose of conducting numerical analysis (CESSDA Training Working Group, 2017-2018). A worksheet of pre-established quantitative codes was used to count categorical instances of each code observed during that first encounter. (For the worksheet used, see

Appendix C). This method primarily draws on data established in the previous studies conducted by Aldred et al., Buckley, and Schmuland to create codes for discretely observable and clearly quantifiable images, typologies, and demographic information regarding archives, archivists, and archival materials. These codes serve the threefold purpose of recognizing and discussing the importance of older portrayals in creating the current media landscape, improving the general potential for data comparability between this study and those of the past, and establishing overall what these archival concepts are in the context of the analyzed texts (CESSDA Training Working Group, 2017-2018).

The rest of this study focuses on textual qualitative analysis, in adherence to Fürsich's (2018) construction of textual analysis as "a type of qualitative analysis that focuses on the underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of a text." It follows the qualitative coding mechanics outlined by Saldaña in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. This included performing an initial and thorough reading of all of the selected texts, engaging in both a pre-coding note-taking process and the creation of preliminary codes over the course of my initial readings, and then combining an analysis of these initial codes and notes with an application of these codes during thorough readings in order to create final codes which can later be employed to determine larger categories and themes (2009, p. 16-19).

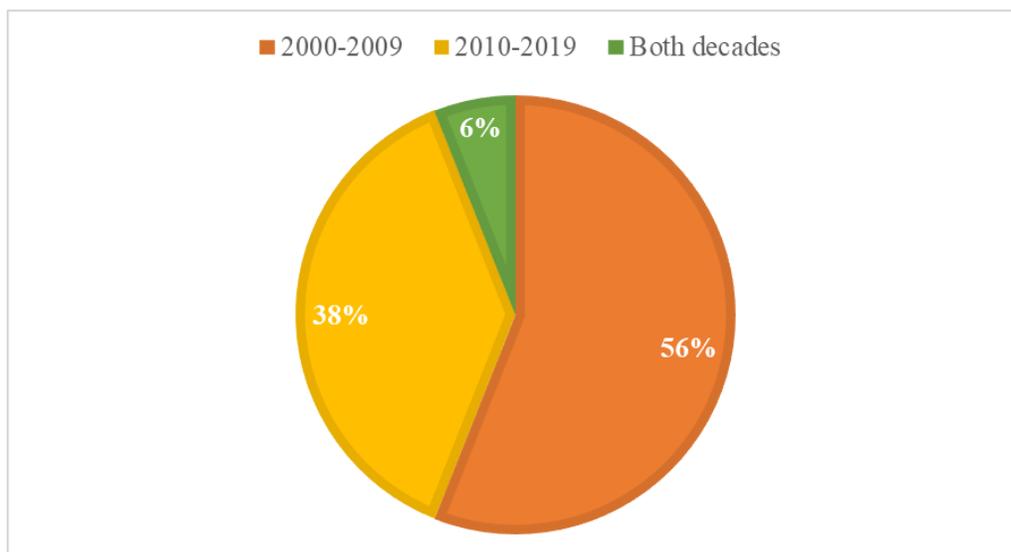
## Results

### Quantitative Results

Of the media texts analyzed, 38% were published in the first decade of the twentieth century, or 2000 to 2009, 56% were published between 2010 and 2019, and roughly 6% included episodes or other media instances from both decades, which in turn meant that a total of 62% of all analyzed media texts were produced at least partially in the years between 2010 and 2019. As seen in Figure 1, these data indicate that the results of this study favor the second decade of the twenty-first century, and that results are more reflective of recent forms of media rather than being evenly dispersed over the two decades being studied.

**Figure 1.**

*Decade of Production for Media Texts Analyzed*

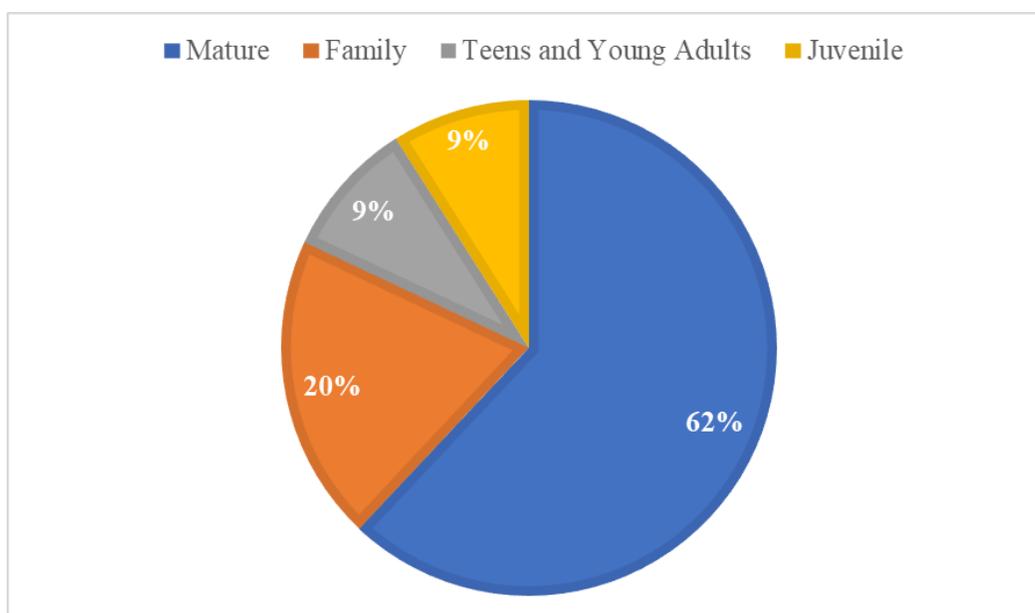


*Note.* More than half of the of all media texts analyzed were produced exclusively between 2010 and 2019, and a total of 62% were published at least partially in this decade.

A similar slant can be seen in terms of the intended audience to whom the selected media was directed, as demonstrated in Figure 2. Of the 45 media texts that were studied, 62% were directed specifically towards a mature or adult audience, while 9% were directed towards a juvenile audience, 9% were directed towards teens and young adults, and 20% were produced for entire-family consumption. In other words, only 38% of the media texts analyzed in this study are of the kind specifically oriented towards consumption by younger audiences.

**Figure 2.**

*Intended Audiences of Media Texts Analyzed*

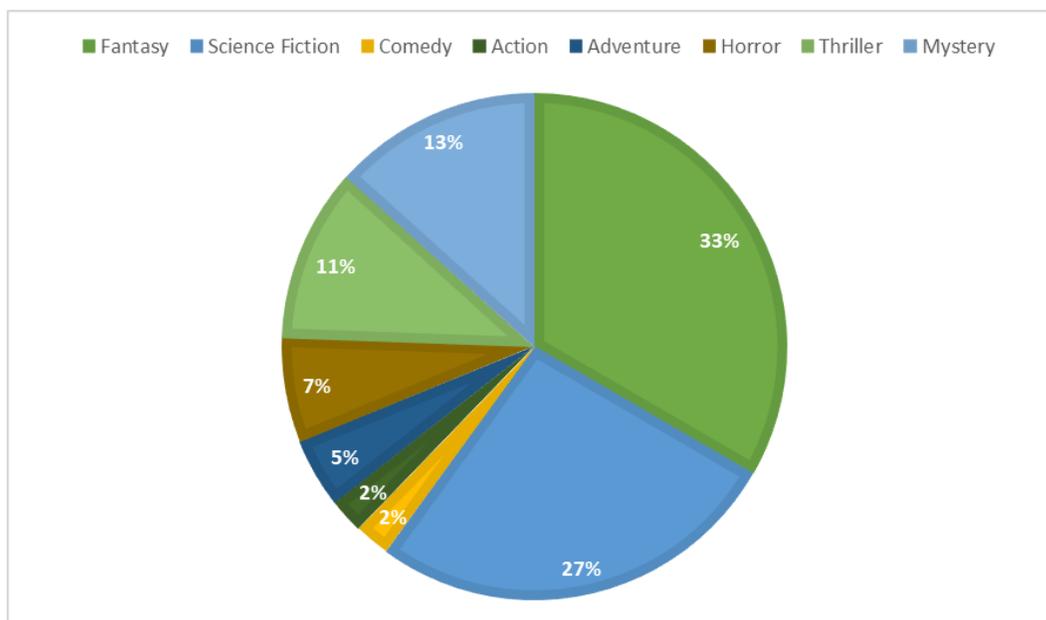


*Note.* The majority of all media texts analyzed were directed towards mature adult audiences, while only 38% were created for the intended consumption of younger audiences.

Genres were determined by identifying the genre attributed to the text by the publishers or creators within the text itself. Very few of the studied media texts featuring archives, archivists, and archival materials are rooted in real-world contexts; instead, the majority are fantasy and science fiction, genres that feature a setting completely separate from the world as it is actually experienced by media consumers, as illustrated in Figure 3. Among the media texts analyzed, 33% were fantasy and 27% were science fiction. Of the remaining 40%, 2% were comedy, 2% were action, 4% were adventure, 6% were horror, 11% were thriller, and 13% were mystery—with the later four categories themselves often featuring at least some elements that marked the setting of the text as separate from reality.

**Figure 3.**

*Genres of Media Texts Analyzed*

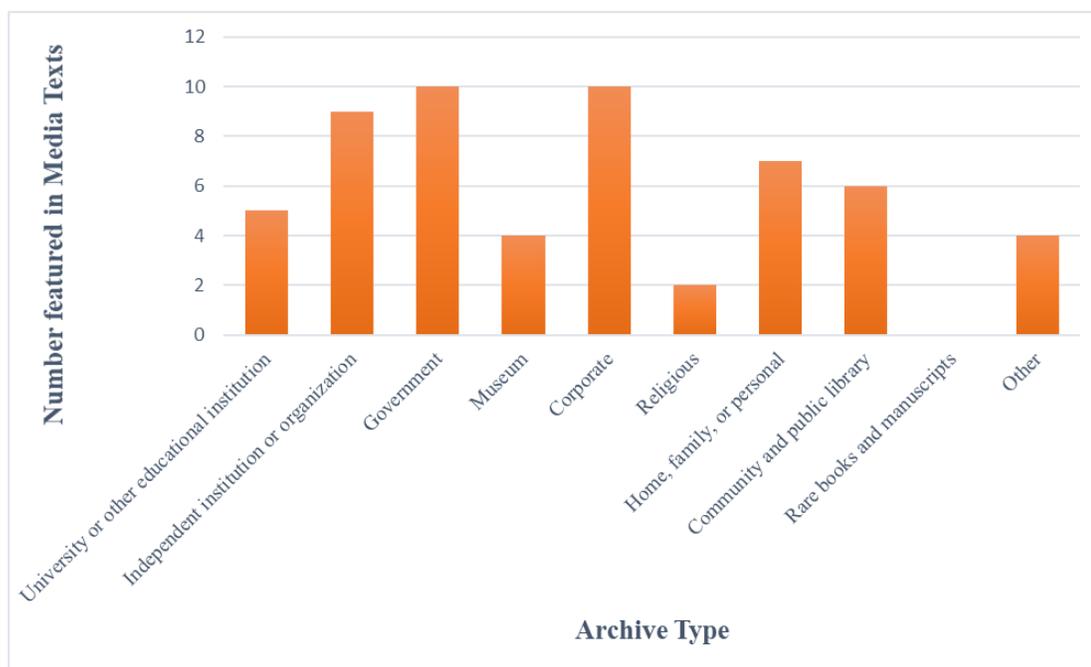


*Note.* The most frequently featured genres in the media texts analyzed, fantasy and science fiction, are those that rely heavily on fantastical or futuristic elements. The next four most prominent genres are those that often feature at least some degree of these elements, as well.

There were 57 distinct archives that were featured in the 45 texts. These archives were of different types, as shown in Figure 4. Of these, no single type had a clear majority. Archives associated with a university or other educational institution made up approximately 9% of the sample; the archives of an independent institution or organization were 16%; government archives were 17%; museum archives were 7%; corporate archives were 17%; religious archives were 4%; home, family, or other types of personal archives were 12%; archives connected to a public library and other forms of community archives were 11%, and other archives such as fantasy archives were 7%. There were no instances in which a rare book and manuscript collection, specifically, was referred to as an archive.

**Figure 4.**

*Types of Archives Depicted in the Media Texts Analyzed*



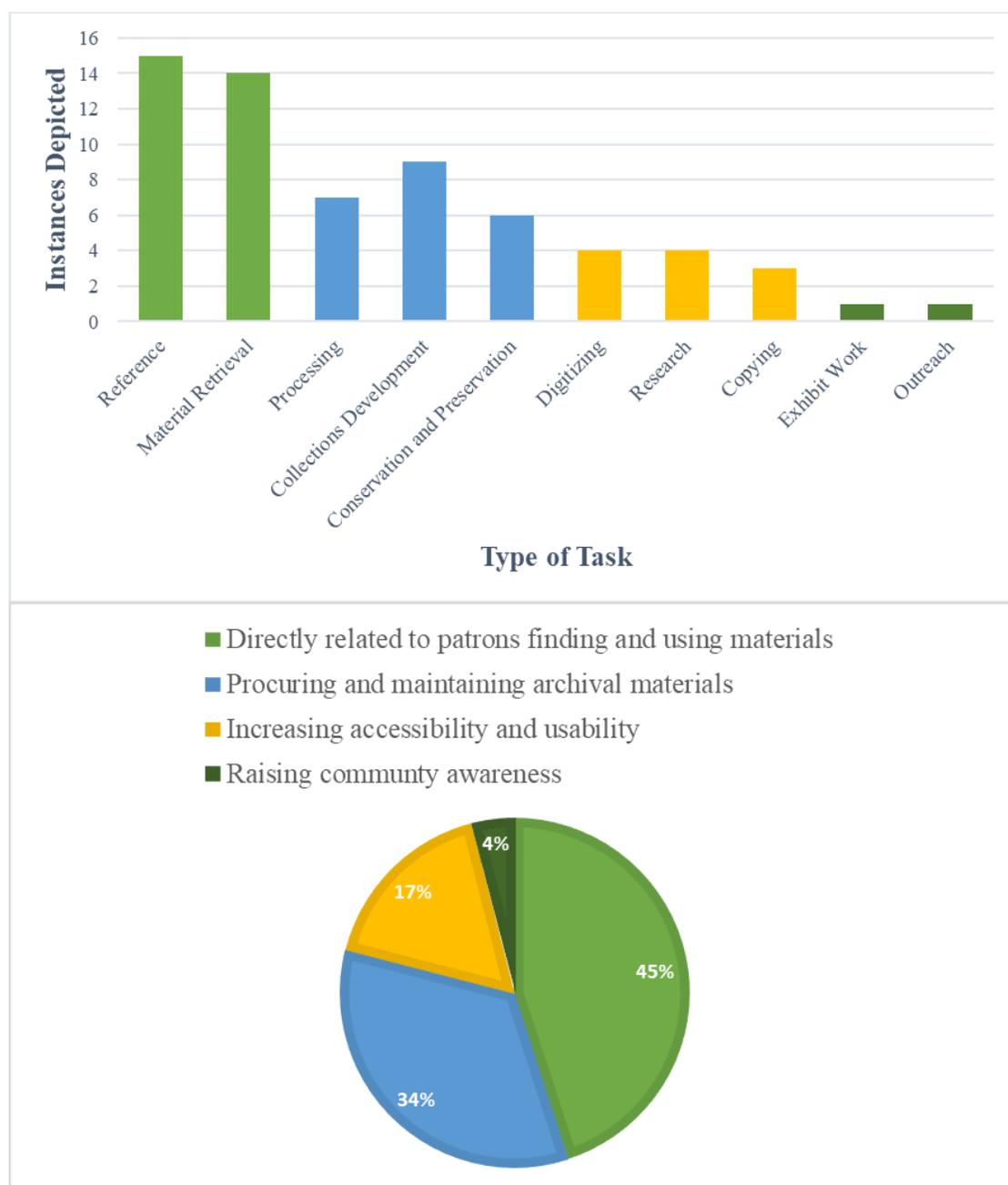
*Note.* Certain types of archives, particularly corporate and government archives, appear more often than other types, but no single type of archive accounts for a majority of all appearances.

The highest proportion of the archival tasks being performed at these archives were those that are directly connected to patrons finding and retrieving specific archival materials. Reference accounted for 23% of the tasks shown, while retrieving materials accounted for 22%, for a total of 45% of the total tasks shown. The next most prominent were tasks that directly involved procuring and maintaining archival materials. Processing archival materials accounted for 11%, collections development accounted for 14%, and conservation and preservation accounted for 9%, for a total of 34%. Less prominent but still present were tasks that could help increase patron access to materials such as: digitizing and making materials web accessible (6%), researching materials and increasing context (6%), creating copies of materials for patrons (5%), for a total of 17%. The least common tasks depicted were those that involved raising awareness about archives in the community, with exhibit work accounting for 2% and outreach accounting

for 2%, for a total of 4%. The numbers of tasks performed and the prevalence of certain categories of archival tasks are reflected in Figure 5.

**Figure 5.**

*Archival Tasks Depicted in Media Texts*

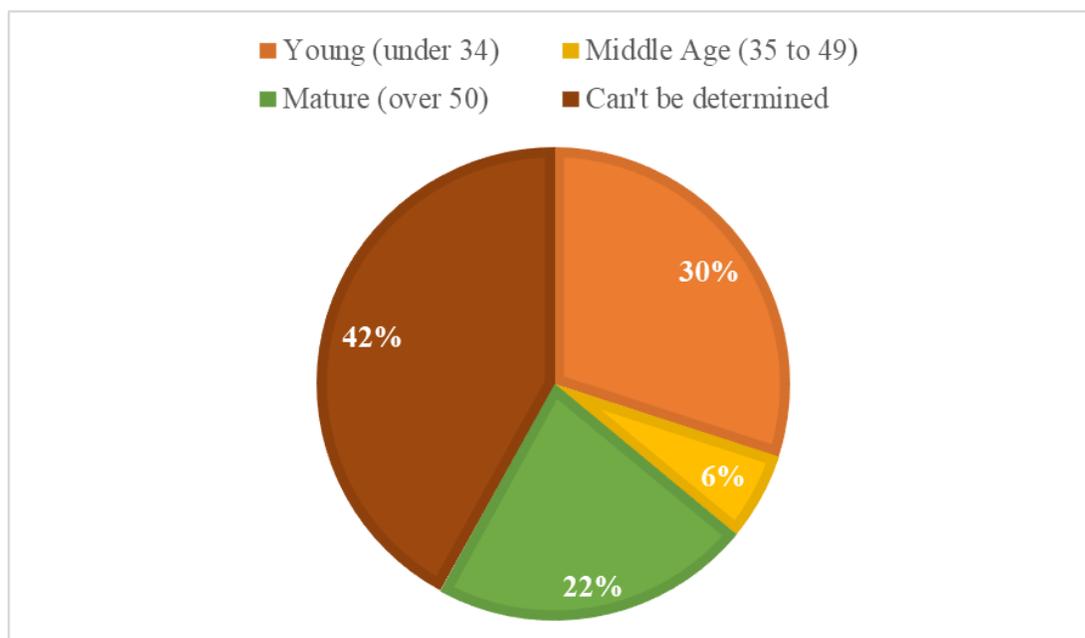


*Note.* Oftentimes, multiple types of archival tasks would be depicted in a single work, but the ones depicted most often are reference and material retrieval, with work done indirectly to promote and encourage patron use depicted the least often, at only 21%.

There were 67 individual depictions of archivists or equivalent members of archival staff depicted over the course of the 45 media texts. Demographic data collected for the group as a whole included age, race and ethnicity, and gender. Age, in particular, was difficult to judge due to the nature of many of the mediums; archivists whose age could not be determined made up approximately 42% of the total archivists depicted. Of the discernable age ranges, depicted archivists tended to skew towards either end of the age spectrum. The depictions most often skewed young, with the “Young (under 34)” group specifically making up 30% of depictions, and the “Mature (over 50)” group occurring almost as often at 22% of depictions. Notably, the “Middle Age (35 to 49)” group appears by far the least of the depictions at only 6% of the total. These proportions are broken down in Figure 6.

**Figure 6.**

*Proportion of Age Groups of Archivists Depicted*



*Note.* If the ages that can't be determined are ignored, “Young” archivists make up 51% of depictions, “Middle Age” make up 10%, and “Mature” make up 38%.

Just as there was a demonstrated trend towards younger archivists, there was also a trend towards female archivists—or at least, women archivists in leading archival roles. While men made up a majority of archivists depicted, with 54% of depictions as compared to women’s 46% of depictions, Women made up a majority of leadership roles, and the majority of women depicted as archivists were shown as leaders. The specific relationship between gender and authority is broken down in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

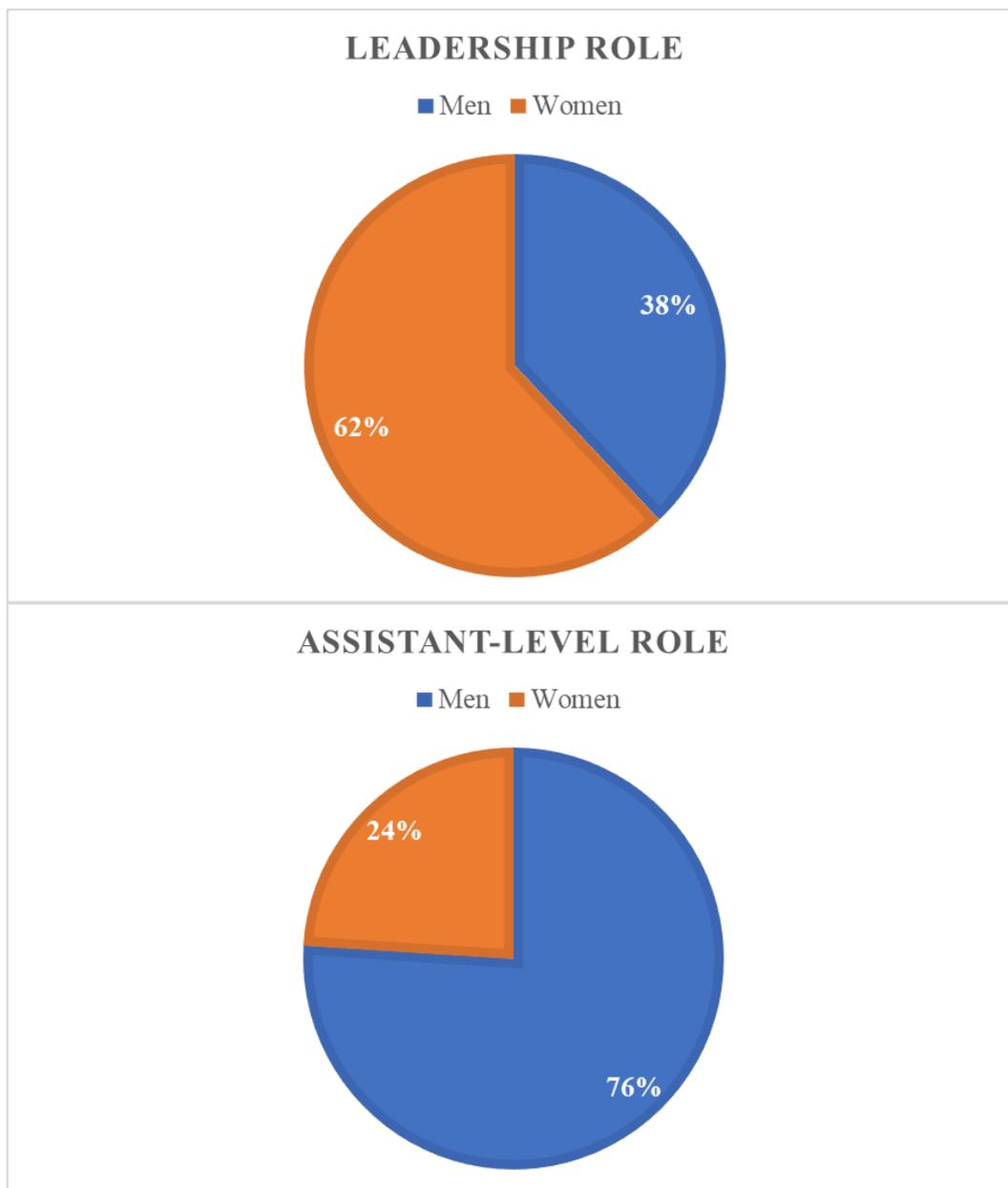
*Proportion of Gender Depictions Based on Level of Authority*

	<b>Administrative or other leadership role</b>	<b>Clerical or other assistant level role</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Total:</b>
<b>Men</b>	14	19	3	<b>36</b>
<b>Women</b>	23	6	2	<b>31</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>67</b>

Of the 37 archivists depicted as holding administrative or other leadership roles, 62% were women and only 38% were men. Meanwhile, of the 25 archivists shown in clerical or other assistant level roles, only 24% were women and the remaining 76% were men. This difference is illustrated in in Figure 7.

**Figure 7.**

*The Proportion of Men and Women in Leadership Roles Compared to the Proportion of Men and Women in Assistant Level Roles*



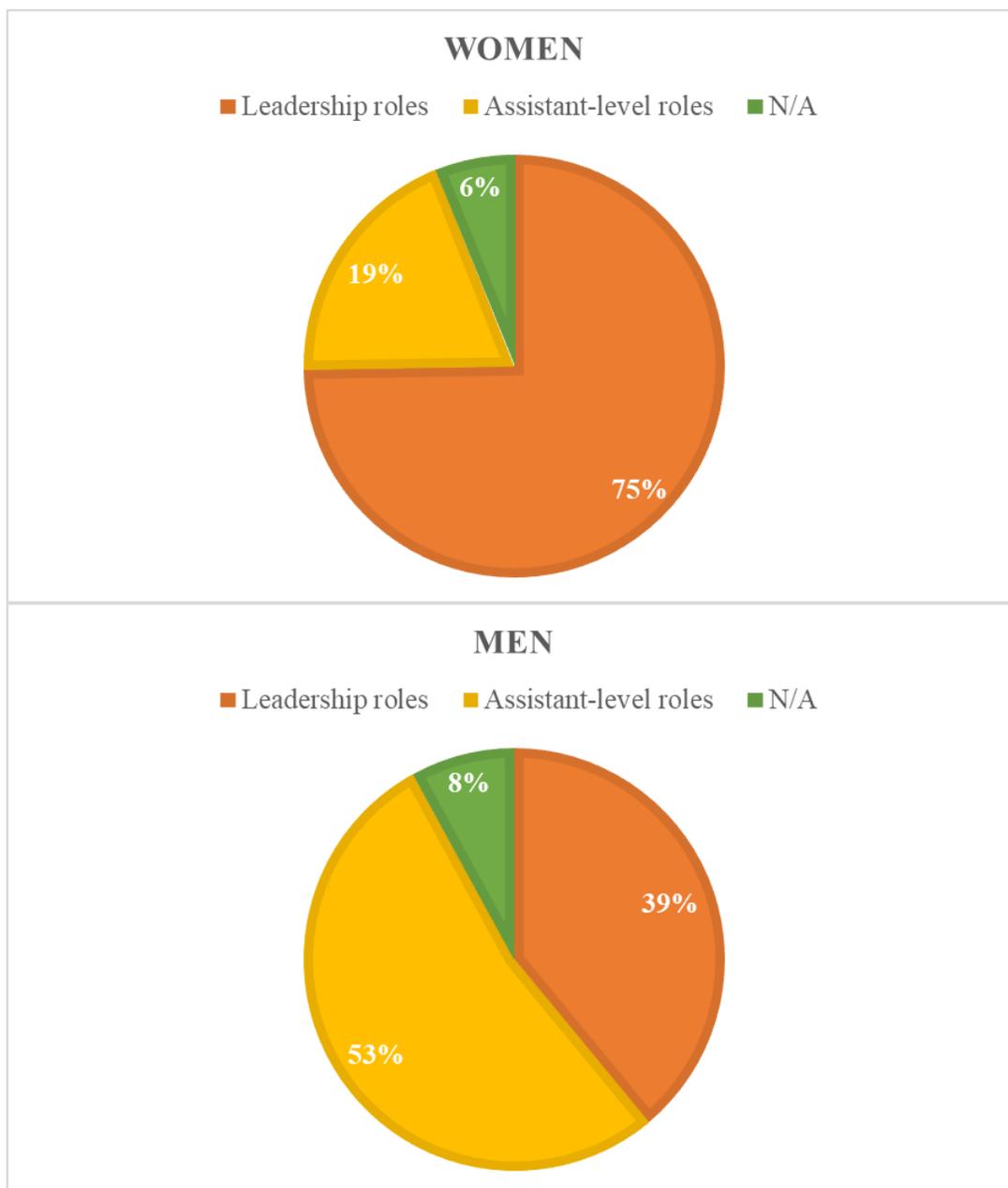
*Note.* With more leadership roles depicted overall, women appear most prevalently in what is already the most prevalent archival depiction.

Moreover, the majority of women depicted were in these leadership roles, with 74% at the administrative level, 19% at an assistant level, and approximately 7% at a level that could not be determined. Men, on the other hand, were mostly in clerical roles—albeit to a lesser degree. Only 39% of men depicted were at the administrative

level, while 53% were at an assistant level and 8% were at a level that could not be determined. These differences can be seen in Figure 8.

**Figure 8.**

*Proportion of Women Depicted in Leadership Roles and Assistant-Level Roles Compared to the Proportion of Men Depicted in Similar Positions*

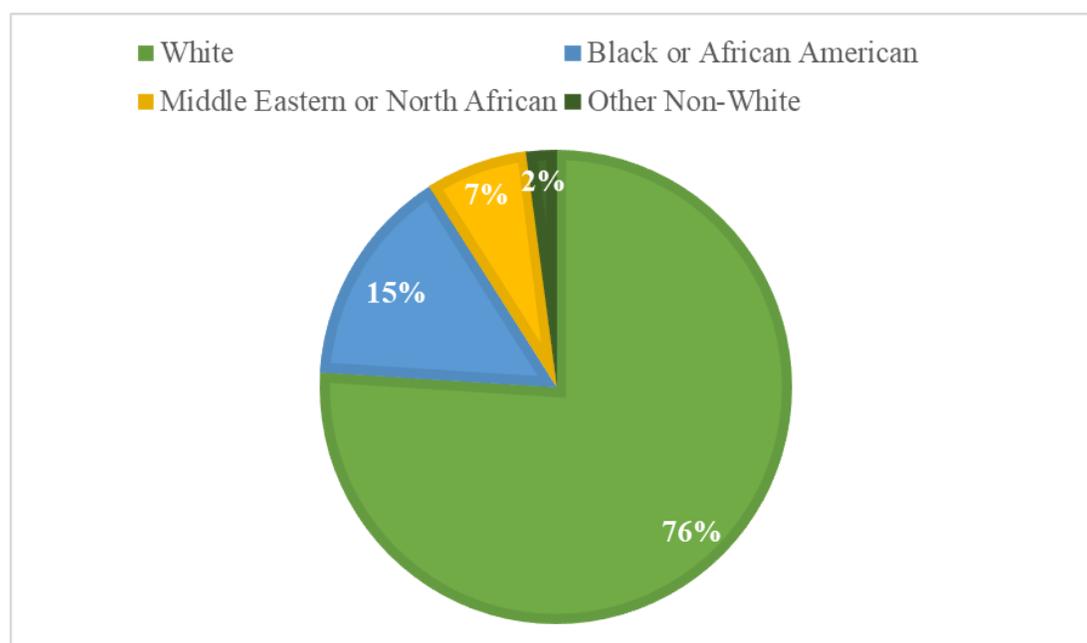


*Note.* A clear majority of women depicted fill administrative or leadership roles. A somewhat lessened majority of men fill clerical or assistant level roles.

The other type of demographic data for archivists depicted in the media texts analyzed for this study were race and ethnicity. Only three racial or ethnic groups were featured in the analyzed texts, the proportions of which are illustrated in Figure 9. Of the 67 total depictions of archivists or archival workers, twenty-six (39%) had a racial and ethnic background that could not be determined due to the nature of the mediums. Of the remaining 41 depictions where race and ethnicity could be determined, 7% were of Middle Eastern or North African descent, 15% were Black or African American, 2% were of another non-white background, and 76% were White.

**Figure 9.**

*Race and Ethnicity of Archivists Depicted in Media Texts*



*Note.* Removing the depictions where race and ethnicity could not be determined leaves White archivists making up the majority of the remaining depictions.

As demonstrated by Table 2, the data regarding race and ethnicity was further broken down according to the level of authority held by the various archivists depicted, but given the fairly negligible amount of non-white depictions the usefulness of this data

is limited, particularly in comparison to the same types of comparison in data on depictions of men and women.

**Table 2.**

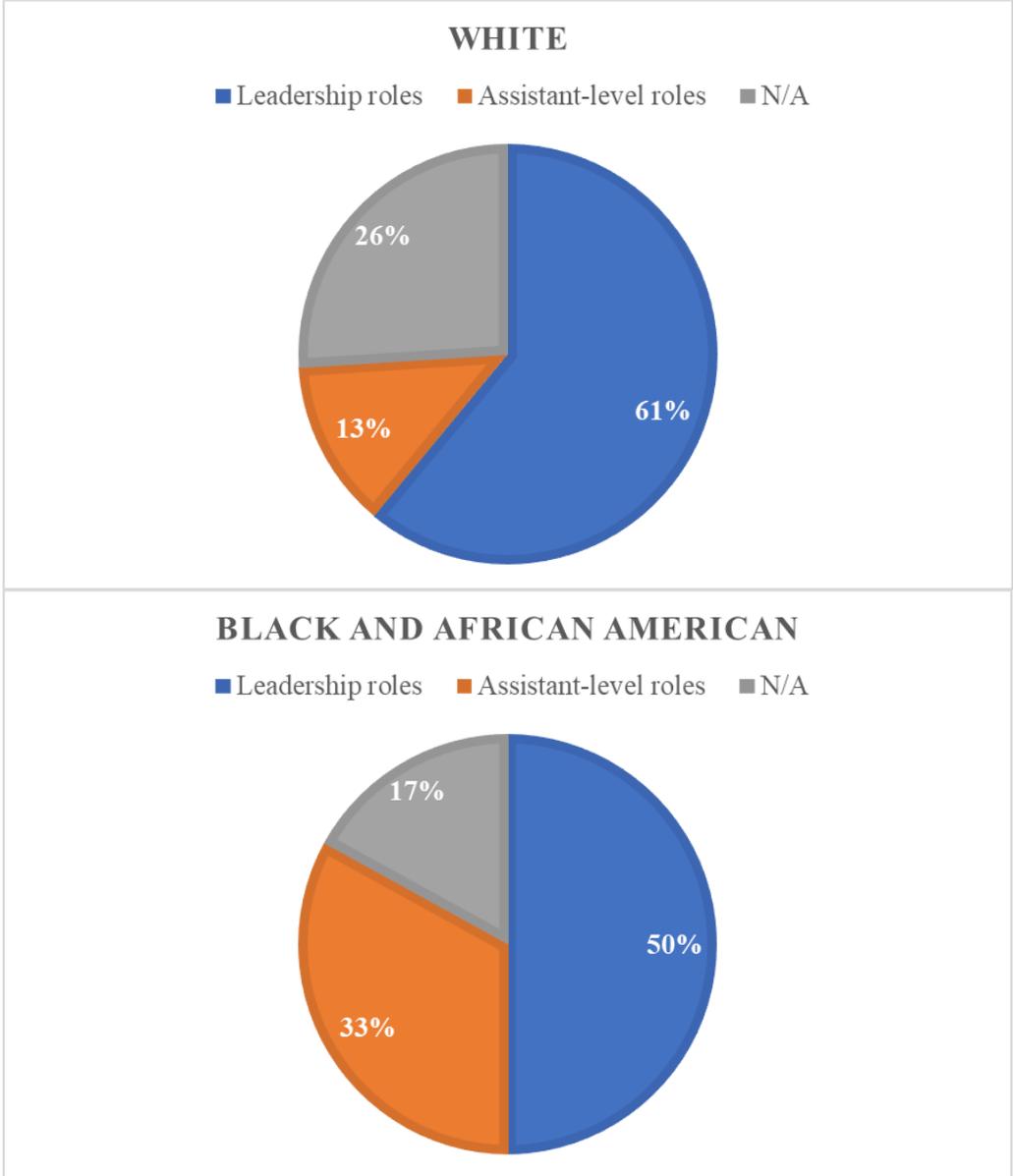
*Proportion of Racial and Ethnic Depictions Based on Level of Authority*

	<b>Administrative or other leadership role</b>	<b>Clerical or other assistant level role</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Total:</b>
<b>White</b>	19	4	8	<b>31</b>
<b>Black or African American</b>	3	2	1	<b>6</b>
<b>Middle Eastern or North African</b>	0	3	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Other Non-White</b>	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>41</b>

As demonstrated above, all of the Middle Eastern archivists depicted were shown to be in clerical assistant-level roles, while the one depicted archivist of another, undefined non-white racial background was in an administrative or leadership role. Given the exclusivity of these categories, and the deep disparity in general between the White and non-white depictions, the only remaining point of comparison to be reported from these data is the difference in the proportions of administrative and assistant-level roles between White depictions and Black and African American depictions, as illustrated by Figure 10. White depictions in leadership roles accounted for approximately 61% of depictions, while clerical and assistant-level roles accounted for 13% and roles whose level of authority could not be determined accounted for 26%. Fifty percent of the depictions of Black and African American archivists were administrative roles, . Similarly, the proportion of Black and African American depictions in clerical and assistant-level roles was much higher than White at 33%; the proportion of the depictions that could not be determined were much lower at 17%.

**Figure 10.**

*Proportion of White Archivists Depicted in Leadership and Assistant-Level Roles Compared to the Proportion of Black or African American Archivists Depicted in Similar Positions*

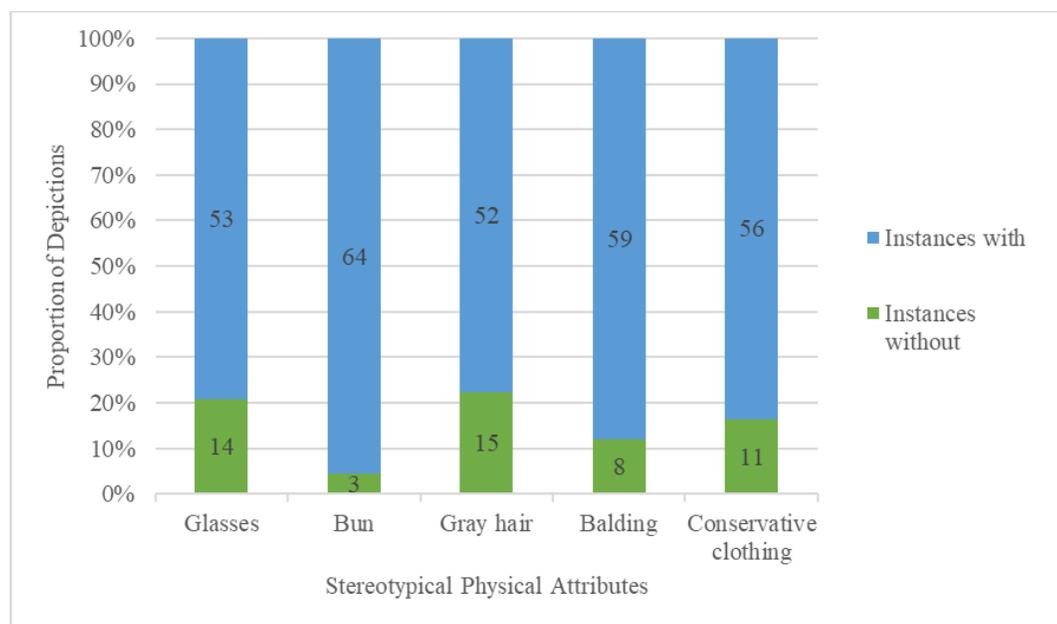


*Note.* The proportion of White depictions in leadership roles is higher than that of Black or African American, while conversely the proportion of depictions of Whites in assistant-level roles is much smaller than their Black and African American counterparts.

Finally, in this study, there were relatively few examples of any of the stereotypical physical traits identified as the most common by previous research. As demonstrated by Figure 11, the physical traits that appeared most often were glasses and gray hair, but at only 21% and 22% frequency respectively. Other traits that appeared were conservative clothing which only appeared 16% of the time, balding or bald that appeared 12% of the time, and a hair bun which appeared 4% of the time.

**Figure 11.**

*A Comparison of the Depiction and Percentage Count for Stereotypical Physical Attributes of Archivists*



*Note.* Although gray hair and glasses appeared the most frequently of all of the physical attributes that have been identified as stereotypical by previous research, they still were absent more often than not.

## Qualitative Results

The codes that were identified over the course of the qualitative textual analysis can be broken down into the following overarching themes: descriptions of archivists themselves, the technical and administrative functions of archives behind the

scenes, the uses and purpose of archives, and descriptions of archival materials.

For the complete code book, see Appendix D.

### *Descriptions of Archivists*

One common and recurring theme in descriptions of archivists that appeared in the analyzed media texts was that the work of an archivist was often performed by individuals who were not archivists. In the novel *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, the picture archive of the newspaper, Hedestad Courier, was run by the newspaper's picture editor (Larsson, 2005, p. 330). In the YouTube series *Critical Role*, the Valley Archive of the Cobalt Soul was run by monks (Geek & Sundry, 2018, April 30).

Most often, the character acting as an archivist was referred to as a librarian. *The Historian* frequently referred to the staff of the novel's archives as librarians (Kostova, 2005). In *The Archived*, none of the Archive's staff hold the title of archivist, but those who work the most directly within the Archive were called Librarians (Schwab, 2014). In some cases, this equivocation was largely justified, however, with librarians sometimes performing archival work in addition to their other tasks. In the graphic novel *Archival Quality*, the archivist protagonist's immediate supervisor was a librarian and worked primarily in the library, but limitation in staff numbers and her own supervisory role often led her to work alongside the protagonist in the archives (Weir & Steenz, 2018).

That said, there was also a recurring theme of archivists needing to have some degree of specialized education and training to be competent in their field. In the film *National Treasure*, archivist Abigail insisted on being responsible for handling the stolen Declaration of Independence because she was the only character present with education and training in caring for antique documents (Bruckheimer & Turteltaub, 2004).

Similarly, resources for the Dark Archive featured in the RPG game *Pathfinder* emphasized the importance of archival staff being provided with specialized training (Moreland, 2014).

Where archivists explicitly achieved their position despite lacking formal training and education in archives, libraries, or information sciences, they were often presented as a source of criticism and suspicion. For example, the protagonist of the podcast *The Magnus Archives* was made Head Archivist with only a research background. As the story progressed, this was treated as a sign that there was something wrong with the titular archives, and most notably, his friend Georgie criticized him for his lack of a library science degree and corresponding lack of understanding of how archival work ought to function (Sims & Newall, 2018).

Alongside this emphasized need for specialized archival training, there was also an ongoing theme of archivists having specialized skills and a general personal drive for finding and recording information, either as a result of natural talent, training, or as a product of their position. In the “Wizard School of Archiving” for the RPG game *Dungeons and Dragons*, there was an emphasis on the tendency towards curiosity and seeking out knowledge for characters who were members of this school, as well as a particular talent for finding and learning new information (Cenycal, 2015).

This individualized tendency related to another consistent theme: archivists had not only a drive but also a professional responsibility to see, learn, and record the world around them, even if the things they were recording were terrible or otherwise not something they would want to become involved in. Within the RPG game *Stafinder*, members of the archival organization *Dataphiles* were charged with continuously seeking

out and recording new information to be added to the archive (Hillman, 2017).

In the novel *Record of a Spaceborn Few*, a major disaster sends the archivists out into the streets to record the event for posterity despite their fear and their horror with the human tragedy around them (Chambers, 2018).

There was, too, an emphasis on the need for archivists to continue recording, no matter what else happened. The archivists in *Record of a Spaceborn Few* were continuously reminded of the importance of continuing to record, even as they ventured further out into the danger and carnage that surrounded them (Chambers, 2018). The Archivist class introduced for the 3.5e version of *Dungeons and Dragons* was similarly defined by its drive to continuously place itself in the center of ongoing action in order to learn more about events as they were happening (Williams, 2006).

Oftentimes, that need to continuously seek and collect knowledge was extended to the level of the supernatural, with archivists being presented as otherworldly, immortal, or even inhuman. The town archivist in *The Librarians* episode “And the City of Light” was, for example, an immortal and ageless figure who was presented for many of the events recorded in the archive (Rogers & McKiernan, 2015). The archival figure introduced in the video game *Diablo III*, meanwhile, had a large degree of supernatural power developed from his collection of information (Blizzard Entertainment, Inc., 2012).

In other cases, archivists’ desire for knowledge was also often presented as the reason for their extreme intelligence and knowledge of their subject matter and institution. In some cases, this was presented as being slightly supernatural in and of itself, with the archival character in the *Angel* television episode “Dad” demonstrating extremely accurate knowledge of every file in her institution’s extensive collection, as

well as their subject matter and the world around her in general (Whedon et al., 2001). In other cases, this level of knowledge was depicted as somewhat more mundane but vast nonetheless, with the primary archivist in *The Darwin Conspiracy* often demonstrating a large degree of knowledge about the materials in his institution's collections, as well as the history behind them (Darnton, 2006).

Oftentimes, archivists were not only presented as knowledgeable and intelligent, but also extremely meticulous and detail oriented. The character about to assume leadership of the archival institution presented in the novel *Event* was described as being extremely concerned with small details (Goleman, 2006, p. 40). One of the archivists introduced in *The Case of the Missing Museum Archives* was likewise described as a very detail-oriented individual, who chose the profession due to his passion for detail and organization (Brezenoff & Weber, 2015, p. 187).

In some cases, this leads to tension between professionals over different types of organization. *Record of a Spaceborn Few* described regular arguments among archival professionals concerning the minute details of different types of organizing and categorization (Chambers, 2018, Location No. 2008). Likewise, in *The Magnus Archives*, a somewhat heated disagreement occurred between the Head Archivist and one of his assistants over the details of their current system for labeling and organizing archival materials (Sims & Newall, 2016, August 24).

Within that same conversation, the Head Archivist of *The Magnus Archives* demonstrated frustration and dislike towards researchers who similarly disliked his system of organization, contributing to another ongoing theme--archivists having an adversarial relationship with their patrons (Sims & Newall, 2016, August 24). A similarly

adversarial relationship occurred between Hugh, the protagonist of *The Darwin Conspiracy*, and the supervisor of the archive that Hugh visited to conduct the bulk of his research (Darnton, 2006).

These adversarial relationships were often a product of archivists being deeply territorial of the materials in their collections, another ongoing theme in the media texts analyzed. In the video game *Path of Exile*, this trait was taken to its most extreme level with the introduction of Undying Archivists, monsters whose entire purpose was to block the main character from accessing the materials contained in the archive (Grinding Gear Games, 2013). Nor was *Path of Exile* the only text to extend the territorial and adversarial nature of many archival depictions to the level of being outright villainous, or at least, in league with the villainous characters. Instead, this was itself a common theme in many of the texts examined. In *Star Trek: Into Darkness*, a member of the staff at the archive uses his place at the archive to help the villain initiate his plan, albeit as the result of blackmail more than actively malicious intent (Abrams et al., 2009).

More often than not, however, the least flattering traits of the depicted archivists were being extremely unhelpful rather than actively malicious. The archival clerk depicted in *The Janson Directive* was particularly notable for his complete inability to provide any of his patrons with any of the information or materials that they were looking for (Ludlum, 2002). But even archivists who were more successful in terms of performing actual archival work were often depicted as being weak or untalented outside of the context of the archive. This theme was epitomized by the Archivist card in the board game *Pandemic: On the Brink*, which was useful for gathering information but provided no benefits for playing the game beyond that ability (Leacock, 2013).

Moreover, archivists were often depicted as being generally unpleasant to interact with in one way or another, both physically and socially. Specifically, many of the archivists depicted were physically unattractive and off-putting. Notably, the appearance of the archivist depicted in the novel *Cabinet of Curiosities* was not only described in unattractive terms but also given an unpleasantly high voice and an ongoing, phlegmy cough (Preston & Child, 2002). Other archivists were depicted as unpleasant in terms of being socially awkward, annoying, or outright rude. One of the archivists in *The Case of the Missing Museum Archives* was frequently depicted as being rude, abrupt, and generally unconcerned about the feelings of those around her (Brezenoff & Weber, 2015).

That said, in many cases archivists were depicted as less actively unpleasant, and more lonely and isolated. When describing his character's personality and eventual fate on the podcast *The Adventure Zone*, Clint McElroy emphasized the fact that his character was both an archivist with an interest in recording the world around him and a natural loner who preferred his own company (McElroy et al., 2019, June 27; McElroy et al. 2019, September 23). This isolation was not always a choice, however, but instead a product of their experience as an archivist. The archivist protagonist of the podcast *Archive 81* found himself trapped in an archive that left him both physically isolated from the outside world and emotionally isolated from his friends and family (Powell & Sollinger, 2016, April 6; Powell & Sollinger, 2016, June 15; Powell & Sollinger, 2016, June 29).

A common theme used to indicate the isolated, physically unpleasant, or socially inept nature of these archivists was to depict them as being particularly romantically

unsuccessful. The same archivist in *Archive 81* began the story with a relationship that failed disastrously due to both his ongoing isolation and strange, obsessive personality traits that he developed as a result of his work in the titular archive (Powell & Sollinger, 2016, June 29). On the other hand, this theme did not appear in all cases; another common theme was archivists whose romantic relationships were contrastingly shown to be positive and successful. Archivist Abigail in *National Treasure* served as the romantic interest for the movie's protagonist (Bruckheimer & Turteltaub, 2004). Similarly, several of the archivists were depicted as quite attractive in direct opposition to the other prominent theme that had emerged regarding the attractiveness of the portrayed archivists, including the head of the Dark Archive in the RPG game *Pathfinder* (Mona et al., 2011).

Both the themes of the attractive and romantically successful archivist represent an important trend in the portrayals of archivists in the media text analyzed--for every negative theme surrounding the archivists portrayed, there was a significant positive theme that emerged in direct contrast to it. For example, despite the tendency to depict archivists as lonely and isolated, in many cases archivists had an active social and personal life outside of the archive. In *Shadowshaper*, the text takes time to depict the archivist's life outside of the archive with a picture and discussion of her children, despite the archivist being a relatively minor character within the overall plot (Older, 2015, Location No. 586).

Likewise, although there was an ongoing theme of archivists who were awkward or socially unpleasant, there was also a similarly common theme of archivists being depicted as friendly and welcoming. In direct contrast to his supervisor, the archival

assistant discussing organization in *The Magnus Archives* had nothing but positive and kind things to say about the patrons with whom he had been working (Sims & Newall, 2016, August 24). In a similar vein, many of the archivists depicted tended to be quite helpful towards patrons, from answering questions, to assisting with research, to helping them locate the materials they needed. The archivist in *The Darwin Conspiracy* often utilized his extensive institutional and subject knowledge to help the protagonists with their research, eventually even breaking institutional rules to assist them in their search (Darnton, 2006).

This action of breaking archival rules to assist a patron was another ongoing theme throughout the texts, wherein archivists had to align themselves with patrons in opposition to archival rules and administration in order to truly be helpful. In the cartoon *DuckTales*, for example, despite initially appearing difficult and unhelpful, the archivist eventually provided the other characters with the tools they needed to help them access materials that had been hidden by administration (Youngberg et al., 2017).

### ***The Technical and Administrative Functions of Archives***

The theme of archivists breaking rules in defiance of administratively established procedures in order to be helpful contributed to another ongoing theme--sinister or generally suspicious archival leadership. In *Archival Quality*, the board responsible for the administration of the library and archive used their power to sell materials that had been collected by the archive, and to mask the institution's sordid past (Weir & Steenz, 2018). Such boards were not always a negative force when they appeared, however, but most depictions referencing trustees and donors did place a great deal of importance on their influence and their ability to either increase or restrict funding to archives. In

*Shadowshaper*, the archivist discussed having to boost her professional profile in order to impress future funders if she hoped to maintain the community archive that she planned to establish (Older, 2015, Location No. 581).

Another prominent theme depicting a great deal of administrative influence that was not altogether positive was the presence of a huge degree of bureaucracy and red tape in many of the archives depicted. In *Cabinet of Curiosities*, the administration of the archive, the material held within it, and even the ability of patrons to use the materials were closely tied to the extensive bureaucracy of the museum that maintained the archive (Preston & Child, 2002). Due in part to the ongoing theme of archival work being closely tied to red tape and bureaucratic minutia, the work performed by archivists overall was often denounced throughout the texts as boring and unglamorous. The narrator in *The Atrocity Archives* faced reassignment to an archival position as a penalty, and he frequently bemoaned the boredom and frustration that accompanied it (Stross, 2004).

But despite the ongoing theme of archival work being uninteresting, many of the texts nonetheless spent a great deal of time delving into the minutia of archival work; specifically, almost all of the works spent at least some time delving into the importance of proper indexing, cataloging, and organization. Mentions of the importance of these functions recurred in the Season One episodes of *The Magnus Archives*, with characters commenting on the difficulties of finding needed information due to previous organizational neglect and an inconsistent descriptive system (Sims & Newall, 2016, August 24; Sims & Newall, 2016, May 23). This was not the only instance of poor attention to organization and indexing leading to lost information and the archive being

rendered nearly unusable. The archival clerk's lack of helpfulness in *The Janson Directive* ultimately originated, at least in part, because of misfiling in the archive (Ludlum, 2002, p. 470).

In many cases, the discussion of organization revealed that the archive being depicted made use of a system of cataloging that was non-traditional, antiquated, or otherwise abnormal, particularly when compared to those of contemporary libraries. The narrator of *The Historian* was surprised, confused, and ultimately amused by how different the complicated and archaic mode of cataloging employed by the archive she was visiting was from the card catalog employed by her home university (Kostova, 2009, p. 229). Contradictorily, another ongoing theme placed a great deal of emphasis on transitioning from older cataloging methods to computerized databases. In the novel *Angels and Demons*, for example, the protagonist searched for a bound volume describing the collection at the Vatican Archives, only to realize that the archive had switched to computers and a virtual indexing system (Brown, 2000, p. 162).

A similar contradiction appeared in the texts in relation to the kinds of tools and technology used by the depicted archives. On the one hand, many of the archives employed old-fashioned or outdated tools and technology. The archive in the video game *Fallout 3* featured several demonstrably old computer monitors, with noticeably outdated interfaces (Bethesda Game Studios, 2008). On the other hand, other archives instead employed highly advanced technology and equipment, in contemporary contexts as well as imagined futures. The archival group in *Event*, for example, employed a highly advanced, prototypical computer to process the data that they collected, while otherwise existing in an apparently modern-day setting (Goleman, 2006, p. 43).

Along with this theme of advanced technology, there was also a frequently occurring theme regarding a lack of technological advancement in one specific area of archival work--digitization. Archival characters often discussed the need to increase digitization work, while patrons expressed frustration in cases where much of this work had yet to be completed. In the podcast *Arden*, the character Rosalind referenced both the extra challenge that a lack of a digitization had caused her when doing archival research, and the reality that the institution that she had been visiting did not have the resources to perform much of this type of archival work (Dole et al., 2018, November 12).

### ***Uses and Purpose of Archives***

Many texts exhibited a theme in which using archives were was challenging, and often went unused altogether. In *The Historian*, the visiting researcher narrating the novel was one of the few researchers to actually visit the archive and use its materials (Kostova, 2005, p. 34). In many cases, even members of an archive's staff and parent institutions, including the members of the Vatican hierarchy that allow the protagonist access to the archive in *Angels and Demons*, were skeptical of the actual usefulness of visiting the archive and employing its materials,

In some cases, the depicted archives went unused because they were hidden or secret, at least to the general public. The idea of a secret or hidden archive was itself a recurrent theme, with knowledge of the archival institution featured in *Event* being allowed only to those with a high enough level of power or clearance (Goleman, 2006). But many other texts instead demonstrated an opposing theme, in which archives were open to the general public, under the specific belief that understanding the past was

crucial to preparing for the future. In certain cases, such as *Record of Spaceborn Few*, this ideology underpinned most of the depicted actions and functions of the archive (Chambers, 2018).

Related to this theme, the work done in archives often helped to reveal the past, fill historical gaps, and challenge existing narratives. In *The Book of the Dead*, a researcher's work while preparing an exhibit uncovered a significant cover-up that her institution had previously engaged in by revealing discrepancies in the official account (Preston & Child, 2007). Likewise, researchers often engaged in the process intentionally within the text, and researchers' intentionally uncovering information that was key to a mystery they were working to solve was a prominent theme in and of itself. For instance, in the episode "The Tale of the Fallen Sea Queen," the protagonists of *Nancy Drew* were able to use archival photographs to uncover the identity of a murder victim's missing brother (Landau et al., 2019).

In many cases, there was a persistent theme of researchers discovering hidden secrets in documents and other materials that have been missed by archivists for years. In *The Darwin Conspiracy*, for example, the protagonist uncovered an account book containing crucial information that had previously gone entirely unnoticed by staff (Darnton, 2006). That said, another consistent theme was the process of going through archival materials as a very time-consuming task, with the researcher having to personally go through large amounts of information to discover anything useful. The *Supernatural* television episode "Hook Man" exemplified this trend. The protagonists' work with the library's archival materials was demonstrably uninteresting and time-consuming, and they had to sift through a great deal of useless materials before they

discovered the information that they needed (Kripke et al., 2005). The accompanying implication was that specialized skills were required on the researcher's part to make effective use of archives, as was continuously depicted to be the case throughout the novel, *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* (Larsson, 2005).

Nonetheless, when taken all together, these themes contributed to an overarching trend in the portrayal of archives wherein the use of archives revealed secrets or otherwise previously unknown and obscure information. In the podcast *Wolf 359*, the characters discover a way to access a classified archive, and employ this access to uncover embarrassing, obscure information from one another's past, culminating in the discovery of a darker, personal secret that had been held by one of their coworkers (Urbina, 2016). This ability of archives to act as a means of revealing and reconstructing the personal identities and pasts of their subjects was itself a prominent theme that occurred frequently throughout the texts. In the *Warehouse 13* episode "Burnout", an archived copy of a former employee's letters helped to trace his life and travels outside of the warehouse (Mote et al., 2009). Oftentimes, this reconstruction was accompanied by an ongoing theme of archives being a means to ensure that people are remembered. In fact, this facet was even shown to be a driving force behind the existence of the archive depicted in *The Archived* (Schwab, 2014).

That said, the ability of archives to help reconstruct people's pasts and personal identity was not always presented as a positive facet. An underlying theme in several of the texts was that the archives depicted were associated with spywork or with an invasion of privacy in general. In the case of the film *Star Trek: Into Darkness*, the archives were revealed to be a front organization for an intelligence organization (Abrams, 2009). In

other cases, archives actively impeded access to the kinds of information required for a complete reconstruction of the past, often requiring characters to break or otherwise defy archival protocol to find the needed information. Notably, both *Captain Marvel* and *Paddington* featured protagonists who were forced to break into archives in order to access the information that they needed to reconstruct their own personal identities (Boden et al., 2019; Heymann & King, 2014).

### ***Descriptions of Archival Materials***

Impeded access often took the form of especially valuable, sensitive, or secret materials being kept separate and less accessible than the rest of the materials in the archive, most often in a vault. The presence of such a vault recurred often throughout the media texts, with the imagery of vaults appearing consistently in instances like the video game *Destiny* and the RPG game *Pathfinder* (Bungle, 2014; Dark archive (faction), 2019). In some cases, the texts forewent the vault and instead depicted entire areas of an archive as restricted for these purposes. For example, in the *Doctor Who* television episode “Bad Wolf,” the entirety of Archive 6 was declared “out-of-bounds” in an effort to block access to what had been placed within (Davies et al., 2006).

One major motivating force behind the effort to restrict certain materials was the idea of danger. In some cases, this was due to the archival materials being dangerous or disturbing in and of themselves, as was the case for the atrocity-related documents and paraphernalia held in the eponymous *Atrocity Archive* (Stross, 2004). A somewhat more prevalent theme, however, was that the information contained within the restricted archival materials was too dangerous to be explored by the public at large. In *The Archived*, information being too dangerous for the general public to become aware of

resulted in drastic steps having to be taken to keep that sensitive information from being spread (Schwab, 2014, p. 177). One such step was administration having useful archival materials deliberately removed to prevent secrets from being revealed, another ongoing theme (Schwab, 2014, p. 177). Knowledge of a specific planet was deliberately blocked from the Jedi Archives in *Star Wars: Episode II - Attack of the Clones* so that it functionally no longer existed for members, and the institute head in *The Magnus Archives* likewise made materials with crucial information inaccessible to both patrons and his staff--although in his case it was implied that the purpose was to manipulate rather than protect (McCallum & Lucas, 2002; Sims & Newall, 2018).

In other cases, restriction was entirely divorced from danger in favor of value. There was a specific, prevalent theme in which archival materials were treated as treasures in the text. The video game *Destiny*, in particular, leaned heavily on the equivocation between materials and the idea of treasure (Bungle, 2014). Sometimes, the concept of value or treasure was explicitly, thematically linked to monetary value. For *The Case of the Missing Museum Archives*, this theme was illustrated by the periodic reiteration of the high monetary value of an item in the museum's archival collection, especially after it had been stolen (Brezenoff & Weber, 2015). Another thematic effort to boost the perceived value of the featured archival material was by name-dropping significant, well-known historical figures in relation to the materials. In *The Librarians* episode "And the City of Light" this figure was Nikola Tesla, while in the novel *The Book of the Dead*, that figure was Ulysses S. Grant (Rogers et al., 2015; Preston & Child, 2007).

Another source of value might have been age: the materials held in the depicted archive were very old, in some cases ancient, and consequently highly valuable. The concept of archival materials was especially prominent in the Vatican Archives as depicted in the novel *Angels and Demons*, with its references to bases like vellum and parchment (Brown, 2000, p. 162). That said, age was also depicted as a detriment, with older materials often appearing as significantly faded or damaged. The older materials held by the museum archives in *Cabinet of Curiosities*, for instance, suffered an extreme enough degree of deterioration than their contents were permanently altered (Preston & Child, 2002, Location No. 1994).

Perhaps the biggest detractor from the idea of the value of archival materials, however, was the idea that archives collected everything offered, regardless of value. This theme by no means appeared in the majority of the media texts examined, but it emerged frequently enough to nonetheless bear mentioning, with the archivists in both *Cabinet of Curiosities* and “And the City of Light” from *The Librarians* discussing the tendency of their archive to keep almost everything (Preston & Child, 2002, p. 436; Rogers & McKiernan, 2015).

## Conclusion

Ultimately, the results of this study demonstrated that the push to improve the public image of archives and archivists has achieved at least some degree of saturation into popular culture and the public consciousness. Archives were often depicted as institutions that had intrinsic value, and the use of archives as a useful and effective tool in efforts to trace the past. These efforts were, in turn, shown to have an impact on both the present and future.

The materials collected by archives were depicted as both useful and valuable, and the archival work involved in organizing and maintaining these materials were given attention and respect as important tasks that required skill, engagement, and patience to accomplish successfully. The education and training that developing those skills entails were similarly given significant narrative weight, and many of the archivists depicted were friendly and helpful.

That said, very little attention was given to the kinds of archival tasks and skills that are necessary to promote community use of archival materials, such as work with outreach and accessibility. The archives depicted, while consistently useful, were likewise at best relegated to the realm of the fantastical rather than being a resource that patrons could use in everyday pursuits of knowledge. At worst, these archives were actively restrictive in ways that prevented a layperson from ever accessing or utilizing the materials themselves, and were further limited by bureaucracy, administrators pursuing their own agendas, and the time-consuming and skill-specific work of using archival

materials effectively. In a similar vein, some negative portrayals of archivists persisted despite the more positive characterizations that emerged, with the archivists in question demonstrating behavior that was unhelpful, territorial, isolationist, adversarial, and ultimately deeply unpleasant.

Likewise, although many of the negative physical traits that were once considered stereotypical of the profession were very rarely present and women in archives enjoyed a widespread level of leadership and authority throughout these depictions, these gains were undercut by the total lack of racial and ethnic diversity present within the same media texts.

Archivists can utilize these recurring themes in the mass media that helps to fuel image formation on the part of the general public by leaning into the positive themes and actively addressing these negative themes during outreach efforts. This could include, potentially, emphasizing the presence of friendly and helpful archivists, efforts to leave archives open as far as logistically feasible, and transparency in making decisions concerning administration and access. This transparency could, perhaps, be helpfully extended to questions of diversity, wherein archivists work not only to promote diversity within the profession, but also to open up these efforts to the review and discussion of diverse voices within their own communities.

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## Appendix A. List of Sources Analyzed

### Books

- *Angels and Demons* by Dan Brown
- *Archival Quality* by Ivy Noelle Weir and Steenz
- *The Archived* by Victoria Schwab
- *The Atrocity Archives* by Charles Stross
- *The Book of the Dead* by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child
- *The Cabinet of Curiosities* by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child
- *The Case of the Missing Museum Archives* by Steve Brezenoff and Lisa K. Weber
- *The Darwin Conspiracy* by John Darnton
- *Event* by David Lynn Goleman
- *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* by Stieg Larsson
- *The Historian* by Elizabeth Kostova
- *The Janson Directive* by Robert Ludlum
- *The Last Templar* by Raymond Khoury
- *Record of a Spaceborn Few* by Becky Chambers
- *Shadowshaper* by Daniel José Older

### Traditional Audiovisual Media

#### *Films*

- *Captain Marvel*
- *It*
- *National Treasure*
- *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian*
- *Paddington*
- *Star Trek Into Darkness*
- *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones*

#### *Television Shows*

- *Angel*
  - “Dad” (Season 3, Episode 10)
- *Doctor Who*
  - “Bad Wolf” (Season 1, Episode 12)
- *DreamWorks Dragons: Riders of Berk*
  - “We Are Family: Part 1” (Season 2, Episode 9)
- *DuckTales*

- “The Great Dime Chase!” (Season 1, Episode 3)
- *The Librarians*
  - “And the City of Light” (Season 1, Episode 8)
  - “And a Town Called Feud” (Season 4, Episode 9)
- *Nancy Drew*
  - “The Tale of the Fallen Sea Queen” (Season 1, Episode 7)
- *Supernatural*
  - “Hook Man” (Season 1, Episode 7)
  - “Provenance” (Season 1, Episode 19)
- *Warehouse 13*
  - “Burnout” (Season 1, Episode 6)
  - “Buried” (Season 2, Episode 11)

## **New Media**

### ***Web-based Media***

- *The Adventure Zone*
  - “Amnesty - Episode 30”
  - “Amnesty - Episode 36”
- *Archive 81*
  - “A Body in a New Place” (Season 1, Episode 1)
  - “A Conversation Without Record” (Season 1, Episode 6)
  - “A Face in a Crowd” (Season 1, Episode 7)
- *Arden*
  - “Family Did It” (Season 1, Episode 8)
  - “The Friends We Made Along the Way Did It” (Season 1, Episode 10)
- *Critical Role*
  - “Voice of the Tempest” (Season 1, Episode 90)
  - “A Favor in Kind” (Season 2, Episode 16)
- *The Magnus Archives*
  - “Angler Fish” (Episode 1)
  - “Boatswain’s Call” (Episode 33)
  - “Containment” (Episode 93)
- *Wolf 359*
  - “Don’t Poke the Bear” (Season 3, Episode 5)
  - “Need to Know” (Season 3, Episode 7)

### ***Interactive Media***

#### ***Video Games***

- *Dark Souls*
- *Destiny*
- *Diablo III*

- *Fallout 3*
- *Path of Exile*

#### *Games (Other)*

- *Dungeons and Dragons*
  - “Wizard School of Archiving” (*DnD 5e Homebrew*)
  - “Archivist: Magical Scholar” (*3.5 D&D Archives*)
- *Pandemic: On the Brink*
- *Pathfinder*
  - “Dark Archive (faction)” (*Pathfinder Wiki*)
  - *Pathfinder Field Guide*
  - “Dark Archive Faction Status Report - Year of the Sky Key” (*Pathfinder Community Forums*)
- *Starfinder*
  - “Dataphiles” (*Starfinder Wiki*)
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## Appendix C. Work Sheet for Quantitative Content Analysis

Title of Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Genre: \_\_\_\_\_ Intended Audience: \_\_\_\_\_

Decade produced:    \_\_\_ 2000 – 2009                    \_\_\_ 2010 – 2019

Type of Archive:

\_\_\_ University        \_\_\_ Institutional        \_\_\_ Government        \_\_\_ Museum

\_\_\_ Corporate        \_\_\_ Religious            \_\_\_ Home/Family/Personal

\_\_\_ Community/Public Library        \_\_\_ Rare books/manuscripts

Other: □□□□ \_\_\_\_\_

Gender of Archivist:

\_\_\_ Female

      Position:        \_\_\_ Administrative            \_\_\_ Clerical

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Male

      Position:        \_\_\_ Administrative            \_\_\_ Clerical

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

      Position:        \_\_\_ Administrative            \_\_\_ Clerical

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity of Archivist:

\_\_\_ American Indian or Alaskan Native

Position:     \_\_\_ Administrative             \_\_\_ Clerical

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Asian

Position:     \_\_\_ Administrative             \_\_\_ Clerical

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Black or African American

Position:     \_\_\_ Administrative             \_\_\_ Clerical

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Position:     \_\_\_ Administrative             \_\_\_ Clerical

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ White

Position:     \_\_\_ Administrative             \_\_\_ Clerical

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Hispanic or Latino

Position:     \_\_\_ Administrative             \_\_\_ Clerical

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Position:     \_\_\_ Administrative             \_\_\_ Clerical

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Can't be determined

Age of Archivist:

Young (under 34)

Middle Age (35 to 49)

Mature (over 50)

Can't be determined

Physical Traits of Archivist:

Glasses

Bun

Gray hair

Balding

Conservative clothing

Archival Tasks:

Reference

Material Retrieval

Processing

Collections Development

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Types of archival materials (List all that appear):

## Appendix D. Code Book for Qualitative Analysis

Category	Code
Archivists	Archivists being territorial or otherwise unwilling to share their materials
	Archivists and librarians as interchangeable
	Archivists as extremely intelligent, or at least extremely knowledgeable in their given subject area
	Helpful archivist
	Meticulous and detail-oriented archivist
	Archivist as physically unattractive or off-putting
	Archivist that is socially awkward, annoying, or otherwise unpleasant
	Archivists as romantically unsuccessful or inexperienced
	Archivist as unreliable, traitorous, or otherwise associated with the villains
	Friendly and welcoming archivist
	Unhelpful archivist
	Isolated archivist, or one without a normal social life and interactions
	Attractive archivist
	Ascribing archival work to a different profession
	Argumentative relationship between archivist and researcher
	Archivist breaking the rules to help someone
	Connection between academic or professional training and archival work
	Archivist having special ability to find and draw information and feeling the need to take action, discover, or otherwise tell someone's story
	Archivists demonstrably having a life outside of the archive
	Idea that an archivist having the responsibility to see, learn, and record, even if things are terrible or if they don't want to

	Need to keep recording no matter what, often documenting history in real time
	Librarian performing archival work or archival records being part of a regular library
	Tension between professionals about different types of organization
	Person becoming archivist without education or training
	Physically weak and untalented archivists
	Archival character bound to archive against their will
	Archivist as an otherworldly, immortal, or inhuman figure
	Archival pride in collection or materials
	Discussions of the importance of cataloging, indexing, and organization
	Emphasis on switching from older cataloging methods to computerized databases
	Non-traditional, antiquated, or otherwise abnormal forms of cataloging used by archives
	Highly advanced technology and equipment
	Misfiling or poor organization, often resulting in difficulties in locating materials
	Old-fashioned and outdated tools and technology
	Discussions of trustees and donors
	Importance of copies and reproductions, especially digitization
	Archival work as boring or unglamorous
	Sinister or suspicious archival leadership
	Emphasis on red tape and bureaucracy in the process of using and running the archive
Administration and technical functions of archives	
	Skepticism as to the usefulness of archives and their materials
	Secret or hidden archives, or at least the idea of archives as places of secrecy
	Archives holding key information that is needed to solve a larger mystery
	Archival materials revealing secrets or otherwise previously unknown or obscure information
	Archives as unused or otherwise unvisited
The uses and purpose of archives	Archives filling historical gaps or un-obscuring the past

	Archives as a medium for making information available to the general public, as a service to help them understand that past and thereby make important decisions for the future
	Archives being associated with spywork/association and an invasion of privacy
	Archives as a way of making sure people are remembered
	Archives as a means to reveal and reconstruct the personal identities and pasts of their subjects
	Hidden secrets in documents and other materials that are noticed by researchers, but that archivists have missed for years
	Going through archival materials being a very time-consuming task, with the researcher having to personally go through large amounts of information to discover anything
	Needing to break into archives, or at least break rules, to get important information
	Need for specialized skills on the researcher's part to effectively use archive
Archival materials	Archival materials as treasures
	Materials that are extremely old or even ancient
	Materials that are faded, damaged, or otherwise deteriorating
	Especially valuable, sensitive, or secret materials kept separate and less accessible than the rest of the materials in the archive
	The materials themselves as being dark, creepy, or blatantly dangerous
	Useful archival materials deliberately removed to prevent secrets from being revealed, oftentimes by administration
	The presence of a vault to hold certain materials
	Archives saving everything and never throwing anything away
	Name dropping important historical events and figures in connection with archives
	Some information having to be kept from the public eye
	High monetary value of materials
	Entire areas being restricted to block access to materials