Making Archives in Early Modern Europe
Proof, Information, and Political Record-Keeping, 1400–1700

Randolph C. Head
University of California, Riverside

European states were overwhelmed with information around 1500. Their agents sought to organize their overflowing archives to provide trustworthy evidence and comprehensive knowledge that was useful in the everyday exercise of power. This detailed comparative study explores cases from Lisbon to Vienna to Berlin in order to understand how changing information technologies and ambitious programs of state-building challenged record-keepers to find new ways to organize and access the information in their archives. From the intriguing details of how clerks invented new ways to index and catalog the expanding world to the evolution of new perspectives on knowledge and power among philologists and historians, this book provides illuminating vignettes and revealing comparisons about a core technology of governance in early modern Europe. Enhanced by perspectives from the history of knowledge and from archival science, this wide-ranging study explores the potential and the limitations of knowledge management as media technologies evolved.


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