

“Complete and in Order”: Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and the Archival Profession¹

Caryn Radick

ABSTRACT

Archival literature has discussed the portrayal of archives and archivists in fiction, but has not offered a reading of a work of fiction with little-to-no overt mention of the archival profession. This article demonstrates the value of looking at such works of fiction through an archival lens by providing an “archival reading” of one famous novel that has been the subject of numerous scholarly articles and books, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. Although a tale of the supernatural, *Dracula*’s narrative portrays the importance of recordkeeping, research, and access to and organization of information. This article considers the narrative and plot of *Dracula* from an archival perspective, discusses literature about the portrayal of archives and archivists in fiction, and examines how *Dracula* reflects nineteenth-century trends in organizing information.

© Caryn Radick. 

KEY WORDS

Archival Records, Arrangement, Preservation, Writings about Archives

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is now considered a literary sensation, the fictional forefather to generations of vampire portrayals and depictions in books and films. Stoker published *Dracula* to some acclaim in 1897, but his other literary efforts never met with—and perhaps were not worth—the same regard. Stoker's fame in his lifetime (1847–1912), however, came not from his role as *Dracula*'s creator, but as the manager of British actor Henry Irving (1838–1905). When the *New York Times* ran a notice of Stoker's death in 1912, it mostly spoke of him in terms of his relationship to Irving and named his “best-known publication” as the 1908 *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*, only listing *Dracula* as one of Stoker's “other works, mostly fantastic fiction.”²

Over the years, however, *Dracula* has had a ripple effect, gaining notability and notoriety. The original novel has been retold in play and movie form, and has often been reworked to reflect contemporary culture through the twentieth century and beyond.³ Over the last several decades, “descendant” vampires have appeared in books, movies, and television shows.⁴

Dracula's more recent interpretations are not limited to popular culture. It is a frequent focus of scholarly literature, often subject to readings that reflect contemporary concerns. The story of *Dracula* has been examined to consider issues of medical science, colonialism, racism and anti-Semitism, and feminism.⁵ Closer to the archival home, several writings address the many recording methods in *Dracula*, one of which describes its topic as “the shabby, dusty corners of *Dracula* . . . aspects of *Dracula* that have received less attention because they, like practicing shorthand, don't immediately seem as pleasurable.”⁶ Other scholars have sought to show how much *Dracula* was a product of its time and Stoker's experience, a subject this article examines closely. Certainly, within these multiple perspectives is room to explore *Dracula* from an archival viewpoint.

People who only know *Dracula* from the movies may be surprised when reading it for the first time. A reader may start the book with visions of castles in mist and horses' hooves on moonlit cobblestones—images drawn in part from movie depictions, which emphasize the gothic aspects of the story. The reader may not expect the mentions of a society that uses phonographs, Kodaks, and stenography.

John Sutherland focused on these “modern” touches in *Is Heathcliff a Murderer?*, one of his works on puzzles in nineteenth-century fiction. In a chapter on *Dracula*, Sutherland posed a question that serves as the chapter's title: “Why Does the Count Come to England?” That is, why leave the relative, immortality-supporting safety of Transylvania for a risky trip abroad? Sutherland pointed out that *Dracula* becomes aware that times are changing, that he is “a demon from the Dark Ages pitted against men of the 1890s armed with Winchester rifles, telegrams, phonographs, modern medicine and science.”⁷ Sutherland concluded that England's modernity draws *Dracula*, saying, “put in its most banal form,

he has come to England to learn how to use the Kodak, how to write shorthand, and how to operate the recording phonograph in order that he may make himself a thoroughly modern vampire for the imminent twentieth century.”⁸

In addition to the focus on innovation and technology, archivists who read *Dracula* may notice the use and discussion of different recording methods along with passages that address practical archival issues. This article explores the archival issues in *Dracula*, providing a new perspective on this work by viewing it through an archival lens. First, it demonstrates how records and recording methods are used in the plot of *Dracula*. It examines events, stylistic devices, and language in *Dracula* from an archival perspective and demonstrates how Stoker both bolsters and undermines the value of records and their use. It considers how *Dracula* fits in with nineteenth-century British literature and culture and why a discussion of this book belongs in archival literature.

Before delving into the particulars of *Dracula*, it is worth looking at where this article fits in with other discussions of archives and literature. Although archival listservs and social media⁹ occasionally feature comments on the portrayal of archivists in literature, the topic has not often figured in archival literature. Perhaps the best-known recent article on this topic is Arlene Schmuland’s “The Archival Image in Fiction: An Analysis and Annotated Bibliography,” published in 1999. Schmuland discussed books and stories that feature archivists as characters or that take place in or have characters visit archives, and she considered “how contemporary fiction, most specifically the novel form, approaches archives, archivists, and archival work.”¹⁰ Schmuland listed 128 works that fit these criteria and considered how archives and archivists are depicted in these works.¹¹ In 2008, *Archivaria* featured discussions on archivists in popular culture and film in an article by Tania Aldred, Gordon Burr, and Eun Park entitled “Crossing a Librarian with a Historian: The Image of Reel Archivists” and a “counterpoint” by Karen Buckley, “‘The Truth Is in the Red Files’: An Overview of Archives in Popular Culture.”¹²

This article follows on the general theme of archives and fiction, but examines only one work, albeit one that is well known and resonant, but one never considered in archival discussions of literature and that seems at first unrelated to the world of archives and archivists.

In contrast to Stoker’s reputation during his lifetime, he is now known as the author of *Dracula* almost to the exclusion of his other accomplishments. A search of articles that discuss only *Dracula* produces numerous titles reflecting the viewpoints of different disciplines,¹³ but the literature of the archival profession has never analyzed the “archival” *Dracula*. This article not only focuses on the archival matters of *Dracula*, but seeks to initiate a discussion within the profession of “archival reading.”

This discussion naturally begs the question of why it might be worth considering *Dracula* from an archival perspective. Although members of a profession of practice, more and more archivists begin their professional lives studying archives at the graduate level. Just as there is space within the professional discourse of other disciplines to discuss *Dracula*, archivists should also have the "right" to consider literature such as *Dracula* through the lens of their own education and training. Adding a twist on the previous discussions of portrayals of archivists in fiction by viewing "nonarchival" fiction through an archival lens offers a new and different level of engagement to members of the archival profession and has the potential to draw interest from nonarchivists. As a shift in perspective, it encourages further shifts in perspective that can lead the field in new directions.¹⁴

What Happens in *Dracula*

Although *Dracula* is a familiar story, it is worth reviewing the plot with a particular emphasis on the role of records and recordkeeping before moving into a more thorough discussion of archival perspectives on its plot.

Dracula takes place in May through November of an unspecified year with a postscript seven years later. There is some overlap in narrative: for example, Jonathan Harker's initial journal runs from May to June 30, the text then shifts back to May with letters exchanged between Mina Murray and Lucy Westenra.

Jonathan Harker, a British law clerk, travels to Transylvania to assist Count Dracula with some legal transactions involving the purchase of an estate in England. Harker notes some strange events at Dracula's castle and notices a number of boxes the Count is moving out. Harker eventually realizes that Dracula is a vampire and that he is no longer a guest at the castle, but its prisoner. Harker escapes at the end of June, but suffers a breakdown and is next seen at a hospital in Budapest. His fiancée, Mina Murray, goes out to assist in his care; they marry and return to England.

During Harker's time at Dracula's castle, Mina is visiting her friend Lucy Westenra who is staying in Whitby, a coastal town in Yorkshire. Prior to Mina's visit, three men—all friends—had proposed to Westenra on the same day: John Seward, a doctor who runs a "lunatic" asylum; Quincey Morris, a Texan; and Arthur Holmwood, an English lord, whom Lucy accepts.

During Mina's visit, a ship called *Demeter* wrecks at Whitby. On board the ship is a large dog—Dracula in disguise—who escapes into Whitby, and the ship's captain is found dead, having tied himself to the wheel with a crucifix in his hands. A local newspaper reports the story, giving details about the fifty large boxes of soil in the ship's cargo and the solicitor who claims they are consigned

to him. The ship's log, also published in the newspaper, reveals that its nine crew members disappeared one by one until only the captain was left.

Lucy, a sleepwalker, soon becomes Dracula's victim, and she slowly grows weaker. Seward is asked to treat her "illness"; baffled, he in turn calls on his medical school professor Abraham Van Helsing for help. Van Helsing suspects a vampire, but does not tell the others. Despite receiving several transfusions from several donors, Lucy, who has gone to her home near London, dies in late September. Soon after, a local newspaper reports a woman attacking children on Hampstead Heath. The children call this woman the "Bloofer Lady" (*Bloofer* is their childish pronunciation of "beautiful"). Van Helsing explains that Lucy is the Bloofer Lady because she is now a vampire. He enlists the help of Seward, Morris, and Holmwood to "kill" her by driving a stake through her heart and then beheading her.

During Lucy's illness, Seward becomes interested in an inmate of his asylum, one R. M. Renfield who eats insects and animals in the belief that by doing so, he is accumulating their lives into his. Renfield is at times particularly agitated and refers to a "Master" who has come—later understood to be Dracula, who has bought the neighboring property, Carfax.

The different strands of the story come together when the Harkers and Van Helsing realize that Lucy's and Jonathan's stories are complementary, confirmed by the fact that Harker has recently seen Dracula in England, looking much younger than he did in Transylvania. The Harkers come to stay at the asylum while they, Van Helsing, and Lucy's suitors consider how to fight Dracula. They realize that the fifty boxes of soil are crucial safe harbors for Dracula, as they were transported from his home. They return to the solicitor in Whitby who claimed the boxes and trace transaction records to find out where they were sent so that they can destroy them. During this time, Dracula uses Renfield as a minion to gain entry into the asylum and attack Mina, who will then become a vampire if Dracula is not killed. Their search becomes more desperate, and they find all but one box, which Dracula uses to escape to Transylvania. The others chase after him, killing him outside his castle.

Records as Reality

In *Dracula*, Bram Stoker tells a fantastic story, but grounds it in reality with his emphasis on documentation, research, and the organization of information. Although he relies on records and recordkeeping to tell this story, he also questions the trustworthiness of records by demonstrating the many ways they can be compromised. The sections that follow offer readings of the events in *Dracula* focusing on these archival matters.

The first level in which records play a role in *Dracula* is the narrative. The story itself is presented as a series of documents. These include two journals kept in shorthand, a diary originally recorded on phonograph cylinders, letters, telegrams, memoranda, a ship's log, and newspaper clippings. For access and readability, transcriptions are made of the phonograph recordings and the shorthand is typed out. Other types of records are referenced throughout, including a notebook kept as a ledger, deeds, photographs, invoices and receipts, maps, and tombstones.

While Stoker uses records to form the narrative of *Dracula*, the story itself depicts the characters' use of records to trace the boxes. At first, the vampire hunters learn that Dracula has one house where he has taken fifty boxes of earth (in reality, places where Dracula is safe, especially while sleeping). When they visit this house and only find twenty-nine boxes, they realize that Dracula has more than one property and has divided the boxes among them. By using their own records, they are able to find the men and businesses responsible for moving the boxes. The receipts and invoices they find at these companies tell them not only where Dracula's other properties are, but how many boxes were taken to each, enabling them to track down the other boxes and destroy them by consecrating the earth within them. They ultimately confront Dracula in yet another property he owns and find his own papers regarding the transactions stored there. Everyone with whom Dracula has conducted business has maintained a record of the transaction, and his hunters are able to use these to track him. Vampire or not, like many criminals, Dracula leaves a paper trail.

The value of records and information to the characters in *Dracula* also becomes evident when "formal" and informal research are mentioned. Before embarking on his journey to Transylvania, Harker visits the library at the British Museum to learn more about his destination. Van Helsing also visits this library to research medicine when treating Lucy. In trying to learn more about Dracula, Van Helsing asks a friend at the university at Budapest to "make his record." Through this, he learns that one manuscript refers to the Count as "wampyr."¹⁵

Dracula does not go to England unprepared, nor does he acquire his knowledge through his powers. After arriving in Transylvania and meeting the Count, Harker describes Dracula's library:

In the library I found, to my great delight, a vast number of English books, whole shelves full of them, and bound volumes of magazines and newspapers. A table in the centre was littered with English magazines and newspapers, though none of them were of very recent date. The books were of the most varied kind, history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law, all relating to England and English life and customs and manners. There were even such books of reference as the London Directory, the "Red" and "Blue" books, Whitaker's Almanac, the Army and Navy Lists, and it somehow gladdened my heart to see it, the Law List.¹⁶

As Sutherland indicated, Dracula wants to assimilate to modern life in London. As a result, he has been doing his homework regarding his new country of choice and has assembled a personal reference library containing items that would be familiar to the Victorian reading public. Perhaps his inability to receive or otherwise acquire more up-to-date periodicals also prompted him to move abroad to be closer to the source.

A final statement on the importance of research comes as the characters pursue Dracula to Transylvania to kill him before he reaches the safety of his castle. Mina reads through the record she has kept of their experiences with the vampire. Only after doing this and consulting other resources is she able to correctly hypothesize Dracula's strategy, leading to their ultimate success. Even though his attack on her connects them, enabling her to feel a link to him and his whereabouts, she can only synthesize the information once she has done her reading.

The Language of Recordkeeping

Much of the language in *Dracula* discusses making, keeping, and preserving records. These passages are perhaps where the narrative and action of *Dracula* would resonate most with archivists.

As mentioned, *Dracula's* story is recorded using different methods, several of which we would be unable to decipher easily today. Access is also an issue for the characters in *Dracula*. Mina and Jonathan choose to keep their journals in shorthand to practice their techniques. However, once Mina realizes that these journals might be important to understanding and fighting Dracula, she uses her skill in typewriting to transcribe them into a form that is readable by those who do not know shorthand.

Issues of access are highlighted more clearly when Mina asks John Seward if she might listen to the phonograph cylinders he uses to keep his diary, particularly the cylinder on which he recorded his description of Lucy's death. The prospect of her hearing this account horrifies Seward, and he at first says no (his secondary reason is the confidentiality of notes about his patients the cylinders contain). In the midst of refusing Mina, he tells her he is unable to give her the cylinder detailing Lucy's death because "I do not know how to pick out any particular part of the diary,"¹⁷ and he comes to the fuller realization that "although I have kept the diary for months past, it never once struck me how I was going to find any particular part of it in case I wanted to look it up?"¹⁸

Seward is confounded by the technology of the device he uses. Jennifer Wicke noted, "Since the gramophone is in 1897 an extremely recently invented device, even Dr. Seward is confused by some of its properties; his worst

realization is that in order to find some important gem of recorded insight, he will have to listen to all the records again."¹⁹

To spare him the need to relisten and sensing the value of the information held on the cylinders, Mina offers to transcribe the phonograph diary in the same way she has transcribed the shorthand journals. As she does this, she notes her use of "manifold"—a type of carbon paper that enables her to make three copies simultaneously. This triplication will be useful for the dissemination of the transcripts.

As these episodes show, the characters come to realize that their records are important to one another. Indeed, the characters ask to read each others' records a number of times. However, once Mina starts her transcription work, she also seeks to broaden the types of records she adds to their recollections. For example, Mina reads an episode in Jonathan's journal where he notes that Van Helsing is startled by something he reads in the *Westminster Gazette*—in fact, a story about the Bloofer Lady attacking children. She decides to go through Seward's files of this paper and the *Pall Mall Gazette* to see if any of the stories have a bearing on Dracula. This explains the presence in the narrative of the Bloofer Lady article and another regarding the escape and eventual return of a wolf to the London Zoo—Dracula used this wolf in an attack on Lucy. The reader sees that Mina, not an omniscient narrator, has added these accounts to the records and the story.

Archival Practices

Once she acquires the records, Mina and her husband go about, as Seward says, "knitting together in chronological order every scrap of evidence they have."²⁰ Seward describes the results: "I got home at five o'clock, and found that Godalming and Morris had not only arrived, but had already studied the transcript of the various diaries and letters which Harker and his wonderful wife had made and arranged."²¹

At this point, the narrative moves beyond issues of access. The word "arranged" has a particular meaning for archivists, as it is the term used for organizing a collection of papers into some sort of order. Papers may have immense value, but if they are unprocessed, in part unarranged, the ability to find information in the papers may be severely hindered.

Seward also notes that the transcription and arrangement of these papers will equip them all with the information they need to battle Dracula:

And so now, up to this very hour, all the records we have are complete and in order. The Professor took away one copy to study after dinner, and before our meeting, which is fixed for nine o'clock. The rest of us have already read

everything; so when we meet in the study we shall all be informed as to facts, and can arrange our plan of battle with this terrible and mysterious enemy.²²

Of course, Mina's form of arrangement is not necessarily consistent with what an archivist would do. She is in a sense creating an artificial collection by taking records apart and weaving them together in a method that suits the users' needs. On the other hand, it is not entirely dissimilar, especially if one considers the opening of *Dracula*:

How these papers have been placed in sequence will be made clear in the reading of them. All needless matters have been eliminated, so that a history almost at variance with the possibilities of latter-day belief may stand forth as simple fact. There is throughout no statement of past events wherein memory may err, for all the records chosen are exactly contemporary, given from the standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them.²³

This statement, particularly the phrase about how the papers have been placed and the elimination of needless matters, bears a resemblance to the arrangement and processing notes in a finding aid, albeit the language is not what archivists would expect to see. Reading this through archival eyes, it is interesting that *Dracula* opens with a note about how the records within have been arranged and hints that some appraisal has been done on them as well.

Preservation and disaster planning are other aspects of recordkeeping familiar to archivists, librarians, and information professionals. As mentioned earlier, Mina makes several copies of her transcriptions, one of which the vampire hunters lock away in a safe. This becomes important when *Dracula* is found attacking Mina. Seward, Van Helsing, Morris, and Holmwood have just realized that *Dracula* is able to use Renfield to enter the asylum and that he has been victimizing Mina. They run to the Harkers' room where they find Jonathan in a deep sleep and Mina on the edge of the bed with *Dracula* pressing her face to his chest, which he has cut open (Stoker likens the scene to one of a kitten with its nose pushed into a saucer, being forced to drink). In the confusion that follows, *Dracula* escapes into the asylum. The men search, but do not find him, and Morris tells Seward the following:

I looked in the study . . . and although it could only have been for a few seconds, he made rare hay of the place. All the manuscript had been burned, and the blue flames were flickering amongst the white ashes; the cylinders of your phonograph too were thrown on the fire, and the wax had helped the flames. Here I interrupted, "Thank God there is the other copy in the safe."²⁴

This, of course, is a Victorian example of the theory behind "Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe." For all the damage *Dracula* has done, the information is not lost. This is not to say that the destruction of the originals has no meaning, especially to archivists, but the information within them has been preserved.

Archival Disturbances

The fact that after this terrible scene, Dracula interrupts his escape to destroy the records indicates their importance in the novel. In fact, records are purposely destroyed a number of times through the course of the story. While he is in Transylvania, Jonathan Harker attempts to send some letters home without Dracula knowing. Dracula intercepts the letters and destroys one because it is written in shorthand, which the Count cannot read.

Another, perhaps more interesting episode, involves Lucy Westenra. After the frightening events of her own illness and her mother's death (she has a heart attack when a wolf under Dracula's control crashes through the window of the room they are in), she writes an account and places it in her clothes so that if she passes away, whoever finds her will find the note. When Seward and Van Helsing find her unconscious, the paper falls out; the professor reads and replaces it. Lucy wakes up and produces it to show the men its existence before falling asleep again. Then Seward describes the events that follow:

Whilst still asleep she took the paper from her breast and tore it in two. Van Helsing stepped over and took the pieces from her. All the same, however, she went on with the action of tearing, as though the material were still in her hands; finally, she lifted her hands and opened them as though scattering the fragments.²⁵

Lucy tears a sheet of paper no longer in her possession. It seems she is in a trancelike state and is tearing up the "evidence" under Dracula's command. Again, this is an example of information being destroyed, although in this case, it survives.

Perhaps more insidious than destroying records that contain information about him, Dracula also attempts to fake records. When Harker is trapped at his castle in Transylvania, Dracula instructs him to write three letters. The final one announces that he has left the castle and arrived safely at his next destination. Harker asks what dates to write on the letters, and when given the final one notes, "I know now the span of my life. God help me!"²⁶

What Harker realizes is that anyone investigating his disappearance will find a record of his safe departure from Dracula's castle. Whatever fate awaited Harker, investigators would conclude, certainly did not involve the Count.

Other episodes in *Dracula* depict the truth of records questioned in both obvious and more subtle ways. For example, the transcription of the log of *Demeter* includes a disclaimer about the author needing to rely on a translator. Perhaps most striking is a discussion in Whitby between Lucy, Mina, and a local man named Mr. Swales who rants about the tombstones in the local graveyard. Swales, it appears, does not believe in organized religion and says, "Why it's them that, not content with printin' lies on paper an' preachin them out of

pulpits does want to be cuttin' them on the tombstones." He maintains that the tombstone inscriptions are all lies. When Mina suggests that tombstones are there to "please the relatives," Swales replies, "How will it pleasure their relatives to know that lies is wrote over them and that everybody in the place knows that they be lies?"²⁷

To support his argument, Swales proclaims that several of the stones use the words "Here lies" when, in fact, the person died at sea and the body was never found. He points out another grave that Lucy and Mina like to sit on and notes that the tombstone says that the man fell off a cliff to his death, to the everlasting sorrow of his beloved mother. The man did indeed fall off a cliff, Swales points out—but only after he committed suicide at the top to spite the mother he hated and scavengers pushed him over.

This is in part a plot device; that this is the grave of a suicide is necessary to the story. (Mina recounts seeing Dracula with a sleepwalking Lucy at this grave—presumably Dracula is able to sense the truth of its unsanctified state despite what the stone says.) However, an archivist who deals with genealogical researchers might pause over this passage. Genealogists trying to determine facts about relatives for their family histories treat cemetery inscriptions as records. Stoker suggests in this passage that for whom they were written—indeed, who arranged for the writing—should be kept in mind.

Another episode relevant to archivists is when Mina transcribes Seward's cylinders. She has listened to Seward describe his sadness over Lucy's rejection of his proposal and her illness and death, and says,

That is a wonderful machine, but it is cruelly true. It told me, in its very tones, the anguish of your heart. It was like a soul crying out to Almighty God. No one must hear them spoken ever again! See, I have tried to be useful. I have copied out the words on my typewriter, and none other need now hear your heart beat, as I did.²⁸

In copying out this record in another format, Mina dilutes it. This relates to the issue of the value of having the original. A copy in another format may provide many kinds of information and be more valuable than having nothing, but a higher value is usually placed on the original. This is often part of the argument made when considering preservation of materials in another format; the value of the original, its "artifactual value," needs to be understood as the qualities that differ inherently from the information contained in a surrogate/access version.

Perhaps the strongest statement about authenticity and records comes in *Dracula's* closing words. Seven years after they kill Dracula, Jonathan Harker writes,

I took the papers from the safe where they had been ever since our return so long ago. We were struck with the fact, that in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document. Nothing but a mass of typewriting, except the later notebooks of Mina and Seward and myself, and Van Helsing's memorandum. We could hardly ask any one, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story.²⁹

In a sense, Harker is equating authenticity with originality, and, in that sense, he is correct. *Dracula* destroyed the original records in the asylum. Only those made after that episode are original. But he also seems to be saying that the story the records tell could not be accepted as true. This is particularly interesting and troubling because Stoker takes such pains in constructing the narrative to suggest that so many of the documents that tell *Dracula's* story are verifiable. If the story told in *Dracula* were absolute truth, the postscript was written only seven years after the events. Presumably, the newspapers from which the clippings came would still exist and some of the records regarding *Dracula's* business transactions might survive. Lucy's date of death would be verifiable, and, if one wanted to take it that far, her body would show signs of her vampire demise. Again, if the events were real, it seems likely that there would have been an inquest after Renfield's death (*Dracula* broke his neck as he left the asylum). Parts of that "mass of typewriting" could be verified on further investigation. Certainly, the closing statement detracts both from the opening's assertion that the records are true and form the body of evidence that builds throughout the narrative.

This ending, and the episodes of records' destruction, falsification, and dilution, are rather disturbing and interesting for an archivist to read because they bring the nature of records into question. Archives often hold records that are subjective in nature, such as diaries and letters, and researchers use these in their work. Whose duty, if anyone's, is it to prove them true or untrue, and how does one begin to authenticate another person's experience? Some events, but not all, can be verified. Imagine if somewhere in every collection was a note equivalent to the opening of *Dracula* and a note that matched its end.

A Man of His Time

This section will briefly touch upon how Bram Stoker's approach in writing *Dracula* reflects his times in two ways. The first relates to the history of the British ghost story (or in this case, tale of the supernatural). Julia Briggs discussed in her work *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* that, as the nineteenth century progressed, tales of the supernatural came to have a more scientific basis. The agent of horror, rather than representing a creature from the great beyond, might be an ingested chemical. Briggs also examined

how, as the nineteenth-century ghost story evolved, the “expert” that characters consulted regarding supernatural terrors transitioned from a priest to a man of science.³⁰ This latter incarnation appears in *Dracula*; at first the characters understand the problem as medical (manifesting as Lucy’s strange illness), which leads them to seek advice from Drs. Seward and Van Helsing. Once they determine the source of Lucy’s illness to be supernatural, they still consider the scientific: research the problem, find the solution.

Dracula’s narrative technique also supports a more objective or scientific perspective on matters. As seen in Mina’s comments on the emotional phonograph recordings, all passion is transcribed out of handwriting or recording into a “mass of typewriting.” Briggs noted this trend:

Some writers made use of mysterious occult systems. . . . But, like the psychic researchers themselves, preferred to borrow the techniques of science which, for all its apparent objectivity, its emphasis on facts and results, was constantly opening up mysterious vistas, asking unanswered, perhaps unanswerable questions about man and the universe he lived in. Science, in spite of, or perhaps because of, its apparent repudiation of supernatural explanations, could contribute greatly to the ghost story by adding that rationality and coolness necessary for an effect of verisimilitude.³¹

The methodical approach to solving the *Dracula* “problem” also reflects the attempts of Victorians to organize time and space. Like the different disciplinary approaches to *Dracula*, much has been written about how advances in timekeeping and cartography led to a higher structuring of life in Victorian society, and literature recorded this effect.³² Stephen Kern, in his *Culture of Time and Space*, contended, “The most momentous development in the history of uniform, public time since the invention of the mechanical clock in the fourteenth century was the introduction of standard time at the end of the nineteenth century.”³³ Sue Zemka pointed out that English literature reflects the heightening of time consciousness: “There are more references to ‘moments’ and ‘minutes’ in Dickens than in Austen, more still in Conrad than Dickens.”³⁴ Adam Barrows discussed the importance of the regulation of time in *Dracula*, alluding to the scene where “in preparation for his invasion of London he reclines on a sofa and reads the Bradshaw guide to train timetables as if it were a novel, studying the departures and arrivals at Victoria station as his fourteenth-century incarnation would have studied the designs of the castle he planned to breach.”³⁵ Barrows contended:

In *Dracula* the power of the timetable is unquestioned. Memorization of train departure times is employed by human and vampire alike, with *Dracula*’s death and subsequent transformation into a chronological text signaling the power of British time to eliminate extraneous and unassimilated details.³⁶

Indeed, Barrows's discussion of *Dracula* considered his role as one of several characters in Victorian literature who are "temporally deviant outsiders . . . timeless creatures existing on the peripheries of empire, challenging the standards and limits imposed by the conventions of British time."³⁷ *Dracula* presents several temporal disturbances; he is centuries old and although he is an old man in Transylvania, he is young when he appears in London.

Both Barrows and Sutherland pointed out that portrayals of time out of line were sources of tension in Victorian culture.³⁸ Sutherland also examined how novel plots came to be scrutinized under "real time" criticism and how, when a critic proved that the events in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859) could not have happened due to mishandled sequencing, this changed the game for Victorian authors.³⁹ The subsequent recall and revision of the book in response bolstered the expectation of verisimilitude in fiction.

And where does Stoker himself fit into this organizing trend? According to biographer Barbara Belford, he was hard to know, "obscured his tracks," and "dispersed memories as selfishly as an old crone ladling soup."⁴⁰ What is known of his biography indicates that he was used to managing large amounts of information. According to Belford, Stoker "estimated that in his twenty-seven years with Irving he wrote at least half a million letters."⁴¹

From what she was able to determine about Stoker, Belford saw how the characters in *Dracula* reflect him:

A lifelong squirrel, Stoker saved everything pertaining to Henry Irving. Envelope flaps with jottings survive, as do menus, tickets, passes, and programs. Deliberately, he maintained a paper trail to honor Irving and the Lyceum but neglected himself. Jonathan Harker, Stoker's surrogate, is also a creature of habit: in *Dracula*'s castle he winds his watch before going to bed and fastidiously folds his clothes. When Mina knits together "every scrap of evidence" concerning the vampire, she notes that "Dates are everything, if we get all our material ready, and have every item put in chronological order, we shall have done much."⁴²

Stoker himself contributed a work of literature on the organization of information. Before working in the theater, he was a civil servant and was appointed as an inspector of petty sessions, which required him to travel throughout Ireland for the courts. This inspired him to write his first book, published in 1879 and entitled *The Duties of Clerks of Petty Sessions in Ireland*.

Belford wrote:

Everywhere Stoker traveled he found the courts lackadaisical: clerks made up the rules as they went along. He set about to reform and unify the system. . . .

His goal, he wrote was "to formulate a code for the collecting and the collating of an immense mass of materials, the major part of which, having been once carefully examined, need never be referred to again." He urged future clerks

to record their experiences and continue to systematize his work. Later, in *Dracula*, he would urge his characters to record their adventures: to explain the unexplainable.⁴³

A Book for Our Time

In *Dracula*, Bram Stoker used records to form a narrative grounded in reality, to further the plot, and to establish the paper trail by which Dracula gets caught. The novel addresses the role of technology in record making and keeping, and explores devices and techniques that were cutting edge at the end of the nineteenth century. It holds an important place in the trajectory of nineteenth-century literature, reflecting trends and changes in Victorian society.

Just as Stoker did in *Dracula*, writers today incorporate the trends in technology, such as cell phones and social media, into their works to give them currency, an “of the moment” feel, and relevance. As the archival profession grapples with the barrage of technological changes, it is interesting to see how the literature of the time mirrors earlier advances in recordkeeping (the passages where Seward acknowledges he does not quite have a grasp on the technology he is using, but uses it anyway, may ring particularly true today). The story itself introduces episodes that speak to the modern archivist about issues such as access, preservation, and authenticity in a way that is both reassuring and unsettling.

Perhaps *Dracula* is a natural choice for initiating the discussion of archival reading as it also has some parallels to Schmuland’s findings regarding the portrayal of archivists in fiction. In a section titled “Of Dust, Dirt, Basements, and the Grave,”⁴⁴ Schmuland stated that dust is the “most pervasive motif associated with archives, even outside of fiction” and that “even the novelists kindest to archives and archivists invariably describe archives and records collections as dirty and dusty.”⁴⁵ Jennifer Wicke supported this sentiment in relation to *Dracula* when she referred to her focus on recording methods as shining light on the novel’s “dusty corners.”⁴⁶

Schmuland also showed that the language of death and burial has a place in the portrayal of archives:

One of the most intriguing motifs to appear in archives-related fiction is that of death and the tomb. Authors frequently use burial-related phrases to describe archives and the use of archives. The popular perception of records as dirty and musty and archival repositories as being below ground may contribute to this image.⁴⁷

Of course, *Dracula* has its visions of basements, dust, dirt, musty smells, and death. In fact, one can find allusions to all of these in a single paragraph.

Here, Jonathan Harker describes his exploration upon opening a previously locked door in *Dracula*'s castle:

It was open, and led through a stone passage to a circular stairway, which went steeply down, I descended, minding carefully where I went, for the stairs were dark, being only lit by loopholes in the heavy masonry. At the bottom there was a dark, tunnel-like passage, through which came a deathly, sickly odour, the odour of old earth newly turned. . . . I went down even into the vaults, where the dim light struggled, although to do so was dread to my very soul. Into two of these I went, but saw nothing except fragments of old coffins and piles of dust. . . .⁴⁸

Schmuland's article ended with the statement that "archivists may still have the opportunity to help shape the stereotypes regarding the profession, and make these something dynamic and relevant both for today and for the future."⁴⁹ More than a decade later, archivists are still concerned with their portrayal and image. Although the dust issue may fade with time, the obligation to move the profession forward will not. Considering what is accepted without further examination and seeing where boundaries can be pushed can lead to insights and perspectives that ultimately enhance the discipline.

This article serves as an example of such a redrawing of lines, demonstrating how *Dracula*, a novel that, at first blush, appears outside the archival profession, actually fits comfortably within it. The literature has already demonstrated value in understanding how authors portray archival matters. Twisting this to consider a work of literature such as *Dracula* in an archival light opens new possibilities. Aside from giving archivists their own "archival" reading of *Dracula* to add to discussions in other disciplines, it encourages them to consider different approaches to professional activities. Examining something "familiar" through an archival lens creates the opportunity to engage audiences—both within and outside the profession—in new and exciting ways.

NOTES

¹ An earlier version of this article was presented at the Rare Book and Manuscript Section, Association of College and Research Libraries/American Library Association Annual Meeting, in Baltimore, Maryland, on June 20, 2007.

² "Bram Stoker Dead at 64," *New York Times*, April 23, 1912, 13, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F50912F9395517738DDDA0A94DC405B828DF1D3>. Another article from the *Times* on the same day, entitled "Bram Stoker" (p. 12) made no mention of *Dracula*, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F10C12F9395517738DDDA0A94DC405B828DF1D3>.

³ Several *Dracula* plays and movies are retellings of the original story and others use the *Dracula* character in different settings. Two such examples are from 1979: *Love at First Bite* with a disconcerting *Dracula* and its "serious" counterpart *Dracula*. A 1993 film version stated its "authority" in its title—*Bram Stoker's Dracula*. More recently, a *Dracula* musical puppet show was portrayed in 2008's *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*. *Dracula* himself reappeared in novel form in Elizabeth Kostova's *The*

Historian (2005), which deserves an article of its own considering its and Dracula's treatment of librarians and archivists.

- ⁴ This list isn't exhaustive, but a few current or recent portrayals of vampires include Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series (books and films; the former published between 2005 and 2008, the latter released 2008 through 2012), the television shows *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003; based on a 1992 movie of the same name), and the currently running *Vampire Diaries* (2009–), also based on a book series. As this article was going to press, a *Dracula* television show was scheduled to premiere on the NBC television network on October 25, 2013.
- ⁵ For *Dracula* and medical science, see, for example, Martin Willis, "'The Invisible Giant' *Dracula* and Disease," *Studies in the Novel* 39, no. 3 (2007): 301–25; and Anne Stiles, "Cerebral Automatism, the Brain, and the Soul in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences* 15, no. 2 (2006): 131–52. Colonialism is the subject of Stephen D. Arata's "The Occidental Tourist, *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization," *Victorian Studies* 33, no. 4 (1990): 621–45. For a perspective on anti-Semitism in *Dracula*, see Judith Halberstam, "Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," *Victorian Studies* 36, no. 3 (1993): 333–52. For feminism/gender issues, see Nancy Armstrong, "Feminism, Fiction, and the Utopian Promise of *Dracula*," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 16, no. 1 (2005): 1–23; and Emma Domínguez-Rué, "Sins of the Flesh, Anorexia, Eroticism and the Female Vampire in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," *Journal of Gender Studies* 19, no. 3 (2010): 297–308.
- ⁶ Jennifer Wicke, "Vampiric Typewriting: *Dracula* and Its Media," *ELH* 59, no. 2 (1992): 467–93, quote on 468. Another article that addresses recording methods and the questions they provoke in *Dracula* is Leah Richards, "Mass Production and the Spread of Information in *Dracula*: 'Proofs of So Wild a Story,'" *English Literature in Translation, 1880–1920* 52, no. 4 (2009): 440–47.
- ⁷ John Sutherland, *Is Heathcliff a Murderer? Puzzles in Nineteenth Century Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 236.
- ⁸ Sutherland, *Is Heathcliff a Murderer?*, 238.
- ⁹ For example, in February 2011, the Archives and Archivists Listserv featured a discussion of an archivist heroine in Annie West's Harlequin romance *Protected by the Prince* (New York: Harlequin, 2011). Another example is the blog, *The Fictional World of Archives, Art Galleries and Museums*, <http://fictionalarchives.blogspot.com/>.
- ¹⁰ Arlene Schmuland, "The Archival Image in Fiction: An Analysis and Annotated Bibliography," *The American Archivist* 62 (Spring 1999): 24–73.
- ¹¹ One book is titled *The Dracula Archive*.
- ¹² Tania Aldred, Gordon Burr, and Eun Park, "Crossing a Librarian with a Historian: The Image of Reel Archivists," *Archivaria* 66 (Fall 2008): 57–93; Karen Buckley, "'The Truth Is in the Red Files': An Overview of Archives in Popular Culture," *Archivaria* 66 (Fall 2008): 95–123.
- ¹³ See note number 5 for examples of articles.
- ¹⁴ A large-scale examination of the nature of creativity and innovation is beyond the scope of this article. An example of writing in this area is Teresa M. Amabile, "Motivating Creativity in Organizations: On Doing What You Love and Loving What You Do," *California Management Review* 40, no. 1 (1997): 39–58. Although referring to corporations, Amabile's statements (p. 40) on the nature of change and preparation for the future speak to the role of innovation in the archival profession:

At its heart, creativity is simply the production of novel, appropriate ideas in any realm of human activity, from science, to the arts, to education, to business, to everyday life. The ideas must be novel—different from what's been done before—but they can't be simply bizarre; they must be appropriate to the problem or opportunity presented. Creativity is the first step in innovation, which is the successful implementation of those novel, appropriate ideas. And innovation is absolutely vital for long-term corporate success. Because the business world is seldom static, and because the pace of change appears to be rapidly accelerating, no firm that continues to deliver the same products and services in the same way can long survive. By contrast, firms that prepare for the future by implementing new ideas oriented toward this changing world are likely to thrive.

Although an archival treatment of *Dracula* may be "bizarre" to some, it also has the potential to engage audiences both familiar and unfamiliar with the archival profession.

- ¹⁵ Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 241.
- ¹⁶ Stoker, *Dracula*, 19.
- ¹⁷ Stoker, *Dracula*, 220.
- ¹⁸ Stoker, *Dracula*, 221.
- ¹⁹ Wicke, "Vampiric Typewriting," 470.
- ²⁰ Stoker, *Dracula*, 225.
- ²¹ Stoker, *Dracula*, 226. "Godalming" refers to Holmwood whose title is "Lord Godalming."
- ²² Stoker, *Dracula*, 236.
- ²³ Stoker, *Dracula*, xxxviii.
- ²⁴ Stoker, *Dracula*, 285.
- ²⁵ Stoker, *Dracula*, 152.
- ²⁶ Stoker, *Dracula*, 41.
- ²⁷ Stoker, *Dracula*, 65–66.
- ²⁸ Stoker, *Dracula*, 222.
- ²⁹ Stoker, *Dracula*, 378.
- ³⁰ Julia Briggs, *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (London, U.K.: Faber, 1977), 53–54. The entire chapter, entitled "A Scientific Spirit: Mesmerism, Drugs, and Psychic Doctors," 52–75, provides a fascinating examination of the shifts ghost stories underwent in the nineteenth century and how ghost stories began to incorporate scientific concepts like mesmerism and chemical transformations, such as that described in Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.
- ³¹ Briggs, *Night Visitors*, 54.
- ³² See, for example, Sue Zemka, *Time and the Moment in Victorian Literature and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Stephen Kern's *Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); and Adam Barrows, *The Cosmic Time of Empire*, which has a chapter that discusses *Dracula* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011). Robert H. Wiebe's *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963) provides an American perspective on changes in organization.
- ³³ Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, 11. Note, not everyone agrees with this contention. Zemka's work is prefaced with a statement that she treats regulated time not as revolutionary, but as leading to "intensification of habits," 7.
- ³⁴ Zemka, *Time and the Moment*, 9.
- ³⁵ Barrows, *The Cosmic Time of Empire*, 85. This episode appears on page 22 of the Oxford edition of *Dracula*, "I found the Count lying on the sofa reading, of all things in the world, an English Bradshaw's Guide."
- ³⁶ Barrows, *The Cosmic Time of Empire*, 83.
- ³⁷ Barrows, *The Cosmic Time of Empire*, 77.
- ³⁸ Barrows, *The Cosmic Time of Empire*, 78. Sutherland's essay, "Why Does This Novel Disturb Us? Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*," in *Is Heathcliff a Murderer?*, claims that the "hysterical" reception of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in Victorian culture was due in part to Wilde's use of time disturbances.
- ³⁹ Sutherland, *Is Heathcliff a Murderer?*, 117–22. Seven essays in Sutherland's *Is Heathcliff a Murderer?* deal with issues of "disturbed time" in nineteenth-century novels. These are "Apple-blossom in June?: Jane Austen, *Emma*"; "Mysteries of the Dickensian Year: Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*"; "On a Gross Anachronism: W. M. Thackeray, *Henry Esmond*"; "The Missing Fortnight: Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*"; "Two-timing Novelists: W. M. Thackeray, Mrs. Gaskell, Anthony Trollope, *Pendennis*, A Dark Night's Work, *Rachel Ray*"; "Why Does This Novel Disturb Us? Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*"; and "How Old Is Kim? Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*." With the exception of the Collins example, Sutherland considers these time-slips to be intentional and that the authors and audiences accepted them if they served artistic purpose.
- ⁴⁰ Barbara Belford, *Bram Stoker: A Biography of the Author of Dracula* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), xiv, 14.

- ⁴¹ Belford, *Bram Stoker*, 99.
- ⁴² Belford, *Bram Stoker*, 111.
- ⁴³ Belford, *Bram Stoker*, 77–78.
- ⁴⁴ Schmuland, “The Archival Image in Fiction,” 42–47.
- ⁴⁵ Schmuland, “The Archival Image in Fiction,” 42.
- ⁴⁶ Wicke, “Vampiric Typewriting,” 468
- ⁴⁷ Schmuland, “The Archival Image in Fiction,” 44.
- ⁴⁸ Stoker, *Dracula*, 47–48.
- ⁴⁹ Schmuland, “The Archival Image in Fiction,” 53.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Caryn Radick is digital archivist at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. She received her MLIS from Rutgers and has a master’s degree in Victorian literature from the University of Nottingham. Her research interests include the intersection of the archival profession and literature and issues of archival professional identity.