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For sixty years now, scholars have drawn on the documents and archives once collectively known as the captured German records to research aspects of German history from the Imperial period until the end of the World War II. Users of archives do not necessarily busy themselves with the history of the files they read when they research the history of something else. Yet whether citing the English or German edition of the *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, using the many T-rolls of microfilm at the National Archives in College Park, or traveling to examine the returned originals at the Bundesarchiv and the Political Archives of the Auswärtiges Amt, it is important to know that these files also have a postwar history, a “biography,” in their own right. They stand for an unprecedented situation in which the “documentary materials covering all aspects of a nation’s life during a whole era” had fallen into the hands of its wartime enemies. They remind us of the fact that it is not always the archive that shapes history but that history can come over the archive.<sup>28</sup> To think about the history of the files when writing history adds another layer to our complex task as historians.

27 This point is made, in connection with art theft, by Alexander Demandt, *Vandalismus: Gewalt gegen Kultur*, 43.

28 Quote in Perman, “Microfilming,” 433; Fritzsche, “The Archive,” 16.