ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Reconstituting Agency Through Archival Access in Science Fiction: Embodying the Archive in Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451, Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale, William Gibson’s Johnny Mnemonic and Neuromancer, and Neal Stephenson’s Snow Crash and Diamond Age.

STUDENT: Joseph Hurtgen

DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

COLLEGE: Arts and Humanities

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This dissertation discusses the archive in SF and the way it is embodied in the subject, questioning the way that recorded, stored information shapes society, making law, enfranchising some groups and disenfranchising others. This dissertation explores the following issues through readings of four authors, Bradbury, Atwood, Gibson, and Stephenson: embodiment of archives in the subject, controlling gender and the body through archives, and the role of information technology in archival control and archival access. In SF, corporate and state powers have anxieties of control mapped onto them and are nodes for the homogenization and control of society while individuality is envisioned as the technology for resisting oppressive structures. SF offers narratives that do the work of embodying archives—sending characters into archival spaces and making them into archives—to elucidate the kinds of anxieties associated with archival control of society and to demonstrate the revolutionary potential of the individual.