

CONSTITUTIVELY INCOMPLETE AND INFINITEKY RICH. A PHILOLOGICAL, DIGITALLY FORENSIC AND ARCHIVAL PERSPECTIVE ON HISTORICAL DIGITAL MATERIALITY FROM EARLY CONSUMER SYSTEMS TO THE PRESENT DAYS (in German)

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Digitally forensic, born-digital archival formats which sustainably preserve born-digital materials that allow for authentication and facilitate analyses with digital-forensic methods are increasingly becoming standard in archives. Philological studies are gradually starting to integrate the corresponding methods. Digital findings are – as this presentation argues using examples from the Kittler estate and other archives – constitutively incomplete at the forensic level and yet at the same time, each analysis is overwhelmingly rich; the gaps in these findings and archives are materially and structurally different in character than that of a manuscript, a handwritten dossier génétique or an estate. With respect to the lacunae in digital archives, the often feared total loss through obsolescence is a far less realistic and relevant scenario than the technical-historically-related (Blanchette 2011: design histories), structurally incomplete nature of digital materiality, for example in the temporal gaps between the recorded snapshots of temporary files or the gaps in system logs, file fragmentations and the technical properties and structures of certain file and operating systems, and certain types of storage media. This presentation will discuss the lesser-known, philological and long-term, archival-relevant system features of various past-to-present generations based on concrete examples from my current research (file systems HFS vs. HFS+, FAT16/32, NTFS, /EXT3/4, SSD hard drives vs. HDD, automatic defragmentation, compression, points of system recovery, swap and hibernation data).