



HoTT
HISTORY OF
TEXT TECHNOLOGIES

*Archives, Memory and
Painting in Renaissance
Venice*

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The Venetian state archive is famous for having been a vast and effective instrument of the early modern Republic. Venetian patricians also cultivated extensive private archives in their family palaces, to further document noble status and to aid in strategies for political advancement. Many of these documents were elaborately bound and illustrated. What were the roles of imagery in such archives, and in archives in general before the invention of photography? This paper explores how paintings in some of these documents transformed them into monuments to patricians and to their achievements. The accumulation of such documents with portraits, over centuries, created galleries of exemplary ancestors for future generations to emulate. In this way, paintings in documents paralleled, indeed authenticated, portrait galleries in oil and sculpture.