

The Rothschild Archive Trust

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The Rothschild Archive, New Court, St. Swithin's Lane, London EC4P 4DU
Tel: + (0)20 7280 5874 Fax: + (0)20 7280 5657 E-mail: info@rothschildarchive.org
Website: www.rothschildarchive.org

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Introduction

Emma Rothschild, Chairman of the Rothschild Archive Trust

OVER THE FOUR YEARS since the Rothschild Archive Trust was established, the Archive has become a European and a global resource. It has provided access to a remarkable group of young and established scholars, who have come from many different countries, and who have studied different activities of the Rothschilds and their associates, in almost all parts of the world. There have been historians of France and Australia and Brazil, historians of zoology and historians of the American Civil War, economic historians and historians of architecture, historians of financial instruments and historians of 19th-century philanthropy.

The development of the Rothschild Research Forum (www.rothschildarchive.org), which is described below (p.22), is an important stage in the extension of the Archive's work. The Archive has also established excellent working relations with the Roubaix Centre of the Archives Nationales, and with the Jüdisches Museum and the Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek in Frankfurt. For the Trust, this continuing effort to make connections and extend access is an essential response to the confidence placed in us by the organizations and individuals who have been so generous in their donations to the Trust of papers, artefacts, and financial support.

The Archive's central concern is with what Professor Fritz Stern, in the remarkable Rothschild Archive Lecture which we are honoured to publish in this issue of the Review, describes as "the myriad connections within a culture and among cultures." The economic and financial culture of the Rothschild family has been international, for as long as the historical record exists. But the Rothschild archives, as Professor Stern also observes, "show the interwovenness of life in many countries." They show the interwovenness, too, of family life and business life, of economic culture and the 'high' culture of painting, poetry, and philosophy. One of the most difficult challenges for historians, in a period of increasingly narrow specialization, is to convey the extent to which political history and financial history, French history and German history and Atlantic history, the history of art and the history of science were in the past interwoven, even in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Rothschild Archive is one of the centres of research where these diverse histories, and these diverse, connected pasts are collected in one location. Our aspiration is, in Professor Stern's words, to be "magnificently alert." We are reasonably confident, at least, that we will continue to be the "opposite of anything parochial."