They found that workers in windowless spaces, as hypothesized, used significantly more décor with nature themes and surrogate views than similar workers in offices with windows.

mented. Archival data can also be used to assess the impact of two different design treatments. In this circumstance, time-related effects that could influence outcomes are controlled. For instance, if absenteeism is assessed for different times of the year in a pre–post study, the differences in illness could be due to seasonal incidence of flu or colds and not to design features. For this reason, most studies using archival turnover or absenteeism data usually assess data for a full year pre and post.

Ulrich used hospital archival data to assess the impact of window views on patients' recovery from surgery.[6] All patients were in the same wing of the hospital, but half of them had views of a small cluster of trees (the "tree" group) and the other half had a view of a brown brick wall (the "wall" group). Ulrich hypothesized that views of nature would have a positive impact on patients' well-being in the hospital. The hypothesis was based on previous research showing that exposure to natural environments, especially trees and water, is associated with positive feelings, heightened interest in the external environment, and reduced stress. The study relied totally on archival data stored in patient records. Data analysis showed that patients who had the natural view stayed significantly fewer days in the hospital, took more mild analgesics, and had more positive recovery processes than the matched group of patients whose view consisted of the building façade.

Archival techniques have also been used by researchers to assess the relationship between productivity and design. In one frequently cited study of personal controls in individual workstations, Walter Kroner and his colleagues studied clerical workers in an insurance company.[7] The company automatically recorded the number of forms processed by each worker on a daily basis. The researchers used these data to assess the impact of personal ambient controls on work performance, using a pre–post study design with workers tested in both the old and new workstations. Unfortunately, the switch to the high-control workstations occurred at the same time as a move to a new office building that differed in fundamental ways from the space in which the baseline data were gathered. The new building was located in a natural prairie setting with trees and a small pond; the old building was in a suburban setting. The new building also had more windows and more open space. As a consequence, most workers in the new building had a view to the outdoors, compared with only a small percentage in the old building. These differences between the buildings made it more difficult for the researchers to