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Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/112790sz

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Publication Date

2023-12-10

Peer reviewed

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ARCHIVAL ACTIVISM: EMERGING FORMS, LOCAL APPLICATIONS

Arhivski aktivizem: pojavne oblike, lokalna uporaba

Izvleček: V tem besedilu avtorja pojasnjujeta osnove arhivskega aktivizma začenjata z vplivnim govorom radikalnega zgodovinarja Howarda Zinna, ki trdi, da se arhivisti morajo znebiti pojma „nevtralnosti" in naj se aktivno vključijo v delo družbenega pomena. Avtorja identificirata štiri različne sklope praks, ki predstavljajo arhivski aktivizem: arhive skupnosti, družbeno zavestno delo v arhivih, ki jih financira država in ostale *mainstream* arhive (na primer, s spodbujanjem institucionalne transparentnosti in upoštevanja); aktivizem na temelju raziskav (odkrivanje radikalnih in potisnjenih zgodovin); družbeno zavestno delo institucionalno neodvisnih arhivistov. Opisujeta več primerov lokalne praktične uporabe arhivskega aktivizma, kot je: delo knjižnice Southern California Library v južnem Los Angelesu, razvoj arhiva National Chavez Center Archives, pomoč neodvisnih arhivistov delavcem migrantom v Združenih državah ter hramba in identifikacija dokumentov z dokumentiranjem njihovega imigrantskega statusa ter zaposlitvene zgodovine ter nedavno odkritje arhivskega gradiva Protifašistične fronte ženske Jugoslavije neodvisnih raziskovalcev in njegovo feministično reinterpretacijo.

Ključne besede: arhivski aktivizem, arhiv skupnosti, radikalna zgodovina, socialna pravičnost

Abstract: In this essay the authors provide a summary history of archival activism, starting with the seminal 1970 speech by radical historian Howard Zinn in which he argued for archivists to rid themselves of notions of "neutrality", and actively engage in socially meaningful work. The authors identify four different forms of archival activism: community archives; socially conscious work within government-funded and other "mainstream" archives (for example, by promoting institutional transparency and accountability); research-based activism (retracing radical or suppressed histories); and socially conscious work by institutionally-independent archivists. They describe several examples of local practical applications of archival activism, such as the work of the Southern California Library in South Los Angeles; the development of the National Chavez Center Archives; independent archivists providing assistance to migrant fieldworkers in the United States in safeguarding and identifying records documenting their immigration status and employment history; and the recent rediscovery of records of the Women's Antifascist Front of Yugoslavia by independent researchers and its feminist reinterpretation.

Key Words: archival activism; community archives; radical history; social justice [14/15]

In 1996, the General Assembly of the International Council on Archives (ICA) held in Beijing adopted the organization's first Code of Ethics (ICA, 1996). Some sections of the code contain relatively straightforward but generalized expressions of archival concerns, calling for the protection, preservation and accessibility of records as well as for transparency of practice and professional education. Other sections inform archivists about *what (not) to do* in order to keep their professional conduct ethically in check. The code is more problematic when its principles and associated commentaries are *opaquely* expressed and invoke *societally structured* boundaries. First

is the question of meaning: what is meant by "impartiality" and "objectivity" when the code states that both of these are the measure of an archivist's professionalism? What is meant by acting "in the general interest" and protecting "national security"? Secondly, there is the question of conflicting mandates: how do such admonishments provide ethical guidance to the archivist in cases where "national security" claims and "relevant legislation" actually prevent access, or serve to diminish privacy or the "preservation and use of the world's documentary heritage"?

It should come as no surprise that, almost two decades later, new or similar ambiguities appeared in a draft "Basic Principles on the Role of Archivists in Support of Human Rights" that was prepared and circulated for comment by the ICA's Human Rights Working Group (HRWG, 2014). Besides pointing out apparent contradictions, two of the most telling critiques emphasize the "over-reliance on universal mandates and conventions" (Caswell, Ramirez, Gilliland, 2014) and the fact that the draft "assumes that it is addressing the contexts of a stable, mature and well-functioning democracy" (NMF, 2015). Similarly, in a recent overview of archival approaches to social justice, Ricardo L. Punzalan and Michelle Caswell distinguish between a legalistic "rights-based approach" and a social justice approach that focuses on the "realities of more subtle, intangible, and shifting forms of oppression" (2016: pp. 31-32). Each critique points out how deferring to legal and statist frameworks for determining which archival actions are ethical can be problematic, limiting archivists' purview to the protection of a record that is assumed to be sufficient and transparent as a result of the application of legislation and normative best practices. But the fact of the matter is that the societal processes that create records are neither "neutral" nor "fair", and the eventual archival record is further molded and punctured by individual and institutional value judgments, historiographical and ideological trends, undifferentiated descriptive approaches, and widely different preservation rates and degrees of accessibility. A society's documentary heritage is thus not necessarily a reflection of the totality of social activities and experiences, its preserved records are not always placed in service of everyone's demands, and archival legislation and practices are usually not inclusive of multiple societal interests. In these situations, when that which is protected is *not all* that should be protected – including not only records but individuals and communities – the *passive* application of ethical standards needs to be replaced with *active* social engagement in the processes of records creation, capture, description and dissemination. The complex of practices that mark such engagement is what is increasingly referred to today as "archival activism".

1. Alternating currents: from neutrality to engagement

On September 30th 1970, radical historian, playwright and civil rights activist Howard Zinn addressed the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists (SAA). Zinn was already renowned for his protests against the war in Vietnam and his subsequent methodological positions expressed radical history at its finest. In his argument for historical research based on "ultimate" or "human values" and subjectivist questioning, he was critical of "trivial or esoteric inquiry", "disinterested scholarship" and so-called "neutrality". He insisted that "neutrality is a fiction in an unneutral world": "There are victims, there are executioners, and there are bystanders," and the "objectivity" of "the bystander calls for inaction while other heads fall" (Zinn, 1971: p. 40). Following the same logic, Zinn addressed archivists directly: [15/16]

"The archivist, even more than the historian and the political scientist, tends to be scrupulous about his neutrality, and to see his job as a technical job, free from the nasty world of political interest: a job of collecting, sorting, preserving, making available, the records of the society. But I will stick by what I have said about other scholars, and argue that the archivist, in subtle ways, tends to perpetuate the political and economic status quo simply by going about his ordinary business. His supposed neutrality is, in other words, a fake. If so, the rebellion of the archivist against his normal role is not, as so many scholars fear, the politicizing of a neutral craft, but the humanizing of an inevitably political craft. Scholarship in society is inescapably political. Our choice is not between being political or not. Our choice is to follow the politics of the going order, that is, to do our job within the priorities and directions set by the dominant forces of society,

or else to promote those human values of peace, equality, and justice, which our present society denies" (Zinn, 1977: p. 20).

He suggested several strategies for counteracting the negative effects of archival neutrality, such as placing less emphasis on "important and powerful people," creating oral histories of the oppressed, collecting papers of social movements, and focusing on the capture of current information necessary for ensuring government accountability. Most importantly, he exhorted archivists to "engage in a campaign to open all government documents to the public." "If there are rare exceptions," he stated, "let the burden of proof be on those who claim them, not as now on the citizen who wants information" (1977: pp. 20-25). Patrick Quinn, a university archivist from Wisconsin, vividly recalled the reaction of many of his colleagues: "While there was a certain general agreement that archivists had indeed been remiss in not devoting sufficient attention to the task of collecting documentation pertaining to women, Blacks, and other minorities and the working class, the reaction to Zinn's call for the opening of governmental records was decidedly adverse. Adjectives ranging from ill-advised to ludicrous peppered much of the post-session commentary" (Quinn, 1977: p. 26).

Still, there was some resonance. A number of archivists, seeking to create an informal caucus, gathered during the SAA convention the following year in San Francisco and adopted objectives and commitments to: "1) initiate actions designed to democratize the SAA; 2) increase rank-and-file participation in the affairs and policy-making decisions of the SAA; 3) encourage the recruitment and advancement of minorities within the profession; and 4) improve the status of women within the profession" (Quinn, 1977: p. 26). This became the basis for the Society of American Archivists' Archives for Change Committee, which later became "Activist Archivists" or "ACT," and then Progressive Archivists. As the 1970s progressed, although failing to reduce white over-representation, ACT made some impact towards procedural democratization of archival associations and the inclusion of women in professional bodies. At the same time, various social movements influenced the collecting policies of some archival institutions and historical societies. For example, there was what Ben Blake refers to as the "boom in labor archives" during the 1960s and 1970s. This was most prominently embodied in the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University in Detroit (2007: pp. 142-143). However, the upward-downward spiral of US politics was felt in the 1980s when previous "counter-trends" were suppressed by rightward leanings and authoritarian policies. The "boom" ended, and active documenting of labor and protest movements and marginalized communities was faced with new challenges (Blake, 2007: pp. 143-146; Quinn, 1987: pp. 4-5).

The 1990s witnessed the reassertion of what Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook called the "professional myth of impartiality, neutrality, and objectivity" (2002: p. 1). This reassertion was also fueled by techno-determinism and the myth of algorithmic neutrality emanating out of archivists' increasing engagement with electronic records and information technology. It underpinned and was underpinned by not only the 1996 ICA Code of Ethics, but also by the preceding and influential 1992 version of the SAA Code of Ethics for Archivists that called for "impartial judgment" and reflected an authority-mandated professional mentality. Nevertheless, the previous countervailing voices and movements had made a lasting impact on the archival profession. Self-reflection on "societal implications of archival work" resulted in [16/17] the proposal of new appraisal approaches – such as the documentation strategy (Samuels, 1986) and macroappraisal (Cook, 2005) – that promoted the proactive formation of socially representative sets of documentary heritage (Punzalan, Caswell, 2016: pp. 28-29). Likewise, Australian archivists developed a proactive model of recordkeeping in society – the records continuum – that would become the basis for international records management standards as well as for reconceptualizing and restructuring the entire fields of archives and records management in Australia (McKemmish, 2016). With such proactive perspectives promoting a "non-neutral" view of the world, it should come as no surprise that the activist ethos of the 1970s would make a comeback by the first decade of the 2000s, and that by the second decade this ethos would also be clearly evidenced and referenced in archival practice in a number of different archival settings.

It may not be immediately obvious, but from calls for a representative historical record on the one hand, to those for increased archival activism on the other, there is but one step. Reinforced by Helen Samuels' and Terry Cook's invocations of George Orwell's well known passage from *1984*, "Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past" (Samuels, 1986; Cook, 2011), this single step is conceived through a realization that existing power structures are set in a way that makes the reproduction of the totality of social life and its documentary (by)products unrepresentative *ab initio*, and, thus, it might be argued, fundamentally undemocratic. By warning his reader that "the prevailing values of a given society generally correspond to the values of the prevailing socio-economic strata of that society", and that archivists are preoccupied with "accumulating a documentary record of the lives of the members of the prevailing strata and of the activities and functions of the institutions that provide the collective infrastructure for that strata", Quinn briefly reminded us of Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist theorist who formulated the concept of "hegemony" (1987: pp. 1, 6). Hegemony merits further attention in the study of archives as social activity. In short, it is the realization of constructing actions, alternating with "direct domination", that produce consent in subordinated sectors of society. In other words, it is "the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent" (see Hoare, Nowell Smith, 1971). Although the documentary record itself reflects the alternating mechanisms of "hegemony", the context and mindset of archival practices are – unless they are *consciously* and *actively* challenged – shaped by this *given consent*.

It was not the ideas of Gramsci, however, that surfaced in the new challenges to "impartiality, neutrality, and objectivity". Much in the spirit of the 1990s, it was the original deconstructionist French philosopher Jacques Derrida and his *Archive Fever* (1996), that influenced the work of prominent archival thinkers such as Verne Harris (1996; 1997), Terry Cook (2001; 2004) and Eric Ketelaar (2002). In the following decade, as both professional and research education in archival studies made significant leaps forward (Gilliland, McKemmish, 2004; McKemmish, Gilliland, 2012), the further introduction of critical and cultural theory in that education stimulated fresh reflexivity and theorizing on power, systemic biases and microaggressions, marginalization, silences, incommensurate ontologies, and the concerns and interdependencies of the local and global as these relate to the creation, identification and preservation of documentary and cultural heritage (McKemmish, Gilliland, Ketelaar, 2005; Dunbar, 2006).

The steady flow of special issues of *Archival Science*, the leading scholarly journal in the archival field, profiles a growing range of areas of critical intellectual engagement: "The Philosophy of the Archive" (3-4/2009), the "Ethics of Memory Construction" (1-2/2011), "Gender Studies in Archives" (4/2012), "Archives and Human Rights" (3-4/2014), "Archiving Activism and Activist Archiving" (4/2015) and the most recent special issue, "Affect and the Archive: Archives and their Affects" (1/2016). In the special issue on activism, guest editors Andrew Flinn and Ben Alexander return to Zinn's ideas and draw parallels with the new "archival environment" which, they argue, has "witnessed a blossoming of autonomous, creative and community-based archival activity", suggesting "a revaluation of the fundamental influence of the archive as equal [17/18] parts historical repository and agent of political representation". They assert that the proliferation of new "debates and developments took place against the backdrop of social and cultural change emanating from new contestations of history, memory, identity and political authority that arose from the (sometimes unrealized) democratization of the very technologies of capture and contextualization of history itself" (2015: pp. 329-331).

A growing social justice perspective – understood as concern about how power and wealth are distributed in society (Duff et. al. 2013: p. 321) – and readily apparent in the intellectual production of the archival field, is increasingly fueling professional debate over what constitutes archival activism and the degree to which practicing archivists should or could engage in it (Gilliland, 2011; Novak, 2013). A recent survey of four leading English language archival journals that are accessible online identified the exponential growth in texts that contained the term "social

justice." Before the 1990s, there were only 5 and none during the 1990s, while 19 were published during the 2000s, with an additional 18 in the following 3 years (Duff et. al. 2013: p. 328). As might have been expected, this proliferation has also led to intellectual contestation. The omnipresent issues have been re-centered in a new discussion over the past years on the pages of *American Archivist*, where Mark Greene challenged the validity of the "social justice imperative" by stating the case for neutrality, non-partisanship and pragmatist practice in a world where archives are ruled by "antithetical sets of values" (2013: p. 320). In a somewhat more moderate commentary, Randall C. Jimerson argued for activism as a "personal choice" (2013: p. 336). Sharper responses were issued by Michelle Caswell and Mario H. Ramirez. Caswell stated her belief that "social justice is a human imperative and not just an archival one." She argued that since "records aren't neutral by-products of activity; they are discursive agents through which power is made manifest" and "creators, records managers, and archivists all have ethical responsibilities; the obligation to engage these responsibilities is present at every stage in the social life of records, from their creation, to their appraisal, acquisition, representation, digitization, and use" (2013: pp. 605-606). Ramirez focused on the dichotomy between social justice as a challenge to structural inequalities and the call for "diversity" as a failed enterprise of a predominantly white profession in a society immersed in those very same structural problems (2015).

2. Outside the walls: community archives and independent archivists

An important form of archival activism is found in what is most commonly referred to as "community" or "community-led archives." These so-called "independent" archiving endeavors are not conceived by government, corporate or other "mainstream" authority or agency, but rather emerge bottom-up by those who self-identify as a "community" on the basis of class, race, ethnicity, gender or sexual preference, locality, social and/or political agenda, status and so forth. Their activities might include documenting and promoting underrepresented or dissenting voices, or unifying or catalyzing experiences or vanishing memories, as well as community organizing in support of democratization and social justice efforts. Because they are a product of "community" as a form of specific social identity or engagement, their character is inherently activist. Their role may be considered to be archival in that their primary concern is *documentation* of activities and voices of that community, even when they do not engage in acquiring records through the same kinds of formal mechanisms as do more traditional archives. Finally, community archives are no longer limited to countries with long histories of colonialism, immigration, slavery or labor organizing, they are emerging around the globe, especially in digital and hybrid forms (Gilliland, 2014: p. 19; Gilliland, Flinn, 2013). [18/19]

Community archives are often created as a response to the failure of "mainstream" archives to document the realities of that community, to protect the records deemed important by its members, or to provide them with necessary access to already collected records. As Flinn notes, "When informed by a clear political agenda and perspective, the capturing of oral histories and community memories can be used to empower the community in challenging the narratives that are falsely representing them and may be used against them" (2011: p. 10). However, just as "neutral" self-perception in "mainstream" archives may produce a socially unrepresentative record, community archives' activist drive could also potentially create a record with exclusively self-celebratory and romantic narration.

An important example of community archives is found in the Southern California Library (SCL) founded in 1952 by Emil Freed and located in South Los Angeles. "A non-profit organization," SCL "houses a large archive collection consisting of audio material, film, papers of labor and leftist organizations, pamphlets, pictures, buttons, posters, and periodicals dealing with radical history" (Zavala, 2015: p. 4). Starting in the 1930s, Freed was a communist activist and labor organizer, active in the union-founded California Labor School. Already a collector of various leftist materials, he initiated an effort in the early 1950s, during the McCarthy era anti-communist prosecutions, to preserve materials he feared would be destroyed by his friends and comrades as self-incriminatory. When the California Labor School was shut down, he took over its library. As

Freed's collecting activity eventually exceeded the limits of his storage space, he left the rented location on La Brea Avenue and borrowed money to buy a former household and appliance store, windowless, with a leaky roof, which was located in South Central. As time progressed, the SCL became an integral part of its new neighborhood, reflecting its struggles. During the Los Angeles Riots in 1992, many buildings in South Central were destroyed, but the SCL was protected by the local community and remained undamaged (Wurl, 2005: p. 66). Years later, with the help of students from Manual Arts High School, activists created a graphic novel of the riots, which, in turn, served as an "eye-opening experience" for the students (Zavala, 2015: p. 6). SCL also serves as a meeting space for community activist organizations whose members learn how to use the materials as a record of praxis. The Coalition Against Police Brutality have used the archives to understand the experiences of prior struggles against police violence. Likewise, the Korean Immigrant Workers Association uses materials from the past struggles of immigrant workers. As a repository that reflects perspectives of both class and race struggles and their intersections and is determined not to compromise its political principles, SCL is faced with multiple challenges, from maintaining its operation with an extremely limited budget, to implementing mission-appropriate appraisal and description practices, to negotiating differing expectations with other archives regarding use, duplication or exhibition of materials from its holdings.

The distinctions between community archiving and archival profession are not necessarily unbridgeable divides, however. When appropriate and desired, both sides may work to overcome what Flinn and Alexander call "the narrow binaries of community versus institutional, professional versus activist, and archive versus activist resource" (Flinn, Alexander, 2015: p. 334; also, Gilliland, Flinn, 2013). As the following section argues, new structural perspectives on "participatory archives" entail not only cooperation between the two, but also enable integration of community interests with public archives. However, it is also important to acknowledge another form of archival engagement with community activism and particularly, community organizing — through the contributions of expertise by archival professionals who are independent of an archival institution. [19/20]

Recognizing the integral role that records and organizational memory can play in training community and labor organizers, in 2012 the Cesar Chavez Foundation approached the UCLA Department of Information Studies to ask if faculty and students in the specialization in Archival Studies could assist them with organizing their records into an archive. The archive would be located at the National Chavez Center (NCC) in Keene in the Tehachapi Mountains about 2½ hours northeast of Los Angeles. This is also the National Headquarters of the United Farm Workers (UFW), founded by Cesar Chavez in 1962 as the first farm workers' union in the United States and the primary such union for the southwestern states. The farm worker movement has been a major force in US civil rights activism, seeking to address the extreme poverty, exploitation and racial and linguistic discrimination experienced by workers who are primarily Latino and often migrant. Cesar Chavez is buried on-site and in 2014 President Obama declared the site a National Historical Monument. Although earlier movement records had been deposited at the Walter Reuther Library, more recent records were held unorganized on-site under poor conditions in temporary and basement storage, and neither sets of records was readily available for use in training community organizers. Working over three years with the NCC, faculty and students rehoused and conducted preliminary inventories of these materials and also drafted a mission statement and strategic plan for the archives. The mission statement was deliberately devised to reflect the core principles of the Cesar Chavez Foundation – quality, integrity and sustainability – as well as the activist vision of the UFW "To provide farm workers and other working people with the inspiration and tools to share in society's bounty". It states that: "the archives seeks to provide access to materials that exemplify the empowering ideas and actions of Cesar Chavez and his fellow community leaders. As the needs of these communities continue to change with each successive generation, the archives also aims to evolve as a facility that collects and preserves materials that reflect these new generations of farm workers, community leaders, organizers and Latino families…"

Such activations of archives in support of labor organizing will never be sufficient on their own in terms of improving the lives of farm workers, however. There is also a crucial need to empower individual workers with regard to their own records and documentary status. Many migrant farm workers, and indeed many other migrant workers in the southwest have either temporary or no legal immigration status. Employers often keep poor employment records and investigative reports are not always created by regulating government agencies, thus the burden of keeping records and of self-reporting abuses falls onto the workers themselves (Garcia 2014). Because of linguistic and literacy barriers as well as the lack of fixed abodes, it can be very difficult for migrant workers to keep their own records relating to employment history and immigration status. As Garcia (2014) concludes, "the focus on immigration has led to a lack of government oversight and an auditing process that places undue burden on those with the least power — foreign workers who have a highly conditional and unprotected place in the USA." Gomez reviews some of the obstacles to doing historical work with and legal safeguards for Latino workers who are undocumented — their concerns that being involved in labor movements might negatively affect their employment, the ways in which the institutions doing the documentation protect themselves, and difficulties in establishing trust with those doing the documenting (Gomez 2015). In the historical case of the braceros ("strong arms"), approximately 4.6 million Mexican workers came to the US between 1942 and 1964 under a government program to work in rural areas of America. Future pensions that had been promised never materialized after the workers returned to Mexico even though funds had been withheld from their wages for that purpose during the program. In 2001, when former braceros demanded repayment of pension funds, American and Mexican authorities asked them to produce individual records of all the income earned through the program — an impossible demand for most now aged former braceros. Osorio explores how two governments and other institutions entrusted with documenting the braceros worker program "failed a group of mostly uneducated, poor immigrants, denying them control over their own history and patrimony" and asks what role archivists and other record keepers should play in protecting the interests [20/21] of specific populations and interest groups (Osorio, 2005: p. 95). The answer may lie either with community organizations, or with a new category of professional archivists working independently of government institutions as records advocates and stewards for the workers, or by both. Garibay provides examples of community organizations that seek to meet migrants' information needs and promote awareness by drawing upon memory (2015). He argues that "In addition to bridging access to resources, the collective memory of the diaspora [i.e., of migrant workers] can be used to advocate for consciousness and tolerance in the greater community of immigrant groups" (Garibay, 2015: p. 7).

3. Tearing down the walls: memory, access, accountability and participation

The activist ethos is not only limited to community struggles outside the walls of official or other mainstream archival institutions. Access to government and corporate records is critical for building self-conscious radical identities and maintaining close supervision over centers of power. So far, archives have seen ample examples of what we may call "research activism": the use of public records for the excavation of suppressed or forgotten history that gained current significance. Besides well known examples from post-conflict societies, where access to records addresses past crimes, "research activism" also entails reconstructing "people's history" through the "mainstream" record. In retracing the history of Black feminist activists and organizations with records of governmental provenance, Kimberly Springer formulated an impression of the FBI "as accidental third-party archivist of radical history" (2015). As far as discontinued histories are concerned, a recent example from Bosnia and Herzegovina portrays how forgotten records can gain new meanings in a radicalized reading of the past and present. During 2015, a feminist organization from Sarajevo, "Crvena" ("red" as a feminine adjective), set out to digitize the records of the Women's Antifascist Front of Yugoslavia (AFŽ), a mass organization led by communist women activists from its inception during the resistance movement in 1942 to its dismantling in 1953. The records are held by the Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the project staff was given free

access to digitize these "barely used" documents. In going beyond "disinterested scholarship," this rediscovery positioned the records in the mission to "introduce, promote and revive the emancipatory heritage of the antifascist struggle of women" ("Crvena", 2015). A similar interest was demonstrated by some cultural studies professors and students at the University of Banja Luka, who used the records of the regional branch of AFŽ, held by the Archives of the Republic of Srpska, to publicly demonstrate a feminist interpretation of past struggles and to aim – as their exhibition title suggested – to "Re-establish the Lost Connection."

But for critical access to move from the sphere of memory to the realm of societal control over current information, archival professionals *en masse* are the ones who would have to move from passive to active modes of practicing their own craft. Four decades after Zinn's address, a study by Joy Novak examined practicing US Midwestern archivists' perspectives on the scholarship on archival activism to evaluate the extent to which such activism has been accepted and integrated into archival practice. She found that while the archivists recognized the social power of archival practice, especially with regard to appraisal and access (Novak, 2013: p. 90), their overall perceptions of the capacity of that social power to influence practice differed significantly (Novak, 2013: p. 87) as did their readiness to play more activist roles in their own work. The ways in which "mainstream" archives and archivists might not only act more proactively but also exert their own activism are often overlooked. This might be something as straightforward as government archivists offering a service to assist individuals to complete Freedom of Information requests to be submitted to agencies for records not yet publicly available (and some government archives do this), but critical access by professionals could also mean understanding and questioning the very context in which records are created (see for example Drake, 2015). [21/22]

Verne Harris has provided examples of ways in which government archivists in South Africa have deployed their own knowledge of the existence and location of official records at another level of activism, themselves acting to expose records through Freedom of Information requests so that they might enter the public purview. Harris calls this "archive banditry" (Harris, 2015). According to Harris, archive bandits are:

"… those ones who pay the closest attention to ghosts, disturb dominant narratives, and allow into the 'professional' what is usually regarded as 'personal'. Archive bandits shape their endeavour in a relation of hospitality to the voices which press in from outside the structures and systems they find themselves in, and to the voices from deep inside themselves. Far from being lawless, as most dictionary definitions suggest, these ones honour justice as a law for practice which trumps the laws which polities pass to protect their interests. They respect the archival trace – the inscription, the imprint, the invagination – rather than the biggest and strongest 'tracers'. They will not be bought, or simply go away. They are haunted" (Harris 2015: p. 16).

One growing discourse with respect to how mainstream archives might become more responsive to more voices and interests, and especially those that are often marginalized, is to engage in more participatory practices. Epistemologically and methodologically, participatory work is grounded in notions of equity, respect and sharing. There is an emerging body of work on participatory archival approaches addressing how mainstream archives might become more negotiated spaces in which different communities share stewardship (Shilton, Srinivasan, 2007; Huvila, 2008; Garcia, 2015) — what Patricia Garcia has referred to as the "participatory turn." This work discusses how participatory approaches applied in appraisal, description, access, and stances on rights regarding records availability are "ethical acts" (Gilliland, 2014) that enfranchise a plurality of perspectives and acknowledge critical personal and community agencies, values and rights by repositioning "the subjects of records and all others involved in or affected by the events and actions documented in them as participatory agents" (Gilliland, McKemmish, 2016).

If we go back to Gramsci, we see how radical democracy is realized through the progression of counter-hegemony, which "is not an instrument of government of dominant groups in order to gain the consent of and exercise hegemony over subaltern classes" but rather "the expression of these subaltern classes who want to educate themselves in the art of government" (in Forgacs, 1988:

p. 197). Archives, as collected information and as social activity, are crucial elements in the interplay of accountable self-governance and informed decision-making. When Zinn called upon archivists to campaign for free access, he believed that this demand was "in keeping with the spirit of democracy, which demands that the population know what the government is doing, and that the condition, the grievances, the will of the underclasses become a force in the nation". In the final analysis: "To refuse to be instruments of social control in an essentially undemocratic society, to begin to play some small part in the creation of a real democracy: these are worthy jobs for historians, for archivists, for us all" (1977: p. 25). [22/23]

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Povzetek

V prvem delu prispevka avtorja podajata povzetek zgodovine arhivskega aktivizma in začenjata z vplivnim govorom radikalnega zgodovinarja Howarda Zinna, ki trdi se arhivisti morajo znebiti pojma „nevtralnosti" in naj se aktivno vključijo v delo družbenega pomena. Ta zgodovina ponovno odkriva in sledi izmeničnim trendom nevtralnosti in vpetosti na arhivskem področju. Drugo poglavje obravnava arhivski aktivizem „zunaj zidov" arhivskih inštitucij, in sicer na področju arhivov skupnosti, kot je Knjižnica Južne Kalifornije (*Southern California Library*) v južnem Los Angelesu pri delu centra *National Chavez Center* ter preko pomoči neodvisnih arhivistov, ki pomagajo delavcem migrantom. Tretje poglavje ilustrira radikalizacijo spominov, ki temeljijo na javnem arhivskem gradivu, in sicer na primeru nedavno odkritega arhivskega gradiva Protifašistične fronte ženske Jugoslavije ter njegove feministične reinterpretacije. Ta del z vračanjem »znotraj zidove« prav tako govori o kritičnem dostopu preko pojma „arhivskega razbojništva", ki ga je vpeljal Harris, preden zaključita s povratkom na poziv Zinna po odprtju arhivskega gradiva državnih organov, kot predpogoja do celovite demokracije.