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Critical Directions for Archival Approaches to Social Justice
Ricardo L. Punzalan and Michelle Caswell

[T]he 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. -- Howard Zinn (1971, 41)

Introduction

Archivists and archival scholars have explored the relationship between social inclusion and archives in the past forty years. More recently, however, we have witnessed a growing call for the archival field to explicitly adopt a social justice mission (Harris 2002; Jimerson 2007, 2009; Wallace 2010). This paper explores the rich history of social justice as a concern in archival studies and delineates future lines of inquiry for the field. We begin by examining how social justice has been defined in the archives literature and its implications for archival studies. Next, we draw forth five major strands of archival thinking in relation to social justice. We identify prominent areas in the archival literature that highlight the relationship between archives and social justice. We also identify critical questions in the relationship between social justice and archives and propose new research trajectories that we deem necessary to advance the archival field in general, and its scholarship, in particular. Finally, we argue for the importance of research that strengthens the tenets of social justice as a central principle in archival scholarship and practice.

Definitions

Archival scholars have recently sought to define social justice and delineate which of its aspects are most clearly implicated in archival endeavors. Thus, it is helpful to begin by examining how social justice is defined within the archival studies literature. Anthony Dunbar (2006), drawing upon the work of Lee Anne Bell (1997), first offered a definition of social justice for the archival audience. Dunbar frames social justice within a series of four overlapping goals:

> to provide a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is more equitable… to seek vehicles for actors to express their own agency, reality or representation… to develop strategies that broker dialogue between communities with unparallel cultural viewpoints… [and] to create frameworks to clearly identify, define, and analyze oppression and how it operates… (2006, 117)

While Dunbar provides some concrete guideposts on the path to social justice, Verne

Harris's work (2011) on "memory for justice" (114) in South Africa stresses the elusive nature of social justice, arguing that it is "always in the process of becoming" yet is consistently marked by an "ethics of hospitality" that welcomes the voices of the other into the archives (120). Adding to this discussion, David Wallace (2010) complicates any simplistic equation of archival thinking with social justice aims. He writes that a social justice approach to archives:

> Embrac[es] ambiguity over clarity; accept[s] that social memory is always contestable and reconfigurable; understand[s] that politics and political power is always present in shaping social memory; consider[s] that archives and archival praxis always exist within contexts of power; … recognize[s] the paradox of archives and archivists of loci of both weak social power and significant social memory shaping potential; and acknowledge[s] that social justice itself is ambiguous and contingent on dissimilar space, time and cultural contexts (184).

While this characterization is purposefully ambiguous, Wallace also gives concrete historical examples of social justice in action. He writes, "Such social justice movements of the past challenged slavery, exploitative labor conditions, racism, colonialism; militarism and war; gender and ethnic inequities, violations of civil liberties, immigrant rights; environmental health; and their linkages to structural inequalities and crushing poverty" (185). More recently, Wendy Duff et al. (2013) trace a detailed intellectual history of social justice from its roots in philosophy, and posit a framework for measuring the social justice impact of archives. For them, social justice is an:

> Ideal vision that every human being is of equal and incalculable value, entitled to shared standards of freedom, equality, and respect. These standards also apply to broader social aggregations such as communities and cultural groups. Violations of these standards must be acknowledged and confronted. It specifically draws attention to inequalities of power and how they manifest in institutional arrangements and systemic inequities that further the interests of some groups at the expense of others in the distribution of material goods, social benefits, rights, protections, and opportunities. Social justice is always a process and can never be fully achieved (324-325).

The development of a framework to evaluate archival projects based on these principles is still an ongoing effort (Duff et al. 2013). Despite the usefulness of the aforementioned definitions and the increased interest in incorporating social justice perspectives into archival practice, research, and education, confusion remains over the exact meaning of the term and its implications in the field. Wallace (2010) writes that the term can appear

so broad that its meaning can be elusive at best, and, at worst, watered down or co-opted by the very powers it seeks to critique. As Randall Jimerson (2007) points out, social justice is often invoked on a list of lofty ideals such as accountability and diversity without concrete achievable directions and goals.

Although the term has been widely adopted in the fields of education and anthropology, there is still some resistance to the term in archival studies (Gilliland 2011). In 2013, for example, a debate erupted at the Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting and in the pages of *American Archivist* over the political nature of social justice work, with Mark Greene (2013) arguing that archivists can best fulfill their professional obligations by remaining neutral and Jimerson (2013) asserting that social justice is a personal, rather than professional, obligation. In response, Michelle Caswell (2013a) posited that what gets constructed as "neutral" is a matter of perspective and that such perspectives remain limited given the homogeneity of the field.

We begin with an assumption that social justice is indeed a worthwhile goal, that archival labor and scholarship have much to contribute to the ways in which social justice is envisioned and enacted, and that, as shapers of the historical record, archivists have a professional obligation to work toward a more equitable future. We now turn to a broad intellectual history of social justice in archival studies.

Social Justice in Archival Studies: Contexts and Approaches

In this section, we identify five areas in the archival literature where the link between archives and social justice causes are more prominently drawn. Our goal here is not to be comprehensive, but to point out areas in the archival literature that have provided fruitful spaces for theoretical engagement with social justice. For the most part, these areas are not mutually exclusive and are best understood for their interrelated and overlapping influences in the field. From our analysis of the literature, we argue that social justice is most apparent in discussions of the following areas of archival scholarship:

- Inclusion of underrepresented and marginalized sectors of society
- Reinterpretation and expansion of archival concepts
- Development of community archives
- Rethinking archival education and training
- Efforts to document human rights violations

We limited the scope of our analysis and the scope of this paper to focus mainly on the North American literature treating social justice issues in archival studies. Our work is also limited to works written in English. While significant efforts might be happening in

other regions and in other languages, unless directly cited by North American or English-speaking authors, we have not accessed them. Since social justice did not emerge as an archival concern overnight, we have also taken into account the genealogy of this idea as it has developed in the archival literature. The cause of achieving equity through archival means has been described using many other terms and implemented in many other ways. The archival understanding of social justice is a product of discussions and debates that have been brewing for decades. We therefore feel it necessary to recognize that the archival field's engagement with social justice precedes the more recent popularity of the term in archival discourse. To focus our search, we adopted Dunbar's characterization of social justice and used it in our examination of literature that may not have mentioned social justice per se but nevertheless manifested important traits identified in the definition.

Inclusion of underrepresented and marginalized sectors of society

Early discussions of the societal role of archivists and their influence on the appraisal and selection of records in archival custody provide a fertile ground for analyzing the relationship between archives and social justice. The radical social movements of the 1960's and 1970's profoundly influenced the field's thinking around the role of archives and archivists in society. Archivists began to question traditional perspectives on the value and importance of records that consequently determine their retention and their preservation in archival repositories.

In the 1970's and 1980's, archivist Hans Booms and historian Howard Zinn called attention to the larger social implications of archival work. Booms exemplifies a strand focused on representing society in the state's archives and voiced the need for inclusivity and for archival collections to reflect society writ large. Booms (1987) criticized prevailing ideas around the role of archives and archivists, mainly Theodore S. Schellenberg's privileging of researchers as well as Sir Hillary Jenkinson's bias towards state administrators.

Speaking before the Society of American Archivists' annual meeting in 1970, Zinn questioned the notion of archival neutrality. In his address, titled "Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest," he urged archivists to look at the broader implications of their professional practice by understanding how it might collectively reinforce the status quo, favoring "the most powerful, the richest in society" and ignoring the "impotent and obscure" (Zinn 1971, 41). His challenge for archivists was to make government documents more broadly accessible and to collect records that reflect the lives of ordinary people and not just the dominant few.

Through the works of Booms and Zinn, archivists reflected on the societal implications of

archival work. Archival activism started to gain momentum which then influenced the development of alternative appraisal and selection models. The development and rise of new appraisal ideas such as documentation strategy (Samuels 1986) and macro-appraisal and functional analysis in Canada (Cook 2004) were all premised on the need to properly document society and public interaction with state institutions.

Reinterpretation of archival concepts

The challenge for archivists to represent and serve marginalized communities required not only changes in what archives collect, but it also inspired profound re-examination of fundamental archival principles that in effect favor state or corporate entities as well as elite and dominant cultures. The field witnessed a widening effort to question prevailing archival concepts beginning in the 1990's. Largely influenced by ideas of critical theory, mainly poststructuralism and postcolonialism, archival scholars began to examine, and in the process expand, archival concepts that provide the intellectual bases for archival practice. Authors advocated for the reconceptualization of the intellectual foundations of archival work to better address historically underrepresented and marginalized communities.

One example is the continuing conversation and expansion of the principle of provenance to help liberate archival work from narrow and restricted interpretations of creatorship and ownership. Beginning with Tom Nesmith's redefinition of provenance as "the social and technical processes of the records' inscription, transmission, contextualization, and interpretation, which account for its existence, characteristics, and continuing history" (1999, 146), provenance has been recast as a dynamic concept that includes not only the initial creators of the records, who might be agents of a dominant colonial or oppressive institution, but more importantly the subjects of the records themselves, the archivists who processed those records, and the various instantiations of their interpretation and use by researchers. In similar vein, Laura Millar (2002), Jeannette Bastian (2003, 2006), Joel Wurl (2005), Chris Hurley (2005), and Jennifer Douglas (2010) have approached the principle to include broader and community-based configurations. The implication of this work is to focus on the larger constituencies of the record and to discourage practices that privilege a narrow perspective.

A particularly active area in archival thought has been theorizing the role of archives in the formation and propagation of collective memory (Bastian 2003, 2009; Caswell 2010; Cook 2013; Jacobsen, Punzalan & Hedstrom 2013; Hedstrom 2002; Hedstrom 2010; Josias 2011; Punzalan 2009). Largely perceived as official sources of elite historical narratives, archival records figure in the preservation, extension, and promotion of social memory. What we might term "the memory turn" in archival studies is a way of acknowledging that official narratives rarely highlight community perspectives. In this

context, archives are deemed useful in the recovery of silenced voices as well as in sustaining counter-narratives.

Development of community archives

Recent developments in the area of community archives further pushed the boundaries of archival practice and thinking. Community archival discourses have expanded the notion of who has the power to process and control archival records. To encourage larger societal participation in archival endeavors, archivists are called to relinquish their role as authoritative professionals in order to assume a more facilitative role in crucial archival practices of appraisal, description, and development of access systems. Although community archives discourses offer new opportunities and challenges for professional archivists, they also draw on decades of postcustodial thinking within the field that have challenged traditional models of archival ownership (Ham 1981; Bearman 1991). With the availability of digital surrogates and Web 2.0 technologies, some ventured into a more participatory archives model (Shilton and Srinivasan 2007; Krause and Yakel 2007), thus exploring new and easier modes of interaction between creators, users, and keepers of archives.

Scholars have observed the increasing number of grassroots and community-based archival organizations since the early 2000's (Bastian and Alexander 2009; Flinn and Stevens 2009; Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd 2009; Mander 2009; Daniel 2010; Cook 2013). The creation of community archives may be situated as a form of political protest in that they are an attempt to seize the means by which history is written and correct or amend dominant stories about the past. Grassroots archival communities have organized around ethnic, racial, or religious identities (Kaplan 2000; Daniel 2010; Caswell 2014a), gender and sexual orientations (Barriault 2009), economic status (Flinn and Stevens 2009), and geographic locations (Flinn and Stevens 2009).

Rethinking archival education and training

Efforts to address social justice issues also became evident in calls to rethink archival education and research (Gilliland 2000; White 2009; PACG 2011). Influential voices in this arena advocate for "archival pluralism." Michelle Caswell (2013b) defines archival pluralism as "the acknowledgement of and engagement with, multiple coexisting archival realities—that is, fundamentally differing but equally valid ways of being and knowing—most commonly made manifest in the archival realm by (sometimes) irreconcilably divergent—but still credible—ways of defining, transmitting, and interpreting evidence and memory." At its core is the active acknowledgement of cultural difference, Indigenous epistemologies, and multiple ways of knowing as equally valid perspectives of knowledge creation (PACG 2011; Christen 2011; McKemmish, Faulkhead and Russell

2011). Such pluralist approaches to archival practice have a long history traceable to early efforts to create more inclusive archives (Zinn 1971; Booms 1987; Cook 1992; Harris 2007; Eastwood 2002; Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd 2009; Flinn and Stevens 2009). However, efforts to actively incorporate these perspectives in archival research and pedagogy are more recent. For Caswell et al. (2012), it is important for archival education to implement concrete steps that include: recruitment of students from diverse historically marginalized communities, encouragement of culturally sensitive classroom environments, pluralist approaches to diverse ontologies and epistemologies, and an ongoing analysis of power both inside and outside the classroom.

Efforts to document human rights violations

Works that highlight human rights archives and the role of records in seeking justice for victims of genocide and state-perpetrated injustices also indicate a sense of purpose for archives to actively confront power and abuses in society (Ketelaar 2002; Harris 2007; Stinnett 2008; Levy and Sznaider 2010; McKemmish et al 2011b; Duff et al 2013; Caswell 2014b; Weld 2014). Scholars outside of archival studies have also examined how records are used in many parts of the world as instruments of oppression, discrimination, unequal opportunities and access to resources, and systemic institutional violence (Spade 2011; Gupta 2012). Works by Verne Harris (2007), Hariz Halilovich (2014), and Anne Gilliland (2014) provide important case studies that illustrate how records and archivists can play an instrumental role in societies coming to terms with widespread human rights violations. Many of the articles on human rights archives do not use the term "social justice." However, it is clear that human rights concerns are closely related to scholarship on social justice in that scholarship on human rights pays attention to adjudication for past abuses and advocacy for equity moving forward.

As the five areas cited above reveal, the cause of social justice has been a topic of discussion on various archival fronts for at least 40 years. If the birth of the modern Western archival profession falls in 1898 with the publication of the Dutch Manual, then the field has been tackling various aspects of social justice issues for nearly half of its modern history. With this trajectory, we believe that the conversation will continue in years to come. Our goal, however, goes beyond making a case that such efforts exist, but to show pathways where we can fruitfully engage and take the conversation further.

In the next section, we identify three key areas useful in framing future research pursuits. These include going beyond rights-based approaches to the understanding of social justice, examining racial and economic structures of marginalization, and understanding the effects and outcomes of digitization and open access. Advancing scholarship that examines the link between social justice and archives will require significant assessment of these key areas in our estimation.

Critiques of and Alternatives to a Rights-Based Framework

In the first part of this paper, we showed how the definition of social justice can be broad and complex. However, much of the discussion of social justice in archival studies has assumed a legalistic, rights-based framework to delineate the role of records, archives, and archivists in violating or adjudicating basic human rights such as the right to life, the right to privacy, and freedom of expression. Although such an approach is useful in examining the most egregious infractions such as genocide and mass rape, it ignores the realities of more subtle, intangible, and shifting forms of oppression that are also pressing social justice concerns. Scholars in archival studies are beginning to grapple with the limits of an individual rights-based framework and are instead proposing alternative models.

Decades of feminist scholarship in fields as diverse as psychology, philosophy, and sociology has called into question the universality of a rights-based framework, arguing instead that an "ethics of care," which stresses the ways people are linked to each other and larger communities through webs of responsibilities, is a more inclusive and apt model for envisioning and enacting a more just society (Gilligan 1982; Card 1991; Cole and Coultrap-McQuin 1992; Frazer et al 1992). This feminist approach to ethics emphasizes "particularlity, connection, and context" rather than abstract moral principles; rejects "'masculinist' moral assumptions" about individual choice and free will in favor of empathy in the face of situational demands; and draws to the fore women's lived experiences as caregivers (Cole and Coultrap-McQuin 1992, 3). As opposed to a human rights framework that endows individuals with universal and inalienable rights and punishes the violators of such rights, a feminist framework based on an ethics of care posits interlacing and ongoing relationships of mutual obligation that are wholly dependent on culture and context.

How would the archival conversation shift if we abandoned the rights-based model in favor of a feminist ethics of care? What happens when we begin to think of record keepers and archivists less as enforcers or violators of human rights, but as caregivers, bound to records creators, subjects, and users through a web of mutual responsibility? What are the consequences of replacing the abstract legal and moral obligations of archivists (as heretofore conceived through scholarship and professional codes of ethics) with radical empathy?

While some archival studies scholarship—particularly Australian work on co-creatorship and Indigenous claims to records—hints at this approach, much more work is needed to further delineate what a feminist contribution to archival ethics would entail. First, some conceptual work is necessary in order to address the limits of the dominant rights-based

framework and to fully articulate the ethics of care to an archival audience. This conceptual foundation should pay careful attention to critiques of feminist ethics as well, so as not to reproduce simplistic constructions that essentialize women's traditional caregiving roles. Given the importance feminist theory places on situated knowledge, multiple case studies are needed to explore how an archival ethics of care has been or can be enacted in real world environments. Examples may include feminist analyses of appraisal policies that bolster social inclusion and place archivists within the ever-changing dynamics of community; the creation of descriptive systems that allow for differential access based on historical and social context; the reconceptualization of outreach programs in response to legacies of inequity, mistrust, and colonialism; and greater attention to affect in all aspects of the archival endeavor, from the psychological impact that processing records of violence may have on archivists, to the emotional responses users have in discovering personal materials in archives, to the shifting relationship between archivists and users based on such registries of affect. This is fertile ground with much work to be done.

Finally, the proposed feminist ethics framework to archival endeavors is just one alternative to the dominant human rights model. Much more theoretical work needs to be done exploring queer approaches to archives, as well as the ethical frameworks suggested by critical race theory, pluralism, and scholarship in the field of oral history. Furthermore, archival studies cannot continue to ignore burgeoning critiques of "human rights" as a neocolonial industry emerging from other fields for much longer (Posner 2014). These still-unexplored alternatives to the human rights framework open up new possibilities for radical reinterpretations of archival ethics in the future.

Examining Racial and Economic Structures

A key aspect of social justice is the equitable distribution of opportunities and resources. Although there has been significant work critiquing the diversity model in archival studies, most discussion of the racial and ethnic homogeneity of the field overlooks the systematic structural inequalities that create such homogeneity in the first place. Racism is not simply a matter of individual choice; it is a system of power relations fundamentally embedded in every institution in American society. While bringing more people of color into the field is a crucial start to addressing the legacy of racism, it cannot be the end goal of a social justice framework. Instead, more scholarly and professional attention needs to be paid to white privilege as an overarching construct that shapes virtually every aspect of the archival endeavor, from the assumptions upon which basic concepts in archival education are built to the power structures that enable the creation of records and the ongoing maintenance of archival systems and institutions. Here, critical race theory's framework for interrogating, challenging, and eliminating the predominance of white supremacy can provide a crucial way forward (Dunbar 2006).

Work on archival pluralism has uncovered the ways in which foundational archival concepts (such as record, provenance, and evidence) are based in dominant Western ontologies and epistemologies, but academic calls for archival pluralism have yet to be taken up in a sustained and meaningful way by the profession. Assumptions based on dominant cultures are so prevalent and pervasive in practice that they are essentially hidden in plain sight. As a whole, archivists have failed to see, let alone challenge, the ways in which dominant worldviews have dictated archival precepts and practice. For example, widespread professional resistance to Indigenous ways of knowing, as evidenced by the debate surrounding and ultimate failure of the Society of American Archivists to endorse the Protocols for the Native American Archival Materials, reveal how much more work is needed to open up pathways pluralism in mainstream archival practice. In this regard, scholars and professionals still have much to learn from community-based archival practitioners, whose conceptions, collections, and practices often reflect broader, non-dominant, and non-Western ways of being and knowing. Here, the challenge is not just how to get more faces of color at the table, but to interrogate the cultural foundations and accompanying power structures upon which the table is built.

Additionally, more attention needs to be paid to economic infrastructures as manifestations of power. The field has yet to come to terms with the ongoing impact of neoliberalism on the university and government structures in which much archival work is done. In the academic arena, neoliberalism has meant increasing pressure on academics to produce research that is fundable and students who are employable. This model rewards research and teaching that perpetuates and instills corporate values and interests (such as tangible impact measures) and disincentives social justice work that seeks to challenge and dismantle such values and interests (such as critical conceptual work). In this way, neoliberalism dictates which scholarly work gets to be done. In archival practice, neoliberalism has meant the defunding of public archives. As funding has been slashed for professional positions, repositories have increasingly relied on unpaid intern and volunteer labor, raising serious challenges for students and new professionals and lingering questions about the sustainability of the profession. Meanwhile, corporations have stepped in to partially fill the economic void by offering funding and labor for digitization projects in exchange for control of information, causing the increased privatization of public records. Community archives that resist corporate funding models are left struggling to raise money from individual donors. Across the board, the field has yet to come to terms with the ways in which neoliberal funding structures are increasingly dictating priorities that replicate structures of inequality in archives and to strategize alternative funding structures that reflect social justice aims.

Understanding the Effects and Outcomes of Digitization and Online Access

Technology has often been touted for its potential to open up collections and encourage greater access and participation. Records of marginalized communities and Indigenous groups are becoming widely available through digitization and online access. We encourage critical examination in this arena. In particular, the field must investigate how cultural heritage institutions can create avenues of meaningful access without further promoting the uneven power dynamic that inspired the creation or collection of records of certain communities or groups.

Over the past 20 years, the archival field has seen significant progress in digitization, incorporation of new digital tools to aid in the processing, preservation, and representation of archival records, as well as the creation of new avenues for users to interact with archival collections. Online access brings collections to wider audiences, helps develop new competencies and skills, harnesses new relationships, and identifies new or unknown user communities. Recent developments in areas such as community archives, human rights archives and documentation, and access to indigenous cultural materials, show that institutions, scholars, source communities, activists, as well as those seeking legal restitution are learning to leverage the Internet and digital resources to provide or gain access to collections.

Many important community digital projects have made it possible for Indigenous source communities to establish formal connections and collaborations with various institutions. In some instances, Indigenous communities have greater control over the preservation of and access to digital materials related to their history and culture. Projects such as the *Inuvialuit Living History* (http://www.inuvialuitlivinghistory.ca) and the *Plateau Peoples' Web Portal* (http://plateauportal.wsulibs.wsu.edu/) provide platforms that support Indigenous knowledge systems and values over digital access to the archival holdings of various institutions (Christen, 2011). The American Philosophical Society and the Smithsonian's National Anthropological Archives have existing protocols with specific Native American communities to maintain collaborative relationships over the preservation and representation of indigenous materials. At the same time, independent community archives projects such as the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA) (http://www.saadigitalarchive.org) and Densho (http://www.densho.org) connect communities with lost, forgotten, or painful histories through digitized archival records. The Human Rights Documentation Initiative (http://www.lib.utexas.edu/hrdi) at the University of Texas at Austin is one example of the various initiatives to make available human rights records that in turn support and promote the efforts of those who seek justice for victims of human rights violations and abuse. Projects cited above have produced diverse digital resources that range from virtual exhibitions to online catalogs to digital repatriation.

However, the seemingly liberating affordances of online collections and tools also inspire

questions of appropriateness and sensitivity. A number of reports simultaneously point to the contentious nature and the liberating effects of digital projects (Roy and Christal 2002; Naka et al. 2008; Pilcher and Vermeylen 2008; Vermeylen and Pilcher 2009; Christen 2011; Dawson, Levy and Lyons 2011; Leopold 2013). Digitized collections stimulate discussions around notions of institutional ownership and authority versus community knowledge and history, the relationship of the object kept in repositories with their source communities, and the ethics of open and unhindered display of artifacts (Pilcher and Vermeylen 2008; Vermeylen and Pilcher 2009; Christen 2011; Leopold 2013). Because the practice of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting collections is inextricably linked with the history of colonialism, heritage professionals and administrators responsible for these materials must also weigh appropriate cultural protocols in displaying cultural heritage online. For many institutions, the motivation for digitizing and making these collections available via the Internet are different from monographs or journals that are more typical for academic and research libraries. For instance, corporate or personal archival records have their own copyright and privacy complications that are completely different than those within the context of Indigenous rights (Brown 2005). Similarly, digitized human rights records and the portals that aim to provide resources to support the dispensation of justice for victims of human rights violations must consider privacy issues that are distinct from Indigenous archival materials (e.g., Danielson 2004; Peterson 2008).

The advent of mass digitization coincides with numerous calls for more sophisticated approaches for understanding the meaningful outcomes of archival collections, programs, and services not only for archival institutions but also for marginalized communities. While institutions routinely compile data on programs and services as well as collections usage and conditions, institutions seem to fall short in analyzing these data to drive decision-making or to institute institutional reforms (Davies 2002). Moreover, while data collection strategies that record numbers of visits and frequency of requests or borrowing may provide useful information, these data do not offer reliable measures of institutional impact or nuanced portraits of audience engagement (Saracevic 2009). Recent studies have noted the inability of a significant portion of institutions to demonstrate the value of their work beyond simple usage statistics and frequency of visits (Davies 2002; Fraser et al 2002; Lakos and Phipps 2004; Duff et al. 2008; Franklin and Plum 2010; Carter 2012; Chapman & Yakel 2012; Hughes 2012; Duff et al. 2013).

As archival materials are increasingly accessed through digital avenues, robust ways to document the outcomes and effects of digital access of these types of cultural heritage collections need to be in place. While quantitative assessments targeting digital resources such as books and scholarly journals are available, they often only address broad or general areas of concern to meaningfully evaluate the value of access to digitized archival holdings (UKOLN 2006; Arts and Humanities Data Service 2008; Schreibman 2007). For

instance, digital ethnographic objects, which often retain links to Indigenous source communities, lack any specialized impact and assessment measures that account for the complex political and cultural issues that access to such items entails. At worst, the lack of sensitivity to the needs of ethnographic materials risks replicating cultural misunderstandings and misuse that has occurred in the past without better information and guidance about how to responsibly plan and assess digital anthropological collections.

The archival field needs to examine how the progress of digitization, especially of culturally sensitive collections, is making a difference in the lives of source communities. How do we demonstrate that the digitized evidence of human rights abuse contribute in the dispensation of justice or in preventing or ending injustice? In what ways do efforts to provide access to digital surrogates contribute positively towards social equity and access to life opportunities? Furthermore, what infrastructure must be in place so that this is achieved? We still lack a framework for assessing the actual outcomes and effects of digitizing archives beyond preservation and access. Such a framework should incorporate not only perspectives of the heritage institutions that house materials, but more importantly, the source communities from which the records originated and the various designated and emergent users of digitized materials.

Conclusion

The recent debate on whether or not archivists should adopt social justice as an archival imperative (Greene 2013; Jimerson 2013; Caswell 2013a) indicates the need to articulate more clearly the relationship between archives and social justice. In this article, we have identified various ways that archival scholars and archivists have expressed this relation. Using the literature as our basis, we traced social justice ideas throughout 40 years of archival thinking. This long-term engagement within the field suggests that social justice has become a central, if under-acknowledged, archival value. This effort occupies a significant period of modern archival history. Thus, there should no longer be a question as to the importance of social justice as an archival ideal.

Our literature review removes any lingering doubts about the importance of the lasting import of social justice to archival studies. Yet the challenge remains for ongoing work to responsively and productively demonstrate how certain archival actions contribute to, or sometimes impede, social equity and inclusion. To help navigate this path, we identified three areas of further examination that can constitute a course for moving the cause of social justice forward in archival theory and practice. The future trajectory of this area and the enactment of the social justice goals brought forth remain in the hands of archival scholars and practitioners. We hope that this article serves as a platform to strengthen and illuminate the development of archival social justice.

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