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Author
Novak, Joy Rainbow

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Examining activism in practice:

A qualitative study of archival activism

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Information Studies

by

Joy Rainbow Novak

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Examining activism in practice:

A qualitative study of archival activism

by

Joy Rainbow Novak

Doctor of Philosophy in Information Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland, Chair

While archival literature has increasingly discussed activism in the context of archives, there has been little examination of the extent to which archivists in the field have accepted or incorporated archival activism into practice. Scholarship that has explored the practical application of archival activism has predominately focused on case studies or proposed methods as opposed to trends throughout the profession. This qualitative study used both individual and group interviews (focus groups and video conferences) to comprehensively examine practicing archivists' perspectives on the scholarship on archival activism to evaluate the extent to which such activism has been accepted and integrated into archival practice.

The dissertation of Joy Rainbow Novak is approved.

Johanna R. Drucker

Mary Niles Maack

Chon A. Noriega

Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013

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Education

University of California, Riverside   2003 to 2005
M.A. in Public History, Archival Management Concentration   Riverside, CA

Washington University   1999 to 2003
B.A. in History and English Literature   St. Louis, MO
Honors: Magna Cum Laude

Professional Experience

Center for the Study of Political Graphics   2007 to 2013
Archivist   Los Angeles, CA

June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives   2006 to 2008
Board Member and Volunteer   West Hollywood, CA

UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center   2005 to 2007
Library Assistant   Los Angeles, CA

UCLA Information Studies Department   2006 to 2007
Graduate Student Researcher/Reader   Los Angeles, CA

ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives   2003 to 2007
Intern and Volunteer   Los Angeles, CA

University of California, Riverside   2004 to 2005
Teaching Assistant   Riverside, CA

Washington University Special Collections   2002 to 2003
Library Assistant   St. Louis, MO

Missouri Historical Society   2002 to 2003
Intern   St. Louis, MO

Conference Presentations

"Examining Activism in Practice," Symposium on Activism in Archives, October 2012
The New School Archives and Special Collections, New York, New York

"Professional Activists & Archivists**,"** GLBT ALMS Conference, May 2008
City University of New York

Publications

"Research Design and Methodology for Studying Archival Activism: A Case Study" in *Research in the Archival Multiverse*, edited by Anne Gilliland and Andrew Lau, Department of Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles and Sue McKemmish, School of Information Management and Systems, Monash University. (Forthcoming 2013)

 "VIVA is Founded to Promote Latina and Latino Artists" in *Great Events in History: GLBT Events*, edited by Lillian Faderman, et al., 455-457. Pasadena, CA: Salem Press, 2006.

Chapter 1: Introduction

> Archives have the power to privilege and to marginalize. They can be a tool of hegemony; they can be a tool of resistance. They both reflect and constitute power relations. They are a product of society's need for information, and the abundance and circulation of documents reflects the importance placed on information in society. They are the basis for and validation of the stories we tell ourselves, the story-telling narratives that give cohesion and meaning to individuals, groups, and societies.[1]

As Canadian archivists Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz illustrate, archives are inherently instruments of political and social power which are exercised through the control and dissemination of information. Yet, despite the intrinsic politics of archives, the traditional understanding of the role of archivists has been founded on principals of positivity which has encouraged passivity in archival practice. Such a passive approach to archival practice has been critiqued by scholars within and outside of the archival profession for failing to acknowledge the power of archives, consequently creating a hegemonic historical record privileging those in authority. Drawing upon this discourse of archives and power, recent scholarship from archivists such as Randall Jimerson and Verne Harris have not only portrayed archivists as active record creators, but also explicitly address archivists' ability and even responsibility to be activists.[2] Examining the inherent politics of archives and the significance of records and record-keeping in the creation and maintenance of social power structures, both Jimerson and Harris direct a call to action to archivists to advocate for social justice by ensuring that archives promote accountability, transparency and diversity.

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[1] Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz. "Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance." *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 13

[2] Verne Harris, *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspectivie* (Chicago, IL: Society of American Archivists, 2007); Randall Jimerson, *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice* (Chicago, IL: Society of American Archivists, 2009). Both books deal directly with archives, social justice and activism. Harris' text includes previously published articles, and Jimerson's text builds upon previous writings. Discussions of both scholars' perspectives throughout this study are drawn from these two works.

While this archival literature defines activism in the context of the archival profession, there has been little empirical examination of the application of such activism into archival practice. The challenge that archival activism poses to traditional archival paradigms creates a significant need to address activisms' applicability to practice. Furthermore, because the discourse surrounding archival activism has been largely been promoted by archival scholars and educators, as opposed to practicing archivists, the possibility of disconnect between scholarship and practice increases. Using definitions of activism gleaned from this discourse, the study sought to examine the extent to which the concept of archival activism has been accepted by professional archivists and considered applicable to archival practice.

Defining Activism

Instead of using a single, all-encompassing definition, core concepts drawn from current archival scholarship were used to examine activism in this study. Utilizing a conceptual framework was appropriate for such a qualitative study as it allowed a more comprehensive and rich examination of activism, as the concepts could be identified within the data in varying degrees. Broadening the definition conceptually allowed a more thorough and detailed analysis of the ways in which archival activism can be expressed among practicing archivists.

The primary concept examined was **social power.** Central to any definition of archival activism is an awareness of the social power of archives and an understanding that archivists have agency in their practice to impact society at large. Regarding the importance of such recognition, Jimerson explains, "It does not require archivists to assume a partisan position, but it does require them to acknowledge that their profession is inherently and unavoidably engaged in

political power struggles to define the nature of society."[3] Ultimately, this social consciousness is essential to defining archivists' acceptance of activism as it demonstrates an acknowledgement of agency in their practice.

In addition to **social power,** the other key concepts of activism gleaned from current scholarship were **neutrality/archival transparency, community engagement, diversity/inclusivity, accountability** and **open government. Archival transparency** involves archivists disclosing details about their personal background as well as their intervention with the records to provide users with the context necessary to understand how they may have shaped the record. This concept ultimately challenges the traditional understanding of archival neutrality as it requires the acceptance that individual perspective impacts the record. **Community engagement** refers to archival projects which encourage community participation in the archival process. The remaining three concepts, **diversity/inclusivity, accountability** and **open government,** were drawn primarily from Randall Jimersons' discussion of archives and social power in which he identified four key ways in which archives can be used to protect the public interest:

1. by holding political and social leaders accountable for their actions,
2. by resisting political pressure in order to support open government,
3. by redressing social injustices, and
4. by documenting underrepresented social groups and fostering ethnic and community identities. [4]

For this study, **accountability** is defined as maintaining, preserving and making accessible records that document criminal, unethical or other unjust actions to hold governments, political or cultural leaders, or other institutions or people in power accountable. While Jimerson

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[3] Jimerson, *Archives Power,* 258.
[4] Randall C. Jimerson, "Archives for All: Professional Responsibility and Social Justice." *American Archivist* 70 (Fall/Winter 2007): 256.

considered redressing social injustice a separate issue, for the purposes of this study, this effort was merged with **accountability** as archivists' ability to redress social injustice primarily involves maintaining and making accessible records documenting injustices to enforce accountability, enabling compensation. **Diversity/Inclusivity** is the aim to actively document communities or cultures that have traditionally been excluded from the historical narrative. **Open Government** refers to supporting transparency of government action by ensuring access to government records. Many examples of archival activism in practice are illustrative of multiple concepts. In summary the six core concepts that examined were: **social power, neutrality/archival transparency, diversity/inclusivity, community engagement, accountability** and **open government.**

Research Questions and Methods

The principal aim of the study was to evaluate the acceptance of archival activism as defined by current archival scholarship among practicing archivists. The primary research questions were:

- To what extent, if any, do practicing archivists believe archival activism, as defined by current scholarship, is appropriate and/or applicable to archival practice?

- To what extent, if any, do practicing archivists believe they have agency for social change through their practice?

- Which, if any, core concepts of activism are most accepted among practicing archivists.

- What variables, if any, contribute to an acceptance of activism among archivists?

This study used qualitative, mixed methods to comprehensively examine these questions. One-on-one, semi-structured interviews were used to explore archivists' perceptions of current

scholarship on archival activism. Group interviews, both focus groups and video conferences, were also used to examine archival activism more fully as the discussions brought multiple perspectives   to the discussion. The interview instrument was organized around key concepts of archival activism drawn from the scholarship to examine activism more thoroughly. Participants were given summaries of, or quotations, about each concept and asked to draw upon their professional experience to evaluate its appropriateness and feasibility for practice. Additional questions addressed participants' professional and educational histories to explore variables that may contribute to archivists' acceptance of activism. This research design generated findings regarding the participants' perceptions of each core concept as well as archival activism overall.

Significance of Study

While archival literature has increasingly addressed the social role of archives and (with less frequency) directly discussed activism in archives, few empirical studies have attempted to measure the extent to which practicing archivists have accepted this social role or incorporated such concepts into practice. Scholarship that has explored the practical application of activism has predominately focused on case studies or proposed approaches to archival methods. Yet, such discursive examinations or case studies of the integration of principals of archival activism and practice are not necessarily indicative of a widely held belief in archival activism among practicing archivists. A 2009 survey found that a significant percent of archivists did not actively read current scholarship or demonstrate interest in publishing their own research, demonstrating the need to explore the possible disconnect between scholarship and practice.[5] An empirical

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[5] Cory L. Nimer, "Reading and Publishing within the Archives Community: A Survey." *American Archivist* (Fall/Winter 2009).

study was necessary to measure activism in the field since existing scholarship could not be used to infer wide spread acceptance among practicing archivists.

Furthermore, the findings of a 2010 survey of *American Archivist* readers also demonstrated a divide between theory and practice among practicing archivists which may indicate a potential disconnect between the scholarship on archival activism and practice. The Society of American Archivists conducted this survey to get feedback on the content and reading habits of *American Archivist* readers. The survey found that 60.5% of users believed the journal was a scholarly or academic journal, and the open-ended user comments indicated that many were dissatisfied with this focus. Overall, the survey results and comments demonstrated readers had concerns over the balance of theoretical and practical content of the journal, with most respondents demonstrating stronger interest in practical topics such as management of born-digital materials or archival tools and software.[6] The findings of this SAA survey suggest a lack of interest in scholarship perceived as theoretical among many practicing archivists, further highlighting the need to examine archivists' perception of the scholarship on archival activism to determine possible disconnect between the theory and practice.

Scholars advocating archival activism claim that archivists are in unique positions of power because of the inherent political significance of archives in society. Such scholarship can be read as a clear call to action for practicing archivists to use their authority to promote social justice. Ultimately, this study attempted to examine the response to this call to action. The findings demonstrated practicing archivists' perceptions of archival activism and revealed indicators of rejection and acceptance of the scholarship which can be used to create tools for future studies to measure acceptance on a larger scale and evaluate the impact of such advocacy

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[6] Kathleen Fear and Paul Conway, "Valuing the *American Archivist:* An Interpretation of SAA's First Readership Survey." *American Archivist* (Fall/Winter 2011).

for activism. Ultimately, these findings can be used to develop more effective strategies to support paradigm shifts in archival practice that promote social justice which is the primary goal of such scholarship.

Limitations and Constraints

The most significant limitation to the study was the use of small-scale research methods. Since this study explored the participants' perceptions of archival activism in the context of their own practice, it was seen as more important to have richer data from a smaller number of participants than less in-depth data for a larger group of participants. In total, interviews were conducted with twenty four participants practicing in the Midwest. This small number of participants, as well as the regional focus, limited the extent to which the findings can be generalized to the larger population of practicing archivists.

The interview instrument examined participants' perceptions of the concepts of archival activism by providing summaries or quotes from the literature and asking the participants to discuss the extent to which they believed the concepts were appropriate and feasible. This direct approach of providing the summaries/quotes was utilized to ensure the participants addressed all the same concepts and to facilitate comparison between participants. This design was also intended to minimize the level of interpretation necessary to measure the participants' acceptance of the concepts as providing the summaries and quotes was expected to draw more direct answers regarding support or rejection of the concepts. However, the findings demonstrated that participants still interpreted the concepts differently despite having the provided summaries. The diversity in the understandings of the concepts ultimately necessitated more interpretation to analyze individual participant's perspective as voiced agreement was not necessarily indicative of

support of archival activism as he/she may have defined the concept differently than the scholarship. Ultimately, the unexpected diversity in participants' understanding of the concepts, and consequently the unanticipated level of interpretation necessary to analyze their answers, limited the extent to which participants' acceptance could be consistently measured and compared. However, despite this limitation, the diversity in perceptions ultimately revealed significant findings regarding the different ways the concepts could be interpreted in the context of practice. These findings also demonstrated further disconnect between theory and practice as the participants' understanding was generally more practical and less theoretical than the scholarship. Furthermore, this range enabled the identification of key indicators of support or rejection of the concepts as defined by the scholarship. These indicators can be used to modify and refine an interview instrument to facilitate more consistent data analysis for future studies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Archival activism assumes that archivists are actively engaged with records in their practice, challenging the traditional understanding of archivists as objective custodians of records. This positivist understanding of archival practice developed from key principals of archival theory as well as the growing influence of positivism in historical and archival research. However, historians, cultural theorists and archival scholars have challenged this approach to archival methods, openly critiquing archivists' passivity in practice and examining the negative consequences of traditional approaches to archival methods. Exploring the political and cultural functions of archives in society, these critiques have articulated the need for archivists to be more proactive in their practice to better fulfill these social roles, illustrating the ways in which their practice can promote social justice.

The literature review is organized into two parts to articulate both the theoretical foundation as well as practical application of archival activism. The first examines the traditional understanding of archival practice as well as the critiques to these traditions to contextualize both the recent advocacy of archival activism and the potential resistance to this proactive approach to practice from the field. The second identifies the core concepts of activism and examines the application of these concepts in archival practice.

Part 1: Traditional Archival Theory and Activism

Archival Traditions

The traditional understanding of the archivists' role as passive custodian is rooted in the principles commonly accepted as the foundations of archival theory, *Respect des Fonds,* Provenance and Sanctity of Original Order. Introduced in 1839, *Respect des Fonds* maintains

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that all records are organized by their creative body as opposed to subject-based arrangement. The Prussian State archivists refined this idea into a more detailed arrangement principle called *Provenienzprinzip*, or Principle of Provenance, in 1881. This principal expands upon *respect des fonds* as records were not only grouped by their source of origin, or provenance, but also that records of one provenance could not be mixed with the records of another. In addition, this principle states that materials should be kept in the order in which they were originally created, later known as the Sanctity of Original Order. While all three developed as practical responses to organizational and bureaucratic needs, these principles have not only remained the foundational concepts of archival science, but the execution of these principles are considered one of the distinguishing features of the archival profession as they are not used by librarians or other documentarians.[7] As a consequence, the influences of these principles have become embedded in the professional identity of archivists.

The significance of these principles to archival work was codified by archival manuals and guides that have remained influential to modern archival practice. Dutch archivists S. Muller, J.A. Feith, and R. Fruin outline the rationale for Provenance and Original Order in their 1898 *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*: "The system of arrangement must be based on the original organization of the archival collection, which in the main corresponds to the organization of the administrative that produced it."[8] They insist that even if the original officials used unusual systems an archivist must be consistent to this existing

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[7] Michael Duchein, "Theoretical Principles and Practical Problems of *Respect des Fonds* in Archival Science," *Archivaria* 15 (1983); Anne Gilliland-Swetland, *Enduring Paradigm, New Opportunities: The Value of the Archival Perspective in the Digital Environment* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2000): 9; Gilliland, Anne J., and Kelvin White. "Perpetuating and Extending the Archival Paradigm: The Historical and Contemporary Role of Professional Education and Pedagogy." *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, 2009: 4-5.
[8] S. Muller et a., *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives* (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1968): 52.

arrangement, maintaining that the original organization is never arbitrary but a consequence of the administrative body of the organization and, thus, a reflection of the record creator. Similarly, British archivist, Hilary Jenkinson, whose 1922 *A Manual of Archive Administration* remains a canon of archival literature, extols the importance of original order. Regarding the significance this principle, Jenkinson suggest the main objective of the archivists is to establish or re-establish the original order "even if, when we look at it, we think we could have done better ourselves."[9] Describing the original arrangement of the records as organic, Jenkinson argues that the records are a natural product of the creative body, making the organic arrangement of the records illustrative of the organization itself. Jenkinson argues that the archivist must avoid intervening in the organization of the records, claiming "What is to be guarded against is the alteration of anything done by the original administrator, the person or body who compiled the Archives: because what they did is a part of the Archive itself."[10] This assessment further demonstrates the need for archivists to leave the original order undisturbed as the arrangement itself becomes a record of the creative body. Following these European traditions, archivist Theodore Schellenberg, whose 1965 *The Management of Archives* was the first archival manual written in the United States, called the Principal of Provenance "inflexible" and "a matter of the highest importance to the archival profession."[11] While he suggests that original order was not necessarily appropriate to all collections,[12] Schellenberg, like his European predecessors, acknowledged that the original order of a collection is valuable because it demonstrated the

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[9] Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration: Including the Problems of War Archives and Archive Making.* (London: Claredon Press, 1922): 82. Although written after Muller, Feith and Fruin, this British work was actually available to most American archivists before the Dutch manual which was not translated into English until 1939.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Theodore Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives* (Columbia University Press, 1965): 105.

[12] Several archivists have critiqued the Sanctity of Original Order as not appropriate for all collections, especially ones which do not have set organizational structures as this disorganization can limit intellectual accessibility. Instead, they suggest that Original Order, while valuable, should not be maintained if it limits accessibility. See: Frank Boles "Disrespecting Original Order" *American Archivist* (Winter 1982): 28.

organic activity of the administration or organization thus providing insight to the creative body itself.

Hilary Jenkinson clearly articulates the relationship between these traditional archival principles and the passive understanding of the archivists' role by suggesting that archival practice should be evaluated by the extent to which the order remains undisturbed. Jenkinson argues that archival intervention in the records maintenance impacts the authenticity of the records:

> The perfect Archive is *ex hypothesi* an evidence which cannot lie to us: we may through laziness or other imperfection of our own misinterpret its statements or implications, but itself it makes no attempt to convince us of fact or error, to persuade or dissuade: it just tells us. That is, it does so *always provided that it has come to us in exactly the state in which its original creators left it.* Here, then, is the supreme and most difficult task of the Archivist – to hand on the documents as nearly as possible in the state in which he received them, without adding or taking away, physically or morally, anything: to preserve unviolated, without the possibility of a suspicion of violation, every element in them, every quality they possessed when they came to him, while at the same time permitting and facilitating handling and use.[13]

With these comments, Jenkinson implies that the organic records of an organization are inherently an unbiased 'truth' that can only become contested through manipulation. Jenkinson's interpretation illustrates the use of these principles to justify a passive approach to archival practice, as any intervention or disruption to the arrangement can be read as a manipulation of the record's meaning.

While archival principles of Provenance and Original Order provided rational for passive archival practice, the emphasis on archivists' objectivity developed from the theoretical influence of positivism, specifically within the field of history. Lead largely by Prussian historian Leopold

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[13] Hilary Jenkinson, " Reflections of an Archivist," in *A Modern Archives Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice,* eds. Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration), 1984, reprinted in 2004: 19-20.

Von Ranke, the positivist approach to historical methods places increased emphasis on archival

research and analysis. Discussing Ranke's influence on the archival field, archival scholars Anne

Gilliland and Kelvin White explain:

> Ranke believed in objective fact as the basis for history. His scientific method of
> historical investigation, which he personified himself through his research in
> archives across Europe, emphasized exhaustive archival research and textual
> analysis of the sources. "Let the sources speak for themselves" was his call to
> historians….His method spurred the development of modern source-based history
> as a professional and academic discipline. It had related archival consequences—
> these new historians…began to agitate for the development of archival
> repositories and trained archivists to oversee them, eventually becoming an
> important part of the founding of the U.S. National Archives.[14]

Understanding historical research and archival practice as a science strips the field of human

subjectivity as the records become indisputable evidence. From this positivist framework, limited

intervention or interpretation of the archivist is essential in allowing evidence to remain true or

unaltered.

As the archival profession shares a close relationship to the history discipline, especially

in the United States, this scientific approach to archival research ultimately entrenched the

profession with positivist assumptions. Although archives and archivists have had a deep

tradition in other countries and societies, archives as a distinct profession and field has had a

relatively short history in the United States. While collecting repositories have existed since the

early 19th century, mostly as regional historical societies, a national system of archives was not

established until the early 20th century. The national archival professional society, Society of

American Archivists, began in coordination with the development of the National Archives in

the 1930s. This first generation of archivists in the U.S. primarily consisted of historians, many

entering the profession through the Historical Records Survey of the Works Progress

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[14] Gilliland and White, "Perpetuating and Extending the Archival Paradigm," 10.

Administration, a comprehensive survey of archives and historical records throughout the nation. Through this large-scale project, archivist Patrick M. Quinn claims, "A corps of young unemployed historians and graduate students were transformed through experiment and experience into a cadre of archivists who would found the Society of American Archivists."[15] As a consequence, almost all archivists in the United States were trained as historians, with many entering the field only when jobs in academia were unavailable.[16] Consequently, the foundations of archival practice were largely shaped by the perspectives and needs of historians, further encouraging archivists to remain objective to maintain an unaltered resource for historical research.

In summary, the principles of archival theory as well as the positivist approach to historical and archival methods have traditionally justified a passive approach to practice that limit intervention to the organic arrangement of records. In discussing this perspective to archival practice, archivists Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz claim, "Archivists have long been viewed from outside the profession…as those who received records from their creators and passed them on to researchers. Inside the profession, archivists have perceived themselves as neutral, objective, impartial."[17] This internal perception of the profession ultimately denies archivists an active role in record creation, management or dissemination, giving archivists little agency to influence society at large through their practice.

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[15] Patrick M. Quinn, "Archivists and Historians: The Times They Are A-Changin'." Midwestern Archivist 2, no. 2 (1977): 6
[16] Ibid.
[17] Cook and Schwartz, "Archives, Reocords, and Power,"1. For the history of the SAA see Luke J. Gilliland-Swetland. "The Provenance of a Profession: The Permanence of the Public Archives and Historical Manuscripts Traditions in American Archival History." American Archivist 54 (Spring 1991): 160-175.

Critiques to Traditional Practice

Critics of traditional archival practice challenge the field's reliance on the positivist assumptions which have justified a passive approach to archival methods. In his criticism of these traditions, South African archivist, Verne Harris, outlines 'core positivist formulations' within archival practice: that the meaning of archives is fixed and uncontested; that archives are the organic product of process, exterior to the archivist; and that archival discourse focused on custodianship.[18] Harris argues that these positivist views hinder archives by narrowing instead of broadening the understanding of records and archives, making the documentation richer and more reflective of multiple voices. Critics to positivism, such as Harris, argue that archives are made up of narratives that are only evidence of perspectives, not universal truths, which consequently allow certain voices to be privileged at the expense of others. Archives can thus be used to exercise authority and control by maintaining narratives that support or reinforce power. Understanding archives as tools of power has exposed the imbalance of traditional archival practice, demonstrating that the seemingly passive approach to practice has ultimately created an archival record biased to those in power.

Fueled in part by the growing influence of postmodern theory, cultural scholars and theorists have explored archives as sites of authority which have not only been biased towards those in power but also influential in maintaining such hegemonic social structures. Regarding the impact of postmodernism's challenge to traditional archival paradigms, Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook claim:

> The postmodern destabilization of our bedrock concepts of reality, truth, and objectivity has placed both power and representation under close scrutiny. Archives and records are not immune to such scrutiny, and indeed our

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[18] Harris, *Archives and Justice.*

professional traditions, so dependent on notions of neutrality and objectivity, are unseated when postmodern concerns for situated knowledge, alterity, hybridity, liminality, and plurivocality are raised.[19]

Contesting the positivist conceptualization of archival work as passive, custodial management of fixed records, this postmodern understanding of archival work is one of active engagement between the archivists and the record. Within this theoretical framework, records are not static, but are constantly evolving as they are continually interpreted with each use. The meaning of each record can never be definitive as each individual has a unique interpretation of the records' meaning in the context of his or her own subjective perspective, undermining the assumptions of universal truths intrinsic to traditional understandings of archives.

As the framework of postmodern theory has helped examine archives' relationship to society as well as archivists' role in record creation, post-colonial scholars have further explored the ways in which archives, and perhaps more importantly, the archiving process, have been used to inscribe power into the historical record. In her examination of colonial archives, anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler suggests colonial scholarship exposes the ways in which passive archival practice has created a historical record privileging those in power:

> We are just now critically reflecting on the making of documents and how we choose to use them, on archives not as sites of knowledge retrieval but of knowledge production, as monuments of states as well as sites of state ethnography. This is not a rejection of colonial archives as sources of the past. Rather, it signals a more sustained engagement with those archives as cultural artifacts of fact production, of taxonomies in the making, and of disparate notions of what made up colonial authority.[20]

Stoler adds, "Colonial archives were both sites of the imaginary *and* institutions that fashioned histories as they concealed, revealed, and reproduced the power of the state."[21] This post-colonial

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[19] Schwartz and Cook, "Archives, Records and Power," 9.
[20] Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance." *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 90
[21] Stoler, "Colonial Archives," 97

framework implied archives are not repositories of historical records, but are instead constructions of knowledge that exert authority by only recording the position of those in power.

As postmodern and post-colonial frameworks have exposed the power imbalance imbedded in archives, archival traditions have perpetuated this hegemony by failing to acknowledge the extent to which archival methods have privileged those in power. In their examination of archival pedagogies, Gilliland and White argue that the discipline has fundamentally been biased towards those in power: "The practice of archivy has always been concerned, first and foremost, with the records of those with the need, the capability, and the power to keep written evidence of their activities."[22] Regarding the influence of such authority on archival traditions, they suggest, "[I]t is reasonable to assume that there are power relationships embedded within the underlying theories underpinning Archival Science whose primary purpose was to support the bureaucratic, accountability, and cultural needs of monarchies, governments, corporations, churches, and expanding empires."[23] This power relationship has been maintained through archival education, which has largely failed to examine the extent to which archival traditions reinforce cultural hegemony: "Both archival educators and practitioners, by virtue of the paradigm that has governed archival theory and practice and the rhetoric of value neutrality, have been agents, consciously or unconsciously, in perpetuating the dominance of narratives, omissions, and perspectives of the mainstream."[24]Similarly, South African archivist, Verne Harris, suggests that most critiques to the archival 'canons' have failed to examine the extent to which the texts themselves have impacted current practice, arguing a theoretical examination of the texts can help contemporary archivists understand how certain

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[22] Gilliland and White, "Perpetuating and Extending the Archival Paradigm," 3.
[23] Ibid, 20
[24] Ibid, 20

voices have been put in the foreground while others have been marginalized.[25] Such critiques

support a need for archivists to be conscious of the relationship between archival practice and

social power, implying that passive approaches to practice can make archivists complicit to

social inequalities or abuses of power.

Understanding archives as a tool of social power inherently biased towards those in

authority, scholars and archivists have questioned both the legitimacy and ethics of archival

tradition's emphasis on neutrality. One harsh critic of archivists' neutrality was Howard Zinn,

author of the 1980 text, *A People's History of the United States,* one of the first historical

examinations focusing on the perspectives of individuals and communities traditionally ignored

in historical scholarship. In a 1970 speech to the Society of American Archivists, Zinn criticizes

the profession for failing to realize the political and social implications of archival practice and

its reliance on neutrality, which ultimately maintained the unequal balances of power within

society:

> [Knowledge] comes out of a divided, embattled world, and is poured into such a world. It is not neutral either in origin or effect. It reflects the bias of a particular social order; more accurately, it reflects the diverse biases of a diverse social order, but with one important qualification: that those with the most power and wealth in society will dominate the field of knowledge, so that it serves their interests. The scholar may swear to his neutrality on the job, but whether he be physicist, historian, or archivist, his work will tend, in this theory, to maintain the existing social order by perpetuating its values, by legitimizing its priorities, by justifying its wars, perpetuating its prejudices, contributing to its xenophobia, and apologizing for its class order."[26]

Discussing the implications of such neutrality, Zinn claims:

> 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....[The] archivist, in subtle ways, tends to perpetuate the political and economic status quo simply by going about his

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[25] Harris, *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective*

[26] Howard Zinn, "Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest." *Midwestern Archivist* 2, no. 2 (1977): 18.

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."[27]

With such accusations, Zinn implies that archivists' efforts to be neutral, in fact, make them complicit to abuses of power as passive practice ultimately maintains the authority of those in control at the expense of the rest of society. Like Zinn, contemporary archival scholars have also challenged the field's reliance on neutrality, suggesting it has too often been conflated with objectivity. According to Jimerson, "Professional standards, including objectivity, need not prevent us from addressing moral, ethical, or political issues. A common fallacy is to equate objectivity with neutrality. One can maintain professional standards even while advocating a cause or defending a moral or ideological perspective."[28] Gilliland makes a similar critique and addresses the social consequences of the field's reliance on neutrality:

> It is inappropriate to perpetuate the inherited myth that either archival institutions or *individual* archival professionals are value-neutral, or even that they need to strive to be value-neutral in order to be trusted with society's memory texts. Institutions and individual archivists, particularly through even routine appraisal, description, and outreach acts, have tremendous cultural, and sometimes also sociopolitical, agency that also has complex temporal dimensions and implications for the public interest. In cases where there is clear evidence of injustice, exclusion, or distortion in the record or in archival practice, using value-neutrality as a reason not to intervene may allow such things to continue unquestioned or unchecked.[29]

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[27] Ibid., 19.

[28] Jimerson, Randall C. "Archives for All: Professional Responsibility and Social Justice." *American Archivist* 70 (Fall/Winter 2007): 77

[29] Anne Gilliland, "Pluralizing Archival Education: A Non-Zero-Sum Proposition," (in preparation), 5. See also: Anne Gilliland, "Neutrality, Social Justice and the Obligations of Archival Education in the Twenty-first Century." *Archival Science* 11 (2011). In this paper, Gilliland addresses the challenge that the controversy surrounding neutrality in the archival field poses to archival educators, especially those with social justice mandates, and ultimately suggests it an ethical obligation for archival educators to raise awareness of the inherent politics of archives.

Such criticism of neutrality suggests that traditional approaches to practice, which encouraged passivity and social detachment, can be unethical when such practice maintains social inequalities and perpetuates abuses of power.

Critics of traditional practice argue that the consequence of a passive approach to practice has been an imbalanced historical record and a failure to adequately document individuals and communities traditionally marginalized in society. The relationship between the historical profession and archives largely contributed to this imbalance in archival representation as US archives were largely dominated by the interests and needs of academic historians, which significantly influenced what documents were saved and how they were organized. Historical scholarship during the majority of the 20th century was focused predominately on the history of the upper class - almost exclusively white, male national figures. The history of the lower class, women, indigenous populations, people of color, immigrants or any communities with little social influence or power were not of academic interests, and consequently ignored in the archival record.[30]

The shift in the history discipline towards social history in the 1960s and 1970s exposed the elitism of traditional archival practice as historians became interested in these previously overlooked populations in society. In the same speech in which he critiqued archivists' reliance on neutrality, Zinn discussed how such practice created an imbalance in documentation and the need for archivists to take a more active approach to representational documenting. He emphasized that the existence, availability and accessibility of documents are determined by those in power, and consequently, such collections privilege those with social influence: "That

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[30] Jimerson, *Archives Power.*

the collection of records, papers, and memoirs, as well as oral history, is biased towards the important and powerful people of society, tending to ignore the impotent and obscure: we learn most about the rich, not the poor; the successful, not the failures; the old, not the young; the politically active, not the politically alienated; men, not women; white, not black; free people rather than prisoners; civilians rather than soldiers; officers rather than enlisted men."[31] This critique emphasizes that archives not only exercise authority by privileging the perspectives of those in power but does so at the expense of the disenfranchised, further recognizing this leads to the continued neglect of these communities as their history will not be documented and remembered.

Ultimately, the critique of documentation failures brings attention to the social role of archives for communities and cultures. Examining this social role, scholars, primarily cultural theorists but also from within the archival field, have utilized the archives conceptually as, what sociologist Mike Featherstone called, "a central metaphorical construct upon which to fashion their perspectives on human knowledge, memory, and power, and a quest for justice."[32] The concept of archives as sites of cultural and historical memory has been used by scholars across disciplines to better understand individuals, cultures and society's relationship to the past. While the discussion of archives, especially from outside fields, has often been used metaphorically to articulate shared cultural discourse and knowledge, there has also been a recognition of the role of physical archives serve in the development of collective memory and identity.[33] In "To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory, and Culture," Kenneth E. Foote claims that archives

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[31] Zinn, "Secrecy, Archives and the Public Interest," 20.

[32] Cook and Schwartz, "Archives, Records and Power," 4.

[33] Featherstone, Mike. "Archiving Cultures." *Journal of Sociology*, January/March 2000: 161-184; Francis X. Blouin, Jr. "Archivists, Mediation, and the Constructs of Social Memory." *Archival Issues* 24 (1999): 101-112; David Lowenthal. "Archives, Heritage, and History." In *Archives, Documentation and Institutions of Social Memory*, edited by Jr. and William G. Rosenberg Francis X. Blouin, 43-45. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

serve as a way to extend communication and sustain memory through the physical collection of

records and collections. Since physical items in archives have more durability than the temporal

forms of communications generally used by society, he argues that archives help extend the

bounds of interpersonal contact. This contact allows many to find connections with the materials

and helps to foster and maintain a collective memory.[34]

Examinations of archives, both conceptually and practically, as a tool for the

development of collective identity and memory have consequently highlighted archivists' own

role in this process. As Foote explains:

> Whether conscious of it or not, archivists are major players in the business of
> identity politics. Archivists appraise, collect, and preserve the props with which
> notions of identity are built. In turn, notions of identity are confirmed and justified
> as historical documents validate with all their authority as "evidence" the identity
> stories so built. While relationships between archives and identity occur across
> disparate historical and cultural contexts, common issues involving the power
> over the record serve to link the crises of identity experienced by a variety of
> subaltern groups desiring to construct a viable, authentic, and cohesive identity.
> Thus, the role of archives and archivists must also be examined against a
> backdrop of this discourse on identity.[35]

Such discussions demonstrate an additional social responsibility of archivists to provide the

resources necessary for identity development. This understanding that archivists have a social

responsibility is further emphasized by discourse on the social consequence of failing to fulfill

this function, specifically for traditionally underserved or marginalized communities. Regarding

the impact of such inadequate documenting, UK archival scholar Andrew Flinn maintains:

> So histories and the memory institutions which tell those histories can play a
> significant role in bolstering the shared identity which underpins the 'imagined'
> community of the nation or a region; but these histories also have important
> lessons about 'belonging' for those who do not find their stories reflected in the

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[34] Kenneth E. Foote, "To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory, and Culture." In *American Archival Studies: Readings in Theory and Practice*, edited by Randall C. Jimerson, 29-46. (Chicago, IL: Society of American Archivists, 2000). See also: Mark Greene. "The Messy Business of Remembering: History, Memory, and Archives." *Archival Issues* 28, no. 2 (2003-2004).

[35] Schwartz, 16

archive and the museum and thus are not invited to share in the meaning. Inclusion of one's story (or of the story of people who were like you in ways with which you identify) in a public history can support an identification with a place and a local or national community. Equally exclusion, absence from, or misrepresentation in those narratives can engender a sense of alienation and non-identification….The positive role that memory institutions, including archives, might play in supporting more cohesive and equitable societies is undermined if the stories they tell, or make available, exclude or misrepresent.[36]

The significance of archives in supporting collective identity and memory, as well as the harm they can cause through exclusion, illustrates an additional manner in which archives exercise social influence. Not only does omission from archives deny such communities the cultural and emotional benefits of shared history, but it also prohibits development of a collective identity that can help organize and empower the community to improve its social status and authority in society at large.

Understanding the significance of archives to the establishment of social power structures and community development has been the primary justification of archival activism, as such social roles imply a responsibility to use this power to balance political and social inequalities. Advocates of archival activism ultimately argue that such active approaches to practice are necessary to redress the social inequities caused by traditional practice.

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[36] Andrew Flinn, "'An Attack on Professionalism and Scholarship?': Democratising Archives and the Production of Knowledge." *Ariadne*, no. 62 (January 2010). The absence of discourse surrounding communities have been examined as a form of trauma by some cultural scholars. See Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

Part II: Activism in Practice

Social Power

An awareness of the social implications of archival practice is essential to any understanding of archival activism. Throughout his examination of archives and justice, Jimerson implies that social consciousness of the political and social functions of archivists is necessary to use archival practices to promote justice, relating his own social consciousness which developed at an early age through witnessing his parents work in the civil rights movement and later expressed through his own anti-war activism in the Viet Nam War era. This political awareness ultimately influenced his understanding of archives by making him receptive to the ways in which archives have traditionally created social inequalities: "Combining my personal values with my responsibilities as an archivist offers a sense of professional purpose with a social conscience."[37] Yet, such social consciousness seemingly challenges archival traditions' encouragement of personal detachment from practice. Regarding this presumed disconnect between activism and archival traditions, Gilliland argues:

> Existing archival codes of ethics strongly discourage bringing personal values and motivations into professional conduct. However, the lineage of this concern tends to be based on cases where individuals have acted out of a desire for personal gain or advantage rather than out of a sense of altruism or moral imperative, for example, when the archivist promotes the role of the archives as a sanctuary for records or the subjects of records who might otherwise be at risk from official authorities if they are identified.[38]

This assessment suggests that the fields' insistence on archival neutrality has been founded on the false assumption that archives are fundamentally neutral and equitable, which fails to acknowledge cases where impartiality may actually perpetuate disenfranchisement or abuse. In

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[37] Jimerson, *Archives and Power*, XVII
[38] Gilliland, "Proposition, Pluralizing Archival Education," 4.

this way, personal engagement in archival practice can be motivated by moral imperatives, making social consciousness crucial in identifying when such interventions are necessary.

Archivists have largely been criticized by scholars, both within and outside the archival discipline, for not expressing a consciousness of the political and social significance of their work. Regarding the disconnect between the theoretical examinations of archival power and archival practice, Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz claim:

> Yet power - power to make records of certain events and ideas and not of others, power to name, label, and order records to meet business, government, or personal needs, power to preserve the record, power to mediate the record, power over access, power over individual rights and freedoms, over collective memory and national identity - is a concept largely absent from the traditional archival perspective. Ironically, at the very time that academic scrutiny across a range of disciplines is trained on the power of the archive in a metaphorical sense, archival practice perpetuates the central professional myth of the past century that the archivist is (or should strive to be) an objective, neutral, passive (if not impotent, then self-restrained) keeper of truth.[39]

Such academic critique articulates a belief that archivists have failed to recognize the power and authority in their position, denying them agency to take a more pro-active approach to practice that would better fulfill their social responsibilities.

Yet, while scholars have been critiquing the profession since the 1970s for failing to acknowledge the social significance of their work, there have been several examples of archivists demonstrating such social consciousness and exploring the ways in which their practice can better fulfill these responsibilities. One of the earliest articulations of archivists' social agency through practice came from Hans Booms, an archivist in West Germany during the post-WWII period who served as the President of the German Federal Archives from 1972-1989. Booms considered the archival record, the "documentary heritage of society," an understanding which implies a responsibility of archivists to decide what makes up this heritage. Articulating this role,

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[39] Cook and Schwarz, "Archives, Records, and Power," 5

he claimed, "[I]t is the archivist alone who has the responsibility to create, out of this overabundance of information, a socially relevant documentary records that is, in spatial terms, storable and, in human terms, usable."[40] He later continues, "Archivists, therefore, in fulfilling their role in the formation of the documentary heritage, hold the monopoly of an activity which dictates what kind of cultural representation of society, in so far as this is reflected by the public record, will be handed down to future generations. That such a function is being performed should raise the question of whether that function requires certain societal controls."[41] Booms suggested that any understanding of archival practice as detached from subjectivity is fundamentally false as any practical decision depends on archivists' subjective experience and judgment: "Archivists are human beings: as an *animal social,* the archivist will unavoidably appraise records according to those subjective opinions and ideas which have been acquired as part of the mindset of one's own time."[42] Not only did Booms demonstrate an awareness of the social role of archival practice, but his discussion of appraisal attempts to fulfill this social function though a more active approach to practice. Booms proposed a "documentation plan" for appraisal, which consisted of archivists learning the history of events surrounding the time of the record's creation and, with the perspective of historical distance, evaluate the long-term significance of separate events within the time period, using such judgment to then make the appraisal decisions. This approach demonstrated a dramatic shift from the passive understanding of archival practice as it not only required archivists to take a proactive approach to appraisal but also acknowledges the significance of archivists' personal subjectivities in their practice. Booms

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[40] Hans Booms "Überlieferungsbildung: Keeping Archives as a Social and Political Activity" *Archivaria* 33,(Winter 1991-1992), 77. See also Hans Booms. "Society and the Formation of a Documentary Heritage: Issues in the Appraisal of Archival Sources." *Archivaria* 24 (Summer 1987).
[41] Ibid, 78
[42] Booms "Überlieferungsbildung"

approaches to appraisal were largely unavailable to North American scholars until the 1990s,

when the Canadian journal *Archivaria* offered the first English translations of his work, at which

point it had a significant impact on the understanding of the social role of archives.

In the United States in the 1970s, a community of archivists, most new to the field,

expressed a social consciousness primarily engendered by the social shifts throughout the nation

in the late 1960s and 1970s. Regarding the significance of this time period to archival social

consciousness, Phillip Mason, president of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) from

1970-1971, highlights the significance of the previous decade including the wars in South East

Asia, student protests, and Civil Rights Movement: "It is little wonder that the demand for

change within the archival profession, as in other related disciplines, was beginning to surface as

the 1960s ended. Specifically, there were calls for more involvement in all aspects of the archival

profession, for changes in the operation of the SAA, and for the SAA to be more responsive to

social concerns within society as a whole."[43] In addition to the social changes throughout the

country, the 1970s also saw significant changes to the composition of the profession, as a new

generation of archivists entered the field, more often as a first career choice as opposed to an

alternative to academia. Mason assesses, "As a result of the social movements of the sixties

many younger archivists have adopted values and priorities differing markedly from those of

archivists who entered the profession earlier. Traditional attitudes toward work itself have

changed and institutional or employer loyalty has been replaced by loyalty to one's

profession."[44] Among this new generation, a small group of archivists organized the group, ACT

(Archivists for Action), in response to Howard Zinn's critique of traditional practice and

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[43] Philip P. Mason, "Archives in the Seventies: Promises and Fulfillment." *American Archivist* 44, no. 3 (Summer 1981): 200.
[44] Ibid., 206.

challenge to create a more representative and balanced historical record. Many within this group,

which began in 1971 with less than 20 members, considered themselves archival activists, as

ACT member Archie Motley illustrates in his 1984 article discussing the progress of the group:

> [A]rchival activists have contributed much to the democratization and
> improvement of our professional organizations and have helped us to recognize
> the relationships between our work and the world around us. Activist archivists
> are those archivists who persistently seek to address major social concerns of the
> archival profession and the public it serves and to improve their own work places,
> their professional organizations, and the archival profession in general….[T]hey
> believe that progress comes more frequently through direct responsible action
> than through passively waiting for change."[45]

To address the difference in perspectives throughout the profession, a special committee for the

1970s was developed within SAA in an attempt to make the association more relevant and

responsive to the values and needs of members. Among the findings of the committee, which

met six times between 1970 and 1972, was a need to diversify recruitment as well as a push

towards addressing more social concerns, a point met with significant controversy within SAA.[46]

Gerald Ham, SAA president from 1973-1974, gave voice to this new generation of

archivists, advocating a more active professional role that challenged the custodial role

articulated through archival traditions. In his presidential address for the 1974 Society of

American Archivists annual meeting, Ham agreed with Zinn's critique of archivists'

documentation failures. Even beyond Zinn's critiques, Ham claimed that empirical evidence of

archival collections demonstrated that even documentation of more traditionally valued subjects

was not comprehensive. Furthermore, he argued that the most significant concern was not the

evidence of significant archival gaps, but instead the lack of concern among the archival

community who had demonstrated little regard or value in developing adequate appraisal

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[45] Archie Motley, "Out of the Hollinger Box: The Archivist as Advocate." *Midwestern Archivist* 9, no. 2 (1984): 65.
[46] Mason, "Archives in the Seventies," 201.

strategies. Ham strongly critiqued the passive, custodial image of appraisal that he argued

contributed to the overall limitations of the archival record.[47] Archivists, such as Ham, voiced a

new understanding of the profession as active in creating the historical record, encouraging

archivists to better understanding the consequences of their appraisal decisions and actively

collect more diverse and representational records.

In an examination of the National Archives and archival theory from 1954 to 1984, Trudy

Huskamp Peterson notes a larger shift in perspective regarding the role of the archivist by the

1980s:

> The archivist's role shifted from accepting what is a record, to defining what
> should be in the record. This is activist, interventionist, and far from the posture
> of the archivist as evaluator, judge, and preserver of what has been created. The
> leap in this country has been from what is, is record: to how best to create and
> maintain what the records generator wants to create; to telling the records creator
> what should be created. This is truly new ground.[48]

This assessment suggests that within the archival profession, the 1970s served as a turning point

in which a growing number of archivists voiced a social consciousness regarding the power and

responsibilities of their work.

Ultimately, such social consciousness of the power of archives and archivists' own

subjectivity and agency is fundamental to any concept of archival activism. Beyond

consciousness of social influence, activism further implies an embracement of this social power

to use archival practice to promote social justice. Emphasizing the significance of turning social

consciousness into action, UK archival scholar and educator Andrew Flinn claims, "If archives

and other memory institutions are really going to fulfill their potential as bodies that inspire and

enrich all by reflecting the full cultural diversity of society, then these institutions and those that

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[47] Gerald F. Ham. "The Archival Edge." *American Archivist*, (January 1975); Gerald F. Ham. "Archival Strategies for the Post-Custodial Era." *American Archivist* 44 (Summer 1981).
[48] Trudy Huskamp Peterson. "The National Archives and the Archival Theorists Revisited, 1954-1984." *American Archivist* 49, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 133.

work in them are going to have to embrace the transformative change in their practice."[49] Efforts to promote such social change through archival practice can be understood around the other five concepts of archival activism: neutrality/transparency, diversity/inclusivity, community engagement, accountability and open government.

Neutrality/Archival Transparency

Because the perspectives and biases of archivists have traditionally resulted in disenfranchisement, archivist using the agency of their practice to promote social justice must be fully aware of the ways in which their own understanding influences their practice. As archival activism demands archivists' active engagement with the records, archivists must be transparent about both their own perspectives and relationship with the records to provide users with the context of the archival process which may influence their understanding of the records. [50]

For full transparency, archivists must be self-reflexive of their own perspectives and biases as well as their interaction with the records to ascertain the ways in which these shape the records. Regarding the influence of the archivists on the records, Verne Harris suggests archival practice is closer to storytelling than to science. Relating records to stories, Harris argues that both the story itself as well as the way it is told matters, implying the archival methods ultimately become part of the story. Because their methods become a part of the record's history and context, Harris argues archivists must be as transparent as possible about the layers of interventions made throughout the appraisal process as well as their own interpretations, suggesting archivists provide a disclosing statement or a biographical sketch. This would give users access to all appraisal documentation and help them better evaluate the records. He claims

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[49] Flinn, ""An Attack on Professionalism and Scholarship"
[50] Harris, *Archives and Justice;* Gilliland "Proposition, Pluralizing Archival Education: A Non-Zero-Sum,"8

that this approach is the difference between "democracy and dominations." He states,

"Oppressors claim that their story is the truth and hide evidence of the storytelling…Democrats

allow space for other, sometimes competing, stories and expose their own story's telling."[51]

Inclusivity of Documentation and Representation

One of the most significant consequences of traditional archival practice has been an

imbalanced archival record dominated by the narratives of society's elites. A growing

understanding of the cultural injustice of archival exclusion has highlighted archivists'

responsibility to ensure a more representational historical record, requiring archivists take a more

active approach to collecting.

To balance such inequalities, Harris stresses the need of 'hospitality' to welcome the

'other' into the archive, which includes any community or individual not traditionally

represented in the dominant historical narrative. Harris articulates his understanding of his

mission as an archivist: "I am advocating a receiving of every advent with respect for otherness

and passion for justice. Otherness and justice: each assuming the other, requiring the other; each

equally beyond assurance of a final coming."[52] As this quote indicates, Harris' understanding of

archival activism is strongly connected to diversity and inclusivity of narratives. Overall, one of

the key ways that Harris suggests archives can work to balance societal inequalities and work

towards social justice is to bring multiple perspectives into the archives, specifically those that

have been traditionally unrepresented.

In examining the ways in which archival practice can more actively document society,

Gilliland argues that archivists should strive for pluralism instead of diversity in the archives.

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[51] Harris, *Archives and Justice,* 104
[52] Harris, *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective*, 36.

Distinguishing pluralism from diversity, she suggests: "it encompasses all populations, worldviews, and contexts, and is less politically-charged and polarizing than is *diversity*, which is often focused on notions of *difference*, a term that is used by some to underscore and value distinctiveness, but that can also promote 'othering.'"[53] While pluralism shares the same goal of inclusivity, it removes a possible valuation of perspectives that may be suggested by discussions of diversity or 'the other,' suggesting instead that all narratives are of equal importance. This may include subjects and positions that are widely repudiated.[54] The distinction between diversity and pluralism was addressed in a 2008 committee of archival educators and students. In critiquing diversity, they argued:

> [Diversity] as a concept, along with its supporting rhetoric and policy of multiculturalism, tends to play into 'us' and 'them' ways of thinking, with its emphasis on the differences between the mainstream and minority or marginalized communities or groups….In contrast, *pluralism* does not privilege any one community or group. It acknowledges that there is a lot of "messiness" and nuance that needs to be exposed, addressed and engaged. Additionally, it strives to give equal footing to the range of perspectives explored, encompassing such considerations as culture, race, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic standing, gender, gender identity, sexuality, disability, and citizenship status, as well as recognizing the intersections between them."[55]

Despite the distinctions, the emphasis on diversity and pluralism are both clear departures from a traditional understanding of archival theory founded on a singular, incontrovertible historical narrative. Instead, the historical record consists of a multitude of narratives, each an individual, subjective perspective, complicating any notion of objective facts. Awareness of the multiple views of narratives is a defining component of archival activism, in which archivists not only acknowledge but embrace their agency in documenting and giving voice to those often silenced by people in power.

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[53] Gilliland, Anne J. "Proposition, Pluralizing Archival Education: A Non-Zero-Sum."
[54] For further discussion of the significance of such collections, see Boles, Frank. "'Just a Bunch of Bigots': A Case Study in the Acquisition of Controversial Material." *Archival Issues* 19 (1994).
[55] Ibid,. 7

The Documentation Strategy is one of the most widely known and discussed examples of archivists taking a more active role in archival practice to collect records that better represent society at large. This appraisal theory was first introduced by Helen Samuels in 1986 and proposed that archivists more actively document specific topics, communities or regions as comprehensively as possible. This model consists of defining the topic to be documented, choosing administers to organize the undertaking, examining the available resources and selecting and placing materials in institutions. This strategy depends on the cooperation of institutions to create integrated programs to better document the defined issues or topics.[56] The documentation strategy starkly contrasted traditional appraisal models as it inherently brought archivists' subjectivity to the collecting process. In his discussion of documentation strategy, Terry Cook discusses the importance of archivists' embracement of their subjectivity, claiming "like scientists, they should accept rather than deny their own historicity."[57] While several projects attempted to use the documentation strategy, most were deemed unsuccessful and impractical to execute.

Recent projects have demonstrated collaborative efforts to promote more comprehensive documentation similar to the Documentation Strategy. In 2009, University of California, Los Angeles libraries began a large-scale project, "Collecting L.A." to comprehensively document the history of Los Angeles. Not only has this project focused on acquiring new collections, but it also works to uncover 'hidden' collections that have been inaccessible, either within the existing

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[56] Helen W Samuels. "Who Controls the Past." *American Archivist* 49 (1986); Phillip Alexander and Helen W. Samuels. "The Roots of 128: A Hypothetical Documentation Strategy." *American Archivist* 50 (Fall 1987); Terry Cook, "Documentation Strategy." *Archivaria* 34 (Summer 1992); Richard J Cox and Helen W Samuels, "The Archivists' First Responsibility: A Research Agenda for the Identification and Retention of Records of Enduring Value." *American Archivist* 51 (Winter/Spring 1998); Timothy Ericson, "To Approximate June Pasture: The Documentation Strategy in the Real World." Archival Issues 22, no. 1 (1997); Cox, Richard. "The Documentation Strategy and Archival Appraisal Principles: A Different Perspective." *Archivaria* 38 (Fall 1994).
[57] Terry Cook, "Documentation Strategy" *Archivaria* 34 (Summer 1992): 188.

UCLA collections or within other repositories. UCLA is working closely with different organizations with primary documents related to the history of Los Angeles to support efforts to collect and make accessible materials documenting the city.[58] On a wider-scale, the Association of Research Libraries organized a Working Group of Special Collections to develop strategies to encourage improved collecting policies and collection management to bring greater access to 19th and 20th century materials. While not focusing on the documentation of a specific topic, this working group demonstrates a collaborative effort among repositories to promote greater overall preservation of and access to materials.[59]

While not physical repositories or archive collections, online projects have explored ways to bring attention and visibility to existing archival collections in an effort to document a subject or community more comprehensively. One such example is the LGBT Religious Archives Network (LGBT-RAN), an online project that identifies archives and collections containing materials related to LGBT religious movements. While the site does give access to some digitized records including oral history recordings, LGBT-RAN is not an archive but instead a resource to facilitate research and access to the topic by providing information and links to other archives with relevant holdings.[60] A similar documentation project is the CASBAH (Caribbean Studies for Black and Asian History) which identifies available sources on black and Asian history in UK archival collections. In discussing this project, UK archivist Louise Craven argues that this project demonstrates a departure in the understanding of archival practice, with the archivist's role actively involved in the dialogue between the past and the present, responding to

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[58] Dawn Setzer, "UCLA Library Project to Highlight L.A.'s Cultures, Communities, Histories," *UCLA Newsroom* (July 23, 2009) http://newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/collecting-los-angeles-96365.aspx (accessed November 16, 2010).

[59] ARL Working Group on Special Collections. *A Discussion Report from the ARL Working Group on Special Collections*. (Washington DC: Association of Research Libraries, 2009).

[60] http://www.lgbtran.org/index.aspx

current cultural landscapes to identify relevant records in collections.[61] Both the CASBAH and

LGBT-RAN project demonstrate archivists actively working to bring increased visibility and

accessibility to records related to communities traditionally excluded from archives.

In many cases, archivists must expand their understanding of records to better document

cultures and communities that have traditionally been unrepresented, or misrepresented,

especially for cultures with colonial histories. In discussing the importance of redefining archives

to document such cultures and communities, archival educator Jeanette Bastian claims, "To fully

prepare to embrace this universe, it is crucial to recognize first that the records created by these

communities may not conform to the traditional concept of records, and secondly that the notion

of an archive itself can be challenged by reconsidering the nature of records."[62] Bastian uses

Carnival in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands as a case study to explore the use of performance and

cultural events as archival records: "As iterative and renewing processes, festivals, celebrations,

and commemorations form essential components of the cultural fabric of all societies,

perpetuating their collective memory, continuing their traditions, and proclaiming community

identity. As a result, these cultural performances are records of the essence of the community

itself, archives of the community ethos. Carnival is such a living cultural archive."[63] Bastian

argues that elements of Carnival, such as parades and troupes, can be read as records by

examining their context, structure and cultural knowledge content. Recognizing the challenge of

archiving such records, she suggests that solutions "may not necessarily lie in new techniques or

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[61] Louise Craven, "From the Archivist's Cardigan to the Very Dead Sheep: What are Archives? What are Archivists? What do They Do?" In *What are Archives?: A Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives: a reader*, edited by Louise Craven, 7-30. (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008).
[62] Jeannette A. Bastian, "'Play Mas': Carnival in the Archives and the Archives in Carnival: Records and Community Identity in the US Virgin Islands." *Archival Science* 9 (2009):115
[63] Ibid.

in methods unfamiliar to archivists, but in the archivist's own recognition and acceptance of cultural performances as records." She continues:

> Translating that recognition into action will require a willingness to document and unite many elements of an extended longitudinal cultural performance—be they artifacts, music, photographs, video, text—within a cultural context over time. The seemingly endless capacity of the Web, the increasing nimbleness and object-orientation of archival tools, and the multilayered and three-dimensional nature of carnival 'documents' themselves suggest ways in which this might be done and how an archive might be presented, accessed, and maintained as a living evolving record.[64]

Despite the challenges, she argues that developing strategies to archive such records remains necessary as they offer unique representations of communities and cultures that traditional archival practices have failed to document.

In her 2009 doctoral dissertation from Ohio State University, Alana Kumbier explores archival practices beyond traditional archival methods that have been enacted by artists, filmmakers, family historians and activist-archivists, to document ephemeral record projects including the Atlas Group Archive documenting the Lebanese Civil War, documentaries, genetic geology, drag king performance participatory archive projects, and online archives of Hurrican Katrina and Rita survivors. Discussing the significance of such projects, she argues, "They remind us that the historic record is shaped by a multitude of factors; that the under-representation of certain subjects in the archives is not always a matter of neglect, disinterest, or exclusion – not everyone wants to be included in the archive, or at least not necessarily on the terms available in traditional and grassroots archives, or through other means of documentation….In those cases, critical archival practitioners have developed alternative strategies for representing the past." [65] This understanding that some cultures and communities

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[64] Ibid., 123.
[65] Alana Kumbier, "Ephemeral Material: Developing a Critical Archival Practice" (PhD, diss., The Ohio State University, 2009).

cannot be represented through traditional archiving demonstrates that a significant amount of cultural knowledge is necessary to identify community specific records, indicating that archivists must work in collaboration with these communities to represent them accurately in the archive.

In response to the lack of representation in traditional archives, communities often began to document their own history and culture independently as a way to construct and also validate a collective identity and history. These community-based archives often developed from the collections of individuals or small groups who preserve their own histories and cultures and give the community increased visibility.[66] This expansion of archives brought new people with more diverse backgrounds and missions into the field. Generally community activists, the individuals developing and maintaining these special subject archives were motivated by deep personal involvement and commitment to documenting their own community, demonstrating personal and emotional engagement at odds with traditional archival practice. In his examination of the history and development of such community archives, Flinn identifies two commonalities:

> First…They have a strong ethos of independence and autonomy. Whilst the majority of these groups wish to work with local formal heritage organisations, many also wish to do so on their own terms and in ways that do not compromise their independence. Secondly the motivation and guiding objective for people participating in this kind of activity is almost universally related to a determination to tell a story (of a place, or an occupation, or the experience of a class or an ethnicity) which is not otherwise represented in formal heritage collections and histories. For some (say black, lesbian and gay, or feminist) archives, rooted in (and best understood as) social movements seeking political change, this is quite an explicit motivation but even those conforming to a less explicit political

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[66] For articles addressing the histories of community-based archives see Joan Nestle, "The Will to Remember: The Lesbian Herstory Archives of New York." *Journal of Homosexuality* 34 (1998); Kepner, Jim. "An Accidental Institution: How and Why a Gay and Lesbian Archive." In *Daring to Find Our Names: The Search for Lesbigay Library History,* edited by James V. Carmichael. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998); Brenda Marston, "Archivists, Activists, and Scholars: Creating a Queer History." In *Daring to Find Our Names: The Search for Lesbigay Library History*, edited by James V. Carmichael. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998); Thistlewaite, Polly J. "Building 'A Home of Our Own:' The Construction of the Lesbian Herstory Archives." In *Daring to Find Our Names: The Search for Lesbigay Library History* edited by James V. Carmichael. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998); Elisabeth Kaplan, "We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity." *American Archivist* 63 (Spring/Summer 2000).

agenda, frequently exhibit a sense that they are documenting lives and stories that would not otherwise be told.[67]

While the agenda of these activities focuses on documenting a specific community as opposed to inclusivity, such community-base archives promote justice by preserving histories and narratives that have been traditionally excluded from traditional archives.

The relationship between such community-based archives to the archival field at large is complicated by the desire to remain autonomous of traditional archives, often due to lack of trust because of past exclusion. As academic and professional interest in community archives increases, Andrew Flinn argues that it is important for professional archivists and archival scholars to not attempt to take control, of such projects in attempts of assistance:

> But it should also be incumbent upon archivists and other heritage professionals to support, in creative and in post-custodial ways, the physical and digital futures of those independent archives which are outside the walls of the formal archive or museum. If this can be done then independent and community archives may continue to help to democratise our archival heritage, contributing to a national archive that exists beyond the National Archives, a record of the public that draws upon more than the public record and ultimately to histories in which those previously with little or no voice can speak clearly for themselves.[68]

This assessment suggests that formal archivists can best support these community-based archives in their efforts to bring visibility and voice to their history by giving them the autonomy to do so independently.

Community Engagement

In addition to increasing the preservation of and access to archival materials of traditionally excluded cultures and communities, archives can promote social justice by engaging with these communities and cultures throughout the archival process. Andrew Flinn directly

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[67] Flinn, "An Attack on Professionalism and Scholarhip?"
[68] Ibid.

relates such engagement to activism, claiming these efforts can help 'democratise the archives."[69] Such participatory projects encourage the inclusion of multiple narratives, providing additional information to the materials and even allowing the subjects of archives an opportunity to tell their own stories.

Participatory projects have largely focused on strategies that engage with communities throughout the description process of archival practice. Description is arguably the most interpretative aspect of archival practice as it involves not only analysis but also narrative construction. Recognizing this process' role in shaping the meaning of records, Verne Harris and Wendy Duff proposed a new "liberatory standard" of description which not only relinquishes some of the archivist's authority but also allows for an evolving understanding of the records. As each description impacts the meaning of the records, creating new records and additional provenance to the materials, Harris and Duff argue that archivists should not dictate a singular way to describe archives but accept that there are multiple provenances, voices, contexts and relationships needing to be documented. Because of the impossibility of representing all subjects adequately and without privilege, especially those usually rendered voiceless, Harris and Duff suggest archivists should explore new ways of inviting other narratives into the description process. Their proposed 'liberatory standard' would be as transparent as possible about the biases of the archivists as well as the descriptive system and would require archivists to uncover the dominant or oppressive voices in the record making process, requiring archivists become engaged with the traditionally marginalized communities. This liberatory standard must be

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[69] Ibid. For additional discussions on the incorpoartiona of user feed-back into finding aids see Light, Michelle, and Tom Hyry. "Colophons and Annotations: New Directions for the Finding Aid." *American Archivist* 65 (Fall/Winter 2002). Michelle and Hyry also suggest a new section in finding aids to provide information about the archives processor to provide additional context to the description.

permeable to allow archivists to relinquish some of their power and allow the voices of others to help describe the records and encourage a process of open-ended record making.[70]

As the discussion of colonial records, such as Carnival, illustrated, cultural knowledge is necessary to adequately document communities and cultures. The significance of this 'insider' knowledge in understanding and describing archives highlights the potential resource that such participatory projects can provide, as they encourage contributions of insider knowledge generally inaccessible to archivists. Regarding this potential, Flinn claims, "If these knowledge-rich communities can be persuaded (and acknowledged and properly rewarded) to share their knowledge, then there is great potential for deepening and extending the detail (and hence access points) contained within the descriptions of archive and other heritage collections."[71] Several projects from major archival repositories have attempted to encourage contributions of user-content. The Polar Bear Expedition Digital Collections project at the University of Michigan, attempted to utilize online features to integrate traditional finding aids and collaborative data, such as allowing users to create profiles, bookmark and comment about the records. The information that users contribute help to provide additional information and context that can be helpful for other users. While traditional finding aids act as tools to guide researchers to specific informational content, the Polar Bear Expedition, which still assists users to locate primary records, also acts as an informational source itself because it provides an increasing amount of supplemental materials as more users contribute to the site.[72] The British National Archives also

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[70] Wendy M Duff, and Verne Harris. "Stories and Names: Archival Description as Narrating Records and Constructing Meanings." *Archival Science* 2 (2002).

[71] Flinn, "An Attack on Professionalism and Scholarship?"

[72] Ghetu Magia Krause and Elizabeth Yakel. "Interaction in Virtual Archives: The Polar Bear Expedition Digital Collections Next Generation Finding Aid." *American Archivist* 70 (Spring/Summer 2007).

introduced a similar project, "Your Archives" which encourages users to engage with archival records and is an effective example of application of the concept of archival activism.[73]

In addition to assisting in the description of records in existing physical archives, digital technologies are allowing new opportunities for communities to represent themselves through online archive projects. Such online archives allow individuals to collaborate in documenting their community, which is not only defined by culture but also around any shared experience, interest or any other type of identification. In such projects, individuals cannot only contribute to the archive by uploading and sharing their own documents (blog writings, photos, etc.) but also adding contact by commenting on others' posts, often filling in gaps in information such as identifying content in photographs. Because of these features, Flinn argues such projects "offers opportunity to share memories and build upon that would otherwise most likely remain uncaptured."

While these approaches have attempted to integrate user feedback or content, archivist Max Evans proposes a new strategy of encouraging user participation in both archival description and processing, which he calls 'the commons-based peer-production.' He argues that all organizations should follow the Greene and Meissner model of processing (More Product, Less Process),[74] which involves minimal processing and descriptive finding aids to provide high-level access points, and make this description accessible online. While minimal, this description would still uncover hidden collections. The prioritization of collections for more in-depth processing should incorporate user interests and demands. While most repositories digitize materials that have been fully processed and described, Evans instead argues for mass

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[73] Prescott, "The Textuality of the Archive."

[74] Mark Greene and Dennis Meissner. "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Processing." *American Archivist* 68, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2005).

digitization without extensive metadata or description for each image. Instead, individuals would

find individual documents online among the other digitized images within the folder/file as they

would in the reading room, without item level description. This would not only give an increased

accessibility to the materials but also minimize handling. He suggests this 'digitizing on demand'

approach demonstrates a commons-based system, in which users ultimately determine the level

of intellectual access given to the materials. Furthermore, he argued that making more materials

accessible online without extensive metadata or description will give wider exposure to potential

volunteers who may want to work on describing the materials. The responsibility to prioritize

collections for description and digitization as well as description itself would no longer be the

sole responsibility of archivists, but instead of anyone interested in the materials – significantly

increasing the amount of people working together to process archives and ultimately processing

an exponentially larger amount of the archives.[75]

    Beyond encouraging insiders to provide cultural knowledge to integrate into the archival

processing, Mick Gooda, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner with

the Australian Human Rights Commission, argues it is important to encourage involvement

throughout the management of a community's records, especially in cases of indigenous peoples.

Proposing principles to develop protocols for archiving records of indigenous communities,

Gooda emphasizes the importance of community participation in the decision making for the

records, which would ultimately make them more significant stakeholders in the archival

processing of their culture.[76]

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[75] Evans, Max J. "Archives of the People, by the People, for the People." *American Archivist* 70 (Fall/Winter 2007).
[76] Mick Gooda, "The Practical Power of Human Rights: How International Human Rights Standards Can Inform Archival and Record Keeping Practices." *Archival Science* (December 2011): 1-21.

Overall, such participatory archival process demonstrates activism by not only encouraging inclusivity of documentation and narratives but also relinquishing archival authority and control. Such projects provide an arena for communities to be actively engaged with their own representation in the archival record. Flinn suggests the potential of participatory projects demonstrate "a culture shift which embraces democratisation, a de-centring of authority and perspective, a refiguring of thinking and practice, and a thorough-going participatory ethos."[77]

Accountability

As archives have traditionally been controlled by individuals, organizations or governments in social authority, they have often failed to preserve or make accessible documentation of abuses of power or human rights violations. Records that would hold those in power accountable for injustices can be excluded from archives through not only purposeful destruction but also through archival practice biased to privilege only the perspectives of those in power, which may fail to identify such abuses. The importance of records as evidence of abuses of power has made archivists, according to Jimerson, "key players in the often-contentious process of political, corporate, and academic power relationships."[78] Yet, Jimerson also suggests that many, including even archivists, remain unaware of archivists' important role in accountability:

> The authority that archivists exercise within their domain partakes in political power, since access to information and knowledge conveys such power. Yet it is a power often unrecognized by most members of society, who do not see or understand the role archivists play in the contested realms of power distribution and control. Although public controversies, such as the fight for control of Richard Nixon's White House tape recordings, occasionally bring documentary sources to the forefront, archivists seldom share the spotlight. However, archival

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[77] Flinn, "An Attack on Professionalism and Scholarship?"
[78] Jimerson, *Archives Power,* 246

records often provide a means for holding public leaders accountable and for documenting significant societal events. Control over records documenting the past often provides power over current and future events. Records may define the intersections of history, memory, and political power. Without accurate records it is difficult to determine what actually occurred in the past."[79]

As Jimerson suggests, archivists' role in accountability is most often recognized in cases of extreme abuses of power, such as the Watergate investigation, the Iran-Contra affair, and the Enron scandal, as well as cases of systematic violation of human rights, persecution or genocide, such as the Holocaust or Apartheid in South Africa.

Yet, even in such widely recognized examples of abuse, many remain unaware of the extent to which archives were used to exercise power and perpetuate systematic abuse. Seeing archives' role in disenfranchising the voices of non-white populations under Apartheid, South African archivist Verne Harris claims archival records were used to maintain social power structures and hierarchies by silencing the histories and narratives of the oppressed and destroying or failing to preserve records of abuses or marginalized communities. Regarding the ways in which power was exercised through archives, Harris explains:

> In imposing apartheid ideology, the state sought to destroy all oppositional memory through censorship, confiscation, banning, incarceration, assassination, and a range of other oppressive tools. This was the context within which public archivists practiced under apartheid – struggle informed not only their institutional and social environments, it permeated the fabric of their daily professional work. Impartiality was patently a pipe-dream.[80]

As the entire environment in which archivists lived and worked was controlled or shaped by those in authority, the position of those in power ultimately influenced all aspects of their practice. Because of the extent of the state's control and influence, Harris suggests that evidence of not just crimes or abuses but also any opposition was either destroyed or surpressed, leaving

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[79] Ibid., 140.

[80] Harris *Archives and Justice,* 73-174. See Also Cox, Richard J., and David A. Wallace. "Introduction." In *Archives and the Public Good: Accountability and Records in Modern Society,* edited by Richard J. Cox and David A. Wallace. (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 2002).

no resources to hold the state or those in power accountable for their actions. As the state was successful in destroying or suppressing most evidence of abuses, Harris suggests it is the archivists' responsibility to find records, including non-textual records such as oral histories, which documents the counter-narratives that had been suppressed throughout apartheid. Such efforts would support accountability, not from the records created by those in power, but from the perspectives of those who had been the subjects of the abuse.[81]

As Harris' discussion of identifying and preserving documents accounting the abuses under apartheid, promoting archival accountability is not limited to intervening in the destruction of government records, but often includes efforts outside of the government archives to and make accessible alternative records or counter-narratives that also account for such violations. Jimerson suggests an example of such efforts to promote accountability can be seen in the development of human rights archives: "By creating human rights archives, [human rights] activists suggest that they can help construct a narrative of the past which gives adequate emphasis to the pain and suffering of victims of human rights abuses."[82] As Jimerson suggests, while archives with explicit human rights and social justice missions demonstrate almost every concept of archival activism, one of their most significant functions is holding those in power accountability for abuses. By collecting records of activists and social and political movements, these archives not only account for the human rights violations motivating the activism but also an organized opposition against those in power. The significance of accountability to such archives is demonstrated by the history behind the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, the largest post-World War II political poster collection in the United States. Now housing over 80,000 posters, the archive grew out of the personal collection of the organization's founder,

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[81] Verne Harris, "The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa" *Archival Science* 2 (2002).
[82] Jimerson, *Archives Power,* 358

who began collecting posters in the early 1980s with the specific intention of bringing attention to the U.S. interventions in Central America through poster exhibitions. As the collection grew, new exhibitions were developed to educate the public about other human rights struggles, with the archive now having over two-dozen traveling exhibitions on topics including women's rights, labor solidarity and the prison industrial complex.[83] The international non-profit organization, WITNESS, also specifically seeks out documentation of human rights abuse for accountability, focusing on video recordings. Inspired by the social impact of bystander video footage of the police beating of Rodney King, WITNESS was founded with the mission to "empower human rights defenders to use video to fight injustice, and to transform personal stories of abuse into powerful tools that can pressure those in power or with power to act." The organization not only maintains the WITNESS Media Archive, holding over 4,000 hours of video footage, but also works with international partners to provide training and tools to assist in video documentation, including software and cell-phone applications to facilitate video preservation, basic metadata capturing and transferring to the media archive. The organization's work demonstrates active involvement in assisting in the documentation of human right abuses and preserving the media attained for future use. [84]

By preserving records of social movements, such archives also demonstrate organized opposition against abuses of power and human rights violations. As Harris suggested in his discussion of the control of apartheid, such oppositional voices are often suppressed by those in power, primarily because evidence of opposition often fuels further opposition. The mission statements of social justice archives often articulate the significance of giving voice to communities generally marginalized by history. For example, the mission statement of the

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[83] www.politicalgraphics.org
[84] www.witness.org

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Southern California Library, reads: "The Southern California Library is a people's library dedicated to documenting and preserving the histories of communities in struggle for justice and using our collections to address the challenges of the present so that all people have the ability, resources, and freedom to make their own histories."[85] As this and similar mission statements illustrate, such human rights archives not only promote accountability by documenting opposition to human rights violations but by also raising awareness to similar social justice movements. These examples demonstrate the significance of not only collecting materials documenting transgression but facilitating access to these records to bring awareness to the injustice to hold those culpable accountable.

By maintaining and making accessible records documenting abuses of power, the archival process also provides resources to redress such violations. Regarding archives significance in redressing injustice, Greg Bradsher asserts, "Although archives can serve to reinforce oppressive political regimes, they can also provide the antidote for poisonous efforts to subvert people's rights and interests."[86] Recognizing the ways that archives can help restore rights emphasizes the importance of specifically preserving and making accessible materials that protect the rights and interests of all. Such use of archives is illustrated by the efforts to restore assets to the families of Holocaust victims. [87]

In many cases, archivists can help protect human rights by educating communities on the importance of keeping their records to protect their interests. This role as an advocate requires

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[85] http://www.socallib.org/about/index.html. Similarly, CSPG's mission statement is: "CSPG demonstrates the power and significance of these artistic expressions of social change through traveling exhibitions, lectures, publications, and workshops. Through our diverse programs, CSPG is reclaiming the power of art to educate and inspire people to action."

[86] Greg Bradsher. "Turning History into Justice: The National Archives and Records Administration and Holocaust-Era Assets, 1996-2001." In Archives and the Public Good: Accountability and Records in Modern Society, edited by Richard J. Cox and David A. Wallace. Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 2002.

[87] Jimerson," Archives for All"

archivists be proactive in recognizing circumstances in which individuals and communities are

vulnerable for exploitation as the significance of such records are often only known after the

violation. An example which both illustrates the significance of records to redress rights and

assists archivists in identifying the need for archival advocacy is the case of the braceros, a group

of over 4 million Mexican farm workers who worked in the U.S. from 1942-1964 through a

program run by the U.S. and Mexican government. For much of the program, the U.S. and

Mexican governments garnished 10% from their wages, to be put aside until they returned to

Mexico as an incentive, often without the workers knowledge. A group of these workers joined

together as the Proyecto Bracero (Bracero Project) to sue the U.S. banks as well as lobby the

Mexican government to retrieve their money. In 2003, the braceros were given immediate health

benefits and a special committee was formed, which suggested a repayment of $10,000 and was

eventually reduced to a $3,500 offer to each individual (significantly less than the money owed).

However, to claim the money, the braceros were expected to produce multiple forms of

documentation, including the Mexican Bracero Workers Registration list, official Mexican

citizen identification, original work contract, pay stubs and a consular registration card, as well

as file the claim in person. In addition, heirs to the claims needed the same paperwork as well as

marriage certificate, birth certificate or proof of inheritance in addition to the death certificate of

the claimant. Because of these extensive documentation requirements, many of the claimants

were unable to retrieve their entitled money. An effort in 2006 to enact a similar program with

the same wage garnishments demonstrated a continued need to educate communities about the

importance of record keeping to protect their rights.[88]

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[88] Jennifer Osorio, "Proof of a Life Lived: The Plight of the Braceros and What it Says About How We Treat Records," *Archival Issues* 29 2 (2005)

In addition to educating about records to facilitate financial or legal compensation, archives can also serve to redress injustice by bringing resolution to communities to aid in recovery from trauma or abuse. Ian E.Wilson discusses many examples in which archived records enabled compensation and official apologies by enforcing accountability, but also suggests that the act of preserving the memory may serve a significant psychological need in redressing these abuses: "Archives have an essential role in helping survivors to tell their stories and bear witness for the future."[89] In addition to the emotional support such documentation may provide survivors, Wilson also asserts documenting such abuses may serve a significant purpose to society at large: "The archives… shed light on the darker places of the national soul and help a society learn and move forward, better informed and alert to weakness….We obviously cannot right the wrongs of the past, but informed by our knowledge of the past, we can endeavor to labor to ensure our society deals justly with no less compelling issues of today." [90] With this, Wilson implies archives can not only assist in redressing past abuses but also help prevent future transgressions by bringing awareness to these past injustices.

Open Government

While preserving records promotes social justice through accountability, access to such records remains crucial. Regarding access, Jimerson states,

> Democracy rests on the informed citizenry. The public's right to know what its political, corporate, and academic leaders are doing must be held sacrosanct. Although personal privacy and national security concerns must be acknowledged and protected, in most instances the need for open access to information prevails. There can be no accountability without documentation, but documentation itself is effective only when people can access reliable records.[91]

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[89] Ian E. Wilson, "'Peace, Order and Good Government': Archives in Society." *Archival Science* (Dec 2011), 2.
[90] Ibid., 6.
[91] Jimerson, *Archives Power,* 262.

As Jimerson suggests, the significance of open government for promoting social justice directly relates to accountability as it ensures public awareness of government action. The importance of open government has been supported, not just by those within the archival community specifically focused on social justice, but also publicly by professional organizations, such as the Society of American Archivists. In the past decade, the SAA has repeatedly made public statements on government efforts to both hinder and promote accessibility to government records, such as President George W. Bush's Executive Order 13233. Signed in November of 2001, this order gave authority to grant access to presidential and vice-presidential records to the executive office, including former presidents, as opposed to the archivist of the United States who previously had this power. In response, SAA President, Steven Hensen, made a public statement claiming: "The archival and public information implications of this order are profound, being contrary to established archival principles and standards, being inconsistent with existing statutory law, and, most important, being at odds with the principles of open access to information upon which our country is founded."[92] Hensen also urged fellow SAA members to contact their congressional representatives in an effort to voice opposition to the order. With this public statement, titled "A Call to Action on Executive Order 13233," the SAA not only took a public position on a social and political issue but also urged individual archivists to take action.

Several online projects have also helped promote open government by increasing access to government records. For example, the National Security Archive at George Washington University is a repository of government records that collects and publishes declassified

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[92] http://www2.archivists.org/news/2001/call-to-action-on-executive-order-13233. (assessed on November 18, 2010) When President Obama returned this authority to the national archivists by issuing Executive Order 13489 (on the day following his inaguartion), SAA president sent the President a thank you letter on behalf of the organization in which he note only voiced support for the President's pledge of open government, but also encouraged him to select a Archivists of the United States with archival training and background to further this mission of transparency. http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/ObamaReEO13233.pdf (assessed on November 18, 2010)

documents, often making them accessible online.[93] The growth of online archives projects such

as openthegovernment.org have provided new avenues of access to government records,

demonstrating increased awareness of the significance of open government.

Conclusion: Encouraging Activism within the Archival Field

Despite projects demonstrating archival activism within the field, there continues to be

resistance to such changes to traditional archival practice. This opposition is clearly articulated

through an anecdote Andrew Flinn relates regarding a referee's comments to a proposed

participatory archives project:

> Whilst two of the reports were very positive, one was more than a little hostile.
> The reviewer was scathing about the focus of the proposed research on the
> democratisation of knowledge production, dismissing the notion as part of a short-
> term political agenda that was detrimental to the idea of scholarship and one with
> which the archive profession should not concern itself. In particular, scorn was
> reserved for the idea that, in future archive catalogues, many 'voices' might be
> enabled 'to supplement or even supplant the single, authoritative, professional
> voice', an idea which was described as being, *in extremis*, 'a frontal attack on
> professionalism, standards and scholarship'.[94]

This response demonstrates that traditional understanding of the archival role as passive and

neutral persists within the field.

Drawing a relationship between this resistance and archival traditions, a community of

archival educators and scholars are exploring new approaches to archival education which would

create a more inclusive archival record. Regarding archival education's role in the opposition to

archival activism, Anne Gilliland and Kelvin White argue that education has perpetuated

dominant power hierarchies in archival records by failing to acknowledge the social power of

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[93] http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB327/index.htm
[94] Flinn, "An Attack on Professionalism and Scholarship"

archival practice.[95] Recognizing the need to adapt archival education to meet these social roles

and frustrated by a lack of progress, several archival educators and students developed the

working group, Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group (PACG), to identify ways that

archival education can encourage students to better understand the social power of archives.[96]

The overall questions which emerged demonstrated a belief that archival education should

incorporate principals of archival activism:

> How do we move from an archival universe dominated by one cultural paradigm
> to an Archival Multiverse; from a world constructed in terms of "the one" and
> "the other" to a world of multiple ways of knowing and practicing, of multiple
> narratives co-existing in one space? An important related question was: How do
> we accept that there may be incommensurable ontologies and epistemologies
> between communities that surface in differing cultural expressions and notions of
> cultural property, and find ways to accept and work within that reality?[97]

Within this group, some participants directly voiced a need for activism and "wanted to explore

how to mobilize the archives to reclaim the past, preserve cultural memory and address issues

related to social justice, the digital divide, human rights, activism and advocacy."[98] Overall, this

effort to incorporate concepts of activism into archival education demonstrates a community of

archivists, educators and students, who feel that the field should embrace such activist roles,

further implying that the field overall continues to discourage such practice.

This education project, as well as all archival scholarship and projects advocating social

justice, highlight the need to evaluate the acceptance of archival activism currently within the

field. If large-scale projects to promote concepts of archival activism are implemented, there

needs to be tools available to measure the acceptance and application of archival activism so the

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[95] Gilliland and White, "Perpetuating and Extending the Archival Paradigm," 20
[96] The Archival Education and Research Institute (AERI) Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group (PACG),
"Educating for the Archival Multiverse," 7
[97] Ibid., 8.
[98] Ibid., 10

success of such efforts can be evaluated.[99] Furthermore, in her discussion of the ethics of

archival education, Gilliland also addresses the need for archival educators to be responsive to

practioners as well as academic peers. In addition, she identifies the expectation that research in

professional fields, such as Information Studies, have practical applications. [100] These two points

demonstrate the need to examine practicing archivists' perceptions of this scholarship, especially

their understanding of the applicability of archival activism. Findings can help assess the

reception of this scholarship and evaluate the impact of this discourse to determine if adjustments

are necessary to gain further acceptance throughout the field.

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[99] The need for a tool to measure the success of changes to curriculum was discussed at a working group meeting
held in November 2010. The meeting aimed to move forward with the goals of PACG. Participants including
archival educators from University of California, Los Angeles, University College London, University of Toronto,
Monash University, as wells as doctoral students from University of California, Los Angeles.
[100] Gilliland, "Neutrality, Social Justice and the Obligations of Archival Education and Educators in the Twenty-
First Century."

Chapter 3: Methodology

Part 1: Research Design

The study utilized qualitative, mixed methods, including individual and group interviews to identify participants' perceptions of archival activism as defined by current scholarship and to evaluate the extent to which the concepts of archival activism have been accepted and applied to practice.

<div align="center">Framework</div>

The qualitative methods of this study utilized a person-centered approach to encourage participants to draw upon their professional experience to evaluate the concepts of archival activism. The interviews included biographical questions concerning professional and educational background, which addressed their motivations for entering the field. In her examination of qualitative methods, Jennifer Mason discusses the method of life history or biographical interviewing in which interviews facilitate participants in the telling of their personal narratives instead of more strictly adhering to the interview script. The aim of this focus is to use these narratives to reveal the participants' construction of their understanding of the world.[101] The relationship between an individual's personal narrative and his or her understanding of his or her work is clearly illustrated by both Verne Harris and Randall Jimerson in their discussions of activism. Each uses his own personal history in the examination of archival activism, demonstrating that their biography contextualizes their personal understanding of the role of archivists. Archivists' understanding of the purpose of their work can be closely related to their own background, making a person-centered approach appropriate for the study. In

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[101] Jennifer Mason, "Qualitative Interviewing: Asking, listening and interpreting." In *Qualitative Research in Action,* by Tim May, 225-241. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2002).

her examination of archival activism, Anne Gilliland claims that archivists' personal histories are often directly linked to their acceptance of activism, as archives' role in promoting social justice can be a motivation for entering the field. Gilliland further suggests there has been a lack of research on the relationship between archivists' personal histories and their practice, demonstrating a need for such biographical framework in research.[102]

This biographical approach also addressed the educational background of the participants, which can vary significantly among those practicing in the field. Throughout the history of the profession, there has been a lack of standardization of archival education. While a Masters of Library and Information Science degree has become widely accepted as an education standard for the profession, archivists continue to enter the field from different backgrounds and consequently, archivists' familiarity with archival scholarship may vary significantly. Since resistance to archival activism may stem from the challenge the concept poses to archival traditions, examining participants' archival education and relationship to archival scholarship was an important variable to examine.

Subjects

Since the study focused on activism in practice, the subject pool was restricted to archivists who were managing and maintaining archival repositories or special collections and did not include archival educators or scholars who were not currently practitioners. The study did not use current professional titles to define archivists since professional responsibilities are not consistently tied to specific titles. While outside the archival field, personal papers or manuscript collections are commonly considered archives, the definition is less clear within the archival

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[102] Gilliland, Anne J. "Proposition, Pluralizing Archival Education: A Non-Zero-Sum," (in preparation): 14

community. Traditionally, archives are defined as organizational, governmental or business records, while personal papers are manuscripts. This strict definition has had a direct impact on the understanding of professional titles and positions within the field, with archivists generally being individuals managing archival records and manuscript curators or manuscript librarians managing personal papers. However, as social history has impacted researchers' understanding and use of records, the management of these records has consequently evolved into the realm of archival practice.[103] For the purpose of this study, practicing archivists were defined as any professionals working with primary documents including both traditional archival and institutional records as well as personal papers such as journals, correspondence, scrapbooks, and ephemera.[104] Similarly, repositories were broadly defined to include, but not be limited to: local, state or federal archives; university or college archives; community-based archives or historical societies; special collections and manuscript libraries.

The subjects of the study were archivists practicing in the Midwest, as defined by states represented in the Midwestern Archives Conference. The region includes rural and urban communities with diverse types of institutions including major research universities, local historical societies, state and local government offices and religious institutions. The region is diverse politically, representing both 'blue' and 'red' states and regions. Unlike the coasts which are often perceived as being more liberal or progressive, the Midwest is often portrayed as the 'Heartland' or 'Middle-America,' implying an inherent belief that the region is more representational of the rest of the country. While this depiction may be a stereotype, the decision

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[103] Caroline Williams, "Personal Papers: Perceptions and Practice" in *What are Archives? A Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives: a reader*, edited by Louise Craven, 7-30. (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008).

[104] Profession titles were not considered when determining eligibility as professional responsibilities are not consistently tied to specific titles, Caroline Williams, "Personal Papers: Perceptions and Practice" in *What are Archives? A Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives: a reader*, edited by Louise Craven, 7-30. (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008).

to focus on the Midwest was made to avoid the potential critique of regional bias. Further studies may focus on other regions to determine if such a bias does exist.

Pilot Study

Because of the potential resistance to the concept of activism, the framework and approach to the interview instrument was essential as the choice of words or directions of questions may have unintended influence over the participants' reactions to the study, and consequently, their responses. A pilot study consisting of individual interviews was conducted with the primary aim of refining the interview instrument. Terms related to activism or social justice may be immediately rejected because of their challenge to archival principles. However, archivists may oppose the terms while still demonstrating an awareness of their social role and an acceptance of the concepts of activism. Many may connote activism and social justice directly to partisan politics which they may feel should not directly influence practice. In addition, some may vocalize an opposition to such concepts because they believe it is the appropriate response given the field's traditions. Overall, the use of any loaded terms may illicit responses which may not accurately reflect their beliefs and perceptions on the topic.

Because the goal of the pilot study was to test the usability of the interview questions, three of the four subjects were colleagues who could also participate in a debriefing following the interviews. The fourth subject was recruited through a local archives meeting. Although a small group, there was some diversity in demographics, education and professional experience:

- two identified as male; two as female
- two were Asian Americans, two were Caucasian
- two had graduate degrees in history, one had a masters degree in Moving Image Archive and Preservation, one had a MLIS and was currently enrolled in an IS doctoral program
- two of the participants have been in the field for almost 30 years, one for over 10 years, and one for three years;

- one has worked exclusively in a university archives; one has experience working with historical societies, community-based archives, state archives, and university archives; one has worked primarily in university special collections; and one primarily in community based archives.

The questions used for the first interview avoided the use of any terms that could potentially connote activism or social justice, with only one question directly addressing the participant's personal understanding of archives role in society. Instead, the term 'responsibility' was used in an attempt to illicit reflections on the larger social functions of archival work. However, the responses focused almost exclusively on the details of practice with little if any reflections on the archives larger role in society. Yet, during the debriefing, the participant articulated an acceptance of many of the concepts of activism, including efforts to actively pursue acquisitions related to communities or topics traditionally excluded in the archives as well as outreach to bring awareness of the significance of archives to local communities. Regarding the disconnect between the interview responses and the information shared in the debriefing, the participant stated that the questions seemed to focus almost exclusively on practice, especially the use of the term 'responsibility.' Overall the findings of this initial interview demonstrated a need to more directly address participants' understanding of archival work in relationship to society at large.

The second version of the interview questions was much more successful in encouraging responses that addressed the participants' understanding of the significance of archival practice in society (See Appendix I: Pilot Study Interview Questions). In addition, the debriefing indicated that these interview questions encouraged responses that more accurately represented the participant's perceptions. The three final interviews generated data that could be used to identify and measure concepts of activism among the participants as each demonstrated different levels of acceptance around different concepts:

- The second participant demonstrated a consciousness of the social role of

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archivists in creating the historical record for society; however, responses did not indicate acceptance of any of the six key concepts and in fact articulated support for traditional understandings of archival practice.

- The third participant articulated a social consciousness regarding the archivists' responsibility to preserve a historical record of society that is accessible to future researchers. The interview responses indicated an acceptance of the concepts of Inclusive Documentation and Representation and Community Engagement. This acceptance was primarily demonstrated by the participants' emphasizing the significance of access to materials, including making diverse materials more accessible and encouraging new users.
- The fourth participant expressed a consciousness of archivists' social influence by directly discussing archivists' responsibility in preserving the histories that have generally been ignored. Furthermore, the participant clearly articulated an awareness of the traditional biases of archival practice and responsibility of archivists to balance the record: "Certain mainstream history gets taken over by winners….and little by little you bring out histories and other perspectives. The archives role is to fill in those gaps and to bring in another layer to that history." The interview responses indicated a clear acceptance the concepts of Inclusive Documentation and Representation and Community Engagement. The responses suggested an acceptance of Transparency to the extent that the participant articulated a significant amount of self-reflection about the personal relationship to the records.

The aim of this approach was to encourage responses that demonstrated participants' understanding of the social role of their work as archivists as well as their personal motivations behind their practice. Such data could be used to evaluate the extent to which participants' understanding of their work and their professional motivations reflect concepts of archival activism. However, this approach was problematic as participants were not asked about archival activism directly and consequently, their responses were not necessarily indicative of their perceptions of the topic, as became apparent in post-interview debriefings. For example, one participant articulated an acceptance of many of the concepts of activism in the debriefing, including efforts to actively pursue acquisitions related to communities traditionally excluded from archives. When asked why this was not expressed during the interview, the participant said he/she did not think this area of his/her work was relevant to any of the questions asked. While the debriefings demonstrated that the indirectness of the questions may result in participants

inadvertently failing to demonstrate an acceptance of activism, it was also possible that

participants may purposefully avoid vocalizing support of activism as such ideas may be deemed

inappropriate by some within the field. Ultimately, as this approach did not directly address the

topic of archival activism, it would be difficult to determine the extent to which the participants'

responses fully reflected their perspectives on the topic of archival activism. Furthermore, this

approach would have required significant interpretation of the participants' responses, which

may not have resulted in an accurate assessment of their perspectives.

The final interview instrument ultimately took a much more direct approach to addressing

the topic of archival activism by providing participants with summaries and quotations from the

scholarship on archival activism and asking them to evaluate the literature based on their

professional experience (See Appendix II: Final Interview Schedule). The summaries and

quotations were used in an effort to provide fuller context to avoid any immediate responses

participants may have to specific loaded terms. Before focusing on the scholarship on activism,

the participants were given a copy of the SAA Code of Ethics to review and asked the extent to

which they feel it is significant and applicable to daily practice (See Appendix III: SAA Code of

Ethics). [105] The intended purpose of examining the code of ethics was to evaluate the extent to

which the currently accepted professional ethics apply to everyday practice. The discussion then

focused on activism, beginning with the broader idea of social power and consciousness before

moving onto the remaining core concepts. For each, the summary or quotation was read and the

participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the concept or statement; thought it

appropriate for the profession; and the extent to which it is feasible or realistic to integrate into

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[105] The study used the Code of Ethics in place at the start of data collection, April 2011, which were approved by
SAA in 2005. A revised Code of Ethics was made available January 2012, after about half of the data had already
been collected. While the SAA Code of Ethics was included in the interview, the discussion did not generate
significant data relevant to the examination of archival activism. The participants' responses were all very
consistently supportive of the codes, with very little range in extent.

practice. The interview also included two introductory professional and educational questions used to examine the participants' motivations for entering the field as well as the extent to which they felt their educational background influenced their daily practice. This interview approach helped ensure the topic of archival activism was discussed directly and that the participants would reflect on each key concept. In addition, such questions also generated more consistent data that better facilitated comparison between users.

Individual Interviews

The individual interviews were conducted by phone to include a broader region in the study as it would not require travel. The interviews were audio-recorded and were approximately sixty minutes long. The participants were given brief summaries or quotations from recent literature on archival activism and asked to evaluate the topic by drawing upon their own experience in the archival field. The interviews in this study were guided or semi-structured, interviews, a method often used for exploratory and inductive studies that focus on understanding how people view and interpret their world. [106] This method allowed flexibility to elicit more in-depth user response, while still giving guidance to address key issues to compare the data between participants. The tone of the interviews was internationally informal to encourage the participants to be more reflective on their work and the profession at large. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were given an opportunity to add anything that they felt was important regarding their work which may not have been discussed.

Prior to the interview, participants were sent an email with the informed consent form and a link to the demographic survey. The first question of the survey consisted of a yes-no

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[106] Susan E. Beck and Kate Manuel. *Practical Research Methods for Librarians and Information Professionals.* (New York, NY: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 2008).

check-box asking if the participant had read and fully understood the consent form. The survey included personal and professional demographic questions including gender identification, ethnicity, undergraduate and graduate fields of studies, and archival education. (See Appendix IV: Demographic Survey). The language for the demographic survey were drawn from the A*Census survey conducted by the Society of American Archivists. The demographic questions were only used as variables in analyzing the data of the study and did not impact recruitment or participation in anyway.

Group Interviews

Group interviews were used to explore the concepts of archival activism more thoroughly. Susan Manuel and Kate E. Beck describe focus groups as exploratory sessions seeking to thoroughly examine participants' perceptions of systems, situations or services thus allowing the researchers to determine factors shaping these views. They suggest focus groups are particularly popular and effective for library science since the groups focus on perceptions and allow immediate feedback on an issue.[107] Focus group participants are not only prompted by the moderator's script but also by the ideas and responses of fellow participants. Unlike the interviews which are limited between the interviewee's and the interviewer's perspectives, the focus group format allows for multiple perspectives on the discussion on key concepts or topics of archival activism. In their 2008 study, Duff, Dryden, Limkilde, Cherry and Bogomazova examined the viewpoints and value of archivists regarding their perception of user studies to develop a questionnaire best suited to meet the archivists' needs for user feedback. The researchers utilized five focus groups with semi-structured scripts. In this paper, the researchers

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[107] Beck and Manuel. *Practical Research Methods for Librarians and Information Professionals*.

offer an in-depth review of the effectiveness of focus-groups for their research, analyzing the strengths and limitations of the method. They suggest they utilized focus groups as a way to better explore the archivist's own feelings and believed that directed conversation between participants would encourage more diverse and substantial discussion.[108]

Group interviews were also audio-recorded and participants were given the informed consent and a link to the demographic survey in an email prior to the group interview. For time consideration, participants were asked to participate in a brief phone interview prior to the group session to address the two professional and educational background questions, as these would take up a significant amount of the group time while not encouraging significant group discussion. Asking these questions individually in a preliminary phone interview, usually lasting no longer than ten minutes, made the most productive use of the group discussion time. This proved to be effective and helped to keep the group session at approximately ninety minutes. Because of the size of the region, focus groups were organized around the Midwestern Archives Conference (MAC) Annual Meeting and the SAA Annual Conferences as such settings bring potential participants to a centralized location, allowing more regional diversity to group. Since limiting focus groups to conference participants may have biased results, several local focus groups in cities throughout the region had also been planned. Cities were selected based on diversity in size, demographics and the number of repositories in the region.

To deal with the logistical difficulty in organizing focus group sessions, the research methods of the study were modified to include video conferences in an attempt to conduct more group interview sessions as the format would not require participants meet at a central location.

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[108] Wendy M Duff, Jean Dryden, Carrie Limkilde, Joan Cherry, and Ellie Bogomazova. "Archivists' Views of User-Based Evaluation: Benefits, Barriers, and Requirements." *American Archivist*, (Spring/Summer 2008).

As for the focus groups, video conference participation included taking the online survey and participating in the preliminary phone interview.

Recruitment and Sampling

Since one of the primary focuses of this study was to determine a potential disconnect between archival scholarship and practice, the subject pool was not limited to membership directories in professional organizations. Since membership in professional organizations such as the Society of American Archivists or MAC generally includes subscriptions to scholarly literature or discounts to professional conferences, members may be more familiar with archival scholarship and literature than archivists who are not members. Random sampling for participant recruitment was generated from a master list of repositories located in the 13 states represented in MAC, gathered from three directories: The Repositories of Primary Sources, which includes a list of over 5000 websites for archival and manuscript repositories; the membership directory for the Society of American Archivists (SAA); and the membership directory for Midwestern Archives Conference (MAC). The Repository of Primary Sources directory includes corporate, regional, public and private collections. The site has been maintained since 1995 and has been updated within the last 18 months. There are 642 repositories in the states in the MAC region listed in the directory.[109] The SAA and MAC membership directories were only used to identify additional repositories in the region. No individual membership information was collected. A search by state was used to locate any repositories represented in the SAA or MAC directories that were not included on the Directory of Repositories of Primary Sources. The random sample was generated by entering all of the repositories into an Excel spreadsheet, sorting alphabetically

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[109] http://www.uiweb.uidaho.edu/special-collections/Other.Repositories.html

to check for duplicate records, and then sorting the listing with the randominazation feature offered in Excel.

For individual interview and video conference recruitment, a participation request was sent to the general contact of the repository randomly selected from the master inventory (See Appendix V: Random Recruitment Email). This initial contact offered a brief description of the project as well as the qualifications for participation.

For the focus groups conducted at the MAC and SAA conference, participants were recruited by posting an inquiry to the MAC, SAA and the SAA Roundtable email listserves (See Appendix VI: Focus Group Recruitment Listserve Email). [110] In addition, focus group recruitment emails were sent to the general contact of all the repositories in the city hosting the conference. For the local focus groups, recruitment emails were sent to all repositories in the selected cities from the master list of repositories. Once the repository had been contacted for a local focus group, it was removed from the master inventory as a potential contact for individual interviews or video conference recruitment. Individuals who responded to the focus group recruitment emails or listserve postings expressing interest in participation in the study, but unable to participate in the focus group, were sent a follow-up email asking if they would instead be interested in participating in a phone interview covering the same topics as the focus group. There were two different versions of the follow-up email depending on the reason the individuals could not participate in the focus group; either: 1) the individual was unable to attend the focus group meeting, or 2) not enough individuals were recruited to hold a focus group in that location. Two versions of the follow-up email were necessary because individuals interested and able to

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[110] The roundtables listserves that recruitment emails were sent to include: Public Library Archives/Special Collections Roundtable; Issues & Advocacy Roundtable; Human Rights Archives Roundtable; Reference, Access and Outreach; Lone Arrangers Roundtable, Archives Management Roundtable; Labor Archives Roundtable; In addition, a MAC conference organizer forwarded a recruitment email to the entire MAC mailing list.

attend a focus group (reason 2) needed an explanation as to why it could not be held in their location. (See Appendix VII: Recruitment Emails for Participants Interested But Unable to Attend Focus Group).

For participation, both individual and group interview participants were entered into a raffle for a $50 gift certificate for participation.

Modifications to Recruitment and Research Methods

Several modifications to the research and recruitment methods were made based on participants' suggestions and challenges that arose as the study progressed. The first modification involved the summaries of the scholarship used in the interviews. Originally, participants were not provided with the summaries prior to the interview. However, following the first participation session, which was a focus group, the participants commented that they would have preferred to have the summaries prior to the meeting to have the chance to think about the points more fully. This suggestion seemed beneficial to the study goals as it could help participants offer more in-depth responses during the interview. For the proceeding individual and group interviews, participants were sent a copy of the Society of American Archivists Code of Ethics and the quotations and brief summaries of the scholarship on activism two to three days prior to the interview (See Appendix VIII: Summary of Concepts to be Sent to Participants). Several participants voiced appreciation in receiving the information ahead of time. The logistical difficulties of organizing the focus groups necessitated modification to recruitment and research methods. Organizing the local focus groups proved especially difficult as the participant pool was limited by the number of repositories in the region. Attempts were made to organize focus groups in three cities: Springfield, Illinois; Milwaukee, Wisconsin and

Indianapolis, Indiana. However, no more than one person expressed interest in participating in any single city, so the local focus groups were not conducted. This ultimately resulted in both a modification to recruitment and to the group interview methods. In regards to recruitment, the participants who did respond with interest in the local focus groups were asked if they were interested in participating in the individual phone interview as an alternative. The methods of the study were further modified to use video conference as the format of conducting group interviews instead of focus groups as recruitment would not be limited by location. Video conference recruitment followed the same sampling methods as the individual interview recruitment.

Data Analysis

All individual and group interviews were fully transcribed prior to analysis. The analysis of the data consisted of examining all of the notes of the interviews and recordings of the interviews to identify recurring themes and concepts. The data was analyzed primarily around the six core concepts of activism and additional themes that emerged. The variables of the study included demographic information gathered through the survey including age, gender identification, racial identification, number of years in the field, and education as well as additional variables drawn from the preliminary questions. The software, Dedoose, was used to manage, code and analyze the data.

Advantages of Methodology

The methodology of the study was successful in generating significant data on the practicing archivists' perspectives on the concepts of archival activism from current scholarship.

Interviews, both individual and group, also demonstrated ways in which practicing archivists see the concepts currently being incorporated into practice. In some cases, such examples have not been discussed in current scholarship, perhaps because this scholarship has primarily been produced by scholars, not practicing archivists. In addition, the format gave the participants the opportunity to express the extent to which they believe such ideas are practical and realistic to everyday practice, which is also an area where their perception and those of scholars can differ significantly. Regarding the advantages of interview formats, while individual interviews could generate significant data, group interviews had the potential to generate more detailed, richer data as it not only recorded the primary response but also the other participants' feedback, comments and shared experiences. However, the group format could also be problematic as the other participants' influence may impact results to some degree. For example, there were some points that were only discussed by two participants, both the only participants in a two person group interview. The topic was introduced by one participant, the second participant agreed and the two conversed on the topic. This generated data of two participants identifying the point. However, if the participants had been in separate individual interviews, it is very likely the second participant would not have introduced the topic on his/her own. For the purposes of an exploratory study, the benefits of the data produced from the more in-depth discussion outweighed these few instances of potentially inflated agreement.

Researcher Transparency and Disclosure

Given the centrality of personal transparency to definitions of archival activism, it is essential to be transparent of my own history, perspectives and biases as a researcher that may impact this project. My initial interest in becoming an archivist grew out of my undergraduate

work as a history major, which introduced me to the special collections library at my university. While I was initially attracted to the field because of the intimacy of reading letters, journals and other primary documents, I became increasingly aware of the social power of the work as I realized the extent to which archivists determined which documents are preserved and made available to researchers. For my archival education, I earned a masters degree in public history with a concentration in archival management. For both my bachelors and masters degrees, my primary research focus was gender history. This research along with my growing involvement with LGBTQ archives and politics developed an understanding of archivists' agency to be activists by preserving and bringing visibility to histories or communities traditionally excluded from archives. I entered the doctoral program at UCLA to further research the role of archives for traditionally marginalized communities, primarily focusing on LGBTQ archives. Throughout my archival education, I have remained committed to archival practice and have had experience working and volunteering at diverse repositories including a state historical society, university special collections, a public library archives, and community-based archives. For the past five years, I have been the archivist for a special collection with a social justice mission. As a practicing archivist, I am conscious of my social responsibility and strive to promote social justice in my work. As a scholar, I also aim to promote social justice through my research by identifying the ways in which activism can be incorporated into practice.

Despite belief in full transparency, I did not disclose that I was a practicing archivist to the study participants. While my professional experience may have potentially made them more comfortable given the perceived disconnect between academics and practice, I felt that any potential benefit would be counterbalanced or negated if they asked where I worked as the social justice focus of the collection I manage may convey my own position on archival activism. After

the interview was concluded, the participants were given the opportunity to ask me questions,

and several asked what my professional plans were after completing my doctorate,

demonstrating an interest in knowing if I intend on a career in academia or in practice. At this

point, I informed them, truthfully, that I intended on a career as a practicing archivist although I

would welcome the opportunity to teach.[111] Given participants' perceptions of the word

"activism" (which will be discussed in Chapter 9), I believe that this lack of transparency was

indeed necessary as some participants would very likely not have been as candid if they

considered me an activist.

Part II: Recruitment Results and Study Participants

The study used several methods to recruit participants. A comparison of the response

rates to the different approaches was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the methods for

recruitment for future archival research on activism. The total number of participants in the study

was twenty-four: fifteen individual interview participants and nine group interview

participants.[112] Of the group interview participants, five participated in focus groups and four

participated in video conferences.

Recruitment Response Rates

Three different types of direct emails[113] were sent to recruit participants for the study:

Random – Phone Interviews; Random – Video Conferences; and Local Focus Groups. While the

Random – Phone Interview emails specifically recruited individual interview participants, the

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[111] In one case, I did reveal my professional experience as a participant began giving me advice on entering the field out of school, and I thought it would be both awkward and disingenuous to let the participant continue advising me, especially if he/she later learned that I was already practicing. However, this was at the conclusion of the interview and would not have impacted the responses.

[112] An additional interview was conducted but had to be dismissed due to ineligibility. The recruitment email and response was not included in the calculations for response rates in Table 3.1

[113] Direct emails are emails sent directly to the repository as opposed to emails posted to listserves.

Random – Video Conference and Local Focus Groups emails recruited either group or individual

participants as phone interviews were offered as an alternative to individuals unable to

participate in the group interview (See Tables 3.1: Individual Interview Recruitment Methods

and Table 3.2: Individual Interview Recruitment Methods).

Table 3.1: Individual Interview Recruitment Methods

Recruitment Method	Number of Participants
Random Email – Phone Interviews	7
Regional Focus Group Email	4
Random Email – Video Conference	4
Snowball	1

Table 3.2: Focus Group Recruitment Methods

Recruitment Methods	Number of Participants
Listserve: SAA Archives	2
Listserve: ARAT	2
Local Focus Group Email	1

Table 3.3: Direct Email Response Rate

Type of Direct Email:	# Sent[114]	# of Responses (Any)	# of Individual Participants	# of Group Participants	Response Rate	Partici- pation Rate
Random - Phone Interview	43	14	7	0	32.5%	16.3%
Random - Video Conference	217	13	3	4	6%	3.2%
Local Focus Group	126	17	4	1	13.5%	4%
Total	386	44	14	5	11.4%	4.9%

The disproportionate number of emails sent for the individual phone interviews and video

conferences was a result of a shift in recruitment strategy at the half-way point in the data

collection process (See Table 3.3: Direct Email Response Rate). Once video conferences were

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[114] Returned bad emails were not counted in the total number sent.

confirmed as a new method of data collection, the recruitment was focused exclusively on video

conferences because of the low participant rate for group interviews. Also, even though

additional individual participants were needed, the focus group recruitment efforts demonstrated

additional individual phone interview participants would be recruited via the video conference

recruitment. The group interview recruitment (both the random video conference emails and

local focus group emails) was effective in recruiting additional individual interview participants.

In total, seven of the fifteen individual interview participants were recruited via group interview

recruitment methods.

While most emails sent did not receive responses, several individuals did respond to

decline participation. The reasons for not participating included:

6 - Time limitations (1 specifically citing staff cuts)
6 - Not able to participate (no specific reason)
4 - No archivist on staff
3 - Unable to attend focus group (no response to interview alternative follow-up)
3 - Limited archival role (didn't feel qualified)
2 - Did not reflect archival activism; "not an activist" (their quotes)
1 - New to position and not comfortable participating

In cases when respondents said they had a limited archival role, I informed them if they were

responsible for the management or maintenance of a primary resource collection their

contributions would be appreciated, but they still declined. Similarly, when respondents claimed

they were "not an activist," I informed them that prior knowledge of these concepts was not

necessary, and that their input would be appreciated; however they still declined.

Of the direct emails, there was a significantly lower response rate between the

recruitment emails for the phone interviews and the focus groups (32.5% and 13.5%

respectively). Similarly, there is another significant drop between the response rate for the focus

groups and video conferences (only 6%). While impossible to determine individuals' reasons for

not responding, one possible explanation for the difference in rates is that response may correspond to the perceived degree of involvement. The individual phone interview was sixty minutes and did not necessitate commuting or the coordination of multiple schedules. Focus group participation was ninety minutes, plus a brief ten minute preliminary phone interview.[115] Length of participation impacting the response rate is supported by the reasons given for declining participation as time limitations was most often cited. Similarly, the video conference also consisted of the 90 minute session, plus the preliminary phone interview. While it did not involve commuting, the technical requirements or perceived complications of a video conference may have deterred potential participants from responding, likely contributing to the lower response rate.

Another possible explanation for the dip in response rate from the individual and group interviews (both focus groups and video conferences) was the group setting itself. Some individuals may feel less comfortable participating in group dynamic than on an individual level. This discomfort may be heightened by the perceived controversial nature of the topic of activism. Furthermore, participants may not only have been uncomfortable with the topic of activism but with the study's direct approach to archival scholarship, which may have intimated potential participants. Three of the individuals responding claimed they didn't feel comfortable because their archival role was limited or they didn't consider themselves an archivist. In addition to those three respondents, several individuals who ultimately participated in the interviews initially indicated they did not consider themselves archivists until I reassured them that they qualified for the study. The definition of archivist was very broadly defined in the

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[115] In addition, participants had to wait for other participants to be recruited and/or schedules to be coordinated until participation time could be confirmed. Thus, participation was not only longer, but the planning and organizing was also more involved. One participant had expressed interest in participating in a focus group, conducted the preliminary interview, but was unable to attend the group. After multiple failed attempts to coordinate schedules with recruited video conference participants, this participant ultimately decided to not participate further.

recruitment emails specifically to encourage participants from different academic and educational backgrounds and diverse repositories. However, the focus on archival scholarship may have appeared to counter this attempt, discouraging people from participating who did not feel comfortable discussing scholarship, especially in a group setting with others in the field. This potential apprehension for group discussion was vocalized by one interview participant who asked about the research study and methods following the interview questions. When group interviews were mentioned as being used to encourage further discourse on the topics among participants, Individual Interview Participant #6 (Participant I6) responded: "I don't know about that. I would think people would be more comfortable and free speaking one-on-one… If you could get people one on one, they would be relaxed." Similar opinions of group interview structures may have influenced the group interview recruitment.

In addition to the direct emails, emails were sent through listserves to recruit for the focus groups that were held in conjunction with the MAC and SAA conferences. Posting to the listserves was done in an effort to reach a wider audience. As the Midwest Archives Conference (MAC) does not have its own listserve, a request was sent to the conference coordinator to forward an email to MAC members, which she agreed to do. In addition, a recruitment email was sent to the general SAA Archives listserve as well as to the listserves for the following SAA Roundtables: Public Library Archives/Special Collections; Issues & Advocacy Roundtable; Human Rights Archives; and Access and Outreach. Only two individuals responded to these listserve posts, both replying to the email received from the general SAA Archives listserve, and both participated in the focus group. Due to the low response rate and turn-out for the MAC focus group, the listserves used for recruitment to the SAA focus group was expanded to include Lone Arrangers, Archives Management, Labor Archives Roundtable, Archivists and Archives of

Color and Archivists' Toolkit/Archon. In total, four responses were received through these listserve posts: three from the Archivists' Toolkit/Archon and one from the Lone Arrangers. All four planned on participating, but two were unable to participate on the day of focus group, so the group consisted of only two participants, both from the Archivists' Toolkit/Archon roundtable. While interesting that the participants in each focus group had responded from the same listserve, little if any conclusions can be drawn given the small number of respondents.

In addition to the email recruitment, one participant was recruited by snowballing methods. This was not a planned method of recruitment. However, one of the participants from the MAC focus group forwarded the recruitment email to a peer who responded expressing interest in participating in the focus group. The participant was unable to participate in either the MAC or SAA focus group and ultimately participated in a phone interview.

Participant Demographics

There were twenty-four total participants in the study, a small number which ultimately limited the generalizability of the study. This scale was the primary limitation of the research design; however, the approach aimed to collect more in-depth data from a smaller number of participants than less detailed data from a larger set of subjects. Despite the small participant pool, the participants were diverse in age, gender, geography and education. To determine the extent to which the participants' demographics are representative of the wider population of archivists, the participants' demographic information was compared to the results of the A*Census survey conducted by the Society of American Archivists in 2004 and published in 2006, the most comprehensive survey of the archival profession available.[116] This comparison

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[116] Walch, Victoria Irons. "A*Census." *American Archivists* 69 (Fall/Winter 2006): 294-527

also serves to analyze and evaluate the recruitment methods of the study in generating a

representative sample of the wider population as well as indicate demographic groups which may

be more willing to participate in archival research about activism.

The demographics of the participants were collected via an online survey completed prior

to interview participation. [117] The option of "Rather not say" was available for all questions in the

survey.

Gender

The gender demographics of the study participants were disproportionate, 14 females and

10 males (58.3% and 41.6% respectively); however, this gap is less significant than the one

within the profession at large as the A*Census found that 67% of archivists are female (See

Table 3.4: Participant Demographics – Gender in Comparison to A*Census Data) The higher

percentage of female representation in the study is thus a more accurate reflection of the

population than had the participants been more evenly split by gender.[118]

Table 3.4: Participant Demographics – Gender in Comparison to A*Census Data[119]

Gender	# of participants	%	A*Census Percentage
Female	14	58.3	67%
Male	10	41.6	33%

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[117] Created and conducted through SurveyMonkey

[118] A* Census results found the genders representation in the younger population of archivists even more unbalanced, with 4 out of 5 respondents under the age of 30 being women and three times as many women entering the field as men. This would indicate the percentage of women should have been higher given the age demographics of participants (see Table 3.5).

[119] The A*Census data for gender and age is for the entire national population of archivists as the A*Census does not provide gender and demographics state by state. It does provide it in regions, but breaks down the Midwest into Great Lakes and Plaines regions, neither of which includes Kentucky which is one of the states included in the MAC region. For the A*Census purposes, Kentucky was placed in the South Central region, so gender statistics just for the Midwest as defined by MAC could not be determined.

<center>**Age**</center>

The age of the study participants ranged from the "30-34" to the "65 and over" brackets

(See Table 3.5: Participant Demographics – Gender in Comparison to A*Census Data). The most

common age bracket of the participants was "30-34" and the second most common was "35-39,"

(five and four participants, respectively). One participant in the study did select the "rather not

say" option for age, but did state that his/her BA was earned in 1993, indicating an age of over

40. While there were no participants under 30, the make-up of the participant pool was younger

on average than the general population of archivists, with nine of twenty-four (37.5%) of the

participants being 39 and younger in comparison with 26% of archivists participating in the

A*Census. Furthermore, 49.5% of A*Census respondents were over the age of 50, with the most

common age bracket being 55-59. In comparison, nine participants (37.5%) in this study were

over the age of 50 and only two (8.3%) were between the ages of 50-54.

<center>**Table 3.5: Participant Demographics – Age in Comparison to A*Census Data**[120]</center>

	# of Participants	% of Participants	A* Census %
Under 25	0	0%	1.4%
25-29	0	0%	5.3%
30-34	5	20.8%	9.6%
35-39	4	16.6%	9.9%
40-44	2	8.3%	10.8%
45-49	2	8.3%	13.2%
50-54	2	8.3%	18%
55-59	3	12.5%	13.9%
60-64	2	8.3%	7.6%
65 and over	2	8.3%	10%
Rather not say	1	4.2%	n/a

The discrepancy between the age of participants in the study and the wider population may be a

result of several factors as opposed to a clear indication of flawed methodology or the limited

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[120] The demographic survey used in the study used the same age brackets as the A*Census.

participant pool. The discrepancy between the age of participants could be reflective of an increase in new archivists into the profession since the A*Census was conducted in 2004. The A*Census found the average age for new archivist entering the field was 29.8, so an increase of new archivists into the field over the last 8 years would shift the age demographics of the profession, specifically increasing the amount of archivists under 40.

Beyond a possible age shift in the profession as a whole, the number of younger participants could also be indicative of a correlation between archivists' age and willingness to participate in research studies. The demographics of the archivists who responded to the recruitment and agreed to participate suggest that younger archivists may be more interested in participating in such research. Furthermore, a comparison of the age demographics between the different recruitment efforts, as well as the type of participation, demonstrates a correlation between age and level of interest in research participation. Regarding recruitment, listserve recruitment had a lower overall recruitment rate with only four participants recruited via listserve recruitment emails. As they are not directly addressed to participants and often received in high numbers, listserve emails are often dismissed without reading unless the recipient has specific interest in the subject line. Consequently, a response from a listserve posting indicates that the subject line about the archival study caught the attention of the participants who then read the email and expressed interest in participating. Of those responding to the listserve, two of the respondents were 39 and under, one was 40-44 and one was over 65. Furthermore, the participant recruited via snowballing methods was also 39 or under. This participant contacted me directly to participate after learning of the study from a colleague, demonstrating significant enthusiasm for the study. Thus, in the types of recruitment methods that were indicative of a higher participant interest in the study, three out of five participants were 39 or under.

There was also an age discrepancy between the group and individual interview participants. Five out of the nine total group interview participants (55%) were 39 or under. In comparison, four out of fifteen individual interview participants (25%) were 39 or under.[121] As discussed in the response rate analysis, recruitment for the group participation had a lower response rate overall, possibly because the participation required more time commitment. Thus, interest in the group interviews demonstrated a willingness to commit a more significant amount of time to the study. Comparing the age demographics of the participants of the individual and group interviews support the correlation between participation interest in archival research and age. Further studies with larger populations would be necessary to validate the relationship between age and participation. Additional comparison studies would be necessary to determine if the relationship between age and participation related to archival studies in general or studies specifically related to activism and/or archival scholarship.

Race and Ethnicity

All twenty-four participants in the study identified their race as White/Caucasian. While demonstrating a clear lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the study itself, the demographics of the participants is also indicative of the lack of diversity within the archival community at large. In the A*Census findings, 87.7% of participants identified as White/Caucasian; 2.1% as Latino/Hispanic; 2.8% as African American; .1% as Alaska Native; 1.0% as Asian; 1.9% as

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[121] Of those individual interview participants, several had expressed interest in group participation but been unable to attend: two participants 35-39 had wanted to participate in focus groups but schedule wouldn't allow; one participant 30-34 was interested in video conference but didn't have tech requirements; one 40-44 was interested but unavailable for focus groups; one 50-54 participant was interested in participating in a local focus group where not enough other participants were recruited to hold the session. When their interest in group participation was taken into account, the age discrepancy is even larger.

Native American; .4% as Pacific Islander; 2.9% as other; and 5.0% as Rather not say.[122] Because

of the significant imbalance in the profession at large, the racial demographic imbalance of the

participants is not necessarily a result of poor or ineffective recruitment methods given the small

scale of the research study. In an effort to try to diversify recruitment, recruitment emails were

also posted through the Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable listserve but received no

response.

Geography

Eligible participants were archivists practicing in the Midwest, as defined by the states

included in the Midwest Archives Conference: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky,

Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin.

The A*Census findings determined that the number of practicing archivists within each of these

states ranged significantly, so it was anticipated that the states would not be represented equally

by participants in the study. While the geographic representation was dispersed unevenly as

expected, the geographic breakdown of participants diverged from the A*Census statistics (See

Table 3.6: Participant Geographic Representation – State by State Comparison to A*Census

Data)

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[122] These statistics are for the nation as a whole and were not available specifically for the Midwestern region.

Table 3.6: Participant Geographic Representation – State by State Comparison to A*Census Data

State	# of Participants	% of Total Study Participants	% of total archivists in Midwestern Region according to A*Census
Indiana	6	25.00%	6.40%
Illinois	5	20.80%	16.20%
Kentucky	3	12.50%	6.50%
Minnesota	2	8.30%	6.30%
Ohio	2	8.30%	16.30%
Wisconsin	2	8.30%	10.70%
Kansas	1	4.20%	4.30%
Michigan	1	4.20%	12.00%
Missouri	1	4.20%	13.50%
N. Dakota	1	4.20%	0.90%
Iowa	0	0.00%	3.90%
Nebraska	0	0.00%	1.8
S. Dakota	0	0.00%	1.20%

There are significant discrepancies between the number of participants representing specific states in comparison to the percentage of archivists the state represents in the total population of Midwestern archivists. Some divergence is in part due to the recruitment methodology. In addition to the random emails sent to repositories throughout the Midwestern regions, emails were sent to all the repositories within several cities selected for regional focus groups. These include the host cities for the MAC and SAA conference where focus groups were held (Minneapolis-St.Paul, Minnesota and Chicago, Illinois respectfully) as well as three cities in which an effort was made to organize a local focus group: Springfield, Illinois Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Indianapolis, Indiana. Because of these methods, targeted emails were sent to those cities in addition to the randomly selected emails, potentially causing a disproportionate amount of participants from these states: Minnesota, Illinois, Wisconsin and Indiana.

However, despite the increase number of emails sent to the state because of the recruitment strategy, the number of participants from Indiana is still surprising in comparison to

the other states, suggesting a higher level of participation interest from Indiana archivists. The

highest number of participants, six (25%) of the total participants, were practicing in Indiana. In

comparison, Indiana archivists make up only 6.4% of the total population of Midwestern

archivists – the seventh highest in the region of thirteen states. Two of the participants from

Indiana were recruited through the direct emails to the Indianapolis repositories. This was a

higher participation rate than any of the other cities that were selected for this type of targeted

recruitment (See Table 3.7: Local Focus Group Recruitment Response Results).

Table 3.7: Local Focus Group Recruitment Response Results

City	# of Emails	Responded	Participated
Indianapolis	11	2	2
Chicago/Evanston	66	6	1
Milwaukee	14	1	1
Springfield, IL	6	2	0
Minneapolis/St. Paul	31	6	1

This indicates that even though this method of recruitment may have sent a disproportionate

amount of recruitment emails to Indiana, those emails still had a higher response rates than those

targeted to the other states. Similarly, one of the six Indiana participants was recruited via

snowballing through another Indiana participant. While this also offers some explanation for a

higher number of Indiana participants, the participant recruited in this method demonstrated

significant eagerness to participate in the study by contacting me directly. Even subtracting the

three participants recruited via the targeted Indianapolis emails and the snowballing method, the

state would have still been represented by three participants making it tied as the second most

represented state in the study. This indicates that while the recruitment methodology may have

resulted in a disproportionate geographic representation of archivists, other factors may have

contributed to the disparity. While no conclusions can be drawn because of the scale of this

current study, the participant breakdown suggests a strong willingness or enthusiasm for research

participant from Indiana archivists, especially in comparison to the overall population of

archivists within the state. One possible explanation is a significant collaborative, peer network

throughout the state which may encourage research participation. Four of the six Indiana

participants (all but the two group interview participants) mentioned working with local or state-

wide archives organizations, indicating a commitment to archival advocacy. The higher research

interest displayed from Indiana archivists indicates that the perception of the "Liberal Coast"

bias may not have been a factor as Indiana is a historically conservative state, demonstrating

regional politics may not impact interest in scholarship on activism.

Educational Background

As discussed in Chapter 2, the educational background of archivists can vary

significantly, in large part due to the lack of standardization of archival education over the

profession's history. The educational background of the participants reflects this diversity, while

also demonstrating significant discrepancy from the A*Census findings (See Table 3.8: Degrees

Held by Participants).

Table 3.8: Degrees Held By Participants

Degrees	# of Participants	% of Participants	% in A*Census
BA/BS	24	100%	76.30%
MA/MS or MLS/MLIS	24	100%	n/a
MA/MS	16	66.60%	46.30%
MLS/MLIS/MSI	17	70.80%	39.40%
MA and MLIS/MLS/MSI	9	37.50%	n/a
MA (only)	7	29.20%	n/a
MLIS (only)	8	33.30%	n/a
Doctorate	3 (2 PhD (History); 1 EDD 1)	12.50%	8.40%

In comparison to the wider population of archivists as determined in the A*Census data, the participants in the study were more highly educated overall. All participants had both their Bachelors Degrees and Masters Degrees. Regarding the types of Masters Degrees, sixteen (66%) study participants held their MA/MS in comparison to only 46.3% in the general population of archivists in the A*Census data. Similarly, seventeen (70.8%) held their MLS/MLIS in comparison to 39.4% of A*Census respondents, and three (12.5%) study participants held a doctorate degree to 8.4% of A*Census respondents. In addition, nine (37.5%) participants held both an MA and an MLIS/MLS/MSI. The percentage of archivists holding dual degrees was not provided in the A*Census data; however, the number of participants holding both degrees was approximately 2% less than the number of archivists with a MLS/MLIS/MSI in the A*Census data, suggesting the percentage of A*Census respondents holding dual degrees would be significantly less than the 37.5% of study participants.

The discrepancy between the educational background of the study participants and the population of Midwestern archivist population suggests a relationship between education and research participation interest. As a masters degree is considered a standard qualification for most archivist positions, all participants holding a masters degree does not seem significant. However, the high number of participants holding dual masters, which is not usually a position requirement, does seem significant. As the second degree requires additional academic commitment, having two masters degrees indicates an interest in research or scholarship. The high number of participants holding both degrees indicates that this interest also includes a greater enthusiasm or willingness to participate in archival research studies.

The educational demographics of the findings may also demonstrate a shift in the field since the A*Census survey was conducted, with the field beginning to lean more heavily into

Library and Information Studies. In the A*Census findings, a greater number of archivists held MA than MLIS, with only 39.4% holding an MLIS. In comparison, seventeen participants (70.8%) in this current study had a MLIS. This could indicate that archivists holding MLIS degrees were more interested in research participation or it could indicate that there is a higher percentage of archivists now hold MLIS throughout the field.

Recruitment Conclusions

Overall, the low recruitment response rate is indicative of both low participation interest in a study of archival activism as well as limited availability for participation. It is difficult to determine if the recruitment would have been more successful had the recruitment documents not mentioned activism. Three respondents said they did not consider themselves 'activists' or did not 'reflect archival activism.' Despite reassurance that this was not a requirement of participation, these individuals did not wish to participate. It is impossible to know how many other recipients of the emails may have not responded because they thought it was necessary to identify as an 'activist' to participate. However, without a further study targeted on recruitment, it would be impossible to determine if such response was due to the topic of the study. Regarding the type of participation, interest in group participation was significantly less than for individual phone interviews, demonstrating a major hurdle in group interview methods. While the participants recruited were diverse in age, gender and educational background, there was no racial or ethnic diversity. Because of the overall lack of such diversity in the profession, a larger scale study or a targeted recruitment methodology may be necessary to increase such diversity among participants.

Chapter 4: Findings – Social Power

While there was an overwhelming agreement that archival practice wielded social power,

there was a very significant divide over the perceptions of the implications of such social power.

Twenty of the twenty-four participants directly agreed with the statement that archivists do have

social power. The other four participants did not directly agree that archivists had social power,

but their responses acknowledged such social power, suggesting their disagreement was instead

because they considered exercising such power inappropriate. For example, Individual Interview

Participant #13 (Participant I13) asserted, "I don't believe they should be exerting social power

through their archival practice because I essentially believe they should maintain neutrality."

Others did not agree with the appropriateness of the word power. Participant I2 maintained, "I

have never seen it as a power, but as a responsibility or as a trust. I kind of like to say, this isn't

my collection. This is the center where I work. It's the members' collection, and I am just the

temporary steward of it." While suggesting exercising social power through archival practice is

inappropriate, these comments indicate an awareness of archivists' potential social influence, a

concept central to the literature on archival activism. Thus, even in such cases when participants

did not directly voice an agreement that archivists wield social power in their practice, the

findings demonstrated an awareness of the potential for power among all participants.

<center>**Perspectives on Social Power**</center>

Archival activism, as defined by the scholarship, necessitates that archivists acknowledge

and use the social power of their practice proactively to promote social justice and activism. As it

equated the exercising of social power to promoting social justice, the scholarship on archival

activism implied a positive perception of archivists' social power which motivates conscientious

or proactive practice. Fundamentally, the scholarship on archival activism argues that archivists not only be aware of their power as practicing archivists but accept that such power does influence their practice, requiring a need to be conscious of this power when making professional decisions. Although all study participants did acknowledge the social power of archival practice, the perceptions of this social power ranged significantly in the extent to which it does and should influence practice, with some participants supporting the positive reading of social power but most countering such scholarship.

Only one participant made a clear indication that archivists should exert this social power; however, this implication was made through a critique of most archivists failing to use their potential power. Participant I6 claimed, "I think they can do much in those ways, provided they are familiar with the records that they are dealing with and they actually looked at them and read them, which is not always the case…. They aren't using their potential. Because, I think today much of the profession is focused on things not pertaining to the records themselves – what the records document - but on managing the records. That's quite a different thing." By suggesting that most archivists are not using their potential power, this participant indicates that archivists not only have social power, but should be better exercising it to a greater extent.

Several of the participants voiced strong agreement in the belief that archivists had social power and also articulated a relationship between the social power and their own practice. For example, Participant I5 claimed:

> I think it's massive, I think based on my experience as a grad student, and some of the work I've seen more closely volunteering with organizations, people pick and choose what they keep, and that impacts the story dramatically, so I think that it's huge. And, I think that people [are] missing the importance of their power if they don't step back as much as possible and try to keep themselves out of the process.

With this comment, the participant indicates not only the awareness of the power of archival practice, but also the importance of recognizing the impact practice will have on others, suggesting the need to take oneself out of the process to gain perspective on the end product.

While not specifically addressing his or her own practice, Group Interview Participant #7 (Participant G7) addressed the impact of archival practice in both short and long terms: "Just the sheer idea that they are able to make certain records available and certain one's not does shape short and long-term history. But, I think in terms of how bigger movements go, it takes a lot longer for that to show up. But, when we are talking about little issues like political scandals which come up in the news and make headlines, I mean, if someone didn't save those records and make them available then no one would have found out." This response indicates a belief that their archival practice can have a direct social impact, even if the outcomes may not be immediately evident.

One participant agreed that archivists held social power but was unsure of the implications of this social power. Participant I11 explains, "I think it is to a significant extent. I wonder whether it is good or bad. I am kind of torn between that. They are right. Archivists can serve the status quo or change the status quo in a sense by what records are preserved and presented. I think to a certain extent it is done, whether it is good or not, I am debating." While the participant indicates an uncertainty over the influence of social power, the response seemingly supports the scholarship on archival activism which suggests such power has the potential to be exercised positively but also abused if not executed responsibly.

Potential for the Abuse of Power

Eight participants recognized archivists' social power but indicated that it should not be

exercised, generally demonstrating a concern that such practice was a potential abuse of

archivists' power. For example, Participant G4 said,

> I think that they do have the power, but they shouldn't [use] it. They also have the
> responsibility to provide access and provide as much description and explanation
> as they can. There are certain archivists that if you don't ask them the right
> questions, you are not going to find what you are looking for… But, that's not
> really the power they [Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook, quoted in the question] are
> talking about. They are talking about the archivist [doing] those kinds of things
> that would distort the record.

Not only does the participant directly indicate that archivists shouldn't exert social power, but he

also demonstrates an interpretation of the description of social power in the question as a

'distortion' of the social record.

Similarly, several participants believed they could exert power in their work but

considered it inappropriate to do so. For example, Participant I16 claimed: "[I]n theory, they are

probably correct, but in actual practice, I think they totally missed the boat on this one. Just

because we can do things doesn't mean we do things…. It's not for me to decide to use my own

personal judgment to decide about certain record groups or documents. That's the job the

historian would do." Similarly, Participant G8 articulated a similar perspective, claiming:

> I think that the quote is very interesting, and in theory [I] do believe that
> archivists can exert social power in practice. Personally, I don't think that we
> should however. [In an example on a controversial issue on campus] I told [the
> university president] that I am the one person on campus that doesn't have an
> opinion. I try very hard to sit on the fence regarding that issue, so that people will
> come into my archives to [do] research that isn't influenced or think they are
> being influenced by my personal opinion. Now certainly if I wanted to, I could
> very much exert social power. I could choose to collect or to not collect certain
> things. Now, I cut up every article that deals with the [logo], I cut out and add it to
> the collection. I could choose not to do that…. I could choose not to put one thing
> in versus the other. I believe that we as archivists can exert power but I think I
> would be doing a huge disservice not only to myself and to my current researchers

but also the researchers who are coming in the future if I am not trying to collect from both sides.

Participant G9 claimed:

> We have the potential to drive a collection the way that we want them to be driven. But it would be, to me, malpractice as an archivist to engage in that behavior where we are selective in what the end user gets to find. To me that's, I wouldn't even consider doing that. Yeah, to say we have the potential to have a lot of power in how we are steering the collections, that is certainly the case. I am a department head here and there is really no oversight from above. The dean or whoever wouldn't even know if I were doing that, so it's just, getting back to the personal code of ethics or code of responsible behavior, that would just to me be criminal just to do that.

Like these participants, Participant G5 similarly linked social power to an individual archivist's exerting their personal perspective or agenda, asserting: "I would hope it doesn't come out very often, and I don't know of cases where it does. But, maybe those types of archivists are so sneaky anyway that they would keep their agenda quiet and still do those things." All of these comments suggest one of the primary concerns of archivists' exerting social power is that they will make decisions that favor their personal positions or perspectives, displaying a concern over a lack of neutrality, which remains a central issue in archival practice.

Areas of Practice in which Power is Most Prominent

In their responses, participants often indicated the areas or practice in which they saw this social power having the most influence. The two areas mentioned most often were access and appraisal.

Access was the most mentioned area of practice within the discussion of social power, with thirteen participants mentioning access in their responses on social power. The relationship between access and social power was most often discussed in regards to decisions regarding prioritizing materials for processing or digitization.

Some participants articulated a strong understanding of their social power in regards to their decisions about selecting materials to catalogue and make accessible. In a discussion of documentation of under-documented communities, Participant G3 claimed:

> Now that you are bringing up race, this is something that I am very conscious of the power that I have. Working for [a religious organization], I mean every church, is dealing with diversity, and about twenty percent of the membership is an ethnic minority, so are our collections twenty percent representing ethnic minorities? No. So I know that historically that was not always the case. But, when you're asking, what collection gets the student's interest? What collection gets my attention? I have been very deliberate about pulling out materials… [and] trying to really put that stuff in front. It's really important for me to know that people who search our materials or photos, they don't just see [hesitates. Participant G1: "Dead, white guys?"] Yes, or white women just sewing and wearing bonnets. It's important to me, and my duty, to put these things out there.

With this comment, the participant specifically states an awareness of the power in bringing access to materials that will bring more inclusive representation into the collection, indicating conscious efforts to prioritize such items for processing. Although similar comments were made by participants in other sections, by including it in this section, the participant explicitly connects such efforts as examples of exercising social power.

Other participants similarly discussed the importance of documenting inclusively of diverse perspectives. For example, Participant I3 suggested, "I don't want to promote the student point of view over the faculty point of view, I see records of people who express things that I think are not keeping with social justice, I am not going to not keep those or not make the information available, because they are, for the lack of the better way of putting it, the other guys." This response indicates a belief that archivists exerted social power by collecting materials regardless of position or content as opposed to just materials generally considered related to social justice issues.

Several participants articulated a general awareness of the significance by discussing hypothetical examples of limiting access as opposed to their own actual practice. Participant G9 said, "Access is certainly another way we have a power…. We have a lot of things that are un-catalogued here in the backlog. And I am aware of what's back there and I certainly could not mention certain collections that a researcher might find beneficial if I disagreed with their thesis or where they were going with their research. So certainly with access that is a way we can exert influence." The use of such hypothetical examples focusing on the impact of limiting access seemingly emphasizes the findings that participants overall demonstrated more concern over the abuse of power than support of exercising power proactively.

Protecting privacy of some record subjects was also considered an example of exercising social power responsibly in some circumstances. One participant described collections which contained materials related to people working in areas of military conflicts which necessitated restrictions for the safety of those involved in the collection. In this example, restriction policies, as opposed to increased access, was deemed a practice of social power as it protects the welfare of individuals.

In addition to bringing access through processing, many participants specifically mentioned the power in deciding materials to digitize as this increases access significantly. Many participants indicated that digitization held additional power implications because of the level of access it provided. Explaining the power in digitization, Participant G6 asserted, "Also, with digitizing, you are making it accessible to everybody. And, I do think that with that comes a power issue that comes with that. And it is at that point in decision making, will I digitize this or will I not. It can be a big deal." One participant not only talked about the power of bringing access to researchers, but also the feelings of responsibilities over protecting the subjects of the

materials being digitized. Participant I1 described an example of deciding to make the papers of

a previous college president available online:

> [The college president] said something like "There was the blacks demanding
> this," and he probably never would have thought that was going to be put online,
> so in a sense, well I had to be neutral and I couldn't protect him. I guess giving
> you that example shows that the archivist does have that personal involvement
> that could sway you into thinking, "Oh gosh, I am not really protecting this
> person." But it's part of history and I am opening it up to the discussion, but I feel
> like I am the one that is responsible, for having made this available. But it's part
> of history and it's exciting for all these different researchers.

This response indicates a conflict of feelings regarding responsibility in deciding to digitize

materials, as the participant in part felt a need to protect the privacy of the subject while also

recognizing the value of increasing access through digitization. However, by acknowledging the

sense of responsibility felt by increasing access, the participant suggests a clear awareness of the

social implications of the decision.

The second most commonly identified area of practice which participants perceived as

having social power was appraisal/selection, with twelve participants referring to appraisal in the

discussion. Specifically, selection was the area where participants most clearly articulated

accounting for their social power when making their professional decisions. Participant I1 says:

> I definitely think that archivists have this social power, because that's one of our
> job tasks to evaluate which materials should be saved. Sometimes, we discard
> things, so we are definitely exerting social power…. But, I am always thinking
> ahead like fifty years, a hundred years…. That [document] can turn into
> someone's treasure. That art print drawn by a former student. And I always keep
> that in the back of my mind. To me, it might not mean that much, but to someone
> else at a different point in time, it might be very valuable.

Similarly, Participant I5 said:

> I hate to get rid of something that comes up later, cause I've been on the other
> side of it more times than I'd like to say…. But the hard part is from hearing from
> the organizations saying, "Oh, that was something we really should have kept.
> That was something we needed." And, all of that being driven home by me being
> the historian sitting on the other side of the desk, when there should be

documentation about a specific issue and it's just not there. Yeah, that's really hard as a researcher, so I really try to keep that in perspective. How many ways can people need or want basic information. That's my job, and to make it accessible without judging that item or judging its value.

In these responses, the participants both indicate being consciously aware of their power when making decisions on selection. Notably, in both of these cases, the participants discuss putting themselves in the position of the user to gain awareness of the significance of their selection decisions, suggesting a need to evaluate the impact their personal decisions may make on others.

In responding to the question of social power, only one participant described proactive appraisal efforts as a way of exercising social power. Participant G1 said:

One thing that I am trying to work on is trying to make sure we get the records of all the student organizations that may normally slip under our radar, because there are types of student groups which are maybe active for a semester or two. Or activist groups develop, like we have a free Palestine student group that has been very active, but that may fade away after they graduate. But that is a huge issue on campus, and that it could be overlooked, and if we don't collect that, then those students are losing their voice and we wouldn't know that that happened.

While other participants described similar collection efforts, such practices were described in responses to other concept questions, primarily diversity/inclusivity. With this comment as a response to the questions on social power, the participant clearly identifies that such proactive attempt to collect materials of under-documented student organizations exercises social power through practice. Later within the discussion of social power, the same participant mentioned the inability to meet some researchers' needs because of the lack of materials on African-Americans on campus, claiming, "It is really important that we are conscious of what we are collecting and why we are collecting something. I mean, when we aren't collecting something we have to be really honest with ourselves about it, you think about [that example], someone really screwed up there, and I mean, it's a product of that time, I supposed, but it is worrisome." This later

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comment suggests that an awareness of the social impact of documentation shortcomings may motivates proactive appraisal efforts.

Within the discussion of appraisal and power, some participants' responses reflected a concern over inappropriate exertion of power. For example, Participant I3 said, "I mean, obviously we do have the power, I personally don't think that I have exerted it for one group over another. I always collect all the records from all side and make all of them as accessible possible. I don't promote one type of record over another, or try to collect one type of issue over another…. It is always kind of in the back of my mind. I mean, in the university where I work, there is a strong social justice background, so I am conscious of documenting all sides." Similar to the more direct discussions of abuses of power, this participant suggested a concern over allowing one's personal agenda or any single position influence appraisal decisions. In this case, the participant indicates this concern influences decisions to collect more inclusively.

The other area of practice specifically mentioned in the response of the question to social power was programming and outreach, with two participants referring to the role of this practice as exercising social power. Participant I11 specifically referred to current programming efforts:

> I will try during my programs to stir the ideas to diversify the perspectives…. In my programs I like to focus on everyday life which seems to be neglected in the past among our collectors. They seem to have collected a lot of the upper class business people but very little on the working class and the minorities. So there was almost nothing on the minority perspectives when I got there. So, I try to steer my programs in that way. What is everyday life like, rather than what was it like for the rich people?

This example indicates a conscious effort to bring increased attention to overlooked history and perspectives. Again, while this example is also relevant to other concepts, most notably diversity/inclusivity, by using it in the answer to this question, the participant clearly indicates a belief that such practice exerts social power.

Limitations to Agency

While many agreed archival practice had the potential for social power, many participants believed that archivists' agency was often limited by factors beyond an individual archivist's control. In total, 11 participants felt that archivists' influence was limited to some extent with the factors listed including institutional policies, record creators or donors, limited resources or the type of materials within the collection.

The most common factor considered to be a limitation to archivists' agency for exerting power were institutional policies, with six participants citing such policies as influencing archivists' social power. Participant I7 explained the role of institutional policies: "I will say to a certain extent though we are, depending on where we work, very beholden to our institution. …And, in some ways that is good, because you know what you are dealing with and there is no pretense. But you know, potentially in some ways that might…be problematic in terms of how an archivist would be able to collect and make accessible certain kinds of materials." The participant later gave the example of processing the collection of a past chancellor who had been involved in high profile scandal: "And, so I processed his collection, and the question has come up, can I put that finding aid online. And the answer has been, 'Well, why don't you quietly let it be known to interested parties that you do have materials available on him if they want it.' Unlike, for example, [the collection of] our first chancellor….that's free and easy and online, no problems, really accessible." Another participant discussed a similar example in which the institution discouraged the digitization of specific materials which the participant would have otherwise wanted to have digitized because of the potential attention such access could bring to the institution. These two examples demonstrate clear cases when, despite their role as archivists, they felt they did not have the agency to bring access to materials within the collection they

deemed appropriate because of the authority of their institution. While the other participants did not provide specific examples, they did voice similar opinions that most archivists work for an institution and consequently must follow the institutional policies, which may limit their abilities to fully exert social power as described by the scholarship.

Three participants indicated they believed that the record creators or donors limited archivists' agency to exert social power. Explaining the influence of the creators or donors, Participant I9 states, "I didn't make the decision not to collect the material, I mean the actual creators threw it away. But in my collection, you can look for court cases for two of the three characters from the lawsuit but you can't look for the third because it doesn't exist anymore, [because] he didn't think it was valuable [and didn't keep it]. That wasn't an archival decision. That particular decision was out of the archivist's hands. It shouldn't have been. It should have been collected….Some of the creators have as much power as the archivists." While Participant I9's example, demonstrates a case in which the creator failed to know the value of the records, Participant G4 described an experience in which the creator purposefully removed materials from the collection before donating them to the repository: "We had a dean who had been dean about fifteen years, and he gave me his records. But he sanitized them. He went out, and he took out anything that he thought would embarrass him, which I discouraged him from doing because I didn't want him to because you want the whole records. And it was unfortunate but you can't do anything about that…. Not that he is hiding anything, we haven't had anything huge. But nuances and things like that really help." Both of these examples demonstrates cases in which the participants felt aspects of their power was out of their control because of the decisions made by the donors or record creators.

One participant explained the influence of the donor not only over selection but also the condition and organization of which the collection was received, which may also limit archivists' agency in practice. Participant G5 explained:

> I think in some cases I would agree with what they say. But, on the other hand, it's also like the donor's responsibilities to give their papers and decide what they are going to give. We have an educated discussion with them; these are the materials we take and these are the materials that we don't. But, if they don't save something, then it's not the archivists' fault that it's not there….The donor did not have that to give. But, in that case it's not the archivist's fault [or] the donor's fault either. But, even though I would agree with this [quote], I think it puts a little too much on the archivist in certain situations because if the donors don't have it to give, or decide not to give it, or decide to restrict it, it's more on the donor wielding that power. And, then the naming part: "the power to name, label, order records to meet personal or government needs." How do you address that with the idea of original order in an archive when we try to use original folder names, too [if provided]? So, in certain collections, I think the donors have that power.

With this comment, the participant demonstrates the extent to which the record creator maintains some of the agency usually considered to be the archivists, limiting archivists own social power in practice.

Similar to the influence that donor's may have on the materials within the collection, two participants also suggested that current archivists' agency could be limited by previous collecting practices which has left gaps in the collection. While they can now make efforts to redress such previous practices, existing gaps in the collection inhibit their ability to assist researchers, provide access or fully document the community.

Two participants also listed the practical limitations resulting from lack of resources including funding, staff and space, which restrict an archivists' ability to carry out many of their tasks to their full potential. For example, Participant I4 maintains, "I think they probably wield quite a bit. I guess some of it would just begin with their institutional policy. Do they accept almost anything that is given to them, or not? In our case, they probably would occur almost

immediately if we would decide if it would fit into our collecting [criteria]. And, most of my [decisions] would be based on space and the funding for the staff to process it." Discussing the influence of space, funding and staff availability on appraisal decisions, the participant indicates the practical issue of limited resources ultimately restrict archivists' ability to fully exercise their social power. Although the limitations of archivists' agency was most often mentioned by participants in the discussion surrounding social power, the issues was also raised by participants in response to questions on the other concepts of archival activism which will be addressed during later sections.

Imbalance of Social Power

A key argument for archival activism is that archival practice has traditionally created an imbalance of social power. Participants were asked if they agreed traditional practice has created an imbalance. Overall, there was little consensus among participants, with almost an equal amount agreeing, disagreeing and being in mixed agreement with the statement.

Seven participants agreed that there has been an imbalance of social power in archives. Several of these participants, agreeing with the imbalance, gave theoretical explanations as a response to the question. For example, Participant G3 claimed: "I think that any time you are associated with an institution [there is]. I mean institutions [are] [made up of] wealthy individuals, for them to have archives in the first place – so right there you have an issue in terms of power, because, you know, it's not the fledgling groups who are struggling who are going to have archives in the first place, I mean, they are just not." While this participant discussed power imbalances in institutions in general, Participant I6 focused specifically on government records and archives: "When I worked for state archives, I was working for state leadership. Obviously,

the people are sovereign, and the idea is that the government is for the people - not for the

masters of power in the time. But the masters in power are the people who can really pull the

strings. So, yes there is a problem there." Implying those with power in society have more power

in archives, either by having the resources to create archives or by controlling them, these

responses strongly support the scholarship on archival activism related to power imbalances.

While most participants used hypothetical or theoretical examples, Participant I5 agreed

there was an imbalance of social power and reflected on observations made in the field at his/her

own repository:

> Yes, unintentionally, but yes. Different groups [within the organization] have
> come in, and some of them are really popular within the organization, and some
> have been completely forgotten about. And, it's extraordinary for me how often
> erroneous information comes into the discussion and will stay there or be woven
> into the history for twenty to thiry years before people will look into it, and say,
> "Oh they are not the oldest club. They weren't the first public exhibition."….So,
> the errors are perpetuated and they are out in the public, which means you can't
> control what is perpetuated, and in that case they are damaging and you can't tell
> if they were intentional or not, and it's absolutely the case because of things
> weren't kept.

With this example, the participant demonstrates the way that social power imbalances can

develop unintentionally within an institution, as organizations or members that carry more

popularity or voice can perpetuate inaccuracies which generally benefit them. Furthermore, the

less popular organizations from the era before records were systematically kept carried less

influence so have been largely forgotten entirely. As the participant implies, such actions are not

done maliciously but instead are generally natural dynamics within organizations.

Five participants disagreed that traditional archival practice has created an imbalance of

social power. The reasons for this disagreement were generally related to beliefs that archivists

did not have the agency necessary to cause such imbalance. For example, Participant I8 claimed:

> I don't believe that the general American society pays attention to what archivists do or what historians do. I mean academic historians especially who are essentially the consumers and the visitors to our research center - again we have tons of other researchers, but they are the mainstay - people don't listen to them. They are unpopular in political discourse, in popular media, in just about every way you can imagine…. When someone bothers to notice academic historians just don't rank very high. So, I would just say no there is just not a power imbalance.

Similarly, Participant I2 said, "No, I don't really agree with that. I think the potential is there, like I've noted. That the potential is there for the abuse of power, but you know, if archivists really wielded that much power, then why isn't our profession valued and paid more, why aren't we esteemed more by society?" While these participants discussed the overall lack of power of archivists in society, Participant I9 specifically discussed the lack of power felt within an institution or university: **"**I don't think so. I suspect it has to do with the type of archives you work with. I suspect the type of archives they are talking about are like national or state archives. Not the little college archives. I don't think I have power over anybody. I don't even get asked if people can throw something away." These responses support the emerging theme that many participants felt that archivists lacked agency to exert social power.

One participant disagreed with the statement out of belief that social balance was unrealistic, specifically that it was impossible to please everyone. Participant I16 claimed:

> How are we going to please everybody?....But the reality is that you don't want every person, every citizen to make every decision for the records. You want the professionals, people with history backgrounds, people that have preservation [training], people who know what they are doing. So, librarianship and archival science has followed certain traditions and certain paths, and the reasons that we do these things are because they work. So it's easy to say "Oh, there is this power imbalance." But what do you suggest otherwise? What is going to be more equitable? It's great to say oh basically, "We have this problem here." But how do you correct something like this?....So, when you are talking about this control of records or whatever, in a certain extent you have to maintain control, that's part of our job – intellectual control, physical control. That's just what we do.

In this case, the participant articulates that archival and librarian practice has developed out of

practical necessity to best serve the fields' needs, arguing that archival practices first purposes is

to maintain control over the documents and materials. Any issues that may be perceived as

imbalances that arise from such practice are largely unavoidable.

Seven participants did not have a clear answer on whether there was an imbalance of

power. Some participants were mixed in agreement because they were uncertain as to the extent

that such imbalance related to archival practice. For example, Participant I12 explained,

> I am not entirely sure if you can say it creates this imbalance. I mean, it's one of
> those universal truths, that the victory is determined by who is going to be writing
> history. The people in power keep the records more because they are more at
> leisure to do so. I don't think it was done specifically by the people who were
> trying to keep the records. They can only keep what they are given.

Another explanation for the uncertainty was the extent to which such imbalanced practice took

place within the field. Participant I7 said, "I don't know that it has. My feeling is that, certainly

there has been a lot of problematic practice by individual archivists, but I would argue that it's at

the hands of individual archivists who fully make the archival ethics and archival practice in its

purest form [and] do the best job that they can with that. And, I always have been." As these

comments reflect, a response of mixed agreement indicated a recognition of some imbalance

with uncertainty over the extent of archivists' influence.

Many participants made a distinction between an imbalance of power and an imbalance

in the record, with some participants disagreeing with the statement on the imbalance on social

power, believing that there has been an imbalance in the records. In total, seven participants

indicated they believed there was an imbalance in the record but either disagreed or were mixed

in agreement in the statement on the imbalance of social power. For example, Participant I7

explained, "Why I believe that is because, simply put, a lot of how history has been documented

and kept has - we have all heard it before - it's been the story of the most powerful. And in our society of course, that's straight, white males of a certain social class – wealthy, so it's really important to me that I do what I can do to right that wrong." Because the literature generally discussed such imbalances in the record as imbalances in social power, these participants who did acknowledge an imbalance in records largely supported the scholarship on activism. This discrepancy is more indicative of a lack of clarity in the question than lack of support.

Six participants also indicated that they believed that efforts were currently being made in the field to redress such imbalances in the record. The previous comment by Participant I7 reflected a conscious effort to redress such imbalance on a personal level. Participant I3 suggested a similar shift in the field: "And I do think that the general practice, and this is a sweeping generalization, that the general feeling in archives is that we need to identify and provide access to records that document underrepresented groups. To kind of redress that imbalance." Similarly, Participant I12 noted that developments of specific initiatives, organizations or repositories specifically focused on collecting materials previously overlooked in archives are addressing this imbalance:

> [T]here are people out there right now, pursuing the other stories, that they are out there with the specific mission to create the archives for women's history or African Americans' history or the people who are under-represented. I think that is becoming a focus. And I think archivists are educated to do so, and archivists and historians who are the ones researching it. But archivists are the ones going to people's homes to ask if they have papers to their repositories. They are out there trying to get these materials. I know in Chicago there is the Black Metropolis Research Consortium which is actively trying to inventory and collect [African American materials]. There is a lot of that programming going on right now, and it is grant funded and pretty fantastic.

One participant suggested that such efforts ultimately weaken the control that institutions or governments can exert over archives. Compared to the early history of archives, Participant I15 claimed,

I think in the 20th century things became more complex and it was harder to control the message. I would agree, I think there is definitely a power imbalance. But I think that given the diversity of archives and just the vastness of information. I am not so sure it is easy to control that for the purpose of advancing the institution, the power that is behind it…. I suspect in the early days of archives they could be pretty selective and select out things that did not conform to their point of view. I don't think that is possible anymore.

These comments related to the imbalance of records not only support the literature on archival activism but indicate a belief that the proactive practice promoted in the scholarship on archival activism has been incorporated into the field and ultimately seen as shifting the traditional imbalance in the records.

Beyond documentation, one participant also suggested that the way archival materials have been traditionally described and made accessible may also create power imbalances and suggests possible shifts in the field towards broadening access. Participant G5 maintained:

We find that we'll do freshman entry classes, and when I tell them… they can't just type it into the library catalogue, I get these blank stares like, "What? I can't even deal with it then." So, then we say, "Well, that is when you come talk to us." And then they get this horrible stare, like "Oh, we have to go talk to somebody, I can't just look at a book, or stay at my desk, or isn't the stuff all digitized?" So, I think there are discussions here and in SAA or MAC and stuff, on how to make your finding aids more user friendly or how to make your websites more patron friendly.….But I wonder if we could be better about presenting the information to them at a level that they are used to. Cause, even when I tell faculty to just go look at the finding aid, they don't know what a finding aid is. So, why do I keep using this language? And I tell myself –"Cause I'm an archivist, and that is what it is called, and I will engrain in these people that that is what it is called." And I am looking at myself going, it doesn't matter what it is called, call it an inventory or a box list, and they will understand what it is, and it will get better results than calling it a finding aid. So, I think there is probably better ways of getting that information out there, and it's always good to see those sessions [at conferences].

Like the issue of documentation, this comment demonstrates recognition that traditional practice has created limitations in access and created a need to explore new access tools to reach users,

whose own expectations are also continually evolving. The comment not only relates a personal observation of the limitations of the traditional tools but also a growing trend towards change which does support the scholarship on activism.

Conclusions

Overall, these findings demonstrate participants were much divided on the concept of social power. In designing the interview instrument, the anticipated indication of rejection of the scholarship was participants' asserting they didn't believe archivists have social power. However, the participants did overwhelmingly acknowledge that archivists had social power in their position, demonstrating social consciousness as discussed in the literature. Yet, a significant number of these participants indicated that they believed it was inappropriate for them to exercise this power which demonstrated a clear rejection of the concept as defined by the scholarship. The primary reason for rejecting the concept was belief that exercising social power would interfere with archivists' neutrality, which the participants indicated was important to maintain. This significance of neutrality will be discussed in full in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Findings – Neutrality/Archival Transparency

The study examined participants' perspectives on the professional role of neutrality because this issue is central to the discussion of archival activism as well as the concept of archival transparency. To explore this concept, the participants were asked the extent to which they agreed with the following statement made by Mark Greene from his SAA presidential address: "Our values include a recognition, acceptance, and deliberate application of our own agency in the work we do with records and users. This simply means that we are not neutral or objective protectors and transmitters of primary sources, but shapers and interpreters of the sources as well."[123] This quote was specifically selected because it summarized neutrality in the context of the scholarship on archival activism. Overall, while participants overwhelmingly considered neutrality significant, there was a clear divide among participants regarding the relationship between neutrality and practice and the extent to which they felt an archivist's perspective does and should influence practice.

Fundamental to participants' perspective on the relationship between neutrality and practice was the extent to which participants believed that neutrality was possible, with most participants beginning their responses by discussing this point. In total, eighteen of the twenty-four participants indicated that they felt that neutrality was either impossible or that the archivist was unable to be neutral all the time. Participant I1 specifically discussed the importance of archival transparency because of this lack of neutrality:

> I mean, we can try to be neutral, but we are not necessarily always going to be neutral – but I guess that's why we need to make sure that people know that there is interpretation and who created the collection within the description to know there is interpretation….I think that is something that all researchers need to be aware of. It's that the archivist isn't

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[123] Mark Greene, "The Power of Archives: Archivists Value and Values in the Post-Modern Age." *American Archivist* 72 (Spring/Summer 2009), 25.

necessarily neutral....I think it is important to try to be [neutral] and to be inclusive in description [as a way] of being neutral."

Recognizing that neutrality was impossible, this participant suggested it is important to inform the users of such interpretation, which supports the literature on archival neutrality. However, this participant also acknowledges the importance of aiming for neutrality, specifically in description, which is a theme that emerged and will be discussed in full later in the findings.

In their discussion of the impossibility of neutrality, some participants highlighted issues not discussed in the scholarship. For example, the scholarship addressing neutrality, or more specifically the limitations of neutrality, in practice focused on the influence of archivists' personal perceptions and intervention in the areas of selection, appraisal, arrangement and description. However, Participant G7 used the example of reference service when explaining why neutrality was impossible:

> I would have to say that it is impossible to be entirely neutral because we all have our own perspectives. It is important for us to strive for it, but in the end, if somebody asks us for something, we are going to have a certain way that we interpret that and what they are looking for, and that will impact the type of feedback that we give them. Especially since most of the people that use the materials, at least in my case, they come to me as their first line…. So, we have to do a lot of interpreting of what they are looking for. I know that there is always something in translation. It's the good old telephone game.

As the participant indicated, reference is another area of practice where personal perspective is clearly central as it consists entirely of human interaction and communication. In this comment, the participant also indicated that many researchers bypass the finding aids – a focus of much of the scholarship on archival activism - to come speak with the reference staff directly. Also, the participant noted that reference services often play a more direct role in users accessing records than do finding aids. Reference services playing a more prominent role in practice than is portrayed in the scholarship on archival activism was a theme that emerged throughout the study.

As in the discussion of social power, the institution for which an archivist worked was also considered by some participants to be a factor in an archivist's ability to be neutral. Participant I11 explained the influence of the institution on an archivists' neutrality: "But again, in purely the archivist's perspective, you are serving the employer of some sort, so that is a certain interest that you will tend to support. So, I agree with that statement pretty much." While the scholarship primary addressed the significance of personal perspective and intervention in practice, this participant focused on the influence that serving an institution ultimately has on neutrality as the archivist must serve the interests of the institution of employment. In this discussion of neutrality, the position of the institution may be seen as formative beyond the archivists' personal backgrounds and perspectives, as archivists' decisions are tied to the institution that they serve. Overall, these findings indicate that institutional authority has a larger influence over archival practice and archival agency than the scholarship suggests.

Regarding the specific Mark Greene quote in question, four of the participants voiced direct disagreement with the statement, indicating that they did not think it was appropriate to suggest that archivists are not neutral or that they shape the record. One of the primary areas of disagreement was over Greene's language, specifically his use of the terms "shapers and interpreters" for archivists. For example, Participant I16 claimed:

> I do not agree with this, especially when he [says] that "we are shapers and interpreters of the sources." Well I don't buy that at all. That's not our job. That's the historian's job. Basically, I know what they are saying about neutrality, and to a certain extent, we have to be neutral about this stuff. But, you know, the reality is, because we are who we are, and because we have the educational background, we are going to gravitate to certain records and documents and groups, maybe to the detriment of other documents….I do believe there should be some kind of neutrality that we can't get too caught up in this stuff cause that becomes a conflict of interest in our profession.

Similarly, Participant G4 voiced concern over that specific language:

I think the statement is too strong where he says 'this simply means we are not neutral…but shapers and interpreters.' It might be ok to say we are not neutral or objective because we can't be. But then he says we are shapers, which is an active term, meaning that archivists shape things, and I think that is wrong. And, we don't interpret necessarily. So I think he overstates that at the end.

In both of these examples, the participants acknowledged that neutrality is impossible; however, they took issue with Greene's implication that archivists' shape the record. Also disagreeing with Greene's assessment of neutrality, Participant G8 claimed:

I guess the second sentence in his quote, 'this simply means that we are not neutral or objective,' I incredibly disagree with that. In my personal politics, I am very well left of center. And, I live in a state that is very much right of center…. So, I have processed collections, when I have looked at a given document, and I have been rolling my eyes in my head, where I am like, this is just a joke. The Republican take on this particular issue is just fundamentally illogical. But, I don't let that affect me. When I am processing a collection, my focus is more on 'is this historically valuable?' rather than 'is this a bunch of bunk that doesn't need to be kept?' so I go out of my way to be neutral. And, I think that our neutrality as archivist is something that we should trumpet. Especially here at a public institution where I work at the [state university].

Explaining the reasons for disagreeing with the statement, Participant I2 asserted:

I guess, my feelings are summed up in the Code [of Ethics] – that you cannot alter or manipulate data or conceal records. I think that's a very deep tradition in the code in as far as one thing that is really important but from the quote that I was given, I don't know if I was entirely in agreement with that or not, or if I think that is really appropriate…. People don't want to hear my opinion or my perspectives, I am just a temporary steward of them, I think that kind of puts it to we are all human beings who all have our opinions but almost in a sense of journalism we need to keep ourselves out of it as much as possible.

By discussing the SAA Code of Ethics and the manipulation of data, this participant suggested that Greene's statement implied a manipulation or alteration of the records by allowing personal perspectives to influence the record. Overall, these participants indicated a strong belief that personal perspective should not influence practice and/or the records, and that acceptance of an interpretive or 'active' role was inappropriate, directly contradicting not only Greene's statement but the majority of the literature on archival activism relevant to neutrality. The participants all

implied that personal perspectives should be removed and not influence practice. This position directly counters the scholarship on activism, which accepts the influence of personal perspectives.

Regarding the specific question of the interview instrument, three participants indicated more mixed agreement, with the same language in Greene's statement also being the primary area of concern. In these cases, the participants indicated acceptance that archivists' perspectives did influence the record, but voiced an uncertainty over the extent to which they shaped or interpreted the record. For example, Participant I10 claimed:

> I think that I both agree and disagree. I don't think that, as an archivist, it is our primary job to shape and interpret the sources. To me, it is our job to conserve the sources and to make them available. And that it may be the persons that use the sources to interpret them and shape them. But, in practice, I think that we can shape things by, particularly in the world now in digital archives, [deciding] what is digitized, what is made available, and what isn't.

Similarly, Participant G9 explained, "Shapers and interpreters is a major change and shift in how we have traditionally practiced. So, I am not sure if we are there yet. At this institution, maybe we are not progressive enough that we are at that point where we are interpreting collections for our users as well. But, I can see where it might be beneficial at some institutions to do so. To create a little context, maybe you can do that from exhibits or other types of outreach. I don't know that I am going to be the one that is out there turning collections into final products that are going to change the world. I will leave that to users." With this comment, the participant did acknowledge that archivists had the potential to shape or interpret records through decisions on digitization and access or programming and exhibitions, but the respondent was uncertain as to the extent to which such practices should be done.

Six participants directly stated that they agreed with the statement. Regarding the reasons behind the agreement, Participant I5 maintained:

I agree with that statement, archivists are not neutral and that they very strongly shape the information that they management….Based on my experience researching from a historical side, [if] the information is not available, it severely impacts what message is put out from the researcher's side. If I am a researcher, I come to you for whatever you have on this group, and I take that that is all that you have. And, if there is information that never made it in there, whether it was provided before it made it to the archivists, I just believe there is a massive room for error, and I think not all researchers or people on that side of the desk take that into account… It's stunning to me, how often we find something that shocks us, and changes the direction of the discussion or the point that we were so sure about. And for us, the devil is in the detail, because we are considered the authority.

This participant drew upon his/her background as a researcher, understanding the impact that an archivist's decisions can ultimately have for the historical record, as it shapes which information is available for research. This participant also acknowledged the authority position that archivists are seen as having because of the significance of this decision making. This response reiterated much of the scholarship on archival activism, including the justification for archival transparency. In addition to those six in direct agreement, three participants who did not indicate clear agreement with the statement did agree that archivists shape the record, voicing agreement with the aspect of Greene's statement found most challenging.

In their response to the question on neutrality, fourteen participants said it was important to aim for neutrality in archival practice. Discussing the significance of neutrality, Participant G5 explained, "I think we try to be, but I don't know if anyone can be totally neutral in any job that they do. So, I don't think it is necessarily the archival field that deals with this.… But, I think we all try to be as neutral as possible, but somehow, I don't think you can be as neutral as maybe you would hope to be." Included among these fourteen participants were two who had agreed with Mark Green's statement. Participant I9 articulated this seeming contradiction: "I think we are professionally responsible to be neutral. But, I very much doubt that most of us are. I think that our own values will shape what we see as important. I know from my own stuff, the things

that I've seen and valued in the department, are actually more likely to be saved." Thus, even when there is recognition of the influence of personal perspective on practice, many practitioners still stated that they aimed for neutrality.

In their responses, six participants specifically clarified that they did not believe it was the archivist's role to interpret the records. Participant I15 explained, "And, I don't think that it would be possible to be deliberately shaping what an interpretation would be of our history. I believe our job is to put it all out there and let the researcher make his or her own conclusions." Similarly, Participant I13 stated:

> I think what we need to do when we are processing and developing finding aids
> we need to be as neutral as possible….We do have collections that I probably
> wouldn't agree with the themes or the manners … but I also look at them as these
> are historical documents, they are documenting the history of the organization.
> There are some people who need to have this information. And, it is not really up
> to me to judge it. So, I look at it as we are providing access to this information.
> So, you have to put your personal perspectives away.

With such comments, the participants suggest that they do not think they should judge or place value on the records in their practice but maintain the records for others to interpret.

Recognizing that neutrality was impossible yet still believing it an important aim, many participants discussed neutrality in terms of bias, implying the goal of neutrality was to avoid bias. Similarly, participants repeatedly mentioned "sides" in their discussion, suggesting opposing positions or agendas. For example, Participant G4 explained, "Because I used to be a historian, I always try to teach students both sides of things. Like, this is what I think, but you don't have to think this. You want students to take history to find out what the truth is. And, so I am biased, in a lot of things, in so far as my politics, but I don't believe I carry that over into my work. I think it is important to keep that aside." Participant I3 also discussed 'sides' in the response, but also believed it was important to not prioritize any at the expense of another:

[I] Sort of [agree with the statement]. To the extent that no one can be entirely neutral, I mean, we bring with us our background and that can't not influence us. But I do think that we have a professional responsibility to try to be as neutral as possible and not favor one side over the other. I mean obviously it is a priority to kind of work with undocumented, under documented or underrepresented groups, so that that gets into the historical records. But, I don't think we should be doing it because it's our personal opinion that this group should get more publicity or something – does that make sense?

Like this participant, Participant G9 also discussed the effort to remain neutral by collecting from both sides: "I certainly strive for neutrality, and I wonder sometimes if I don't go to the other extreme to be so not neutral that I don't go out of my way to collect right wing materials to represent them or show the tax payers of [my state] that you know, we are not a liberal bastion here, we are reflective of [this region.]." In this case, the participant also indicated that the effort to be neutral actually influenced his or her practice by encouraging overcompensation for materials from countering personal perspectives. Another participant also illustrated this theme of 'sides' through an example of documenting the history of the football program on the participant's campus. Participant I10 explained:

[The program] is something I have heard about all the time since I started working here. It is used as a PR [gimmick] by the college lots of times, and you kind of get a little tired of just hearing one aspect of it. So, I suppose I do make an effort to present the other side, which is not a very positive side. And, it's one the college doesn't want to publicize very much because it doesn't fit in with things. It's sort of like, it could be contrarian. But, I don't go out of my way constantly present the negative aspects of the college's history. Just the full story, which includes both good and bad.

All of these comments indicate that many participants relate lack of neutrality with bias, a term with stronger connotations than other comparable terms like perspective, which were used less often. Practically, many participants suggested that the primary means of avoiding such bias was to represent both sides as much as possible, consequently ensuring that one is not demonstrating special attention to areas of personal interest.

Participants implied that neutrality was more central to certain aspects of practice than others. The discussion of the need for neutrality was most often discussed in relation to appraisal or collection development and description. Discussing the need to maintain neutrality in description, Participant G3, who had earlier in the interview called neutrality "a myth," explained:

> I already admitted I don't really try to be neutral, but in arrangement and description I try to be neutral because I'm not going to say – you know, the truth might be – "Boy, the people running this organization were nuts." I mean, I'm not going to say something like that. I mean you do have to have some sort of a little bit of a museum objective voice when you are writing a catalogue record or finding and you just try say, "There is a rich source of documentation of annual reports of this and this," and you don't go and say, "you can find out why the institution was such a disaster and collapsed six years later.' So, I guess that is a place where you do keep some of your opinions to yourself.

While claiming not to try to be neutral in practice overall, this participant considered it important to try to maintain neutrality in the area of description. However, one area in which several participants acknowledged archivists' having a greater interpretive role was through developing exhibitions, largely considered an appropriate arena to create a narrative. For example, Participant I10 discussed the use of exhibition to issues largely ignored but relevant to the history of the college campus, including the football program discussed previously:

> [T]he legend [of the team] had grown and it was a big deal among the alumnae for many years. And, what has been remembered and been revered for many years was the legend. But, what was forgotten and never discussed were the problems it created..... And, I have tried to make some display and collections to present the full story of those years. The same things of desegregation of [the college] in the 1950s and 1960s. You know, I tried to present the full story of that, of how the board of trustees tried to drag its feet on those issues. So, I guess in that stance, I can shape it or simply not shape it by simply not reinforcing the traditional interpretation of things, but hopefully presenting the entire story by using documents that people don't realize exist. And, they might not realize the aspects of the legend that they have heard about their whole lives also happened. So, in that sense, I think that I am not exactly neutral or objective. Because I do want to present another side of the story. But, I am not only presenting one side.

Explaining the difference between exhibitions and other areas of practice, Participant 112 maintained:

> Because when you are creating an exhibition or if you are writing a piece that is based off or your materials, there is a goal, not a lesson – cause that has a value statement to it, but there is something you want to teach your viewer about your collection or your materials. So you already have a goal…. You are trying to tell a story. That in itself is not neutral, because you have a purpose for doing what you are doing. When you are processing and accessioning materials, you want to try to get the broadest picture you can because you never know who your researchers will be or what their interests will be so you want to keep it relevant to the scope of your archives, whatever your archives' mission statement is. Whatever your over-arching institution says they want this archives to be, and you agree with your institution hopefully when you read the mission statement. And, you want to keep that in mind when you are doing the processing and the accessioning activities. But, when you are doing an exhibition activity or writing you are going to be thinking about narratives.

These participants argued that creating exhibitions involves selecting materials and creating a description to construct a narrative, requiring the archivists' interpretation.

In addition to exhibitions, a few participants mentioned other areas in which they considered archivists' perspectives influencing practice. For example, Participant G3 discussed the role of personal perspective and reference services, claiming "we can definitely share [our opinion] with a researcher who is exploring a topic." The participant continued, "For example, for an undergraduate student, I would have no hesitation in saying, 'Yes, this little initiative that was tried, yes, and it was a total disaster. And you need to read those records to find out why,' because it peaks their interest. They may be like, "How do you know it was a total disaster?' 'Well, they had bazillion dollars in funding, and it closed in three years later.'" Thus, even if it is important to maintain neutrality in description, the participant argued that one could share personal opinion to assist researchers in finding relevant materials, implying this can bring more visibility and interest to the materials especially to users who may not be as familiar with

working with archival records. As discussed previously, the significance of the personal

interaction through reference service was not fully examined in the scholarship.

Another participant articulated the role of the archivists' perspective shaping the records

through grant making decisions. Relating decisions behind exhibitions and programming to

grant-making decisions, Participant I12 suggested that the archivist was interpreting what would

be of most interest to the users:

> I think going back to what we were talking about with getting your collections out
> there, whether it's through exhibitions or organization… it is always a value
> judgment, of what would be the most important materials to get out to people.
> What would be of most interest? And really, what would be the most likely to be
> granted grant funding. That is also the big decider there. What is the most
> applicable to this grant there? I mean, you try to be neutral there, but you know,
> [that is] your bread and butter, you need to decide what would be the hottest
> prospect of getting that grant funding. You are making a value judgment right
> there. You are making a value judgment on what you think your best candidate is.
> And, also what would be the most interesting to your users. I mean, you should
> know your audience. What are they going to want to learn about? What is going
> to strike their fancy? You are going to have to make that decision, too. That's not
> very neutral. When it comes to collecting and what you choose to accession, you
> would hope that you wouldn't show bias.

With this example, the participant implied that it is not as much the personal backgrounds or

positions that influences the archivists' decisions, but instead their interpretation and

understanding of their audience. As the participant indicated, such efforts demonstrate a value

judgment and lack of neutrality; however, this is a different understanding of record shaping than

portrayed by the literature on archival activism, which primarily discussed the issue in terms of

how the archivist's personal experiences shapes practice and consequently the record. In this

example, the participant is not emphasizing the influence of the individual archivist's perspective

but instead the archivist's understanding of the user and grant demands.

One participant also indicated neutrality may play a factor in practice by influencing job

selection. As Participant G2 explained,

I tend to be a person that just goes from project to project, and there are certain projects that I just won't take because I just know what I would find would just bug the crap out of me. But you know, there are things in any collection that go against your personal beliefs and you just cannot be a censor, you just can't be censors - you just describe as best you can and keep our opinions to ourselves.

In this example, the participant suggested that, even before an archivist begins to work, personal perspectives have influenced his/her decision to even pursue the job. Furthermore, the participant implied that job selection is more important because of the need to keep personal opinions on the materials out of the process, suggesting working with a collection pertaining to some materials may make this more difficult. Like reference work and grant-writing, job selection was another area not discussed in the scholarship which influences archival practice.

Archival Transparency

As the literature on archival transparency required self-awareness, participants were asked how they dealt with their own perspective in their practice. Overall, the participants primarily discussed their approaches to maintaining neutrality.

Several participants addressed the need to separate their personal beliefs from their practice when working with the records. Participant I6 described this approach:

A person has to consciously step away and has to recognize one's own views, and try to combat them at the time that one is doing one's job, whatever one is doing…. Say that a person was working in a historical society, and… they were to come across bill of sales of slave trader or something that is repugnant to most people today. How does one deal with that? You have to step back from it and think of it as a historian and think, well this is wonderful documentation of a past, or an economic system based on slavery on the purest form of human exploitation. You need to step back from that or, say, that is 150 or 200 years ago, so in those situations you are able to separate yourself from records in a temporal [sense]. But if you are dealing with something today, if you are a records manager working as an archivists in an organization working for BP or Exxon Mobile, and you have records of the chairman of the board, and he or she is making comments about, "What's a few thousand birds, when we are trying to protect the shareholder profits" that type of thing.

Similarly, Participant I12 also discussed the importance of the archivists keeping their voice or

perspective of their work:

> Well, I really try to make it not about me. I mean, I am curating the collection. I
> know what is interesting to me. I know what I am trying to do when I am
> reviewing my sources for usage, to see what the overall voice is of the creators of
> those records. You know, who is making them. What are they trying to get
> across? I don't really want to interpret things to the point where I am telling my
> story with them. You need to try to remove yourself from the situation as much as
> possible. Keeping the creators in mind but also your users in mind as well.

Participant G8 specifically discussed the need to detach oneself from individuals represented in

the collection, particularly in cases in which public or political figures may be involved. Using

an example of records related to a district judge involved in a scandal, Participant G8 explained:

> I strive for neutrality. I really, really, really do…. I try to have a detachment from
> these people as much as possible. I try to flip more to archives [me], than personal
> liberal [me] so to speak, so I actively strive for neutrality, especially if its material
> that is public to begin with. So, [as soon as possible], I put that finding aid up on
> our website, regardless of whose name is in there, because I said this is a public
> document, a public court, it is not my job to be a barrier to people finding
> information.

Instead of addressing his or her own perspectives, Participant G1 described the potential

problems that may arise from being too close to a collection. Working for a religious college, the

participant, who is not affiliated with the religion, described how the religion of those working

with the materials may impact practice:

> My boss handles acquisitions and I think neutrality is an interesting issue for my
> boss, because he is a very devoted [to the religious affiliations of the school]. And
> a lot of our collections are [that religion], and I think sometimes he would take
> things that we would not take otherwise. I mean, some of our [religious]
> documents, they aren't going to necessarily have a historical value. It's more of a
> symbolic value. Did we really need to spend a hundred dollars on this item? But
> because it is so close to him, because it is [that religion]…Is he biased so much
> through [the religion] that he is blind to other things, I think it would be very
> interesting to ask him that question about neutrality. And to ask if he is so devoted
> to something how do you not know [if an item] isn't really something that doesn't

fit into out collecting policy, because we focus on collecting [materials] on the lesser [religious figures].

With this example, the participant implied that a close relationship to the subject matter may actually influence acquisition decisions as someone who is too close to the materials may place more weight on symbolic instead of historic value, implying some personal distance may be more appropriate in some repositories.

Several participants discussed using peers to review work to ensure it is free from bias or errors due to possible conflicts of interests. Participant I5 discussed this approach:

> There is a group of people [in our office] that I rely on pretty heavily to discuss potential conflicts… I don't want to be the one that contributed that erroneous piece of information….. Once that detail goes out, a date, a name, a location, a provenance item, … we are the authorities, we are it out there. I am not just providing information. Especially today with the internet. 90% of the people who use the archives are not setting foot into the door. So, they are taking my word as though they are here. That's a lot more responsibility today, I think because, we have a lot more access and that puts a lot more responsibility on the responses that I give, because that's it. They don't have a chance to look at all the papers in front of me.

This participant suggested the reason for using peers to review content was because of the increased sense of responsibility that comes from putting materials online which brings further access to content. The participant also noted that the archivist is considered the authority on the topic, further increasing the responsibility to try to maintain accuracy and avoid any conflicting information. This focus on review highlighted participants' concern of personal bias and inaccuracy.

Several participants specifically voiced the need to be aware of personal perspectives and the influence this may have on their work. Participant I9 illustrated this point:

> I think I try to be aware that I have certain biases. I personally am not at all interested in financial records, but I do know that they are important to document, some of them at least. So I probably keep more than I need to because I don't

understand them….[later] I try to be very aware of myself, when I am judging something. A lot of archive work is very much the matter of judgment.

In this example, the participant recognized something is important even though it is outside the participant's own interest, possibly over-collecting these materials consequently. Participant G5 also discussed self-awareness, emphasizing an awareness of the subject areas in which one has less experience:

> I think it is important to kind of know where you stand. But I… don't try to force it on anyone. … So I try to be self-aware, but I think there are some situations where I may come across in a way that, how do I say this, like I may not understand what my biases are. Like in some way I think that it ignorance, too, like, with certain collections I just don't have a strong background in that. So, there may be some ignorance there that may come out that the scholar may see. Whether that's a bias or an ignorance. But, I hope that they would bring that up and be able to talk through that and be able to give them the collections that they would need….Like, if it is an ignorance issue, like how those interplay, and how the researchers are taking what we are giving them, may be interpreted differently than what we are trying to portray. But, I think most researchers know enough to ask enough questions to get around that.

Participant I11 also indicated an awareness of personal perspective and the influence this perspective has over the participant's approach to practice, specifically programming:

> I don't believe that pure objectivity is possible. So, I accept that I have some subjective judgment…in what I am doing. …Even with the descriptions and history that we write, I try to present new perspectives but make sure to be very careful to remember what the public that I am serving is very interested in. I am trying to provide that as well as trying to [give] them a new perspective. Trying to balance both of those is part of that [job]….I am from a working class upbringing. So, I am interested in the history of the working class and the common people, so I am trying to - I don't want to say push - but I try to include that [community] in all the programming and the history that we write. … But I also try to incorporate a broader perspective. Like, what this means in the greater world. Whereas a lot of our users just want to know the simple [facts], rather than their history… they just want to see pictures of the store and names of the people that were their ancestors. Whereas I am trying to present, yes, these are your ancestors, but this is what it meant to national history. I guess that is what I am trying to say. I try to give them the big pictures along with the little pictures that they ask for.

In this example, the participant articulated the impact of personal background on the practical decisions that he/she makes, implying a working-class upbringing motivates the participant to design programming representing a broader, more representative history of the community. The participant did not indicate a need to separate this personal position from practice, instead the participant makes the attempt to balance the participant's own goals of showing the users a more diverse history and the users own, specific requests. This discussion of self-awareness closely corresponded to the approach to personal perspective presented in the scholarship on archival activism.

Biographical Note

To examine the concept of archival transparency directly, participants were asked the extent to which they believed it would be appropriate or useful to include a biographical note of the archivists in the finding aid, which would aid in transparency about their perspective and the influence they may have in shaping the records. Overall, the participants had mixed perceptions on the benefits and practicality of a biographical note.

Eight of the participants thought that using a biographical note of the archivist could be beneficial. Describing the benefits, Participant I1 claimed:

> I do [believe it is beneficial], because I think that even if it is fifty or a hundred years from now, it could lead to a revelation. …[S]omeone could look at a collection description and look at the note on the archivist and think, this person might have left a certain amount of information out. And to go back and check – because something in the collection might be overlooked based on the description that is given. So, I think it is important to know that, to know that you know how to evaluate the archivist's work. I think it is the same as an author who is writing about history, and knowing their background and that they might have biases, and knowing what type of education they had or what types of information they had. It might be helpful, maybe more in the future than now.

Similarly, Participant I12 suggested, "I think that actually has some merit. I actually like the idea

of that. I mean, I am not the first person to touch this collection. You can see the hand of other

archivists in what is kept and what is absent.… I mean, something about them would be really

helpful." Participant I11 agreed that it would be beneficial to include a note, although indicated a

personal preference for not including one:

> I guess that would be helpful if they do know my background and my perceptions.
> But, from a purely selfish personal perspective, I and a few of my co-workers do
> prefer anonymity. We don't sign our names to the articles we write or things like
> that. So, my thought would have been to that, because I don't want to be part of
> the story. But that is not really honest, because we wrote it so we are part of the
> story.

These participants responses indicated an acceptance that their background or perspective

impacted the collection or record to some degree, or that they were "part of the story," and

consequently thought providing biographical material would be of value.

In comparison, eight thought that providing such information would not be beneficial.

Explaining the limitations of a biographical note, Participant I5 claimed, "No, I don't think I

would feel any more confident or secure whether the person had a particular degree or interest. I

don't think that would make or break [the research]. I think it would be interesting, but I don't

think it would automatically augment the content of the information I was receiving [from a

researcher's perspective]." In addition to not adding benefit, Participant G9 also implied that it

would be of little interest to the users: "I don't know if patrons would look at that in the finding

aid. Do they really want to look at something about me? The guy who processed this? I think that

seems like something a professor would come up with. Not somebody who is working in the

field. I think that is kind of ludicrous." Also arguing it was not beneficial, Participant I16

suggested:

Absolutely not. I think that is overkill. Especially considering the fact that we had this Greene and Meisner article that said we are spending way too much time processing collections, so we certainly wouldn't do it item by item level any more. That is just adding additional information that I don't believe is beneficial at all. I think it is just going to take more time. Again, we are governed by a code of ethics and it is up to us to go by those codes of ethics. So, as long as we are doing archival practicing standards and archival practicing procedures that would be irrelevant and unnecessary.

With this comment, the participant not only indicated a belief that such a note was not beneficial but also a waste of limited time resources, as following the current Greene and Meisner approach to processing, More Product Less Process, the archivist would only process and describe the collection on a minimal level to increase the amount of material processed in any capacity. Thus, the participant implied, that including such a note would counter this approach as it is adding unnecessary processing or description.

While most participants believed it was not beneficial or unnecessary, Participant I7 maintained that including such a note may instead make description less effective, claiming, "I almost see it could be argued both ways whether that makes a record neutral or not. I might lean towards the record maker should be as anonymous as possible." This participant specifically reiterated the theme of aiming for neutrality, especially in description. In this case, the participant suggested that such neutrality is actually better achieved by removing any identifying material about the archivist or record maker as opposed to including a biographical note.

Six participants had mixed perceptions on providing a biographical note of the archivist. Unlike the participants who felt it was not beneficial, these participants indicated they saw some value but were unsure if such notes were necessary, primarily suggesting uncertainty over users finding them useful. For example, Participant I3 claimed:

I don't think that it would be a bad thing to do. I'm not sure that it is necessary. I mean, partly to some of our users, I don't think it would matter to them one way or another. Like genealogists I don't think are going to care whether the person

giving them their great grandparent's marriage certificate is a republican or a democrat. I think there are situation where it is more of an issue – like presidential libraries or anything to do with public records. Or anything like that. I would hope that anyone in charge of those records would have professional neutrality about them. I guess I could see, I mean, we do get some academic researchers, where I could see that a researcher could be curious if the archivist had a bias. I mean, my sense is that they believe we are neutral and we should be. But, the extent to which that is true, I don't know.

While this participant can understand some circumstances when it may be of value, overall the participant indicated a belief that most researchers would not be interested. Participant I15 also suggested that such a note would not be indicative of practice if the archivists was objective, implying such objectivity was ideal: "I don't see any problem doing it, I guess what I would say I don't think it would be necessarily determinative of their archival work. I think most people can rise above that and be more objective….But, I don't see any problem with that biographical sketch, I am just not sure it would be necessarily reflective of how they dealt with the material." With these comments, these participants suggested that if archivists were effective in their strive for objectivity the note would be of little value.

One participant was uncertain of the value of such a note because it was dependant on the type of institution and/or level of processing performed. Regarding the significance of the type of repository in the value of such a biographical note, Participant G6 explained, "Maybe at the larger institutions, when there are more specialized collections then that might be useful. Especially if the archivists has an emphasis in a background that they specialize in. But, I am just a generalist, I don't know that my biography is going to tell anything." The participant later claimed, "We just do minimal processing and cataloguing, very minimal description, so I don't think [my background] plays into my [work]." Through these comments, the participant implied that the note may be of value of at specialized repositories, but given the subject matter of the collection and the participant's own background and focus, including a biographical note with

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the participant's work would not be very beneficial. Furthermore, the participant implied that

minimal processing and description further lessens the value of a biographical note, as the

archivist's background has less of an impact on description at this level.

Three participants implied that biographical notes put too much significance on the role

of the archivist. Discussing the use of the biographical note, Participant I2 asserted, "I

understand it from the standpoint of how they are talking about it, but it just seems kind of

egotistical." Similarly, Participant 16 claimed:

> That is sort of glorifying the finding aid to a higher degree than perhaps it should
> be. So, it's a glorified list. [I]t doesn't float my boat….I think the finding aid isn't
> a work of art. It's a tool. Now, a good finding aid is a good tool and reflects the
> record, not so much the individual that puts it together. We wouldn't put
> dedications space into it. Like, "I would like to thank all the little people"
> ….That's for a book. A finding aid is not a book.

Participant I8 suggested that the idea of including a biographical note placed too much

importance on the individual accomplishments of archival practice, claiming:

> I would say it's interesting, but I would put a footnote that it's a bit on the
> narcissistic side for me. I just feel like, to some extent, especially in a field when a
> lot of people are coming from academia were the focus is on the individual and
> the individual's accomplishments, I think it's a little too much, "Look at what I
> can do, Mom!" But, I would say, maybe at some point, I might slap my bio on it
> just for the hell of it. Just to see how people might respond, just for the hell of it.

All three of these participants indicated they thought the use of the notes were clearly un-

necessary and also suggested that archivists' role in shaping the finding aid was not as influential

as the scholarship indicated.

The primary practical concern that several participants had, including both participants

who thought it would be beneficial and not be beneficial, was the difficulty in identifying what

information would be useful to include in the note, both for practical and theoretical reasons.

Regarding the practicality of using a biographical note, Participant I8 maintained:

Rarely do we have a finding aid where it is just one archivist writing it. So, if you are going that route, and the most open and transparent, and the most progressive, then you can end up [with a finding aid] were there are two authors, and two editors. I mean, that's four people. So are we going to put four biographies at the bottom? And, what kind of biographies are we going to write? A junior from [the local university] who may or may not be interested in a career in archives, who was just looking for an internship to just check off a box to graduate? So, I would just say on a functional level, it just wouldn't work very well for us.

As this participant indicated, the collaborative construction of the finding aids would make

including a biography of the archivists less practical as it would require multiple notes.

Participant G5 also discussed the diversity in training of individuals working on finding aids

including students and interns, and raised questions on the amount of details to provide in the

biography:

We do put our names on the finding aids. We say 'processed by' and list individual staff names. And we have a lot of students, and library interns that do it, and their names are on there. And if you do a bio, how detailed would you go into? Like every organization you are a member of? And at that point, if you don't put everything that you are a member or were a member of, then they may see it as you holding back then, too. And you can't list everything. The SAA president has a sixteen page resume. She's not going to go be able to condense that into the bio for the collections that she processes in a good way for the people where she's not holding something back. So, it's interesting. I mean, you could, and it would at least give people some context, but then they could do some further research, like if they really wanted to know more about you, then they could ask for your resume, I guess.

These comments point to the practical application of including a biographical note when multiple

individuals contribute to the description, requiring archivists or those working on the project to

edit their biographies appropriately, which would limit the feasibility of using such notes.

Other participants also questioned how the appropriate contents for notes would be

determined. Participant I1 was also concerned over who would write the biographical note:

I think it would be easy to put into record, but I am going to guess that a lot of people would not be happy as far as their own privacy goes. And then, what kind of information are you putting in about the archivist? What type of information is

important? Because, if someone wrote something about me, I might not agree with it. But if I was writing about myself, then it definitely wouldn't be neutral.

Participant G2 also discussed the differing values of biographical information:

> The thing about the staff bios, that will be your CV, but I think in terms of neutrality and bias, I don't think it would have a whole lot of implications like that – white woman born in a certain age, very left leaning, recovering Catholic. I mean, I have all of these things going on, and those probably come to bear. I mean, I try not to have those things influence what I do, but they do.

With this response, this participant demonstrated an awareness that the biographical aspects that may be more relevant to include for archival transparency relate to personal history as opposed to professional experience. Other participants also discussed the types of information they considered to be most beneficial for researchers. For example, Participant G6 claimed:

> I think it would have to be a pretty detailed biography to give a researcher perspective….Some of the nuances of the biography might be difficult to represent in a page or less than a page. It sounds ideal, but perhaps it might be the kind of thing that when you are in a specialized archives and acquire something scholars can access and goes into detail, or you are a published archivist… But, if you are just a generalist – then I think it would be difficult then to know from my biography what type of bias I might have.

Similarly, Participant I11 said, "I really got into details like if I studied the WPA in grade school and am interested in the preservation of local community records or something like that, they might understand why we are saving it and presenting it the way that we are. But, I suppose if we are just, I got my BA here and MA there, I don't see much benefit for that." Regarding the significance of subject interest and knowledge, Participant I1 gave an example of working in a special subject collection, in this case with architectural and archeological materials:

> I had an interest in that area, but no training in [architecture] and absolutely no training in archeology, and I worked on an archeology collection. I wrote a huge archivist's note. It was basically … a puzzle of how I finally figured it out. And I was like, "I need to write a description on how I figured it out, so people could, too." But part of me was like, what if I am wrong? What if I am describing it wrong? And what if I was putting the pieces together wrong? But I am thinking that I could have written a note saying I was an archivist by training but didn't

have an archeological background. But I think that when I worked there, most of the staff was either trained in architecture or archeology. And it was strange, because some of them didn't know the archival background on how to describe things, but I didn't have the training to describe things in the correct archeological terms.

These comments also demonstrated that the participants felt that subject expertise was the biggest influencing factor that would be of most value for researchers. The participants' prioritization of subject knowledge diverged from the scholarship promoting archival activism which suggested that personal history or experience was most relevant and influential to practice. However, the participants' responses suggested that such biographical notes may be a practical challenge as it would require significant time to determine what personal information would be relevant. In addition, five participants voiced some concern over the privacy of the archivists with the amount of information that might be expected to provide. As Participant I4 explained:

But, I don't think it should go to the point where it would be an invasion of the person's privacy or in the case of the religious person if they belong to a certain church. But a general background might help or what that person [was] interested in. [For example], we have some theater papers here. So if someone put down if they had a degree in theater arts or something, then that might hold some sway, or if they had a science background….I just think there would have to be limits because they would have to take the personal [privacy] of that person into consideration.

Thus, some of the biographical factors which may actually have the most significant impact over archivists' practice, such as race, sexual or gender identity, political affiliations, social-class or religion may specifically be the type of information that may be considered an invasion of the archivists' privacy if it was expected that archivists should include this information.

Two participants were concerned that including a biographical note may have negative consequences as such notes might make users suspicious of bias. Participant G4 explained how the biographical note might heighten researcher's awareness of the archivists' potential bias to the extent that they might not trust the finding aid: "I think that it is an implication that archivists

are biased. In other words, it's like 'Warning, this archivist is a member of some kind of organization or labor union or something like that'…. But I think on the other hand archivists should be willing to discuss their positions if the researcher asks them." In response to this participant's remark on the biographical note, Participant G5 agreed:

> [The researchers] could read it wrongly then, maybe think your bias is in there more, and maybe wonder what you are keeping out because of your bias. Because you have the power, especially when you are getting into More Product Less Process, when they are thinking about your bias, they are going to think, "What are you holding back? What description are you not putting in there so I can't find the thing that I need because you don't think it should be in the collection or shouldn't be part of what you do?"

The participants expressed concern that some readers may wonder why the biographical note was included and read it as a 'red flag' for the rest of the finding aid. This feedback also implied that such warnings may negatively influence or impact a researcher's perspective of the document as the researcher may misconstrue the relationship between the archivist's biography and the archival processing and consequently misinterpret his or her reading of the records themselves. This is a concern that was not significantly addressed in any of the literature related to the biographical note.

Alternative Methods of Sharing Biographical Information

Five of the participants indicated that they already included some biographical information about themselves on their website with some suggesting this may be a more appropriate place to provide such information, as it would be in one central location that was easily accessible to any researchers wanting more information. Because institutions with smaller archival staff, including those with lone arrangers, would have the majority of the finding aids written by the same individual, Participant G7 claimed, "I think that for most institutions that we

represent [the biographical note in the finding aid] might be redundant." In addition to redundancy, Participant G3 suggested the website would be more efficient because most users would rather have shorter finding aids: "Yes, I just think a biography would be a waste in a finding aid. Nobody wants to read anymore, anyway." When this participant made the comments, the other two focus group participants agreed, implying that their practical experience has suggested that most researchers would not be interested in reading such notes in the finding aid. Including a biographical note on the repository website would allow the users who may be interested in such information to access it if they desire.

Several participants mentioned that they felt that it was more appropriate to provide such biographical information when working directly with users, such as during reference work, outreach or donor relations, as opposed to a finding aid. In regards to reference work, these participants implied that this was a better way of determining what information was relevant for the researchers' needs and would also provide context to such information, which would help alleviate the concern over creating user suspicion. Many indicated they already shared such biographical information with researchers when it was relevant. For example, Participant G1, who worked at a religious college but was not personally affiliated with that religion, explained:

> I have needed to say [to researchers], I am not [from this religion] because they
> have been asking me questions like I am, and I feel like I need them to know that
> I can't say what the meetings were like last week. I just need to get that out on the
> table. I mean, usually they are ok, but I have been asked - why do you want to
> work here – you aren't [the religion]? And I'm like, well there are a lot of reasons
> I want to work here, and I can explain that and I am comfortable doing that. But I
> don't know if I want that in a finding aid though.

Similarly, Participant G3, the archivist for a church archives that the participant was not a member of, also often found the need to discuss personal backgrounds with researchers:

> But, I do think it is a good idea, and my identity is something that I do talk about
> with my researchers, because almost all of them are [from this religion]. And I'm

new and have been there for about a year. And some of them had suspicions, and some of them were like, thank you so much for coming and helping – it was a total mess. Thank you so much for coming and helping us out. I mean, and some people say, it's really good that you are not a [church member] cause you could throw things out that [we] couldn't throw out. But then some of them worry that I am throwing out the wrong stuff, so I feel that my identity is very much a character in the archives.

As the participants' comments indicated, researchers may often have questions for the archivists, particularly for collections related to communities like church archives, which increases the importance of the archivists being open about their background.

Similar to reference services, Participant I8 also described sharing personal information during programming as well as work with donors:

When I do give [a tour] of our archives, or … a tour of exhibits, I describe my background. I mean, I think you have to. I don't go to the point of political association. But, to at least to what my academic interests are, where I went to school, sometimes where I live in terms of the suburb where I live, that impacts people and has some significance, depending on the topic. [Later] I will say [when working with donors], especially when I am meeting them face to face, you know, I've been at the museum for twelve years. My training is as an academic historian. You know, I've worked in archives in terms of research and in terms of acquisitions, and I am only getting on the ground in terms of understanding the archives profession, but this is my opinion as a museum employee as a professional employee. So, yes, I think it's, in that spirit of transparency, I think it's important. As far as I remember, I've tried not to pull any punches with that.

Participant G3 also reflected on the importance of personal transparency with donors:

I think it might be good for us to be more transparent, be more open because you think about the kind of personal scrutiny record donors or people who end up in records are subject to. In some ways it's not only fair to do this, but it's a move of empathy almost. Look you are trusting us with your story. Here is my story, you know, a little bit of exchange there. So, I can sort of see how that would possibly even things out a little bit in terms of power.

The participants indicated that areas of practice involving personal interaction, such as reference, programming or donor relations, would be a more appropriate way to be transparent about personal background than through a finding aid which the researcher generally uses

independently. The participants suggested they were more comfortable sharing their personal backgrounds through these direct exchanges, implying this generally happened organically. The use of providing archival transparency during these areas of practice was something that had not been discussed in the literature, despite the apparent prevalence of such practice within the field and practical benefits.

Conclusions

Overall, the participants emphasized the importance of neutrality to archival practice, although most recognized that neutrality was impossible. This would seemingly demonstrate lack of support for the concepts of archival activism, which would necessitate the acceptance archivists' having an impact on the record. Participants generally described lack of neutrality as using practice to promote an agenda or bias, suggesting that objectivity may be a more appropriate description for their professional priorities. This topic of language will be examined more fully in the final conclusion.

Neutrality was seen as having a role in different areas of practice than discussed in the literature. While participants did discuss appraisal and description, the primary areas addressed in the scholarship, they also mention reference services, programming and even grant development. Unlike appraisal and description which focuses on participants' evaluation of the records, these other areas of practice place more emphasis on the archivists' perceptions and interpretations of the needs of their users, which they then use to determine which materials from their collection would be of most value. These areas still involve an evaluation of the records; however, the judgment is in the context of researcher use. However, this can still ultimately shape the records, especially in the areas of programming and grant development, as such visibility generally leads to more processing and access.

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Participants were overall mixed in support over the value of archival transparency. Regarding the biographical note specifically, many participants suggested that it would be less practical, indicating that while it may be of value to some researchers, it would be difficult and practical to determine and identify which information would be appropriate and useful. This discussion seemed to suggest that the participants found that researchers did not rely on or carefully read findings aids as much as the scholarship would suggest. Several participants implied most researchers didn't want to read the whole finding aid and one said most researchers bypass the finding aid to go directly to the reference staff. Furthermore, many suggested that minimal description would really limit the necessity of such a biographical note. However, participants did suggest that archival transparency was more practical and useful on a personal, individual level, generally through reference as well as programming and donor relations. This suggested that these methods of transparency were considered more practical because the archivists could determine what information would be relevant to the researcher and provide context to their biographical information, as opposed to a fixed note in the finding aid.

Chapter 6: Findings – Diversity/Inclusivity

For the concept of diversity/inclusivity, participants were asked to what extent they believed it was appropriate for archivists to actively document communities or cultures that have traditionally been excluded from the historical narrative. Overall, the participants were overwhelmingly in agreement over the appropriateness of such practice; however, there was significant range in response over the feasibility of such practice.

All twenty four participants agreed that the issue of diversity/inclusivity was important and was appropriate for archivists to make efforts to collect the records of under-documented communities. In most cases, participants asserted their agreement very directly indicating they strongly agreed with the concept. When asked if diversity/inclusivity was important and appropriate, Participant I7, for example, claimed:

> Absolutely, and that's another guiding principle for me for what I do. Why I believe that [it is important] is because simply put, a lot of how history has been documented and kept has - we have all heard it before - it's been the story of the most powerful and in our society of course, that's straight, white males of a certain social class, wealthy, so it's really important to me that I do what I can do to right that wrong… [Later] When I bike to work every day, I think about that. That's what gets me in the door every day.

With this reply, the participant not only agreed it is an important and appropriate issue but a personal motivation for being an archivist. In addition to agreeing it was appropriate, Participant I8 also indicated it was specifically an issue of personal interest:

> Yes, I agree that this should be a priority. I think it should be a priority for personal reasons, because I find that the history of those groups are more interesting and more engaging to explore as a historian, not just as an archivist. And I also think a lot of what you are seeing here is what you are seeing in museum practice for not quite twenty years, but almost twenty years. And there is a lot scholarship in public history along these lines, so this idea that, yes, we should reflect, in our case, the diversity and importance of these communities around us, yes absolutely that is important.

Not only did this participant agree it was a priority and significant, but the participant also indicated observing the topic in the field of public history and museums for some time, implying it is not a new or challenging concept in those fields. Although the participant claimed that part of his/her agreement comes from personal interest in such history, the comment regarding the significance of representing the community supports the scholarship on archival activism. Participant I5 also asserted agreement that diversity and inclusivity was appropriate and something already being done at his/her institution:

> Absolutely. I think it would be ideal. We certainly contact other people for input as we are working on our archival project. I think that could be because [this repository is] so specialized. I think that could be a difference with specialized archives versus more general repositories. For us, that's the life blood of what we do. For us, if we get the papers of an [individual], I want to know who their friends are. I want to know everything about their life. But as much as I would like to do more and more of that, [because of] time, I just don't have that much flexibility. But, we are lucky enough to rely on interns, and volunteers to try to fill in some of those gaps when we have work on some of those projects.

With this comment, the participant suggests that this is something considered essential to the participant's repository, implying it may not be considered as important in more generalized repositories. However, even in a repository which prioritizes such practice, the participant does also indicate that time resources are often limited. Participant I3 also considered the type of institution when evaluating the extent to which it was a priority, claiming:

> I definitely think that archivists have a responsibility to do that. I wouldn't want to rank it terms of priorities because we all have different collections and different user communities and it should be higher priorities to some places than others. But I definitely think we have a duty to do that. And my institution is a member of [an effort] that is actively searching out collections both in repositories that are under-described and under-accessed and also in basements and attics to document African Americans in our area. So, we are taking a pro-active role of seeking out those records. So, I actually think it should be a priority. But I don't know how it should rank.

The overall participant support of diversity and inclusivity indicates that this concept of archival activism has been largely accepted as appropriate for practice.

One participant agreed with the importance of the issue of diversity and inclusivity, but specified that it was important to define diversity in the context of the community the repository is representing. As Participant G9 explained:

> Yeah, I think as long as there is a broad understanding of what diversity means, I think that's fine. We serve a predominantly rural population here and so that could be seeking out materials that document the rural lifestyle and that is very appropriate. Yeah, I think as long as diversity is understood more than just race or gender or ethnicity, then I think that is very appropriate to do….[Later] [T]o me the rural poor is very diverse, and we have a lot of rural poverty that is not documented here, that is not in urban centers. I could find a lot of diversity in my various shades of white people in my region, each telling a different story.

Similarly, one participant who was the archivist for a membership organization discussed efforts to document more inclusively from within the organization, including records of staff who generally been undocumented such as housekeeping or dining, an example which further illustrates how diversity or inclusivity would be defined by the institution.

While agreeing that it was important, six participants vocalized concern over the use of the word priority to describe such efforts. The responses demonstrated a range of reasons for the apprehension over the use of the word. The most common reasons related to the limitations of resources as several participants believed that such prioritization may take resources away from other areas that were also necessary job functions. For example, Participant I6:

> I think archivists should be always on the lookout for documenting the marginalized and previously undocumented groups in the area of collecting that they do. It's very important. You don't want to leave undocumented, people who are part of the community that you are working in. But, to use the term priority could lead to distortion. Again, an archives is a part of an institution or an organization, so you can get to work with that organization to document those who are not well documented in the past, but to do that, if you prioritize that, then you run the risk of not collecting the records of the organization well.

This comment also implies that prioritization could lead to an overall imbalance in the collection.

Regarding the limitations of time, Participant I1:

> I just don't know if it should be a priority. I just don't think that might be the best – as far as certain time goes for an archivist – it just may not be feasible for us to pick out information on the underdog. But that if it is out there, we should try to capture it, but not necessarily make it a priority.…It just seems like it would take too much time to make sure every collection is well rounded.…[I]t would just take too much time to make sure to get everyone's opinion, when there are so many other things to get done, too.

These participants suggests that archivists should try to document such materials if it is available, indicating support of diversity/inclusivity, but suggesting that it may not be practical to prioritize such proactive collecting efforts because of the limited resources needed to fulfill all other job responsibilities. Also apprehensive about the use of the word priority, Participant I4 demonstrated concern that prioritization could also lead to certain communities feeling even more slighted:

> I think it should be a priority, I don't know if it should be an overarching priority to the point where other areas are neglected. …[M]y concern is that if we totally make that a priority, and if other groups get wind of it that were not included then their feelings will get bumped, and they will say – so and so. But, I do think that it does need to be an area of focus. But, it's hard to do in some [communities because] there is a distrust.

This response implies that some communities have a distrust of donating materials to the archives, which may be heightened if they feel slighted for another community. This reason did not seemingly contradict the importance of the issue, but demonstrated concern with the impact of archival practice on the communities being documented. Another participant felt prioritization was unnecessary for most repositories as collections have already become

increasingly diverse and inclusive, especially with some repositories focusing on specific

communities. Explaining this perspective, Participant I10 said:

> I think it should be an important aspect. I am not sure it should be a priority. I guess, my feeling is, that in the United States… are there any groups who were formerly undocumented or unrepresented, who are not documented in archives or collections these days? I don't know. It would be interesting to know which groups [have] no archival record anywhere of the group. … There may be for example, tribes in the Brazilian rainforest who have not been documented. But, how would you document them in an archival collection?… But, I think that in my case, if from within a local community, if an African American local author or whatever had some papers from their ancestors and wanted to deposit them, I would say yes, because I had the facilities to store them, and organize them in archivally proper ways to preserve them for future researchers. So, you know I would collect them; I just don't go out and seek them.

Unlike the other participants' concern where communities may feel further marginalized, this

participant felt prioritization may not be necessary as most communities or cultures are

represented to some extent, suggesting there are many repositories collecting these diverse

materials now. Thus, while the participant indicates it is an important issue, he/she would not

actively seek out such materials. Overall, these participants still said that it was an important

issue which should be supported, but had concerns with prioritizing the concept for a variety of

reasons. Yet, given the responses, having concerns with prioritizing the issue is not necessarily

indicative of less support of diversity/inclusivity. For example, Participant I4, who does admit

it is a priority, just not an overarching priority, vocalizes the complexity of working with the

local communities and an attempt to understand how such activities may be perceived by the

communities, demonstrating significant care for the community concerns. Other participants

discussing the limitations of resources imply that these participants may be placing more

emphasis on the practical execution of such practices, as opposed to the significance of such

work. In contrast, the reason that such emphasis on diversity/inclusivity may not be necessary

does suggest less support of such proactive efforts. Instead of the support of the word priority, a

better indicator may instead be the extent to which participants believe archivists should proactively promote diversity/inclusivity through practice with the resources available to them.

The specific question used to examine the topic of diversity/inclusivity included a quote from the 2010 draft of the Core Values Statement prepared by the Task Force on Developing a Statement of Core Values for Archivists: "Archivists embrace the importance of deliberately acting to identify (even create) materials documenting those whose voices have been overlooked or marginalized."[124] The 2010 draft was used as it was the version available at the start of the data collection although the Core Values was approved and made publicly available on the SAA website in 2011. In response to the question, four participants specifically highlighted the use of the language 'even create' in the quote. One participant, Participant I8, specifically mentioned this language and supported this idea:

> I see in parenthesis, even create. Absolutely, at some point, we would like to become more active than we have in the past, in oral history collecting, that is one way that we can create. We can create documentation, and I think [that is] one of the most active ways. And I think for us as an institution that is also a way that we can realistically manage [things]…The digital records file that would get created with an oral history project would still create problems for us, but they wouldn't present problems of the same time of backlog, storage space issues.… Hopefully, many archivists do something like active collecting in more traditional archive and manuscript materials, or oral histories. And, you know, I think that should be reflected in the exhibitions that we do, in the websites we create, in the other kinds of projects that we support.

While this participant appreciated this language, most participants who discussed the word 'create' voiced concern over its implications. Explaining his/her apprehension, Participant I2 said, "But I kind of take issue with the term 'even create,' and maybe I am misinterpreting that, if that is saying that you will create new records separately. Creating a new record, I think that

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[124] "Core Values Of Archivists Draft" August 9, 2010. http://www2.archivists.org/news/2010/comment-on-draft-values

would go against the principal of Original Order. I think that they should let the records speak for

themselves." In addition to participants who voiced concern with the word, several participants

asked what was meant by "create." Overall, the attention paid to the use of the word "create"

indicates the word may be controversial in the field. In fact, the word "create" was not in the

final "Core Values of Archivists" approved in May 2011 (See Appendix IX: SAA Core Values

of Archivists). Given the feedback from participants, this revision may have been made because

the word was considered too controversial.

Institutional Influence

While agreeing diversity and inclusivity was important, five participants specified that

the type of institution influenced the extent to which such collecting efforts were appropriate. In

these cases, the participants clarified that archivists needed to collect records within the mission

of the repository and supported diversity/inclusivity whenever appropriate within the guidelines

of that mission. By specifying that archivists must follow the guidelines of the institution, these

participants suggest that archivists' agency to collect proactively may be limited in some

repositories. Conversely, one participant implied that diverse/inclusive collecting was more

feasible when supported by the mission or heads of the institution. Explaining the significance of

supportive repositories, Participant G3 said:

> I think if your institution is already making the steps to do that, they should be
> using their power to do an inclusive [approach to collecting]. Then I think the
> archivist has a little more power to do so. My institution has had a pretty good job
> of putting this on the front burner. And, so I am putting them on the front burner. I
> am doing that because I see my parent institution doing that, and I want to be in
> line with my parent institution. And, I think it is important personally, as well,
> and it's really great when those two values match up.

This comment further highlights the influence the institution has over archivists practice, a recurring theme throughout the study.

Alternative Records

While the literature on archival activism discussed the significance of exploring untraditional or alternative records to better document cultures and communities, only two raised this topic. Both participants were involved in the same focus group, so the issue of alternative records was discussed in conversation with each other as opposed to being independently raised by individual participants:

> Participant G5: And maybe the other thing that needs to happen is … they need to see how they document their culture or what in their daily life they use to document their culture… maybe it would be something totally different, like they tell stories. And so, I think it is different for each group. So you may not be able to give them this list, "if you have letters or records," and if they don't have those [types of records], then you have to think of other ways to document them.
>
> Participant G4: But it's the way different groups of people see things, and if you could get people to be aware of the different rituals or the ways they eat or set the table and all that kind of minutia.
>
> Participant G5: I think that helps you get past your own bias too. It helps you put yourself in their shoes and that old cliché. You know, find out what they are doing in order to tell their story properly instead of telling it from your angle.

Neither of these participants indicated that they currently did collect such alternative types of records; however, both did recognize the value that such type of documentation would serve, which supports the scholarship.

Feasibility

While there was overall agreement in the appropriateness of active inclusive

documentation, there was more range in response on the feasibility of such efforts. Ten

participants said they did not think that it was feasible to proactively seek out collections. The

most common reason given was lack of funding and space limiting the ability to document fully,

with six participants listing this concern. Regarding the significance of funding, Participant I9

said:

> I think it's a very nice thought, but I think that the person who wrote it didn't
> understand what a budget was. You know, we don't have enough budget, we
> don't have enough bodies to go collect the stuff I know I have to collect... I mean,
> I would love to go out and document our student organizations and lives of the
> campus, but I don't have the time to go collect flyers for every student event. … I
> mean, part of it is that it's a lovely thought, but you have to have somebody, you
> have to have the staff to actively go out there and do it and to physically do it, and
> financially do it. So, small archives are just stuck. We just budgetarily don't [have
> the capacity to do that].

Participant G6 also believed it was not feasible due to budget reasons, questioning those who

advocated proactive practice by implying it was an unrealistic expectation: "I would like to know

where their dollars are coming from. I think people who aren't in the field. I think it just sounds

really biased. It just sounds like academics and practioners are just at odds in certain

perspectives. I mean, it would be ideal to have representative collections, no doubt." Another

participant specifically focused on the budget limitations for conducting oral histories, which

were seen as a valuable way of performing such active documentation. Regarding oral histories,

Participant I9 said:

> [O]ral histories are a way of [documenting]. But, I mean, oral histories are not
> cheap... I am in the middle of writing to the Institutional Review Board proposal,
> and you have to go through that. So there are a lot of hoops to go through. But, I
> think it would be very valuable. But, you need to recognize that there is a lot you
> have to go through…. So some of the things they are talking about are very good
> ideas, but they have to be looked at in terms of budgets and bodies.

Related to funding were staff time limitations, as articulated by Participant G8:

> I agree with this statement…. And, the same point, I don't think the word proactive can be used for me that much. I have a huge back log, and I have researchers that are always coming in, and I don't have time to be incredibly pro-active in terms of collecting something that we haven't collected in the first place….I haven't approached [the campus LGBTQ organization], about documenting the history of their organization, but at the same time I haven't actively done it for the fraternities or sororities on campus either. If they approached me and they said, hey we got some materials, would you be interested, I would enthusiastically say yes, and I would definitely work with them on that, but I would not be described as being proactive, because I simply don't have time.

In addition to funding and time, participants also indicated that current backlog made proactive collecting infeasible. Discussing backlog, participant G7 said, "We already have this much material that you already haven't made available and accessible, then going out and creating more it is just not possible in most institutions." Overall, these participants all implied that they thought that the issue was important but that they felt it was not feasible to put the concept into practice due to an overall lack of resources. In many cases, the participants specifically implied they felt that the advocates of such practice had an unrealistic view of the practical capacities in the field.

Many participants discussed the ways in which they tried to integrate diversity/inclusivity into their current practice. Three participants specifically said that they consider this issue when making decisions regarding which collections in the backlog to catalogue, make accessible and promote. Discussing this decision making process, Participant G1 said:

> Like we have papers from an organization from Bolivia, and I got that up there right away. I knew people didn't know it was there, but I just wanted to make sure those finding aids were up there. And, they are getting used, and people think it's great. And they wouldn't have known they were there. And now people know about it and want to research about missionaries in Bolivia and South America.

You know, trying … to make sure that I am [putting up the finding aids] about the other countries, and our international students, and some of our international missions… I mean that's another way of doing it – letting people know that you have [the materials that you do have] and you have a wide variety and that people know about it.

In the same focus group, Participant G3 agreed:

For me, I guess, it's a little harder when we start talking about creating a record that doesn't exist, because when we start thinking about documentation strategy … you know I have so much stuff, how can I justify having more? I mean, when we start thinking about it in terms of the backlog that we already have then it's real easy to me. It's no question. You don't even have to think about it - Let's bring the Native American stuff out first from the backlog.

In addition to description, Participant I2 suggested an effective way of incorporating the concept into practice was through programming and exhibitions:

[In my past experience] I was on the board of an African American museum that was just starting up, and that experience kind of changed my life. It gave me a whole different perspective on things….That being said, I think there is a right way and wrong way to go about dealing with this kind of an issue in this field. I can see value, a lot of value, in identifying materials in a collection, and promoting it through research and writing…..[Gave an example of an African American museum developing programming around recently discovered documents] I think that's a good example of how to use the records to identify these kind of issues of diversity and inclusivity.

These comments demonstrate that the participants make a conscious effort towards this aim of diversity by bringing as much attention to any such existing materials currently in the collection when resources are not available to actively collect new records, indicating these participants place importance on the issue of diversity/inclusivity.

Five participants discussed the importance of collaborations within the community, organizations or other departments within an institution to assist to make such efforts more feasible. These programs may involve working with specific departments on a campus to help work on documentation projects. For example, Participant G3 described the value of

collaborating with the women's studies department in a previous position for an oral history

project:

> It just…requires archivists to really be good with their partnerships and be really
> mindful about where they make their partnership. For example, at my last job, I
> wouldn't have [said I had time] for documentation strategy; but actually we did
> one while I was there. It was an oral history project; it was done by students for
> the women's studies program. I really just had to partner [with them] – and it gave
> me a little extra work but out of it we got probably twenty-five oral histories
> about the development of the women's studies at [the] university…. I think it's
> not just realistic for us to do it by ourselves – it is realistic for us to partner our
> constituents and help them help us.

Similar to collaborations, five participants also specifically discussed the importance of utilizing

interns and volunteers to accomplish projects related diversity and inclusivity. This would

include projects specifically for students to become more involved with collecting information

from the local community as part of their own coursework. The discussion of collaboration as

well as interns and volunteers highlight the efforts made make the most of limited resources to

work on projects promoting diversity and inclusivity.

One participant demonstrated a history of active involvement in a variety of projects

specifically promoting diversity and inclusivity beyond proactive collecting. Discussing the

active involvement around this issue, Participant I7, said:

> [A]s an academic archivist, my primary gig is to collect and preserve the records
> of the campus….I have to do that, and that's important. But also, what I really try
> to do is to reach out to student groups and to staff organizations, because we are
> so hierarchical…Also we have a [civil rights] center here on campus…and it's a
> really dynamic, really great part of our campus… Its mission is to work with our
> students and also area K-12 students to think about social justice, talk about social
> justice in lots of different ways - reading programs, history programs, etc - and
> [to] document and look at the past, present and future in lots of different ways. I
> am very active [with the center]. I am on six different committees with the center.
> I am on the board of the center. I am the archivist for the center. And a few things
> that I have pushed for is that we have a oral history program where we try to
> interview local activists, in broadly speaking, the social justice movement locally,

the civil rights movement locally, so I am viewing that and working with them to make that happen and be successful. And very recently, we received four different grants [that I wrote] to develop a walking tour of local African American history in the city.

The participant displays multiple ways in which the issue of diversity/inclusivity is incorporated into practice including collecting, educational and programming. By discussing the civil rights center and stressing the focus of social justice in response to the question on diversity and inclusivity, this participant indicates that the work that is done through the center promotes diversity/inclusivity. This response also implies the participant connects this issue with social justice. Of note, Participant I7 was the only participant in the study who did call himself/herself an activist which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 9.

Assisting Communities in Documentation

As a follow-up to the initial questions related to the appropriateness and feasibility of archivists to actively document marginalized communities or cultures, the participants were also asked to what extent they thought it was appropriate for archivists to assist communities in documenting their own culture. As such assistance is one of the primary means by which archivists can help "create" records, this follow-up question was included as a way to directly explore participants' perspectives on this point without using a potentially loaded term like "create."

Twenty-three participants thought that assisting communities in documentation was an appropriate role for archivists to take. One participant was unsure, indicating it would depend on the type of institution the archivist was working at. In most cases, the participants expressed their

support of these projects very strongly. Regarding the significance of this work, Participant I16 said,

> This is the one area of activism…that I can fully embrace and understand. And the reason is because there are groups of people and their voice is not heard. And lots of times it's because they don't realize they have the wherewithal to have some of their documentation … not only in consideration but also preserved. And, often times I look at this like a "Doctors Without Borders" concept. Like, if you have the training in the profession, why wouldn't you want to use that to help people who can't afford it…This is what we are trained to do, this is a component of our profession that is not only underutilized but also overlooked. And as archivists and people that understand the importance of the historical record to everybody, not just the movers and shakers in the world, but the people who have been marginalized and who might not have had a voice, it is incredibly important…..The problem is, there are still all types of records that are still being pitched or dumped because the people who created them still don't understand the importance of those records. That's our job as archivists, to make them [not only] aware that they are important, but why they are important, and, why they should save things.

This participant later discussed leading educational programs in the community about topics such as dating photographs or basic preservation methods. In support of such practice, Participant G2 claimed, "Sure, the earlier the better. Take our stuff out to under-represented groups, try to engage them about how cool the stuff is, and they may start documenting it." Similarly, Participant I11 said, "Yes, I feel pretty strongly about that one… I think that being proactive, in a way, we are creating the collections ourselves, especially for oral history and things like that. So, I think that would be a very good idea for most archivists and most collections." With comments like these, the participants indicate very strong support of assisting communities in documentation, suggesting they believe this is work archivists should be doing. One participant also indicated that such practices would benefit archival practice overall by alleviating problems the field is currently facing with space and backlog. Regarding this point, Participant I8 said:

> I also think, especially at an institution like us [with significant backlog], we don't necessarily have to be the place where the documents come anymore. That if some community, neighborhood or social service organization, a branch of the

[city's] public library wants to create its own local archive to document and [are] asking us to help, and all we are going to get out of it is to know those documents are going to be saved and open to the public at some point, I think that is also what we should be doing. It's not necessarily what we are collecting, what we are bringing into this brick and mortar structure or our warehouses. We are active historians, and we are encouraging others to be historians of the city and the country. [Later] Obviously, it competes with dozens of other jobs…. As far as I would be personally the commander of my own schedule, I would prioritize some of that kind of work, because I find it very personally enriching, besides the thing that makes me want to come back the next morning and the next week and the next month.

This participant suggests that the emphasis for archivists should be on ensuring the documents are collected, preserved and made accessible, not necessarily collected by the archivists' own repository, implying this would further the historical record while also circumventing the growing space problems in existing archival repositories. Participant I13 also discussed the value of extending the archiving process beyond the walls of the repository:

We are actually working with local historical societies throughout the state, to encourage them to develop oral histories. So, we are trying to develop prototypes to develop a system because it is really important for these stories to get documented. Last year we got grants [to conduct] oral histories with people who served in Iraq and Afghanistan cause those stories are not being recorded. So it is very important to do this outreach. We have been working on going outside our physical building to reach out all over the state.

Overall, these comments highlight the importance of making communities aware of the significance of their history and records and ultimately enthusiastic about creating and saving their own documentation.

One participant who also believed assisting communities in documenting their own culture was appropriate did note that increasing such efforts would ultimately shift traditional archival practices and processes. According to Participant I1:

I think it is worth a try, but I don't see it happening much…I think it's becoming – rather than being receptacles for retaining items - more about helping to actually collect them and [telling] people what would be important. So we aren't getting those weeded collections. You are getting the collection sooner rather than

decades later. I don't think it's already making that shift.…I guess, if the appropriate situation arises, but it doesn't always happen that way, when you are working with a group to collect information. A lot of times you are just receiving information at a later date. So it is really changing the way that archivists would work – because they would become a lot more a part of that collection. And in a sense, that would affect neutrality. Maybe it is becoming more diverse, but then maybe the archivist is saying, "No, you need to collect the student's opinions, not just faculty and staff." I mean, is that a way of the archivists' putting forth their own opinion?

The participant notes that by assisting communities in documenting their own culture archivists would not only be proactive by encouraging documentation but also influence the eventual contents of the collections themselves as their insight or suggestions may be taken into account by the collectors. The participant specifically questioned the impact this would have over neutrality because of this influence.

Many participants brought up the feasibility of such efforts. Six participants said that such efforts were feasible, most indicating they were already involved with such practices or they felt it was already part of archivists' expected functions. Participant I12 said, "Yeah, I mean, everybody does do it. Part of being an archivist is going out and looking for materials that make sense to accession. Talking to potential donors. I don't think it is unreasonable to do something of that nature or against standard practice." Some participants specifically discussed such activities being most feasible through programming efforts. For example, Participant I4 discussed different walking tours that have been successful in gaining awareness about community history:

I think that a lot of people do it. I think a lot of the African Americans have been interested in documenting their own culture and creating walking tours and so on. And recently, one of our staff members, led a 'real' walking tour, and focused on a lot of [LGBTQ] bars and other hotels and other places that [existed] before homosexuality became really [visible]. And people, would never have known what those buildings were connected to, but she did a really excellent job of documenting what they were and what they meant at the time.

The participant suggested that such programming efforts could lead to more documentation and future acquisitions related to these communities. Another participant also discussed collaboration with student groups for oral history projects for their classes. The specific program discussed involved the students interviewing their own family members under the supervision of the faculty and archivist. These specific examples of executed programs demonstrated ways that such practices could more broadly be incorporated into practice.

In addition to collaborating with the communities directly to assist with their documenting, one participant discussed the value of collaborating with other local archives and libraries in an effort to pool resources to better document the community more fully. Discussing this organized peer group, Participant I7 explained:

> One thing is it all boils down to money of course…. I mean, alone, they are almost dead and bleeding on the side of the road, just like anyplace else. So, we have talked about doing some grant writing, for some collective buying of supplies and that kind of thing. One thing that we did do a few years ago, we celebrated through the month of October, National Archives Month… We had a lot of PR, and some of my area colleagues are hooked into news stations, radio stations, and TV stations. And we had some really good attendance through the month of October. And, we had some tours at different repositories and open houses, and it was successful [and lead to more acquisitions].

This example demonstrates the success of collaborative outreach efforts among local repositories to help promote further collecting from the local community.

Five participants thought that these practices were not feasible for archivists at the majority of repositories, primarily because of funding or time limitations. As Participant G1 explained, "To me, it's difficult because if I am going to do more of that, what am I not going to be able to do?" In response, Participant G2 agreed, "I know, you'd have to clone yourself." Participant I11 emphasized the financial limitations of most institutions: "In the ideal world,

yeah, but in the current economy, it might not be feasible enough….I think most archivists would have the skills to do it. But, whether we have the time and money to do it is a different question." Also stressing the time limitations of archival staff, Participant I2 said, "I think it's more realistic as a private citizen, take off the archivist hat, and go out into the community to campaign for that. Like I said, I don't think we really have time for that. But, I wish I could do that." In addition to funding and time limitations, another participant highlighted the space limitations many repositories were under, noting that the participant's own repository was at 99% capacity. While not thinking it realistic for most repositories, Participant I5 voiced great interest in the possibilities of the work, suggesting a proposed project that the participant had been thinking of for some time:

> I always have this dream, that wouldn't it be cool to have these public history students or library science people get together to look more closely at all the cultures and communities that helped the city.… So, for a million dollars I would love to be able to go and create this current contemporary resource, and I have all these ideas that I have talked to students about. But it's a funding issue. [Regarding archivist's role] I think in my mind the archivists would be the driving force that would open an intrinsic topic, not any one topic, but encouraging different voices, "Hi – we have this really cool collection of whatever," and then getting a whole bunch of students to create a great exhibit…So, encouraging that voice - not defining it - but encouraging it based on what information is successful in getting it out there.

In this proposed example, the archivists would initiate outreach and then encourage students or others to create programming to further increase visibility within the community. Although clearly considering this a valuable project, calling it a 'dream' project, the participant still suggests it would not be feasible without further funding. While this participant viewed archivists' as being the initiative to such efforts, Participant G7 suggested that it would be more feasible if the archivists did not initiate the efforts:

It would take someone else coming in and saying, 'Hey can we get this set-up and do this, do you think we can do this?' Then we become involved. But, it isn't something that I would say I would start my whole project out of the blue and try to get it all together when I have all these other responsibilities. I am going to let somebody else take that reign.

This participant suggests that time limitations make it infeasible to initiate a project, making it more realistic to lend guidance or assistance to projects organized by others. However, the participant also discussed concerns arising from projects that were initiated by other departments:

[Our development office was] interested in working with the archives on different projects. We've talked about sending students out…to do local histories with the development people, which is wonderful. Except the development people only get to go out and see the alumnae who want them to come out to see them who are usually the people who had a really great time at the school, These are the people that they want to get money from. So we are not looking at other minorities that are on campus most of the time. Because [these] people don't tend to become so involved with everyone around the school or have such an investment in it.

While the participant voiced appreciation that the initiative of the development office provided the resources for the oral history project, the participant indicated that the collaboration ultimately did shape the records created, implying different decisions may have been made had the archivist been directing the project.

Conclusions

Overall, participants voiced strong support of the concept of diversity/inclusivity as well as the practice of assisting communities in documenting. While the participants demonstrated general support of the concept, some themes emerged from the findings which can be used to better evaluate the extent to which participants accept the concept within the context of archival activism.

As discussed previously in the section on the use of the word priority, participants' agreement that the issue is a priority is not necessarily an accurate measurement of the extent to which archivists support the issue of diversity/inclusivity. Instead, a clearer indicator of strong support is the belief that archivists should make active efforts to promote diversity/inclusivity whenever possible. Participants' own experience making such efforts through their practice would further indicate the extent of support. Many participants mentioned that such efforts, specifically proactive collecting, were not feasible, primarily because of the limited funding, time and/or space. Yet, the examples discussed often highlighted ways that participants made choices in practice to promote diversity with the resources available. This was perhaps most notable in the discussion of assisting communities in documenting their own culture which included more examples of programming and outreach including educational workshops. Since resources would vary significantly between repositories, which may impact archivists' ability to perform different levels of outreach or active collecting, it may be more appropriate to not only consider the activities performed but also evaluate the extent to which participants considered the issue of diversity/inclusivity in their daily practical decisions, such as backlog processing, programming, and outreach, as this may better account for lack of institutional resources. In addition, a few archivists specifically discussed diversity/inclusivity as an issue of personal interest or significance, which would also be an indicator of higher support, with one participant indicating it was a key professional motivation which demonstrates very significant support. Such personal connections to the issue would be a further way to measure participants' acceptance of the concept.

Chapter 7: Findings – Community Engagement

For the concept of community engagement, participants were asked if they thought incorporating insider voices into the archiving process, such as participatory projects, was beneficial to practice or should be considered a priority. The participants were also asked if they thought such efforts were feasible and if they had experience doing any projects which did incorporate insider contributions.

Overall, most participants agreed that community engagement was beneficial to practice, with nineteen participants claiming it would be valuable. Supporting this issue, Participant I7 said, "Yes, absolutely as much as possible, no matter what type of records you are creating. Again, in my own job, whether its administrative records, faculty records or community member's records that's ideal." Also agreeing it was significant, Participant I16 claimed:

> Absolutely….[T]his is where we might agree to overstep our bounds as archivist in terms of describing a collection. If you have a person who was actually there or knows a lot about it, and we have an opportunity to bring their input into it, then by all means [we should]….We [archivists] are always so used to one particular type or one particular way but there are many ways that information is disseminated. It is going to help us be better archivists if we can incorporate information that we were not aware of into the finding aids or into the description to stay more truthful or accurate to the records.

Participant I5 agreed it was beneficial and suggested that the growth of technology and media has both allowed for and heightened the need for such projects:

> Yes, I think that maybe twenty years ago when we didn't have immediate access to the world… maybe the audience wouldn't have been so ready and immediate. But, we have this equal synchronicity of having the internet, having the history channel, having all of these ways to get the next level of access. Verbally, visually, we have the ability to transform information into a story today more easily than years ago when you had to pick up a book, read it through, use the bibliography to find maybe other books related. Today we have more open mechanisms and more of an audience already in place. So I would like to see the archives field be supported well enough so I, or my staff at the archives, could take the next step.

All of these comments demonstrate the extent to which archivists believe such projects would

not only be appropriate but beneficial to practice, indicating general support of the concept of

community engagement.

Among those participants agreeing that community engagement projects are beneficial,

seven emphasized that such practice required proper oversight. As Participant I10 explained:

> I think that it should be done as long as the archivist recognizes the potential
> problems that can happen with it. From my own experiences, I know people can
> often times provide insights to events or papers that if I just looked at…is just a
> physical document…because I wasn't involved in the process in which it was
> created. But, I've also discovered that sometimes people's memory is faulty. They
> may only have a small snippet of knowledge that can sometimes be wrong. That
> their knowledge is based on anecdotal evidence….So, I would be aware…of what
> the limitations of that would be, but also what the importance would be.

As this comment suggests, one of the participants' primary concerns with incorporating insider

knowledge was determining the accuracy of the information. Participant G4 claimed, "I think

insider voices can be very good [but] you need to hold them to rules of evidence because

memory is very important. And if you are asking a person about something that happened thirty,

forty, fifty years ago, even last week, then memory fails them and they can give you information

that isn't accurate." Another participant discussed attending a workshop demonstrating a website

which allowed user to submit materials and content. Discussing this project, Participant I11 said,

"The public can post historical documents and present their stories, and that fascinates me. I

think it can work. Of course, it has to be well moderated, because some of their stories could be

baloney. But it sounds like a good way to perform outreach and build up the historical record at

the same time." In addition to the concern that information provided may not be accurate, the

other primary reason given for the need for oversight was that insider knowledge may be biased.

Regarding this concern, Participant I13 said, "You just have to be careful that they aren't

skewing everything in a positive light. You just have to make sure it is more neutral in your

description." Similarly, Participant I3 claimed, "I think that whoever created the records they are the ones that are telling their story and to bring other people in to tell the story, too, I think could potentially skew things a little bit." Overall, these participants felt proper oversight was necessary to ensure the reliability of the record, both for informational content as well as to make sure the description was as neutral as the participants believed it should be.

Several participants clarified that such insider knowledge was more appropriate in certain aspects of practice than others. For example, Participant G8 said:

> I have a hard time saying that it should be a priority. I guess that my reasoning for that is sometimes the neutral, scholarly detachment can be important when you are looking at a collection because if we were having an insider voice into the archival process, especially if it was appraisal, trying to figure out what needs to be kept and what shouldn't be kept, I would think that the insider voice may do more harm than good.

However, when told that such engagement was primarily in terms of description, the participant had less reservation over having insiders involved in that area of practice than appraisal or processing. Like the previous comments discussed, this participant's primary concern was the lack of neutrality with incorporating insiders into archiving process, specifically decisions which would impact which records were physically saved, implying such weeding decisions may be made to benefit the individual. Participant G5 specified that such input could also be more problematic in some aspects of description than others: "If they are helping with a bio that is fine. But if they are helping with a context [note] or something, then you are getting back into that bias of the [individual]. And if you feed that back into the finding aids, you have to add that in with a caveat, as said by researcher, instead of by archives staff." Later discussing the significance of such transparency, Participant G5 continued, "But when you filter it through the archivist and put [the insider's information] in there - and this is going to sound bad, too - if it goes through the archivist it has more authority." The participant implies users view the content

produced by archivists as having authority, which places more significance on the archivist to provide accurate information and increases the need of identifying the source of other information. Similar to the previous discussion of participant concerns over validity of the information, this discussion further highlights the concern of bias when incorporating insider information.

Several participants discussed specific examples in which they either already used or would like to incorporate more insider knowledge. These examples primarily focused on utilizing individual knowledge to verify description content. The most common example was providing the description, generally the front matter of the finding aid, to the donor or individuals with specialized knowledge to review for accuracy, which ten participants said they either already did or would consider doing. In the discussion of such description review, Participant G9 specifically emphasized that archivists should maintain authority over the description:

> In doing a scope and content note, if I knew there was somebody in town that could edit something for me, I might send it to someone if I could trust that individual, with the caveat that I had full editorial control over the wording in the finding aid. I might ask for advice from somebody, "is this accurate?" I might ask for help, but I would never give anyone full reign over the finding aid.

While open to assistance for accuracy's sake, this participant implied that archivists should maintain control of the description, which would ultimately limit the extent to which an insider's voice could be incorporated. In addition to providing the description to insiders, one participant discussed encouraging researchers to provid feedback on the finding aid and description after they had used a collection. Participant G3 implied this was especially important since the collections have been processed minimally, so the feedback would be important to know if there were any notes that should be included in the description, suggesting such practice was " killing

two birds with one stone" by evaluating researchers' experience and also "pumping" the

researchers for information to improve the finding aid. All of the examples involved archivists

writing insider or user provided information into the description as opposed to having others

write the description.

Another use of insider information seen as valuable was assistance in identifying

unknown materials, with seven participants discussing the use of such projects. Specifically,

most participants expressed interest in setting up projects for photo identification, especially

uploading unidentified photos onto sites such as Flickr that allowed online user tagging.

Regarding such activities, Participant I12 said:

> That is one thing that I am very drawn to - these current initiatives on crowd
> sourcing and things like Flickr comments, where the Smithsonian has digitized
> large portions of its photos and invites the public to send information if they have
> it. For our perspective at the archive, I would like [insiders] to get involved with
> telling me what they know about the really unprocessed collections or the photo
> collections, like who are these [people], what are their names, what room in
> [organization] was this….So you are engaging hundreds of mind instead of trying
> to work with your own limited knowledge. Because no one knows everything. I
> think it is great that people are thinking that way.

The value in such projects was both recognition of the limitations of the archivists' knowledge

and an attempt to encourage others to contribute information to increase resources. While

appreciating the benefits of new technology and media, several participants indicated such tools

heightened the need to be transparent about the information source. Regarding this point,

Participant G5 said:

> I think there are certain ways already [in Flickr], when you post comments to
> things… you at least know it's a researcher versus the archival staff. And maybe
> they could include their own little bio – like we were discussing the archivists
> would have. But then you keep it in that section, so then researchers looking at
> this whole thing can say, "Ok - this is a researcher; I don't know who they are.
> Take it for what it is worth."

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This comment articulates the belief that the archivist's content would be held to a different standard than the information provided by an insider or a researcher.

While most discussed identifying photos through individual users (either in-house or online), one participant mentioned a potential photograph identification project involving community collaboration. This proposed project would involve bringing reproductions of unidentified photos to a programming event relevant to specific collections, where those in attendance may be familiar with the materials. At the event, guests would be invited to review the photos and see if they know anyone. Unlike soliciting individuals for assistance, this would bring a group together to engage with the materials together and share their knowledge.

While focusing on specific individuals, Participant I15 discussed the use of a "life story" which the donor or subject of the records/collection would create an audio or video tape which would become part of the collection and be available for future researchers. Regarding the value of such projects, "I don't think they might necessarily stand up to the rigors of historians in so far as being primary sources, but I think the anecdotes are priceless and I think they round out the picture of what the person was about and what they were like. Even though it is very subjective obviously, but I think it's very appealing to read or listen to those." This differed from the discussion of user verification of information as it would be a full narrative or oral history that would accompany the collection to provide fuller context.

Instead of description, Participant I8 discussed other areas of practice in which community engagement was valuable such as the accessioning process as well as exhibitions:

> Yes, absolutely in theory, I think it should be a priority. But, like a lot of other things, I think it is very hard to bring to fruition in practice…. I think that kind of goes back to the step before [description], and so many collections that we have, where there was a lot of front end. The 'yes we want it' in letters or emails over a

period of years to solicit an important collection, but then when the individual dies, or the organization moves its office or goes out of business, then it's like, "let's throw everything we have, including the rat traps, into a box and give them to the historical society." You know, it would be great, if we could do that kind of thing… Whether it's someone like me, or an intern, or someone on a project or grant basis, and [ask the donor] out of this box, out of this folder, out of this filing cabinet, "what do you think is really important? what do you think is less important? and what do you think would help us shape the collection?"….You know we have gotten to, in terms of, working on exhibits where we will ask people to help us write labels [or] to help us form exhibits…We have done it and would do it for oral history projects. We are working with them to craft the narrative.

With these examples, the participant identifies ways in which the insider voice can ultimately shape the collection, by providing insight into what should be saved, assisting in exhibitions or crafting the narratives for oral histories. Unlike many participants who voiced concern over insiders shaping records, this participant implies that such input that shapes the collection would be beneficial and should be performed if possible, a perspective in more support of the scholarship of archival activism.

Regarding feasibility, four participants indicated they thought incorporating insiders into the archiving process was feasible. In contrast, eight participants did not think that such efforts were realistic, with the primary reason being limited funding. Discussing the limitations, Participant I4 said:

> I would like it, but I don't think it would be realistic for us, in this particular situation, as we are so stretched with what we do on a day to day basis, we wouldn't be able to pay. And even if we had volunteers than we would still have to have the training, and we would have to have the staff time to work alongside them. Any type of work we have is catch as catch can, it would just be hard to schedule… I think it's a very nice idea, but I don't know if I could make it a priority [except in an] ideal world. In this day and age, everyone I've spoken to, their staff is just so stretched.

Related to funding, Participant G2 specifically emphasized the limitations of time necessary for such efforts: "I mean, that's a big time commitment – to search out expertise for various groups and whatever you are collecting…. And I would hate to be a broken record, but I just don't have time – I mean, there is another collection back there waiting for me." Similarly, Participant I9 also discussed the time limitations in relation to the other activities: "Some of this is just having the bodies to do this – what [one] can easily do in the day. But if you are swamped, and already taking on more hats than you can go into." While not necessarily a reason making it infeasible, Participant G5 indicated that a hesitation for putting images up on Flickr and asking for feedback was not being able to satisfy user expectations.

> And I was hesitant to [put the photos on Flickr], because I was afraid we weren't going to be able to do anything with it, and I didn't want to disappoint the researchers by saying, "Yes, give us your feedback." But they we weren't going to do anything with it. Just with the resources that we have that wasn't something that was in a normal workflow so sometimes it gets put into the bottom of a list, but that's just the reality… So, one is the workload increase, which should never be a reason not to do something, but you asked about the reality, and that is one concern I do have.

This comment brings attention to the concern that with putting materials online would not necessarily just involve the time necessary to put the materials up but to continue to integrate the content retrieved.

Similar to the discussion of diversity/inclusivity, four participants discussed the importance of utilizing interns or volunteers to assist in activities promoting community engagement. In addition to the work assistance, a benefit of using interns or volunteers is the potential of pairing them with collections representing their own community or neighborhood, which may give them more insider knowledge or access to community members than the archivists. Regarding such partnerships, Participant G9 said:

> There certainly is something to be said for having a personal stake in a collection. So, if I have a student worker from a town and I have a collection from that town, I might suggest, "Is this something that you might like to work on?" Again, maybe that person can bring some knowledge that I wouldn't have known, may recognize a name, or recognize a building or a street, and be able to make the description a little richer.

In addition to processing, Participant G1 discussed the benefits of having students also perform archival research to create exhibitions, which "can benefit [the archive] and benefit the collection and benefit themselves as well." Discussing the overall value of such collaborations, Participant I7 claimed, "I think of course, that sort of thing is a great double, if not triple or quadruple purpose, because you are building relations with potential donors, building community relations." Overall, the participants valued interns and volunteers not only because they would assist in this work but because they saw such projects as also valuable to the community, interns themselves and the collections.

Conclusion

While the participants voiced overwhelming support of the concept of community engagement, the incorporation of insider knowledge described by most participants differed significantly from the scholarship on archival activism. While the participants' examples primarily focused on individual knowledge to verify specific facts, the scholarship on community engagement generally focused on cultural knowledge in which self-description was necessary for reasons associated with identity politics. This difference indicates a significant divide between the practicing archivists' understanding of effective and useful insider knowledge and scholars.

Most participants' primary concern was in the factual content of the material whereas the scholarship focuses on the extent to which the subject feels accurately represented in the

description. A possible explanation for this divide can be drawn from the responses to this question as well as in the previous question regarding the use of a biographical note. Many participants indicated the current description was very minimal which limits the extent of any in-depth description, focusing more on timelines and key individual names as opposed to cultural descriptions. Participant G3 specifically discusses this level of description in his/her response to the question on community engagement: "I think I would not do that at the description level – just because I am doing minimal processing for just about everything. I will try to understand it on a very broad level what it is that I am dealing with, but I wouldn't say that I am able to go much further than that in practice. But in just plain old description and arrangement I would just do my best [to] just let people know it's there." Given this description level, this understanding of insider knowledge may be considered more practical than that promoted by the scholarship which would necessitate a greater level of descriptive depth than most repositories are currently performing.

Although community engagement was overall discussed differently than in the scholarship, some themes did emerge which enable the evaluation of participants' acceptance of community engagement as defined by the scholarship. The concern over the reliability of insider knowledge, especially the concern of bias, demonstrates opposition to the scholarship, which specifically focuses on the value of the perspective of the insider provides. Stressing the need for oversight to ensure reliability seemingly places complete description authority in the hands of the archivists whereas the scholarship suggests a need for archivists' to relinquish some authority to allow such engagement. Overall, this concern suggests a distrust of insider knowledge which would ultimately limit the acceptance of community engagement as defined by the scholarship of archival activism.

While not discussing projects that fully explored community engagement to the extent discussed in the literature, several participants did discuss the use of projects or collaborations that did encourage more insider knowledge into the archival process. Most focused on individual involvement as opposed to group, although one participant did proposed a project utilizing group knowledge. Such efforts would indicate more acceptance of community engagement. The projects in which the insiders were given their own voice to contextualize the records, such as the creating life books or writing exhibition descriptions, would demonstrate stronger support.

Chapter 8: Findings – Accountability and Open Government

Accountability

For the concept of accountability, participants were asked if they agreed it was archivists'

responsibility to maintain, preserve and make accessible records that document criminal,

unethical or other unjust actions to hold institutions, governments or people accountable for their

actions. Overall, while all participants agreed that accountability was a significant aspect of the

archivists' function, participants ranged in agreement over the extent to which it was archivists'

responsibility and what role archivists should have in supporting accountability.

Twenty participants directly agreed that supporting accountability was archivists'

responsibility. The remaining four participants did not directly state agreement in their responses

but did indicate support of accountability. Agreeing with the statement, Participant I1 discussed

the significance of this role, claiming:

> Definitely – I think that that is part of our job. To preserve the good, the bad and
> the ugly. We need to try to preserve all perspectives and make sure that no one is
> out there weeding through the stuff to change the way that people are going to
> look at either other people or institutions, events. It's definitely that we should I
> would say, that is what should be a priority. Making sure that it everything that is
> possible is being saved, and that no one is out there weeding through things to try
> to change history.

Like this participant, many implied that accountability was an essential part of the archivists'

position. For example, I6 claimed, "Definitely. It's called, documenting what happens."

Participant I2 also agreed, stating, "It seems like a no brainer to me. I think that the SAA code

recognizes the importance of preserving the records whether they are good bad or ugly. But, I

would go further, and say it's not just the responsibility of archivists, but all citizens in general,

to demand accountability." In the responses, record collection and preservation were the practical

tasks most commonly discussed, suggesting that those are the areas of archival work considered

most relevant to accountability. Regarding this practice, several participants claimed that part of archivists' responsibility was to collect materials representing all positions. For example, Participant I10 said, "And, if those records document those unjust or unethical actions than it's the archivists responsibility to make those available. It would also be the responsibility of the archivists to make available records that don't document criminal, unethical or unjust actions and allow others to come to those conclusions." Participant I9 also discussed the importance of documenting "both sides." Beyond the discussion of sides, Participant I12 emphasized the importance of representative records by focusing on the future historical document: "I don't feel that personally archivists should expunge any dirty secrets from their collections…and also not to cloud the history of whatever you are representing as the archivist, whatever the story." Explaining the significance of such inclusive documentation, Participant G4 claimed, "What I like to think about archives [is that] this is where you can find the truth…[T]eachers of history, even though we are trying to be honest, we are still biased. We emphasize one thing over another without even thinking about it…. But, the archives should be neutral in a sense. They should be trying to get the complete record out." This comment seemingly implies that by documenting all 'sides' or creating a 'complete record' an archives maintains neutrality.

Seven participants clarified that while accountability was archivists' responsibility, it was not archivists' total responsibility, suggesting that other people were involved in holding the leaders accountable such as lawyers or journalists. Regarding archivists' role, Participant G9 said, "I think it might be *a* responsibility, not *the* responsibility. Many people should be involved in this. But, yeah, if there is a way that through our collections we have access to provide that we can create a more just society, than absolutely, why not? [Later] I also wonder what kind of soap box we have. Does the public really want to hear from the librarian?" With this comment, the

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participant suggests that archivists also have little voice in bringing attention to an issue.

Regarding the necessity of other institutions, Participant G5 made a similar point:

> I think the government and the other institutions have a role to play too. Archivists can't do it for themselves. So if there are certain laws like the "Open Information Act" and some of those other things that are helping that than archivists should definitely do their part, but other institutions need to buy into it, or it isn't going to get anywhere, or not as far as it would.

Overall, these participants felt that archivists served a significant role but others were also necessary to fully hold people accountable.

Such comments discussing the responsibility of others indicated participants believed archivists had limited agency in holding leaders accountable. Archivists' own access to records that would hold document any wrongdoing was seen as the primary limitation to archivists' agency. Regarding archivists' access, Participant G6 said:

> I am so far down the food chain here that I seriously doubt that I am privy in any way [to anything] that might smack of illegal or unjust. If I somehow came across that, I would certainly not hesitate to preserve that material. For example, I know that there are Freedom of Information Act requests that are filed each year, but I don't have a clue as to what they are involving, and I don't expect I will….And, I am mainly the archivist of the history of our institution and not records management, so I am even further down [the chain].

This participant implies that by the time materials get to the archives it is unlikely there would be any incriminating records. Furthermore, this participant suggests that the records the repository collects also reduces the likelihood of receiving such types of documents, implying the issue of accountability may be more relevant with the records management department within the institution. Many implied it was the record creators, often government leaders themselves, who limited archival agency as they did not release records for archivists to collect appropriately. Discussing this situation, Participant G4 said, "It's not the archivists that are holding them. It's

the government or politicians that are holding them back." Participant I6 illustrated this point

with specific example from a previous experience working the state archives:

> People we are documenting are the people the most interested in destroying the
> documentation. [When working at the state archives], I went to the Governor's
> office … and said, "We want to work with you to develop a records management
> system to get the records into the state archives." And I had meetings with
> government council and one day they sat me down and they essentially said, "No,
> and we are not going to. We are exempt." And the governor's council…gave me a
> brilliant reading of state law saying that the governor's state office wasn't bound
> by state records law. And so, as a consequence, that governor was in office for
> eight years – two terms, and left office, and the state archives got less than 100
> cubic feet of records….So, they destroyed the records, and we know that. And, so,
> we couldn't do anything about it. We were powerless.

In this specific example, the destruction of such records was intentional with the record creator

(and staff) denying the archivist agency to support accountability through practice, despite desire

to do so. Supporting this example, Participant I8 suggests that it is unrealistic to expect to receive

incriminating papers from record creators although such documentation may be available

through other collections:

> To think that we are going to get the papers of a person that are going to include
> papers of his or her malfeasance, discrimination, etc, etc. is a pretty outlandish
> thought. But, I think where this comes in more is … collections of local and
> regional watch dog groups. They are looking at the accountability of the media, or
> the accountability of city government, or state government….So in so far as we
> have those records and can make them available without transgressing those other
> things like privacy so forth, we should make those available.

The participant then continued to discuss an example of a collection of the city police department

surveillance group, which the repository was under court order to serve. While maintaining the

records in the collection would very much be relevant to the issue of accountability given the

source, the participant indicated that the court order strictly limited the repository's ability to

give access to the materials:

> There are some serious and real constraints that the federal court put on us. We
> would be breaking the federal court order if we transgressed those guidelines.

And those guidelines aren't necessarily in agreement with making people accountable. I mean, we aren't destroying records or anything like that, but there are some hurdles you have to jump over before you can access the records.

While this example suggests alternative types of collections can be used to hold people accountable, it also indicates the further limitations to archivists' agency from restrictions to access beyond the control of the archivists such as court orders. The examples given by these two participants clearly demonstrate the limitations to archivists' agency to promote accountability. While both of these examples illustrates external factors limiting agency, other participants discussed the influence of institutional policies on participants ability to fully promote accountability, primarily in the area of access and restriction. Discussing restriction policies on some collections at a church archives, Participant G3 said, "I would agree [accountability is important]. But, people who have done un-ethical things also having privacy rights as well, so one person's ethics might not be another persons' ethics, especially in the religious arena. [So] we have a lot of things right now that are restricted [from] sixty years ago - I mean, come on. But we need to be more open about this. But for things that happened ten years ago, I completely support the decision of the conference to keep it restricted for a while." While understanding the purpose behind policy restriction for privacy reasons, especially in a religious archive, the participant implied that some of the restrictive time periods enforced by the institution were unnecessarily long and personally opposed such restriction. However, the participant indicated that his/her agency as archivist was limited because of such institutional policies.

As illustrated by these comments regarding limitations to agency, many participants indicated that archivists' ability to promote accountability was largely influenced by the type of repository at which they worked. In the previous comment above, Participant G3 indicated that

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religious archives often had longer restriction policies due to privacy concerns. Working as an

archivist at a Catholic university, Participant G4 also discussed the influence of working at a

religiously affiliated organization or private institution versus a public institution:

> It's kind of tricky. Our school is … a Catholic school…and religion is sometimes
> not open, and you can't force them to be. And like the government, it's great that
> the congress can pass laws. They are pretty hesitant about doing it, but you can
> force them to pass a law to get the records straight. But in private institutions,
> corporation and so on, sometimes they fudge the record. It would be nice if you
> could tell the truth, but you can't do that.

Participant G7 also expressed the difference in ability and expectations of archivists to support

accountability when working at a private institution:

> When you are talking about a government funded institution, then it is absolutely
> their job. Then they have the obligation to maintain transparency. In my position
> [at a private university], I would love to make everything accessible. But, all I can
> say is that I don't destroy it…I think it is very important for it to all be there and
> kept, and I would love it if private institutions were required to make it all
> transparent as well. But, I don't think we are ready yet.

However, Participant G1, working at a private, religious university, indicated the institution had

a more open policy:

> We don't have that many restrictions. The only collections we have that are really
> restricted are the personnel files which are restricted until the person dies. But
> everything else - even the presidential papers, [for the president who] just retired,
> those are going to be opened pretty much right away…. We are just going to be
> minimally processing the whole thing. We tend to lean on the side of access and
> accountability, and I think that is a choice that we have made over the years. Not
> that we don't [have any of] those controversial [issues], but there are things in
> there that a lot of institutions may restrict, but I think we have probably aired on
> the side of [being] open. And I am ok with that.

This response discussing the open access policy at the private, religious university demonstrates

that private or religious institutions do not necessarily have more restricted access policies, but

that institutional policies can range significantly. Working at a state funded historical society

which collects the state's records, Participant I13 indicates that the public funding strongly

influences the institutions' approach to accountability:

> Since we are holding these records in the trust from the government or from the
> donors, we need to be as transparent as possible to how we are taking care of
> them, to how we are providing access, to how we are processing them. That is one
> of the foundations here in the historical society. We are trying to be accountable
> and transparent because we receive part of our funding from public tax money, so
> we should be able to say, 'this is what we are doing.'

This participant indicates that working at a public institution strongly supports accountability by

maintaining transparency in the management of public records; however, the comment suggests

that the focus of the transparency is actually on the work of the archivists as such work is funded

by tax payers. Despite this distinction, the participant still indicates that access of the public

records is prioritized. Overall, the discussion of institutions suggests that archivists' agency in

supporting government does range significantly, with the type of the repository being a primary

variable in the extent to which an archivist can support this issue with his/her practice.

Participants almost exclusively discussed collecting and access as the central practical

areas relevant to accountability. However, Participant G1 also noted that, beyond record

acquisition, preservation and access, promoting the records is also necessary to ensure

accountability:

> Another issue is that people just know we have these files. Sometimes students
> write letters to the editors of the schools magazine saying that they don't have
> access to all this information, and I tell them, "Yes you do have access to all this
> information – it's in the archives. You can come read it, and it's open to you. And
> you can't really say that you don't have access to it." But they don't know it
> exists so it's also an outreach issues.

This point illustrates that beyond an open access policy, it is also important that the institution

bring awareness to the availability of the materials. Unlike many restriction policies put in place

by institutions, outreach would be an area that archivists may find more agency. Furthermore,

although the participant does not discuss the significance the documents may hold for the

students, highlighting the importance of outreach supports the scholarship as bringing awareness

to records and assisting the public in accessing documents that can redress injustices is relevant

to the concept of accountability as defined by the scholarship.

While most participants felt that it was the archivists' responsibility to preserve and make

accessible records that would support accountability, five clarified that it was not archivists' role

to interpret or judge the records to evaluate any wrongdoings. That was the responsibility of

others including historians, researchers or legal professionals. Discussing archivist's role,

Participant I3 claimed:

> I mean I think it would be insanely cool that within the process of going through
> the collection, I found a clue that broke up an unsolved case. But, I don't know if
> that's our role. It's more like keeping those records from getting shredded, so that
> the criminal activity or the evidence doesn't get destroyed….I think we should
> preserve an accurate record of what happened. I don't think it's up to us to say,
> "They shouldn't have done this, and they did." And in a lot of cases, I may not
> know what's significant or not. I mean, like the whole banking thing. Like if I had
> the financial records, I don't know what they are. I just think our role is to
> maintain an accurate record. And it's up to other people to decide whether that
> record shows wrongdoing or not.

Similarly Participant I5 said, "I feel it isn't my place to judge the accountability of an item, if it

was a part of a discussion or the activities of what a person was involved in. Someone else can

make the judgment. I just can make the materials accessible and available." Regarding the extent

to which archivists should consider accountability when making practical decisions, Participant

I10 claimed:

> Personally, I don't think that the archivist should be making those types of
> decisions. If you get a collection of someone who is a revered local person and
> you discover that within the collection that there are papers that are not very
> flattering, I think that it is the responsibility of the archivist to make the collection
> available, whether it is an unflattering portrayal or a flattering portrayal of a
> person or an organization. If I am given a collection of papers and I go through
> those papers to find those things that I think are appropriate to include in the

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archive, I don't make the decision [to] support a particular view or not. I make the decision based on whether or not it's of historical value.

The participant specifically implies that considering the issue of accountability when appraising records would be inappropriate as such decisions would support a specific agenda. These participants suggest that such evaluation is inappropriate for archivists because they should remain neutral. Participant I16 emphasizes the significance of neutrality, implying that it is essential to accountability:

Yes, absolutely [it's archivists' responsibility]. And this goes back to neutrality. We cannot be swayed by the record itself. We need to realize the importance of the records and the intellectual information it contains, and do our best to preserve the records. It is not our place to make value judgments on the records and decide, because there is a Republican government and I happen to be of the Republican persuasion or whatever the scenario, that I am going to look the other way just so it doesn't make the current administration look bad. That's not my job. My job is to take these records and process them and make them available to the public, warts and all.

This participant suggests that maintaining neutrality supports accountability by promoting comprehensive collection and access of records 'warts and all.' Like the comment from Participant I10, this implies that archivists evaluating the records ultimately support a personal agenda, suggesting practical decisions may be made to favor the archivist's personal or political position. Despite indicating support of accountability, these participants' understanding of accountability does not support the scholarship on archival activism's reading of accountability which requires judgment or interpretation of wrongdoings to bring attention to such records as a means of enabling social justice. These participants' position that archivists should not evaluate the records seemingly limits archivists' active involvement in promoting accountability. Preserving and giving access to records is an essential element, but identifying such incriminating records to aid in bringing them light is also necessary to hold people accountable

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for their action. Overall, the emphasis of neutrality ultimately limits the extent to which these participants accept accountability in the context of archival activism.

Open Government

Like accountability, the participants voiced overwhelming support of the concept of open government, with twenty-three participants agreeing it was a significant aspect of the profession. Participant I5, the only one who did not directly agree with the statement, instead said it was important for archivists to follow the law in regards to open government: "I think that in this case the judgment is that there are very clean, strict laws which require what you should and shouldn't do. My politics shouldn't come into my words." This comment was not a direct disagreement with the statement but instead emphasized the need for archivists to follow rules and policies instead of personal politics. Most participants' support was very strongly worded, indicating they considered it a fundamental element of the field. For example, Participant I3 said, "I strongly agree with that. I think that we are the keepers of the historical record and if we don't make it accessible then no one will know it's here. So we have a responsibility to make it available. I mean, I try to restrict access to as little stuff as possible, and it's always an issue of someone's personal privacy." Suggesting that the issue was one of personal importance, Participant I12 said, "I don't know if I can separate that from my personal beliefs to be honest. I believe in transparent government. And I don't know if that is because I'm an archivist or if because I believe in transparent government. I don't know how to separate the two in that one. Obviously, the archivist would be someone who would facilitate that process." Several participants stated that beyond just being significant for archivists, open government was an important issue for all citizens. Participant I10 implied that there should also be others involved in the issue: "Yes, I do.

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I think that archivists should be an active voice in supporting open government. I think that they

should be one of many voices, not the only voice. I think to me, that archivists should have a

strong voice in asking questions about what it means in a new world in the current world with all

kinds of electronic documents, what does that mean, in terms of an open government."

Participant I2 also agreed, "My feeling is that the support of open, transparent government is not

only a responsibility or priority for archivists, but of every citizen who resides in a democracy.

So I am in full support of this principle." These participants suggest that support of open

government should extend beyond their work as an archivist.

While supporting open government, one participant also emphasized the importance of

balancing privacy rights. Regarding the significance of privacy, Participant I15, who worked at a

religious archives, claimed:

> I think it is very important to have transparency. I think you also have to balance
> that or weight that with the right to privacy. I think that would be certainly a
> consideration when we talk about restrictions to documents. That is why we have
> a moratorium on private papers, personal papers. As I said before, twenty years on
> members after their deaths and forty years after the administration goes out of
> office. That would preserve or protect the peoples' right to privacy and would also
> give people access to the information when they need it.

This participant suggests that access policies are carefully determined to both protect subject's

rights while also allowing appropriate access. As a religious archive, the type of repository and

content of the records may place more emphasis on privacy in creating the access policies, which

was a point made by another participant working at a religious archive in the discussion of

accountability.

As in the discussion of accountability, Participant I16 suggested that maintaining

neutrality was an essential aspect of supporting open government:

> It should be a priority – an absolute priority – because government officials are
> elected by the people. They are beholden to the people. The records that they

generate or that are often times, the majority of the times, are part of their official acts, their official business in office. They are not their personal records. …. As an archivist, this is where the neutrality comes in. We cannot choose one candidate over another or one person's records over another. If we truly believe in transparency than we have to accept these records for what they are and as they are. We can't just talk about transparency and then not practice it. The only thing that is going to keep these public officials accountable is if we have transparency; if we know what they are thinking; if we know what they are doing. This is the only way.

Similarly, the previous quote from Participant I5, who did not directly state agreement with the support of open government, also stressed the importance of keeping personal politics out of the issue of open government. Overall, such comments both stress the significance of neutrality and also suggest a concern that open government could potentially threaten archival neutrality if pursued inappropriately.

Two participants used examples from their own practice to illustrate their position on open government. Participant G3, who worked at a religious archives, discussed the implications for accepting collections with restricted access:

I think that in my particular case with the recent development organization, an organization does give us money annually to help take care of its records and so we would be looking at a loss of financial support if we lose this collection. But if it is that important that we [wouldn't] want it if [the organization said] we can't provide access to it without telling researchers, "Well, you have to email this person and ask if your project is ok." I mean, that would just undermine us as a research facility. Beyond that it is just wrong. It is just wrong, for a charitable organization to just not be open about what it is doing….We aren't going to do this because they are giving us this money.

With this example, the participant illustrates how financial contributions can influence decision making involving specific collections. However, the participant emphasized the importance of weighing such financial benefits with issues such as access, indicating that limitations to access would not only be wrong but make the collection not worth accepting even with the financial contributions. This overall demonstrates the extent to which open access to the records is valued.

Participant G9, who worked at a public university, recently had the job expanded to include record management responsibilities and was now directly working with the issue of open government. Regarding the new role, the participant said, "In many ways, it's become my responsibility and my priority, because I am kind of the gatekeeper between us and [the state capital] regarding what we write in the retention schedule and what we keep. It might be situation specific, but in this case, absolutely, it's a responsibility in my daily life, and one that I didn't want to take on." The participant indicates that this new task has significantly shifted the priorities of his/her position given the responsibilities of that role. The participant also suggests that this was not a desired new role because of the considerable increase in job responsibilities.[125]

Three participants said that archivists' agency was limited in their abilities to actually enforce open government in any way, generally because they may not have access to such incriminating documents or any power over policy. Regarding this issue, Participant G7 said, "I think that is a huge responsibility and it's important. I think that where most government archives run into trouble is making sure that the institutions that make the records are actually getting them to the archives. I have heard that that can be a big problem." The limitation of agency because of archivists' access to records was also seen as the primary limitation to archivists' agency in accountability. However, while seven participants voiced this concern in regards to accountability, only three participants discussed the issue with open government.

To look at the issue of open government directly, participants were given the example of the then SAA president's letter opposing President George W. Bush's Executive Order 13233, which limited open access to presidential records, as well as the similar public letter of the then SAA president supporting President Obama's Executive Order 13489 which reversed the

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[125] This example may illustrate the extent to which archivists' role are perceived within institutions as such a significant job responsibility was just added to the participant's position in attempts to cut back on other staffing.

previous order. Participants were asked if they felt that the public stances regarding Open

Government were appropriate. This example was chosen because it was discussed in the

literature as a clear example of those in the field publicly supporting open government.

The actions of the SAA presidents in both cases were overwhelmingly supported by the

participants, with all but one participant agreeing they were appropriate.[126] Several participants

discussed the role of the SAA president to represent the field, especially in significant issues

such as open government. For example, Participant I1 claimed:

> Yes, I do believe SAA was appropriate in its support of the overturned executive
> order. One job of an archivist is to appraise records for their historical value. The
> SAA president was simply standing up for archivists, historians, and basically all
> Americans by saying that presidential records are important to the nation's history
> and therefore limiting access to them is detrimental to our understanding of
> political events.

Also discussing the role of the organization, Participant I10 said:

> Yes, I think that the professional organization does have an important role in
> voicing its collective view on access to, in this case, government records. That
> any intention to, in some way limiting access to them, or putting them in an
> archival collection under lock and key for a long period of time so people won't
> have access to them, these are issues that not just archivists, but citizens of the
> country, should have. So, archivists as protectors of these materials should take
> public stances on these types of issues.

Such comments highlight the belief that the issue of open access to government records is an

issue for all, increasing the importance of archivists to take public stances when risks to access

arise. While supporting the actions of the SAA presidents, Participant I2 emphasized the

importance of remaining bipartisan in such criticism: "If an administration -be it Democrat or

Republican - takes action to promote more open, transparent government, they should be praised;

if they move to restrict information, they should be called to account for it, and I believe that the

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[126] Because of time limitations, this question was not asked of all participants as it was one of the last questions of
the interviews. When not asked in the interview, the question was asked in a follow-up email but there were not
responses for all twenty-four participants on this question.

SAA is justified in taking such action, as long as their stance is as a non-partisan 'watchdog'."

By stressing the need to be bipartisan, the participant implies a potential concern that public

stance may be seen as taking a political position if the archivists are not clearly in a watchdog

role.

       Participant I6 discussed the unique position of the SAA president versus the archivists

actually working the government records:

> SAA did a good thing in shaming Bush and supporting Obama in that [situation].
> But what's more important is what the people at NARA were doing, as they
> couldn't publically condemn President Bush and publically support President
> Obama. No, but they maybe could in private, and they were probably in
> conversation with the White House, but they are not in the position to say yea or
> nay. So that is kind of [similar] to what our position was in the state archives with
> the governor - we just [had] to accept it. They probably just had to accept what
> [President Bush] did and what Obama did. And so SAA can pontificate, but
> what's more important is what the working archivists on the case could or could
> not do.

Drawing upon his/her own experience working in a state archives, the participant indicates that

the public position of the SAA president would likely not impact the practice of the archivists

working for the National Archives, who must follow the policies put in place even if they do not

agree with them. This comment suggests that the institutional policies would need to change for

the practice to change, and that the archivists working within the National Archives would not be

in the same position to publically discuss and potentially influence policy like the SAA

president.

       The one participant who did not approve of the SAA presidents' actions indicated that

such stances displayed a lack of neutrality that was inappropriate for the position. Participant I16

said:

> It was inappropriate [since] it goes against neutrality because [SAA president] is
> supporting the president in his decision making, which basically benefits that
> president, and it doesn't benefit the common person or the population at large. So

he is basically taking sides, and again he is not neutral. And if a person is going to use [it as a] position of power, they really don't deserve to be president [of SAA].… With something like [the executive order] to be so high profile, it should just be understood that we live in a free country [and] that the public has access to the records that would be of benefit and interest to them. Obama does not need the president of the SAA to support him in this matter. Again, that is a personal belief that he should just have kept it personal and not made it a statement… from the Society of American Archivists. But in general, I am in support of open records and transparency, because that is the only thing that is going to help democracy, or to keep this country free and democratic.

The participant implies that by publicly critiquing or supporting the actions of the President, the SAA presidents demonstrated a lack of neutrality, which was not appropriate for a representative of the field. However, the participant vocalizes strong overall support of open government, which he/she considers essential for democracy. This response demonstrates the primary critique of the SAA presidents' actions were the public stance because of the participant's strong belief in maintaining neutrality in the archives.

Several participants discussed their personal involvement advocating for open access which would often include taking public positions, most commonly with letters to public officials to bring attention to potential risks to public access. For example participant I9 discussed working with a genealogical librarian listserve which organized a letter writing campaign to multiple state archives regarding record closing. Participant I7 suggested that the issue of open access can often motivate more archivists to become involved with advocacy: "I think it's easier to get people on board to things. [For example] the Hungarian National Archives are in danger in many ways, and we wrote a letter to the US ambassador of Hungary. I mean, when the collections are in danger, I think it's easier for people to latch onto something. But I think we absolutely have to do that….But I think we need to do more." On current advocacy work surrounding the threats to close the Georgia State Archives, the participant continues, "Keeping such an institution open, speaking widely and generally here, ensures that citizens have

access – and thus knowledge – about their own history. Without that access, citizens are at once stymied and are left without a voice."[127] This comment suggests that such active efforts promote open government by bringing awareness to cases where access to records is threatened

Conclusions

Similar to the previous discussion of diversity/inclusivity and community engagement, the vast majority of participants voiced support of the concepts of accountability and open government. Because of this overall support, additional factors must be used to further measure the extent to which the concepts were accepted among participants.

In the examination of accountability, the clearest indication of rejection of the scholarship on archival activism was belief that archivist evaluating or interpreting the documents is inappropriate as this would directly contradict the literature. While five participants directly voiced this position, it is possible more agreed but did not vocalize this view as the question did not ask it directly. The focus on collecting 'both sides' suggests that others may share a similar view as both discussions imply an emphasis on maintaining neutrality.

While archivists' interpretive role can be used as a way of indicating rejection of the concept, examples of participants making efforts to support accountability in practice would be an obvious demonstration of strong support. The primary means by which participants suggested archivists promote accountability was by collecting and preserving documents. However, no participant gave clear examples of cases when they suggested they were able to promote accountability in their own practice. Specific examples generally discussed the ways in which the participant felt their agency was limited. This lack of examples of practical applications of

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[127] Written response to emailed follow-up question

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promoting accountability seemingly supported participants' assessment that this is an issue in which archivists' agency seems more limited, at least on an individual level. Thus, while the findings did demonstrate strong participant support of the concept of accountability the extent to which it is considered feasible for archivists to fully support such efforts through archival work is limited because of factors beyond the archivists' control, such as the role of the record creator and institutional restrictions. The emphasis on archivists' agency in preserving records documenting transgressions highlights a genuine concern for the overall feasibility of attaining such records as few individual archivists in any institution have authority to enforce ethical record retention. This theme points to a broader need within the field to address these challenges directly to develop tools or methods to assist archivists, both as a field and on an individual level, to ensure these documents reach the archives and are preserved.

This challenge of attaining incriminating records also emphasizes the need to explore alternative records that may document transgressions beyond those produced by the government or institution in question. While the scholarship addressed this to some degree and individual repositories and initiatives discussed in the literature review demonstrate recognition in preserving and making accessible such documents for this purpose, only one participant identified the significance of outside collections or records as means of promoting accountability. Participant I8 used the specific example of collections of watchdog groups as means of documenting the transgressions of the city's police. No participants discussed seeking out alternative documents for the specific purpose of accountability. Overall, the almost exclusive focus on records produced by the institution itself demonstrates a lack of awareness to alternative means of promoting accountability. Given the challenges in ensuring governments and institutions retain records of their own transgressions, increasing emphasis on identifying,

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actively collecting and making accessible non-institutional records documenting such abuses

may be a more feasible way of the field to promote accountability.

As with accountability, participants also voiced overwhelming support for the issue of

open government. However, no clear indicator of rejection of the open government emerged to

assist in the measurement of its acceptance except disapproval over the SAA presidents' letters

regarding the executive order, which demonstrates belief that public efforts to support open

government are inappropriate. The primary means to evaluate the extent of acceptance would be

participants' individual active efforts or public support of such efforts to promote accountability.

Thus, significant work in letter writing campaigns to bring awareness to threats to record access

would demonstrate stronger support of open government in the context of archival activism,

whereas disapproval of such active efforts to promote open government would indicate rejection.

Chapter 9: Findings – Concluding Questions

Overall Acceptance

After discussing the six core concepts of archival activism, participants were asked to what extent they believed the concepts were overall appropriate for everyday practice. Most participants voiced support of the concepts that had been discussed, with few having mixed responses to the scholarship and two suggesting they were either not appropriate or not practical.

In total, seventeen participants said they believed the concepts were appropriate.[128] In addition, one participant agreed the concepts were appropriate depending on the repository. Although stating overall support, the responses did demonstrate range in the extent, with some participants emphasizing the importance of the concepts for the field and others just agreeing they were appropriate. Highlighting his/her commitment to the significance of these concepts to the field, Participant I7 said, "I hope you ascertain, this stuff is really close to my heart….I think it's so important." Participant I11 suggested the concepts were overall significant but individually ranged in appropriateness: "I think what we have talked about have ranged from at least moderately to extremely appropriate, so I have agreed with the general sentiment that has been suggested by all these questions. So, yes, I think that is important." In comparison, Participant I3 agreed the concepts were appropriate, but not necessarily as significant to daily practice: "They [are]. I don't know to what extent we come up against this stuff on a daily basis, but I do think it's appropriate for us to be thinking about it and discussing it so when they do

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[128] In one focus group, consisting of two participants, the participants nodded but remained silent and, when prompted, said they didn't really think they had anything more to add because they felt they covered everything. Since the time was nearing the end, I moved onto the next question regarding the **term** activism as I believed that would generate more relevant data in the limited time. Because they nodded agreement, they both were counted as supporting the concepts overall even though they did not fully answer the question or explain their reasoning. For time reasons, this was also skipped to go directly to the question on "activism" for Participant I8 as that question had been providing more significant data, and the participant had indicated support of all the concepts previously discussed.

come up we feel sure about what course we should take." Overall, these comments demonstrate a significant range in the extent of support, which would further suggest the level of commitment participants would likely be willing to carry out such work, if able.

Several participants indicated they were not familiar with the concepts prior to the interview, but they believed they are appropriate and valuable after hearing the summaries through the interview. For example, Participant I4 said, "Yes, I was glad to get these questions, because I wasn't sure what [archival activism] was. I tried to look it up when you emailed me. But, I think it is important, and I certainly have a better understanding, but I do think it has a place. But I think for a long time, that people thought archives were just a dusty place where people sat back and just worked with history. But I think it is more than that, so I think it is all just very important." With this comment, the participant implies these concepts do challenge the traditional understanding of archives, which the participant does support.

Unlike the participants who agreed the concepts were appropriate to varying degrees, two participants indicated mixed agreement. Participant I2 claimed to be "all over the board with this stuff" thinking some concepts were appropriate while others were not. Participant I10, on the other hand, had concerns over the general concept of archival activism:

> I think that in theory, [the concepts] are [appropriate] to some extent. I think that when archival activism becomes or morphs into presenting and supporting a particular social or political agenda of the particular archivist, that that is not appropriate. I do feel that if an archive acquires or accepts or has a collection, that it ought to be made easily available and accessible and should be publicized to that affect. But, I don't think it should be the archivist's role to use that material to present one side of an issue and to sort of hide the other side of an issue. That's someone else's job.

While agreeing the concepts may be appropriate, the participant implies that individual archivists may potentially use archival activism to promote a specific agenda or position, which suggests

the belief that archivists must maintain neutrality, contradicting the scholarship on archival

activism despite voicing agreement "in theory."

Only one participant specifically said the concepts were not appropriate overall. Also

emphasizing the need to maintain neutrality, Participant I13 said:

> The social power and the social consciousness, I understand that. But I don't think
> in archival practice it is really appropriate. I really think we need to be able to
> take the stance that we need to be neutral [about] what is in the records or the
> manuscripts, and our stance is that we want to preserve this history and wants to
> preserve these records so that people 100 years from now will have them and have
> access to them whether it is in paper or in electronic format. So, I don't think that
> is really up to us to make the judgment decision as to what gets processed and
> what does not get processed.

Highlighting the preservation of the records for future potential use, the participant argues that it

is not appropriate for archivists to judge the materials during practice, implying the primary

reason this scholarship is not appropriate is because of the perceived challenge to neutrality.

While not indicating it was inappropriate like Participant I13, Participant I16 claimed archival

activism wasn't practical: "I would say in theory it's interesting. But, again, I think that the

academic historians have written this, and they haven't gotten their hands dirty on a day to day

level with this stuff. So I think it makes interesting copy, but I don't think it is practical on a day

to day sense at all." While not addressing the appropriateness, the participant suggests that the

scholarship does not have enough practical applicability to be realistic.

Many participants often suggested that some concepts were more significant or

appropriate than others. The most frequently discussed were open government followed by

accountability, with four and three participants discussing these concepts, respectively.

Regarding the significance of open government, Participant G7 said, "I think the most

overarching one is with government transparency because it affects everybody. But certainly,

when we are talking about diversity and balance of power those are huge issues, too. But, again

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those aren't going to be felt to each person at quite the same level." This indicates the participant placed highest significance on this concept because it has the largest impact on society as a whole. Also discussing the importance of open government, Participant I15 suggested that such efforts were likely to be met by resistance and opposition by the government leaders: "I think it certainly will make a difference in keeping citizens informed of what we are doing and what we are not doing. But, I think realistically you have to expect people will try to thwart that, and I think that for a whole host of reasons. And, I think that there are people who are just not willing to just allow the electorate to have knowledge of what they are up to." Thus, the participant suggests it is not only one of the most significant but perhaps one of the most challenging because of this opposition. While the concept of open government was mentioned most often, it was also one of the concepts with the least specific examples of participants having active involvement, with archivists' primary role instead being support and advocacy which happens outside of daily tasks or interaction with one's own collection. Thus, the form of activism they most supported was one seen outside of archivists' own individual work within a repository, suggesting an understanding of activism more detached from practice. Following open government and accountability, two participants discussed the importance of access and one the importance of community engagement to enhance record description.

Three of the participants that agreed the concepts were appropriate clarified it was necessary to focus on the concepts individually and find a balance to incorporate them into everyday practice. Participant G7 suggested that any of these concepts were feasible, but only if taken on individually, highlighting the importance of prioritizing:

> I think on an individual level, you can go out and pursue any one of these goals. I think it is just a matter of picking your priorities and focusing on them. I mean, with [open government] you can get political with the good old fashioned American activism there, but for the rest of these, it's about what you think you

can handle working into your everyday schedule. And, most of the time there is
not enough time to do everything, so you have to pick and choose.

In addition to making the point about prioritization, this comment also reiterated the theme that

archivists' promotion of open government is seen as being done outside of archival practice

through more political activism. Regarding the significance of balance when incorporating these

concepts, Participant G8 also emphasized the importance of balancing these concepts with

current daily tasks:

I definitely think they are appropriate, and I think that they need to be discussed
and thought of. At the same point and time, we can't not process collections. We
can't not help people because we are too busy thinking of the big picture. It's a
matter of balance. It would be silly to not think of these things and totally just
focus on what's happening right now, and at the same time you can't just focus on
the big picture that you miss helping people who are in your facility.

While agreeing the concepts are important and necessary to the future of the field, the participant

suggests a concern that focusing too much on the concepts of archival activism will take energy

and resources away from the current tasks of the repository that need to be completed. Overall,

these comments related to balance ultimately suggest concerns over feasibility as they imply

there are not enough resources to fully pursue the concepts of archival activism without careful

prioritization.

Several participants specifically discussed the overall feasibility of archival activism.

While suggesting it is not realistic to incorporate into practice, Participant I5 stressed the

significance of the concepts:

Yes, absolutely [it is appropriate]…. [Regarding which concepts are more
significant] I think that is not even something I can approach, because half of
these things I can't achieve in a forty hour week. Can I aspire to them and be open
to opportunities to be able to do them? Absolutely. Will I be able to make the
time to do major outreach projects? It's not likely I will have that privilege. But
that we should be looking in that direction [to] where the opportunities allow it be
a part of that world. Absolutely.

Similarly, Participant I12 asserted:

> Appropriate yes. Feasible? That totally depends on institution, staff time, the budget. It's great to aim to be as transparent and open as you can be and to get every area of your collection as equal amount of love as you can give. The truth when you are running a one man shop, and on a limited budget, is that you will still have to make judgments on what areas are processed and accessed. What is needed the quickest. That is kind of the reality of it. But, yes, I think it is important, and I think it is good to have these discussions and have these goals.

Both this comments suggest the participant recognized the benefits of the concepts and would like to be able to integrate them but felt it was infeasible because of resource limitations. When asked if the concepts of archival activism were appropriate, Participant G7 responded, "Entirely, and I think the conclusion to draw from this is that there needs to be more funding available for more of this." The discussion of feasibility once again raises the issue of archivists' agency, which many participants felt was overall limited primarily because of financial restrictions. In addition to limited resources, Participant I6 also brought up the influence that institutions and employment concerns have over archivists' actions:

> So these power issues are implicit in the jobs we do. So you have to be careful about that, and be cognizant of it, but in many ways, the working archivist is fairly powerless if the archivist is going to keep his or her job. So, being cognizant of that, these kinds of issues are important. Documenting, being neutral, but of course, what does the archivist working for the CIA do? Does the archivist have to keep the records secret? Or, if the records document illegal acts - surprise, surprise, I would be shocked if the CIA does that - does that archivist have to leak that to wiki-leaks or the front page of the New York Times? I mean, we have to be realistic about this type of stuff.

This discussion points to the influence that the institution may have over archivists' actions, not through institutional policy but the fear of job loss. The participant indicates belief that most archivists would not realistically pursue actions which may put their jobs at risk, specifically whistle-blowing, directly contradicting scholarship on activism which supports the role of whistle-blowers in accountability.

Highlighting the overall significance of the concepts, several participants indicated that awareness of these concepts was very important. Feeling their opportunities may be limited, they suggested it was imperative to be conscious of these concepts so they would be more readily able to integrate them when they had the opportunity. Participant I3 raised this point:

> I don't know to what extent we come up against this stuff on a daily basis, but I do think it's appropriate for us to be thinking about it and discussing it so when they do come up we feel sure about what course we should take. [Later] Well I think it's part of my fundamental background as an archivist that these are issues that would need to be aware of. I mean it's not like I come in to work and think – "ok, how can I promote social justice today." But as I go through it, I make decisions, and some of them are based on preservation needs, some are based on storage needs, some of them are based on being accountable and making sure [I am] doing this in a way that's ethical and right.

Participant G9 also suggested exposure to the material was a way to evaluate current practice. Indicating that the study was an introduction to this scholarship, Participant G9 said, "Yeah, it is certainly things for me to think about in the future. To re-evaluate what I've been doing here in my practice. I don't read a lot of archival literature, I must confess." Discussing the practicality of archival activism, Participant I5 said,

> It's not, but I want it to be which means, I hope that I am open to opportunities that can make that happen, even in small ways. So, that's why I think it is appropriate to talk about it as much as possible, because that is where I think we should be someday, but I can't focus on those things, but if they come up, I feel comfortable being open to them and trying to find ways of making them happen. But, I think in the reality of a 40 hour work week, it's not realistic, unless there are more of us. If my staff was larger we would be reaching for a lot more of these goals and opportunities. But, based on what I need to get through to make it through the day… I think today you come into the field with the perspective that you don't just want this stuff to sit on the shelf. In general, I think most people I talk to are just fascinated by the Indiana Jones quality of what we do, in that any box can hold a secret, any box can hold the answers. And I think that's part of what archivists are when they come to the field. Wishing we could be more proactive to get stuff out there, I think that is who we are. So, I think that is something I would do, even if it wasn't listed as one of these [concepts]. I just think this doesn't exist for any reason other than moving forward.

Ultimately, these comments suggest that many participants who currently feel unable to carry out such efforts because of lack of resources or agency within his/her institution are open to the concepts and interested in integrating them into practice when possible.

Acceptance of the Term 'Activism'

In addition to the overall appropriateness of the concepts to archival practice, the participants were also asked if they felt the term "activism" was appropriate for the concepts.[129] Overall, participants voiced very mixed feelings regarding the suitability of the term for the concepts as well as feelings towards the word in general.

In total, eight participants did feel it was an appropriate description for the concepts discussed. Discussing the term's appropriateness, Participant I2 said, "I think I understand the context and appreciate and understand the use of it." This approach to the response implies it would not be the word chosen by the participant although the participant accepts its use. Participant G5 described being unfamiliar with the concept going into the interview but thinking it was appropriate upon learning more information through the study:

> It's kind of a strong word….. But, in the collections I have and the collections I've worked with recently, I would not equate archival activism with the civil rights movement and social justice movements, and maybe that is bad on my part that I don't see them on the same level. But it just has a really strong connotation in my mind. And again that's my experience coming out, and my bias. But when I first saw this, I was just like yeah, "that's a strong word." But I don't have any other word that I would say. And I think once you get into the context of it, it made more sense since you provided the background and context of it.

This suggests the participant believes some apprehension and bias over the word, but does think it is appropriate and understands its use. In comparison, others, such as Participant I12,

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[129] This question was not included in the original script so some early participants were not asked this in the original interview. A follow-up email was sent with the question, and several responses were received; however, not all participants responded.

demonstrated stronger support of and identification with the term: "I think it is appropriate. Obviously, when you are dealing with issues like diversity and inclusivity and trying to bring out issues of under-represented stories, that is activism. You are trying to be an advocate for people who are not necessarily given the same voice that others are. If that is not activism, than I don't know what is." Beyond believing the term is an appropriate description, the participant identifies the efforts as a form of activism in general, not just within the archival context, specifically in the area of diversity/inclusivity. This suggests an awareness and appreciation of the social significance of the work.

Two additional participants specified that it was an appropriate description for some of the concepts, such as open government and diversity/inclusivity. Regarding the distinction between the appropriateness of the term for the different concepts, Participant I3 said:

> I think of activism as more proactive. I think things like giving guidance to people who document under-represented groups would count as activism. I think writing to congress about George W. Bush's emails would count as activism. I think some of the other issues are important and deal with archival ethics, but I'm not sure I would describe them as activism…. I see activism as something that goes outside the profession or outside the institutions, like writing to congress, doing a workshop for non-archivists. And I have written letters in support of funding for the NHPRC. You know, to that extent, it's activism. But most of my day-to-day, nuts and bolts stuff is about getting most of the stuff I already have processed and out there so people can actually use it.

The participant suggests activism is work done outside of the archivist's own repository or management of the collection, thus considering promoting open government or assisting communities in documenting their own culture activism as it is proactive activities outside the scope of the institutions' own collection management. Participant I8 also suggested that the term activism may be more appropriate for activities such as diversity/inclusivity although the participant emphasizes the wording itself is not important:

> Yeah, I would [agree the term is appropriate].…I think it is overstating, I think, where I like the word 'active.' That archivists and historians are active shapers of the historical narrative. And for archivists, that active shaping…most often comes through the shaping of records and manuscripts. So, we are active in that way. So, whether that is activism or not, I guess to me is immaterial what you call it. And, honestly I think it also relates to another issue that I come into a lot in terms of public history and now that I see working with archival interns is that, either in public history or archives or the area where public history and archives overlap: You can't expect to come into this field and spend ten, fifteen, twenty years quietly arranging documents quietly in a basement or an office somewhere. You are going to have to actively engage with however you define community or communities around you.

Similar to the previous comments, this participant also emphasizes archivists being 'active;' however, this participant further recognizes the active role archivists have through collection management by shaping the historical narrative, supporting the concept of neutrality/archival transparency as defined by the archival scholarship. In addition, the participant also highlighted the significance of active engagement with the surrounding communities, suggesting that is a necessary aspect of practice, one which many entering the field may be unaware of. Yet, despite this seeming support for the concepts, and agreement that activism is appropriate for these specific concepts, the participant suggests it is not the preferred term as it "overstates" archivists' roles, implying the term places too much social significance on archivists' work.

Nine participants did not think the word was suitable or "the best word" to use, generally believing the term had implications inappropriate for archival practice. Twelve participants in total indicated they thought the word had connotations which may make it difficult to find acceptance in the archives field, whether they agreed with the connotations or not, with some calling the word "troubling," "loaded" or "tricky." This included three participants that indicated the word was an appropriate description for the concepts. The primary concern was that activism had political implications which made the participants uncomfortable applying it to archival work. For example, Participant I13 said, "It sounds like you are more Republican or Democrat.

That you are going for a cause." Participant I5 expanded, "I think it's a really rough use of those

terms…I think it is one that probably causes more reaction than is intended. I feel there has got

to be a better word….I think in my mind, 'activism' is like you are coming up against

something….I think it also seems like it has political connotations, rather than social

connotations….It's a prickly word." Similarly, Participant I10 said, "I think that the activism

comes with a lot of baggage, the word…."activism" to me connotes presenting particular issues

in a certain way, limiting the discussion of particular issues." All of these comments

demonstrate an understanding that activism promotes an agenda, primarily political, which the

participants viewed as inappropriate for archival practice. Similarly, Participant I5 indicated it

was an appropriate description for some archival activities but voiced apprehension over the

broad use of the term:

> If you are questioning whether an archivist can be an activist, yes, I think so.
> For example, (if I recall correctly) the archivist at the National Archives 'blew the
> whistle' on Cheney/Bush a few years ago when documents were not being
> supplied to the National Archives as required. On the other hand though, an
> archivist as activist can be dangerous if the power/responsibility is
> misused/misinterpreted by the archivist themselves, perhaps by repressing
> material without legal cause or by personal agenda.[130]

While indicating the term accurately described the actions supporting open government, the

participant demonstrates belief that activism has the potential for encouraging abuses of power in

archivists' attempt to promote a particular cause, emphasizing activism's connotation with an

agenda. Furthermore, by suggesting it is 'dangerous' the participant implies the use of the term

itself may lead to such abuses by encouraging archivists to promote activist agendas.

Some expressed an overall rejection of the word in general, beyond the context of

archives. For example, Participant G8 said, "I really don't like the word 'activist.' 'Activist' in

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[130] Email response to follow-up question.

my mind is a fairly negative term. I view someone who says they are an activist as someone who

just complains a lot and spends a lot of time thinking but doesn't actually get down to the nitty

gritty of actually trying to fix the situation. So, I would also be uncomfortable using the word

'activism.'" In response to this comment, Participant G9 agreed, "Yes, it's a word that has been

used to pigeonhole people in a corner to be leftist crazy." Participant I4 also discussed personal

connotations to the word activism:

> But I think sometimes activism can have a negative connotation to it. Not that I
> thought that when you emailed me because I didn't think archives would be
> negative. But I think that when you are talking to a general public [it] isn't really
> self-explanatory, because I think of it more about someone who is out there
> marching and carrying the signs protesting or something like that. But I don't
> know what a better word would be. 'Pro-active archivists' maybe?... But to me,
> proactive is in large part more positive than activism. That is just me. I don't
> know. And yet, we do use proactive in library terms a lot. And I didn't think
> about it, I wish there was a word that was better."

These comments demonstrate attitudes towards the term unrelated to archival practice,

suggesting the response to the word is not necessarily related to the appropriateness to archives

but just distaste for the word in general.

Two participants indicated that the term was not accurate or appropriate. Participant G9

displayed more uncertainty, questioning his/her own definition of activism: "I don't know if it is.

I guess I might have a different idea of what activism is being in a small town. I guess this is just

a new way of thinking about your profession, is that being an activist? It's not being out there

beating a drum or anything. It's just being a little bit, I don't know, it's tough. It's really a hard

question. Is it activism...I don't think it really is, no." In comparison, Participant I16 stated clear

belief it is inappropriate:

> No, because it comes across as very militant. I don't like the word activism,
> because it makes you seem like it has a certain bent. Again I don't think
> archivists, necessarily by nature or by profession, should be considered radical, or
> activist or militant…. I like the word like archivally responsible. You know, just

being responsible to your code of ethics, to your public record law, to your Freedom of Information Act, to just do what you're hired to do. To be the archivists that you should be. I mean, I am reading this stuff about what you could do with records, but good grief, oh my gosh, it's a worst case scenario. I hope that no one that I know one would do this stuff. I mean, withhold information, change records, do this stuff to benefit themselves or some cause, rather than, again, follow standard archival practice and procedures. Again, this stuff is centuries in the making. We didn't arrive at the way we do the things we do a decade ago or fifty years ago, but it's a continual process of why we do the things we do and how we do the things we, do and it's been highly effective.

With this declaration of disagreement, the participant demonstrates a reading of the scholarship on archival activism discussed as not only promoting an agenda to benefit the individual archivist but as going against traditional archival ethics. The participant also emphasized the challenge that archival activism poses to traditional archival practice, which the participant suggests developed to make practice more effective. Overall, this comment would indicate not only a rejection of the term but the fundamental idea of archival activism.

Some participants disagreed with the term activism, yet emphasized their support of the basic concepts, indicating they instead considered them essential aspects of the profession. For example, Participant I6 said:

No, I consider myself an archivist. And, implicit in my work are all of these elements. So being neutral, trying to balance the power from the powerful to those who lack power, being inclusive, including diverse voices and perspective, engaging with the community, being accountable, all those things are implicit in the work. So, yes. I think I can do those to the extent that I can given the limitations that I can address. I'm not sure that "I am an archival activist" is necessary to say.

It is notable in the quote above that the participant did relate being neutral as an issue of archival activism, again demonstrating that most participants associated lack of neutrality with abuses of power or bias to some extent. Participant I9 voiced a similar understanding of the concepts as a fundamental part of the archivists' role:

I think it is more professional responsibility to defend. I don't know if I am entirely [in agreement that it's activism]. I am old enough, that to me, an activist is someone who is going out there and lying in the streets. And I supported that type of activism, even it if not always supporting all their ideas as I was more of a moderate. But a lot of things I consider activism is going out and doing something. Some of the things we should just do as a responsible archivist. If we can help the under-represented, that's being professionally responsible.

Suggesting such practices were being responsible, as opposed to practicing archival activism, implies that the participant did not only consider the concepts appropriate but suggests they are the foundations of the field.

The rejection of activism as an appropriate word was not always indicative of the participant's own negative connotations to the word, but sometimes an understanding that such connotations existed, making it difficult to find acceptance in the field. For example, Participant I11 said: "Well, I am trying to look at it from the other perspective. Because we live in a weird society, [and activism] comes with some negative connotations these days. So I worry about it, because there are too many people, when you say "activism," they perceive trouble making. Because that is really stupid, but you have to deal with what you are stuck with." Similarly, Participant I15 claimed, "I think that it could be problematical in the sense that it could be identified with a particular political or social agenda. I believe I understand what is meant by that and I don't believe it is necessarily threatening. But I think some people may be put off by it." Participant G7 specifically discussed the way the term may be perceived given current social contexts: "I think it is technically appropriate, but maybe not the best choice for today's political climate. I don't know if I was going to go out and pursue a more diverse collection, I would want to go to the president of my college and say, 'I am going to go out and be an activist.' He probably wouldn't take very kindly to that." In response, Participant G6 agreed, "I think it is a good description of the activities. But, I agree it isn't a good one to use in this climate…. I think

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it sounds like you are working like a faction. And I don't think you want to sound like you are

working as a faction, and I don't think that is the way we would want to be perceived. However,

I do feel these are appropriate goals of the profession." Participant I6 suggested that it could be

perceived both positively and negatively: "I think it is a loaded term. It's one that that today, for

many people, is a great term, because they see themselves as activists. But I think other people in

the larger community have pejorative associations with traditional activists…so the term can

have negative understandings, negative implications." This comment suggested that some

individuals do identify as activists and are inspired by the term while also acknowledging that

more people have negative perceptions of it. Overall, these responses indicate that the primary

concern with the word is over the reception it will receive from others both within and outside

the field, as opposed to personal connotations. This suggests more personal support of the term

and concepts and also recognition of the potential challenge it may face finding acceptance

throughout the field.

Participant I12 also supported the use of the use of the word activism and acknowledged

its potential rejection from some in the field, suggesting the differences in acceptance may relate

to both educational and generational divides:

> I guess I am comfortable with the role of an information professional being an
> activist. That is something that the library community has really embraced.
> [Regarding the archives community], it sounds like something that is becoming
> more of an emphasis. I think about going to library school, and some of the
> courses seemed like straight up activist courses. Like talking about archival, I am
> sorry, library theory, and how libraries are meant to be equalizing bodies and
> information for all. So, it sounds like archives are stepping into that realm too….
> I think it is starting to be more embraced by the archives community. It is
> interesting being one of those people that straddle the line between the two,
> because you notice the distinct differences between the two communities of
> professionals.… I almost feel like there is an old school archivist versus a new
> school archivist generational gap thing going on right now. The old school
> archivist is like, "we need to keep this stuff as safe as possible because in the
> future someone may use it." And, the new school archivist is like, "hey let's get

this stuff out here and let more people take a whack at it." So, I think it is very clear what is going on out there – a total generational shift. And that's great, it's good.

The participant voices support of the term activism as well as the concepts because of exposure to similar ideas in library school. The participant also discusses his/her observation of a generational gap within the archival field over attitude towards such practice which involves more interaction between the records and communities, which supports the argument that such concepts challenge archival traditions. Furthermore, the participant emphasizes support of the concepts of archival activism by indicating this generational shift is beneficial to the field.

Even though most acknowledge supporting many of the concepts in their responses, only one participant self-identified as an activist. Participant I7 asserted, "I do see myself as one [an activist]. I would like to see myself having an imprint somehow. Yes, so I would just say that that's probably more person by person, rather than the profession seeing themselves in any particular way." This comment suggests the participant relates activism to making an impact on society, which the participant hopes to do. Yet, the participant also recognizes that this is a personal understanding of the professional role, not one necessarily held throughout the field, an observation that was evident in the findings of this current study.

Acceptance of Social Justice

As a follow-up, participants were told the concepts were also often discussed as promoting social justice and asked to what extent they agreed that such concepts did promote social justice. This question was asked to determine if social justice was considered less controversial than the term activism. Overall, participants had much more positive connotations

with the term social justice and were in more agreement over the use of this phrase in the context of archival practice.

Thirteen participants agreed participants did have the potential to promote social justice through their practice. Participants most often discussed the concepts of open government and accountability as areas in which archivists advanced social justice. Participant I7 discussed the significance of supporting government transparency:

> I think that archival work can potentially very much promote social justice. Archivists doing the job of keeping records open and accessible to those who request them… is helping to keep information of all sorts both transparent and circulating.… In instance after instance, denying access to (in whatever form this denial takes – from closure due to funding or outright denial to grant access to records) records means that the public is missing key and central parts of its own individual – and collective – memory. Archivists can (try) do the work of making sure that access to records remains open and clear to all.[131]

Regarding the ways archival practice can enable social justice, Participant I6 said:

> There is huge potential. And it seems to me, when using records it is all about discovery. You can discover injustice illegality per se. You can find that someone did something wrong, and it can be exposed. Reporters do that all the time. When they get something linked to them, or when the reporters go to the archives, so that they can [find] things. That kind of potential is huge. The records are there to reveal the actions in one way or another [of] the record creators or the [subject]. So it is all kinds of things like that. When I read your question first, a couple things just come to mind very quickly. A student wants to come do research on women doing medicine. And, there were certain leaders, that were grossly misogynistic, there are records in the files [showing them being] derogative. This is something that I want the student to see.

This example demonstrates how individual archivist's practice can promote accountability from within an institutional setting.

In addition to the issue of promoting open government and accountability, other participants emphasized collecting as the primary means by which archivists advance social justice. Participant G9 addressed the social impact of collecting broadly, indicating the

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[131] Email response to follow-up question.

significance lay in selecting materials which would be valued by future researchers: "I like to think that what I am doing matters. That may be by the decisions I am making, the things I am taking in, that spending my life's work by taking these things in and making them available, people are going to be able to use them for something good, however that is defined." Other participants placed significance on what the records themselves documented. For example, Participant I5 maintained:

> Since the mission of archives is to preserve and make available primary documentation, within those materials exist first person accounts/experiences, original tracking/observance material and, of course, material that represents alternative and minority social/cultural views. So, ideally, as archives grow their access/holdings we are better equipped to chip away at our reliance on filtered historical perspectives.[132]

Similarly, Participant I11 said, "Yes, I think so. Because I think, if you use the cliché that the history is written by those in power, then if we all, if we can broaden that to the history of others, then I think that does seem to create a social justice idea." Both of these participants indicate that the primary means to promote social justice is by broadening the greater historical narrative to be more inclusive, supporting the concept of diversity/inclusivity. Instead of discussing specific areas of archival methods, Participant I15 suggested that archivists' role in promoting social justice related to the materials they were collecting. An archivist for a church archives, who collected the records of church members and leaders, including many working internationally, the participant addressed many ways in which managing the collections related to social justice. Using the example of records of members working in Chile during the presidency of Augusto Pinochet, the participant explained:

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[132] Email response to follow-up question.

> [The church] had to remove a lot of people from that area just for their safety. But a lot of people stayed, and I think those documents are very much about political and social justice. And, we have some limitations to access them for the protection of the people who were involved and who continue to work there. I will say that that would probably be the major case of the first and the second themes of archival activism: the social power and social imbalance.

The participants indicated the management of these collections as promoting social justice by documenting the examples of the imbalance of social power and abuses of social power under periods of dictatorship. While not specifically focusing on the issue, the participant's example also indicates that access restrictions are in place to assure the protection of members who may be at security risk due to their past involvement, demonstrating another area in which collection management can promote social justice by potentially protecting identity when necessary.

Participant I8 indicated that archivists had the most potential to promote social justice through assisting communities or others outside the profession in documenting their own history, especially when this history relates to social justice efforts:

> I think the single biggest thing an archivist can do along these lines is collect materials related to social justice and work with social justice organizations so that they can document and keep their own history. Many of these kinds of organizations run on such a paltry budget that they don't have the staff or the time to consider documenting the important work that they do. Archivists can also think about their roles not just as collectors but also people with knowledge that can benefit these kinds of organizations.

This role focuses on archivists' work outside the repository, expecting archivists to draw upon their expertise to encourage and educate others to archive their history. While physically performed outside the repository, the tasks described by this participant still directly involve practice and collection management that promotes social justice, but the trained archivist's role would be as the educator instructing others to perform this work. However, while recognizing the value of such work, the participant also voiced concern over using the term social justice:

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I would qualify all of that [by saying] archivists should not have an inflated sense of their roles in this regard. Yes, historians and other scholars access these documents, but generally the kind of scholarship they do is not widely read or distributed. Archivists can't assume because they are collecting or working with social justice organizations in this regard that they [are] making a significant impact. It makes me wonder if there's any way to judge that or measure that kind of impact.

Thus, even though archivists are making efforts to promote social justice and documenting social justice efforts, the participant considers it is unlikely the work will be widely identified or recognized. Similarly, Participant G8 also implied the phrase may suggest greater social significance than archivists really have:

I would say that they could be [promoting social justice], but I'm not going to be changing the world by choosing to collect records from the [LGBTQ campus organization]. I would love to do so, but I would not actively change the world, or improve someone's life. I would also like to hope I'm not making someone's life worse. So, social justice is a real big concept to me, and I am not sure that we as archivists contribute to that.

While both participants agree archivists' work can promote social justice, they indicate the overall impact of the work is likely limited. Both participants also imply that the phrase social connotes larger social significance than archival practice can realistically achieve, suggesting archival practice may better society but not to the scale that the phrase social justice entails.

Participant I16 did not use the phrase social justice but agreed that archival practice did have a social impact on society, identifying an example in which his/her work specifically had a social impact on the local community:

The reality is we deal with the record of human action and interaction, so there is always going to be a social component to the things that we do. But the extent to which we become socially active depends on a lot of things. The particular individual archivist's inclination, the resources, the type of community you live in. There are all these factors that you have to be aware of ….There was a group that was trying to prevent their [residential] area from being rezoned for commercial [space]. So one of the things they did was they gave all the records to us at the state archives, which was kind of brilliant on their part because they could not be subpoenaed since they were no longer their records. They were ours,

because they signed a deed of gifts. But, again it was a record of all that transpired in terms of the homeowners' association trying to prevent them from being rezoned. So is that a social component of what I am doing, yes, again it was a human interaction about something that was incredibly important at the time. And because they did what they did, they prevented the rezoning of their area and the demolition of a bunch of houses.

With this example, the participant demonstrates awareness of the social significance of archives and the role of archivists as the archives played a key role in helping the community keep their homes. However, the participant does not discuss having an active role in this example, implying the homeowners donated the materials to the archive, which he/she accepted, consequently protecting them from subpoena. Thus, while the example does indicate recognition of potential social justice in archival practice, the participant does not necessarily demonstrate a position on whether archivists should actively promote social justice through their work as the archivist's role in the example was exclusively custodial.

Similar to the discussion of activism, Participant G5 indicated that the association of archival practice to social justice was not something he/she considered before participating in the interview but agreed it was appropriate upon receiving the information:

Maybe it's because I'm not one of those people I would consider an activist, [but] it's hard for me to see my role as being a social justice activity. When you phrase it like that, I would agree with it and I understand it better. But, just thinking about it myself, I wouldn't necessarily think about it like that…. Social justice is not why I got into archives. That thought never crossed my mind….I like history, and I like to tell people's stories so other people can learn about them and interpret them. So, if that is what someone's definition of social justice is in anyway than I guess so, but I never would have thought that without being here.

This response did demonstrate agreement that archival practice, such as diversity/inclusivity which documented generally overlooked histories, had the potential to promote social justice, although the participant implies he/she would not identify social justice as applying to his/her own work, overall suggesting agreement but not strong support of the phrase social justice. As

the participant was not familiar with these ideas prior to the interview, the comment suggests that the scholarship effectively argues that such activities promote social justice as the participant implied the provided summaries introduced the topic sufficiently enough to support this position.

Two participants did not agree that archival practice could promote social justice, considering it an inappropriate role for archivists. Responding to the question, Participant I10 said, "No, because the role of an archival collection is not essentially to promote social justice. Because I think, the term social justice can mean different things to different people. What is my social justice may not be someone else's." The participant indicates that social justice must be defined by position or cause, implying archivist would be demonstrating a personal objective or position in any attempt to promote social justice, which the participant feels is inappropriate.

Participant I13 also discussed the appropriateness of promoting social justice, also emphasizing the importance of archivists not advocating an agenda with their practice:

> If you are going into social justice to advocate for a point of view, I don't think that is our role. But, to [help them] tell their story, I think it is [appropriate]….Which is what we are doing in communities….We have an extensive collection of people of the Urban League from the 1970s oral history, so we've had people come in and say, "Hey, this is what things were like" and talk about being an African American from the 1950s-1970s and telling their stories.

The participant indicated that the appropriateness depended on the work being done and on whose behalf. Like the comment from Participant I10, this indicated that supporting social justice would not be appropriate if it was demonstrating the position of the archivist. However, Participant I13 did distinguish projects that helped give voice to those represented in the collection, especially for communities generally under-documented such as the example given of the Urban League oral history project. Overall, the comments addressing the inappropriateness of social justice indicate the primary concern over the use of the phrase was that such archival practices would ultimately demonstrate an archivists' personal position.

While agreeing archivists had the potential to promote social justice, some participants felt their agency was limited. Participant I2 indicated that time and resources limited archivists' ability to carry out such efforts:

> Certainly, the potential for such promotion exists as it does in any profession, although given the current economic situation, I think that most archivists are principally concerned with keeping their jobs and dealing with the endless and constant stream of "stuff" that comes our way daily. I'm not against the concept of promoting "social justice" in archival work--not at all--because I see the history of human endeavor (including archival work) as a story fundamentally of progress, not regress--it's just that for many of us, we're too busy trying to keep our heads above water and working through the day-to-day challenges that come our way than to do any serious, active promotion of this concept.[133]

The participant implies that archivists have the potential and even aspiration to promote social justice; however, the demands of fulfilling current job responsibilities make the ability to carry out such efforts limited. Participant G3 also discusses the influence of institutions on promoting social justice through practice: "Archival work should promote social justice, and access to archival records is a social justice issue. Unfortunately, because archives are embedded in institutions, I have some doubts as to whether the profession can navigate successfully the tension between serving institutions and serving the interests of social justice."[134] Ultimately, both of these participants imply promoting social justice may ultimately impede on archivists' ability to fully meet their institutional needs, either serving the institution's overall mission or the job responsibilities, a necessity to hold their position. This indicates that archivists may be less likely to actively promote social justice if they feel it may put their employment at risk by not fully meeting their institutional expectations.

Participant G7 voiced agreement that archival practice could promote social justice but also concerned over the use of how the phrase may be received outside the archival community:

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[133] Email response to follow-up question.
[134] Email response to follow-up question.

I think they are, but at the same time, that's another phrase [like activism], that a
lot of people are going to look at and think, "Oh you are going to camp out in a
tent somewhere." It is all these things that… have all been tied up with things like
the "1%" and the "99%" and everything. And, as much as yes, it's maybe a true
description of what we are trying to do to some extent, that is not the way we
want to be perceived if we want to actually achieve any of these goals.

Similar to the discussion of archival activism, this comment demonstrates apprehension over the use of the word because of concern that it would be negatively received by others who would associate such practice with more politicized activists, such as those supporting the Occupy Movement who set up camps in major cities. Although not disagreeing with this description, the participant suggests that such associations may ultimately make archivists' activities less effective as people may be less supportive of their efforts. Overall, participants voiced much less apprehension over the connotations associated with social justice than activism; however, this comment, in addition to those participants rejecting the term, indicate some concern that social justice also connotes an agenda which is seen as inappropriate or ineffective for archival practice.

Conclusions

The majority of participants indicated overall support of the concepts of archival activism to varying to degrees. However, in some cases, the responses were evident that some participants were unclear on the concepts' definition in the context of the scholarship on archival activism, specifically neutrality/archival transparency. For example, in response to the question on the overall appropriateness of the concepts of archival activism, Participant I1 maintained, "I do think that they are appropriate and there are a lot of things… that we should always keep in the back of our minds when we are at work, as far as being neutral and trying to get the best description available….It is just a good reminder of what our role is." Similarly, when discussing concepts that were less feasible, Participant I12 asserted:

> The emphasis on neutrality. I know it is extremely important. But, I don't know
> how much you can really avoid those outcomes. People are some way or another
> always going to be a little bit biased. I mean, in anthropology they call it culture
> of real, or seeing through the lens of your culture. You think you are acting as
> neutral as possible, but you are still going to be acting from where you are coming
> from. It is something to strive for though.

Implying it is infeasible to achieve the concept of neutrality/archival transparency, the participant indicates an understanding that the concept means maintaining neutrality to promote activism as opposed to accepting the influence that archivists shape and interpret the records through practice. While supporting neutrality as an aim, the participant believes it is impossible because everyone's perspective ultimately influences his/her actions, a reading which supports neutrality/archival transparency as defined by the scholarship. This participants' confusion demonstrates a lack of clarity in the interview instrument, likely due to the way the concept was organized and named, as including "neutrality" in the concept heading may have lead participants to associate neutrality with activism. This confusion may have been avoided if the concept was just called "archival transparency." However, it was essential to first address neutrality as this was fundamental to fully examine the concept of archival transparency and archival activism in general. The word was added to the concept heading to explain the topic's centrality to the question. The Mark Greene quote was specifically chosen to contextualize how neutrality was being defined in the discussion of archival activism; though, this may not have been enough to counter traditional understandings of neutrality throughout the discussion. Ultimately, this confusion lead to difficulty in evaluating participants' responses related to this topic, especially the further the discussion got away from Greene's specific quote. However, participants generally gave enough context to their responses to indicate their intended use of the word.

The findings related to the question specifically on the use of the word "activism" demonstrated a significant resistance to the term. Even though most participants said they agreed with or understood the use of the word, they also indicated it had negative connotations. Even in cases in which the participants did not support the concepts to the same extent as the scholarship advocated but still agreed they were appropriate, they still had negative perceptions of the word activism. The primary reason for the negative connotations was because the term implied political agendas. Overall, this apprehension further highlights the importance participants place on archivists maintaining neutrality as any demonstration of position or agenda was seen as inappropriate. These findings suggest that archival traditions supporting passive practice and positivity is one of the primary obstacles to the acceptance of archival activism, which is seen as a clear challenge to such traditions. However, the findings also revealed that many participants demonstrated their negative connotations related to activism extended beyond the context of the archives field, indicating a reflection on the wider activist community. As such perceptions apparently developed outside of archival education or training, these findings indicate that some portion of the archival community would likely continue to hold negative connotations of archival activism regardless of the position of archival traditions, theory or scholarship.

Participants were much more receptive to using the phrase social justice to describe these concepts. The difference may be indicative of a more overall positive perception of the phrase social justice even outside of the context of archives. While several participants voiced having negative feelings towards the word activist, no one indicated negative connotations with "social justice," some even indicating personal support of the phrase itself. Participant G4, for example, said, "I have a very strong belief in social justice and it's a very positive term." The personal responses individual archivist has for these terms will ultimately impact the extent to which the

words will find acceptance within the archival community. The findings indicate the word activism may have more difficulty finding acceptance because of resistance to the term itself. Regarding the implications of the attitude towards these words, the findings indicated that many participants believed the word "activist" suggested someone is an activist for a specific cause which ultimately demonstrated an agenda. While many participants expressed concern over the use of the word "activism" because it connoted a partisan position, often specifically political, only two participants voiced concern that social justice implied a position. This difference indicates that social justice is a more inclusively understood term connoting a justice for society or humanity in general. However, the argument for archival activism suggests that activism can also be broadly understood to support human rights as opposed to a specific agenda. Overall, the findings demonstrate that most participants do not define activism as inclusively as social justice, which makes it a much more controversial term.

Chapter 10: Data Analysis

Measuring the Acceptance of Archival Activism

A primary aim of the study was to measure the extent of acceptance of archival activism among practicing archivists, which included identifying the concepts most accepted as well as variables that correlate to archivists' support. The research design was successful in exploring archivists' perceptions of archival activism and many themes emerged from this data to draw several conclusions related to practicing archivists' support of archival activism. However, while the interview instrument approached the concepts directly by using quotes and summaries from the scholarship, the participants' full responses often demonstrated they understood the concepts differently than they were defined in the scholarship. These findings were significant as they demonstrated further disconnect between practicing archivists and the scholarship beyond just voiced acceptance or rejection, as participants often had a much less conceptual interpretation of the issues than presented in the scholarship.

However, the range in interpretations of the concepts ultimately made it difficult to measure individual participant's acceptance of the concepts consistently to compare acceptance between participants as voiced agreement was not necessarily indicative of support if the full responses demonstrated an understanding that diverged from the scholarship. Furthermore, comparison of participants' acceptance was also more complicated and potentially problematic because participants did not necessarily expand their answers to the same extent, so it was possible some participants that did have contradictory understandings of the concepts simply did not indicate this in their responses.[135] Overall, the interview instrument was much more effective in identifying themes that indicated rejection or acceptance of archival activism among

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[135] This demonstrates a need for future studies using a more refined interview instrument which can be developed from the findings of this current study. This will be further discussed in Chapter 11.

participants as opposed to a tool to consistently measure the extent of acceptance of archival

activism on an individual level and, consequently, limited the extent to which acceptance of

activism among participants could be compared.

Despite these limitations, the findings were used to create a key to identify rejection or

support to enable a basic evaluation of the participants' acceptance of the concepts of activism

and allow comparison between participants. For each concept, points either indicating support or

rejection of the scholarship were used to categorize the participant as demonstrating either: No

Support; Moderate Support; or Strong Support (See Table 10.1: Archival Activism Acceptance

Key). This support was then translated into "scores" to facilitate overall comparison, with No

Support = O; Moderate = 1; and Strong = 2. In the case of neutrality/archival transparency,

participants may have two different scores as some participants' responses on the understanding

of neutrality indicated support of the scholarship although they rejected the biographical note or

vice versa. These two scores were averaged so the concept of neutrality/archival transparency

would not have more overall weight than the other concepts. The overall acceptance score was

the sum of the six core concepts. The participants' responses to the concluding question

regarding their overall acceptance was not included in this score as this was often answered very

generally as many felt their previous answers were sufficient and they were not pushed for more

in-depth responses due to time restraints. Similarly, the questions on the terms "activism" and

"social justice" were not included in the score because acceptance of the language is not

necessarily a reflection on the scholarship itself. Also, not all participants answered these

questions. Overall, the total acceptance score would be out of a possible 12. The mean score of

participants was 6.5, mode was 8 and median was 6.5. These scores were then compared to the

information collected from the demographic survey to determine if any variables influenced

acceptance of archival activism. (See Table 10.2: Acceptance of Archival Activism and Table

10.3: Participant Demographics and Acceptance)

Table 10.1: Archival Activism Acceptance Key

Concept	No Support	Moderate Support	Strong Support
Social Power	- Considers exercising power inappropriate - Stresses concern of abuse of power	-Agrees archivists have social power	-Acknowledges social power and relates it to participant's own practice -Demonstrates awareness of impact of practical decisions
Power Imbalance	- Doesn't identify imbalance	- Recognizes imbalance (also in records)	- Identifies imbalance and believes it important to redress
Neutrality/ Archival Transparency	-Strongly emphasizes maintaining neutrality - Not appropriate to shape or interpret the records	-Recognizes neutrality impossible but uncertain over extent to which they shape record	-Accepts archivists shape/interprets the records through interactions
Biographical Note	-Believes note provides no beneficial information	-Considers note unnecessary	-Believes note would provide useful information
Diversity/ Inclusivity	-Believes actively seeking out diverse collections is unnecessary	-Agrees important issue - Promotes diversity/inclusivity through practical decisions in collection management - Considers value of alternative records	- Agrees important to actively promote diversity/inclusivity - Considers diversity of the archives a personal motivation -Supports community involvement - Actively assisting communities in documenting
Community Engagement	- Demonstrates distrust of insider information (bias) - Exercises strong control overall archival authority	- Agrees important concept - Seeks out insider information (as defined by participant)	- Supports projects encouraging users to provide their own narratives - Allows that engagement shapes collection
Accountability	- Believes it is not archivists role to interpret records	- Agrees important and responsibility of archivists - Focuses almost exclusively on collecting	- Identifies alternative records or documentation as methods of accountability - Supporting access policies to promote accountability
Open Government	-Concern over neutrality - Disapproves of public efforts to promote open government	- Voices strong belief in significance of promoting open government	- Identifies personal involvement in projects promoting open government or protecting government records

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Table 10.2: Acceptance of Archival Activism

Participant	Social Power	Neutrality/ Transparency	Diversity/ Inclusivity	Community Engagement	Account- ability	Open Government	Total Score
I1	High	High	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	8
I2	No	No/Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	4.5
I3	Mod.	Mod.	High	Mod.	No	Mod.	6
I4	Mod.	Mod.	High	Mod.	No	Mod.	7
I5	High	High/Mod.	High	Mod.	No	Mod.	7.5
I6	High	High/No	High	No	Mod.	High	8
I7	High	Mod./No	High	High	High	High	10.5
I8	Mod.	High/Mod.	High	High	High	Mod.	9.5
I9	Mod.	Mod./No	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	High	6.5
I10	No	High/Mod.	No	Mod.	No	Mod.	3.5
I11	High	High	High	Mod.	No	Mod.	8
I12	High	High	High	High	Mod.	Mod.	10
I13	No	No/Mod.	High	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	5.5
I15[136]	High	Mod.	Mod.	High	Mod.	Mod.	8
I16	No	No	High	Mod.	No	No	3
G1	High	High	High	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	9
G2	High	No	Mod.	No	High	Mod.	6
G3	High	High	High	Mod.	High	Mod.	10
G4	No	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	5
G5	No	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	5
G6	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	6
G7	Mod.	High/Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	6.5
G8	No	No	Mod.	No	Mod.	Mod.	3
G9	No	No	Mod.	No	Mod.	Mod.	3

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[136] An interview was conducted with Participant I14 but it was not included in any data analysis because the participant was ineligible.

Table 10.3 Participant Demographics and Acceptance
(sorted by acceptance score)

Total Score	Age	Gender	Institution Type	Degrees
3	45-49	M	State Library	BA – History; MA – Public History (2001); MLIS (2006)
3	35-39	M	Public Univ.	BA – History and Political Science; MLIS – Special Collections (1999)
3	30-34	M	Public Univ.	BA – Business Admin; MLIS – Librarianship (2002);MA - Scandinavian Languages (2003); MS – Instructional Design and Technology (2010); EDD (2011)
3.5	60-64	M	Private College	BA – History; MA – Library Science (n.d.)
4.5	45-49	M	History Organization (Medical)	BA - History and Legal Services; MA – Public Administration (1987)
5	65+	M	Private Univ. (Rel)	BA – History; MA – History (1961); PhD History (1976)
5	30-34	F	Private Univ.	BA – History; MA – History and Museum Studies (2002)
5.5	55-59	F	State Historical Soc.	BA – American Studies; MA – American Studies (1976); MLS (1996)
6	45-49	F	Public Univ.	BA – History; MLIS – Archives Concentration (1987)
6	Rather not say	F	Heritage Organization	BA – Information Management; MLIS – 2005
6	55-59	F	Pub High School	BA – German; MLIS (1990)
6.5	55-59	F	Public Univ.	BA – History; MLIS (1975); MA – History (1979)
6.5	30-34	F	Private College	BA – History; MLIS – 2011
7	65 +	F	Local History/ Pub. Library	BA – History; MLIS – Public Libraries (1971)
7.5	35-39	F	City Art Museum	BA – Art History; MA – Public History (2004); MLIS (2004)
8	30-34	F	Private College	BA - Economics; MLS/MLIS – Archives Management (2006); MA – Scottish Studies (2007)
8	50-54	M	Public Univ.	BA –History; MA – History (1992)
8	50-54	M	Local History/ Public Library	BA – History; MLIS (1995); MA – History/Public History (2000);
8	60-64	M	Church Archives	BA – History; MA – Theology (n.d.)
9	35-39	F	Private College (Rel)	BA – History; MA- History (1998); MSI (2008)
9.5	40-44	M	City Historical Society	BA – History; MA – History (1992); PhD – History (2000)
10	30-34	F	Private Club	BA – Anthropology; MLIS – Special Collections and Archives (2008)
10	40-44	F	Church Archives	BA – History and German; MA – History (1996); MLIS (2000)
10.5	35-39	F	Public Univ.	BA – History; MLIS – Archival Admin. (2002)

Acceptance of Specific Concepts

Although participants voiced overwhelming support of many of the concepts such as diversity/inclusivity, community engagement, accountability and open government, their responses demonstrated that many did not strongly support the concept as it was defined by the scholarship. Overall, no concept as defined by the scholarship was accepted by the majority of participants, with most being moderately accepted (See Table 10.4: Participant Acceptance of Activism by Concept).

Table 10.4 Participant Acceptance of Activism by Concept

Concept	# of Participants - No Acceptance	# of Participants – Moderate Acceptance	# of Participants – High Acceptance
Social Power	8	6	10
Neutrality/Transparency	6	7	11
Biographical Note	7	11	6
Diversity/inclusivity	1	11	12
Community Engagement	4	16	4
Accountability	6	14	4
Open Government	1	20	3

The concept most accepted was diversity/inclusivity, which not only had the most participants indicating high acceptance but also only one participant indicating no acceptance. An indication of high acceptance voiced support of active collection, which would include both pursuing collections as well as assisting communities in their own documentation to increase diversity/inclusivity in the historical record. While many participants indicted that budget, space or staff limitations restricted the extent to which they could actively collect diverse materials for their collection, many did demonstrate support of projects which would assist communities in documentation. The appropriateness of this work was addressed directly in the follow-up question for the concept of diversity/inclusivity. Ultimately this follow-up question focusing on a

specific effort helped differentiate between levels of acceptance, which highlights the need for even more direct questions in future interview instruments.

The concept of social power was the most divided, having ten participants demonstrating high acceptance as well as the most participants rejecting the concept. Almost all of the participants who did not support the concept recognized social power existed but believed that participants should not exercise it, demonstrating clear rejection of the concept. This unambiguous sign of rejection made social power the concept in which no acceptance was most easily identifiable. Similarly, participants were much divided on the concept of neutrality/archival transparency, although fewer participants demonstrated no acceptance for this concept than for social power. Like social power, there was also a clear identification of rejection of neutrality/archival transparency if participants voiced belief that archivists should not shape or influence the records. The divide in acceptance of the concepts of social power and neutrality/archival transparency further support the overall findings of disconnect between theory and practice as these two are the most conceptual.

Participants voiced almost unanimous, often very strong, support of the concepts of community engagement, accountability and open government; however, the responses generally demonstrated only moderate acceptance of the scholarship with only three or four participants indicating high acceptance for each concept. In these cases participants did not indicate clear rejection but demonstrated an understanding of the concepts that was generally not as theoretical, proactive or engaged with the community as the scholarship. Ultimately, these findings demonstrate the extent to which the participants' understanding of the concepts differed from the scholarship on archival activism.

Gender and Age

There was some correlation between both gender and age and acceptance. Regarding gender, of the fourteen female participants, nine had a score at or above the median while five had scores below. In addition, female participants had the highest three acceptance scores. In comparison, four out of the ten male participants scored at or above the median and 6 scored below. Male participants also had the six lowest scores. Overall, female participants' average acceptance score was 7.5 while male participants' average score is 5.5. As there were no participants of color in the study, women were the only identified members of a demographic group traditionally under-documented in archives which may be a possible explanation for this correlation. This relationship between archival exclusion and acceptance of activism can be examined more closely in future studies by specifically recruiting participants of color and also identifying other variables such as sexual orientation or class which may reveal similar relationships.

Because the scholarship on archival activism challenges archival traditions, there was some expectation that younger archivists would have been more receptive to the scholarship as they were more likely to have been exposed to this newer scholarship since they generally received their education more recently.[137] Furthermore, the higher recruitment response rate among younger participants displayed higher interest in research on the topic of archival activism, indicating possible support of this assumption. Of the nine participants between 30-39

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[137] However, the demographic survey demonstrated that age did not necessarily correlate to educational year as many participants, especially participants with dual degrees, received their degrees significantly after their bachelors. While it may have been valuable to compare the years in which the degrees where received, the approach would have been problematic given the diversity of degrees and high proportion of dual degrees. For example, would it accurate to use the year of the last degree received, regardless of the degree (MLIS or MA in Public History, for example) or compare prioritize the year the MLIS was received for consistency, which would have demonstrated greater emphasis on that degree. Given the scale and exploratory approach to this study, that level of analysis was not performed as the small participant pool limits the generalizability regardless of approach. However, future studies with larger participant pools should determine an approach to evaluating age/year of education prior to conducting the study to ensure an effective survey instrument.

(the two youngest age brackets represented), six participants had a score at or above the median of 6.5, with three of the five participants with the highest acceptance scores within these two younger age brackets: 9.5, 10 and 10.5.There were no participants over 40 among top five highest scores. However, two of the five participants with the lowest scores were between 30-39. Overall, further studies are necessary to confirm correlation.

Education

As discussed in the demographics section in Chapter 3, all participants had a masters degree and nine participants had a dual masters degree. Of the nine participants with dual masters, seven were in higher support of archival activism with a score of 6.5 or higher. However, two participants with dual masters also had scores of 4 or below. Of the eleven participants with scores below the median, one participant had an EDD, MLS, and MA, two dual masters, one PhD in history, two MAs and four MLS/MLISs (including one MA in Library Science that was added to this group as the degree was Library Science focused). In comparison, of the fourteen participants with scores at or above the median, one had a PhD in history, five dual masters, two MAs and five MLS/MLISs. This comparison suggests that the primary difference between the two groups is the number of participants with dual masters which is higher among archivists with greater support of archival activism. As suggested in the demographics section, the dual degrees may be an indication of a greater overall interest in research and academics which may make participants more receptive of this scholarship. However, further study is necessary to confirm this finding.

In addition to the demographic survey, participants were also asked a question about their educational background and training to identifying variables which they considered most

influential to their practice. Several common themes emerged from this discussion displaying the

aspects of education considered most influential among participants (See Table 10.5: Influencing

Aspects of Archival Training/Education).

Table 10.5: Influencing Aspects of Archival Training/Education

Participant	Score	On the Job Experience/ Field Experience	Case Studies	Role of Archives/ Documents in Society	Influential Professor	Training Courses/ Workshop
I7	10.5	X				
I12	10	X	X			
G3	10		X	X	X	
I8	9.5	X				X
G1	9	X				
I1	8	X				
I6	8	X				
I11	8			X		
I15	8					
I5	7.5					
I4	7	X		X		
I9	6.5				X	X
G7	6.5	X				X
G2	6					
I3	6	X		X		
G6	6					X
I13	5.5	X				
G4	5					X
G5	5	X	X			
I2	4.5	X				
I10	3.5	X				
I16	3		X	X		X
G8	3	X				
G9	3	X			X	
Total		15	4	5	3	6

The aspect of their training/education that was most often cited as influential to their current

work was "On the Job Training" or "Fieldwork Experience," which included internships or work

experience received as part of their academic program, with fifteen total participants addressing

such experience. The large number of participants citing on the job experience or fieldwork as

one of the most influential parts of their education or training ultimately supports the overall

emphasis on practice (as opposed to theory) as more than half the participants identified the

training they received through practical experience as significant. In addition to job experience, six participants considered archival training courses or workshops beneficial. As these are generally intensive workshops on an area of practice, such as description or digital management, this influence would also demonstrate the participants placed greater value on practical training. Similarly, four discussed the value of examining specific case studies in their graduate programs, which also implies emphasis on practice as the case studies are generally used as a method of illustrating practical applications of a specific topic. In addition, three participants mentioned the influence of their professors. One of these participants specifically discussed the professor's "real world archives" approach which examined archives practically through case studies and current news stories "to get us thinking about how important archives are in the world and to people and society as opposed to understanding archives in an ivory tower." This would demonstrate appreciation for what the participant considered a practical approach to archival education, further demonstrating the value most participants placed on practice. On the other hand, five participants indicated their education emphasized the roles of archives or documents in society which suggests a more theoretical examination of archives. Yet, overall this question regarding educational influence demonstrated the participants' perceived education or training emphasizing practice as more beneficial to their work.

While the discussion of educational influence highlights the emerging theme on the perceived divide between theory and practice, comparing the variables with the overall acceptance scores among participants does not indicate any correlating variables between these influences and acceptance. For every influence, the participants not only ranged in acceptance, but the number of participants identifying the factor as influential are evenly split with the same number being at or above the median as below. In the three cases of odd numbers, the additional

person is at or above the median. This even split indicates that these variables have little correlation to acceptance of archival activism.

Geography

As noted in the demographic discussion and recruitment response analysis of Chapter 3, participants from Indiana made up a larger proportion of the total participants than the state's population size within the region, indicating a high research interest from the state's archivists. While this research interest identified during the recruitment analysis could not necessarily be interpreted as a higher level of acceptance, the findings for from the interviews demonstrate that the participants from this state did have a higher acceptance score overall. Of the six participants from Indiana, all but one scored at or above the median; Indiana participants also had three of the five highest scores. The average score for Indiana participants was 8, in comparison to the overall participant average of 6.5. While no clear correlation can be drawn regarding the specific state without further studies, the high research interest and overall acceptance of activism from Indiana archivists does seemingly undermine the perception of a regional bias towards activism as Indiana is a historically Republican stronghold. In comparison, the research interest and acceptance of participants from Indiana was significantly higher than scores from participants from Illinois and Minnesota, two predominantly Democratic states. Of the five Illinois participants, only two scored at or above the median and their average score was seven. Both participants from Minnesota scored below the median and had an average score of 5.5. Ultimately, these findings suggest that the politics of the geographic region may not be a strong influence over archivists' perceptions of archival activism.

Institution

A theme that emerged from the findings was the influence of institutions on participants' perceptions of their own agency, which would indicate a strong relationship between the repository type and acceptance. For the purposes of the study, the definition of archivist was expanded to include any professionals managing or maintaining collections of primary documents or resources including both archival or institutional records as well as personal papers and manuscript materials. This not only broadened the definition of archivists but also the diversity of repositories represented in the study.

The most common types of repositories represented were colleges and universities, with twelve participants working in a higher education setting. Among these participants, five worked at public universities, four at private liberal arts colleges and three at private universities. Two participants worked at church or religious archives and two worked at public libraries that had significant local history collections. Two participants worked with state records, one at a state historical society and one at a state library. Additional repositories represented by participants included: a city art museum; a city historical society; a cultural heritage organization; a historical organization with a medical history focus; a private club and a public high school.

If focusing solely on the current institute of employment and acceptance score, the findings indicate a possible correlation between institution and acceptance. Most significantly the only two participants working at state institutions, a state library and a state historical society, were two of the participants who were least receptive to archival activism and most vocal in their rejection. Both participants also specifically discussed the different perception they might have because of working at a state institution. For example, Participant I13 claimed, "Sometimes I read some of the literature. It's great in theory and practice. But, I guess here in the historical

society, you have to stress neutrality, because whoever is in charge, the party may change." The

participant implies that working for a state institution necessitates maintaining neutrality more

than at other institutions, implying the importance is largely because demonstrating any position

which could be considered partisan would be problematic if or when the state's political power

dynamics change. Similarly, in the discussion of social power, Participant 116 said, "We are

governed by [State's] Public Record law, so personally I can't do this stuff and keep my job."

The participant later said, "And the thing is I've only worked in state institutions… so I don't

know what other archives are doing. But, like I said, we are really well regulated here. So the

stuff they are talking about is very foreign or alien to me. Like I said, it sounds very rogue. It

sounds very personality and person driven, certainly not from any context of working from any

state archives. You couldn't do this stuff. You couldn't be an activist or a militant archivist or

what have you." This indicates the participant not only thinks the concepts are inappropriate

because of his/her experience working with state archives, but that pursuing them could

potentially jeopardize employment. In addition to these participants working for state archives or

a historical society, Participant G8 also indicated working at a state public university influenced

his/her practice:

> If I was working say at the [the archives of the] American Dental Association…
> and someone writes a publication that is very anti-dentistry, for example, then I
> could see [thinking], "I am the archivist for the ADA. I am there for them." I
> could be less neutral….If my agency doesn't look fondly on the anti-dentistry
> things, than I don't need to preserve them. But here, since I work in a public
> university I absolutely have to be neutral.

In the hypothetical example, the participant suggests that archivists working for private

organizations make selections and decisions primarily based on benefiting their institution,

generally to promote a desired image. The participant indicates that decisions are made

differently at public institutions, as they aim to be neutral, although he/she does not clarify the

factors contributing to decision making. Yet, while Participant G8 was one of the participants with a lower acceptance score and suggested his/her perceptions were largely influenced because of the institutional context, participants from public universities as well as private colleges and universities were dispersed throughout the range of acceptance overall, indicating that university/college settings, both private or public, do not have as strong a correlation with acceptance of archival activism.

Three of the four participants from religious affiliated repositories, a Catholic repository, church archives and a religious college archives,[138] were more in acceptance of archival activism than most participants, with the participants from the church archives and religious college archives being within the five highest scores. The fourth participant, Participant G4, an archivist for a Catholic university, had a lower acceptance score of 3.5. All three religions represented by the participants supporting archival activism have strong associations with social justice, which may make the working environment more encouraging overall for many of these concepts. Furthermore, the participant working in the Catholic repository often focused on the social justice work of the clerical order as well as addressed the leadership of Catholic activists such as Dorothy Day, demonstrating a personal identification with the social justice mission of Catholicism. In these three cases, the religions' overall support of social justice may correlate to an institutional environment that is more supportive of archival activism.

In addition, the responses of these three participants suggest that the religious context of the collection also encouraged more reflection on the relationship between their personal identity and the collections they manage. Specifically, the two participants who were not affiliated with

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[138] The specific religion is not being listed for confidentiality as the number of repositories affiliated with the two religions in that region is very limited. Similarly, the specific type of Catholic archives may also limit the potential repositories in the region; however, the archives primarily, but not exclusively, collects the records of clerical order members.

the religion of the collection they managed addressed the significance of examining the extent to which their own religious identity impacted their practice. On the other hand, the participant from the Catholic repository was a member of the clerical order represented by the collection. The participant discussed the challenge of working with collections from before the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) as the context was so different from his/her own perspective, indicating the participant generally personally connects to the materials being processed and feels the need to relate to the perspective of the record creator for these older collections. This was a much different approach to processing more historic collections than other participants who specifically discussed distancing themselves from the materials and thinking about them specifically as historical evidence. This difference demonstrates more personal reflection and engagement, likely the result of being the archivist for a collection that represents his/her own order, and consequently the participant's own history. This highlights the point that religious archives represent a specific community, which likely contributes to the heightened awareness of identity. Ultimately, the self-awareness demonstrated by all three participants resulting from religious context of the collection correlated to a higher acceptance of archival activism especially in the discussion of social power.

Overall, the findings do indicate some correlation between type of institution and acceptance of archival activism. Yet, like all the variables, future studies are necessary to confirm the extent. However, the study demonstrates a major challenge in determining the correlation between institutional type and acceptance of activism as many archivists work in a variety of repositories throughout their career. While their current repository would likely have the strongest influence as they are impacted by the institutional policies and mission, their previous experience often had an impact on their perceptions as well. For example, Participant

I6, who worked at a public university archives at the time of the interview, generally used examples from previous experience at a state repository. Similarly, Participant I2 currently worked at historical organization but discussed the influence of previous experience working at an African American archives. Yet, the overall responses indicated that the institutions did influence perceived agency regardless of type. Participant I11, an archivist for a public library with a local history collection who had a higher archival activism acceptance score of 8.5, articulated this point in his/her discussion of the overall agency of archivists to incorporate archival activism: "I think the capacity is there. [But] I think to really have the time to do it. I mean, we are stuck. We are servants to a master, whoever we are working for. As much as we want to hold onto archival principles and ethical principles we have to do what we are told." Given the findings that participants overwhelming felt their agency was influenced by their institution to some extent, future studies attempting to determine a correlation between institution type and acceptance should reasonably assume there is an influence and focus on determining environmental variables of institutions that may be more encouraging or restrictive for archival activism.

Personal Biography

The first question of the interview addressed participants' reasons for entering the archives profession. The participants were simply asked: "Why did you become an archivist?" The question was intentionally open ended to encourage participants to discuss any factors they felt may have influenced their entry into the field. The participants' responses almost always began with how they entered the field and then addressed why they entered the field. In some

cases, a follow-up was necessary to ask par ticipants to explain their motivation for entering the field, as some responses only initially explained "how they became an archivist."

The career paths of the participants as revealed by the responses reflect the complexity of defining a professional identify as discussed in the literature (See Table 10.6: Reasons for Entering the Field). Archivists continue to enter the field through a variety of avenues and fields, some actively pursuing archives as a career and others falling into the role accidentally or through other jobs. Of the twenty-four total participants, eight described career paths in which they fell into archival work through other jobs, primarily Librarian positions. This includes cases in their current positions' job responsibilities were expanded to include managing their repositories archival collections. Others worked in other positions and were asked, encouraged and/or selected to become the archivist for their institution based on their qualifications. Such 'accidental' career paths did not significantly correlate to acceptance to activism. However, among these participants, archivists who came from Museum or teaching fields were more likely to support archival activism than archivists who fell into archives through librarian work.

Table 10.6: Reasons for Entering the Field

Participant	Score	Fell into Archival Role	Interest in History	Alternative to Teaching	Significance of Documents
I7	10.5		X	X	X
I12	10				X
G3	10				
I8	9.5	X (Museums)	X		
G1	9		X		X
I1	8		X	X	
I6	8		X		X
I11	8		X		
I15	8	X (High School Teacher)	X		X
I5	7.5	X (Museums)	X		X
I4	7	X (Libraries)	X		
I9	6.5	X (Libraries)	X		
G7	6.5		X		X
G2	6		X		
I3	6		X		
G6	6	X (Libraries)			
I13	5.5	X (Libraries)	X		
G4	5		X		
G5	5		X	X	X
I2	4.5		X		
I10	3.5	X (Libraries)			
I16	3		X		X
G8	3		X	X	
G9	3				
Total		8	19	4	9

The most common influence expressed was a strong interest in history, with nineteen of the participants mentioning their background or appreciation of history when explaining their reasons for entering the field. While the predominance of this reason makes it difficult to identify a correlation between interest in history as a reason for entering the field and acceptance of archival, many participants referred to their history background throughout the interview, often indicating it as an influence of their current practice. For example, Participant I7 strongly identified his/her motivation to enter the field with this history background, asserting, "I was on fire for history. And I still am." Other participants referred to the influence of their history background to their daily practice more specifically, such as Participant I5 referring to this

experience as increasing his/her understanding of the impact of archivists' decisions. Ultimately, these findings demonstrate that while a background in history does not necessarily correlate to acceptance of archival activism, individual archivists may be motivated to accept archival activism by their enthusiasm for history.

Within this group of participants who articulated an interest in history, a related theme emerged, which was being drawn to the field as an alternative to teaching or academia, with four participants indicating they turned to the profession because they loved history but "didn't want to teach." Thus, the profession was seen as a career that could put to use their history interest outside of teaching, which many perceived as the primary career path for history majors. The desire for an alternative to teaching would further highlight the theme of the perceived divide between theory and practice as the participants viewed being an archivists as a way of "getting their hands dirty" while pursuing their history interest. However, even though this would indicate a specific rejection of a career more predominantly focused on theory in teaching, this factor did not seem to correlate to acceptance of archival activism as several of the most supportive participants voiced this reason such as Participant I7.

Another common theme was the significance of the documents or the archives themselves as a reason for both entering the field and/or a continuing professional motivation. For example, Participant I7 identified this as a reason for his/her work: "The idea that I am preserving history and making it accessible to people - that's incredibly important to me." Participant I16 also voiced this as his/her primary motivation for entering the field: "I got into this cause the records are bigger than I am. So it's always going to be about the records more than anything else. They are always going to be so much more important than I am. I am getting paid by the state to be the steward of these records. At the end of the day the most important

things in life is what lasts. There is some enduring value to all of this. My hope is that this stuff will be here long after I am gone." With this response, Participant I16's voices his/her strong commitment to the archival profession and considers the work socially significant. This comment ultimately demonstrates that rejection of archival activism is not necessarily indicative of professional complacency; however, it may be more evident of the perceived role of the archivists. Participant I16 displayed clear commitment yet focuses on the role of being the records' steward to preserve them for the future. In contrast, Participant I7 included making history "accessible to people" as part of the significance of the work, which places more emphasis on current use and engagement. Ultimately, these two participants, who represent the highest and lowest levels of acceptance of archival activism, both shared the same personal motivation for their work, voicing a strong commitment to preserving the records and history, but their perceptions of archival activism demonstrate different understandings of the role of archivists.

Biographical questions were included in the study to determine if personal biographies motivated acceptance of archival activism. As discussed in the literature review, the association between archivists' motivation for entering the field and practice has not been fully explored. However, overall, most participants did not talk about their cultural backgrounds or personal history in their discussion of reasons for entering the field. Outside of the biographical question, personal histories were brought up by some participants. As mentioned previously, three participants' religions were discussed in relationship to their collections. However, this discussion appeared very collection specific, as their religion would not be as influential to their practice if they worked for different repositories. In the case of the participant at the Catholic

repository, he/she would likely not be an archivist if the position had not been assigned by the clerical order.

The one area of personal biography that was voiced as being influential to perceptions of archival activism was class, with two participants specifically discussing their working-class upbringing as motivations for their practice. As discussed in the section on social power, Participant I11 specifically connected his/her working class up-bringing to his/her approach to programming which focused on integrating the stories of more everyday people within the community. In addition, Participant I7 also discussed the strong influence of being raised a "union baby" which gave him/her a deeper understanding of issues of class and social power. The participant also discussed how this background highlighted the extent to which his/her position on social issues differed from many other archivists as the participant was heavily involved in advocacy surrounding the 2011 SAA conference in Chicago which was hosted by a hotel involved in labor disputes. The participant voiced surprise that so few members of the profession demonstrated concern for this issue, which was identified as a turning point in which he/she realized that the majority within the field did not share the participant's social justice commitment.

In addition, Participant I16 also referenced his/her identification as a Czech American to emphasize a point regarding open government. After discussing the SAA presidents' letter regarding the executive orders on presidential records, which he/she didn't support, the participant maintained, "But in general, I am in support of open records and transparency, because that is the only thing that is going to help democracy, or to keep this country free and democratic. And of course, if you don't believe that, then you think about where our ancestors came from, the Czech Republic, which was a Soviet satellite states. And if you want to talk to the

people there about freedom and records, they didn't exist." [139] Thus, the participant used his/her

personal identification as Czech American to highlight support of open government, suggesting

the Czech Republic's communist history during the Cold War increases his/her understanding of

the significance of open government. Referring to his/her personal background may also have

been an attempt to further engage me in the participant's point as our shared family history had

been identified earlier in the interview. Overall, with the exception of these few examples, the

participants did not mention their personal background in the interviews, indicating personal

biography may not have a significant influence over practice for many archivists.

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[139] The participant had responded to the recruitment email by phone. During the initial phone conversation, the participant correctly identified me as Czech from my last name and asked me questions about my genealogy, which I was largely unable to answer due to the limited information I have on my family history.

Chapter 11: Conclusion

The study methods were effective in encouraging participants to evaluate the concepts of archival activism to reveal their perceptions of such scholarship. As was discussed in the previous chapters, these findings demonstrated that the concepts were accepted to varying degrees, with participants voicing overwhelming support of the concepts diversity/inclusivity, community engagement, accountability and open government but more mixed beliefs on the appropriateness of social power and neutrality/archival transparency. Furthermore, the study found that even with provided summaries, participants' understanding of the concepts often differed significantly from their context within the scholarship, complicating the measurement of acceptance among participants as voiced agreement may not accurately reflect their support of the scholarship. The findings ultimately demonstrate the diversity of interpretations of the concepts and further illustrate the perceived disconnect between theory and practice, which not only influences the extent to which participants accept but also understand the concepts. In addition to the findings regarding the acceptance of the specific concepts, several themes emerged throughout the study which augment the understanding of the reception of the scholarship on archival activism overall.

<div align="center">

Objectivity and Neutrality

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Perhaps the most significant theme to emerge from the study was the significance participants placed on neutrality in their practice and the impact this had on the overall acceptance of archival activism. In cases in which a participant either rejected a concept or agreed to a more limited extent, the primary concern was a perceived challenge to neutrality. Similarly, the emphasis on neutrality also largely influenced the reception of the word activism

itself. The findings demonstrated a significant number of participants were uncomfortable with that word or rejected it completely even if they voiced support of the concepts such as diversity/inclusivity, accountability and open government. In some cases this was due to negative connotations with activism that went beyond the context of the archives field; but, in most cases their discomfort with the term was because it was seen as a threat to neutrality, making it inappropriate for archivists.

For the scholarship on activism to gain greater acceptance, these findings suggest a need for greater effort throughout the field to better distinguish neutrality and objectivity, supporting Randall Jimerson's call for the archival field to stop equating the two concepts as archivists can maintain the professional standards of objectivity while still defending or advocating for moral or political perspectives or values.[140] The study findings clearly demonstrate that most participants do not make this distinction as they continually discussed the need to be neutral with little discussion of objectivity. The equating of objectivity and neutrality is perhaps most clearly evident in the example of Participant I7, who identified as an activist and voiced very strong personal support of the concepts as well as displayed multiple examples of incorporating activism into practice. Yet, the participant also discussed the importance of aiming to be neutral: "Everything that I do, I always want to - and try to daily - question my bias. Anything I might have been socially conditioned with. So, I think that is important. How that works for me as an archivist, I try to be as neutral as I can with what I do." While the participant voices the aim of neutrality, the extent to which the participant clearly advocates for social justice throughout the interview seemingly demonstrates the participant is equating 'objectivity' and 'neutrality.'[141] In

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[140] Jimerson, "Archives for All: Professional Responsibility and Social Justice"

[141] In the case of this participant, the vocalized aim of neutrality did not impact acceptance of any of the concepts of archival activism, with the exception of neutrality/archival transparency as the participant indicated the biographical note may not be appropriate as description should remain neutral. Yet, even this quote demonstrates some support of

another example, Participant I16, who vocalized the most strong objections with the word activism and the concept of social power, placed significant emphasis on neutrality for almost all of his/her answers. Yet, this participant did demonstrate support of several concepts and even participated in efforts that would be considered archival activism, most notably holding workshops for non-professionals in the local community to provide assistance in documenting their own history which supports diversity/inclusivity. This effort actually demonstrated more active involvement than many other participants who did not vocalize such strong objections to activism. This example suggests that the strong objection to the concepts may largely be attributed to the language surrounding activism and traditional theory as opposed to the concepts themselves.

Furthermore, in many cases, participants implied that lack of neutrality ultimately indicates personal bias and often rejected archival activism because of this implication. Like the discussion of neutrality, participants continually talked about the influence of archivists' bias, as opposed to their perspective. This suggests it may be more effective to use the word perspective instead of bias when discussing neutrality and activism as bias often connotes prioritizing one perspective at the expense of another, which was also emphasized by participants continually discussing bias in terms of "sides." Ultimately, the findings of the study demonstrate that many practicing archivists are receptive to the ideas of archival activism, but are often rejecting the language in which it is presented. Consequently, distinguishing objectivity and neutrality as well as perspective and bias within the field can help counter this hurdle of language to encourage practicing archivists to more fully embrace the concepts of activism.

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the scholarship on neutrality/archival transparency which promotes the significance of self-awareness of perspective to determine potential influence on the record.

Limited Agency

Another significant finding was the extent to which participants felt their agency was limited. The limitations to agency were most specifically addressed in the discussion of social power as it encompassed their overall agency for social influence; however, participants voiced feelings of limited agency for every concept of archival activism. This perception of agency could indicate that these participants may not consider the concepts a high priority, as strong commitment to the concepts may push them to seek additional means to gain agency. For example, Participant I7, who defined his/herself as an activist and discussed being motivated by social justice issues, also talked about limited resources, but demonstrated significant agency in several areas of active practice. However, the findings may also demonstrate that the scholarship's assumptions of archival agency are unrealistic and do not fully account for the limited resources facing most archivists or the influence of institutional policy. These practical concerns regarding resources and job security are likely heightened because of the state of the national economy since the 2008 economic crisis, which significantly impacted the budgets and staffs of many repositories. Several participants specifically mentioned recent staffing reductions and budget cuts within their repositories which have added to their own job responsibilities. Furthermore, the emphasis on institutional influence suggests a significant concern over job security as insufficiently following institutional missions or policies may lead to employer dissatisfaction resulting in potential job loss. As the economic circumstances have also impacted the job market for archivists, concern for job security is also likely heightened. Overall, the disconnect between participants' and scholars' perception of archivists' agency is likely a combination of both factors, with agency being more limited than the scholarship indicates while

archivists deeply committed to activism are likely motivated to make the most of whatever means available to promote social justice.

Theory vs. Practice

One of the aims of the study was to determine a potential disconnect between the scholarship on archival activism and practice, and the study did find a significant divide between theory and practice. Not only did participants indicate more mixed support of the more theoretical concepts of social power and neutrality/archival transparency (both largely influenced by post-modernism and post-colonial theory), but they demonstrated much more practical understandings of the other concepts than presented in the literature. This discrepancy was most clearly seen around the concept of community engagement in which the participants' perception of significant insider information diverged from the scholarship as discussed in Chapter 7.

In addition to the concept of community engagement, the participants' focus on practicality over theory was also significant in the discussion of the biographical note, which is a largely theoretical concept based on the understanding that the archivists' personal perception shapes the record through the archiving process, with the archivist's influence ultimately becoming part of the record. Yet, most participants evaluated the biographical note very pragmatically, focusing on the execution of the biographical note and the perceived user interest. From their observation in the field, many questioned the extent to which users critically considered the finding aid enough to significantly value a biographical note, with some participants indicating that many researchers bypass the finding aid completely to speak directly with the reference staff. The discussion of the biographical note also highlighted the role of reference, with many participants indicating that sharing personal backgrounds to express

archival transparency was more practical, appropriate and effective during reference service than in the finding aid. As a biographical note would remain fixed within the finding aid, the archivist would need to anticipate what biographical information would be relevant to contextualize his/her relationship to the collection for all potential research interest. In comparison, the personal interaction with the researcher during reference allows the archivists to better determine what information would be relevant to the specific research project, answer any researcher questions about their relationship or interaction with the collection and also contextualize any biographical information they may provide. Beyond this discussion of archival transparency, the study found participants considered reference service to be a more significant aspect of practice than the scholarship would indicate as the intersection between reference and activism was not fully explored. This finding demonstrates that scholars' and practicing archivists' weigh the significance of archivists' various job responsibilities differently.

In addition to their responses to the concepts of archival activism, several participants specifically discussed a perceived divide between theory and practice, implying that scholarship was not necessarily applicable to practice and/or that scholars did not always have a realistic understanding of practice. Regarding the applicability of theory, Participant G8 asserted, "The one thing I really didn't like about library school was all the theory - whether it was archival theory or library theory. I'm just not interested in theory that is not directly applicable to what I am doing on a daily basis." In discussing the overall appropriateness of archival activism, Participant I6 said, "Some of its academic archival educators talking to other archival educators and not so much people in the trenches. So, yes, some of it is rather high minded, and rather divorced from everyday practice." Similarly, Participant I16 maintained, "I think that the academic historians have written this, and they haven't gotten their hands dirty on a day to day

level with this stuff. So I think it makes interesting copy, but I don't think it is practical on a day to day sense at all." Participant I2 also observed the divide, but felt both practitioners and scholars were mutually responsible for the disconnect: "I think the hurdle [of theory] is because of the lack of interaction between the two….They are sitting in their ivory tower and that might be true. But it might be just as true that the people out here in the real world, we are not interacting together….I think we are both a little to blame. But I really see this gap and I think it's reflective in the language [of the concepts]." With this comment, the participant voices belief that practicing archivists should be responsible in being open to scholarship, ultimately suggesting the need for more dialogue between practicing archivists and scholars. Overall, these comments, even the last comment distributing responsibility, demonstrate many practicing archivists do consider scholars removed from practice and theory generally impractical, suggesting the archivists consider theory independently from practice as opposed to a tool to augment practice.

This perception of the divide between theory and practice was perhaps heightened by the framework of the study and interview instrument design, which specifically focused on the scholarship on archival activism and often incorporated the language of this literature. This framework may have inadvertently reinforced the perceived dichotomy of "Theory vs. Practice" that often persists throughout the field in which some view theory as wholly isolated from practice. By specifically encouraging participants to draw upon their professional experience to evaluate and critique this scholarship, the responses of many participants may have been influenced by their overall attitude towards scholarship or theory within the field, especially for those who entered the study with negative connotations to archival theory.

Future Research

The findings from this study demonstrate several areas for further examination. First, there is a need to conduct a study specifically on recruitment methods for studies related to archival activism. Given the rejection of the word activism, it is very likely that many potential participants rejected the recruitment documents because of the language. Considering the recruitment challenges, a study focused specifically on recruitment methods which compared response rates between recruitment documents using the word activism and alternative phrasing would be valuable in refining a more effective recruitment tool. Such a study would necessitate careful planning to meet Institutional Review Board requirements to ensure proper transparency. However, large scale studies on archival activism will require more participants, increasing the need for as high a participant response rate as possible to ensure enough participants.

As discussed in Chapter 10, the interview instrument encouraged significant data indicating participants' perceptions on the scholarship on archival activism; however, the openness of the questions made it difficult to consistently measure acceptance among participants. Yet, these findings were successful in determining signs of acceptance and rejection of the concepts, which can be used to refine the interview instrument for further studies. These interviews would consist of more directed questions to ensure every participant was exposed to common identifiers to enable more consistent measurement. Furthermore, future studies may benefit from focusing on one concept at a time for a more in-depth examination as this would allow more time to thoroughly discuss the concept and ensure all meanings and contexts were clearly understood.[142] The most pertinent concept for in-depth study would be neutrality/archival transparency given the centrality of the concept of neutrality to participants' perception of

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[142] For the purpose of the exploratory study, the misunderstandings were actually very revealing as they demonstrated the continued emphasis on neutrality and practical interpretation of the concepts.

archival activism overall. Findings from a study focused specifically on participants' perceptions on neutrality/archival transparency would be significant to educators aiming to shift traditional archival paradigms from the emphasis on neutrality towards objectivity.

As previously discussed, the framework of this study and instrument may have heightened the divide between theory and practice for some participants. As the interview instrument was based around the scholarship, often using quotes from the literature on archival activism in an attempt to examine the concepts directly, this framework may have seemed to isolate the concepts from practice which may have influenced participants' perceptions of the concepts. Some participants may have responded in part to the language of the instrument in addition to the concepts themselves. Future studies may benefit from using frameworks that situate the concepts within practical scenarios for participants to evaluate. For example, the participants can be given an example of a practice that would be considered a archival activism, as defined by the scholarship, and asked to what extent they think it appropriate and why. Participants could also be given scenarios that had social justice implications and asked what they would do in that situation, which would allow them to express their approach to practice in their own words. These alternative frameworks would allow the examination of the concepts independent of the language of the scholarship. The acceptance key produced by this study can be used to both develop such an interview instrument and evaluate the collected data.

Another potential study would specifically focus on self-identified 'activists' to examine the extent to which those who did feel dedicated to these issues believed they had agency and the concepts were feasible. This study would help minimize the unknown factor of participants' potential complacency. Such a study would necessitate focused recruitment including snowballing and directed emails through targeted listserves such as the Human Rights Archives

or the Issues and Advocacy roundtables. Also, because of the lack of racial diversity, future studies may also benefit from targeted recruitment of participants of color by reaching out directly to the Archivists of Color Roundtable for assistance.

As the current study was regional, there is also need to expand the study geographically to determine if the results were influenced by the subject region. However, in addition to conducting a national study, a comparative international study in countries with different archival traditions or record histories would also be informative. Examples may include countries whose archival professions are not as closely tied with the history profession or countries previously under totalitarian governments that controlled records. Such a comparison study would indicate the extent to which perceptions are shaped by archival traditions as well as national political histories.

Core Value of Archivists

In 2011, the Society of American Archivists approved the Core Value of Archivists. The purpose of these values are "to remind archivists why they engage in their professional responsibilities and to inform others of the basis for archivists' contributions to society" and "to provide guidance by identifying the core values that guide archivists in making such decisions and choices." (See Appendix IX: SAA Core Value of Archivists). While this current study did not aim to examine these core values specifically, many of the concepts of archival activism that were explored did address many of these values including accountability, diversity, service and social responsibility.[143] Several of the questions of the interview instrument actually used language from the 2010 draft of the Core Values statement, including the question related to the imbalance of social power as well as the concept of diversity/inclusivity. Because of this overlap,

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[143] One of the individuals who served as a leader of the task force responsible for developing these core values was Randall Jimerson, whose works were primary texts in the development of the research design for this current study.

the findings of this study provide insight into how these recently approved Core Values are perceived and accepted. In addition, the methodology and acceptance key can be used to design a study to specifically evaluate the reception of these Core Values among practicing archivists throughout the field.

Awareness

Another emerging theme in the findings to highlight as a final conclusion was the significance of awareness of archival activism, which is perhaps one of the most promising findings for advocates of archival activism as it demonstrates the importance of furthering discourse on these topics. As discussed, many participants voiced support of the concepts and interest in incorporating them into practice but felt doing so was infeasible because of limited resources. These limitations ultimately increases the need to explore innovative ways to integrate these issues into practice and necessitates archivists seek any available opportunities to carry out such work. The significance of this awareness was understood by many participants in the study who indicated it was important for practicing archivists to keep informed of such concepts so they could identify opportunities to integrate them and be better equipped to do so effectively. Ultimately, this finding highlights the importance for advocates of archival activism to continue this dialogue and bring increased awareness to more archivists throughout the field.

APPENDIX I: Pilot Study Interview Questions

1. Why did you become an archivist?

2. What do you think is the primary role of Archives in Society? For individual and communities?

3. What do you think is the primary role of an archivist? What is the most significant functions the profession serves society? Has your understanding of the field changed throughout the course of your career?

4. What aspect of archival work do you think is the most important and why?

5. What do you feel is your biggest motivation in your work? What factors do you motivates your work and decisions in the field?

6. To what extent do you think that you're archival education shapes your work?

7. To what extent do you think your own perspective or background has influenced your practice?

8. How do you decide what collections are prioritized for collecting and processing? Do you have an example of a collection that you thought was really important to collect or prioritize for processing?

9. Can you describe a project that you've worked on as an archivists that you've felt were especially significant for you personally?

APPENDIX II: Final Interview Schedule

Introduction: In this study, I am exploring recent discourse in archival scholarship addressing archival activism, which involves archivists being proactive in their practice to promote accountability, transparency, diversity and social justice. However, such archival activism has largely been promoted by archival scholars not practicing archivists. My goal is to talk to practicing archivists about their perspectives on this scholarship addressing archival activism to examine the extent to which those in the field think it appropriate or applicable to practice.

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS: Before we talk about the literature on archival activism, I would like to start with a brief discussion on your background and your experience in the field:

1. Why did you become an archivist?
2. How has your archival education or training influenced your archival practice? What concepts or topics addressed in your education have you found to be the most important in your everyday practice?

CODE OF ETHICS: I'd like to briefly discuss the current SAA 'Code of Ethics," Here is a copy of the existing SAA code of ethics for you to look over.

3. To what extent do you think the ethics discussed here apply to everyday practice? Are there any points that are particularly important to your practice? Are there any points that you think are not applicable or inappropriate to your practice?

THEMES OF ARCHIVAL ACTIVISM: Let's move on to the discussion of the literature on archival activism, starting with some larger concepts before moving onto more specific elements.

SOCIAL POWER/SOCIAL CONCIOUSNESS: The discussions of archival activism argue that archivists wield a significant amount of social power in their work with records: appraising, collecting, preserving, describing and making them accessible. For example, archival scholars Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz claim archivists have the "power to make records of certain events and ideas and not others, power to name, label, and order records to meet business, government, or personal needs, power to preserve the record, power to mediate the record, power over access, and power over individual rights and freedoms, over collective memory and national identity."

4. To what extent do you believe archivists can or do exert such social power through archival practice? Do you think this idea of the social power of archivists applies to your own work?

A key argument for archival activism is that archival practice has traditionally created an imbalance of such social power. The most recent draft of the 'Values Statement" prepared in

2010 by the Task Force on Developing a Statement of Core Values for Archivists, specifically points out this imbalance: "Since ancient times, archives have afforded a fundamental power to those who control them."

5. Do you agree that traditional archival practice has created an imbalance of social power? Why or why not? To what extent do you believe archivists have agency in supporting or even exercising social power?

NEUTRALITY: Another issue central to the discussion of archival activism is the professional role of neutrality in archival practice, which can be summarized by Mark Greene in his the 2008 SAA Presidential address. Greene claimed "Our values include a recognition, acceptance, and deliberate application of our own agency in the work we do with records and users. This simply means that we are not neutral or objective protectors and transmitters of primary sources, but shapers and interpreters of the sources as well."

6. Do you agree with this assessment of archival neutrality? Why or why not? What do you think is the role of neutrality in archival practice? How do you deal with your personal perspectives in your practice?
7. The discussion of activism has suggested the need for archivists to be transparent about their perspectives and the influence they might have on shaping the record. One option proposed was to include a biographical note about the archivists in the finding aid. Do you think that this would be appropriate? Do you see any benefit of doing this? Limitations?

DIVERSITY/INCLUSIVITY: The discussion of archival activism identifies ways in which archivists can be more proactive in practice. One way is to actively give voice to largely marginalized or undocumented communities. This focus on diversity and inclusivity was included in the recent 2010 draft of the 'Values Statement", which includes diversity as a core value. It states that "Archivists embrace the importance of deliberately acting to identify (even create) materials documenting those whose voices have been overlooked or marginalized."

8. Do you agree that this should be a priority for archivists? Why or why not? To what extent do you think it is appropriate or feasible for archivists to actively seek out collections or assist in the creation of documentation of under-represented communities?
One example might be: Assisting communities in documenting their own culture. Do you think this is an appropriate role? Realistic?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Along with the emphasis on more diverse representation in the archival record, the discussion of archival activism has also addressed the significance of incorporating insider voices into description. This can include participatory archival projects, which would encourage users with insider knowledge of the subject/community/collection to contribute to the description.

9. Do you agree that this should be a priority? Why or why not? Do you think that this type of project would be beneficial to archival work? Do you think it is realistic? Have you had experience doing this?

ACCOUNTABILITY AND OPEN GOVERNMENT: Another issue central to archival activism is the significance of archivists in holding governments, political or cultural leaders, or other institutions or people in power accountable for their actions. This includes maintaining, preserving and making accessible records that document criminal, unethical or other un-just actions.

10. Do you agree that this is the responsibility of archivists? To what extent, if any, do you feel archivists should consider accountability when making professional decisions?

Along with accountability, most scholarship on archival activism also promotes open government, suggesting archivists should support transparency of government action by ensuring access to government records.

11. To what extent, if any, do you agree that supporting open government should be a responsibility or priority of archivists?

Concluding questions: Overall, do you think that the ideas and aspirations addressed in the discussion of archival activism are appropriate for everyday practice? Why or why not?

Are there certain areas of practice for which activism might be more appropriate? Where it might be less appropriate?

To what extent do you think archivists have the capacity or agency to use their practice as a form of activism?

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time. I also encourage you to contact me if you think of anything you may like to add that we did not address in our discussion today.

APPENDIX III: SAA Code of Ethics

Provided to participants prior to participation and discussed during the interview.

Approved by the SAA Council, February 5, 2005.

Preamble

The Code of Ethics for Archivists establishes standards for the archival profession. It introduces new members of the profession to those standards, reminds experienced archivists of their professional responsibilities, and serves as a model for institutional policies. It also is intended to inspire public confidence in the profession.

This code provides an ethical framework to guide members of the profession. It does not provide the solution to specific problems.

The term "archivist" as used in this code encompasses all those concerned with the selection, control, care, preservation, and administration of historical and documentary records of enduring value.

I. Purpose
The Society of American Archivists recognizes the importance of educating the profession and general public about archival ethics by codifying ethical principles to guide the work of archivists. This code provides a set of principles to which archivists aspire.

II. Professional Relationships
Archivists select, preserve, and make available historical and documentary records of enduring value. Archivists cooperate, collaborate, and respect each institution and its mission and collecting policy. Respect and cooperation form the basis of all professional relationships with colleagues and users.

III. Judgment
Archivists should exercise professional judgment in acquiring, appraising, and processing historical materials. They should not allow personal beliefs or perspectives to affect their decisions.

IV. Trust
Archivists should not profit or otherwise benefit from their privileged access to and control of historical records and documentary materials.

V. Authenticity and Integrity
Archivists strive to preserve and protect the authenticity of records in their holdings by documenting their creation and use in hard copy and electronic formats. They have a fundamental obligation to preserve the intellectual and physical integrity of those records. Archivists may not alter, manipulate, or destroy data or records to conceal facts or distort evidence.

VI. Access
Archivists strive to promote open and equitable access to their services and the records in their care without discrimination or preferential treatment, and in accordance with legal requirements, cultural sensitivities, and institutional policies. Archivists recognize their responsibility to promote the use of records as a fundamental purpose of the keeping of archives. Archivists may place restrictions on access for the protection of privacy or confidentiality of information in the records.

VII. Privacy
Archivists protect the privacy rights of donors and individuals or groups who are the subject of records. They respect all users' right to privacy by maintaining the confidentiality of their research and protecting any personal information collected about them in accordance with the institution's security procedures.

VIII. Security/Protection
Archivists protect all documentary materials for which they are responsible and guard them against defacement, physical damage, deterioration, and theft. Archivists should cooperate with colleagues and law enforcement agencies to apprehend and prosecute thieves and vandals.

IX. Law
Archivists must uphold all federal, state, and local laws.

APPENDIX IV: Demographic Survey

Please indicate ALL of the degrees you hold. If you hold a second BA/BS, MA/MS, etc., please enter it in the box next to "Other." (Select all that apply). Please list the year you earned the degree.

1.	High school	7	PhD
2	Associate	8	JD
3	BA/BS/BFA	9	Other (Please specify)
4	MA/MS/MFA	10	Other (Please specify)
5	MLS/MLIS	11	None of the above
6	MBA	12	Rather not say

Please indicate your major/concentration for each degree listed below.

Q8b. Associate
Q8c. BA/BS/BFA
Q8d. MA/MS/MFA
Q8e. MLS/MLIS
Q8f. PhD

Q1. What is your age?

1. Under 25		7	50-54
2	25-29	8	55-59
3	30-34	9	60-64
4	35-39	10	65 and over
5	40-44	11	Rather not say
6	45-49		

Q2. What is your gender?

1   Male
2   Female

Please select the racial group(s) that best describe(s) your race/ethnicity. (Select all that apply)

1	African-American	5. Latino/Hispanic
2	Alaska Native	6. Native American
3	Asian	7. Pacific Islander
4	White/Caucasian	8. Other (Please Specify
		9. Rather Not Say

APPENDIX V: Random Recruitment Email

My name is Joy Novak, and I am a doctoral student in the Information Studies Department at the University of California, Los Angeles. I am conducting a research study to examine recent scholarship on archival activism in the context of archival practice. I will explore this topic by leading interviews with practicing archivists to discuss their perspectives on archival activism as defined by this scholarship.

Participants will be given brief summaries or quotations from recent literature on archival activism, and asked to evaluate the topic by drawing upon their own experience in the archival field.

I am contacting you to request your participation in a phone interview. The interview should take approximately one hour during which time we will briefly discuss your professional and educational background before discussing the topic of archival activism. You will also be asked to complete a brief demographic survey prior to the interview.

For the context of this study, practicing archivists includes any professionals managing or maintaining collections of primary documents including both archival or institutional records as well as personal papers or manuscripts such as journals, correspondence, scrapbooks, and ephemera. Similarly, this study also broadly defines repositories to include, but not be limited to: local, state or federal archives; university archives; community-based archives or historical societies; special collections or manuscript libraries. Please feel free to ask if you have any questions regarding your eligibility.

For your participation, you will be entered in a raffle for a $50 gift certificate to Amazon.com.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating. Contact me by phone or email if you have any questions or concerns.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Joy Novak

APPENDIX VI: Focus Group Recruitment Listserve Posting

My name is Joy Novak, and I am a doctoral student in the Information Studies Department at the University of California, Los Angeles, and I am currently recruiting archivists practicing in the Midwest to participate in upcoming focus groups which that will be ___. I am conducting a research study to examine recent scholarship on archival activism in the context of archival practice, using interviews and focus groups with practicing archivists to discuss their perspectives on archival activism as defined by this scholarship.

The focus group should take approximately 90 minutes. Participants will be given brief summaries or quotations from recent literature on archival activism and asked to evaluate the topic by drawing upon their own experience in the archival field.

 In addition to the focus group, research participation also includes a brief, preliminary phone interview and a short demographic survey. This interview should last no more than 10 minutes and will consist of only two questions regarding your professional and educational background.

To be eligible, participants must be archivists currently practicing in the Midwest region of the US, which includes the states: IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD, OH, and WI. For the context of this study, practicing archivists includes any professionals managing or maintaining collections of primary documents including both archival and institutional records as well as personal papers and manuscript materials. Please feel free to ask if you have any questions regarding your eligibility.

The focus groups will be held at ____

All participants will be entered in a raffle for a $50 gift certificate to Amazon.com. Refreshments will be provided.

Please let me know if you are attending the conference and are interested in participating. Contact me by phone or email if you have any questions or concerns.

 I look forward to hearing from you.

 Sincerely,

Joy Novak

APPENDIX VII: Recruitment Emails for Participants Interested But Unable to Attend Focus Group

Participants unable to attend meeting:

Thank you very much for your interest in my research study which will explore practicing archivists' perspectives on current scholarship addressing archival activism. I am sorry that you will be unable to attend the focus group that I will be conducting in [city]. Since you are unable to attend the focus group, would you instead be interested in participating in a phone interview which will address the same questions that are discussed in the focus groups?

The interview should take approximately one hour during which time we will briefly discuss your professional and educational background before addressing the topic of archival activism. You will also be asked to complete a brief demographic survey prior to the interview.

For your participation in the interview, you will be entered in a raffle for a $50 gift certificate to Amazon.com.

Thank you once again for your interest in the study. Please let me know if you would be interested in participating in the phone interview. I encourage you to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about the interview.

Focus Group in Area Unavailable:

Thank you so much for your interest in participating in a focus group for my research study which will explore practicing archivists' perspectives on current scholarship addressing archival activism. Unfortunately, I have been unable to recruit enough participants to hold a focus group in [city]. Since I am not able to conduct a focus group in your area, would you instead be interested in participating in a phone interview which will address the same questions that are discussed in the focus groups?

The interview should take approximately one hour during which time we will briefly discuss your professional and educational background before addressing the topic of archival activism. You will also be asked to complete a brief demographic survey prior to the interview. For your participation in the interview, you will be entered in a raffle for a $50 gift certificate to Amazon.com.

Thank you once again for your interest in the study. Please let me know if you would be interested in participating in the phone interview. I encourage you to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about the interview.

APPENDIX VIII: Summary of Concepts to Sent to Participants

SOCIAL POWER/SOCIAL CONCIOUSNESS: The discussions of archival activism argue that archivists wield a significant amount of social power in their work with records: appraising, collecting, preserving, describing and making them accessible. For example, archival scholars Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz claim archivists have the "power to make records of certain events and ideas and not others, power to name, label, and order records to meet business, government, or personal needs, power to preserve the record, power to mediate the record, power over access, and power over individual rights and freedoms, over collective memory and national identity."

> To what extent do you believe archivists can or do exert such social power through archival practice? Do you think this idea of the social power of archivists applies to your own work?

A key argument for archival activism is that archival practice has traditionally created an imbalance of such social power. The most recent draft of the 'Values Statement" prepared in 2010 by the Task Force on Developing a Statement of Core Values for Archivists, specifically points out this imbalance: "Since ancient times, archives have afforded a fundamental power to those who control them."

> Do you agree that traditional archival practice has created an imbalance of social power? Why or why not? To what extent do you believe archivists have agency in supporting or even exercising social power?

NEUTRALITY: Another issue central to the discussion of archival activism is the professional role of neutrality in archival practice, which can be summarized by Mark Greene in his the 2008 SAA Presidential address. Greene claimed "Our values include a recognition, acceptance, and deliberate application of our own agency in the work we do with records and users. This simply means that we are not neutral or objective protectors and transmitters of primary sources, but shapers and interpreters of the sources as well."

> Do you agree with this assessment of archival neutrality? Why or why not? What do you think is the role of neutrality in archival practice?

DIVERSITY/INCLUSIVITY: The discussion of archival activism identifies ways in which archivists can be more proactive in practice. One way is to actively give voice to largely marginalized or undocumented communities. This focus on diversity and inclusivity was included in the recent 2010 draft of the 'Values Statement", which includes diversity as a core value. It states that "Archivists embrace the importance of deliberately acting to identify (even create) materials documenting those whose voices have been overlooked or marginalized."

> Do you agree that this should be a priority for archivists? Why or why not?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Along with the emphasis on more diverse representation in the archival record, the discussion of archival activism has also addressed the significance of incorporating insider voices into archival processes, and specifically in description. This can include participatory archival projects, which would encourage users with insider knowledge of the subject/community/collection to contribute to the description.

> Do you agree that this should be a priority? Why or why not? Do you think that this type of project would be beneficial to archival work? Do you think it is realistic?

ACCOUNTABILITY AND OPEN GOVERNMENT: Another issue central to archival activism is the significance of archivists in holding governments, political or cultural leaders, or other institutions or people in power accountable for their actions. This includes maintaining, preserving and making accessible records that document criminal, unethical or other un-just actions.

> Do you agree that this is the responsibility of archivists?

Along with accountability, most scholarship on archival activism also promotes open government, suggesting archivists should support transparency of government action by ensuring access to government records.

> To what extent, if any, do you agree that supporting open government should be a responsibility or priority of archivists?

Appendix IX: SAA Core Values of Archivists

Approved by SAA Council May 2011

PURPOSE

Archivists select, preserve, and make available primary sources that document the activities of institutions, communities and individuals. These archival sources can be used for many purposes including providing legal and administrative evidence, protecting the rights of individuals and organizations, and forming part of the cultural heritage of society. The modern archives profession bases its theoretical foundations and functions on a set of core values that define and guide the practices and activities of archivists, both individually and collectively. Values embody what a profession stands for and should form the basis for the behavior of its members.

Archivists provide important benefits and services such as: identifying and preserving essential parts of the cultural heritage of society; organizing and maintaining the documentary record of institutions, groups, and individuals; assisting in the process of remembering the past through authentic and reliable primary sources; and serving a broad range of people who seek to locate and use valuable evidence and information. Since ancient times, archives have afforded a fundamental power to those who control them. In a democratic society such power should benefit all members of the community. The values shared and embraced by archivists enable them to meet these obligations and to provide vital services on behalf of all groups and individuals in society.

This statement of core archival values articulates these central principles both to remind archivists why they engage in their professional responsibilities and to inform others of the basis for archivists' contributions to society. Archivists are often subjected to competing claims and imperatives, and in certain situations particular values may pull in opposite directions. This statement intends to provide guidance by identifying the core values that guide archivists in making such decisions and choices. Core values provide part of the context in which to examine ethical concerns.

CORE VALUES OF ARCHIVISTS

Access and Use: Archivists promote and provide the widest possible accessibility of materials, consistent with any mandatory access restrictions, such as public statute, donor contract, business/institutional privacy, or personal privacy. Although access may be limited in some instances, archivists seek to promote open access and use when possible. Access to records is essential in personal, academic, business, and government settings, and use of records should be both welcomed and actively promoted. Even individuals who do not directly use archival materials benefit indirectly from research, public programs, and other forms of archival use, including the symbolic value of knowing that such records exist and can be accessed when needed.

Accountability: By documenting institutional functions, activities, and decision-making, archivists provide an important means of ensuring accountability. In a republic such accountability and transparency constitute an essential hallmark of democracy. Public leaders must be held accountable both to the judgment of history and future generations as well as to citizens in the ongoing governance of society. Access to the records of public officials and agencies provides a means of holding them accountable both to public citizens and to the judgment of future generations. In the private sector, accountability through archival documentation assists in protecting the rights and interests of consumers, shareholders, employees, and citizens. Archivists in collecting repositories may not in all cases share the same level of responsibility for accountability, but they too maintain evidence of the actions of individuals, groups, and organizations, which may be required to provide accountability for contemporary and future interests.

Advocacy: Archivists promote the use and understanding of the historical record. They serve as advocates for their own archival programs and institutional needs. They also advocate for the application of archival values in a variety of settings including, to the extent consistent with their institutional responsibilities, the political arena. Archivists seek to contribute to the formation of public policy related to archival and recordkeeping concerns and to ensure that their expertise is used in the public interest.

Diversity: Archivists collectively seek to document and preserve the record of the broadest possible range of individuals, socio-economic groups, governance, and corporate entities in society. Archivists embrace the importance of identifying, preserving, and working with communities to actively document those whose voices have been overlooked or marginalized. They seek to build connections to under-documented communities to support: acquisition and preservation of sources relating to these communities' activities, encouragement of community members' use of archival research sources, and/or formation of community-based archives. Archivists accept and encourage a diversity of viewpoints on social, political, and intellectual issues, as represented both in archival records and among members of the profession. They actively work to achieve a diversified and representative membership in the profession.

History and memory: Archivists recognize that primary sources enable people to examine the past and thereby gain insights into the human experience. Archival materials provide surrogates for human memory, both individually and collectively, and when properly maintained, they serve as evidence against which individual and social memory can be tested. Archivists preserve such primary sources to enable us to better comprehend the past, understand the present, and prepare for the future.

Preservation: Archivists preserve a wide variety of primary sources for the benefit of future generations. Preserving materials is a means to this end not an end in itself. Within prescribed law and best practice standards, archivists may determine that the original documents themselves must be preserved, while at other times copying the information they contain to alternate media

may be sufficient. Archivists thus preserve materials for the benefit of the future more than for the concerns of the past.

Professionalism: Archivists adhere to a common set of missions, values, and ethics. They accept an evolving theoretical base of knowledge, collaborate with colleagues in related professions, develop and follow professional standards, strive for excellence in their daily practice, and recognize the importance of professional education, including lifelong learning. They encourage professional development among their co-workers, foster the aspirations of those entering the archival profession, and actively share their knowledge and expertise. Archivists seek to expand opportunities to cooperate with other information professionals, with records creators, and with users and potential users of the archival record.

Responsible Custody: Archivists ensure proper custody for the documents and records entrusted to them. As responsible stewards, archivists are committed to making reasonable and defensible choices for the holdings of their institutions. They strive to balance the sometimes competing interests of various stakeholders. Archivists are judicious stewards who manage records by following best practices in developing facilities service standards, collection development policies, user service benchmarks, and other performance metrics. They collaborate with external partners for the benefit of users and public needs. In certain situations, archivists recognize the need to deaccession materials so that resources can be strategically applied to the most essential or useful materials.

Selection: Archivists make choices about which materials to select for preservation based on a wide range of criteria, including the needs of potential users. Understanding that because of the cost of long-term retention and the challenges of accessibility most of the documents and records created in modern society cannot be kept, archivists recognize the wisdom of seeking advice of other stakeholders in making such selections. They acknowledge and accept the responsibility of serving as active agents in shaping and interpreting the documentation of the past.

Service: Within the mandates and missions of their institutions, archivists provide effective and efficient connections to (and mediation for) primary sources so that users, whoever they may be, can discover and benefit from the archival record of society, its institutions, and individuals. Archivists serve numerous constituencies and stakeholders, which may include institutional administrators, creators and donors of documentary materials, rights holders, un/documented peoples, researchers using the archives for many distinct purposes, corporate and governmental interests, and/or citizens concerned with the information and evidence held in archival sources. Archivists seek to meet the needs of users as quickly, effectively, and efficiently as possible.

Social Responsibility: Underlying all the professional activities of archivists is their responsibility to a variety of groups in society and to the public good. Most immediately, archivists serve the needs and interests of their employers and institutions. Yet the archival record is part of the cultural heritage of all members of society. Archivists with a clearly defined

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societal mission strive to meet these broader social responsibilities in their policies and procedures for selection, preservation, access, and use of the archival record. Archivists with a narrower mandate still contribute to individual and community memory for their specific constituencies, and in so doing improve the overall knowledge and appreciation of the past within society.[144]

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[144] http://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics#core_values

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