



Engaging with war records: archival histories and historical practice

The First World War (1914–1918) produced an explosion of record making and record keeping, from state agencies conducting a war of unparalleled scale, to individuals and families producing testaments of experience which also often became objects of remembrance and memorialisation. The effort to document has a history; so too does the determination – or otherwise – to retain those records, organise and describe them, and provide for or otherwise deny access to them. In turn, the ways in which contemporaries recorded and then archived the First World War have powerfully shaped the kinds of histories produced over the last century. The war was being recorded and archived as it happened – and for decades after – for particular reasons and particular purposes. The processes of recording and archiving have bequeathed in different times and places alternately a very rich, very partial, and very prejudiced record of conflict and its legacies. This special issue of *Archives and Manuscripts* grew out of a gathering of scholars in Melbourne in 2018. The conference, hosted by the International Society for First World War Studies, took as its theme ‘Recording, narrating and archiving the First World War’. Our selection of papers from that conference revisits the creation, recreation and transmission of knowledge about the war. Together, a series of archivists and historians investigate the ways in which a war that has been so critical not only to defining the modern world, but also individual and cultural identities, has been shaped and reshaped by those who produced and archived its record for a century since 1914.

Studying the experience and demands of war – perhaps especially the First World War – has been enormously consequential for archivists and historians both. In an immediate sense, Hilary Jenkinson’s 1922 *A Manual of Archive Administration* emerged in the wake of that experience (subtitled *Including the Problems of War Archives and Archive Making* and published as part of a series on the Economic and Social History of the World War), with abiding impact on how archivists thought about their practice. More recently, studies of records-making and management during and after the First World War have been important in giving historical weight to emergent themes in archival thinking. For historians, of course, the war has other attractions. So well described as the ‘matrix event’ of the twentieth century, for the way it set the pattern for the century’s politics and culture, and indeed for its terrible example of humanity’s capacity for mass killing, the war has proven endlessly fascinating.¹ As a wellspring, too, for narratives of national maturity in places like Australia and New Zealand, the war remains politically charged as a subject of historical debate. We should not be surprised that the recent centenary – even before it commenced – provoked expressions of unease at a perceived over-commemoration of 1914–1918.² The continued historical and popular significance of the experience exposes the diverse and changing contexts for

engaging with war records. In turn, this can illuminate the dynamic relationship between archives, archivists and historians.

Archives, archivists, historians

What then of the archival underpinnings of all these activities? Recognising the lineages of war records and their relationship to historical endeavour is crucial to grasping the multiple histories of war and experience that are possible. Historians in Australia and elsewhere still tend to treat the textual and audio-visual records as invisible. How these records came into being, who created them, why, how they did or did not document the experience of the war, and in what circumstances they have been collected, transferred to libraries and archives, preserved, described and made available, are processes largely overlooked by many historians, even those with deep familiarity with those records. Gaps, silences and loss of records remain underexamined. Interventions by archivists – the choices and decisions they make in appraising, acquiring, describing, digitising and exhibiting records – are largely unknown to the user. These processes often differ from institution to institution but again, few researchers realise this or contemplate the effects on their own work. Alternate histories are available, but one of the preconditions of attending to them must be a recognition of the limitations imposed by archives' own histories. What potential for new scholarship emerges from an archivally informed historical approach?

Historians might have particular cause to think again about the sources from which they work; for their part, archivists are in a position to provide the insight and tools necessary for engaging historians in the history of archives and archiving that can produce more responsible histories. The arrangement and description systems archivists use, especially for government and organisational records, do not always make for a user-friendly experience for many researchers. Archives are not arranged by subject, yet most users approach archives with subject-based enquiries. Google (and, in Australia, Trove) searching sets up an expectation that everything will be revealed via a single search box. That fundamental gap in expectations has to be bridged every time a new researcher approaches an archive, and any reference archivist knows that the task of educating researchers never ends. Institutional websites often include good information about how to use the archives' catalogue, so the curious or diligent researcher, if he or she digs deep enough, can approach the archives with some foreknowledge. The concepts and philosophies behind these systems, however, are rarely made apparent. In Australia, many government and organisational archives, including universities, have adopted the series system developed at the National Archives of Australia in the 1960s. The series system was a response to rapid organisational change in Australia during and after the Second World War and is a uniquely Australian contribution to archives theory and practice. Anyone interested in how it developed must pick their way through archival literature going back many years.³ So, potentially unaware that the system they use to understand archives is itself an historical artefact, historians may be reduced to passive consumers of that system. The actions and decisions, the professional expertise and indeed the power exercised over them by the archivist: none of this is apparent.

The foundations of any working out of relations between archivists and historians might go back of course to Jenkinson and beyond.⁴ More profitably, however, we can

look to the ructions and developments in both professions in the 1990s and 2000s in response to postmodernist challenges to knowledge. At stake were the disciplinary practices that flowed from the answer to the key epistemological question: how do we know what we know? Postmodernist thought rejected the foundational idea that historians and archivists could be neutral actors in the advancement of knowledge. For historians, the challenge was to recognise their own purposes and choices in producing their histories in the present. Archivists were to accept they were not neutral keepers and ciphers between the records of the past and those who would use them in the present. Instead, as Tom Nesmith put it, archivists were ‘key mediators or constructors of the knowledge available in archives’.⁵ This meant focusing on archivists as genuine agents in shaping archives, rather than ascribing that power entirely to those who produced the record in the first place; it meant asking questions about why archives exist at all, and to what purposes. If archivists are not neutral actors in the making and transmission of knowledge, then the challenge for archivists and historians alike became, in Nesmith’s memorable phrase, to ‘see archives’ through their own histories. This means recognising the agency of archivists in the history of archives, to ‘see archivists anew—as visible, active, agents in the construction of this history [of the record] and the societal knowledge it shapes’.⁶ The latter part of that imperative insisted that archives are and remain political actors in an ongoing contest over the past and, ultimately, over identities.⁷ To this end, Antoinette Burton observes that the processes of making public memory ‘make visible the extent to which national identities are founded on archival elisions, distortions, and secrets’. Public debate around the world over the past raises ‘provocative questions about the nature and use of archives and the stories they have to tell, not just about the past, but in and for the present as well’.⁸ Archivists and historians are both implicated in that process.

Archivists, then, as those who shape archives and control access to them, wield enormous cultural power. The extent of that power might be up for debate. In 2006, Terry Cook described the power of the archivist, especially in appraisal of records, in such a way as to insist that ‘We are deciding what is remembered and what is forgotten, who in society is visible and who remains invisible, who has a voice and who does not.’⁹ On the other hand, Michael Piggott counselled moderation in making claims for archivists’ power over social memory, or indeed any equivalence between the terms ‘archives’ and ‘memory’. He suggested that archives and archivists, among numerous other agents – including historians – might help to shape social memory, but ‘The memory role of archives and the memory work of archivists are rarely direct and not nearly as dominant as implied in our rhetoric.’¹⁰

Meeting the challenge to ‘see archives’, and accepting that the interventions of archivists had meaningful impacts on records and their use, was not always easy. In the early 2000s, key figures in the debate criticised archivists and historians alike for their dedication to comforting older certainties, and inhibiting opportunities for more informed engagement with archives. The breaking down of faith in the certainty of records and the access to knowledge they represent meant a challenge to the neutrality and objectivity that had so much been a principle of both professions. Those advocating change explained the resilience of those older conceptions in both cohorts as a kind of mutual complicity, in which ‘the blind are leading the blind’.¹¹ They found archivists in denial of their own power in shaping the historical record, by adopting ‘a strategy of self-

effacement in their professional principles and discourse'.¹² Historians, in the same way, maintained the falsehood that records could provide unmediated access to the past, thus denying the power of archivists' interventions in shaping the available historical evidence. Imbued with their faith in empiricism historians refused to recognise archives' history at all, and what it might mean for the materials that arrive at the research desk.¹³ Historian Antoinette Burton expressed her frustration with that state of affairs in 2005 with an assertion that historians remained resistant even then to overturning their faith in the archive. Historians had yet to embrace, or at least to find the most effective tools for reading an archive, with all of its 'personal, structural, and political pressures . . . on the histories they end up writing – as well as those they do not'.¹⁴ In 2006, despite promising signs, Terry Cook observed that there remained a 'great silence between archivists and historians. It is called archival appraisal'.¹⁵

It has been difficult, then, to see entirely clearly the potential dynamism of the relationship between archivists and historians, both in embracing one's role in the ongoing life of records and archives and producing history. Rather than a collaborator, it has been hard for historians to see archivists as other than the person at the end of the record's life cycle, as Eric Ketelaar put it, 'literally at the dead end, in the archival graveyard where the life of the record ended'.¹⁶ Harder still, perhaps, to see where an historian's own contribution to understanding the history of records might begin, or to begin to deal in records more thoughtfully. Burton's impatience with her fellow historians was nevertheless a good sign of shifts occurring, especially in the field of imperial history. In Australia, Alistair Thomson was drawing historians to the same appreciation of the need for archival histories in dealing with personal testimonies of the First World War. Thomson was concerned to ensure not only a more responsible and reflective use of such sources, but to point to the kind of history that kind of reflection made possible. Understanding the archival histories of such documents becomes critical in understanding how the meanings attached to the experience of war changed over time for participants, and for those who came after them. Thomson was guiding us towards witness accounts being at once sources for 'a history of past events, but also an essential part of that history of memory'.¹⁷

Such encouragements indicated the need to move beyond a model of mutual ignorance and blindness, towards a more promising reality of collaboration, including recognition of the mutual production of pasts, and our capacity for repression of alternate histories. We are obliged now to expand our understanding of the creation of records, to ask why, in what context and by what means were records created, and subsequently ordered, used, and reordered. This is perfect territory in which archivists and historians can not only work, but recognise their own agency. The necessity for histories of the record, then, insists that historians move even further beyond an awareness of the constructed nature of archives, and into the material histories of archives and their functioning in time and place, the lack of which is a weakness long acknowledged. In 2007, for instance, Michael Piggott was pleased to see a growing interest in the history of records but, he asked rhetorically, 'do we have the bedrock knowledge to account for the existence of records?'¹⁸ More pointedly, Elizabeth Yale has labelled the simple acknowledgement that archives have histories as little more than a 'methodological prophylactic', an excuse for historians to continue doing as they have always done.¹⁹ An ethnography of archives allows us to see more clearly how archival materials may become, in Ann Laura

Stoler's evocative phrasing, 'active, generative substances with histories, as documents with itineraries of their own'.²⁰ Archives, and the human actors behind and within them, thus become more fully in our histories the historical agents they have always, in fact, been.

Naturally, demand for archival histories has been most pronounced in places where archives have been the handmaids to state policies of definition and regulation, including exclusion, of particular categories of people. The need has been acute, for instance, in understanding the functioning and legacies of the colonial state in relation to indigenous peoples, and in the state-managed removal and care of indigenous and non-indigenous children. The product of archival histories has been to expose in a very real sense both the archive as historical actor, and the range of other actors – the subjects – in archival production. The colonial administration never operated exactly according to its mandates; there were always disruptions and resistance from those whom colonial authorities sought to define and order. The making of colonial knowledge was an ongoing process, rather than a fixing of realities. As an example of the power of archival history, understanding how colonial knowledge was made shows that one cannot escape or overcome the past – it is part of the present. Indeed, studies of the relationship between care leavers, or indigenous communities, and state archives expose the extent to which records remain alive and liable to further transformation in the lives of individuals and communities.²¹

Engaging with the records of war

If archival histories have been so necessary to elaborating the functioning of colonisation and understanding its contemporary politics, there are good reasons for studying war records, with their own politics and possibilities. In a direct sense, understanding the lineages of war records can take us into the history of the archival profession itself, both in its practices, and in the recognition and consolidation of archives as an agency of government. To later generations of archival scholars, in the 1990s and 2000s, examining the production and deployment of war records in and after the First World War offered a compelling way of illustrating the agency of archives and archivists in shaping the records, and the modes in which they are made available to us today. More recently again, reflecting the urgency we see in the study of colonial archives, histories of war records offer access to the contemporary production of histories that feed the contest over national identities founded in the experience of war.

The records produced in prosecuting the First World War are significant both in their relative scale and in their specificity. They highlight well the agency of a rapidly expanding state apparatus, which was coming into contact with citizens (and non-citizens) on a scale reflected to date perhaps only in the census and criminal courts. What distinguished war records from those categories of records was, however, as Hilary Jenkinson recognised, not only their scale, but their purpose-specific and (largely) temporary value to government. He was also careful to note the rapidity with which some of those records came to be regarded as 'historical': 'the speed with which, almost before they have ceased to be used for their original purposes these documents are brought to the attention of Historian and Archivist alike' required special and unique attention from an archivist's perspective.²² Jenkinson was perhaps not in a position to recognise the importance of war as a catalyst for the making of archival policy more generally. In Australia, for instance,

the problem of settling the disposition of war records set an important precedent, in which parliament for the first time allocated a particular set of government records to the custody of a national institution.²³ It was the experience of the Second World War that ultimately provided the impetus towards the establishment of a constituted government authority responsible for managing the records of the federal government.²⁴ Australians were hardly unique in finding the experience of war an important catalyst in formally establishing government archives: critical to the movement that led to the establishment of the U.S. National Archives was the persistent advocacy of veteran groups, which had long advocated the establishment of the archives as a war memorial.²⁵

To a later generation of archivists, that contemporary sense of war records' historicity invited a closer investigation of their making. The endeavour dovetailed nicely with those now advocating recognition of archivists' agency. Studies of war records recommended themselves early as a means to illustrate the active construction of the record, and how those processes shaped the possibilities for historians. Examining in 1998 the work of the Canadian War Records Office (CWRO), Robert McIntosh observed that the organisation's efforts at documenting the experience of the Canadian Expeditionary Force 'produced two distinct wartime initiatives which anticipated the present-day debate within the archival literature on the archivist's proper role'. One was its active encouragement of records creators to deposit their records for historical reasons; the other was to insinuate themselves into the actual creation of records, especially through commissioning visual representations, but also through press reporting.²⁶ Tim Cook elaborated on that process in 2003, observing that 'They [CWRO] may have been the spokesmen for the army, but they certainly were not neutral or objective in their approach – they judged what to report and they defined what was to be emphasized and what would be forgotten.'²⁷

If this attention to Canadian war records joined with contemporary debate, its interests had been presaged in Australia almost two decades prior. Michael Piggott, then working at the Australian War Memorial, had been pointing to the need for histories of Australia's records of war as early as 1980. In a study of the work of the Australian War Records Section from 1917 to 1925, Piggott observed that 'no satisfactory historical account has been published yet describing the administration of military archives in Australia'.²⁸ Piggott might have been disappointed in his hope for 'a full scale history', though the opening of the records of Australia's official war correspondent and official historian, Charles Bean, in 1979, opened the way for historians to examine Bean's modes of recording events and constructing his *Official History* and other publications.²⁹ It remained, however, for Piggott himself, and Anne-Marie Condé to address the making of the archive that served Bean's work almost three decades later. Condé pointed out the strictures that Bean's history and the mode of its production placed on the endeavour of writing histories of the war more generally:

Charles Bean's history was a combat-related, soldier's-eye view of the war. This was the history he imagined he would write, and the records he needed for it were imagined, created and arranged so as to allow him to write that story. . . . Accordingly, every later historian has had to work within that framework: what was not selected for his immediate use might be quite hard to recover now. His history has been so dominant that it has held back other modes of history, and other types of records, from finding their moment.³⁰

The extent to which references to the history of war records illuminated current trends in theorising archival practice in the 2000s certainly had its expression in Australia. Indeed, Condé was one of the first to highlight the importance of understanding the conscious making of collections of war records, and the ways in which that process illuminated meaning-making by a range of agents: librarians and archivists certainly; but also veterans and bereaved families of the dead. Her study of the making of collections of private records at Sydney's Mitchell Library and the Australian War Memorial in the 1920s exposed at once how in positioning themselves to donors as legitimate keepers of war's collective memory in Australia the two institutions immediately resist any characterisation as passive repositories.³¹ Moreover, collecting depended on what the holders of records were prepared to give. Individuals and families had already contextualised their collections in particular ways, whether it was the box that Louisa Hughes had made to hold the snapshots and ephemera related to her son lost in 1916, or Robert Goldrick's recognition in 1934 that he was himself recontextualising his own 'dead letters' by having 'temporarily exhumed [them for typing] from the tombs in which my late parents, as guardian angels, embalmed them'.³² In donating those records to public institutions, such individuals and families were critical agents in deciding what was appropriate for that new context. As Condé carefully observed, 'appraisal began around the kitchen table'.³³ It is a point that Tanja Luckins reinforced in her exposition of war letters and diaries as 'memory objects' for bereaved families: objects have histories and meanings attached to them before entering archives. The process and imperatives of collecting shape the collection, and reshape documents themselves through their contextualisation.³⁴ Margaret Hutchison's 2019 *Painting War* investigates the making of Australia's war art collection, and how contingent were the processes that set its direction and shaped the records it produced; to come full circle, it is a meditation on how we know what we know about the First World War.³⁵

As the above suggests, historians in Australia are increasingly becoming attuned to the importance of archival histories in their treatment of war records, especially in a context of the powerful narratives of nationhood that run through its histories of the First World War. They are aware of the range of users engaged in making meaning from records, especially in the pursuit of family history, and the privileging of certain records for digitisation that can drive that quest in particular directions.³⁶ If archives are memory institutions, then their histories are critical to understanding the politics of memory that continues to impact the present. Bruce Scates' recent account of the administrative and public life of Australian repatriation records embraces that demand for an understanding of how records are made and remade over time and by a multitude of actors, including the subjects of those records, their managers and their users. In particular, Scates was concerned to show how, 'In the space of barely 10 years, their status moved from vulnerable to revered, a "dormant", largely under-utilised holding in one decade, earmarked for digitisation and acclaimed as a national treasure in another.'³⁷ At stake in Scates' account are the modes by which Australians – indeed any users of such records – come to know the First World War; the activism and agency of historians and archivists in providing or denying access, in contextualising the encounter with those records for users who also bring their own contexts to the enterprise.

More responsible histories

Contributors to this special issue are similarly possessed of the immediate value of engaging with war records, of understanding their histories and the way in which they shape the possibilities for historians in the present. They see opportunities for more responsible histories that become available in acknowledging the politics in the production of knowledge in which they are engaged, and indeed of the evidence on which it relies.

Abundance of records and archives such as we have for the First World War offers not just the raw material for history, but for studying how they work in society. What do they reveal about the character of a society? How does societal change have an impact on the records we create, and how we use them to understand ourselves and our histories? Michael Piggott has been thinking and writing about this for most of his career and we are delighted to include Michael's keynote address to the conference in this special issue of *Archives and Manuscripts*.

How many records (letters, memos, reports, photographs, messages, diaries, add your own favourite type) were actually created during the course of the First World War? Of course, no-one knows, but Piggott quotes figures that suggest that even in the Australian context, never mind internationally, there must have been millions. What do we make of this quantum of records, some of which have survived as archives? Piggott's assessment takes us through four chronological stages in the 'archival century' since the war, and two themes, thus creating for us a warp and woof in the texture of the material with which we have to work. His themes cover the capture, neglect, rediscovery and the current boom in the use and re-use of war records. He ponders the key role the Australian War Memorial has played in all this, not just in the capture of records, but also their neglect and destruction. And while some records are loved and used over and over, others remain locked away in uncatalogued backlogs. Riches are never uniformly enjoyed. Digitisation brings its own opportunities and problems. Piggott's discussion affords us glimpses of Australian archives history from odd angles. For instance, in the 1950s when the Australian War Memorial was culling administrative records of the AIF, the newly formed Archives Division of the Commonwealth National Library was establishing repositories and procedures to preserve large quantities of departmental records, regardless of value. How might we account for this, and what might be the legacy today of decisions and choices made by both institutions, and their archivists? Piggott always addresses us with a sense of urgency, and it is this urgency that suffuses the papers in this issue.

Paul Dagleish is one of the few scholars to have studied the records of the Australian Imperial Force at and even before the point of creation. He demonstrates how record-keeping systems can be subject to very particular societal processes. In late 1915 the Australian government was forced to act to ensure adequate flow of casualty information from Gallipoli via Egypt back to Australia. Until then the government had explicitly relied on administration by the British War Office, which commanded the forces sent from Australia. Their intervention came after months of criticism from the families of soldiers abroad. Dagleish lays out a complex interplay of factors – political, personal, ideological, emotional – in 1915. Slow and inefficient flow of information could directly threaten morale and recruitment rates, and erode the confidence of voters, including

women voters. And while wanting to promote the flow of information using cable and postal systems, the government needed also to control it via censorship. The creation of a Central Inquiry Bureau in 1915 achieved direct control of administrative structures and led to better recordkeeping. The ultimate legacy is the 376,096 personal service records now held by the National Archives of Australia.

Analysis of the post-war history of these records is taken up by Anne-Marie Condé. Condé's examination of the continued use and significance of these records highlights the multiplicity of historical actors invested in their production and use, the politics of their disposition in archives, and the intricate web of relations produced by multiple uses over several generations. Condé is careful to observe not only to the extraordinary power of service records in provoking new kinds of academic histories, but their capacity also to draw members of the public closer to the personal histories of war within their families. While digitisation has promoted dialogue between records and their users, Condé observes how that process privileges the capacity of one set of records to speak of the experience of war, over those that speak to other lives lived during and after 1914–1918.

So too is Sneha Reddy concerned with how we can read and engage with government archives to expose those experiences of war marginalised both by historians' choices and by the accessibility of archives, in a practical and intellectual sense. Reddy delves into the difficult realms of analysing colonial soldiers' experiences in the Middle Eastern theatre. Where scholars have in recent years found ways of accessing the voices of Indian soldiers via the records of censorship agencies, or through wartime anthropological studies, Reddy interrogates the French colonial archives for signs of the colonial administration's modes of monitoring, regulating and controlling colonial soldiers at war. In doing so, she offers ways of negotiating the production and subsequent histories of those records. Reddy also thus exposes the multiple ways in which colonial soldiers have continued to be pushed to the margins. Only by understanding those histories – by attempting to decolonise the archive – she observes, can historians keen to understand those experiences begin to recognise them again.

So much for state-run systems for information flow. Where these official channels broke down, private individuals and organisations stepped in. Melanie Oppenheimer exposes the direct role that historians can play in framing the contemporary significance and potential usage of records in the private sector and non-government organisations. In her study of the records of the Australian Red Cross around Australia, Oppenheimer draws on her own experiences of advocating for the preservation, description and opening of those records to researchers, ultimately leading to their deposit in institutional archives. Framing her role as 'historian activist', Oppenheimer shows clearly how the process of pluralising records is an historical phenomenon, in which the historian, in collaboration with archivists, can be a critical agent. Examining the records of the Australian Red Cross Society and its various branches is an exercise in recognising ever more clearly the 'contingency, inertia and, ultimately, enthusiasm' so much a part of societal provenance.

Elise Edmonds takes up the theme of archival institutions and how their decisions about what to preserve shape the way we see the past. The Public Library of New South Wales acted quickly after the war to acquire, mainly by purchase, diaries of people who had served, regardless of rank. The result is one Australia's largest collections of First World War private records, drawn on extensively by historians over many years.

Edmonds takes us through the acquisitions process, led by Principal Librarian William Ifould. The Library's expanded acquisitions policy elevated the writings of the average soldier to the status of great Australian explorers and statesmen upon whose papers the Library was already building its reputation. We learn about the types of material sought, what was accepted and what was rejected, and how judgements of historic, 'sentimental' and commercial value were arrived at and, sometimes, inconsistently applied. Edmonds touches in passing on parallel efforts by Australia's other great library of the time, the Public Library of Victoria, to collect ephemeral printed material. In Victoria there was no major effort to collect First World War manuscript material until the 1970s, by which time, of course, historical values and interests had changed, leading potentially to a different kind of collection. Clearly, there is important work still to do to compare collecting efforts across place and time.

Maria Inés Tato reminds us that the collective memory of war is built not just from 'archives' in the traditional sense. She describes the production and significance of seven books of remembrance commemorating participation of immigrant communities in Latin America in the First World War. Written in English, French, Italian or Spanish, they were compiled from a variety of sources to mark the various communities' participation in the war. Compilers generally did not have access to official records so relied on personal and community information, company records and newspaper accounts. Thus, Tato's analysis challenges our understanding not just of the traditional divide between archives and published sources, but asks us to consider complex transnational loyalties felt by people simultaneously belonging to a society of origin and a host society. She further probes commemorative practices that cross national boundaries and boundaries between state and commercial entities. These 'multidirectional identity constructions', as Tato calls them, are uniquely captured in the books of remembrance.

Delphine Lauwers' investigation of hundreds of investigation and prosecution files documenting the German invasion and occupation of Belgium from 1914 not only speaks to the production and keeping of evidence by civilians and its transformation into a legal record for the prosecution of war crimes, but to the politics of those records in a series of different contexts over time. Created in an attempt to prosecute German military personnel for war crimes following the First World War, the records were targeted for removal by the Nazi occupying authorities after 1940, still sensitive to the accusations of two decades prior. Subsequently removed to Berlin, and then to Moscow by the ultimate victors in 1945, the records assumed a new life contextualised by the Second World War and ensuing Cold War. The return of those records in 2002 has enabled fresh insights into the making of international criminal law, at a time when such histories are desperately needed.

As our contributors show, engaging with war records is a key access point to engaging archivists and historians in a deeper contemplation of their practices. The potential is a much closer and more collaborative relationship in producing responsible histories in the present. To return, then, to Michael Piggott's prompt in his keynote address: how do we account for past activities and decisions in the societal provenance of war records, and understand the effects of those interventions on the records we have, the meanings we give them, and the histories we produce? To respond effectively, all of us – archivists and historians – need to poke our heads out of our burrows, sniff the air, and be *curious* about

records and archives and how they operate within a multiplicity of social, human, technological and historical settings.

Notes

1. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War*, Hill and Wang, New York, 2002, p. 6.
2. In Australia especially, see Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *What's Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2010; also contributions by Carolyn Holbrook, Frank Bongiorno and David Stephens in David Stephens and Alison Broinowski (eds), *The Honest History Book*, NewSouth, Sydney, 2017; Shanti Sumartojo and Ben Wellings (eds), *Nation, Memory and Great War Commemoration: Mobilising the Past in Europe, Australia and New Zealand*, Peter Lang, Bern, 2014; and Bart Ziino, 'Remembering the First World War Today', in Bart Ziino (ed.), *Remembering the First World War*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2015, pp. 1-17.
3. The starting point is Adrian Cunningham (ed.), *The Arrangement and Description of Archives Amid Administrative and Technological Change: Essays and Reflections by And About Peter Scott*, Australian Society of Archivists, Brisbane, 2010.
4. Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual Of Archive Administration, Including the Problems of War Archives and Archive Making*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1922, p. 15.
5. Tom Nesmith, 'Seeing archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives', *The American Archivist*, vol. 65, no. 1, 2002, p. 26.
6. *ibid.*, p. 41.
7. Joan M Schwartz and Terry Cook, 'Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory', *Archival Science*, vol. 2, no. 1-2, 2002, pp. 3, 13.
8. Antoinette Burton, 'Introduction: Archive Fever, Archive Stories', in Antoinette Burton (ed), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and The Writing of History*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2005, p. 2.
9. Terry Cook, 'Remembering the Future: Appraisal of Records and the Role of Archives in Constructing Social Memory', in Francis X Blouin Jr and William G Rosenberg (eds), *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2006, p. 169; see the even more absolute statement in Schwartz and Cook, p. 1.
10. Michael Piggott, 'Archives and Memory', in Sue McKemmish, Michael Piggott, Barbara Reed and Frank Upward (eds), *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society*, Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W., 2005, p. 310.
11. Schwartz and Cook, p. 1.
12. Nesmith, pp. 32, 28.
13. Schwartz and Cook, p. 6.
14. Burton, p. 8.
15. Cook, pp. 171, 174.
16. Eric Ketelaar, 'Archivistics: Science or Art?', in Jennie Hill (ed.), *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: a Reader*, Facet, London, 2011, p. 94.
17. Alistair Thomson, 'Anzac Stories: Using Personal Testimony in War History', *War & Society*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2006, p. 21.
18. Michael Piggott, 'Human Behaviour and the Making Of Records and Archives', *Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2007, p. 238.
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