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Authenticity in places of belonging: community collective memory as a complex, adaptive recordkeeping system

Belinda Battley

Centre for Organisational and Social Informatics, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

ABSTRACT

As archivists, we aim to preserve community records for the future, putting them in boxes in secure repositories to save them from the damaging effects of everyday wear and tear. However, recent research shows a community itself acts as a complex, adaptive recordkeeping system that maintains records through networks that include personal relationships, cultural practices, stories, embodied knowledge, repeated events and special places. Removing records from communities without taking these elements into account assumes our recordkeeping methods are superior to the community's existing systems, constructs barriers between the community and its records, and removes much of the records' context.

KEYWORDS

Community archives; recordkeeping systems; archives; archival practice

Introduction

Bastian and Alexander observed that '[t]hrough their formation, collection, maintenance, diffusion and use, records in all their manifestations are pivotal to constructing a community, consolidating its identity and shaping its memories.'[1] For many years, archivists have been 'rescuing' records from their communities, putting them in acid-free boxes in climate-controlled repositories to protect them from the depredations of everyday use, but at the same time, separating them from their living community contexts.

Archivists and recordkeeping professionals manage many community records in institutions according to an established body of practice, standards and models, set out in foundational texts which, in Australian and New Zealand archival contexts, are strongly influenced by colonial powers such as Britain, Europe and the USA.[2] Variations on these archival cultural norms are applied across the records of multitudes of communities, each with their own unique culture and history.[3] I have worked as an archivist for nearly three decades, and have seen first-hand how archivists assume expert knowledge over how best to 'preserve' or 'save' community records, while not taking into account the existing complex recordkeeping structures within the community which provide essential context. Archival education and professional practice still focus in the main on setting archives aside within archival repositories, whether they be state, collecting, or sometimes community institutions.

My recent research[4] suggests our preservation efforts have missed something vital: an understanding of the way a community acts as a complex, adaptive recordkeeping

CONTACT Belinda Battley belinda.battley@gmail.com

system. Removing records from communities without taking these elements into account assumes professional archival methods are superior to the community's existing systems. It constructs barriers between the community and its records and removes much of their context.

Research within my own community has provided evidence that authenticity of records in communities is determined by the community itself. Records are embedded and embodied in the community's people, stories, processes and places of belonging. This paper discusses the elements of complex, adaptive recordkeeping systems in communities, and the implications for archivists and archival institutions. The consequence of collecting archives for institutionalisation can be an increase in societal discrimination and dysfunction when records of collective memory are removed from less-privileged communities. Where records are embedded in communities and community places, preservation is something organic that needs to be nurtured, and not something an outsider can impose. My research has highlighted the need for a significant change to archival practice. Any practitioner intending to work with the records of a community must first develop a deep understanding of the community's collective-memory processes.

Communities as archival context

Three elements of the community were central to this research. First, a dictionary definition: 'A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common' or 'The condition of sharing or having certain attitudes and interests in common'.[5]

Second, the communities most directly involved in the study are a professional (archival) community, an academic community and a community which could be defined as a social/sports club. All are 'communities of practice',[6] where members are brought together by carrying out activities in common and by 'what they have learned through their mutual engagement in activities'.[7]

Third, Jeannette Bastian described a 'community of records' as 'the aggregate of records in all forms generated by multiple layers of actions and interactions between and among the people and institutions within a community'.[8]

The communities involved were New Zealand/Australian communities of archival practice and research, and the Auckland University Tramping Club (AUTC). (Tramping is a New Zealand term for hiking). I knew from the outset of this research that understanding must come from a well-grounded base, and for me, that base was the AUTC community into which I was born. My parents met in the Club, and I grew up with my own cohort, together with my sister and brother, in my undergraduate years at university. As a Pakeha[9] New Zealander, my relationship with the natural environment is a strong element of my identity, and my time and relationships with the AUTC are strongly bound into that relationship. Most of my closest friends are my fellow tramping clubbers with whom I have shared trips into the wilderness, and this is also true for my parents and others I talked with throughout this research.

The AUTC, formed within a university environment in the 1930s, might on first glance seem a community with perspectives in line with traditional western institutions. However, a closer look at the club reveals a unique culture highly valued by its members

and in need of preservation, not only for its own sake but also for its value to the wider community. This includes developing members as future leaders, and the knowledge and skills the club can provide in areas such as navigation, safety and rescue in the mountains and bush, detailed environmental knowledge and skills for carrying out environmental restoration and preservation projects, data for climate change research, and an extensive range of photographs, stories and songs that themselves provide information and enrich New Zealand's archival stores.

Much of the research into alternative views of archiving relates to communities that have traditionally been 'othered' – often indigenous communities known for strong oral traditions, or communities that have been seen as transgressive and excluded from providing their own voice to traditional archives.[10] By locating this research within a community made up of people educated in western European traditions of written records and structures, this study has highlighted the many points where archiving and recordkeeping theories, models and assumptions can be challenged even by communities which would appear to be closely aligned.

Archival practice itself, though codified in national manuals and an increasing number of international standards, is not uniform across jurisdictions, and often not even within them.[11] Huvila's study of Nordic archives professionals found that their work and the meanings of the archives they managed were strongly influenced by their individual and institutional contexts,[12] just as I found in my own earlier research into descriptive choices made by archivists in New Zealand,[13] and in line with Oliver's research into organisational culture and recordkeeping.[14]

Authenticity

For the past few years, I have been reflecting on archival authenticity, and what the concept of places of belonging might mean for archives as well as for our traditional practices and methods as professional archivists and recordkeepers. As noted in the introduction, archivists put a great deal of energy and thought into preserving records in context. However, archival preservation and authenticity are very much a point of view dependent upon the community in which you are embedded. International records management standard ISO 15489:1 (2016) defines an authentic record as one that can be proven to be what it purports to be, to have been created or sent by the agent purported to have created or sent it, and to have been created or sent when purported. Business rules and processes, policies and procedures are seen in our professional minds to ensure the authenticity of records.

My research provides evidence of a community maintaining records of its 'business' through networks made up of a range of elements including personal relationships, cultural practices, stories, embodied knowledge, repeated events and special places, as will be discussed further below.[15] These networks ensure the authenticity of the records for community members. When archivists remove records from communities and do not take these elements into account, they impose professional archival culture on those community records, and fail to acknowledge that the community already has its own complex, adaptive and interdependent recordkeeping system, though it might not look like the kind of recordkeeping system archivists are used to. Removing community records into an archival institution and arranging and describing them to suit

institutional systems strips away the community's own measures of authenticity. It constructs barriers between the community's records and the community's people and processes, removing much of the records' context.

This can be illustrated with a conversation I had with a life member of the Club, who joined in the 1950s. He described visiting club records that had been transferred to the University's 'Special Collections':

> And there were also two big photograph albums, which again had been wafting around. They'd come out at Club functions. They used to sit in this wardrobe for a while. When I wanted to look at them, recently, they're now at the Archives in the University, so I had to put white gloves on to be able to look at them [laughing], but I appreciate this was policy for Archives, so I guess we've …

At this point in the conversation his words trailed off and he looked thoughtful. I reflected that he seemed to regret the loss of immediate contact between the albums and the Club at functions, where stories about the photographs had been shared and renewed with fellow Club members. I also noted his amused and slightly incredulous look at the thought of these records, which had been until then subjected to the experiences of everyday life, being handled with white gloves.

It was apparent from my conversations with Club members from the beginning of the research that current members of the Club had little or no awareness of the records that had been transferred to Special Collections in the University Library, although this was only a very short walk from common Club meeting places. When I asked John (the President at the time of our conversation) if he was aware of the Tramping Club records in Special Collections, he said 'I'm vaguely aware of that, I have never actually looked at it.'

When the records are no longer embedded in the community's processes and places of belonging, much of the meaning is lost, and the usual methods by which the community assesses and maintains authenticity and significance are greatly restricted.

A personal encounter with the AUTC archives in Special Collections

One of the first steps in this research was to visit the AUTC archives held in the University of Auckland's 'Special Collections'. This visit had a profound effect on the direction I took in the research, and I wrote a reflection on it, one of many autoethnographic reflections that informed the research process and outcomes. This early visit gave me a visceral understanding of the impacts of place and community on the experience of archives.

When I visited, I was greeted warmly by the Archivist in charge for the day, who I knew already from us having worked together in the past. It was good to catch up, and then she showed me to a table in the unfamiliar reading room, pointed out where the relevant finding aids were, said I was welcome to ask any questions I needed to, and left me with the lists. I wrote notes about the experience. They began like this:

> Inventory of the records of the University of Auckland Tramping Club, 1936–1978 MSS & Archives 89–22 Special Collections, University of Auckland Library.

> Feel quite annoyed they have changed name to 'University of Auckland Tramping Club'. Who decided that? That's not what it's called. Can't they see the initials are AUTC? Should I say something?
>
> Next, I am given some boxes to look through . . . . after [some newsletters] I see the first directly AUTC related item: a trip plan for a Milford Sound trip. It lists the members of the party, and I feel a visceral jolt, and tears come to my eyes as the first name to catch my eye is Margaret Hoyle . . . my father's sister, who died a few years ago . . . No year is given, will have to work out – ask Dad? Work out how old Margaret was, and work back?

Later, I noted:

> Experience of looking at archives – really, really strongly wanted to share with all of the people in there, and with [my son, who is in Tramping Club now]. Came home and told him about them – he asked where they were so he could find them . . . When I found photos and names of relatives, felt terrible urge that others feel in our reading room to share with the only other person there – another reader.

The experience raised many issues for me. Experiencing the records on my own, I felt a strong need to be with others who would understand, so I could discuss what I had found, share memories, ask questions, expand on ideas, share stories and just have a communal rather than an individual experience. I felt uncertain, uncomfortable, out of place and observed, even though I belong to the same practitioner community as the archivists there, and despite knowing from my archivist perspective that they would be pleased if I gave them more information about the records, and were far too busy working to really be observing me too much. I felt uncertain of the protocols of the institution when I arrived, worried that I might damage the records because of the aura of hush and preciousness, annoyed at how little I understood of much of what I was reading, annoyed that the records had been named by someone who did not belong to the AUTC, but most of all I felt the need to share the stories I was finding in the records with people who would understand and be as excited by them as I was.

A brief note on research questions, design and methodology

This research, which began with the question 'What part is played by records and recordkeeping in a community's collective memory, identity formation, and performance of their culture?' led to another question: 'How does existing archival and recordkeeping practice facilitate [these processes]?' A participatory ethos was at the heart of this research, which had at its heart an Inclusive Research Design framework,[16] and included many features of community partnership research.[17] Participatory research is an evolving methodology which increasingly enables community understandings, values and needs to be included in research design, methodology and desired outcomes. It began in the fields of health, education and community development[18] but is now also used in the area of archives and recordkeeping[19] and other information studies, often in action research projects within organisations where there is a problem to be solved, while researchers study the outcome of the intervention in the problem.[20] The use of Community Partnership and Inclusive Research Designs is growing in information studies and archival research.[21]

My research design was emergent, developed throughout the process together with the research design and outcomes. The participating communities were incorporated in the research development, production of outcomes and assessment of requirements and results through communication, collaboration, reflexivity and friendship as methods. Cultural academic requirements, however, meant there were certain requirements that were not negotiable.

As an insider in both the AUTC and the archival communities, I used participatory, auto-ethnographic methods,[22] as noted above, and grounded theory techniques,[23] while acting as a catalyst within the communities involved. Autoethnography was used as an essential tool for analysis, as well as for sharing preliminary findings for feedback. My position as an insider in the communities gave me a head start in the necessary relationship building and negotiation of research aims, design and methods. An example of the benefit of autoethnographic methods is seen in the insights gained from the reflection on my first visit to Special Collections. The deeply self-analytical and iterative nature of the combined autoethnographic and blogging/conversational approach used, with constant interaction with the different communities, allowed problematic issues and barriers to be highlighted and addressed, providing added richness and depth to the emerging data and analysis. The data both came from and provided rich insights into the processes of recordkeeping and collective-memory construction in the Tramping Club community. I have written extensively elsewhere on the methodology used.[24]

Creating, managing, using & sharing embodied records in a community context

My research considered the relationships between collective memory and recordkeeping in the AUTC.[25] The image below (Figure 1) shows a whole lot of recordkeeping processes happening in a tramping club context. There I am in the middle reading a map, supported by the advice of more experienced trampers. They are sharing their knowledge with me, both by telling me directly and by letting me watch what they do. We are on a tramping trip where we are all gaining more skills and knowledge, and that includes embodied knowledge: we are learning the skills of tramping by doing it. On

Figure 1. AUTC tramping trip, Whanganui River, c.1985. Photo: Andrew Poole.

this Club trip, we are also creating stories together and reinforcing bonds with one another. Our experience and the records we create, and how we store them, are strongly influenced by the place we are tramping. The state of the track, the state of the weather, the type of forest we are in, and the terrain all have a strong influence on the experience we have, what we are learning, the stories we are creating, the photos we take (or whether we take photos at all, if it is pouring with rain) and whether we are ever going to go tramping again.

In a definition of recordkeeping in records continuum terms, Sue McKemmish described the way archives and records are 'transformed into a corporate or personal archive by recordkeeping and archiving processes that "place" records-as-evidence in the broader context of the social and business activities and functions of the organization, group or individual, and manage them in frameworks that enable them to function as individual, group, or corporate memory'.[26] The Club's collective memory maintenance is a system of recordkeeping and archiving processes that place the community's records-as-evidence as well as records-for-memory within the specific and Club-designed activities and functions of the Club and manage them in community-appropriate frameworks which help the club continue to flourish.

Co-constructing collective memory as a complex, adaptive system

Figure 2 presents the model of the AUTC process for maintaining collective memory that was developed in the course of my research together with the participating community members, through ongoing conversation, analysis and discussion. Using an inclusive research design meant the development of the model had to use AUTC-appropriate research processes, which were developed in a reflexive response to feedback from the community as the research process went on. This is described in more detail elsewhere,[27] but what is significant here is the way developing the research processes together with the AUTC led to further insights into the community's recordkeeping and collective memory processes, helping develop a well-grounded model. Developing an understanding together with the community rather than simply trying to observe as an outsider provided rich, deep insights into community recordkeeping processes.

The model illustrates how the Club maintains its collective memory in a complex, adaptive system embodying recordkeeping processes, information flow, physical records, people, places, events, stories, the continuing development of trust and camaraderie, structural features, shared experience, shared values and aims, individual development and group continuity. Nurturing of apprentice members and the presence of elders with a long view are vital parts of the system. As with any complex system, all of the elements depend on one another, and the relationships between them are kept alive through the processes of being a Club, performing its activities and maintaining friendships. The system was built organically through the culture of the Club and the knowledge, understandings, needs and actions of its members.

Records act to support multiple functions in the Club's processes, including developing and maintaining identity; uniting and communicating; teaching and enabling actions and functions; acting as evidence of authority, trustworthiness or rights; maintaining stories; and providing a public face. Many of the records act both as structure and constituents of the recordkeeping and information system, and their overall

Figure 2. The Tramping Club process[28].

function works towards helping members meet the main aims of the Club: to carry on tramping together and maintain a spirit of camaraderie.

The characteristics of complex, adaptive systems were described by Mitleton-Kelly as they were defined by theorists from the natural and social sciences.[29] These are self-organisation, emergence, connectivity, interdependence, feedback, far from equilibrium, space of possibilities, co-evolution, historicity and time, path-dependence and creation of new order. All of these characteristics may be seen in the Club and its recordkeeping and collective memory processes:

- **Self-organisation**: Club members decide what the club will do, deciding individually to come together to do activities, create, use and maintain records, and so on.
- **Emergence**: Defined by Mitleton-Kelly as 'the process that creates new order together with self-organisation'[30]; changes to the Club arise from the interaction between all of the elements of the club, with feedback from all of the related entities: new actions, records, cultural elements and so on emerge through the interaction of the whole of the club, including all of the external forces influencing each internal element.

- **Connectivity and interdependence**: This relates to all elements of the system: humans, records, places, events, aims, values and so on. Decisions or actions of individuals, or characteristics of places, or records, or events can affect others in the club – for example, individuals decide to run trips or training in particular places, help maintain the hut, take on the safety officer role, digitise club photographs and make them available online, and so on. The impact of decisions of individuals, or characteristics of other elements, on any other individual element depends on the state of the individual receiving the impact, so it can be greater or lesser. For example, the individual may have already been on that training course, or might not have time to go, or conversely, perhaps the trip is the turning point in their life, and they decide to try for Club Captain, and/or devote their life to conservation of the environment.
- **Feedback**: Feedback is an intrinsic part of the club's Process, built into the system through committee meetings, including, for example, decisions on who is qualified to lead or go on a trip; conversations; individuals' decisions about whether or not, and how, to run and attend events as a result of previous experiences; and informed by input from the external environment.
- **Far from equilibrium**: The Tramping Club is in a state of constant flux as the membership and committee are renewed each year. This constant change of membership and decision-makers allows for constant experimentation and exploration of possibilities as society changes. The recent development of Kauri dieback disease in the vicinity of the Club hut has led to the closing of the forest and limited access to the hut. This is likely to have an ongoing detrimental effect on Club activities, memory and recordkeeping system unless the Club can develop strategies to deal with this new, significant challenge. Club members already begun, for example, by volunteering to improve tracks in the Waitakeres so to reduce the risk of soil movement around Kauri trees.
- **Space of possibilities**: As Mitleton-Kelly notes, 'any strategy can only be optimal under certain conditions, and when those conditions change, the strategy may no longer be optimal'.[31] The constant renewal of Club leadership and membership allows for the exploration of an expansive 'space of possibilities', new possible strategies to try, within the safety-net of longer-serving committee members who can provide a buffer against any change they believe is detrimental to broader Club aims.
- **Co-evolution**: Elements of the Club's system evolve together over time, through feedback due to connectivity. When the club introduced a Facebook page, for example, it was at first only the current student members who were aware of it and used it, but when older, former members became aware of it through their club-member Facebook friends making posts or 'liking' photos posted there, many began to follow, post images and comments on the Facebook page as well.
- **Historicity and time**: Subsequent evolution of the Club depends on decisions made within the system: the state of the Club at any time is dependent on what has happened to all of the elements in its history. For example, the decision to have a Club hut has had a powerful and ongoing influence on the Club, its members, its events and its records, as has the decision to have an annual magazine, and the

decision of an individual Club member to lead a trip to a particular valley on a particular date, when the mountainside unexpectedly collapsed.

- **Path-dependence**: As above, the specific paths a system may follow depends on its past history. In one of the examples above, the loss of four club members in a tragic tramping accident, within the same year as several climbing accidents, led to a greater emphasis on safety in the mountains, encouraged by influential individuals such as the President. Some individuals believed that as many of these accidents had a large element of chance, they did not see a need to modify behaviour. However, for the Club as a whole, the powerful negative feedback of the loss of close friends led to an impulse to improve training in alpine skills, which in turn led to the introduction of new training courses and requirements. These in their turn led to new trips, new skills for individuals, and more new possibilities, all of which provided positive feedback for the new path. It was noted by some that awareness of the need for safety in the mountains tended to move in cycles as people with direct knowledge of people who had died left the Club, but measures were put in place to try to keep awareness current, including requirements relating to the duties of Club safety officer and alpine officer.
- **Creation of new order**: Mitleton-Kelly describes self-organisation, emergence and the creation of a new order as three of the key elements of complex systems. New order is created through the interrelationship of all elements of the system, working together. In a complex, adaptive system in constant flux, as in the Tramping Club, every new order is a temporary creation, but due to the background of unchanged shared aims, an effective structure, and the continuing interconnection of the elements of the system and process, it forms a coherent and cohesive organisation.

All of the elements of this complex, adaptive system, working together give the club's collective memory and culture its richness and resilience in the face of constant change. The research itself also benefited from the working of the system, helping to enable the inclusive, participatory research design, as the Club's system gave access to the combined knowledge of Club members and also provided a safe structure for members to contest my developing aims, questions, theories and conclusions. However, traditional ways of collecting and managing archives are not designed to deal with this level of complexity and interdependence.

Archival institutions as colonising powers

Understanding that the community's collective memory is a holistic and complex adaptive system, with all of the elements intertwined and reliant on one another to maintain the context and meaning of the records and information they contain, it is possible to consider how adequate existing models of archival theory are for representing the place of records and recordkeeping in this system. Existing models of practice can also be examined, to work out whether they can meet the newly-understood needs of the community.

In my research, I found that when records are removed from the system and placed into an archival institution, or are otherwise separated from the current club, these

connections with the records, control over them, knowledge of their context, awareness of their existence, and the ability to judge authenticity in Club terms tend to be lost to Club members. Transferring community records to an archival institution supports the processes of colonisation. Colonisation may seem an extreme word to use when referring to a university club's records being transferred to a university archive, but some aspects of colonisation are exactly what can be seen here, with a dominant archival culture imposing its rules and processes over the community records within its custody. This is not intended to diminish in any way the far more extreme impacts of having one's entire country colonised, but rather to demonstrate that colonisation can also occur on a continuum, and in an apparently benign guise, through a lack of understanding of the implications of applying standard practice.

AUTC members have experienced the removal of records of their collective memory from the Club's context of activities and functions, places, events, interactions, personal relationships and interpretations into a new, archives-defined context of control, access requirements, metadata and physical housing. Although it has not reduced the Club's autonomy over many aspects of its everyday life to a significant extent, it has changed the ways the records can be found, used and interpreted, and the roles the records can play. Community memory sources are removed from their place in the community's processes to the control of an external power. Any community member who wants to visit their records has to follow the institution's cultural requirements, and experience all the affective and practical impacts of that new context.

Control of records and power over representation in archives has been identified as a significant aspect of colonisation and decolonisation.[32] Evelyn Wareham has discussed this issue in relation to the introduction of Western European recordkeeping traditions to the Pacific, where the impact on day to day life has been significantly greater than for the AUTC.[33] Noting the 'entanglement of colonial power relations in local recordkeeping practices', Wareham discussed the relationship between records and processes of political and economic disempowerment, and the subsequent reclamation of rights and identities as the island states reassert their pre-colonial power. This has led to an increased understanding of the need for archives and recordkeeping processes to 'better integrate into their cultural and political contexts' in the unique environments of the Pacific micro-states.[34] This integration can only occur if the contexts are well understood by the developers of those archives and recordkeeping processes, which can only be achieved if the communities are full participants in their development.

What is preservation? What is a recordkeeping system?

This research has highlighted the need for a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes a record, and recordkeeping, and archival preservation, even for a University-based community which appears to be strongly based in a European/Antipodean academic tradition. For this community, whose recordkeeping system is embodied in the club itself, many different physical, virtual and embodied entities were used as if they were records. For example, the tramping club hut, O'nuku, in the Waitakere Ranges, is a very important and constantly renewed element in the Club's recordkeeping system, where many events are held and within which a whole lot of physical evidence is also recorded.

Anne Gilliland discussed the permeability of the perceived divisions between archival concepts such as enduring/transitory, instantiated/latent, and actualised (real)/imaginary when considering contemporary recordkeeping and community-based archiving alike.[35] She wrote that community archives are 'often constructed to meet the needs of the present, but not necessarily the future' in terms of survival of physical objects. However, records continuum theory[36] shows us that every activation of a record has potential to echo on – every recorded event a 'brick of potential … thrown into the future'.[37] Just as Duranti describes the preservation of the authenticity of digital records through 'continuous refreshment and periodic migration',[38] so Winiata writes how in Māori culture, foundational customs, traditional knowledge and behaviours handed down are 'constantly being refined and enriched, are of the past, they make up the present and they take us into the future. The accumulating memory is the Māori archive … '[39] Interpretations of 'enduring' and 'transitory' are culturally bound. Archival systems within communities may well be constructed to meet the needs of the future as well as the present, whether or not an individual physical manifestation of a record is deemed worthy of preservation. In the AUTC, too, migration is an essential aspect of the preservation of the Club's archive, as demonstrated by the Club hut, as well as the passing on of embodied records such as skills essential to safe tramping by apprenticeship through repeated training events in suitable environments with the oversight of skilled practitioners.

The principle of entropy states that without the input of energy, everything gradually declines into disorder. The constant renewal of the hut points to a significant aspect of maintaining records that is not generally acknowledged in current archival theory and practice – preservation requires maintenance not only of the records themselves but also of their context by people who understand the records and their meaning, significance and contextual relationships. Records kept within a community can be constantly renewed with the energy of the community while they are still needed. This community input is largely unavailable once the records are transferred to archives.

These findings also show that for archival institutions to be co-creators or enablers of community collective memory, the first need is to understand the community's record-keeping processes. Archivists can share their skills and knowledge, but also have to respect the skills, knowledge and values of community members, and need to understand that they already have a recordkeeping system, it just might not look like one from an archivist's point of view.

Figure 3 shows an exhibition about tramping clubs in Auckland put together in a visitors centre in the Waitakere Ranges, near the Tramping Club hut, using records kept by community members and provided to the exhibition designer in ways that let us express our own views of ourselves as a club. The items were located and the metadata provided using existing Club networks, within our own system of word-of-mouth and personal-relationship-based 'finding aids'.

If it is necessary to transfer community records to an archival institution, this research has shown it is not only essential to make sure the community can continue to interact with records as part of the community's everyday life, but also to maintain a personal relationship with the archivists managing the records. The institution needs to

Figure 3. Physical archives provided by the AUTC for a temporary exhibition promoting tramping at Arataki Visitors Centre, Waitakere Regional Park, Summer 2017–2018. Author's photo.

become part of the community's complex, adaptive system of collective memory maintenance and recordkeeping.

I have recently been working with the archivist at the University of Auckland Special Collections to see how we can ensure records of the AUTC they are already storing can remain part of the Club's collective memory. These were transferred by the Club several decades ago when an early Club President who was keeping these paper records retired from the university, and it was feared the records might be lost. Like many other communities, the Club saw an institutional archive as an answer to preserving physical documents but did not think about how the community would maintain knowledge amongst new members about where the records were.

As a fellow archivist, I am in a privileged position compared with members of most communities with records in institutional archives. I already knew the archivist, and we speak the same technical language. We discussed several different ways we can stay in touch with our archives in institutional custody in AUTC-appropriate ways while keeping in line with archival customary practice as much as possible. Suggested methods include being able to take them out for special occasions, or for promotional purposes, or for reuse in publications; visiting them in groups, as a kind of Club event; sharing the work of digitisation; and working together with the institutional archivists to describe the records. We will also include information about the records' location and links to digitised items in the AUTC website, to make sure club members can find them easily. Finally, we have now designated a specific Club member as 'Club Archivist', responsible for maintaining knowledge about the records in Special Collections, just as other committee members are responsible for other areas of the club's memory.

This negotiation was made easier for me as a Club member because I was speaking with the archivist from a position of knowledge of archival culture. Members of many

communities negotiating transfer are unlikely to start from a similar position, so it is essential the archivist responsible for the potential transfer works with the community to develop a shared understanding of the implications of transfer and methods for ongoing community connections.

There are documented examples of some or all of these options for maintaining connections having been negotiated by other communities, in other archives,[40] and often government agencies have similar arrangements with State archives,[41] but it is not common practice for collecting archives, nor for State and other institutions holding records relating to co-creating communities seen as 'subjects' of the records. Much more needs to be done. Each community will have unique needs and also unique culture, knowledge, skills and resources, which will determine whether any transfer of records to an archival repository as defined in traditional archival terms is appropriate, or whether a different type of intervention might be more useful, with no transfer of records at all.

Although having Club archives in an institution has not worked well so far for the Club, there is potential to improve this, and make it work for the community, because Special Collections are physically close to the places Club members are likely to congregate, and it is within an institution (the University) with which all members are familiar. With work, Club members and Special Collections archivists may be able to co-create a place of belonging to enable a re-connection. However, for other communities, this type of environment would be completely foreign, and it would be difficult for the institutional archive to become an effective part of the community's collective memory resources. Each community has unique needs. Keeping places for community archives must be readily available for use by community members, and must be places in which they feel at home and can express their culture. Much work is being done now on the best way to preserve community archives, and much more research is needed.[42]

The context of records can be highly complex and can include multiple human actors and communities. If this research is considered in light of the needs of vulnerable communities such as people who have been in care, or refugees, often many records relating to them are created and managed by others, never having been under their control, but still have powerful impacts on their lives. The findings and outcomes from this research could be explored further in the context of the growing contemporary discourse on the social justice impact of archives.[43] A more nuanced understanding of the role of records and recordkeeping in specific vulnerable communities is beginning to shed light on their impacts and some work is being done on interventions where those impacts are negative and when rights in records are denied.[44] An example of a community taking action to tell their own story when their records are controlled by others can be seen in the Parragirls initiative in Australia, where a community of women formerly in care are using the powerful impact of place to provide their own narrative around the records.[45] Also in Australia, the Find and Connect web resource improves access to existing records for people who were in care,[46] and in Australia, in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, work is being done on transforming recordkeeping for people in care so that their rights to information about themselves are recognised.[47]

''Co-creating places of belonging in the archival multiverse: implications for archival theory, practice and communities

Bastian and Alexander describe the connections between communities and their archives as 'a symbiotic relationship'.[48] This research reveals the need for archival practitioners to consider their own everyday practices, and question whether their work is enabling communities to maintain the connections they need with their records, or whether they are instead creating a barrier. Archivists assert that their work 'saves' community archives, and 'gives voice to' communities. However, this patronising attitude assumes that communities are not able to save their own records, or speak with their own voices. It perpetuates the institutional/community binary and disguises the existence of a separate archival community culture and language. Any archivist preparing to work with community records needs to find the answers to some important and complex questions:

- How can the process be inclusive and transparent for the community?
- How to best get to know and work with the community? Are there people who can be connectors and advisors? What cultural practices to take into account?
- How does this community use records in maintaining its collective memory?
- What roles are played by records?
- What types of recordkeeping does the community carry out, and what does it use as records?
- What else helps the community maintain its collective memory? (for example, people, events, processes, places, relationships, stories, songs, dances … ? These can of course also be both records and recordkeeping actions simultaneously).
- What skills and knowledge already exist in the community that are helping maintain recordkeeping processes?
- What skills and knowledge do the recordkeeping professional/archival institution have that the community needs?

Very importantly, if community records are to be transferred to an archival repository, the institutional archivist must ensure the community is able to create, or co-create with the organisation, a place of belonging where those records can be accessed. Proximity or online availability is not enough: the access needs to be visible and culturally appropriate. Community members need to be able to 'bump into' information about how and where to access the records in the course of their normal activities and need to be able to interact with the records themselves.

Archivists have many skills that can be of use to communities in preserving the records which the community believes need to be physically saved. Trust in both directions is essential, and needs to be earned, particularly when there have been bad experiences in the past. With a partnership approach, where both parties have skills and knowledge that are valued by both partners, these skills can be effectively shared with communities. A decolonised approach to community archives should accept that the community itself knows best the many different systems and processes within the community which maintain the authenticity, relevance, integrity, meaning, authority and other multiple qualities of the records. Sometimes, setting records aside into special

archival keeping places, even if they are managed by or on behalf of the community, is not necessary, and can be harmful. The records must be able to continue to play their roles in the community processes to which they are integral.

Recognising that archives form part of a complex, adaptive system embodied in a community means that if archivists want to get involved with the community's records, the first step is to develop strong relationships with the community where the records belong, in the community's own environment. The recordkeeping professional must accept the validity of the community's model of recordkeeping, put effort into developing an understanding of the existing recordkeeping structures and processes, nurture ongoing relationships and build in community-appropriate elements that enable ongoing effective interaction between the systems of the community and the archivists.

All functional communities have skills, knowledge and understandings that are valuable and worthy of respect. Development and management of relationships with external holders of community records will need to be designed anew for each community, custom-built to match the context and circumstances of each partner. This, in turn, will lead to better outcomes for the communities, the professionals and their institutions, the records and the recordkeeping systems to which they belong. This research has demonstrated that when archivists and communities work together in partnership, with an ethics of friendship, a commitment to open communication, an analytical, reflexive attitude and a willingness to respect and learn from one another's existing information systems, knowledge, skills, aims, understandings and needs, it enriches our communities, practices and theories, and archives.

Understanding of this community's needs, and the negative impact of removing records even from a community that at first glance appears to be culturally similar to the archival institution, has highlighted the potential impact of the removal of archives on less-privileged communities. Many records relate to multiple communities, particularly but not only those held in public archives. For these records, it is important that all communities who have relationships with the records can maintain those relationships in a manner appropriate to each of them, provided that this does not deny the rights of the other communities. This may require a considerable time and effort to negotiate but will have the added benefit of enabling the contextual richness and complexity of the records to be maintained.

Removing records from within the collective-memory maintaining processes and systems of any community may make them more readily available to external researchers, but they will be diminished relics of their former contextualised richness. Huvila called for a 'radical user orientation' in participatory archives.[49] A still more radical user orientation would accept that communities may be maintaining their own archives that are not necessarily visible from an archival community point of view, and that sometimes the best approach is to recognise that professional archival intervention is not needed.

Notes

1. J Bastian and B Alexander, *Community archives: the shaping of memory*, Facet Publishing, London, 2009, p. xxi.

2. Overviews of the background to archival theory in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK can be found, for example, in texts such as T Cook, 'What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift', *Archivaria*, vol. 43, Spring 1997, pp. 7–63; T Cook, 'Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms', *Archival Science*, vol. 13, nos. 2–3, 2013, pp. 95–120; H MacNeil and T Eastwood (eds), *Currents of Archival Thinking*, second ed, Libraries Unlimited, Santa Barbara, 2017; D Retter, 'A chronology of archives-keeping in New Zealand to 2002′, *New Zealand Archivist*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2002, pp. 9–19; and Laura Millar, *Archives: Principles and Practices*, Facet Publishing, London, 2017, pp. 37–66. Texts on accepted archival theory include Sir Hilary Jenkinson's much-cited text from 1922, *A Manual of Archival Administration*, many of whose concepts are still familiar today, as well as the earlier 'Dutch manual' by Muller, Feith and Fruin, *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives* (republished in English by HW Wilson Co in 1940). Schellenberg in the USA was also a strong influence (T Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*, Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 1956).
3. For a detailed discussion of the multiverse of contexts in which archives are created, managed, used and shared, see A Gilliland, S McKemmish and A Lau, *Research in the Archival Multiverse*, Monash University Publishing, Clayton, 2017. Another source on some of the wide ranging concepts of archives in communities, and the symbiotic relationship between communities and archives, is Bastian and Alexander.
4. B Battley, 'Footprints through space and time: co-creating places of belonging in the archival multiverse', PhD thesis, Monash University, Caulfield, 2018.
5. Oxford English Dictionary, Definition of Community in English, 2018, <*https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/community*>, accessed 14 May 2019.
6. E Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998; and J Lave and E Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991.
7. ibid.
8. Jeannette Bastian, *Owning Memory: How a Caribbean Community Lost Its Archives and Found Its History*, Libraries Unlimited, Westport, Connecticut, 2003, p. 5.
9. The meaning of the term 'Pakeha' or 'Pākehā' is constantly shifting, originally referring mainly to New Zealanders of English descent, but then expanding to all New Zealanders of European descent. New Zealand historian Michael King, in his much-cited book *Being Pakeha*, (Hodder and Stoughton, Auckland, 1985) broadened the term further to its currently widely accepted definition as a non-Māori and non-Polynesian New Zealander.
10. For example, Ally Krebs, quoted in S Faulkhead and K Thorpe's 'Dedication: Archives and Indigenous Communities', in Gilliland, McKemmish and Lau, p. 3, said 'Indigenous peoples' views, definitions and understandings of 'archive' are often different and more diverse than those emanating from traditionally based Western archival science'. There is an increasing body of literature from a range of countries which further illustrates this, including Australia (J Bradley and Yanyuwa Families, *Singing Saltwater Country*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2010; S Faulkhead, *Narratives of Koorie Victoria*, PhD thesis, Monash University, Melbourne, 2008; K Thorpe, 'Aboriginal Community Archives: a Case-Study in Ethical Community Research', In Gilliland, McKemmish and Lau); New Zealand (T Jacobs and S Falconer, 'Ka mua, ka muri; walking backwards into the future: Paths towards managing Māori information in Archives', *Archifacts*, October 2004, pp. 1–9; W Winiata, 'Survival of Māori as a people and Māori archives', *Archifacts*, April 2005, pp. 9–19; A Tikao and N Frean, 'Titiro ki muri: Resurfacing Māori collections through improved arrangement and description: a case study', *Archifacts*, October 2012, pp. 23–32); the Pacific (E Wareham, 'From explorers to evangelists: Archivists, recordkeeping and remembering in the Pacific Islands', *Archival Science*, vol. 2, 2002, pp. 187–207); and Korea (E Youn, 'Investigating socio-cultural aspects of the implementation of an international archival descriptive standard in Korea', in Gilliland, McKemmish and Lau, pp. 789–810. Other communities too are expressing different concepts of archives that problematise the

western archival tradition: for example, 'Queering the Archive' (A Kumbier, *Ephemeral material: Queering the archive*, Litwin Books, Sacramento, 2014); independent community archives in the UK (A Flinn and M Stevens, '"It is noh mistri, we mekin histri". Telling our own story: independent and community archives in the UK, challenging and subverting the mainstream', in Bastian and Alexander, pp. 3–28); and in online communities (F Upward, S McKemmish and B Reed, 'Archives and changing social and information spaces: a continuum approach to recordkeeping and archiving in online cultures', *Archivaria*, vol. 72, Fall 2011, pp. 197–237).

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12. I Huvila, 'Another wood between the worlds? Regimes of worth and the making of meanings in the work of archivists', *The Information Society*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2015, pp. 121–138.
13. B Battley, 'Finding aids in context: using Records Continuum and Diffusion of Innovations models to interpret descriptive choices', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2013, pp. 129–145.
14. G Oliver, *Organisational Culture for Information Managers*, Chandos Publishing, Oxford, 2011.
15. Battley, 'Footprints'; and B Battley, 'Archives as Places, Places as Archives: Doors to privilege, places of connection, or haunted sarcophagi of crumbling skeletons?' *Archival Science*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 1–26.
16. S McKemmish, F Burstein, R Manaszewicz, J Fisher, and J Evans, 'Inclusive Research Design', *Working with communities: community partnership research in information technology, management and systems*, Special issue of *Information, Communication and Society*, vol. 15, no. 7, 2012, pp. 1106–35.
17. Randy Stoecker, *Research Methods for Community Change: A Project-Based Approach*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, 2012.
18. S Kemmis and R McTaggart, 'Participatory action research: communicative action and the public sphere', in NK Denzin and YS Lincoln (eds), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, SAGE Publications, Inc, Thousand Oaks, 2007, pp. 271–330; Y Beebeejaun, C Durose, J Rees, J Richardson and L Richardson, '"Beyond Text": exploring ethos and method in co-producing research with communities', *Community Development Journal*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2014, pp. 37–53; and A Cornwall and R Jewkes, 'What is participatory research?' *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 41, no. 12, 1995, pp. 1667–1676.
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21. For instance, J Evans, S Faulkhead, R Manaszewicz and K Thorpe, 'Bridging Communities', *Information, Communication and Society*, vol. 15, no. 7, 2012, pp. 1055–1080; C Humphreys, G McCarthy, M Dowling, M Kertesz and R Tropea, 'Improving the archiving of records in the out-of-home care sector', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 67, no. 4, 2014, pp. 509–524; C Lang, L Stillman, H Linger, J Dalvean, B McNamara, J McGrath and R Collins, 'Collaborative research partnerships in the community: Digital divas and doing IT better', *Information, Communication and Society*, vol. 15, no. 7, 2012, pp. 1081–1105; D Pan, G Bradbeer and E Jurries, 'From communication to collaboration: blogging to

troubleshoot e-resources', *The Electronic Library*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2011, pp. 344–353; and, to some extent, K Shilton and R Srinivasan, 'Participatory appraisal and arrangement for multicultural archival collections', *Archivaria* vol. 63, August 2007, pp. 87–101.

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25. Battley, 'Footprints'.
26. S McKemmish, 'Traces: Document, record, archive, archives', in S McKemmish, M Piggott, B Reed, and F Upward (eds), *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society*, Charles Sturt University, Centre for Information Studies, Wagga Wagga, 2005, pp. 12–13.
27. Battley, 'Footprints', p. 106.
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31. ibid, p.14.
32. L Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (second ed), Zed Books, London, 2012; M Caswell, 'Seeing yourself in history: Community Archives and the fight against symbolic annihilation', *The Public Historian*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2014, pp. 26–37; E Wareham, 'From Explorers to Evangelists: Archivists, Recordkeeping and Remembering in the Pacific Islands', *Archival Science*, vol. 2, 2002, pp. 187–207; and in terms of critical theory analysis of race-based power relations, AW Dunbar, 'Introducing critical race theory to archival discourse: getting the conversation started', *Archival Science*, vol. 6, 2006, pp. 109–129.
33. E Wareham, 'From Explorers to Evangelists: Archivists, Recordkeeping and Remembering in the Pacific Islands', *Archival Science*, vol. 2, 2002, pp. 187–207.
34. ibid., p. 187.
35. A Gilliland, 'Permeable Binaries, Societal Grand Challenges, and the Roles of the Twenty-first-century Archival and Recordkeeping Profession', *Archifacts*, December 2015, pp. 12–30.
36. Frank Upward, 'The records continuum', in McKemmish, Piggott, Reed and Upward, pp. 197–222.
37. Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, Bloomsbury Books, London, 1997, p. 161. Michaels is a poet and novelist rather than an archival theorist. The entire quote is: 'Every recorded event is a brick of potential, of precedent, thrown into the future. Eventually the idea will hit someone in the back of the head. This is the duplicity of history: an idea recorded will become an idea resurrected.'
38. Luciana Duranti, 'The impact of digital technology on archival science', *Archival Science*, vol. 1, pp. 39–55.
39. Whatarangi Winiata, 'Survival of the Māori as a people and Māori archives', *Archifacts*, April 2005, pp. 9–19.
40. For example, the Victorian Women's Liberation and Lesbian Feminist Archive at the University of Melbourne, <*https://archives.unimelb.edu.au/resources/subject_guides/homosexuality-and-the-university-of-melbourne/victorian-womens-liberation-and-lesbian-feminist-archive*>, accessed 14 May 2019, and collaboration between the MacMillan Brown Library at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand and Ngāi Tahu people, such as the Ngāi Tahu cultural mapping project – see <*https://ngaitahu.iwi.nz/our_stories/cultural-mapping-unlocks-ngai-tahu-history/*>, accessed 14 May 2019.

41. See, for example, Archives New Zealand, *Government Loan Service* [web page], <*http://archives.govt.nz/services-government-loans*>, accessed 17 May 2019.
42. For example, Bastian and Alexander; M Caswell, J Gabiola, J Zavala, G Brilmyer, and M Cifor, 'Imagining transformative spaces: the personal–political sites of community archives, *Archival Science*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2018, pp. 73–93; K Thorpe, 'Aboriginal Community Archives: a case-study in ethical community research', in Gilliland, McKemmish and Lau, pp. 900–934; and Caswell, pp. 26–37.
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47. C Humphreys, G McCarthy, M Dowling, M Kertesz and R Tropea, 'Improving the archiving of records in the out-of-home care sector', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 67, no. 4, 2014, pp. 509–524; Evans, McKemmish and Rolan; Hoyle, Shepherd, Flinn and Lomas.
48. Bastian and Alexander.
49. Isto Huvila, 'Participatory archive: towards decentralised curation, radical user orientation, and broader contextualisation of records management', *Archival Science*, vol. 8, 2008, pp. 15–36.

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Notes on contributor

Belinda Battley has recently completed a PhD at Monash University, which considered the place of records in community collective memory. A member of the Records Continuum Research Group, her specific areas of research include the significance of place in records creation and use; community constructs of records and recordkeeping; and participatory, reflexive research methodologies. Belinda works as a Senior Archivist at the Auckland office of Archives New Zealand and as a teaching fellow at Victoria University of Wellington.

ORCID

Belinda Battley http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0618-566X