An educative intervention: assisting in the self-assessment of archival practice in 12 community service organisations

Melissa Downing, Michael Jones, Cathy Humphreys, Gavan McCarthy*, Cate O'Neill and Rachel Tropea

Melissa Downing is a Senior Project Archivist at the University of Melbourne's eScholarship Research Centre. Melissa's current project role is Database Manager for the 'Find & Connect' web resource. She recently provided archival training for non-government organisations as part of the Records Access Documentation Project to improve access to records of Forgotten Australians and former child migrants. In 2012, she worked with ten community service organisations in Victoria to complete the Self-Assessment Tool for Archives.

Michael Jones is a Senior Research Archivist at the University of Melbourne's eScholarship Research Centre and Acting Program Manager of the 'Find & Connect' web resource from 2012 to 2013. Since starting at the Centre in 2008, he has worked on numerous paper-based and digital archival projects with academics, government departments and arts and community organisations to explore the potential of structured informatic systems to support organisational and public knowledge.

Cathy Humphreys is the Alfred Felton Chair of Child and Family Welfare – a professorship established through collaboration between the Department of Social Work at the University of Melbourne and the Centre for Excellence for Child and Family Welfare in Victoria – the peak body for 90 child and family welfare agencies. She has developed a strand of research in the area of out-of-home care, where her interest in documentary analysis continues to be explored. The *Who Am I?* project was led by Cathy Humphreys and evolved to bring the highly significant, but neglected, area of recordkeeping in out-of-home care to the fore.

Gavan McCarthy is an Associate Professor and Director of the eScholarship Research Centre at the University of Melbourne and has been a professional member of the Australian Society of Archivists since 1985. Gavan was a Chief Investigator and led the archival strand of the *Who Am I?* project. He has a Masters degree in archives and records from Monash University.

Cate O'Neill, eScholarship Research Centre, University of Melbourne. Cate is the national editor and research coordinator of the 'Find & Connect' web resource project. Before this, she was a postdoctoral research fellow in the School of Social Work, working on the historical strand of the *Who Am I?* project. With an educational background in historical studies, Cate has also worked in archives, including Public Record Office Victoria, where, between 2005 and 2006, she was involved in a project aimed at improving access to the records of the Stolen Generations.

Rachel Tropea is a researcher and archivist at the University of Melbourne eScholarship Research Centre and the Program Manager of the 'Find & Connect' web resource. From 2009 to 2011, she was a member of the *Who Am I?* project

*Corresponding author. Email: gavan.mccarthy@unimelb.edu.au

research team. Rachel is particularly interested in systems and practices that facilitate discovery, understanding and access to information resources among a wide range of people. Rachel was a co-researcher on '"Care" Leaver Access to Records: A Case Study' and has worked closely with access services and heritage staff at the Department of Human Services, community service organisations, advocacy groups, former state wards and academic researchers to develop improved protocols and policy in access service delivery.

There is a need for systemic improvement in the management of care records in Australia. This has been highlighted by government inquiries, media coverage and research literature relating to the significance of records for those who experience out-of-home care. The Who Am I? *project – an interdisciplinary collaboration between historians, social workers and archivists – sought to address this concern and support positive change in 12 participating community service organisations (CSOs) in Victoria. To provide a framework for practice improvement, research archivists on the* Who Am I? *team designed the Self-Assessment Tool for Archives. Based on an action research methodology and influenced by the Records Continuum, this was an 'educative intervention' for the CSOs, as well as the participating archivists.*

Keywords: Records Continuum; archives; records management; community service organisations

Introduction

… we know that there should have been a sizeable file with [a community service organisation] in the eastern suburbs, but when he [an applicant] approached them, they said, 'Well, we don't have the resources to actually look for the file' … And in this case, you know, it had come up to me and I was contacting basically the manager of that agency saying, 'You need to locate this file' and they're going, 'it's in the basement, nothing's catalogued, I just don't have the resources to do it'.[1]

The report following the Victorian Ombudsman's investigation into the storage and management of ward records by the Department of Human Services, Victoria, published in March 2012, highlighted the widespread inadequacies of the current archival practices of organisations in the out-of-home care sector. There were many factors that contributed to this situation. The organisations in question were under-resourced, and available funds were prioritised for front-line services over records and archives management. There was a legacy of poor recordkeeping, which resulted in a massive backlog of materials requiring archival processing. Most organisations did not have a professional archivist, and few of those responsible for managing archives had received any formal training. With little guidance and a lack of specialist organisational knowledge and support, those given the task of managing archives could, in practice, only expect to be successful by effectively reinventing, often in isolation, many of the core archival principles taken for granted by the professional archival community.

For some organisations, these problems might result in lost organisational knowledge or history, without significant impact on the communities in which they operate. But for community service organisations (CSOs) or non-government organisations, the records of people who were in their care are more than merely organisational history and evidence of past practice. They are an invaluable resource for many people seeking to establish aspects of their personal identity and piece together fragmented and sometimes traumatic personal narratives. They may also be the only remaining evidence of relationships to relatives and family. Furthermore, the National Archives of Australia's

January 2013 announcement of a freeze on the destruction of all such records in light of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse[2] highlights the importance of these records as evidence of violations of human rights.

The project, *Who Am I? The Archive as Central to Quality Practice for Current and Past Care Leavers (2008–11)*,[3] sought to support positive change in this marginalised area. The project was based on an action research methodology – an iterative process, which involved interested stakeholders engaging in a process of problem identification, action and review.[4]

The first year of research was to be one of exploration: what do we know already? What do we need to find out? What is working well? What is working poorly? A series of workshops were designed to provide opportunities for all participants to share their knowledge and experience across a range of themes. Participants included practitioners (supporting either children in care or older care leavers accessing their records), managers of CSOs, archivists, policy advisers from the Department of Human Services, academic researchers and care leavers, both old and young.[5] One of the key themes introduced during the workshops was the Records Continuum. This provided a strong conceptual model and, interpreted broadly, helped participants develop a practical mental picture of the world of records related to care leavers.

In addition to the workshops held during the first year of the project, members of the *Who Am I?* team visited the participating CSOs to discuss key issues and concerns relating to their archives. It quickly became clear that there was need for a self-assessment tool. The aim of the tool would be to provide a structure through which organisations could critically evaluate their recordkeeping practices. From the point of view of the *Who Am I?* team, it would also be a means with which to systematically communicate archival concepts.

The distribution of care records in Victoria is characterised by a small number of government and professional archives, but a much larger number of organisations with small collections, staffed by volunteer, part-time or non-professional archivists. Surveys conducted of other collections of archival material provide evidence of similar characteristics. For example, Figures 1 and 2 depict the distribution among repositories of records documented by two projects: the 'Encyclopaedia of Australian Science'[6] and 'North Queensland Archives and Resources'.[7] It is evident from this research that the archival landscape is often dominated by a few organisations with large repositories,
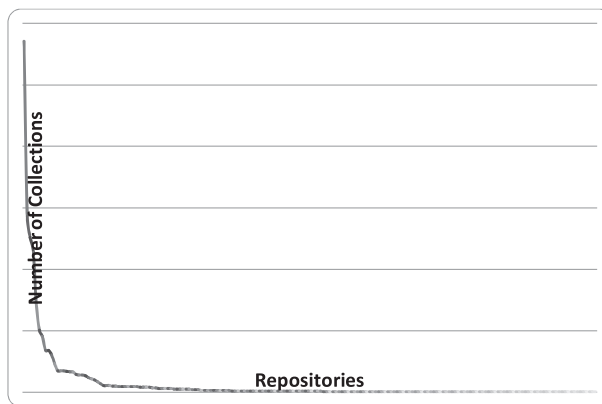

Figure 1.   'Encyclopaedia of Australian Science' – collections per repository.
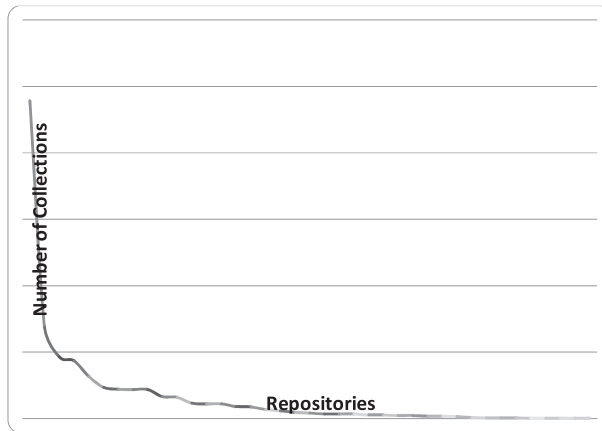
Figure 2. 'North Queensland Archives and Resources' – collections per repository.

but that this is not the whole picture. As the graphs illustrate, there is a long tail of organisations with smaller collections. While each is responsible for relatively few records, together, these are the people that are responsible for a proportion of our cultural heritage equal to (if not larger than) the more visible large repositories.

So the question is: how do we deliver archival training and support to those who live outside of the professional archival community? While bodies like the Australian Society of Archivists run training courses and special interest groups, our experience suggests many small organisations are not aware of these options. And, if they were, time and funding constraints could still mean that they are out of reach. The *Who Am I?* project highlighted the need for archivists to distribute their skills across the archival landscape and look at new ways of communicating with users and communities.

Background and methodology

Until the late 1990s, the literature concerning the importance of records to a person's sense of identity was overwhelmingly concerned with adoption, rather than children in 'care'. This is beginning to change, and there have been a number of studies coming out of the United Kingdom (UK), in particular, which explore the issue of access to records for people who were in 'care' as children.[8]

Internationally, there have been a range of inquiries into historical abuse of children in institutions, since the issue began to come to prominence in the late 1970s. Some of the earliest national inquiries were into the Stolen Generations (Australia, HREOC, 1997) and the UK Parliament's inquiry into the *Welfare of Former British Child Migrants* (1997 to 1998). In 1994 in Canada, a group of women known as the Grandview Survivor's Support Group negotiated a redress agreement with the Government of Ontario. The Canadian Justice Minister commissioned a report in 1997 from the Law Commission of Canada, which resulted in the publication of *Restoring Dignity – Responding to Child Abuse in Canadian Institutions* in 2000. Following the Prime Minister's 2008 apology on behalf of all Canadians for the Indian residential school system, Canada launched a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is still active at the time of writing. Ireland's Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse ran for nine years (2000 to 2009), and the Swedish Commission, established in 2006 to inquire into child

abuse and neglect in institutions and foster homes, did not report until 2011. In 2013, another inquiry into historical institutional abuse began in Northern Ireland.

Records and recordkeeping were important topics in all of these international inquiries, as they were in the Australian Senate inquiries into child migration (2000 to 2001) and children in institutional care (2003 to 2005). The crucial connections between identity and records explored by the *Who Am I?* project resonate throughout all of the national inquiries, as stated within the Scottish Government's 'Shaw Report' (2007):

> Former residents … are responding to a basic human need to search for family and to better understand what happened during their childhood. They live in a society of people who grew up in family homes, knowing their siblings, parents and extended family. Their lack of such knowledge can make them feel isolated, so records can help them trace their own family connections and develop a common sense of belonging … [9]

Scotland's inquiry resulted in significant legislative change, with the passage of the *Public Records Act* in 2011.[10] The *Who Am I?* project has developed links with academics at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland, who are working to address other recommendations of the 'Shaw Report' and develop the Scottish Government's next initiative – the National Confidential Forum for Adult Survivors of Childhood Abuse.[11]

To the authors' knowledge, when it commenced in 2008, *Who Am I?* was the first international example of a project specifically responding to recordkeeping recommendations from inquiries into institutional 'care'. Its approach – engaging academics, past and current care providers, record-holding organisations and care leavers in an action research methodology – was also unique.

The *Who Am I?* project was based on a participatory action research methodology (though Reason and Bradbury suggest that it is an orientation to inquiry, rather than a methodology).[12] Action research is an iterative process that involves interested stakeholders engaging in a process of problem identification, action and review.[13] It is an approach to inquiry that is 'simultaneously productive and self-assessing'[14] and aims to bring about desirable change and organisational learning. While action research embraces a wide range of approaches, there are several principles that are fundamental and to which the *Who Am I?* research adhered. These principles include: the production of practical knowledge that is useful in the everyday lives of the participants; the development of knowledge that contributes to the increased well-being of persons and communities; the development of collaborative relationships with people through participation and engagement; and the involvement of cycles of action and reflection, in which practices are tested, evidence gathered and time is taken to assess, reflect and plan new forms of action. In short, action research seeks to create participative communities of inquiry, in which qualities of engagement, curiosity and question-posing are brought to bear on significant practical issues.[15]

The *Who Am I?* project was a two-stage project, in which small, nested research projects were identified through a first stage of joint inquiry by a large interdisciplinary group of stakeholders. Therefore, the first year of research was one of exploration, in which the participatory action research approach was established. A series of workshops were designed to provide opportunities for all participants to share their knowledge and experience across a range of themes. Participants included practitioners (supporting either children in care or older care leavers accessing their records), managers of CSOs, archivists, policy advisers from the Department of Human Services, academic researchers and care leavers, both old and young.[16] A 'democratic' approach to
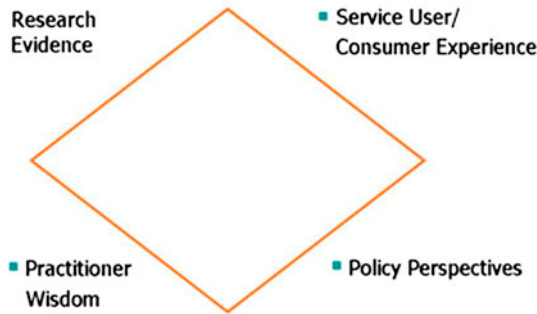
Figure 3.   The knowledge diamond.[17]

knowledge production was established, through using the heuristic of the 'knowledge diamond' (see Figure 3). Each workshop began with an assertion that knowledge from empirical research, care leaver experience, practitioners and policyworkers was all of equal value. Moreover, the research process and knowledge produced would be enriched by bringing together these different perspectives.

The 'knowledge diamond' was enacted at each participatory action workshop, through beginning each workshop with the care leaver experience of a particular issue. For example, the workshop in which archiving of records was the central theme began with an older care leaver bringing along his 'care file' and talking about the meaning, experience, gaps and problems with accessing and understanding his 'care file'.[18] As with other care leaver personal testimonies, this was an emotional, intense and revealing experience for all at the workshop. Through this process, the wider significance of records management was highlighted, and the archivists who were present experienced 'the person within the file' as lying at the heart of their records management. Similarly, the role of the archivists and record managers were elevated from a marginalised area of practice in the out-of-home care area to one of prime importance.

Through the action research process during the first year of the project, two key elements for the inquiry were established. The first involved the introduction of the Records Continuum; the second involved the development of the self-assessment tool to be deployed as a nested research project within the wider *Who Am I?* program of research. They are both discussed below as an aspect of the developing action research methodology for the project. The specific methodology utilised for the self-assessment tool project is outlined later.

The Records Continuum – a sophisticated conceptual framework – might at first seem likely to alienate participants; however, it proved an extremely useful model for those involved. While the model can be difficult to comprehend for those new to archives, it does provide a framework for understanding the complexity and multiplicity of the world of records related to care leavers. Without analysing the continuum model too closely, the overall concept of interdependency and continuity between past, present and future proved very useful (see Figure 4).

The core message was that records need to survive and be understood beyond the life of the people who created them – a concept immediately understandable in the out-of-home care context. Whereas other approaches to recordkeeping, such as the life cycle model, represent records as following a linear course from creation to retention or destruction, the continuum model conveys more succinctly the multiple purposes for
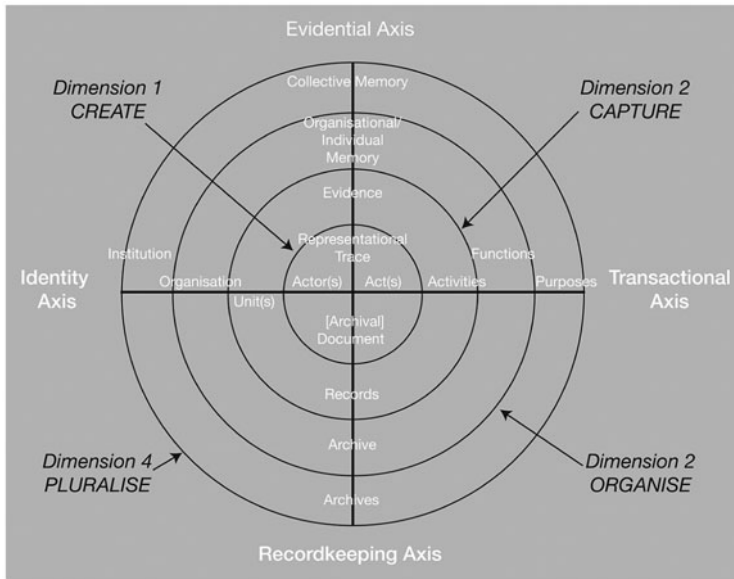
Figure 4.   Records Continuum diagram.[19]

which information might be required over time, whether it be by the organisation, care leavers or the wider community.[20] In the case of care leaver records, it can be argued that client files and other organisational records, created in the past for, and by, agencies and now 'closed' or archived, have become more significant, albeit for reasons quite different to those envisaged when the record was created.

According to the continuum view, the role of recordkeeping professionals includes setting up recordkeeping regimes that can ensure that, *from their creation*, records are managed in ways that enable them to fulfil their multiple purposes, both in the present *and* over time. Setting up such regimes requires organisations to recognise that record-keeping and archiving are key activities and that these are related to every aspect of organisational activity.[21]

The continuum model fostered a new appreciation of the archival issues affecting current practice, past practice, recordkeepers, case workers, care leavers and their families and provided a means by which those involved could develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of the space in which they operated.

Self-assessment tool[22]

During the exploratory phase of the project, members of the *Who Am I?* team visited the participating CSOs to discuss the problems that they were facing in managing their records and how the situation might be improved. Importantly, the CSOs who partici-pated in the project had already identified the need to improve the management of their archives. They had become involved in the project through their relationship with the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare[23] and, in this way, self-selected themselves for support.

The Self-Assessment Tool for Archives was developed in consultation with the CSOs as a practical solution to the concerns that they expressed relating to the

management of archives. The tool was designed to survey current practice in archival management and to facilitate progression through to a well-managed archives, integrated information systems and policies, including managing records access and preservation. When designing the tool, existing surveys were examined, such as the Data Seal of Approval guidelines,[24] which aim to assess the management of research data, and the Trustworthy Repositories Audit & Certification document[25] for digital repositories. However, none of the assessment tools found by the team were suitable for the target audience or the wider explorative aims of the project. The approach and deployment of these existing tools as an adjunct to managerial and regulatory practices lay in stark contrast to the participatory action research methodology of the *Who Am I?* project.

The Self-Assessment Tool for Archives was completed by 12 CSOs in 2010 and again by ten of the same CSOs in 2012.[26] On both occasions, the tool was completed as a collaborative process between CSO staff and members of the *Who Am I?* project team, working together to systematically gather data concerning the current status of their archival programs.[27]

The self-assessment tool is divided into four main sections:

- organisational policy and staff,
- collection management and storage,
- preservation and disaster recovery, and
- access and interconnectability.

Within each section, there is a set of guideline statements. For example, the organisation has a mission statement and related policy documents that reflect a commitment to the long-term retention and management of records and archival materials.

For each guideline, the organisation made an assessment and scored themselves according to the following scale, as well as providing an explanation of their response:

(1) We have not done anything yet.
(2) We have some ideas and are discussing this.
(3) We have commenced implementation.
(4) We have gone as far as we can, given our current limitations.
(5) We have fully implemented this guideline.

Over the course of the project, the rating scale proved a useful indicator, allowing each organisation to evaluate the progress that they had made and assess how they might be able to progress further. Due to the qualitative nature of the tool, statistical analysis or comparison between organisations is only possible to a limited extent. However, it is possible to draw some conclusions from the results and from the information gathered during the process. For example, the average score for all but one question increased, and the overall average went up 20 points from 64 in 2010 to 84 out of a possible 130 in 2012, suggesting that there was an improvement in practice amongst the organisations.

It was also clear that each organisation had areas of strength and weakness, with no one organisation scoring themselves consistently high on every question. For example, in 2012, one organisation scored themselves '5' ('we have fully implemented this guideline') on seven questions, but also '1' ('we have not done anything yet') on seven questions.

The area of archival practice that showed the strongest average across questions in 2010 and 2012 was collection management and storage, though there were nevertheless some questions on which a small number of organisations were yet to make any

progress. Generally, organisations thought the storage of their paper-based records was good, with many using third-party storage providers. However, photographs were consistently raised as a concern, due to their lack of documentary control. Similarly, there was a lack of confidence about the storage of digital files.

The area that showed the greatest improvement between 2010 and 2012 was preservation and disaster recovery. The aggregated average score across the nine questions in this section increased from 17.9 in 2010 to 27.8 in 2012. Many organisations had taken steps to mitigate the risks of records deteriorating – for example, storing them appropriately and backing up servers. However, several organisations still lacked an explicit preservation plan. Disaster planning had been considered by most organisations, and steps had been taken to mitigate the risk of records being destroyed. Initially, there was a lack of clarity about the term 'mission critical', which suggested that there might be a lack of attention directed towards this issue. However, once respondents understood the terminology (and associated intervention), most organisations were confident that these records were appropriately managed.

A positive outcome, from the perspective of organisational policy and staffing, was the creation within two organisations of new roles, since first completing the Self-Assessment Tool for Archives in 2010. Over the course of the project, a clear improvement in the archiving policy area was shown, and respondents commented that the sharing of good policy documents between organisations had been particularly helpful.

In a highly litigious sector, restricting access to third party information is a major consideration when releasing records. As a result, many raised the issue of redacting or blanking out third-party information, in response to question 4.3 on managing access to personal and private information. Assessing what information to release was often not the responsibility of the archivist or person retrieving the files, thus emphasising the need for a clear policy to ensure that the principles guiding disclosure and redaction are appropriately applied.

While a few organisations could identify that their archival documentation met the International Council on Archives (ICA) standards, *General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G))*[28] and *International Standard Archival Authority Record For Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families (ISAAR(CPF))*,[29] others were unaware of such standards. A couple of organisations acknowledged that they lacked anyone with strong archival expertise and that they would benefit from a sharing of knowledge within, and between, the CSO and archival sectors.

Conclusion

The design and implementation of the Self-Assessment Tool for Archives has been an important action research activity, raising awareness of recordkeeping issues and providing a framework in which to improve practice. Over the course of the project, the participating community service organisations developed a more detailed understanding of the current inadequacies of their recordkeeping and an enthusiasm and commitment to change. In a sector where many of those responsible for archives have little to no archival training, the ability to collaborate on the self-assessment tool with professional archivists was extremely beneficial. It is now our intention to develop the tool, so that it can continue to be used successfully beyond the life of the project, when assistance may not be available.

Throughout the project, the Records Continuum proved a very useful model, offering a practical foundation for analysis of existing systems and improving the

management of records. A clear finding from the project was that artificial lines had been drawn between the roles of archivists, case managers and other workers and between past and current practice. The continuum model provided a means of visualising records as archival from creation and the interdependency of past, present and future. Reflecting on the experiences of care leavers, records were easily understood as important to multiple stakeholders beyond the organisation. Furthermore, records were now seen as being at the forefront of all organisational activity, rather than as a by-product.

However, despite the progress that was made within the time frame of the project, there still remain many obstacles to embedding better archival practices. Given the conclusions of the Victorian Ombudsman's report into the storage and management of ward records by the Department of Human Services, it is clear that this is not an isolated problem.

For the CSOs involved in the project (and, anecdotally, more broadly), resourcing remains a major issue, as does raising awareness throughout their organisations. It was felt by those participants responsible for managing archives that, without continued management support, very little could be achieved. As noted by one participant: 'A case or strategic plan has to be made for resources in this area.'[30] Over the course of our work on this project and more broadly, we rarely see concrete evidence that the professional archival community is aiding this situation by engaging with small archives in a concerted way or influencing wider public opinion:

> archives and archivists are very poorly understood in the community, a situation that continues to hold us back professionally and puts the archival heritage itself in jeopardy … most people have minimal knowledge of archives/records work, much less understand the vital role it plays in society.[31]

The *Who Am I?* project highlights the opportunity for archivists to widen their boundary of practice and influence change. Encouraging awareness of archival issues within organisations, across the sector and out into the broader community is essential, in order to avoid regression to poor and ineffective practices. Creative interdisciplinary projects are potentially one of the vehicles through which better practices for the future can be developed.

Acknowledgements

Endnotes

1. Victorian Ombudsman, 'Investigation into the Storage and Management of Ward Records by the Department of Human Services', March 2012, p. 21, available at <*http://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/resources/documents/REPORT__Investigation_into_the_storage_and_management_of_ward_records_by_DHS_-_Mar_2012.pdf*>, accessed 28 February 2013.
2. National Archives of Australia, 'Records Disposal Freezes: Records Relating to Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse', available at <*http://www.naa.gov.au/records-management/agency/keep-destroy-transfer/freezes/index.aspx#section2*>, accessed 26 February 2013.
3. C Humphreys, S Swain, G McCarthy, A Brown-May (Chief Investigators), C Clare, M Bamblett, C Asquini (Partner Investigators), *Who Am I? The Archive as Central to Quality*

Practice for Current and Past Care Leavers (Forgotten Australians), *Australian Research Council Linkage Project LE0883232, 2008–2011*.

4. RL Ison, 'Systems Thinking and Practice for Action Research', in PW Reason and H Bradbury (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, 2nd edn, Sage, London, 2008, pp. 139–58.

5. C Humphreys and M Kertesz, '"Putting the Heart Back into the Record": Personal Records to Support Young People in Care', *Adoption & Fostering,* vol. 36, no. 1, April 2012, pp. 27–39.

6. 'Encyclopaedia of Australian Science', eScholarship Research Centre, Project Code EOAS-2007-750, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, available at <*http://www.eoas.info/*>, accessed 24 May 2013. Graph based on data extracted during February 2013.

7. 'North Queensland Archives and Resources', eScholarship Research Centre Project Code NQAR-2011-966, University of Melbourne, Melbourne. Graph based on data extracted during February 2013.

8. See, for example, Gillian Pugh, *Unlocking the Past: The Impact of Access to Barnardo's Childcare Records*, Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, 1999; Jim Goddard, Julia Feast and Derek Kirton, 'A Childhood on Paper: Managing Access to Child Care Files by Post-Care Adults', *Adoption & Fostering*, vol. 32, no. 2, Summer 2008, pp. 50–62; Jim Goddard, Suellen Murray and Zachari Duncalf, 'Access to Child-Care Records: A Comparative Analysis of UK and Australian Policy and Practice', *British Journal of Social Work*, available at <*http://bjsw.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2012/03/07/bjsw.bcs004.abstract*>, accessed 24 May 2013.

9. Scottish Government, *Historical Abuse Systemic Review: Residential Schools and Children's Homes in Scotland, 1950–1995*, Edinburgh, 2007, p. 118.

10. See National Archives of Scotland, 'Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 – Introduction', available at <*http://www.nas.gov.uk/recordKeeping/publicRecordsActIntroduction.asp*>, accessed 24 May 2013.

11. The *Who Am I?* project and the national 'Find & Connect' web resource project (available at <*www.findandconnect.gov.au*>, accessed 24 May 2013) that succeeded it have provided international models for the team at CELCIS (the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland). A recent conference paper proposed that Scotland follow the Australian example and develop an online public knowledge space about the history of 'care' in Scotland – see Andrew Kendrick and Hugh Hagan, 'Lost Childhoods: Accessing Personal Records and Information about Care Placements', paper presented at the Centre for Archive and Information Studies Conference *Democratising or Privileging: The Future of Access to Archives*, Dundee, 25–26 April 2013.

12. P Reason and H Bradbury (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participatory Inquiry in Practice*, 2nd edn, Sage, London, 2008.

13. RL Ison, 'Systems Thinking and Practice for Action Research', in PW Reason and H Bradbury (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, 2nd edn, Sage, London, 2008.

14. B Torbert, *Action Inquiry: The Secret of Timely and Transforming Leadership*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, 2004.

15. Reason and Bradbury (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Action Research*, p. 1.

16. Humphreys and Kertesz, "Putting the Heart Back into the Record", pp. 27–39.

17. R Tropea, C Elkner and G McCarthy, 'Archiving: Moving Forward as a Community – Report of the Workshop Held 15 April 2010', p. 10, available at <http://www.cfecfw.asn.au/sites/www.cfecfw.asn.au/files/Who%20am%20I%20paper-Archiving%20Workshop%20Report%20by%20R.%20Tropea,%20G.%20McCarthy,%20C.%20Elkner.pdf>, accessed 28 February 2013.

18. Humphreys and Kertesz, "Putting the Heart into the Record", pp. 27–39.

19. A Pederson, 'Understanding Ourselves and Others: Australian Archivists and Temperament', *Archival Science*, vol. 3, no. 3, September 2003, pp. 223–74.

20. C Elkner, V Selakovic and R Tropea, 'Access to Records for People Who Were in Out-of-Home Care: Moving Beyond Third Dimension Archival Practice', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 40, no. 1, March 2012, pp. 29–41.

21. Reproduction of the diagram in Sue McKemmish, 'Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: A Continuum of Responsibility', available at <*http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/groups/rcrg/publications/recordscontinuum-smckp2.html*>, accessed 26 February 2013.

22. See, for example, S McKemmish, 'Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: A Continuum of Responsibility', available at <*http://infotech.monash.edu/research/groups/rcrg/publications/recordscontinuum-smckp2.html*>, accessed 21 May 2013.

23. Tropea, Elkner and McCarthy, 'Archiving: Moving Forward as a Community', p. 10.
24. This section has largely been drawn from an unpublished report on the Self-Assessment Tool for Archives: M Downing, L Campbell and M Kertesz, 'Self-Assessment Tool for Archives Report', July 2012.
25. 'Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare', available at <*http://www.cfecfw.asn.au/*>, accessed 23 May 2013.
26. 'Data Seal of Approval', available at <*http://datasealofapproval.org*>, accessed 23 May 2013.
27. Center for Research Libraries, 'Trustworthy Repositories Audit & Certification: Criteria and Checklist', available at <*http://www.crl.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/pages/trac_0.pdf*>, accessed 23 May 2013.
28. Due to staff availability and changes, two organisations were unfortunately unable to complete the self-assessment tool in 2012. It is hoped that the research team will have the opportunity to collaborate with these organisations in 2013 and continue the process of self-assessment.
29. Ethical clearance for both the action research workshops and archiving project was gained through the University of Melbourne's Human Research Ethics Committee. All participating organisations were provided with their own data from the self-assessment tool, and a final report was produced, in which all data was de-identified. Separate ethical clearance was gained for the first year participatory action workshops and the ensuing research using the self-assessment tool through the University of Melbourne's Human Ethics Research Committee. Each organisation involved in collecting data for the self-assessment tool had their own data returned. A research report with deidentified aggregate data was also circulated to all those involved in the project and provided the basis for a further workshop. Both this paper and a further paper written for a social work audience provide steps towards generalising some of the findings from this case study action research to a broader constituency.
30. *ISAD (G): General International Standard Archival Description* was adopted by the Committee on Descriptive Standards, Stockholm, 19–22 September 1999.
31. *International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families* was adopted by the Committee on Descriptive Standards, Canberra, 27–30 October 2003.

Appendix

Self-Assessment Tool for Archives – questions

1. Organisational policy and staff: does the organisation have the right policy and statement of purpose documents in place?

1.1 The organisation has a 'statement of purpose' and related policy documents that reflect a commitment to the long-term retention and management of records and archival materials.

1.2 The organisation has a 'statement of purpose' that reflects a commitment to providing appropriate, supported access to its records, in line with the standards set out in reports such as *Lost Innocents*, *Bringing Them Home* and *Forgotten Australians*.

1.3. The organisation has specific policy documents around their archival collection regarding what material they take in and access to that material.

1.4 The organisation has the necessary staff to support its archival and records management functions and services.

1.5 The organisation provides training and development opportunities to staff involved in archives and records management.

2. Collection management and storage: does the organisation have control over the archival records in its custody?

2.1 The organisation stores its archival materials in appropriate and secure repositories for:

- paper-based records (including photographs),
- digital files,
- material objects – furniture, clothing, plaques and so on, and
- audiovisual material.

2.2 The organisation has registered all of its archival material – that is, it has surveyed its holdings and has documentary control over all records at a minimum baseline level (for example, pathways – archival descriptions).

2.3 The organisation has documentation (databases, finding aids, indexes, lists of holdings and so on) that enables it to locate and access material within the collection.

2.4 The organisation can unambiguously identify all items in its collection. This means that each archival item has a unique identifier that is marked on the item itself and used in all cataloguing systems (guides, indexes, databases and so on), so that they can be referenced with confidence.

3. Preservation and disaster recovery

3.1 The organisation has an appropriate preservation plan for the long-term conservation of its:

- paper-based records (including photographs),
- digital files,
- material objects – furniture, clothing, plaques and so on, and
- audiovisual material.

NOTE: This could include off-site storage of copies of digital files; digitisation and separate storage for key paper-based records and material objects.

3.2 The organisation has a disaster recovery plan in the event of flood, fire and so on for:

- paper-based records (including photographs),
- digital files,
- material objects – furniture, clothing, plaques and so on, and
- audiovisual material.

3.3 The organisation has identified and made copies of mission critical records and has them stored in a different location from the originals for:

- paper-based records (including photographs),
- digital files,
- material objects – furniture, clothing, plaques and so on, and
- audiovisual material.

4. Access and interconnectability

4.1 The organisation has information about its collection and access policies available to the public.

4.2 The organisation has control over, and access to (or copies of), all records and information related to the organisation's essential operations and activities.

4.3 The organisation can systematically identify information that is suitable for the public domain and where access to personal and private information can be sensitively managed.

4.4 The organisation has an information management system that uniquely identifies in a consistent way all key entities – people, places, organisations, events and so on important to its history – that could be used internally as a means of linking materials and linking to authority records in external places – for example, the National Library of Australia.

4.5 The organisation has implemented its archival documentation according to ISO standards *ISAD(G) General International Standard Archival Description* and *ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families*. (If the organisation has referenced other standards/guidelines, what are they?)