



ARTICLE

Created, Intended, Articulated and Projected: Four Perceptions of Purpose Around the Archival Document for Expert Users

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Abstract

This article presents a new model of four perceptions of purpose relating to the archival document in archival organisations. It explains created purpose (it is what it is), intended purpose (it is what the creating or host organisation attests it as), articulated purpose (it is what the archival organisation presents it as) and projected purpose (it is what the user signifies it as) and outlines why an understanding of these may be useful for expert users in research. The article also references and supports discourse covering the conceptualisation and critical reflection of users and their interaction with the archival document.

Keywords: *Archival document; Archival practice; Expert users; Perceptions of archives; Purpose of archives.*

User perceptions around the different purposes of the archival document are not much discussed in archival literature. This article helps to address this by discussing a new model that formulates four perceptions of purpose as they relate to the archival document in an archival organisation. It explains each purpose and outlines why an understanding of each may provide helpful insight for highly proficient and informed (expert) users who interact with the archival document as part of their research. The four perceptions of purpose discussed are *created purpose* (the archival document is perceived as evidence of an initial task), *intended purpose* (the archival document is perceived as evidence of actions or decisions), *articulated purpose* (the archival document is perceived as evidence of a curated account), and *projected purpose* (the archival document is perceived as evidence of repurposed narrative). It is the intention of the article to also support discourse relating to the conceptualisation and critical reflection of the archival document's creation, (re)use and management over time, as well as discussion concerning expert users' reflective practices around the archival document.

The four perceptions of purpose model is based on critical analysis of archival processes and user engagement, published literature, and traditional notions of archiving and record-keeping epistemology. It is also influenced by the records continuum theory¹ in terms of its consideration

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of the plurality of the archival document as evidence of a transaction, a concatenated record, and a (re)presented item. Within the article, each perception of purpose is closely influenced by the places the archival document has been created, amended, and managed as a record, and selected, described and managed as an archive. It presumes established forms of archival arrangement within the archival organisation holding the archival document; particularly those forms to do with custody² and ‘the traditional European theory of arrangement as constituted by the principles of respect des fonds and respect for original order’.³ However, while the article recognises that the archival document is evidence of the direct relationship between record and event, it also accepts that the record can serve as a narrative,⁴ interpreted as ‘a sign, a signifier, a meditated and ever-changing construction’.⁵ Finally, the article presumes that the expert user takes an active role in seeking out and addressing the various purpose-related questions and issues discovered in their research involving archival documents.

With these assumptions in mind, the article aims to contribute to discussion and ‘on-going critical interpretation’⁶ around the user and the archival document. Methodologically, it uses a review of literature to create a form of think piece that discusses how an awareness of four different ways of archival document can be perceived. This can help expert users identify many of the diverse influences affecting the presentation of the archival document covers a range of topics. These include ‘small histories’ of individual lives;⁷ exclusion and misrepresentation;⁸ the archivist-historian relationship;⁹ business history;¹⁰ ethnographic analysis;¹¹ and feeling, emotion and affect.¹² However, most discourse does not seem to include discussion relating to users and how they perceive the purposes of the archives they use.¹³

Identifying the influences affecting their interaction with the archival document can help users such as expert users determine why the archival document ‘is presented the way it is’ by the archival organisation, in turn informing how expert users critique or champion the archival document to potentially ‘transformative affect’.¹⁴ These influences can support users’ ability to address questions such as ‘why does the archival organisation describe it this way? Why is access restricted?’ ‘Why are there gaps?’ and to start to identify some of the agendas operating around the archival organisation itself.¹⁵ The answers that are obtained can help expert users to understand the different reasons why an archival document was created, used, and kept regardless of their own epistemological lens. The four perceptions of purpose model can also assist users to gain a better understanding of the archival document as a record, the archival organisation that holds it, and their own reactions to both aspects. This understanding can in turn help expert users to consider whether their interaction with the archival document is affected ‘of, by or for’ the document’s creating or host organisation, ‘of, by or for’ the archival organisation that manages it, ‘of, by or for’ the expert user themselves, or a mixture of all three.

Situating terminology

The terms used in this article have the potential to be perceived differently, depending on the reader’s own understanding of archives. Archival theory and praxis are not fixed but open to critical review, creating new and ongoing definitions of the archive as an ‘epistemic thing’.¹⁶ This results in the archival document being a potential ‘nexus of evidence’ from which multiple interpretations can be made, based on influences like content, location, description, accessibility, documentation and the epistemological understandings of the user. Therefore, the following definitions have been provided to demarcate the key terms used in this article.

Archival document is defined as a purposefully collected physical or digital record that provides evidence and/or ‘tells a story’ – one which is intentionally held and managed within an archival organisation (usually as part of a larger collection). This definition is derived from the

Continuum Theory¹⁷ as the theory does not aggregate document, record and archive, allowing the archival document in its ‘recordness’ to be viewed as (among other things) evidence within the process of recordkeeping.¹⁸ Accepting that evidence as a concept can be questioned,¹⁹ the archival document can still be defined through the traces of its creation, re-creation, use and re-use as a record. While the term ‘archival document’ may not always reflect the varied nuances around the archival item (particularly oral sources or individuals and communities who are subjects rather than creators), it provides a useful confinement of scope when it comes to the discussion of the four perceptions of purpose in this article, as the more generic term ‘archive’ can encompass item, group, collection, place, concept, or movement.

Expert user is used to determine the levels of knowledge and experience a user may need to fully apply the four perceptions of purpose to an archival document. Typically, an expert user will be an experienced and knowledgeable researcher who is invested in their research topic²⁰ and who creates recognised authoritative outputs such as articles, books, websites and reports. Expert users are often ‘self-conscious and politically-attuned users of the archive’²¹ who are actively engaged in the process of conceptualisation and critical reflection around the archival document and how they are using it. Expert users may be historians, professional researchers or academics, or else non-professionals with extensive research and/or life experience.

Archival organisation is used to include the different communities, repositories or even individuals that purposely maintain archival documents. For repositories, these may be mainstream, alternative, physical or virtual. It is expected that examples of archival organisations are validated by some ‘level of legitimation or authorisation’²² as well as by evidence of ongoing stewardship.²³ This allows them to be viewed by users as an authentic and reliable place where archival documents are managed, regardless of other influences and agendas.

Creating organisation and *host organisation* are used to define the organisations that caused the archival document to be (among other things) created, received, used, re-used, amended, described, organised and stored as a record prior to it being archived. These organisations can include individuals, groups, communities, and agencies that are private, public, or voluntary. Often the creating organisation and the host organisation are the same.

Presented is the word used to cover the various custodial processes and services carried out by the archival organisation as they make the archival document available to users. This includes selection, listing, cataloguing, boxing, shelving and the creation of metadata, information systems and finding aids. It can also include guidelines and rules around donorship, collaboration participation, access and use, provision of working spaces, and exhibition and display.

Interaction is used to summarise the processes involved to create a state where the user can critically reflect,²⁴ conceptualise and/or ‘make meaning’ in relation to the archival documents they use within an archival organisation. Interaction includes the user’s emotional responses to the archival document itself,²⁵ and encompasses the notion of information use behaviour and the mental acts involved in finding, accessing, and engaging with the archival document within an archival organisation, interpreting it, and ‘incorporating the information found into the person’s existing knowledge base’.²⁶ This may involve reflective practices such as ‘awareness of constructive and literary aspect, the specific characteristics of the sources, and the narratives built in archives and documents as well as the narratives derived from them’.²⁷

Representing the four perceptions of purpose

The four perceptions of purpose that can be applied to an archival document within an archival organisation are represented in the model below (see Figure 1). Each perception of purpose is then discussed in turn.

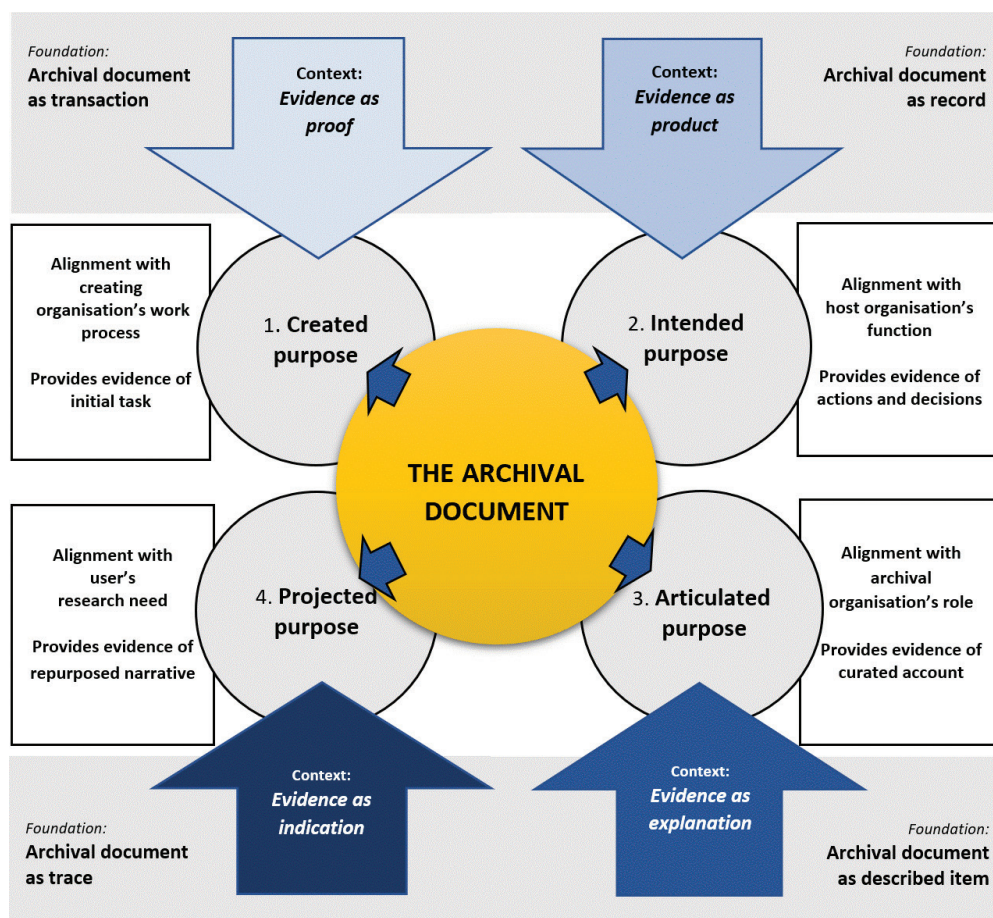


Figure 1. Four perceptions of purpose that can be applied to the archival document within an archival organisation.

Created purpose

Created purpose invites the user into the organisational perspective, but its scope is narrow due to the limited nature of the original intent behind the creation of the 'source' record. Through the lens of created purpose, the archival document is viewed as a transactional record – one that is often created as accepted proof of a minor and/or repeated transaction that has occurred within prescribed and pre-set tasks or processes.²⁸ For example, a financial transaction resulting as a receipt, or a legal transaction as a signed document. A useful foundational explanation of this concept is 'archival documents first and foremost provide evidence of the transactions of which they are a part – from this they derive their meanings and informational value'.²⁹ The term 'transaction' is not always easy to define from a recordkeeping perspective, although it is often used to explain the concept of record and its evidential purpose in the sense of 'transacting business of any kind, whether by governments, businesses, community organisations or private individuals'.³⁰ This usually occurs 'in the normal course of... business activity'.³¹

By presenting the archival document as evidence of a transaction, the perception of created purpose raises the user's awareness of the value of the archival document in its contextual integrity as a 'small something', regardless of greater meanings that can be applied to it. That is, it is what it is. This then bids the question: *why did the creating organisation generate it this way?* hopefully

producing answers that demonstrate an understanding that something happened because evidence exists that a transaction occurred – a receipt was produced, or a document was signed.

This more concentrated insight into the transactions that make up the creating organisation's systems and processes can be a useful way of interpreting its larger workings. For instance, it may help an expert user to find out more about the original 'place'³² of creation and the tasks, systems and processes that brought about the transaction (and evidence of it). Such knowledge can also help the expert user to confirm the existence of common incidences within the day-to-day business of an organisation and the 'experience of the parties to the transaction',³³ helping them to better judge the meaning of any deviations or aberrations. For example, finding an unsigned document within a group of signed ones may help to establish whether this occurred because of human error, a deliberate action, or unfinished business.

Intended purpose

Intended purpose, like created purpose, invites the user into the organisational perspective, but the scope is broader, covering the various organisational intentions behind the creation and use of the archival document as a record. That is, via the lens of intended purpose, the 'recordness' of the archival document is established through the existing evidence of its business activity, its role as an information asset, and its authenticity, reliability, integrity and useability over time.³⁴ As a concept, intended purpose helps to identify content that can give an account of what happened to an archival document before it was processed as 'an archive'.³⁵

As intended purpose is perceived this way, the archival document can be explained as one of many records the creating or host organisation used within the context of a function or activity. Intended purpose considers the archival document '*as a record*' rather than '*from a record*', understanding it as a form of mediated 'evidence as product' within a structured organisational context. This in turn raises the question: *why did the creating organisation represent it this way?* providing opportunity to consider the organisation's original attestation of intentions and decision-making in the creation of the archival document. It also invites consideration of the contemporary processes affecting the conscious formation and official collection of records as products and assets, and deliberation around the contemporaneous infrastructures³⁶ and record-keeping systems impacting the formation and use of the archival document as a record. Duff and Harris claim that 'information about record-keeping systems, functions, and activities... plays an essential role in understanding the deeper contextual meaning of records',³⁷ something that Trace attributes to the fact that they are 'causally affecting' the processes they measure.³⁸ This information may help expert users establish how creating and host organisations presented and mediated themselves through their classification structures and/or metadata, as well as identify existing links between the archival document and others within the same aggregates such as archival fonds or archival series. This information can also assist expert users to establish how an archival document 'was presented' in the classification structures that noted its existence as a record and ascertain the archival document's intended purpose and meaning in relation to other, existing, archival documents that are contextually related to it. For example, to determine whether modifications or corrections to schemes or proposals in archival documents indicate competing viewpoints, human error, external influences or changing organisational priorities.

A perception of intended purpose can therefore help to establish the organisational intent behind the creation of the archival document as a record (as implied through associated classification structures and metadata), so it can be compared with the documented result (as demonstrated through the content and metadata of the record itself). This perception also provides opportunities for insight into the creating and host organisations' own tacit (unspoken and/or assumed) and explicit (acknowledged and/or stated) knowledge relating to its narratives and experiences (that is, its 'doings, sayings and relatings').³⁹ This provides another way of seeing the evidence of the

intent behind organisational functions or activities in addition to the evidence of the functions or activities themselves. For example, a contract may provide just as much evidence of a need to demonstrate success as evidence that the contract was successfully completed.

Articulated purpose

Articulated purpose again invites the user into the organisational perspective, but this is focused on the archival organisation responsible for the archival document. It considers how the archival organisation presents and describes the archival document as a record, and whether these are affected by the organisation's custodial viewpoint.⁴⁰ An archival organisation's custodial viewpoint varies considerably from archival organisation to archival organisation.⁴¹ This is because it is based on the archival organisation's own understanding of its identity in terms of role, place, purpose, functions, traditions, languages and cultures, and its expressions of each of these aspects in various physical, situational, political, emotional, interventional or other ways.⁴²

Through the lens of articulated purpose, an expert user can consider how access tools used within the archival organisation (such as shelving, boxing, metadata, indexes, descriptions and links) display, describe, explain and contextualise the archival document on behalf of the creating and host organisations who were responsible for it as a record, and the people who are represented by these organisations. This includes not only capacity to 'protect and preserve records'⁴³ but also to 'legitimize and sanctify certain documents while negating and destroying others; and provide access to selected sources while controlling the researchers and conditions under which they may examine the archival record'.⁴⁴

While most archival organisations apply common archival principles such as provenance and original order to give 'archives their context and structure',⁴⁵ these principles are expressed differently from organisation to organisation. Being aware of why the archival document is described and presented the way it is by the archival organisation can help expert users to usefully question the archival organisation's descriptions around it in light of various drivers such as the organisation's purpose (we are created to collect these things), aims (we hope to achieve these things), resources (we have the money to do these things), personnel (we have these people to do these things), underlying methodology (we do things this way), and prescribed audience (we do things for these groups of people). Combined with an awareness of intended purpose, an expert user can better understand the fullness of the collection in which the archival document sits and the archival organisation's own custodial approach, helping them to determine aspects such as who 'owns' the archival document, whether it has a full description or is 'divorced' from the context of its creation,⁴⁶ whether there is a 'misleading impression of completeness'⁴⁷ or it exists as part of an 'archival diaspora' divided across institutions.⁴⁸

The different services around the acquisition and management of the archival document (notably, transfer/donation, selection/appraisal, arrangement and description) can also be reviewed through the lens of articulated purpose. These services can be seen as another expression of the archival organisation's abstract conceptualisations around its perceived identity, resulting in an operating environment that is formed as much by the organisation's perceptions of its place and purpose as it is by available resources. For example, a small community-created archives may provide services that focus on stewardship and 'facilitating community access',⁴⁹ while a national archives may present services that fit their perceived role as guardian and 'former of national identity'.⁵⁰ Consequently, an awareness of articulated purpose can result in the question: *why did the archival organisation explain it this way?* helping users to identify the reasons why the archival organisation presents the archival document the way it does.

An awareness of articulated purpose can also help expert users establish how arrangement and description practices are explained to the user by the archival organisation, since 'numerous tacit narratives are hidden in the acts of categorization, codification and labelling'.⁵¹ One

way to ascertain this is through the role of the archivist.⁵² Archivists can be seen as the ‘principal actor in defining, choosing, and constructing the archive *that remains*, and then in representing and presenting that surviving archival trace to researchers’.⁵³ An understanding of articulated purpose can help the expert user to better explain the role of the archivist in relation to the representation of the archival document by the archival organisation.

Projected purpose

A perception of *projected purpose* can be considered broadly, moving away from the organisational perspective and focusing on the variety of unbounded understandings or new imaginings that can occur out of the user’s interaction with the archival document. An expert user may use the archival document as trace or partial evidence to indicate the existence of larger issues, hidden stories, or told or untold narratives, based on their own philosophical, social or critical stance and their levels of experience, reflexive practice and domain knowledge.⁵⁴

Through the lens of projected purpose, the expert user can be invited to consider how their own research methodologies, epistemological strategies, recognised subjectivities and confirmation biases match the indications they find within the ‘constrained evidence’ of the archival document and its subsequent representation by the archival organisation. This invitation creates opportunities for the expert user to consider the narratives they have constructed around the archival document and address the question: *why do I ‘see’ the archival document this way?* It helps the expert user to decide what the archival document signifies for them in terms of which parts of the archival document’s ‘presented story’ they will accept, which they will ignore, and what any discovered gaps or ambiguities may mean for their research.

In relation to the other three perceptions of purpose (created, intended and articulated), a perception of projected purpose can also provide opportunities for the expert user to reflect on how far the archival document can be relied on to provide evidence in areas it was never created to provide evidence for. For example, they may need to ‘acknowledge that things that at first seem relevant may later prove to be irrelevant, and that different people will form different judgments about what is relevant to a given issue’.⁵⁵ This, however, still needs to be balanced with the acknowledgement that the archival document is still ‘archival’ in that it represents some facet of truth, even if it’s just its ability to be a reliable representation of what happened⁵⁶ as a form of ‘socially constructed and maintained entity’,⁵⁷ or else a reliable perception of it.

Four possible benefits of understanding the four perceptions of purpose

The rest of this article summarises four possible benefits that may come out of an expert user’s understanding of the four perceptions of purpose, collectively referred to from this point as ‘purpose knowledge’. Purpose knowledge can aid understanding of the archival organisation’s influence on the archival document, facilitate the identification of gaps in archival understanding that may bias or hinder research, assist with identifying the validity of any ‘purpose projection’, and support research around the user’s interaction with the archival document.

Purpose knowledge can aid understanding of the archival organisation’s influence on the archival document

Purpose knowledge can help users to better understand the archival organisation’s influence on the archival document, particularly around selection description and presentation. Decker, a business historian, says that ‘each organizational archive needs to be understood on its own terms’ when used for research⁵⁸ and others have similar views.⁵⁹ As a result, users need to understand ‘all significant interventions by the archives itself in the history of the record’,⁶⁰ both social and technical.⁶¹ Purpose knowledge can help users identify significant interventions to the archival document by aiding the identification of classification systems, processes of use and re-use, and rules around ownership,

provenance, destruction and transfer. This in turn can help them to gain an awareness of the different subjectivities around the perceived value of the document as presented by the metadata and descriptive information, as ‘notions of value are always contextual’.⁶² It can also help them to identify possible (positive or negative) assumption or bias in the selection, description and presentation of the archival document and likely reasons for these. For instance, identification may help the expert user determine whether assumption or bias stems from organisational collection mandates or forms of community representation, or unrecognised colonial thinking or less than ideal ‘temporary’ descriptions from 20th century finding aids. Alternatively, purpose knowledge can help the expert user identify instances of ‘inclusive description’,⁶³ where the archival organisation acknowledges descriptive tensions around how the archival document was and is represented.

This ability to identify evidence of assumption or bias (and how this is addressed by the archival organisation) can help the expert user become more aware of other influences on the archival document as well. Influences include the level by which the archival evidence is constrained through the archival organisation’s selection, positioning and description of the archival document, the portrayal of original authors⁶⁴ and subject matter, the agenda displayed in the archival organisation’s custodial practices⁶⁵ or the role of the archivist in determining access.⁶⁶ There may also be influences outside of the archival organisation’s control, such as ‘the personal agenda of visitors and users and the wider economic and social contexts within which the institution operates’.⁶⁷ Identifying evidence of assumption or bias can create a greater awareness of the potential range of ‘custodial contradictions’⁶⁸ in relation to an archival organisation’s stewardship practices, particularly those around ‘positionality, subjectivity and representation’.⁶⁹ This can help the expert user to usefully question their own reaction to the archival organisation as a place and whether they see it as a ‘safe space in which to explore...feelings and histories’⁷⁰ with archivists who mitigate ‘the injustice documented by the records’⁷¹ or a location that projects ‘epistemic violence’⁷² with archivists perpetuating ‘endemic bias’.⁷³ Regardless of the reaction, greater awareness of assumption or bias within the archival organisation can help the expert user to understand how the archival organisation considers and presents the ‘human in the record’⁷⁴ and how it may intentionally or unintentionally restrict access to people who live or understand differently.

Purpose knowledge can facilitate the identification of gaps in archival understanding that may bias or hinder research

While the notion of archival context is embedded in archival principles and variously discussed in archival discourse⁷⁵, the tangle of context, content and meaning influencing the archival document within an archival organisation can still be a ‘foreign country’ to many users.⁷⁶ This can increase the methodological, conceptual and practical ‘divides and disconnects’ that have traditionally existed between historians and archivists.⁷⁷ Purpose knowledge can help users to address some of their potential gaps around archival knowledge and ask, ‘*how do I perceive the archival document contextually?*’ This can help them to further explore the organisational context and associated subjectivities⁷⁸ that influenced its original meaning as a record while still being aware that subsequent archival selection, organisation and description can fall somewhere between ‘objective science’ and ‘subjective response’.⁷⁹

Yakel and Torres⁸⁰ state there are three distinct forms of knowledge required to work effectively with primary sources: domain knowledge (knowledge of the research subject), artefactual literacy (‘the ability to interpret records and assess their value as evidence’), and archival intelligence (knowledge of ‘archival principles, practices, and institutions’). However, history as a discipline ‘does not have a consensual way to investigate and write about what happened’⁸¹ and many expert users can ‘muddle through with a variety of individual strategies’⁸² when researching large amounts of archival material. For expert users, in-depth understanding of the organisations, processes, systems and people involved in the history of the archival

document and its cultivation⁸³ or co-creation⁸⁴ by the archival organisation can result in greater understanding of the various meanings that can be gained from it. For instance, it can help to identify the custodial, legal, political and social reasons why the archival document is represented the way it is by the archival organisation and the levels of its ‘mediated nature’.⁸⁵ It can also help identify the impacts of different people (such as creator, curator, stakeholder and user) had on the archival document in terms of why it was selected and how it was described.

Purpose knowledge can also aid the further development of a user’s artefactual literacy and archival intelligence, helping the user to identify potential gaps or bias in content, collection, or cataloguing (such as evidence of unrecognised colonial thinking in archival descriptions) that may cause misunderstanding or feelings of exclusion for some user groups. Purpose knowledge can also help the expert user to establish what these issues may mean in relation to their research. For instance, whether issues were caused by poor recordkeeping practice or systemic bias from the organisations who created or hosted the archival document as a record, or because these organisations considered the content out of scope.

Purpose knowledge helps to assist with identifying the validity of tacit narratives and new imaginings

Research involving archives and discussion of tacit narratives and new imaginings can often consider the interaction between user and archival document.⁸⁶ This can open opportunities for exploring related topics such as access, diversity, inspiration, inclusion or participation⁸⁷ as well as silences and traces.⁸⁸ ‘there must be a reckoning with more than evidence of what is past... there is also story, there is imagination and there is future’.⁸⁹ However, discussion of tacit narratives and new imaginings involving the archival document still needs to be balanced with the purposes and concerns⁹⁰ set around the archival document as a record. This is so users out of their own ‘cognitive individualism’⁹¹ don’t move past consideration of ‘what it may have been’ and ‘what it could mean for us now’ to ‘what we want it to mean, regardless’. This is particularly applicable when interacting with archival documents that present a ‘profound paradox’ in that they can both ‘maintain a repressive regime and... hold that regime accountable’⁹² (for example, records of state care or land records). Purpose knowledge can help expert users reflect on whether their research with the archival document addresses the document’s created and intended purposes or overlooks these purposes in the need to prove other points.

An awareness of purpose knowledge can also help expert users to become more aware of the different areas where they may need to judicially reconstruct meaning around archival documents, transparently describe the known and unknown, and voice any assumptions and known bias in their research.⁹³ It may also help the expert user to demonstrate awareness of archival gaps such as ‘missing links, both literal and figurative’⁹⁴ within holdings metadata and finding aids. These aspects can help expert users to keep in mind the processes employed by more traditional archival praxis, the ‘implied explicitness’ that can come from associated arrangement and description, and the archival document’s perceived levels of ‘documentary truthfulness’⁹⁵ because of these two influences. For instance, by being aware that when reading through lists of selected holdings that often much more was destroyed than kept, and that ‘all archival collections are compendia of silences’.⁹⁶ Purpose knowledge can therefore aid understanding of the connection or disconnection between the archival document and its intended and actual purposes.

Purpose knowledge can support research around the user’s interaction with the archival document

The four perceptions of purpose model and discussion around purpose knowledge can support future research relating to the user’s interaction with the archival document. To date, this type of research has been only occasionally discussed in western archival discourse particularly, Yakel and Torres’s seminal work on expert users and their information behaviour: *AI: Archival Intelligence and User Expertise*.⁹⁷ Other research articles and theses around

users and records and archives exist,⁹⁸ but many aspects remain unstudied,⁹⁹ or are discussed in non-archival disciplines such as management and organisation studies.¹⁰⁰

Applied knowledge of the four perceptions of purpose may also be able to contribute to a range of research processes in historical and qualitative research, particularly that involving information use behaviour and/or reflexivity. For example, purpose knowledge could enhance practices around narrative enquiry¹⁰¹ and historiographical reflexivity¹⁰² as well as ethnography, autobiography and autoethnography.¹⁰³ Purpose knowledge can also help in the development of effective search strategies relating to the expert users' own domain knowledge¹⁰⁴ or in the creation of further opportunities to support inclusive practice.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, it can support thinking around qualitative research methods relating to the document and its social affect, and influence thinking around discourse analysis.¹⁰⁶ That is, it could inform questions raised by reflexive discourse analysis around the archival document, particularly, 'how do we know what we think we know about the socio-political role of the discourse and knowledge we produce?'¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

This article introduces four perceptions of purpose that could be applied to the archival document within an archival organisation, particularly by expert users. These can be summarised as the perception of the archival document's created purpose (it is what it is), the perception of the archival document's intended purpose (it is what the creating or host organisation attests it as), the perception of the archival document's articulated purpose (it is what the archival organisation presents it as), and the perception of the archival document's projected purpose (it is what the user signifies it as).

This model is intended to stimulate further discourse around the user and their interaction with the archival document, such as those involving the different descriptive contexts, gaps and potential meanings surrounding the archival document and the user's own critical reflections around these. Ideally, an awareness of purpose knowledge will help expert users to deepen their understanding of how the archival document is created and used as a record and selected and presented as an archive and use this understanding to inform their own research.

More generally, this article may support archival praxis through a model that encourages clearer communication of notions around western archival practice¹⁰⁸ as well as the better expression of understanding between archival organisations and their expert users in various ways.¹⁰⁹ It may also help archival organisations to explain and contextualise their roles and services around the archival document with greater transparency, especially when faced with the multiple narratives that can be presented of, by or for the individuals, groups and organisations that create, re-create, represent and champion the archival document. For example, by applying specific crowd-sourced user understandings of purpose knowledge to forms of archival description. While the archival document is not always a neutral representation of 'all the past', it does still represent a trace of some of it. Archivists, historians and others are calling for 'new epistemologies'¹¹⁰ around archival research and praxis that reduce 'the great silence between archivists and historians'¹¹¹ when it comes to understanding the archival document as a record. This model will help to support such calls.

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End notes

1. See for example, Joanne Evans, Sue McKemmish, and Greg Rolan, 'Critical Approaches to Archiving and Recordkeeping in the Continuum', *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2017, pp. 1–38, doi: 10.24242/jclis.v1i2.35; Sue McKemmish, 'Recordkeeping in the Continuum: An Australian Tradition', in Anne Gilliland, Sue McKemmish, and Andrew Lau (eds.), *Research in The Archival Multiverse*. Clayton, Victoria: Monash University, 2017, pp. 122–60; Frank Upward, Sue McKemmish, and Barbara Reed, 'Archivists 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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