Reading the Records Continuum: Interpretations and Explorations

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This article provides multiple parallel readings of the records continuum model in relation to a single case study. The purpose of these multiple readings is to illustrate the capacity of the model to support different interpretations, simultaneously, depending on the context. The article demonstrates that the records continuum theory and model is not a straightjacket for linear application of records theory within a government arena. It is a vibrant and dynamic tool and method of thinking that challenges all archivists to engage on a broad social canvas, in addition to providing the means of articulating specific methodologies for specific contexts.

Introduction

Much has been written about the records continuum theory and its common representation in the 'circles' model[1] (Figure 1). It represents a means of representing complexity which can apply to any records environment. To understand the records continuum model, one needs to first understand what it is representing. Inevitably this involves starting either from the centre or from the outermost circle. Either way, the initial explanation is inevitably linear, thus perpetuating the notion that linear readings are the most appropriate. However explanations must begin somewhere. Depending on individual preference, explanations will work outwards exploring the circles as ripples precipitated from an instance or action in the first dimension, or alternatively, work inwards exploring the circles as cascading regions emanating from the social and cultural dimensions represented by the outermost circle. For the purposes of this initial overview, I have chosen to present from the inside out.

The first 'create' dimension of the records continuum model represents the locus of all action. It is in this area that the business of action (all action) happens, including representations of actions in documents. Things within the dimension are in the process of formation, may exist in versions or as partial expressions. The document has the potential to move beyond the locus of creation, but as yet this potential is nascent – all the elements required for robustness are present but not explicit and until the connections are explicit, the document can't be managed as a record. The beginnings of that journey to robustness occur with transition into the second 'capture' dimension when the document is communicated or connected through relationships with other documents, with sequences of action. With characteristics from the second dimension, records, now attest to evidence of action and are able to be distributed, accessed and understood by others involved in undertaking business activities. The transition to the second dimension may be formal or informal, may involve a deliberate act of registration in organisational systems, or may be an intention represented by placement or grouping. Here metadata elements needed to make the context of the document known are added and the record is able to be referenced or drawn upon by others.

The third dimension, the 'organise' dimension represents an aggregation above individual instances of sequences of actions, investing the record with explicit elements needed to ensure that the record is available over time exceeding the immediate environments of action. Here, a record joins multiple other records deriving from multiple sequences of actions undertaken for multiple purposes. This is the dimension of the 'archive' or the 'fonds', the whole, extant or potential, of all of the records of an organisation cumulating to form organisational or personal memory. At an implementation level, this is the dimension of policy or rule establishment which will affect the 'create' and 'capture' dimensions. The fourth or 'pluralise' dimension is the broader social environment in which records operate – the legal and regulatory environment which translates social requirements, different for every society and at every period, for recordkeeping. Recordkeeping does not occur in a social, cultural or political void. The environment of recordkeeping external to a specific locus of records action critically determines the nature of the record. The fourth dimension also represents the capacity of a record to exist beyond the boundaries of a single creating entity. This is the

environment needed to ensure records are able to satisfy demands of those not involved with the actions precipitating records creation, capture and organisation. The fourth dimension involves ensuring that records are able to be reviewed, accessed and analysed beyond the organisation, for the multiple external accountability, historical, cross organisational purposes that are required, for as long as they are required.

The axes of the continuum of evidence, recordkeeping, transactionality and identity act in concert, and can also be seen as reciprocal vertical or horizontal purposes, which fold up to meet each other. The evidence and recordkeeping axes have this particularly close reciprocal relationship. As recordkeeping professionals we are particularly concerned with ensuring that recordkeeping and the recordkeeping containers meet requirements to provide evidence of action (not evidence as in legal evidence necessarily, but evidence of action). Similarly the way the transaction axis correlates to the identity axis represents the way societies and organisations structure themselves to carry out their allotted roles. This is a representation of structuration theory from sociology.[2]

In early discussions of the development of the model various representations were mooted. One of these, particularly, represents this notion of reciprocity – the children's fortune telling game that involves folding paper into a rhomboid shape with flaps under which individual predictions are written. By operating the paper toy and moving the flaps, different parts of the paper are brought together momentarily into close proximity. It is this possibility of alignment, particularly bringing together these reciprocal axes at specific moments that appealed in working out an appropriate representation for the model. Of course, this representation failed in translation to paper, and was not suited to an explanatory role, but I remain secretly attached to the dynamism inherent in this and the revealing of opportunistic relationships or different viewpoints at a particular point in time that it enables.

The preceding explanation demonstrates in full the frustration inevitably felt with having to explain the model which is particularly acute in attempting such a compact explanation. Each of the dimensions and axes are dependent upon each other. A record exists at the same time in all dimensions, but in our day to day working lives we tend to focus on specific views suited to our particular circumstances of employment.

Recordkeeping is complex and dynamic. Linear explanations reduce the power of interaction.

For some, though, the model in circles is not expressive enough. One of the problems is representing the model in an essentially flat two dimensional paper reading, where it really needs to be dancing free as a three dimensional object positioned in time and space. Various attempts to come up with a better representation have been made. Brien Brothman at one time was alleged to have been playing with a representation of the continuum model that resembled a DNA strand, twirling and continuous.[3] Frank Upward ceased using solid lines in representing the axes some time ago. Similarly, the solid lines representing the boundaries of the dimensions should perhaps be somehow represented as porous or slightly transparent to indicate a mutable boundary, one that is there, but which can be crossed or not crossed at different times and in different ways. Elsewhere the interpretation of the circles model has been limited by a human desire to fill in the boxes, to associate specific meanings to the labels on the axes and dimensions. Whatever representation is devised will inevitably fall short of expressing the complexity and connectedness of the theory as a whole. Models are representations of ideas, things, people and relationships.

Despite its limitations, the circles model stands as an extremely useful representation of the theory. The intended audience must interact with the model before we add layers of ambiguity, contextuality and contiguity to it.

This article moves beyond the linear interpretations, to read multiple realities into the interpretation of the model using a specific case study. It therefore will not attempt to explain the labels or their underlying principles beyond that already done. More complete explanations are done much better elsewhere.[4] Rather the article focuses on telling recordkeeping stories using the model as a reference point. The records continuum theory enables many starting points. It 'discounts the idea that records evolve in an irreversible direction through distinct stages of use/life'.[5]

A case study has been developed to serve as the starting point in this article. Four readings of the story illustrate the capacity of the circles model to present simultaneously different interpretations from a variety

of perspectives or contexts. Each reading of the case study is coloured by the point of view, or perspective taken. The essential key to positioning any interpretations using the model is determining the point of view to be taken. Chris Hurley calls this ambience,[6] or the surrounding context or lens through which the interpretation is made. It is the reality of different perspectives that makes multiple readings, the telling of different recordkeeping stories, possible. There are only four recordkeeping stories told here. Many more stories could be told using the same case study and the same model.

The following case study is strictly fictional. It is set in a fictional country, however resonance is expected with current and recent events. In other words, it requires an individual's knowledge to be applied. Throughout the text indicators for readers have been inserted in bold text (often in parenthesis) to locate the discussion to the appropriate dimensions of the records continuum model.

The case study

The email received through an anonymous remailer in April 2012 by *The Monitor of Truth* newspaper contained photographs. The photographs were accompanied by metadata embedded into the photos showing they were taken in May 2010. The email message asserted that they showed multiple instances of abuse of prisoners in the privatised detention centre located in the foreign location of Badna Cela, which was contracted by the government to house both illegal immigrants and suspects not charged with terrorism but detained under the Anti-terrorism legislation, 2006.

The horrendous image of detainee humiliation and the jocularity of uniformed guards holding guns was published in on the front page of *The Monitor*. The politicians' response was horror and calls for the establishment of a committee of inquiry to ascertain the authenticity of the photographs, and to reassure the public of the conditions of care in the detention centres.

The Parliament instigated such an Inquiry into the Department of Domestic Security. It came to the conclusion

that the specific photographs were fakes – they showed details of fittings that could not have come from the Badna Cela facility and the personnel could not be placed. The photographs were sourced to Con Cerned, a member of an advocacy group, People Opposed to Detention (POD). This group was web savvy with a sophisticated website, incorporating alternative broadcast mechanisms (podcasting, RSS feeds and blogs) for disseminating their concerns. Con was charged with mischievous intervention in government affairs under the Anti-terrorism legislation, and at trial admitted to seeking to find a way of sensationalising the concern. Numerous instances of detainee abuse were alleged and a culture of abuse was alleged to exist. Other photographs emerged during the trial, some that were used in the process of interrogation as tools of humiliation, and some reported to the police by an assistant in a photo developing shop who was distressed by the images she was asked to process. These were sourced back to guards at the facility.

The Inquiry itself concluded within four months of the allegations. Public hearings and a published report alluded to the potential of a 'culture of abuse' and breach of international obligations under UN treaties. As a parliamentary inquiry, the papers, evidence and report were despatched to the Archives on the Inquiry's closure.

However the public outcry was such that although the instances of the photographs that gave rise to the inquiry were found to be fakes, the Department was forced to review its outsourced arrangements. While contractual responsibility for conditions, staffing and detainee treatment was clearly placed with the outsourced provider, Management and Correctional Facilities Pty Ltd (MCF), the Department's actions in conducting monitoring and reviewing of compliance to standards was clearly in question. The accusation that the Department was purchasing moral immunity to treatment of detainees gained public credence.

In Con's trial some of the uncovered 'trophy photographs' were identified as being of Emmy Grant, a detainee subsequently accepted as a permanent resident of Larasutia. Emmy, represented by the Public Advocacy Legal Foundation instituted compensation claims for mental and physical abuse, claims which went to the heart of the private/public relationship and responsibilities of both the government and MCF.

Emmy Grant's recordkeeping story/ies (Figure 2)

Emmy Grant has at least two recordkeeping stories within the case study. The first is a contemporary tale, for at the time of the case study's events, she is a citizen of Larasutia, successfully having been through the processes of refugee assessment. Little is known about this story from the case study, but it is the story that allows Emmy to take legal action for compensation, and therefore it needs to be acknowledged without pursuing it further. The second is a recordkeeping story from her past, revealed in public circumstances when she sees a photograph of herself splashed in the news media and available as part of the Con's trial for mischievous intervention. She features in one of the 'trophy photographs'. Both of these stories intertwine.

Emmy's story in relation to the photographs is as the subject of one of the 'trophy photos'. The photos were taken either as a tool of humiliation or by one of the MCF staff seeking to encapsulate a moment for memory. Depending on the circumstances of the creation of the photographs, different tales can be told.
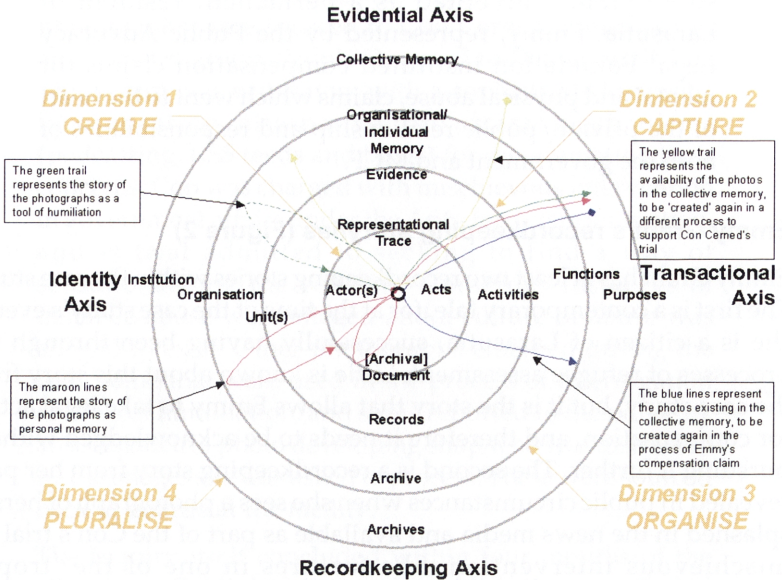
Figure 2: Emmy Grant's recordkeeping stories

Photographs as records of 'business process'

If the photographs were taken as a tool for humiliation, they represent not just a record of abuse, but also form part of a deliberate 'business process' undertaken by officials at the detainee facility to create an atmosphere in which detainees would feel compelled to speak. While it is gruesome in the extreme to think about this as a business process, and not intended to diminish the social impact of such incidents, if seen in this light the photographs are definitely a record. The photos are evidence of the activity, even though this activity might not meet community expectations.[7] Their existence attests to a practice undertaken in the business of running the outsourced detention facility.

The photographs depict identifiable persons and were taken by an official present at the incident (*first dimension, create*). As these

photographs came to light in a legal case against Con Cerned, presumably there had been a process of deliberately committing the photos to a records system within the facility *(second dimension, capture)*. We do not know whether the photos were part of the official records, and in fact there would be reason to suppose that they were not, but none the less they exist, and are able to be placed into context to provide evidence of the activities. By impute, then, the activities were known about even if only tacitly, by the organisation, MCF. The records may not have formally crossed the thresholds between records continuum model dimensions, but their context is able to be recreated and thus there is an implicit existence in the *second (capture) and third (organise) dimensions* of the model. They are, either tacitly or explicitly, part of the 'archive' of MCF, one of the components of the organisational memory of the facility *(third dimension, organise)*. As such, they are a contributor to the organisational culture which prevailed in the Facility, the alleged 'culture of abuse' suggested in the report of the Inquiry (in this reading, operating in the *fourth, pluralise dimension*).

In the records continuum model diagram in Figure 2, this trail is represented by the green lines. The creation of the photographs in the *first (create) dimension* is clear, but the processes of incorporation into official systems is implicit, hence the dotted lines into the *second (capture) and third (organise) dimensions*. Yet, by impute the records are known about and influence further action, hence the trail circles back down to the create dimension to represent the impact of this actions on further actions.

Photographs as records of personal memory

If the photographs followed the other path to public dissemination, being one of the photos 'reported to the police by an assistant in a photo developing shop who was distressed by the images she was asked to process', we have a different recordkeeping story, represented in Figure 2 by the maroon lines.

In this story, the photos were 'trophy photos', presumably taken by an officer involved in the abuse who snapped a photo as a means of reminding himself of the events *(first dimension, create)*. These, then are personal records of an individual involved in the incidents. The process of getting the photographs into a format for personal use or even

potential distribution, is to send the negatives to a photo shop for development (a further creation process, but one technologically and chronologically distanced from the event witnessed in the photographic moment itself, but still within the *first, create dimension*).

Once in the photo shop, the film and processing become a business activity of the particular shop, the service that they offer about which they would maintain records. The person assigned to performing the activity, however, was distressed by the images and undertook as an individual, not as an operative of the photo shop business, to report the photos to the police. The act of reporting the photos to the police, starts a further act of creation, this time the registration of the complaint/issue and the registration of the photographs as a part of that police process of taking and investigating public complaints. We can presume that there was a process within the local police department (*second, capture and third, organise dimensions*) about which this particular rendition of the case study gives us no knowledge. But that the investigation must have proceeded is evident in the fact that the 'trophy photograph' was brought to the attention of the Parliamentary Inquiry (*fourth, pluralise dimension*).

In its diagrammatic representation in the maroon lines in Figure 2, we have two processes of creation, the first a self enclosed circle within the *first, create dimension* representing the taking of the photograph, the second the printing of the photograph by the photo shop. This second set of lines represent not only the creation in the photo shop (*first, create dimension*), but also the capture and incorporation of the records into an external process, that of the police reporting (*second, capture dimension and third, organise dimension*).

Photographs as records used by the Inquiry

Regardless of how the specific photographs of Emmy reached the Inquiry, which of the sequences of actions propelled them there, their appearance as evidence to the Inquiry immediately is another form of 'creation', this time within the context of the Inquiry. Their dissemination into the public arena, presumably through the media, immediately places them into the *fourth, or pluralise dimension*. This is represented in the diagram by the second strong green line, and the parallel maroon line.

Photographs as records in the collective memory used by Con Cerned

Once in the *fourth, pluralise dimension*, they are part of the collective memory of society as a specific instance of the alleged abuse. They are also available from the collective memory to be used again in the trial of Con Cerned. This trail is represented by the yellow lines in Figure 2. This trail commences in the *fourth, pluralise dimension*, but tracks down into the *first, create dimension*, when the photographs are again created and captured and organised (*second and third dimension*) as a part of the legal process.

Photographs as evidence in process of compensation action

Emmy is at the time of the case study a permanent resident of Larasutia. With that status she initiates legal action (*first dimension, create*), using the services of the Public Advocacy Legal Foundation. Here, actions in the *fourth, pluralise dimension*, spiral down again into the *first, create dimension* through the initiation of action causing a further trail of recordkeeping and action. The circumstances of the photograph's creation now become a critical component of the legal action she undertakes.

This is represented in Figure 2 by the blue lines, showing an action originating because of the photos as records in the collective memory, the *fourth, pluralise dimension*, but spiralling down to a specific process of creation of records (*first, create dimension*) as part of the process to initiate a compensation claim (*second, capture and third, organise dimensions*).

Emmy as the recognisable subject of the photograph not only has potential compensation rights, but also privacy rights that have been significantly violated. While she was not a party to the photograph being created, she is an actor in the event, albeit not a willing one. What rights does she have over the photograph? Her perspective is quite different to other actors in the events and in the records. The rights of the data subject are increasingly being recognised. In a case such as this, where personal information is involved, increasingly it is being recognised that there are rights for the data subject associated with the record. Privacy and access rights are the first ones to be socially acknowledged, but potentially other rights exist.

If recordkeepers begin to acknowledge the rights of the 'data subject' in the record, this also makes them active participants in recordkeeping processes. They might be considered co-agents of creation. To enable such emerging roles and rights, our thinking needs to expand beyond the realms of strict organisational recordkeeping. The interpretation, classification and use of records from the perspective of the data subject may be distinctly different from those of the organisational context within which records traditionally are maintained. Such musings lead immediately into the realms of parallel provenance, a subject being pursued by Chris Hurley elsewhere in this journal.[8]

Con Cerned's and POD's recordkeeping stories (Figure 3)

The email

An email is transmitted. We know from subsequent events described in the case study, that the email is sent by Con Cerned. The sending of an email is a deliberate act of communication and represents an action designed to evoke reaction. Prior to the sending of the email, it exists in the *first, create dimension*, within the sender's domain. However on transmission it moves outwards, being communicated with intent, and the email is no doubt a record – moved beyond the *first, create dimension* to the *second, capture dimension*.

In this case, the email is a transmission medium – an anonymous message with a deliberately obscured transmission route containing politically explosive material. The email is a compound document in that it contains photographs. The photographs are the substance of the email, but we have little detail about them. We do know from the message that they purport to be about events in a specific detention centre, and the photographs themselves have an inscribed date.

Con Cerned, is an actor in the *first, create dimension*, operating within an advocacy, social action group, People Opposed to Detention (POD), an entity in the *third, organise dimension*. POD uses a mandate from social conscience originating in the *fourth, pluralise dimension*. The nature of social advocacy groups is that they are often less organised than corporate or government entities. The blurring between personal actions undertaken as a person who belongs to a group and actions on behalf of the group can cause difficulty in determining whether the action is

authorised by the People Opposed to Detention group (thus having a *second, capture and third, organise dimensional* aspect as an organisational record) or an individual action of Con himself. Where the records are held is unknown, but it is possible that they live with the individual. In this case, we have little information about whether Con's actions were endorsed by the organisation.

Evidential Axis

Collective Memory

Organisational/
Individual
Memory

**Dimension 1
CREATE**

**Dimension 2
CAPTURE**

Evidence

The yellow line represents the trail of prosecution actions against Con, commencing in the 4th dimension

The blue line represents Con's email if he were acting as an individual

Representational
Trace

Identity Institution
Axis Organisation
Unit(s)

Functions **Transactional**
Acts Activities Purposes **Axis**

Actor(s)

The green line represents POD's communications with their constituent or potential constituent group

[Archival]
Document

The maroon line represents Con's email if he were acting as an agent of POD

Records

Archive

**Dimension 4
PLURALISE**

**Dimension 3
ORGANISE**

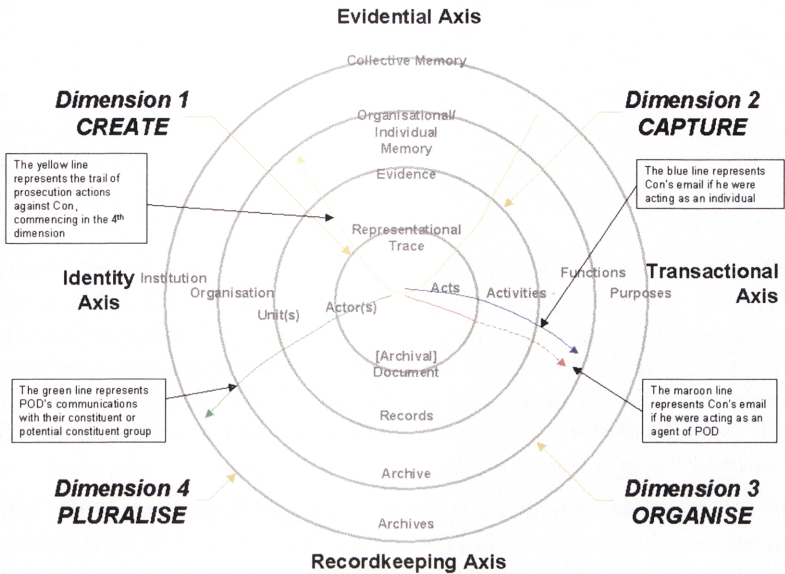Archives

Recordkeeping Axis

Figure 3: Con Cerned and POD recordkeeping story

The blue line in Figure 3 represents the trail if the record is a personal record, commencing in the *first, create dimension* and moving through the *second capture and third, organise dimensions* to depict despatch to a *third, organise, dimension* organisation, *The Monitor of Truth*. The maroon line represents the same trail of action but assumes that the email was a record of POD, rather than of Con personally. In that case, the act of creation is clear in the *first, create dimension*, but less clear (hence dotted

lines) in the *second, capture and third, organise dimensions*, as we don't know whether POD maintains formal recordkeeping.

The actions of Con as a social advocate, whether working individually or on behalf of POD, is to deliberately manufacture a means of catapulting knowledge of alleged events into the *fourth, pluralise dimension*. The rationale is to force agencies of the social polity into action by the brunt of (social) *fourth, pluralise dimensional* concern. The media as an agency is a primary tool for means of directly influencing a social agenda, hence its use by Con (and possibly by POD?) by the transmission of the anonymous email containing photographs. The tactics adopted may be interpreted as a means to the end, so the authenticity of the email and the veracity of the photographs may not be so critical to Con/POD. (Asserting the authenticity and veracity, or otherwise, of a record involves particularly the *first, create and second, capture dimensions* of the records continuum, but involves consideration of *all the dimensions* of the model).

Con's use of photographs as a tool for catalysing action is an alert to the power of the graphic representation or image as a record in a media-savvy society. Photographs as a medium are powerful storytellers. This is so, especially as individuals are able to understand and be directly involved in the making and manipulating of images through the widespread use of digital technologies both for taking pictures and for manipulating and changing those photographs.

The role and uses of new visual media for recording events both within organisations and as personal mementos opens realms of discussion on how to manage, use, preserve and interpret photographs, invoking consideration of the semiotics of photographs, both as object of truth and, as in the case study, objects of deceit.[9] Given the ubiquity of photograph, now increasingly digital, and their fragility for preservation, there is unprecedented opportunity to widen the social concern about issues of authenticity and digital preservation.[10]

Technology to disseminate messages

Similarly, POD pursues other means of reaching a public. As an advocacy group for detainees, POD is presumably at odds with the prevailing governmental policies on its specific area of advocacy. The use of technology broadcasting mechanisms such as blogs, podcasting

and RSS feeds are other means of POD disseminating its message to those interested in its cause. This is represented in Figure 3 by the green line which commences in the *first, create dimension* and extends through *all the dimensions* out to the *fourth, pluralise dimension*. Such technologies when used by an organisation such as POD, are perhaps a means to actively create communities (*fourth, pluralise dimension*) of interest around specific issues. Such groups are self selecting, possibly small and fragmented; communities of interest forged with technology which eliminates distance as a determining factor. What documentary dynamics are forged and how should we as archivists document them?

Prosecution of Con

Subsequent to the exposure, the Inquiry and the possible shift in social opinion on detainees precipitated by the email, Con Cerned as an individual (*first, create dimension*), is charged with mischievous intervention under the Anti-terrorism legislation (*fourth, pluralise dimension*). A charge being laid is a *first, create dimension* act in terms of recordkeeping creation. The processes invoked are formularised and very prescriptive, so will follow very specific routes through the *second, capture and third, organise dimensions* of records continuum model (represented by the yellow line in Figure 3). The very rigidity of following procedures in a legal prosecution is demanded by codes of conduct (fourth, pluralise dimension) and social requirements for procedural transparency (again fourth, pluralise dimension). The recordkeeping strands in a legal action will spin in various directions, as both the prosecution and defence gather formal legal evidence to be laid before the court and as the police, justice and court processes play out (all potentially different but intertwined views of the same events

but with differing recordkeeping strands following multiple different routes across the dimensions of the model).

The recordkeeping story in *The Monitor of Truth* (Figure 4)

Receipt of the email

The anonymous email containing photographs is despatched to *The Monitor of Truth* newspaper (the act of sending/receiving places the communication on the boundary of the *first, create and second, capture dimensions*). Given the provocative nature of the content of the email, there would be little doubt that it would be captured (*second, capture dimension*) somehow for follow up. We do not know whether the email was sent to a specific person or a generic address. Organisational protocols would be invoked (these would be established by *The Monitor of Truth* acting as an organisation within the *third, organise dimension*). These rules would be aimed at the person receiving the email and would determine whether or not the email was to be captured as a record (moving into the *second, capture dimension*) and incorporated into the record systems of *The Monitor*. This is represented in Figure 4 by the green lines, indicating an iterative process of creation and capture all taking place within a specific business process within the boundaries of *The Monitor*.

Evidential Axis

Collective Memory

Dimension 1
CREATE

Organisational/
Individual
Memory

Dimension 2
CAPTURE

Evidence

The green lines represent
the processes of receiving
and capturing the email
sent by Con

Representational
Trace

Functions   **Transactional**
                    Axis

Identity Institution
Axis   Organisation   Actor(s)   Acts   Activities   Purposes

Unit(s)

[Archival]
Document

The blue lines represent the
actions of publishing the
email and attendant story,
involving the promulgation
into the pluralised or
collective domain

The maroon lines
represent the internal
processes of decision
making within The
Monitor leading to
publication.

Records

Archive

Dimension 4
PLURALISE

Dimension 3
ORGANISE

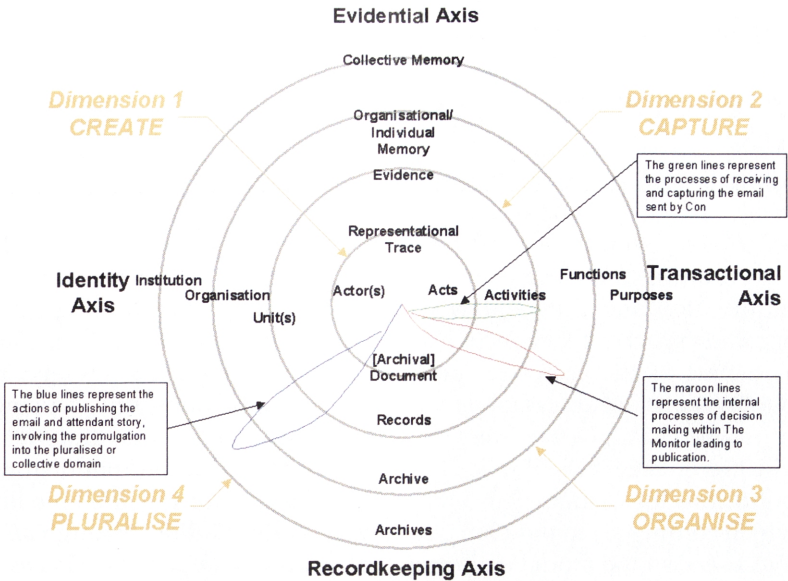Archives

Recordkeeping Axis

Figure 4: The recordkeeping story of *The Monitor of Truth*

Decisions on whether to publish

Presumably within *The Monitor* there would be an attempt to work out who received it and perhaps to chase up the response, as a part of the normal business process of the *second, capture dimension*. In the event, we can assume that there is suspicion of the email: its deliberate obscuring of its route, its lack of sender details, its assertions, and its potentially explosive contents. Yet *The Monitor* publishes the contents. We can therefore presume that the email is captured into the systems of *The Monitor* (*second, capture dimension*). The processes of newspaper production (*second, capture and third, organise dimensions*) would define the decision-making associated with the publication of the photograph on the front page. The decision would be made (*first, create dimension*) and recorded (*second, capture dimension*) along with any story written (*first, create dimension* and implicitly *second, capture dimension*)

accompanying the photograph. In Figure 4 this is represented by the maroon lines, indicating a recursive set of actions involving creation, capture and organisation as email is incorporated into the decision-making concerning publication.

The photographs as part of collective memory

Publication of the photographs on the front page of *The Monitor of Truth* immediately launches the photographs into the *fourth, pluralised dimension*. The photographs are distributed with newspaper editions to a wide community beyond the borders of any one organisation. The photographs and their contents, the 'horrendous images of detainee humiliation and the jocularity of uniformed guards holding guns', becomes a part of the collective memory of contemporary society. There, as a part of the collective reflection of contemporary society, the photographs act as a catalyst to unlock further actions, thus causing a spiralling back into the dimensions of organisational action undertaken by different agencies. Public outcry fuelled by media speculation forces politicians into action. This is represented in Figure 4 by the blue lines which commence in the *first, create dimension* and follow through *all the dimensions* of the model including that of the *fourth, pluralise dimension*.

In this case study the media is the main vehicle for the pluralisation of information, in this case, information derived from a record (*fourth, pluralise dimension*). The analysis of media for reference to records and archives and the use we make of it is an interesting thread that can be pulled for exploration. The initial use of such a tool seems to have originated at Monash University, as a part of teaching,[11] but the efficacy of this type of analysis or overview as part of our professional discourse has been more widely adopted, perhaps most notably by Peter Kurilecz's RAIN (Records and Archives in the News) daily roundup of articles relevant to records and archives posted to a number of professional listservs.[12] More recently, this type of analysis has formed a part of the methodology used by the Museum Libraries and Archives Council of the UK in the report *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future.*[13]

The Parliamentary Inquiry's recordkeeping story (Figure 5)

Deciding on dimensional locus for the Parliamentary Inquiry

The establishment of a Parliamentary Inquiry requires specific business actions within the organisation of the Parliament. Parliament, depending on the view taken at a specific time is either a *fourth, pluralise dimension* institution – an overarching social entity operating to make and enforce the laws of a society, a keystone for the type of society depicted, or a *third, organise dimension organisation* – an organisation with its own business imperatives and actions that it needs to undertake in order to fulfil its own mandate. Of course both dimensional locations operate simultaneously. But to enable action to occur, we must shift the focus to Parliament as a *third, organise dimension* organisation. To establish an Inquiry, procedures need to be followed within the organisation of the Parliament. All actions are always located in the *first, create dimension*, undertaken within an organisational setting within the business processes (*second, capture dimension*) and organisational policies (*third, organise dimension*) established by the Parliament.
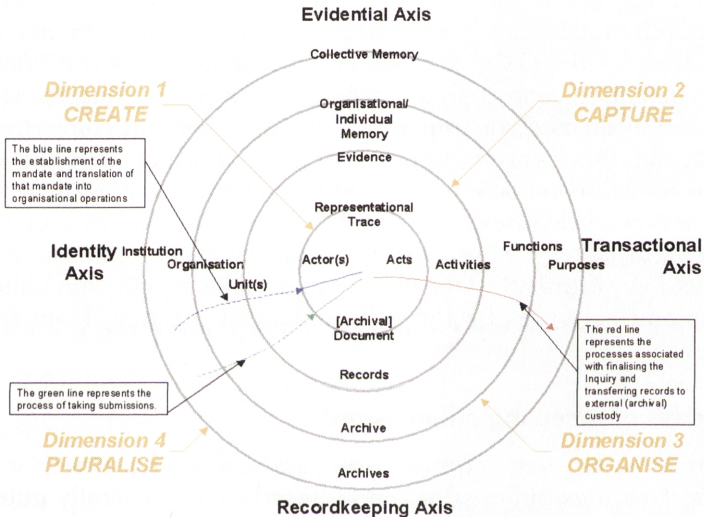

Figure 5: Recordkeeping in the Parliamentary Inquiry

A Parliamentary Inquiry is again either a *third or fourth dimensional* organisation depending on the view taken. If we see the Inquiry as a result of social concern, established to inquire over multiple organisation's activities, the Inquiry would be located in the *fourth, pluralise dimension*. If, on the other hand we are looking at the Inquiry as an entity with its mandate established by another body (the Parliament) we could consider it as an organisation located primarily in the *third, organise dimension*. At the same time, if we think of the Inquiry as a part of the processes undertaken by the Parliamentary Departments, we might locate it at the *second, capture dimension*, one of the business activities conducted.

The mandate of the Inquiry

The matters referred to the Inquiry become the mandate of the organisation, established in the *fourth, pluralise dimension* and translated into the specific organisational goals of the Inquiry in the *third, organise dimension*, govern the operations of the Inquiry. This is reflected in Figure 5 as the blue line, commencing in the *fourth, pluralise dimension* and dotted because the mandate needs to be first created within the *first, create dimension*, regardless of the fact that it originated externally. The terms refer to the circumstances surrounding the email and its contents. At the same time the Inquiry is charged with investigating the conditions of care in detention centres, in direct response to public concern. This mandate is a social mandate (public concern) and therefore comes from the *fourth, pluralise dimension*, but is concerned with specifics of how a particular function and activity is undertaken (thus *third, organise and second, capture dimensions*), specifically examining the role of the Department of Domestic Security, a *third dimensional* organisation (a government department established to undertake specific mandated functions and activities by the government of the day) from this perspective.

The process of receiving submissions

The Inquiry is, as most Inquiries are, conducted with a degree of openness. Hearings, submissions and transcripts are generally public documents available to the media and to the public for review and input. The submission process is represented in Figure 5 by the green line which

commences from the *fourth, pluralise dimension*, dotted because although the submissions arise in the *fourth, pluralise dimension*, from the perspective of the Parliamentary Inquiry they are created in the *first, create dimension*, hence the solid line. The purpose of a Parliamentary Inquiry is to provide external scrutiny on actions surrounding a particular event or set of events.

Finalising the Inquiry

While at the end of the process, the records of the Inquiry are bundled up and transferred to the Archives, the findings, processes and actions of the Inquiry have been located in the *fourth, pluralise dimension* for a considerable time prior to that set of actions associated with the winding up of the Inquiry. This is reflected in the maroon line in Figure 5, commencing with negotiations to transfer (*first, create dimension*) and continuing through a whole chain of processes involving *all dimensions* of the continuum to transfer the records to archival custody, into the *fourth, pluralise dimension*.

Considering other agencies involved in the Inquiry

The Inquiry hearings concern more than the photographs. It is also concerned with the conduct of the activity of managing detainees at the outsourced facility in Badna Cela. This process of outsourcing is common amongst government agencies. From the specific view of the government agency concerned, the Department of Domestic Security, they are outsourcing an activity (hence *second, capture dimension*).

In the case of the Badna Cela facility, the positioning of the organisation is important in terms responsibilities and accountabilities, the subject of the Parliamentary Inquiry. Multiple external mandates exist: the contract with the government, the government's specification of the extent of the responsibilities delegated, the government's accountabilities to international treaties and to its own legislation, the reporting requirements and the monitoring role of the Department of Domestic Security. Each one of these different strands bring different requirements for accountabilities, some with the Badna Cela facility, some with its parent entity, MCF and some with the Department of Domestic Security. On top of all this there is the question of jurisdiction with MCF being a globalised entity, operating the Badna Cela facility

in a specific, foreign jurisdiction. At a social level the accusation that the government is attempting to purchase moral immunity in its treatment of detainees is not about the letter of the law, but about a *fourth, pluralise dimension* or social concern over the management of people not charged with offences.

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

Just what do these different recordkeeping tales derived from the case study tell us and what does using the records continuum model in this way, enable? Firstly, this article writes a teaching style. This is just how one might use the model in analysing actions, reactions, complexity and multiple perspectives using the records continuum model in a workshop or class.

The multiple stories told using the case study highlight the importance of the point of view chosen for the interpretation. Change the point of view and you change the story that can be told. In practical application of the records continuum being able to situate yourself as you analyse particular events is critical to being able to diagnose or appropriately locate the types of strategies that might suit in specific circumstances. For example, introducing a records regime (*third, organise dimension*) to a specific business unit, is only going to work if you regard that business unit as a third dimensional entity. There would need to be external support for such an interpretation, otherwise the attempt is doomed to failure as the remainder of the organisation will not behave in ways that would support the recordkeeping actions which might be introduced.

If we pulled the strands of the case study a different way, and looked at one particular record as it spirals through many stories, we would be able to see that, depending on the perspectives or points of view applied, the record may exist simultaneously in multiple dimensions. For example, the photographs contained in the email, even while fakes, nonetheless exist in all dimensions of the continuum at a point of time. Or one could add a further element of time to the equation and look at events chronologically to see specific movement between the dimensions in which a record exists over time. This latter, time based, interpretation and the capacity to use the model to support it is the reason that there are some who assert that linear readings such as a life cycle

representation are the same as the continuum readings. While the continuum model will support linear readings, I hope I have at least demonstrated that this is only one, and a simplistic one, of the readings available.

What is revealed by any and all of these readings, the ones presented here or others still lying dormant in the case study, is the dynamic nature of the record and the non-linear paths that are revealed for each event and its representation or trace in a recorded transaction or record. Readings of the continuum are amenable to multiple and flexible interpretations. The challenge is to imagine and write such interpretations and through these articulate roles, strategies and tactics for engaging with a diversity of experience. The records continuum theory and model is not a straightjacket for linear application of records theory within a government arena. It is a vibrant and dynamic tool and method of thinking that challenges all archivists to engage on a broad social canvas, in addition to providing the means of articulating specific methodologies for specific contexts. The problem of interpretation lies not with the theory or the model, but with ourselves.[14]

Acknowledgement: This article benefited greatly from the editorial comments from Glenda Acland, Rachel U'Ren and particularly Jackie Bettington, to whom my thanks are due. The errors in expression or any misrepresentations remain solely mine.

Endnotes

1 Frank Upward 'Structuring the Records Continuum. Part One: Postcustodial Principles and Properties' *Archives and Manuscripts* Vol. 24, No. 2, November 1996. <http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/rcrg/publications/recordscontinuum/fupp1.html>.

Frank Upward 'Structuring the Records Continuum. Part Two: Structuration theory and Recordkeeping' *Archives and Manuscripts* Vol. 25 No. 1, May 1997. <http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/rcrg/publications/recordscontinuum/fupp2.html>.

Frank Upward 'Modelling the continuum as paradigm shift in recordkeeping and archiving processes, and beyond – a personal reflection' *Records Management Journal* Nov 2001 <http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/rcrg/publications/recordscontinuum/fupp2.html>.

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14th National Convention, 15-17 September 1997, RMAA, Perth, Australia, 1997. <http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/rcrg/publications/recordscontinuum/smckp2.html>.

2 Frank Upward 'Structuring the Records Continuum. Part Two: Structuration theory and Recordkeeping' *Archives and Manuscripts* Vol. 25, No. 1, May 1997. <http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/rcrg/publications/recordscontinuum/fupp2.html>.

3 Conversation with Terry Cook in New Zealand, 2003, perhaps reflected in the phrase 'helical, circular, epicyclical representation of cycles entailing ideas of social reproduction. recurrence, and repetition, and ambiguous origins and endings.' Brien Brothman 'Memory, History, and the Preservation of Archival Records' *Archivaria* 51, Spring 2001, p. 54. These ideas are further explored in a forthcoming article, Brien Brothman 'Still Life, Life Cycles, and Death Wishes: A Helical Model of Record Formation.' *Archivaria* (forthcoming).

4 See footnote 1.

5 op. cit. Brothman p. 57.

6 Chris Hurley 'Parallel Provenance: What, if anything, is archival description?' *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol. 33, No. 1 May 2005, or Chris Hurley's article in this issue.

7 This point was also made by David Roberts in his 'Director's Letter' *Vital Signs* State Records NSW, Issue No. 6, July 2004. <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/publications/vs/vs6.htm>

8 op. cit. Chris Hurley.

9 Within archival literature, the Canadian archivist, Joan Schwartz is pre-eminent in exploration of photographs.

10 For example, the vendor community is now actively engaging with standards for digital photographs to ensure greater longevity as acetate film ceases to be made on a commercial basis, see 'Picture Archiving and Sharing Standard' work of Fuji, Eastman Kodak and Minolta announced on 27th September. <http://www.fujifilm.co.uk/presscentre/news/index.php?flash=6&id=1216> or the Adobe Digital Negative Specification>. <http://www.adobe.com/aboutadobe/pressroom/pressreleases/200409/092704DNG.html>.

11 See an early example in Charlie Farrugia 'Print Media Perspectives on Recordkeeping' in Sue McKemmish and Frank Upward eds *Archival Documents*, Melbourne, Ancora Press, 1993.

12 Peter Kurilecz's RAIN or Records and Archives in the News appears on both the UK Records Management listserv and also on the US Records Management listserv.

13 Museums, Libraries and Archives Council *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future: Report of the Archives Task Force,* London, March 2004, Appendix H 'On-line media coverage of archives, 1999-2003' <http://www.mla.gov.uk/documents/atf_annex_h.pdf>.