'Communities of Memory': Pluralising Archival Research and Education Agendas

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Global archival frameworks of the kind imagined in the pluralising fourth dimension of the records continuum model face a major challenge: how to build archival systems and associated practices that operate and inter-operate effectively worldwide, but respect and empower the local and indigenous. In this paper we explore the nature of that challenge and the implications for archival research and education agendas, and for archival science itself in an increasingly globalised world.

The authors are keenly aware that this article grapples with complex insider-outsider issues and is inevitably framed in terms of a particular world view. This may well be challenged by or will evolve based on the richer understandings of differing worldviews that it is hoped will flow from engaging with the local and the indigenous, and pluralising our research and education agendas on the basis of those understandings. We would also hope to see this engagement reflected in the pages of this and other archival journals.

Archival paradigms

In human societies, individuals and groups make and keep records that document their activities and function as evidence and memory. While records and recordkeeping may take many forms, which records are made and kept relates to prevailing ideas about their usefulness and continuing value to individuals, groups and the wider society. Societies institutionalise their collective archives according to their own evidence and memory paradigms. These paradigms influence what is remembered and what is forgotten, what is preserved and what is destroyed, how archival knowledge is defined, what forms archives take, how archives are described and indexed, and who has ownership, custodial and access rights relating to them. They also shape archival notions of reliability, authenticity, and trustworthiness.[1]

Available technologies and prevailing literacies also play a formative role in shaping the archives and the formation of collective memory. As Derrida observed:

> The mutation in technology changes not simply the archiving process, but what is archivable ... the way we experience what we want to keep in memory, or in archive ... is conditioned by a certain state, or a certain structure, of the possibility of archiving. So the archive, the technological power of the archive, determines the nature of what has to be archived.[2]

Each recordkeeping technology has its strengths and limitations. When records were kept on stone or clay tablets, the portability of, and access to the records were limited. Arguably, however, the tablets were less vulnerable to accidental or deliberate damage than today's highly accessible and distributable records created in networked electronic systems. The persistence of written and widely distributed records may make the societal ability to forget more difficult than in the case of oral memory which is vested in direct person-to-person re-telling of a text, although some measure of forgetting is arguably essential for the ability of a community to heal itself and move on after a traumatic event.

Archival records have multiple purposes in terms of their value to an individual, organisation or society. They can be vehicles of communication and interaction, facilitators of decision-making, enablers of continuity, consistency and effectiveness in human action, memory

stores, repositories of experience, instruments of accountability, and evidence of identity, rights and obligations. On a darker note, they can also be instruments of colonialism, repression and abuse of power.[3] Frameworks for the selection, collection, arrangement and description, preservation and accessibility of archives are, therefore, closely linked to societal processes of remembering and forgetting, inclusion and exclusion, and the power relationships they embody. In this sense, archives are always political sites of contested memory and knowledge, following Derrida's 'there is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory'.[4]

Globalism is a phenomenon whereby events within one country or actions taken by that country influence or are influenced by those in other countries in ways that effect social and cultural change. Coupled with increased use of networked technologies and the web of international standards and agreements necessary to support efficient international and trans-community interactions, it presents unprecedented challenges for preserving the heterogeneity and relevance of local and indigenous knowledge and forms of remembering within individual communities.

Communities of memory

One of the issues facing us as archivists in engaging with stakeholder communities is how we conceptualise communities from an archival perspective.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a community is 'a body of people organised into a political, municipal, or social unity'; this definition is, according to the OED, 'often applied to those members of a civil community, who have certain circumstances of nativity, religion, or pursuit, common to them, but not shared by those among whom they live; as the British or Chinese community in a foreign city '. Different disciplines have different views of what a community is (or should be). One may look along a cultural dimension of community, or a social dimension, one may see a community as a symbolic construction, either constructed in social action or through values and normative structure. Political theorists and communitarians see a community primarily as a political community, urban planners as a locality, others focus on global and virtual communities.[5]

Ketelaar's view of the memory dimension of a community highlights characteristics of particular relevance to archives and to understanding the significance of a community's archival needs and concerns.

> Collective identity is based on the elective processes of memory, so that a given group recognises itself through its memory of a common past. A community is a 'community of memory'. That common past is not merely genealogical or traditional, something which one can take or leave. It is more: a moral imperative for one's belonging to a community. The common past, sustained through time into the present, is what gives continuity, cohesion and coherence to a community. To be a community, family, a religious community, a profession involves an embeddedness in its past and, consequently, in the memory texts [in any form, written, oral, as well as physical] through which that past is mediated.[6]

Building global frameworks for the archives of the future

Globalism as a phenomenon affects not only the communities and cultures which archivists seek to record and document. It also has a direct impact upon the development of the field of archival science itself. Emerging global frameworks for managing archives in both traditional and digital forms include the development of model archival laws, international and national standards, suites of policies, strategies and guidelines, archival information systems and electronic records management software applications (eg ISO records management and metadata standards, the International Council on Archives archival description standard, *ISAD(G)*, and the US Department of Defense records management software requirements). Electronic recordkeeping (the creation, management, preservation and use of records in digital form in and through time) and digital archiving (the preservation, description, and dissemination of archival materials in digital or digitised form) in particular have posed new challenges and opportunities for archives. They have led to initiatives aimed at developing global standards and model systems for the creation, management, preservation and use of records and archives.

Major research and development projects have underpinned these initiatives (University of Pittsburgh *Functional Requirements for Electronic Recordkeeping,* 1996; the UBC *Protection of the Integrity of Electronic Records Project,* 1994-97; the Canadian *International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems Project,* InterPARES 1 and 2, 1999-2006; and the Australian ARC funded *Recordkeeping Metadata Schema Project,* 1997-98, and *Clever Recordkeeping Metadata Project,* 2003-05). These frameworks, in turn, have been integrated into archival education programs worldwide in order to develop the appropriate knowledge and skill base to support the implementation of standards and best practices by current and future generations of recordkeeping professionals. And educational curricula are themselves increasingly transported across national, juridical, and cultural boundaries by means of various forms of distance education.[7]

The impetus for global approaches has come from a variety of sources -- such as the opportunities provided by the Internet and new information and communications technologies for enhanced accessibility; and the push for better quality electronic recordkeeping and archiving to support democratic government, corporate accountability, e-government, e-business, and e-health. It must be noted, however, that these initiatives have drawn almost exclusively on frameworks that have evolved in mainstream archival programs, both government and private sector, in Western Europe, North America and Australia, ie, in western archival science, to appraise, select, describe, preserve and make accessible collective archives.[8]

The challenge: respecting the indigenous and the local

Communities outside the mainstream have had little opportunity to participate in these developments. Their exclusion is in part a manifestation of the differential power relationships at play between the global, the national, and the communal, manifested in a lack of local archival expertise, fiscal resources, and robust technological infrastructures. This is reinforced by a lack of recognition or acknowledgement in western archival science and practice of the legitimacy of local and indigenous forms of recordkeeping and memory preservation. The assumption behind many of the initiatives is that 'one size fits all', that there are common questions, needs, conceptual understandings and solutions. While acknowledging the contribution

that the emerging suites of best practice standards, guidelines and strategies, model recordkeeping regimes, metadata schema and standardised archival systems can make to quality recordkeeping and archiving worldwide, archival theorists have also characterised them as phenomena of globalisation. They cater foremost to the needs of the mainstream, and their development has taken little account of the differing archival needs of the diverse communities which constitute the globalised societies of the twenty first century. At worst there is not even an acknowledgement on the part of the developers that such differences exist. This is particularly argued in relation to the needs of communities at the periphery – whether countries at the global periphery or groups (identifiable by language, gender, ethnicity, religion, or otherwise) on the periphery of the countries at the hub.[9] For the reasons outlined above, such communities have typically not been part of global archival dialogues, and their members are under-represented in or absent from the archival profession and the ranks of archival researchers and educators.

Even in western or westernised contexts, there is an assumption of heterogeneity within nation states and geographic regions that is only challenged in the most obvious of areas. Does one ascribe to a continuum or a life cycle view of records and recordkeeping? Do the legal systems operate in different ways? Do the national archives of each country define records differently? Are there other areas of terminological difference? Within western jurisdictions, there seems to be little awareness that the needs, circumstances, and semantics of diverse communities, such as indigenous groups, recent immigrant groups, marginalised or 'invisible' populations, even creators of personal records in digital form, or particular user or stakeholder communities, might call for augmentation or translation of the archival paradigm encoded through best practices, strategies and guidelines. Nor have there been many initiatives relating to the development of critical and practical tools to assist with such augmentation and translation.

Archival literature increasingly points to the need to develop archival systems that can represent multiple recordkeeping realities, encompassing or at least accommodating the differing and temporally-bound world views of all those involved in the activities the records document, and providing meaningful access paths to all stakeholders. Writers also suggest that there is a need to re-think definitions of records

and archives that exclude orality, literature, art, artefacts, the built environment, landscape, dance, ceremonies and rituals as archival forms. Postmodern ideas are opening up the possibility of 'refiguring the archive'. For example, in societies like South Africa, archivists are exploring 'the archive outside the archival inheritance of colonialism, and later, apartheid' – the oral record, literature, landscape, songs, dance, ritual, art, artefacts and so on.[10] This may entail redefining the boundaries and relationships between power, memories and identities at the levels of State, community and the individual.[11] The concept of community mediation is also relevant here insofar as all collective memories and identities are 'mediated' by cultural tools such as 'texts' in any form, written or oral, as well as landscapes, buildings, rituals and performances.[12]

Responding to the challenge

Mainstream archival programs, governmental and non-governmental, are increasingly sensitive to cultural issues relating to providing reference services to records in their custody, and the accessibility of archives to indigenous and local communities. However the wider issues identified above and in the literature have not yet impacted on practice. These wider issues include the challenge that different memory and evidence paradigms might pose to western archival science, and the implications of acknowledging communities as co-creators of records for archival practice in relation to appraisal, selection, preservation and description of archives. There have only been a handful of research projects that have explored such issues. Examples of such research are Bastian's work on a Caribbean community[13] and the current Australian Research Council funded Linkage Project, *Trust and Technology: Building archival systems for Indigenous oral memory.*[14]

Prior to European colonisation, Aboriginal Australia was predominantly an oral culture. Memories passed down through narrative forms, including storytelling, played an important role in the transmission of indigenous knowledge from one generation to the next. The importance of this oral memory continues to underwrite much of contemporary Australian Aboriginal culture.[15] For example, in a recent Tasmanian case, decided by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, oral testimony of Aboriginal ancestry prevailed over documentary evidence located in government archives and Births, Deaths and Marriages records.[16]

The case underlined the shortcomings of current archival models in accommodating indigenous orality, whether for evidence, policy development, or cultural understanding. The Trust and Technology project aims to address this issue by exploring the needs of Indigenous Australian communities in Victoria in relation to archival services, in particular relating to oral memory. It is a collaborative, multidisciplinary project involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, and industry and community partners from both Koorie and mainstream archival programs in Victoria. Although the project's main focus is on oral memory, it is hoped that its findings in relation to building trust and understanding between archival institutions and Indigenous Australian communities, will be generally applicable to modelling community-centred archival services for Indigenous communities in Victoria.[17]

Preliminary findings from the user needs analysis, as outlined in a recent paper by Lynette Russell, confirm the fundamental importance of oral narratives to indigenous identity and community:

> Every person interviewed has indicated that 'story telling' is both a feature and necessary marker of their Aboriginality ... Telling stories, constructing narratives and talking about the past is invariably regarded as part of knowing oneself, from where they come and to whom they are related. Knowing such stories is seen as a mechanism for sustaining core social, familial and community relationships.[18]

In terms of the relationship between the written records held in government and other mainstream institutions and oral memory, another critical issue relates to a keen desire to set the record straight:

> A constant theme within the interviews has been the participant's request to be able to add their own 'stories' and versions of other stories to the records held in public archives and other institutions. [19]

The issue of who exercises control over access, disposal and preservation is a major concern. The need for control goes beyond the kind of acknowledgement and consultation currently built into public records programs, encompassing a desire for shared roles in preserving indigenous knowledge in archival records.

Although, as indicated above, mainstream archival practice has yet to engage in any substantial way with these fundamental issues, the archival, indigenous and related discourses are beginning to explore issues and concepts relating to negotiating the tensions between the global and the local, and addressing the challenges highlighted by the Trust and Technology project. Some of these issues and concepts are explored further below.

The concept of *incommensurable ontologies* has been used to characterise indigenous knowledge (defined as local, unique to a particular community or culture) as separate from, even incompatible with, globalised western or 'scientific' knowledge.[20] The issue of incommensurability is particularly problematical when one knowledge system is subsumed, or interpreted in terms of the other. In writing about this concept, Russell[21] refers to a meteorological research project in which information was sought from an Indigenous Australian community about weather and climate, eg what characterised hot or cold weather patterns in terms of the growth of plants or animal behaviour. Having collected this information, it was presented via a website in the form of a calendar based on western constructs of season and time – for example, in this calendar, the hot season, labelled as summer, was shown as lasting from October to March, and the events that the Indigenous community associated with the hot weather were represented as occurring during this period. In this case, the Indigenous community's knowledge ontology does not include constructs of summer and winter, or the idea that these seasons begin and end at fixed times in a calendar. Rather, changes in the weather are marked by an accumulation of signs like fruit ripening or a change in animal behaviour; the hot and cold weather begins and ends when they begin and end, each time the cycle being different. The western scientific ontology relating to weather with its constructs of seasons and time is incommensurable with the indigenous ontology relating to weather. Indigenous knowledge about the weather was subsumed to the western world view, ironically losing much of its meaning and value in terms of the aims of the project to better understand weather patterns in that part of Australia.

Archival researchers have yet to investigate the implications of this concept of incommensurable ontologies in relation to archival knowledge and systems, although it resonates with postmodern archival

theory. Indigenous or local knowledge is often equated with traditional knowledge that relates to the past, and is transmitted orally and experientially rather than in recorded or written forms. It is not normally regarded by archivists or researchers as a form of archival knowledge equal to the knowledge created and maintained by western – mostly colonial – archiving:

> Over the past decade or so I have been involved with numerous archival projects all of which have had as their primary aim to uncover aspects of Indigenous history or culture. In each case I understood that the archival knowledge I would uncover was not Indigenous *per se* but rather was western or colonial knowledge about Indigenous people and their cultures. This material was, I had assumed, for the most part the results of the surveillance of Indigenous people and their cultures. In short it was archival texts within which Indigenous people were the object (and subject) of the gaze of colonial authorities and 'experts'. In this paper I would like to interrogate that assumption and consider some of the issues that have arisen in using archives for the creation of Indigenous (or hidden) histories.[22]

How might archival systems recognise and address the incommensurable ontologies of indigenous knowledge as transmitted through oral narratives and colonial knowledge as transmitted through written records?

Increasingly in postmodern writings about archives, the notion that the archives are themselves fixed and immutable relics, artefacts of the past, is under challenge. Similarly, Indigenous researchers argue that indigenous societies, cultures and their knowledge systems are 'utterly modern … dynamic and adaptive'.[23] Just as the meanings of indigenous artefacts are fluid and made manifest not by displaying them in a museum, but in the act of using them within the community,[24] postmodern archival theorists argue that the archives are both fixed and mutating as they continue to fulfil their multiple purposes in society.[25] With reference to this re-conceptualisation of archives, it is possible to see how archival knowledge can function as indigenous knowledge if used to support the activities of indigenous communities, particularly if it is interpreted – 'reconfigured' – within the knowledge

systems of those communities to 'facilitate communication and decision-making'.[26] However a critical factor here relates to giving equal validity to different knowledge systems.

> While I do not believe that the material housed in archives and libraries in general is Indigenous knowledge *per se* ... such material can become Indigenous through reclamation processes which can be facilitated by libraries and archives ... Perhaps we might even develop systems that not merely acknowledge the inherently different nature of *Indigenous knowledge* but celebrate the ontological incommensurability of various knowledge systems and work towards making the two systems at least comprehensible and of equal value.[27]

In the related field of museology, adapting conservation and presentation practices to the processes of indigenous knowledge has been going on for quite some time. This entails taking another view of the relationship between past and present, between conservation and use. Many indigenous communities feel, in the words of a Canadian First Nation person that:

> By using the object you're continuing the evolution of the cultural identity. You know, that object is really in the past, but they're using that object to continue the present and the future.[28]

While not downplaying the value and significance of western-derived standards and practices, in particular the role they can play in relation to corporate and democratic accountability, Russell's vision, as articulated above, holds out the possibility of moving beyond the binary oppositions implicit in ideas of incommensurability, as does Verne Harris:

> I am arguing against the binary opposition and the either/or. It is in the both/and, the holding of these apparent opposites in creative tension, that there is *liberation* ... a liberation for the indigenous in being open to engagement with the dynamics of globalisation. A liberation for the global in respecting the indigenous.[29]

And Harris concludes:

> We need a firm shift towards an ethic of partnership
> through which solutions devised for the hub are articulated
> with realities in the periphery, and are opened to other
> ways of knowing.[30]

A number of archival writers have identified concepts of particular
relevance to postcolonial and reconciliation concerns, and to respecting
local and indigenous ways of knowing and archiving. Chris Hurley has
coined the term 'parallel provenance' to refer to future archival
descriptive systems that could describe the parallel recordkeeping
universes of postcolonial societies:

> Recognising that the documentation created within the
> New Zealand national archives system largely reflects the
> cultural views of the Pakeha majority, but living in a society
> in which bi-culturalism is more than mere rhetoric, Hurley
> began to question how the views of the Maori could be
> accommodated in systems defined by Pakeha standards,
> and to seek a set of alternative, equally valid ways of
> viewing and documenting the records.[31]

Ketelaar has explored the implications of this concept for archival
practice with reference to the concept of communities of records as
developed by Bastian, and associated notions about shared ownership
and joint heritage.[32] Bastian defines a community of records as:

> the aggregate of records in all forms generated by multiple
> layers of actions and interactions between and among the
> people and institutions within a community.[33]

Thus:

> all layers of society are participants in the making of
> records, and the entire community becomes the larger
> provenance of the records.[34]

Drawing out the implications, Ketelaar points to the matrix of mutual
rights and obligations of all the parties involved and how they would
extend to all aspects of recordkeeping and archiving – ownership,
custodianship, appraisal, description, access and so on.

Ideas about the collective memory of communities being ultimately located in individuals,[35] in what Pierre Nora calls the memory-individuals ('hommes-mémoire')[36] are also of relevance. The living histories of individuals and families form part of a larger framework of communities' histories, contributing to local, regional, and national identities and those of political, religious and other social groups. As a New Zealand museum conservator said, it is:

> very difficult to try and break down the difference between the community from which the objects have come, and the object … you feel as if you're an advocate for the object but as the object, to them, is a living part of their culture you can't really divide it.[37]

Archival science is required to arrive at 'not only a more refined sense of what memory means in different contexts, but also a sensitivity to the differences between individual and social memory'.[38] Addressing this issue is also essential for envisaged archival systems of the future with digital technologies offering new and innovative ways of connecting public and private memories.[39]

Implications of and for archival education

One of the most powerful tools available to archival science for building more consistent and robust archival practices and raising the profile of archival issues globally within a comparatively rapid timeframe is professional education. However, while education is potentially a critical tool in empowering local and indigenous communities, it can also be used to subvert their traditional ways of knowing and recording. It can create, in effect, a new form of colonisation by reshaping local practices for creating, recording and preserving knowledge. How do we build professional expertise in these communities without at the same time compromising the integrity of local and indigenous practices and knowledge systems, or ignoring or giving lower priority to the most pressing needs of individual communities? As already discussed in this paper, there is a growing professional realisation that there are many communities whose cultures and beliefs are predicated upon ways of memory-keeping other than that of the paper or electronic record. Different notions of trust, authenticity, and even what comprises a record may exist. They are largely unrecognised or at least under-respected by

'mainstream' forces such as western legal systems, international standards for recordkeeping and technological implementations. These alternative means of keeping records and memory have often been either over-ridden or partially disabled as a result of the imposition of alternative recordkeeping practices by colonisers and invading forces. In postcolonial situations and sovereignty movements, however, there is also a growing awareness that having functioning recordkeeping and archival systems is a key infrastructure requirement for enabling a nation to develop and sustain itself.

Small, developing or remote nations are also faced with determining what kind of technological and recordkeeping infrastructure they need to put in place in order to participate in the global arena. For example, a 2001 report by PARBICA (Pacific Regional Branch International Council on Archives) identified several challenges facing Pacific island nations needing archival education and training, including:

- The composition of the PARBICA membership and the needs of all countries within the Pacific region.

- The fact that no one program will serve the needs of all recordkeepers in the Pacific uniformly.

- The environmental and geographical realities of the Pacific.

- The effect on education of restrictions on travel and limits on communications.

- The limited financial resources currently available for archival programs.

- The low profile of archives and the changing role of archival institutions.

- The need to establish a well-defined recordkeeping workforce in the Pacific in order to promote the sustainability of records and archives programs.

- The need to develop basic training programs that can become more sophisticated and complex over time.

- The importance of balancing current recordkeeping challenges, such as the management of electronic

technologies, with more traditional but still important issues, such as preservation and access.

• The need to provide basic training in the use of information and communications technologies, in order to increase the skill level and knowledge of record keepers.

• The specific cultural concerns in the Pacific region and their relationship to records and archives management.[40]

In relation to the under-representation or absence of local and indigenous communities in the archival profession, lack of expertise is a particularly critical issue. Many communities around the globe, especially those that are small, remote, or subject to another community's governance, may not have their own infrastructure for educating archivists. In such situations, the only option may be for interested individuals or groups to participate in distance education or occasional workshops that are provided by archivists from Western Europe, North America and Australia, or through international or regional initiatives sponsored by the International Council on Archives. Predominantly such programs are structured around western paradigms. This is also the case for members of indigenous communities living in remote areas within Western Europe, North American and Australia who do not have access to local, community-specific archival education. An alternative for those with the means to do so, is to travel to another country to attend an archival education program, but again, this implies an immersion in the archival thinking of a different culture in a context physically and often intellectually remote from the student's own background. Where larger indigenous communities exist, there is also the potential for them to develop their own archival education and training resources.

For example, Wareham has discussed the establishment, in 2000 of a Diploma in Maori and Information Management at Te Wananga-o-Raukawa, a Maori tertiary education institution in New Zealand, with the aim of building tribal organisational capacity and to protect Maori documentary heritage.[41] In the western United States, the Knowledge River Project at the University of Arizona, School of Information Resources and Library Science, seeks to provide education for American Indian and Hispanic communities that authentically represents their cultural and linguistic perspectives. In addition this project is reaching out to inform and educate both the community members as well as

working practitioners on ways to address issues of Hispanics and American Indians with library and information management solutions.[42] Pluralizing the Archival Paradigm: A Needs Assessment for Archival Education in Pacific Rim Communities is a collaborative research initiative involving archival academic staff at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and Monash University. This project is working to identify a research methodology, critical tools, and approaches that promote both the development of culturally and politically sensitive education of qualified archival professionals in Pacific Rim communities (especially those which have no local archival education infrastructure), as well as the incorporation of the interests, needs and cultural beliefs and practices of diverse communities into existing, predominantly Eurocentric educational programs in the Pacific Rim area.[43]

As with other aspects of globalisation, technology has played an increasingly important role in recent educational initiatives. For established archival education programs, emerging information and communications technologies have provided opportunities to enrich and pluralise curricular and research activities through teaching and research collaborations that not only cross campuses, but even national boundaries. Online courses in areas of specialised expertise can be traded between programs. New professional forums such as electronic journals, online discussion groups, and websites for student chapters of professional associations can be supported. Technology has also provided educational programs with a means to move beyond the constraints of correspondence courses to educate students who are physically unable to attend the institution in an economically efficient way. Several universities have enthusiastically pursued Internet-based distance education, albeit for a combination of altruistic and financial reasons.

Distance education, especially that which is technologically-facilitated, also generates its own issues. Most obviously, while the number of people who are literate in information technology worldwide has grown substantially over the past decade, globally we are still faced with a digital divide. Not everyone can participate on an equal basis. This is especially the case in areas characterised by remoteness, poverty, lack of technical expertise, and even political limitations on Internet access. Inadequate electricity and telecommunication infrastructures may also

limit the availability of high-end computers able to download curricular materials or support participation in real-time in online classrooms. Less obvious perhaps are the conceptual, curricular, and even affective issues associated with developing a curriculum that addresses the needs and sensitivities of a single local community or multiple diverse communities, as well as the needs of the individual archival student (often studying without the benefit of a student or professional cohort). What pedagogy can assist the instructor in developing, and remotely teaching such a curriculum? How can and how much should local and indigenous communities influence that curriculum? If there has not been a formal archival infrastructure in their community, are these communities in a position to identify and articulate to the instructor the kind of education they wish to receive? What would a 'core curriculum' comprise and how would it be presented in a culturally sensitive way that incorporates and honours the local when taught through distance education to students from multiple local and indigenous communities?[44] What language should be used in instruction, which models should be taught, and whose professional terminology should be promoted?

One could imagine that educational programs sensitive to local and indigenous needs would feature some or all of the following topics that currently get scant or no attention in many existing programs:

- Issues of stewardship versus custodianship of the records generated by one's own community, especially if that community is one that is disempowered or otherwise marginalised.

- Addressing and integrating the variant forms of recordkeeping resulting from the 'layering' of juridical systems due to repeated colonisation and/or occupation.

- Appraisal from the perspective of the 'other' or the 'co-creator' of the record.

- Design of descriptive tools, ontologies, reference services and automated interfaces that are sensitive to the cultural, religious, and emotional values and linguistic usage of the local and indigenous communities.

- Design of descriptive tools that address how local and indigenous communities seek and use information.

- Examination of differing constructions of ownership.

- Security of archival holdings and the role of the local archivist in times of war or civil unrest.

- The role of records in reconciliation and redress movements.

- The role of replevin and associated legal processes.

- Examination of legal actions where oral and written recordkeeping traditions have come into conflict.

- Local preservation concerns such as tropical climates.

- Building advocacy, leadership, change management, and community education skills.

It is imperative, however, that we do not stop at a consideration of how to educate professional archivists in local and indigenous communities. We need to ensure that what is learned from these communities is also fed back into 'mainstream' archival education, which itself caters to an increasingly diverse student body, but where additional diversity is also badly needed. More broadly what is learned must be used to extend and augment what lies at the core of that education curriculum – the accepted body of archival theory and the standards, guidelines and strategies through which it is implemented in archival practice.

Implications for archival research agendas

The challenge of respecting the local and the indigenous, and the related issues canvassed above suggest a rich field for archival research that:

- Reflects on emerging concepts such as incommensurable ontologies, parallel provenance and communities of records in the context of the archival needs of local and indigenous communities, and with reference to their memory and evidence paradigms.

- Contributes understandings of how community memory and evidence paradigms, and related archival needs, might support, challenge, or require augmentation or revision of

dominant archival paradigms, practices, and prevailing definitions of archives and records.

- Suggests ways in which archival frameworks and systems can be shaped to enable archival knowledge to function as indigenous or local knowledge to support communities to develop organically – to be dynamic and adaptive, rather than underpinning either 're-colonisation' or internal or external attempts to preserve or freeze the community or culture.

- Informs the efforts of existing archival institutions and programs to engage with communities and their archival needs with reference to the broader issues raised above.

- Promotes organisational and technological innovation through greater understanding of the challenges involved.

- Supports the development of innovative, inclusive archival educational curricula.

- Contributes further insights to the archival literature and related discourse.

- Contributes to the development of community-centred research design and methodologies.

Such research could potentially feed into organisational and technological innovation in relation to developing frameworks for the archives of the future, now only imagined in the archival literature as systems that:

- Manage the records of multiple groups and individuals beyond the boundaries of the personal or corporate archive.

- Represent multidimensional contexts of creation, capture, organisation and pluralisation – juridical, organisational, functional, procedural, technological and recordkeeping.

- Provide multiple views of parallel recordkeeping universes.

- Continuously and cumulatively weave relationships between records and related people, organisational structures, functions and activities to assist in preserving

their evidential value and enable multiple access paths to records and their meanings.[45]

It would begin to address the needs highlighted in the literature relating to postcolonial and post-totalitarian societies. It might be particularly focused on the existence of critical phenomena, eg in postcolonial settings, a mixed recordkeeping heritage, especially oral or written, or on issues that are particularly pressing for some communities and necessitate robust recordkeeping/archival infrastructures and global interaction. Such issues would include sovereignty (for example in Native American communities), redress and reconciliation (Indigenous Australian communities), and identity and memory shifts (Hispanic communities in North America; non-western migrant communities in Australia).

Addressing these needs is likely to include developing archival systems that engage with the concept of co-creation of records, negotiate the rights of the co-creators, and the identity and privacy of those who were enumerated and controlled by the colonial or totalitarian recordkeeping regimes. In relation to the research-teaching nexus, such research would aim to identify ways in which archival education can contribute to the development of professional expertise that is tailored to the needs of local and indigenous communities. It would also aim to develop greater sensitivity and awareness among all archivists of the plurality of archival issues and build practical tools and theoretical frameworks that can be applied in addressing them. Such research would explore how archival systems of the future, through the development of tools for ensuring multiple access paths, might promote the 'sharing' of remembered pasts and mediated identities.[46]

The type of agenda outlined above is an ambitious one, especially given that it is inevitably framed in terms of a particular worldview. This may well be challenged by or will evolve based on richer understandings of differing worldviews emerging from the research.[47] In particular, research of this kind will need to grapple with a range of insider-outsider issues. In this regard, it will be imperative for researchers to experiment with inclusive and innovative research designs that respect, empower and facilitate the full and equal participation of the communities engaged in the research. It is anticipated that research will therefore be characterised by:

- An emphasis on exploration of community views in the context of the community's own knowledge system.

- A holistic multidisciplinary approach to the values communities attach to their 'memory texts'.

- A focus on identifying and addressing the archival needs of communities in relation to their own memory and evidence paradigms.

- Teasing out underlying complex interactions, dependencies and belief systems in the continuum of individual, group and societal memories, communities, technologies and the archives, and beginning to ascertain the extent to which there is fundamental commonality or diversity.

- The community-centred nature of the research design itself.

It is anticipated that qualitative approaches, based on an understanding of the social world as being ever changing, constantly 'interpreted or constructed by people and … therefore different from the world of nature',[48] would be best suited to community-centred research. From this perspective there is no one objective reality, but rather 'multiple realities which are socially and individually constructed'.[49] Research undertaken within this paradigm is concerned with interpreting social meanings and personal sense-making. The focus is on the collection and analysis of qualitative data to form rich pictures or thick descriptions of particular instances, and to build transferable knowledge, ie to use the development of rich pictures and in-depth understandings of particular instances to help the understanding of other instances, taking into account their particular contexts. Generic ethnographic methods and archival ethnography could also play a key role. The application of generic ethnographic methods could enable community-based fieldwork studies of archival and related issues in the socio-cultural realm of record creation, management, preservation and use:

> by … 'becoming immersed in their milieu, and seeing events and activities as they see them', ethnographers have the opportunity to identify, analyze, and articulate the "insider" (emic) perspective.[50]

Within this broader context, archival ethnography could be used to study cultures of documentation, the forms of records and archives, the

recordkeeping and archiving processes that shape them, the worldviews made manifest in their systems of classification, the power configurations they reflect, and associated memory and evidence paradigms.[51]

Research methods and protocols would also need to be developed and applied in ways that respect the culture and knowledge systems of the communities engaged with the research. Ideally research teams would include researchers recruited from the local communities, while community elders and stakeholders would be included in advisory groups which would have input to all aspects of the research including the research design, as well as data collection, analysis and dissemination. Such consultation and collaboration with the communities engaged in the research would hopefully result in models for engaging in meaningful dialogue with communities, and for building the mutual respect that is crucial to addressing their archival needs.

Conclusion

The challenges of pluralising archival research and education are complex and potentially far-reaching. Beyond those already mentioned in this paper, some initiatives are already underway to engage with communities to explore ways forward. For example, a Search Conference, *Memories, Communities, Technologies*[52] will be held at Monash University in Prato, Italy in 2006. Historians, social and political scientists, archivists, librarians, information technologists, and linguists, as well as key industry and community stakeholders will be exploring the rich interplay between memories, communities and technologies at the nexus between the humanities, sciences and information technology. A second initiative within this broader frame of reference is the *Memories, Communities, Technologies and the Archives of the Future Project* which aims to undertake in-depth case studies of local and indigenous communities in North America, Australia and Europe.[53]

Pursuing the kind of approaches to archival research and education outlined in this article would hopefully contribute to essential understandings for the development of future archival systems and technologies that operate at a global level, but at the same time respect and empower the local and indigenous, eg through:

- Facilitation of the capacity of the archives to function as indigenous or local knowledge.

- Facilitation of the role recordkeeping can play in reconciliation and redress.

- Preservation of indigenous and local ways of knowing and remembering integral to the continued development of communities on the periphery, including indigenous language.

- Assistance to communities in protecting themselves against those who would seek systematically to erase certain kinds of memory, people or cultural/religious ways of knowing as in the Pol Pot regime or Bosnia.

It is envisaged that such understandings would emerge from analyses of the formative and transformative interactions that relate to the continuum of individual, group and societal memories, the use of enabling technologies, and the formation and re-formation of the archives. In-depth understandings of related issues of ownership, custody and access rights with reference to the relevant memory and evidence paradigms would be pursued. Flowing from these outcomes would be emerging understandings of how the archival mainstream might engage with the local and indigenous in ways which acknowledge and are respectful of different knowledge systems, are sensitive to differences (not only between the global and the local, but amongst local and indigenous communities themselves), and promote mutual understandings. From this vision, emerging global frameworks for archival systems and technologies, archival research and innovative archival curriculum design would better address differing communal and global needs, and lead to the further evolution of archival science itself.

Endnotes

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44 The PARBICA report attempts to balance the need for a comprehensive distance education program that can reach across diverse Pacific communities with recognition of specific local education needs: 'Although the specific current interests of PARBICA members should be considered when developing educational programmes in records and archives management, this focus should not divert attention unduly from the development of a sound introductory programme in records and archives management,' 'Distance education is the most appropriate method for delivering an introductory program in records and archives management. Additional delivery methods, including face-to-face teaching, workshops and practical placements, should not be excluded from consideration, but should not be incorporated if they risk the success of the distance-based program.' Anderson et al, *Ibid.*

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52 'Memories, Communities, Technologies: an Arts/ICT Search Conference, Prato 2006' is funded by a Monash University-Kings College London research grant; Chief Investigators Professor Sue McKemmish, Monash University, and

Professor Harold Short, Kings College London. Main objectives of the search conference include building an international community of researchers, industry partners and community stakeholders interested in trans-disciplinary research and development initiatives in the areas canvassed in this article, developing a research agenda to identify possible research projects and funding, planning related publications and exploring issues relating to appropriate research design, methods and techniques, including consideration of how to empower communities through their engagement in the research process.

53 This project will involve archival and community based researchers and will explore issues such as governance, sovereignty and accountability, identity, rights and obligations; the production and preservation of community knowledge; the community's memory and evidence paradigms; ownership, custody and access rights relating to archival knowledge; and technological change.