

Reviews

Edited by Adrian Cunningham

Sue McKemish, Michael Piggott, Barbara Reed, and Frank Upward, eds., *Archives: Recordkeeping and Society*. Topics in Australasian Library and Information Studies, Number 24. Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, 2005. 348pp. ISBN 1 876938 84 6. \$71.50 + \$6.60 postage and packing.

This book represents the most important attempt to date to sum up recent profound changes in archival thinking and to begin to outline their implications. The book brings together in twelve excellent essays the work of nine leading Australian archival thinkers. They are joined by Dutchmen Hans Hofman and Eric Ketelaar. A short review cannot provide an adequate summary of each essay. In any case, it is more important to sketch in the book's general direction, as the contributors share an overall viewpoint, which is their *raison d'être* for writing.

The strong tendency of much archival activity has been to try to erect stable structures: the fortress - and temple-like buildings that Adrian Cunningham and Ketelaar mention in their essays; and equally unshakeable concepts of archives, provenance, fonds, and record, as outlined in definitive, comprehensive standards, manuals, rules, laws, procedures, and vision and mission statements. The aim has been to create a 'freezer' for records, as Frank Upward aptly calls it, wherein the integrity or nature of the record could be preserved by a 'caretaker' archivist (p. 206).

Australian archivists have been powerful contributors to and (more recently) critics of this tendency. The Australian series system reflects a striking early insight into the limitations of these structures. The foundation stone of provenance was not so stable after all, in the

Australian vision of multiple creators shaping the record over time. But the series system was developed in the 1960s and 1970s within the older overall framework of pursuit of stable structures. It was a much better structure than others, and expected to be an enduring one. In the late twentieth century Australians made their mark by being the recordkeeping world's most energetic and ambitious systematisers of such positivist, fixed archival concepts, law, and administration. The technical expertise of the Australian recordkeeping community is thus unsurpassed.

By the mid 1990s new ideas were in circulation in Australia. Australians began to reassess their commitment to the traditional paradigm. The title of Sue McKemmish's path-breaking 1994 article 'Are Records Ever Actual?' sums up the turn being taken toward the view that things might not be so fixed or straightforward. Her observation in 2001 (repeated in this book) that 'the richness, complexity, diversity, and idiosyncracies of the contexts in which records are created, managed, and used cannot be fully represented in models, systems, standards, and schema' is another milestone in this rethinking (p. 186). What had happened? The profession's recordkeeping idealism had begun to engage more deeply what Hofman calls society's often 'anarchic' record making and archiving behaviour and ideas (p. 144). Archivists in Australia and elsewhere learned that society was not listening much to appeals for better standards. Pervasive mismanagement of records persisted despite determined efforts to counter it. Many archivists in various countries were not listening closely either – perhaps put off by the 'confusing soup' of standards (p. 94). Australians were also influenced by post-modern and Derridean ideas circulating in society, and as they were adapted to archives by Terry Cook, Verne Harris, Ketelaar, Brien Brothman, and others. At home Cunningham's reminders about the often overlooked distinct complexities of personal archives and Michael Piggott's attention to the varied socio-historical contexts of human recording and memory formation, including indigenous ones, added to the swirl of new questions and doubts about conventional archiving. Society's contingency, complexity, variety, uncertainty, and even inscrutability had finally been brought into archival discussion in Australia (and other places). It is easy to think that stable structures which model reality can be erected when the societal or human factors on which they rest are largely left off the blueprint. It cannot be done

when they are admitted. This book's great strength is that it presents archives as the product of recordkeeping *in* society.

The book provides an Australian reassessment of the traditional paradigm. Thus Upward notes here that there are 'no settled and stable beings' in an archives. 'Recordkeeping objects,' he adds, 'are marked out by their processes of formation and continuing formation, not by their intrinsic nature' (p. 206). He goes on to provide a welcome related recasting of Australia's signature continuum model, which now allows for contributions to the record's creation by all elements of the continuum and all along the history of the record. The record is thus not simply *created* at the initial inscription stage and merely *kept* in the 'freezer' along the rest of the continuum. More balance is thereby achieved between front-end contemporary and long-term archiving contributions to record creation, with all that that clearly implies for much more attention to the latter among professional priorities within the recordkeeping community. This is particularly true in Australia, where the emphasis hitherto has been on the former. Also in the revisionist spirit, but in relation to actual recordkeeping methods, rather than models, Chris Hurley writes, 'Methodologies and techniques are necessary for good recordkeeping, but they are not sufficient. Process is no substitute for intelligence. The test of whether the recordkeeping is good depends not simply on compliance alone, but also on the ethical purposes for which good records must be kept' (p. 227). In other words, societal purposes and actions are the key determinant of good recordkeeping, not just proper techniques. (Indeed, the very goodness of the techniques, or how well they conceptualise or classify people, actions, and records, is rooted in these purposes as well.)

Where would the contributors to this book take us? McKemmish, Reed and Piggott note in their essay that the new thinking about archives has not yet had much impact on archival practice. For most contributors to the book there is a strong initial impulse to employ the new ideas to update standards and models to achieve that practical effect. (pp. 190-93) But if such standards and schemas now have readily admitted limits, seem in constant need of overhaul, and society and many of our own colleagues keep ignoring and evading the best efforts to implement them, leaving us with something different to understand from the ideal records we try to conceive and promote, we should take a different tack.

Given the recent radical changes in conceptions of archiving, we do need to update and restate basic concepts of provenance, document, record, archives, the functions we perform, and models such as the continuum. This book is exemplary in that regard, although Upward's recast continuum still appears to subordinate the contributions to record formation of the post-initial inscription phases of the continuum (p. 207), and thus maintains the overall pre-eminence of front-end priorities. In the book generally more could have been said about the reconception of functions such as appraisal, reference, public programming, and preservation. Do these longer-term archiving functions receive less attention because of the overall front-end priorities? Does this reflect a reticence to embrace more fully the implications of the new thinking, with all its challenges to front-end priorities and related modelling? If records are being made and remade, what contribution to that process do these long-term archiving functions make? If the records retained indefinitely (presumably because they are the most valuable to society, the book's key concern) thus spend much more time along the continuum in the longer term archiving dimension, then what makes them what they are over time occurs mainly after the initial inscription. Thus the priorities of the continuum would not only require the better balancing they receive here, but reversal, in order to study much more these records and their process of 'becoming', to borrow Upward's helpful term (p. 206).

This reticence about the new thinking also seems evident in the greater confidence among some contributors to the book in the ability to ensure the authentic, reliable record by good recordkeeping than is warranted by the book's keen awareness of the fallible, subjective human beings behind the records. What then is meant by the integrity of a record? Can this concept be reconceived as well? This too is a remaining tension in the Australian move from stable to dynamic views of recordkeeping (pp. 15, 91, 128). Livia Iacovino's notion of 'degree' of integrity is a helpful starting point for further discussion (p. 267). But rather than focus on this task of reconceptualising as our ongoing high priority, and such standard setting and modelling has long been the primary tendency in the archival field, we need to pick up much more on the other key response to the changes in concepts of archiving that is in this book, but should figure much more prominently in it.

The archives that result from the kind of recordkeeping in society that we usually encounter continually fall far short of our ideals and standards, no matter how excellent and well intentioned, or how acute our professional self-understanding. This book points to important examples of those very human archives (to paraphrase Ann Pederson's essay's title), mainly in the records of the 'Children Overboard' case, and in brief references to the 'many adventures' of the Duke of Guelders's records in sixteenth-century Holland and the intricacies of US presidential records. The contributors offer important insights into these records, but they might have seen the new ways of thinking about archives as a means of focusing on unravelling the complexities of specific records much more fully. Might we not make extensive studies of particular bodies of records the unquestioned centrepiece of our efforts to perform and conceptualise archival work? The last word on refining standards, concepts, and methods has not been said. But it is time to employ the new thinking to study in much greater depth the strengths, weaknesses, uses, archiving, and impact of various records that are key to society's agenda and priorities, without being as focused as we have been on how that affects our models and methods. As this would help society to understand and use records, it might, in fact, gain attention and support for our overall recordkeeping agenda.

This is far from a challenge just to the Australian archival community. It is one for the profession worldwide, if we are to be known and valued more for our critical understanding of societal recordkeeping and archiving, than our fortresses, temples, models, and ideals. With that in mind it is especially good news that the editors of this book promise another one. The next book is intended to address the theme of 'recordkeeping and the global information society'. But widening the scope of our societal concern in this ambitious way, as we must, will bring much greater awareness of the contingencies, complexities, and varieties of recordkeeping, which will pose even larger challenges to modeling, and invite added efforts to understand in depth human recording and archiving. If such societal complexity is granted as a powerful determinant of recordkeeping, modeling and standardising will produce diminished returns – beyond helpful general guidelines. The bigger challenge, and more valuable contribution to recordkeeping in society, as this book points toward, particularly in essays by Cunningham, Ketelaar, and Piggott, is to go beyond that to explore more

deeply those 'processes of formation and continuing formation' of human recording, archiving, and memory making.

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David Carr, *The Promise of Cultural Institutions*, AltaMira Press, Lanham, Maryland, 2003. 240pp. ISBN 0 7591 0292 9. US\$26.95.

Cultural insularity is at its most obvious when it is on the larger scale: between countries, languages, and races. Most commonly, it is expressed in the form of ignorance by a group of another group in terms of what the latter values or believes and, where it does have some conception, general disdain is common. But cultural insularity is not confined to larger groupings: it is equally prevalent between professions. Attempts at understanding are not helped by the fact that a common language can obscure different meanings given to the identical word by different professions – 'archive' for instance.

If we see the larger cultural group for archivists as containing Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums (the GLAM) then realistically archives is to the larger whole as a Belgium to France or a Wales to England. That is to say they know we exist, but largely ignore us as unimportant. We can be all too conscious of the fact they exist and – indeed, we cannot ignore them. Given the size of the 'archival enterprise' as a whole, we have to acknowledge that what they do may be important or useful to us. We cannot disdain what galleries, libraries, and museums do except to our own disadvantage.

Having said that, there are certainly limits to what can be generalised to apply across all GLAM institutions and professional practices – there are just too many special cases and exceptions. There are at least two approaches for the archivist when dealing with the non-archival literature: the simple and the complex. The simple approach is just to substitute 'archives' or 'archivist' as the case might be where 'library' or 'librarian' is mentioned and see if it still makes sense. The second is to take the argument being made and to consider whether it applies at

all to archives at all or to what extent. If it does apply then you will get something new or at least a fresh insight. But frequently it may only be a few raisins in a large, bland pudding.

The book under consideration, while having 'cultural institutions' in the title, is from an author with a background in museums and libraries and as an educator. Archives play what may be termed the 'Belgian' role: acknowledged but not taken into practical consideration in the discussion. The second point to make is the book's emphasis on institutions as learning places for both general visitors and students. While a teaching/learning function may be part of an archival institution's remit, it is rare if ever it has the prominence given to these functions by many museums.

The book is published under the aegis of the American Association for State and Local History. This is an organisation that from personal experience does a wonderful job in producing educational and training material in a highly accessible and practical form for local museums, libraries, and similar. From the specialist point of view, the book does suffer from being a collection of essays and addresses. That is to say while the arguments are accessible they are not argued in depth because they were originally drafted as addresses to a listening audience. Arguments are kept simple, as is required by the needs of a large, diverse group. Unfortunately, the benefits of this approach come at the price of repetition of similar points across the essays.

As well as discussion of education and exhibition issues, the book does have an aspirational value – something more often ignored in favour of denseness in many more formal texts. I quote:

When people come together as learners under the aegis of a library or museum, they have an opportunity to understand that cultural institutions – libraries, museums, historical societies, botanical gardens, archives, zoos, parks – are grounded in the idea that a culture requires places, forums, working laboratories for cognitive change, where voices can be heard expressing hopes and aspirations in the contexts of the possible. When we capture and express such possibilities, we come to own a view of the future. In such places – truly open sources of our society – there is also equality in those possibilities of ownership, assuring

that knowledge is not privileged to any but those who can learn from the records and objects at hand and from other people in mutual engagement with a common world (p. 38).

In summary, the book is written from the museum perspective. It would be of most value to those interested in cultural institutions as places for exhibitions and as learning pathways. As such, archivists can indeed learn from it. After all, arguably, many of our approaches are based on the value and the use of archives as being self-evident rather than considering that for many archives are just another type of cultural institution – albeit specialised ones. And we should not disdain other insights and approaches.

Stephen Yorke

Gregory S Hunter, *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives, A How-To-Do-It-Manual*, 2nd ed., Neal-Schuman Publishers, New York, 2003. 450pp. ISBN 1 55570 467 0. US\$65.00.

The maxim of not judging a book by its cover seems more than apt when applied to Gregory S Hunter's weighty tome *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives*. At 450 pages, predominately of text, the second edition of this book first appeared a somewhat onerous read and hardly the practical solution for the beginning archivist to whom it seeks to appeal. In fact, the book does proffer a wealth of useful advice delivered in an engaging, accessible style although it is not without problems, particularly in its design and construction.

The engaging style would appear to reflect the fact that Hunter is Professor at the Palmer School of Library and Information Science at the Long Island University in New York. Much of the text has the tone of a lecture to students with amusing anecdotes and cultural parallels: who would have thought the television program M*A*S*H and its depiction of triage could be cited as a means of understanding the process of archival selection? (p. 52) On almost every page is a little vignette about archives and records taken from newspapers and

magazines, which certainly add colour, and offer an opportunity to demonstrate recordkeeping in everyday settings.

Furthermore, Hunter provides some extremely detailed advice for the archivist new to the job and seeking a template for action. The sections on conducting a records survey, arrangement, description, conservation, storage, and digital records provide a step by step approach to the tasks, even to the extent of including suggestions on when to offer 'coffee and Danishes' as a means of improving attendance at group meetings with records creators and users (p. 271). Therefore it is perhaps not surprising that it received the Society of American Archivists' 2004 Waldo Gifford Leland Award for writing of 'superior excellence and usefulness in the field of archival history, theory or practice'.

However, the in-house style of the 'A How-To-Do-It Manual' series works against the book. It is firmly a textbook, making no effort to appeal to a wider readership. I found the layout quite distracting. The extra wide left hand margin is perhaps intended for making notes, but is also a waste of space. While illustrations, anecdotes and figures break up the text, the use of oversized text boxes and incompatible fonts is jarring. It isn't an easy book to pick up and delve into, and it works against its target audience in that regard. Both editions of *Keeping Archives*, which have similar aims to this book, are far better examples of design and impact.

More problematic is the rather obvious approach taken to the structure of the book. Hunter moves typically through the stages of archival endeavour, taking a firmly America-centric life-cycle approach to the identification, preservation and use of long-term records. He does discuss international perspectives on recordkeeping, including Australian records continuum theory, but solely within the context of appraisal. While Hunter suggests that the records continuum approach is in fact unconsciously undertaken in many (American) archival settings despite archivists 'acting life-cycle' (p. 81), he doesn't explore the theory in any detail or discuss implications that a records continuum approach might have in practice to other archival functions.

Hunter also includes a chapter on digital records, which further undercuts the life-cycle approach as a theoretical basis to the structure of the book. Hunter offers sound strategies for the long-term management of electronic records, and citing David Bearman he

highlights how the definition of the record and recordkeeper is changing. However, while it is true many archivists in smaller institutions may not be required to manage electronic records, to be suddenly confronted by them and the challenges they present in Chapter 10 is confusing. It also seems a lost opportunity to not encourage a proactive approach to recordkeeping and explore what constitutes a record, and recordkeeper, in a broader context. This second edition could have included a more rigorous initial chapter on archival theory providing a more international focus and a better understanding of the changing nature of archives. In fact, the extensive Bibliography listing all the classic tracts actually achieves this international overview and will hopefully encourage readers of the book to explore more widely the fields of archival endeavour during their studies if not in their spare time.

Overall, the value of *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives* to an Australian audience is limited, although it is apparently a standard text in America and its advice is eminently practical. A shorter, better designed book, would have done justice to Hunter's enthusiasm and experience.

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Trudy Huskamp Peterson, *Final Acts: A Guide to Preserving the Records of Truth Commissions*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, Washington and Baltimore, 2005. xii + 110pp. Paperback. ISBN 0 8018 8172 2. US\$25.00.

Final Acts is a book which promises to meet a need which has been growing steadily over the past two decades. In this period the world has seen a succession of countries choosing 'the truth commission' as the preferred means of dealing with traumatic pasts – and there is no end in sight to the phenomenon. It can easily be demonstrated that the work of these commissions hinges on recordmaking. And yet the literature on this dimension consists of fragmentary papers, articles, essays, media coverage and the self-reflection (in sections of formal reports) of the commissions themselves. An extended enquiry into recordmaking by and around truth commissions is long overdue. This,

precisely, is the terrain into which Peterson ventures. Does her book fulfil its promise?

Before attempting to answer this question, let me acknowledge at once that I am not a disinterested observer. I worked closely with South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission from 1996 to 2001, and subsequently have given recordmaking advice to the commissions in Sierra Leone, East Timor and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This engagement has taught me that the terrain is fraught and messy, and has reduced my tolerance for analyses which hug safe lines or which privilege theory over praxis.

It should also be noted up front that Peterson draws tight parameters for her enquiry. She excludes commissions set up by non-governmental bodies 'because they and their records do not fall under the legal control of the government' (p. 1). And she excludes the management of records 'while in active use by the commission' (p. 1). Effectively her concern is entirely with what she calls 'disposition'. I assume that most Australian readers, influenced as they are by continuum thinking, would resist the latter limitation. I certainly do. My reasons are legion, but three are most pressing:

- 'Disposition' is never a discrete, temporally bounded activity. It is embedded in the 'first acts' of truth commissions, arguably begins in the recordmaking of the oppressive regime to be documented by the commission, proceeds through 'active use by the commission', and resonates long after the commission has closed its doors formally.
- The retreat into 'disposition' enables Peterson to avoid asking the toughest (and most interesting) questions – for instance: how best can a truth commission document the past and its own work; what are the challenges to sound recordmaking which commissions are likely to confront; and what is a truth commission in recordmaking terms?
- Peterson (not intentionally perhaps) reinforces the view that archivists are those who pick up the pieces once the players have walked off the field. They come in on invitation to handle formal disposition procedures after the action. To

their credit, Australian continuum thinkers have given us courage to think of ourselves as players, as agents who can shape recordmaking and the world in which recordmaking happens. We can be in on the action.

Does *Final Acts* fulfil its promise? By now the reader will have realised that, at a broad level of analysis, I have severe reservations. But what of the book's treatment of the sliver of a terrain chosen for it by the author? Here Peterson is well organised, measured and confident. After an overview, she defines key questions to be considered, addresses each of the questions, and concludes with country reports on the twenty commissions falling within her ambit. Three substantial appendices cover 'criteria distinguishing commission records from personal property', 'access criteria' and 'physical storage criteria' respectively. Much of the content is sound and well-considered. There is no doubt that the book will promote awareness of recordmaking in relation to truth commissions and become a resource to those who find themselves picking up the pieces after these commissions. However, while traversing the text's reach I heard several alarm-bells ringing:

- Her advice (sound in principle) on ensuring that commission staff members do not remove organisational records, is focused on closure procedures. In my experience, unless guidelines are built into the operating cultures of commissions early on, one is fighting a losing battle.
- Her easy categorisation of commission records into administrative ('which can be destroyed in a relatively short period of time after the commission ceases to exist') (p. 5), program and investigative records, ignores a routine messiness in recordmaking. For instance, the degree to which 'administrative records' are porous to non-administrative functions needs to be accommodated.
- She neither accounts for nor takes into account the enormous documentary sedimentation commission work leaves in other offices of the state, organs of civil society and the media. This reality calls for an imaginative and complex documentation strategy – not flagged, less addressed, by her. Again, implicitly archivists are portrayed as after-action cleaners rather than active shapers.

- The 'political context' (I would insist on the plural 'contexts') addressed by her is extremely narrow.
- While the access guidelines proposed by her are comprehensive and reasonable, she chooses not to address systemic barriers to public access. It is not enough to define the criteria for dealing with access requests. In South Africa, for example, the vast majority of citizens don't know where the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) archive is located and have never used public archives services. Which explains why the Commission recommended a vigorous public programming endeavour around its archive.

It was, then, with some trepidation that I engaged Peterson's account of the South African TRC. For me this would be the sternest test of her analysis – it was the one commission she noted direct experience of, and, as I have indicated, it is the one with which I am most intimately acquainted. The strictures of a book review exclude too detailed an exploration, but let me cite just a few examples of the chasm between her neat account and the harsh realities on the ground:

- 'South Africa', she asserts, 'also has a privacy act' (p.77). In fact, after years of legislative drafting, it still does not.
- 'As the commission began to wind down in 1999, it transferred all but thirty-four boxes of its records to the National Archives and Records Service' (p. 77). Would that there were such tidiness in the real world. Omitted here is the long contest over the records' final destination. Also omitted are the Commission's databases, now under the control of the President's Fund. And the rest of the electronic records, in the custody of the Department of Justice. And the substantial records accumulations removed by commissioners and staffers.
- 'Those thirty-four boxes were sent to the office of the minister of justice, Dullah Omar. In 2003 they were transferred to the National Archives' (p. 77). Peterson neglects to mention that these boxes were moved from Justice to Intelligence, that both Justice and Intelligence publicly denied knowing where they were, and that only after lengthy litigation undertaken by the South African History Archive (SAHA)

did Intelligence admit to having them and agree to transfer them to the National Archives.

- ‘South Africa’s freedom of information act covers the records of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and has been used to obtain records’ (p. 18). Again, messy realities are glossed over by such assertions. In fact, public access to the TRC records has been a site of fierce contestation. In numerous reports SAHA has recounted their and others’ difficulties in using the act to access TRC records.
- ‘In South Africa, a multiagency team reviewed sensitive TRC records and formulated recommendations on what information could be released and what information required continued protection’ (p. 39). It needs to be noted that the review was forced by court action, and that neither its mandate nor its recommendations have been made public.
- ‘There are no known instances of defacement or destruction while records have been in the hands of operating successor agencies ...’ (p. 36). In South Africa it was well-publicised that a file contained in one of the thirty-four boxes mentioned above had disappeared.

Does *Final Acts* fulfil its promise? I would have to say ‘no’, not in its own terms nor in the terms others might reasonably apply to it. An extended enquiry into recordmaking by and around truth commissions – one which accommodates complexity, is accurate on detail, engages critical contexts, and gets its hands dirty – remains overdue.

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National Gallery of Victoria, *Andy Warhol's Time Capsules* exhibition,
16 March – 8 May 2005.

Jane Lane: "I'm just posing the question; what if an egg beater were considered great art on Mars? Would that make it art to us?"

Jane's cell mate: "Hell! If an egg beater can be evidence, why not art?"

Daria

Teen animation Series

MTV 1999

This is a review of an unusual exhibition recently mounted in the National Gallery of Victoria; *Andy Warhol's Time Capsules*. As the exhibition is quite massive in both scope and ambition, this will necessarily only offer my impressions based on two visits, during which I was unable to entirely comprehend the displays in detail. In addition to trying to provide a sense of the contents, I'll be looking at the potentially controversial question of whether the collections on display could be said to be archives.

Perhaps I had better commence by answering the question; What are 'Time Capsules'? The genesis for the idea came in 1974, when Warhol was in the process of moving his Factory studio to new premises. As he was an avid collector of just about anything that took his fancy from moment to moment, the task was a daunting one, for which he purchased a large stock of cardboard moving cartons. It was at this time that a friend encouraged him to periodically dump the contents of his desk into cardboard boxes, which would be sealed and thus represent time capsules of his life at the time. Obviously taken with the idea, Warhol had filled some 600 of the boxes by the time of his death in 1987. These currently reside in the Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh.

Those of us who work, or have worked, in the collection management field would understand what a massive cataloguing effort this would entail, and hardly surprisingly, it remains far from complete. As such, what is presented in the exhibition is a selection of fifteen of the time capsules; those which have been able to be completely controlled.

Upon entering the exhibition space, the first view is of the 'time capsule' containers themselves; fifteen ordinary looking cardboard boxes labelled roughly in marker pen, with a rough description of contents and dates.

The dates are obviously vital in providing the only clue to the context in which the boxes were filled. The contents have been laid out in museum display cases which fill an impressive amount of the floor space of three major galleries. In an attempt to replicate the experience of rummaging through the cartons, the cases have been lined with corrugated cardboard.

There is no space here for any detailed description of the contents, so I shall have to restrict my description of the contents to those items which most captured my attention. The smallest of the capsules (in terms of square footage when laid out) is number 58. This contains some LP album covers, dating from a period when Warhol had been commissioned to do a cover for the Rolling Stones. Not his work, he had collected them, perhaps, as research. Interestingly they share a cabinet with a pair of shoes belonging to Clarke Gable, apparently sent by Gable's widow. Many of the capsules contain items from celebrity acquaintances, celebrity being one of Warhol's acknowledged passions.

Time capsule 61 interested me in particular; containing (among other items) a large array of telephone message slips. The archivist in me was intrigued. Some documented calls from celebrities, others from people of whom I had never heard. I found myself wanting to know who received a return phone call, and who missed out. And why.

Interestingly, among the contents of capsule number 12 was a rejection letter from the Museum of Modern Art, received after he had offered a donation of one of his shoe drawings. I couldn't help but wonder whether this was consciously selected. Was he unafraid of placing his failures on record? Did he hope to expose the museum's director, Alfred Barr, as having been culturally shortsighted?

Much as it troubles me to pass over the vast majority of the exhibition, I'll leave the description of contents here, and get to my thoughts on the exhibition as a whole. Firstly, I'm intrigued by the selection of materials on offer. I can't get past the view that the contents of the time capsules have been self consciously selected. Warhol was the man who made famous the idea of fifteen minutes of fame. He was obsessed with celebrity, and was certainly aware of his place in the star pantheon, becoming eventually as famous for being a popular icon as he was for his art. Additionally there was the choice to call the boxes his 'time capsules'. This label implies a future audience for whom the materials

are being preserved. For these reasons I cannot bring myself to believe that the material selection was remotely random, as is suggested in the exhibition brochure.

Then we must acknowledge a second level of selection. Why were these fifteen capsules chosen to be catalogued over all the others? They are not the first fifteen containers of the numerical sequence, and the exhibition brochure refers to the staff having delved into others. How did the staff choose which capsules to catalogue first?

Finally, I would suggest that the need to array the contents of cardboard boxes in flat display cabinets, necessarily involves the imposition of an external intellectual mindset on the contents. This is inevitable, and not a basis for criticism.

So, the question remains: 'Are these items archives'? Certainly they meet the criteria on many levels. What is contained in the cartons is definitely evidence concerning the life, career, interests and acquaintances of Warhol. The fact that it was self selected, even if self consciously, does not compromise that. After all, the self selection of archival collections by their subjects is quite common. Presidential libraries, anyone? Personally I regard the contents as having been self consciously selected. Approaching the exhibit my understanding of Warhol, was as an icon of art and popular culture. The exhibition did nothing to change that. I felt there was little of Andy the person, much to reinforce his iconic status. Here we see Warhol as object, often getting a glimpse of how he was seen by others, but seeing little of Andy, the person. This makes it incomplete evidence, but evidence nonetheless. Often we, as practitioners, make the assumption that our archives contain 'the record'. Certainly they do not. The Warhol collection is hardly unique in providing an incomplete, self selected record.

Finally, and in order to invite controversy, I'm going to get cheeky and address the question of whether these capsules could be said to be art as well as evidence. In fact, there are several examples of what would be generally regarded as artworks in the capsules. Leaving this aside, Warhol was a subscriber to the stream known as conceptual art. His iconic Campbell's soup tins embraced the idea of the everyday as

artwork, and his technique of screen printing (including getting factory members to produce the prints for him) definitely allows for artistic recognition of the everyday and the mass-produced. Art is said to occur at the point of interaction between object and perception. So ... if a pair of Clarke Gable's shoes can be evidence, why not art?

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