

“Why archive?” and Other Important Questions Asked by Occupiers

Co-authors: Siân Evans, Anna Perricci, and Amy Roberts

Published in: Informed Agitation: Library and Information Skills in Social Justice Movements and Beyond (ed. Melissa Morrone, Library Juice Press, 2014)

As the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement began to take shape in Zuccotti Park—also known as Liberty Square—in New York City, an archives working group formed as a collective interested in preserving the physical and digital documents created by activists in the movement. Members of the Archives Working Group (AWG) were faced with a unique set of challenges, as well as the opportunity to address these challenges in an independent, non-hierarchical, non-institutional setting. Consensus-based decision-making drove the actions of the group, but competing visions also needed to be reconciled. Some of the most common questions about the role and function of archives required explanation, both within and beyond the working group.

The desire and need to interact with the archives' creators was integral to the establishment of the OWS AWG's collection. Managing relationships with any set of living donors is inherently complicated, and the occupiers we found ourselves working with represented a dynamic group of content creators and contributors. Activists ask a lot of questions. By definition activists are challenging the status quo. As members of the AWG, we were asked a lot of very valid questions including:

“What is an archive? Is there a difference between art and archives?”

“What are you collecting?”

“Who will have access to what you are collecting?”

“Where is this stuff going to be kept?”

“Are you trying to collect all the archives produced in the movement?”

“Why collect this?” and “Why not this?”

“What do archivists do and why?”

“Why should archives matter to people in the movement?”

These questions and how we answered them serve as the foundation for this chapter. We will elaborate on our answers to activists' questions and put forth an analysis of archival theory as related to some of the questions with especially complex implications. The formation of a digital archive also brought up some issues that are beyond those most relevant to the discussion of management of and access to analog archives. Part of this essay is dedicated to the ways in which we addressed these particular concerns. We will conclude with lessons learned in the process of creating a collection of physical and digital archives coming out of Occupy Wall Street in 2011-2012.

For the Occupy Wall Street Archives Working Group, Archiving Is Activism

The OWS AWG, online at <http://owsarchives.wordpress.com>, is a working group recognized by the New York City General Assembly of Occupy Wall Street. The task of the AWG initially focused on the acquisition of materials created by activists and the short-term stewardship of these objects. But from the outset, the ideal was always long-term preservation paired with a consistently high level of access. Explaining the balance between access and preservation became central to the answers the working group members needed to provide, especially to those interested in borrowing archives back for exhibition or even reusing signs for future protests. We also always intended to remain an independent working group that was part of the OWS community. While collecting can be done with and by institutions, we have an OWS working group for archives because we want to represent what is going on with Occupy from inside the movement. There are a lot of other people recording the movement and telling its story, but we want to empower occupiers to help preserve what is being made while their story is unfolding. While some archivists aim to be dispassionate and “objective,” our intent was to be more involved in the movement and open about the inherent influence of our actions.

The OWS archives officially began when two participants with a mutual interest in archiving met each other on September 24, 2011, in Liberty Square a week after the occupation began. The fluid nature of the movement and its rapid evolution made it both essential and challenging to archive the movement as it unfolded. In the following weeks, as it exploded into a national and international phenomenon, it became clear that it would take more than two people to archive the different types of media that the movement was producing, from the cardboard signs that lined the perimeter of Liberty Square to the Livestream footage online. The working group that subsequently formed consists of professional archivists, students enrolled in archives and preservation programs at universities, and interested individuals who share the conviction that archiving is important. The members generally see ourselves as both participants in and supporters of the movement, and we emphasize the role that archives could play in strengthening activists’ and scholars’ knowledge of Occupy Wall Street in the future. As such, one of the group’s initial endeavors was to draft a mission statement:

“Our mission is to collect ephemera, signs, posters, audiovisual materials, digital files, photographs, oral histories, and artifacts that were created and distributed in and around Liberty Plaza and at actions that Occupy Wall Street participates in. It stands as an evidence of how participatory democracy can work, how culture and politics connect, and how the 99% can come together to generate social and economic change. Its mission is to keep OWS historically self-conscious, and guarantee that our history will be accessible to the public.”

Collecting Physical and Digital Art and Archives, in the Midst of Blurred Boundaries Between Art and Archives

In defining what archives are, we quickly ran into difficult questions about the distinction between what is considered art versus what is considered an archive. Many participants in the Occupy movement are artists, though not all of them identify themselves as such. Even those

creating signs on discarded pizza boxes were in fact committing a creative act and expressing themselves. However, even occupiers who readily call themselves artists do not automatically presume that everything they produce should be considered art. The inability to draw clear lines separating artworks from archival material both enriches and muddies the discourse about how one defines art, archives, and the creative process through which they are created. Actually defining the term “art” is well beyond the scope of this paper, but let us work under the widely-held assumption that art and archives are not synonymous but may in fact be more related than one might at first realize or acknowledge. For example, the blurring of the boundaries between art, activism, and archives has been a topic of numerous publications over the past decade (Spieker, 2008). Furthermore, since the media attention surrounding OWS, there have been a series of public exhibitions on the topics of art, activism, and information science, including *Collect the WWWorld: The Artist as Archivist in the Internet Age* at the 319 Scholes space in Brooklyn; *Required Reading: Printed Material as Agent of Intervention* at the Center for Book Arts in Manhattan; and *Disobedience Archive (The Parliament)* at Bildmuseet, a museum of contemporary art and visual culture in Sweden.

The majority of the ephemera collected by the AWG could be regarded as art, both in digital and physical formats. As the movement unfolded and the group grew, its members collected and saved hundreds of cardboard signs that we felt had a significant visual and symbolic value. During the occupation, new signs were made on a daily basis and displayed on the sidewalk around the perimeter of Liberty Square to greet people who were visiting and wanted to learn about it. The physical archive currently includes over 300 of these cardboard signs, which represent the cornerstone of the physical archive because of their intrinsic value to the OWS movement.

The archive also consists of a number of other objects. In the physical archives, we have a banner for the media and information station in Liberty Square. Each station of the occupation—from the kitchen to the information and media station—was marked by an orange mesh banner. These banners did not just announce the location where someone should go to obtain food or information, they also told a story about the occupation. Much of the ephemera that the working group collected reflect the themes of resisting, reclaiming, and recreating, which are at the heart of the movement's principles. For example, the media and information banner can be read in multiple ways; the sign itself has a story, and some of its physical characteristics are especially significant. It is made out of fabric from an orange net used by the police to confine protesters in one area during a mass arrest. This material was taken from the police during the march in solidarity with the October 2011 attack on the Oakland occupation. Appropriating physical materials that symbolized repression was a common tactic among occupiers. Several protesters made jewelry out of zip ties, which are made of the same type of plastic and have a similar design to handcuffs used by the New York Police Department. Black and yellow tape styled after the archetypal police tape used to block off sections of Liberty Plaza after the eviction was also created with the word “Occupy” printed on it.

The Screen Printers Cooperative, Occuprint, and Occucopy were all creative cooperatives that came together during the occupation, producing many shirts, buttons, flyers, and posters for

actions and events. The Screen Printers Cooperative printed pieces of fabric with different images and phrases that became popular for occupiers to wear pinned on their clothing. While these items are uneditioned multiples, rather than one-of-a-kind objects, they are a limited quantity of artists' work. Other materials in the ephemera collection are handmade and unique, such as letters of solidarity from across the country, many of which were handwritten.

Our digital collection includes Livestream footage, digital video, animated shorts, digital photographs, audio files, mailing list messages, email announcements, articles, spreadsheets, and other correspondence. We have also been periodically saving data being used in the #OccupyData Hackathons, including a large number of tweets pertaining to OWS. We are not archiving websites right now, because the Internet Archive is regularly harvesting hundreds of websites, including Facebook pages, related to the Occupy movement worldwide. We have contributed to the Internet Archive's Web archiving project by sending over 200 URLs to use as seed sites for the collection, including several dozen Facebook pages that were heavily used to organize occupations throughout the world.

One remarkable thing about the Occupy movement is its embrace, development, and use of technology, from mobile apps such as Obscuracam and "I'm getting arrested" to hardware designed to meet the needs of people engaging in public protest, notably the FreedomTower (a robust mobile hotspot) and Amelia Marzec's community phone booth project (viewable online at <http://www.ameliamarzec.com/phonebooth>). An event to highlight this technological innovation, Demo Day, was held at the contemporary arts space Eyebeam in New York City on January 28, 2012. At Demo Day, a variety of tech tools made for and/or by activists was presented. The organizer, artist Taeyoon Choi, was also a co-organizer for Share Day, an event in which we invited activists to bring in their digital archives to share with one another and donate to the AWG if they so chose. Choi's Demo Day website, at <http://demo-day.org/projects>, gives more information about these initiatives.

So, What *Is* an Archive?

When this question came up, we would begin the conversation by noting that archives are traditionally defined as collections of records with ongoing evidential value to an organization and subsequently to society at large. Records (or items) can be a variety of different things, including text, images, ephemera, and digital content. Furthermore, a single item can also be called an archive. Archives document the activity of people or organizations and are often associated with other institutions like libraries, museums, or universities.

This basic working definition is only a small part of the answer. The term "archive" has been a flashpoint for critical discussion over the past few decades, and as such the term itself has been expanded to mean a variety of different things. This is partially a product of what Pierre Nora (1989) calls the "imperative of our epoch"—that is, to preserve any vestige of memory and, in the process, to produce archives (p. 14). According to this logic, archives—alongside museums and libraries—are society's memory tools. Or, as Nora puts it, "modern memory is, above all, archival" (p. 13). But if this helps us understand why we archive, it does not explain what the

archive actually is. A specification of the function of an archive is an early step but not a comprehensive answer to the initial question about what an archive is.

In the process of more richly defining an archive, let us consider the history of our context and practice as archivists. While archives have been maintained since antiquity, the modern conception of the archive was developed in revolutionary France. The National Archives were founded in 1789 and the Archives Department in 1796. Similarly, in England, the Public Record Act of 1838 assembled the management of all public repositories (Ferreira-Buckley, 1999, p. 578). The institutionalization of archives is generally associated with 19th century Europe, when the archive (and especially the national archive) played into a general sense of Positivism typical to the era. By Positivism we refer specifically to an understanding of the world, derived from the philosophy of Auguste Comte, that assumes the universe is governed by natural laws that are observable, therefore implying an objective reality that is “knowable” (Harris, 1997, p. 132). Under this premise, archival science as a discipline assumes the inherent neutrality of the archivist and posits the archive as an accurate reflection of historical fact.

As Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook (2002) have argued, both scholars and archivists have had a vested interest in perceiving and promoting the archive as a neutral historical repository of information (p. 6). According to them, the archive is not a passive receptacle of historical information; it actually shapes and controls the way history is read, which in turn shapes our contemporary political reality. As Derrida (1994) so succinctly points out in an oft-quoted footnote at the beginning of *Archive Fever*: “There is no political power without control of the archive, or without memory” (p. 4).

The lack of clarity in the term “archive” is also a product of the expanding of the word itself in critical theory. Terry Cook (2011), for example, distinguishes between the “archive” (singular) and “archives” (plural) (p. 600). If the term “archives” refers to the development and processing of historical documents over time, the “archive” is a much more flexible term that has come to mean a number of different things and is, at times, collapsed with the term “memory” itself. While this loosening can be attributed primarily to the writings of Michel Foucault (1991, 2010) and Jacques Derrida, a series of theorists and critics including David Greetham (1999), Pierre Nora, Andreas Huyssen (2000), and Hal Foster (2004) has taken up this expanded “archive” and the relationship between archives and institutional power in a variety of ways.

We ask ourselves and our contemporaries what this means for archivists and for alternative archives. There is a small but growing community of archivists—including Verne Harris, Terry Cook, Joan M. Schwartz, and Eric Ketelaar (2002)—who have taken the postmodern critiques of archival Positivism to heart and have championed increased discussion between archivists and the historians, journalists, and scholars who use archives in their work. This has led to what Verne Harris (1997) calls “a transformation discourse” in which the role of the archivists and the process of archivization have come under increased scrutiny (p. 132). Harris and Cook, among others, have argued compellingly for greater transparency in the process of archivization. Harris’ call to respect the “other,” and to “invite every other into the archive,” is perhaps a tall order, but it is a necessary one in a heterogeneous and horizontal movement such as OWS.

Why Should Archives Matter to Occupiers?

When we reflect on why archives should matter to activists, “Baby Pictures of a Revolt”—a section of Rebecca Solnit’s poetic letter to Mohammed Bouazizi—comes to mind. Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor, self-immolated in protest of the poverty and humiliation in which he was living, and his death contributed to the beginning of the Arab Spring. When we think about archives coming from OWS, we could consider them documentation of a tender and formative period of a worldwide movement that has lasted far beyond the two-month occupation of Liberty Square. While “baby pictures” is too sentimental a term for wide use by the working group, the value remains: this is evidence of how things were at the beginning of something larger, and its future form was only hinted at by the manifestations recorded as it began to take shape.

These archives should matter to occupiers both because they are the result of their own ingenuity and creativity, and because these materials are representations of what happened that will outlive us if handled properly. Occupiers taking responsibility for their own archives enables us, as a culture, to preserve voices that could otherwise be silenced.

We contend that archives are not dead and instead help stories live on, sometimes giving voices to the voiceless. Through the preservation of these records, we have a chance to make sure the memory of OWS is maintained with as much accuracy as possible. Many people outside the movement have asserted what it entails and means to them, so why should we not make sure occupiers’ own stories are told and preserved?

What Is a Digital Archive? Why Archive Digital Materials?

When asked what a digital archive is, the explanation starts by specifying that there are at least two ways one can define a digital archive. The first is that it is an organized collection of digital files. Digital files themselves can also be referred to as digital archives as they are archival materials (archives). To us it’s important to note that nearly any kind of digital file could be saved in an archive, but the long-term preservation of the files involves more than just keeping a copy or two in a safe place.

The perception that digital archives are secure if they are posted online is one that we encourage people to question. Digital preservation is a multifaceted, long-term strategic process through which files are cataloged and managed in the short term, then stewarded on an ongoing basis. Content on the Web can disappear without a trace at the volition of the account holder who posted it, or the service provider such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, or Tumblr.

The AWG collects digital materials from activists and select datasets used by Occupy Research (<http://www.occupyresearch.net>), including a large collection of tweets that were analyzed as part of the #OccupyData Hackathons in New York City and elsewhere. As mentioned earlier, for Web archiving, members of the working group submitted over 200 websites, including many

Facebook pages and websites for occupations worldwide, for the Internet Archive to periodically harvest (these archived websites can be viewed at <http://archive-it.org/collections/2950>).

One of the AWG members came into the group specifically because she wanted to archive digital materials. She started her work with a needs assessment. This process was undertaken within a two-week timeframe and resulted in a flexible project plan to establish a digital archive for OWS. To determine the needs of the activists, two working group members referred the digital archivist to Livestreamers, videographers, photographers, people in the technology centered working group (Tech Ops), and avid social media users. Through conducting user interviews and encouraging collaboration between groups, several questions about digital archives frequently came up (examined below), and we made some decisions about how we wanted to approach creating and maintaining a digital archive.

The interviews made it clear that some activists knew already that they needed help managing their files and were interested in a Digital Asset Management (DAM) system. We struggled to find a robust tool that would let people manage their files and ensure ongoing access. There was no free system that was easy to use and simple to maintain that would meet the needs of the activists. Ultimately, we chose to work on a preliminary basis with Omeka, a free, open source Web publishing platform created for museums, libraries, archives, and scholars to create Web exhibits. Omeka has several very useful plug-ins, and we are using it on a test server to try out different ways to upload and catalog digital archives. Part of why we chose Omeka is because it is open source and built using a programming language called PHP, which several computer programmers in the movement know. We recognize the prospect of identifying features that would make Omeka more effective for our purposes and requesting their development by activists or other technologists who would like to help us.

Digitization Isn't the Same Thing as Preservation, and It's Not Simple

The digital archiving efforts at first were very reliant on cooperation and support from OWS's technology working group, Tech Ops. Our conversations with Tech Ops largely revolved both around our hardware and bandwidth needs as well as our reasons for requiring a digital archive at all. To get any support from Tech Ops, we first needed to answer some typical questions and explain how digital archiving is more than having a back-up and that the assignment of non-technical metadata is not a process that can be automated.

Parallel to our work, Tech Ops was looking into options for a DAM, so it was not hard to explain the value of managing files in the immediate future, although we need to convey how a DAM is only part of the way digital archives will persist in the long run. There was a perception that digital materials would survive if they continued to be useful and were likely to be maintained by the creators of the file. A simple reminder of the ephemerality of websites usually did a good job of starting the conversation of the fragility and fleeting nature of digital works online. Almost everyone we spoke to about how easy it is to accidentally lose important data admitted that they, like most of us, have lost files or even had hard drives crash. The possibility that files would be seized by law enforcement as evidence was also openly acknowledged, as was the

possibility that materials stored in the cloud could be rendered inaccessible rather easily, particularly if a paid service proved to be unaffordable.

Tech Ops members and many other people in the movement assumed that the AWG would be digitizing the physical archives in short order and then making these materials available online. There was a common belief that if a file is not available through a Web-based interface, it is not really accessible. While widespread access was a goal, immediate needs revolved around simply gathering digital and physical archives, then keeping them safe and in reasonable order.

In February 2012 at Judson Memorial Church in Manhattan, a discussion of the challenges of digitization came up at an open forum intended to determine the future of the archives held by the AWG. Some of the attendees, including a few members of the working group, pushed for immediate access to archives through the Web, albeit without having the time or expertise to contribute to the effort of doing so themselves. At first it was not easy to succinctly explain how digitization entails a lot more than taking a picture with a good quality digital camera, and how a database-driven website with a decent user interface involves a lot of work. Over time, we gained the ability to help people understand the limits of quality to rough and ready output such as unedited scans or digital pictures of ephemera in the collection. We also became more adept at explaining that while there are very robust tool sets available, it would take a lot of time and expertise to customize the kind of content management system we needed before we could even think about the front end that users would see. The ability to search the collection would also be contingent on adequate metadata assignment, which requires a significant amount of work.

Ultimately, our server space was set up and maintained by someone who had originally come to the movement as a participant in Tech Ops but joined the AWG to help us move forward with the digital archive. Having an enthusiastic and very skilled technical expert in the working group significantly reduced our reliance on Tech Ops. That said, we kept up an informal dialogue with Tech Ops to coordinate our groups' respective efforts.

Licensing to Encourage Reuse

The potential for use and reuse of digital archives was at the forefront of our thinking as we began to plan for a digital archive. There was a pragmatic need to ensure that materials would be cleared for access and reuse, particularly for multimedia files, and we wanted to be very transparent about the fact that these archives would not be private or held in confidence. We opted to require that digital archives taken into the AWG's collection be licensed under Creative Commons. Since we were not interested in supporting commercial work with our efforts, we specified that the license associated with the assets in the collection must limit the use of the materials to non-commercial purposes. Donors are always to be credited (attribution). At the time of donation, creators were asked to specify if and how editing or remixing their materials is permitted (derivatives allowed, no derivatives, or Share Alike). We also tried to reassure creators that assigning a Creative Commons license did not amount to a resignation of their right to grant additional permissions and further use, including for commercial purposes. The

Creative Commons licensing is meant to serve only as a baseline for future use, with the rest being up to people beyond the working group.

Another common licensing question that came up was, “Isn’t the stuff made by people in the movement in the public domain?” Works created in conjunction with OWS may physically have been in a public domain or existed on the open Web, but the works are not in the public domain in legal terms. The duration before something is legally released into the public domain is the lifetime of the creator plus 70 years (Copyright Act of 1976). The people who created these works are most likely still alive, and even if they are not they were living as of the fall of 2011 and therefore did not die decades ago.

Why Collect _____ and Not _____? Or Inviting Every “Other” into the Archive

The content of the physical and digital collections is very much contingent on donations from activists involved in OWS. While we cannot collect everything—especially given limited staff, funds, and space—we are trying to find a way to gather a representative sample of archives created through OWS.

Harris’s call to invite every “other” into the archive is perhaps problematic here in that it defines the non-archivist as “other.” Because the AWG has sought to dismantle the distinction between archivist and activist by establishing dialogue between the two, this boundary becomes blurred in the context of a highly participatory movement. Nonetheless, in his desire to invite everyone in, Harris gets at the principle of “total archives.” The total archive is one that seeks to collect everything and does not distinguish between valuable and invaluable content. If we had more time and resources, we would have tried to determine which objects have intrinsic value and which don’t. In many cases, these decisions could be judgment calls by archivists who considered themselves part of the movement. Instead, the decisions were made based on limitations of space and staffing. Ideally, it would be wonderful to be able to collect everything and anything and then thoughtfully appraise it, but with a small, all-volunteer staff and limited physical (and server) space, this was not possible.

Where Will the Archives Be Kept and Who Will Have Access to Them? Engaging the OWS Community: Open Forums for Occupiers to Share Their Visions for the Future of the Movement’s Archives

Where the archives would reside in the short and long-term was very contentious within the working group and beyond. As is the case with most records, the significance of the OWS archives could be strengthened when held in the context of a rich, representative sample or reduced by the abject absence of other records from the movement. The value of having many items from the movement in one place was disputed by one of the working group members, who insisted the archives should be distributed widely rather than held centrally. However, compiling a representative sample of the works coming out of Occupy would be nearly impossible if the collection were intentionally divided and spread out in the way that he repeatedly proposed.

Maintaining collection materials in one location is very powerful and gives researchers the ability to see a range of the works that were produced and collected. How one would be able to get to and use the archives was and continues to be a contentious issue. We very much needed to explain the purpose of archives as well as highlight the value of aggregation, archival processing, and subsequent access in a safe space. Security of the materials inevitably entails some barriers to access, but there were concerns about overly protecting the records to the point that they would no longer be accessible to anyone. There was a fair amount of misunderstanding about the balance between security and access, typified well by this online exchange. On OWS's primary website for discussions within the movement (<http://NYCGA.net>), an activist who identified himself as David Everitt-Carlson wrote in a forum discussion about the future of OWS's archives:

I fully understand your want for the work to be accessible, but having it stored in the room at the end of the film Indiana Jones does not to me constitute it being shared with the public. Initially, I had created the work to share an experience, but it certainly was not donated to anyone including the Smithsonian, NYU or the New York Historical Society.

We wanted to ensure that the experiences that made up the Occupy movement were in fact shared, rather than locked away in a private storage locker. Ultimately, attempts to safeguard the archives outside of an institutional setting amounted to simply making them inaccessible to anyone. The collective spirit of the movement, though outside of any formal institution, will likely become dependent on one for the persistence and access to the materials. That said, some institutional settings are more appropriate than others.

Issues around access were debated in weekly working group meetings, and we held two broader meetings where other OWS activists were invited to gather as a larger group to discuss the archives. During the first meeting, held on February 5, 2012, at Judson Memorial Church, many of the questions that became the basis for the FAQs on the website were posed to the working group and the other archivists in attendance. The meaning of some archival vocabulary and practices were not necessarily clear to many activists. Some criticized terms such as "intellectual control" and "materials" because they connoted concepts that conflicted with the anti-materialist and horizontal nature of the movement. One occupier, for example, asked why preservation was needed—did OWS need to be "mummified"?

The idea of preserving the longevity of documents produced by the movement seemed unsettling for some activists who viewed what they were doing as "happening now." Many occupiers expressed the desire for an online presence so that the archives would have a more participatory and decentralized feel in harmony with the ideals of the movement. One of the suggestions offered in this discussion was that participants might swap and share their personal archival collections. "Share Day," described above, was organized by Taeyoon Choi and two AWG members partly in response to this desire to engage occupiers and others in the community.

During Share Day we also had the opportunity to see a documentary in progress about Campaign 99 (online at http://www.99campaign.com/p/all-narratives_17.html) that was being made by an Iranian activist, Ali Abdi. This project focused on an exchange of inspirational tributes between Occupy activists and Iranian prisoners of conscience. We also learned about the work coming out of the #OccupyData Hackathons, which started with a wide harvesting of relevant data and then processed it into visualizations and other accessible abstractions.

The second movement-wide meeting to discuss the future of the collection gathered by members of the AWG was organized by the working group and held at the Interference Archive in Brooklyn on August 5, 2012. The Interference Archive was chosen because it is a do-it-yourself archive created by activists, and it is also where Occuprint—a collective of activist printmakers—is based. The purpose of the meeting was to involve OWS participants in the decision of where the archives should be donated. At the time, the archives did not have a permanent stable location where they could be accessible, secure, and safe from the elements. It had become clear that the working group did not have the resources to create and sustain an independent archive, and members had begun looking for alternatives. As of winter 2013, we are working on an agreement with the Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, an organization that has a long history of working with activist and labor movements and is housed at New York University (NYU).

Much of the discussion at the second movement-wide meeting was around the issue of associating with an NYU affiliate. One occupier expressed concern that although Tamiment was independent, NYU could use the archives to promote their institution. The distrust of NYU was understandable given that some participants in OWS have also been protesting NYU's expansion into Greenwich Village and backing NYU graduate students' years-long struggle to have their union recognized. Nonetheless, the Tamiment Library has been supportive of the union, and a number of archivists there had been active in our working group or within the broader movement.

Institutional Partnership and Visions of Alternate Models for Archiving OWS

Finding a situation in which access and safekeeping are both considered to be adequate by occupiers is not simple, and at the time of this writing, the analog archives collected by the AWG are not settled. Work with the Tamiment Library is in progress, but establishing the terms for the deed of gift has revolved partially around the ability to communicate the necessary elements of compromise inherent to the preservation of archives in—or out of—an institutional setting.

Community archives require an ongoing sustainable effort by individuals who are committed to extended stewardship. Occupy Wall Street is a fluid and transient movement; activists' participation can wax or wane depending on other circumstances in their lives, and movements historically tend to split off into different directions. OWS is not an organization or a nonprofit, nor does it represent a particular section of society that has a shared identity and/or history. While the continual evolution of the movement made archiving in real time important, it means that maintaining an ongoing physical archive is particularly challenging.

For independent and alternative archives to survive, they require people committed to staffing it long-term and securing some type of financial sustenance, which most likely entails continual fundraising. Though the members of the working group saw an independent archive as a goal, a stable and cooperative institution that both preserves and provides access to the collection is a more attainable option. At both of the open forum meetings that the working group organized, occupiers felt quite strongly that the archives should be kept independent but were not able to firmly grasp how difficult this is to do in practice.

Although the intention to keep the archives independent might not have been achieved in this instance, consideration of alternative models of archives are valuable in current archival practice. Currently, several institutional archives in the United States are being dismantled or coping with extreme budget cuts, which impedes public access to the collections. As we have pointed out earlier in this essay, archivists and historians have a vested interest in perceiving the archive as a neutral space. However, professional archivists are to some extent unconsciously contributing their own views on the subject matter in the process of collecting and processing records. In the case of a social movement like OWS, standing apart and simply observing from a distance does not necessarily make the archivist any more objective, as archivists are also participants in the society being critiqued by the movement. Nonetheless, neutrality is an especially fraught concept for archivists documenting a social movement as well as for archivists who are also activists. An activist within a movement like OWS has gained insights that can influence how she or he processes the collection; likewise, a sympathetic (or unsympathetic) observer brings her or his own experiences to the table.

How Can Archivists Work Productively with Activists?

Even archivists who do not consider themselves activists can work productively with activists by being respectful and empathetic. There are different challenges with living creators, especially ones with concerns about privacy, sometimes stemming from the fear that archives will be used against them by law enforcement. The AWG decided that we would not try to keep closed archives or dictate who may or may not consult them. We can see how keeping certain materials closed for a set duration can be useful, but it is not something we are equipped to do. Trust and openness are integral to maintaining legitimacy and being considered safe, sympathetic collaborators.

Some activists were very concerned about the destination of the archives and wanted assurances that they would be entrusted to people within the movement or their allies. This partially illustrates one potential caveat to the total archives approach; not all marginalized groups want to have their experiences recorded, especially in official government archives. As Rodney G.S. Carter (2006) has said, "it is essential that archivists not undermine the right of groups to remain silent" (p. 227). Carter uses the example of feminist writers who have argued that silence should not be equated with absence. By this logic, choosing not to be archived can be a political tactic. Carter recommends, however, that archivists be willing to invite community members into the planning and administrative processes of archiving, allowing them to help in

the decision-making around use and access of the records (p. 231). This would enable marginalized groups to make an educated choice about whether or not they would like to keep their silence.

It was this principle that guided a lot of the work we did in the OWS AWG. Because the group consisted of occupiers and sympathetic professionals, we embodied a mixture of archivists, activists, and archivist-activists. As such, we were careful not to impose an authoritarian, unified archival voice on the decision-making processes. Our decision-making process was consensus-based; not only did we hold weekly meetings, but we also created an open forum Google Group in which those who could not attend could voice their opinions. The discourse on the Google Group mailing list was tense at times, but it did provide a venue for people to speak freely in writing.

Conclusion: Lessons Learned and Closing Thoughts

In this chapter, we have discussed some of the most salient questions that have come up since the group's formation in September 2011. We have faced some unique challenges in attempting to archive a movement from within it. In the construction of traditional and even independent archives, particular narratives are often adopted. All too often, while archives should represent a multitude of identities, the focus is on the stories of the privileged and powerful. By highlighting the particular questions that came up in the course of our work, we hope to educate other activists on the importance of archives as well as help other archivists work with activists.

The working group learned a number of important lessons while working both *as* and *with* activists within OWS. We learned that consensus-based decision-making is imperative in activist environments, but it requires organization, alliance building, compromise, and educational outreach. Activists and archivists need, at the very least, to understand the principles behind each other's thought processes. Archivists need to learn the proper channels for communication and organization within a horizontal movement like OWS, and activists need to be educated as to the basic principles of archiving in order to engage in productive conversation. These are not small tasks, and we hope others will continue this type of work and share their solutions to some of the questions raised in this chapter. We contend that a lack of clarity in some contexts makes room for exploring nuances in the definitions of archival terms and lets us interrogate the role of archivists in our society. This ambiguity can enrich the work of archivists among activists and all the "others" who need to be heard and represented.

References

- Carter, R. G. S. (2006). Of things said and unsaid: Power, archival silences, and power in silence. *Archivaria*, 61: Special Section on Archives, Space, and Power, 215-233.
- Cook, T. (2011). The archive(s) is a foreign country: Historians, archivists, and the changing archival landscape. *The American Archivist*, 74, 600-632.
- Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. § 302 (1976).
- Derrida, J. (1996). *Archive fever: A Freudian impression*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Ferreira-Buckley, L. (1999). Archivists with an attitude: Rescuing the archives from Foucault. *College English*, 61(5), 577-583.
- Foucault, M. (2010). *The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1991). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. London, England: Penguin Books.
- Greetham, D. (1999). "Who's in, who's out": The cultural poetics of archival exclusion. *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 32(1), 1.
- Foster, H. (2004). An archival impulse. *October*, 1(110), 3-22.
- Harris, V. (1997). Claiming less, delivering more: A critique of positivist formulations on archives in South Africa. *Archivaria*, 44, 132-141.
- Huyssen, A. (2000). Present pasts: Media, politics, amnesia. *Public Culture*, 12(1), 21-38.
- Ketelaar, E. (2002). Archival temples, archival prisons: Modes of power and protection. *Archival Science*, 2, 221-38.
- Nora, P. (1989). Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire. *Representations*, 26, 7-24.
- Schwartz, J. M., & Cook, T. (2002). Archives, records, and power: The making of modern memory. *Archival Science*, 2(1-2), 1-19.

Solnit, R. (2011). The occupation of hope: Letter to a dead man. In S. van Gelder and the staff of YES! Magazine (Eds.), *This changes everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% movement* (pp. 77-82). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Spieker, S. (2008). *The big archive: Art from bureaucracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.