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Libraries & Librarians in the Aftermath: Our Stories & Ourselves

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Abstract

Following her experience of the Virginia Tech campus shooting in 2007, filmmaker and librarian Ashley Maynor set out to explore the phenomenon of temporary memorials and so-called “grief archives” using both documentary filmmaking and other qualitative research methods. She subsequently published her findings about Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook, and other public tragedies as *Response to the Unthinkable: Collecting & Archiving Condolence & Temporary Memorial Materials Following Public Tragedies*, to help fill a large gap in LIS literature about the best practices for libraries in responding to crises in their communities.

In the years since, her opinions and perspectives on archiving the aftermath have been both reinforced and profoundly changed by subsequent tragedies and their influence on our culture and our archival practice. In this work of autoethnography, Maynor weaves her personal experience and methodological research into an essay that argues for more flexibility and less rigidity about any role or responsibility of an archive, library, or individual when a tragedy takes place in their community.

Keywords: libraries, archives, disaster studies, tragedy response, active shooter, rapid response, crisis management, curation, emotional labor, autoethnography

Introduction: Our Stories

Archives are about being saved.

The physical objects that come to live there are the rare ones – a chosen minority that are spared the dumpster, incinerator, or paper shredder. The orphaned photos of unidentified people, forever remembered – if not by name, then by a number and description in a finding aid.

It’s where the incidental – the theatre playbill, the advertisement – can be elevated to utmost importance – a primary document that helps us to recount our history back to ourselves. It’s where the detritus of our history finds order and preservation.

Even in our swift digital age, it’s the place where time slows down. It’s where “forever” is not just a value but a way of life, a concept hard to grasp sometimes amid the clatter and accelerating pace of the Snapchat-y and Twitter-y present we live in.

And it’s also where people like me find comfort and healing because the objects inside are the keepers of our stories. After we disappear, they can still be touched, held, read, and, we hope, felt, by the lucky soul who chooses to visit them in the future. These objects become a stand-in for our lives and ourselves.



Figure 1: Home movie footage from Virginia Tech's campus in April 2007. (Click image to play video.)



Source: <https://player.vimeo.com/video/90887450>

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On April 16, 2007, I was in Blacksburg during the Virginia Tech campus shooting. Inside my personal archive are the home movies (see Figure 1) I took about two weeks later, when I finally mustered the courage to venture back to campus and I saw what remained of the temporary memorials there. Silent, eery and slightly grainy Super-8 captures the wilted flowers and rain-swept signs on the makeshift memorial that popped up on the campus drill field. A cheery pinwheel spins in the wind next to votive candles and weather-saddened notes to the dead.

I took my Super-8 camera with me, because as a filmmaker and archivist by training, sometimes the way I'm able to get through hard things is by documenting them. As I began to study this phenomenon of spontaneous shrines, I quickly learned that I'm not alone. Indeed, this impulse to mourn in a tangible way is very human.

Figure 2. The flood of letters and messages following tragedy—illustration by Rebecca Mullen from *The Story of the Stuff*.



Source: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/zjdyo26wz6tr3r3/Rebecca-Mullen-Illustration.jpg?dl=0>

Tens of thousands of people are motivated to do the same thing – to commemorate, to remember, and, especially for those in the library and museum world, to document. We’ve been grieving this way – through temporary shrines and memorials – for millennia.¹

What’s new, however, is that we’re now collecting these objects of our grief – selecting from these makeshift memorials and condolence

packages – and granting them the “forever” status in archives. We’re even changing the way these selections happen: the Boston Marathon Bombing collection is perhaps the first grief archive to really crowdsource its collection.² Truly, it’s only in the last thirty years or so that this kind of collecting even began.³ It’s escalating rapidly as we have seen tragedy compounded by more tragedy, headlines of terrorism and violence that seem like a cruel joke or a comically dark Onion headline.⁴

Figure 3: A headline and article from the satirical news website *The Onion* that repeats with nearly the same text each time there is a mass shooting in America.

NEWS IN BRIEF

‘No Way To Prevent This,’ Says Only Nation Where This Regularly Happens

2/14/18 5:32pm • SEE MORE: NEWS ▾



PARKLAND, FL—In the hours following a violent rampage in Florida in which a lone attacker killed 17 individuals and seriously injured over a dozen others, citizens living in the only country where this kind of mass killing routinely occurs reportedly concluded Wednesday that there was no way to prevent the massacre from taking place. “This was a terrible

Source: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/7c7ilzy0kzzdk2p/Screen%20Shot%202018-04-11%20at%209.59.17%20AM.png?dl=0>

I’ve spent a lot of time with these curated and collected objects of grief, outrage, and sympathy. Some of them came in strange and beautiful forms like my favorite objects from Virginia Tech: hand-painted *pisanki* eggs; origami animals from school children in South Korea; a baby doll in hand-crocheted army fatigues; a festively outfitted Barbie-turned-school mascot in vivid orange and maroon school colors; a signed Burger King crown. Sometimes the things people sent were perplexing—like Cheerios and tube socks—and sometimes they were offensive. But nonetheless in the years since,

they have tended to come more and more—sparking a global phenomenon so well recognized that we can already imagine it in our mind’s eye before the news broadcasts—the candles, the flowers, the signs, the teddy bears. In a strange and depressing twist on America’s consumer culture, some of the most recognizable items have become a profitable job for full-time shrine contributors, which critics allege, are making a living off of the tragedies of others.⁵

Figure 5: Illustration by Natsko Seki from *The Story of the Stuff* depicting items left at the sites of Oklahoma City, 9/11, Texas A&M, Virginia Tech, and Sandy Hook.



Source: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/3sn5n86re4jf1bw/Natsko-Seki-Illustration.jpg?dl=0>

In the massive quantities that they sometimes arrive, say for instance, the 65,000 teddy bears of Newtown, these objects may begin to feel banal. But from the senders' perspective, and as those who have spent time in these archives know, each object carries its own unique story. Most of those stories reveal a truly awesome amount of love and goodwill in the world, especially in the wake of unthinkable violence. To behold these objects is to glimpse into our collective humanity; however bitter the inciting incident, you would be hard-pressed to experience one of these collections without a feeling a sense of connection—an uncommon kind of intimacy with strangers who felt your pain, first-hand once removed, mediated by their televisions, computers, and phone screens.

Handling these objects was part of my own grieving process. I spent nearly four years working with them on a daily basis to make my web documentary, *The Story of the Stuff*⁶ and in the writing of a chapter on libraries' responses to the unthinkable.⁷ Some might consider me a kind of expert on the therapeutic effects of saving these objects, of telling our history with them, of their power to heal.

But my thinking on the purpose, utility, relevance, and value of these archives has profoundly shifted in the more than a decade since my experience of Virginia Tech and the many tragedies that have followed. Below are key takeaways, told through a kind of autoethnography: an intentional blending of conclusions and analysis from professional literature (and the

gaps therein), reinforced by my relevant personal experience.⁸

Lesson One: Memory vs. Forgetting

First, I've glimpsed beyond the public and touchable "grief" collections and have come to understand the illusory purpose of those special collections that are never meant to be held. These were the most perplexing of archives that I've encountered in my research – the "dark" or "closed" archive – the ones that practically no one is allowed to visit.

One of the tragedies I've studied and documented at length is the Texas A&M bonfire collapse that killed a number of students in 1999. After the accident, a huge shrine cropped up on the campus, where people left clothes, bonfire building tools, cadet helmets, class rings, and flowers in dizzying quantities. Spearheaded by a professor of folklore, the University decided to meticulously keep and catalog every single item – not a single flower petal was left behind – and using very strict archaeological principles, they sealed all non-organic matter into plastic bags for a permanent archive. They took all these objects and placed them in a warehouse on the outskirts of campus, without a finding aid, without easy public access, without anyone having access except for those who created and currently maintain the collection.⁹

In the early years of my research, I couldn't really understand how an archive like that could help people to grieve. *What kind of purpose did it serve for objects to be there inaccessible to the public and inaccessible to most researchers?* But one of the main organizers, professor Sylvia Grider, explained it to me simply:

*Those artifacts are just the silent sentinels that say, 'We were here. We stood vigil.' ...What they do is they stay there. People in the community seem to be perfectly satisfied knowing that the artifacts are there. They are safe; nobody bothers them.*¹⁰

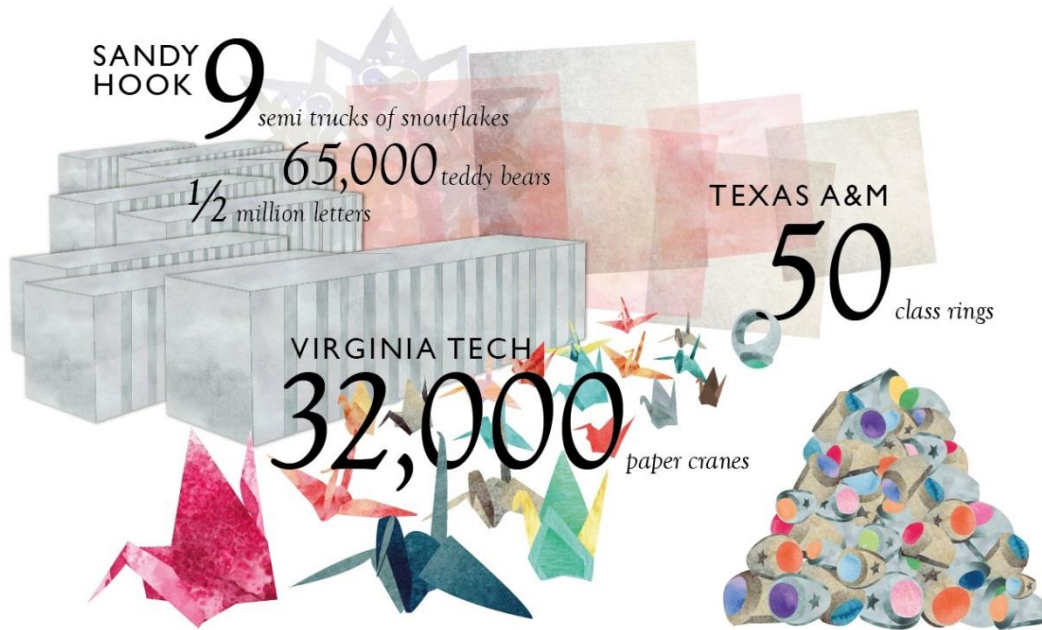
Silent sentinels – that's the purpose they serve. Only now, years later, do I believe that I am really beginning to understand the real value and purpose of a silent, hidden archive.

There's a certain beauty in a documentation that gets frozen in time – one that can't be dug back out on the anniversaries that continue onward and onward in the perpetual march of time. They can't be consulted by the new stations nor flashed up on all of our screens and social media.

There is something beautiful and comforting about knowing the objects are there – the beauty of all of that love and the pain of all that sadness there as well. And there is great relief in also knowing that you don't have to look at it anymore. For some of us, while you always want to remember, eventually, you might also want to begin to let yourself forget.

Memory is a tricky notion – our archives, those photos and mementos – help us to remember. They remind us. Sometimes they help us hold on to happy memories, to recover, and to heal. One needn't dig too far into the scholarly and popular record to see how public exhibitions and museums have helped communities, even generations of individuals, remember, hold on, heal, and experience history. But sometimes those same things – those memory aids – they hold us back, in a vortex of pain.

Figure 6: Illustration by Rebecca Mullen from *The Story of the Stuff* visually representing the massive quantities of items received by communities: 50 class rings left at the Texas A&M shrine; 32,000 paper cranes sent to Virginia Tech; 9 semi-trucks worth of paper snowflakes received by Sandy Hook; 65,000 teddy bears; 1/2 million letters.



Source: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/hh4y1e2d58y8d1z/Rebecca-Mullen-Illustration2.jpg?dl=0>

Lesson Two: Post-Tragedy Librarians & Library Work

Second, some of the commonly accepted core librarian values¹¹ conflict with my post-tragedy identity. I'm not the same person I was when I first stepped into a public library position fresh out of graduate school or, later, as a newly-minted faculty member on a university campus. The person who had been delighted by breakdancing and a skateboarding halfpipe in Roanoke Public Libraries has been replaced by someone who just this year complained to colleagues about students with a megaphone in the atrium of New York University's Bobst Library. And, no, this isn't just me getting old (though I

am certainly aging in some predictably stereotypical ways), it has to do with a different way of perceiving sound and crowds – the clinging remnants of post-traumatic stress that don't seem to abate.

While I feel the professional obligation to protect freedom of speech and assembly, especially on a university campus, I'm caught up in a tug-o-war with an intractable need for a sense of safety as I enter and leave my place of work. My lens has shifted to such an extent that before accepting my most recent job, interview questions and job offer requests had contingencies I would have considered high maintenance, disturbing, or simply bizarre a decade earlier:

Is there a panic button somewhere in the library?

Are there two forms of egress from my proposed office space?

Can I manually turn off the motion sensor lights in my work area?

Is anyone in the library trained in mental health first aid? What about mass casualty triage?

My response to fire alarms and disaster drills has none of the flippancy it might have had as a college student. That said, I'm not a voice of support for mass shooter drills. As for most of those campus trainings and simulations designed to help us prepare for manmade disasters—I abhor them—not just for the trauma that a realistic simulation can impart upon someone unsuspecting on campus, but also because these trainings do not account for our profession's unique commitment to our users nor, even greater, our larger humanistic impulses.¹²

These drills, especially for those who experience them from elementary school and beyond, can have an unintended psychological impact for our patrons.¹³ There have yet to be any studies to prove their efficacy in surviving a disaster (though I recognize that data would be hard to come by) and some of the established practices, such as lockdown, have also been criticized by security experts.¹⁴ Unlike, say, a hurricane or tornado, anthropogenic disasters don't follow patterns that can be mapped by radar. Instead of one set of rules to follow, we need flexibility and responsiveness to the situation as it unfolds in real time—training that is much harder to cram into a simplified acronym or cheesy, repeatable PowerPoint slideshow.

Finally, while my professional ethics encourage me to avoid overt political stances, I've felt a higher moral obligation to do so. For instance, I served on a campus carry task force while work-

ing at the University of Tennessee to try to prevent legislation to allow students to carry firearms on campus. The supposed distinction "between our personal convictions and professional duties" has blurred for me when it comes safety in the workplace.¹⁵

Just as some librarians might feel a call to receive training in opioid overdose response,¹⁶ we each have to interpret the intersection between the day-to-day demands of our job, patron community needs, our professional ethics, and our personal code. This is no small task. I'll venture that few, if any, LIS professionals enter library school thinking their career choice will have resonances with that of first responders and yet, my experience has shown this is more and more the case than one might imagine.¹⁷

Lesson Three: The Emotional Toll of the Archive

Third, while our professional literature has begun to examine so-called emotional labor in librarianship, that is the psychological stress and strain that results from service and customer-oriented work, this inquiry has yet to fully encompass the affect and impact of working with emotionally-charged collections, such as grief and tragedy archives.¹⁸

I've made a small accounting of the enormous (and largely invisible) emotional toll of the archival labor that goes into grief collections in my past work and a recent panel I moderated explored first-hand experience.¹⁹ A thorough search of the literature, however, shows little to no exploration of this topic. From working at an emotionally-charged museum (such as the 9/11 Museum and Memorial, Holocaust Museum, etc.) to creating finding aids for a grief collection, this kind of labor has consequences for those employees and arguably should come with a toolkit, support, or resources for managing such daily trauma long-term.

Lesson Four: The Purpose & Privilege Problem

Fourth, and perhaps most controversially for some, I've begun to fundamentally question the use of our precious time and labor in service of grief archives versus other rapid response efforts. In other words, do we even need these grief archives anymore?

When Virginia Tech became the site of the worst mass shooting in modern US History in 2007,²⁰ Columbine seemed a faraway memory (the shooting took place in 1999) and school shootings then felt like an anomaly, not a weekly occurrence.²¹ The incidents, however, are increasing. 2018 was considered the worst year yet for school shooting in America, with an incident roughly once every eight school days.²²

There's also a question of privilege at work: we have created collections for tragedies where relatively affluent Americans (especially white ones) have died unexpectedly, but little work if any has been done to document the everyday shrine, the teddy bears and mementos on urban corners where the latest gang or drug-related shooting has claimed another life. These deaths, to be sure, are felt as profoundly in their communities yet they do not receive the same time and curatorial attention being given to memorial archives such as the ones surrounding the tragedies at Sandy Hook or Las Vegas.

The media, to be sure, plays a large role in this attention disparity. Every day, 100 Americans are killed with guns and hundreds more are shot and injured.²³ While public mass shootings receive nearly non-stop attention for a period of days or weeks, little screen time is devoted to everyday gun violence. Gun violence is considered a national health crisis²⁴ with the U.S. gun homicide rate at 25 times that of other high-income countries.²⁵ More detailed statistics surrounding gun attacks and injuries illuminate the various kinds of privilege at work and, in their own way, suggest that perhaps this disparity of

who is impacted by such violence may be at the root of why so little action has taken place to quell the epidemic and why our archival practice mirrors the media's in terms of who we collectively mourn:

- Firearms are the second leading cause of death for American children and teens and the first leading cause of death for Black children and teens.
- Women in the U.S. are 16 times more likely to be killed with a gun than women in other high-income countries.
- Black women are twice as likely to be fatally shot by an intimate partner compared to white women.²⁶

These statistics challenge us to interrogate the inherent misogyny and racial and socio-economic bias at play in our efforts (and lack thereof) to quell our American gun violence epidemic.

Lesson Five: Action & Alternatives

As I've delved more into the complexity of violence and memorialization in America, I've transformed my own thinking about the best use of our time and resources when we are called upon to respond to a crisis in our community. Writing for the National Council on Public History blog in 2018, I penned a mission statement — a suggestion for what libraries can/should be if and when a crisis happens in their community: following a tragedy, our mission should be this: be places of refuge, be keepers of memory. We should, first and foremost, provide space for our community to reckon with the events. The real physical space we can provide should not be taken for granted.²⁷ And should we choose to take the next step of creating some form of historical record or archive, then we have a unique opportunity “to be curators and creators of a historical record as seen through the eyes of the grieving, not just the media. In a time where many news outlets are

hardly unbiased or neutral, we have a great responsibility to provide an alternate and more inclusive record of how our community experienced a tragedy.”²⁸

I’ve also made a direct appeal to those who do the work of memory institutions—libraries, archives, history centers, community centers, etc.—to do better through bolder, more imaginative tragedy responses, through events and remembrances that take place long after the media has moved on, and through acts of generosity that do not place an additional burden on the community.²⁹ While the impulse and desire to do something following a tragedy is admirable, one of the most common responses—to send stuff to a community in crisis—is, in almost all instances, not actually helpful.

Though it may provide catharsis for the sender, piles of used clothing, toys, and other items pose a tangible burden to the recipient community—this rings true not just for anthropogenic disasters but for natural disasters as well.³⁰ What feels like the least personal response is often the most helpful: money.

We should take our cue from how Dolly Parton inspired thousands to donate monetary relief in the wake of devastating wildfires in her hometown of East Tennessee in 2016. Almost immediately, Parton announced the creation of the My People Fund and personally pledged “a coordinated effort with the Dollywood Foundation and area businesses that pledged to provide \$1,000 a month for six months to families who lost their primary residences in the fire.”³¹ She then revealed plans for a telethon to bolster these efforts, which went on to raise nearly \$9 million dollars.³²

While we aren’t all able to call on Miley Cyrus and Kenny Rogers for personal favors and big checks, we can choose to send five dollars instead of a teddy bear or Hallmark card. We can also direct giving to small non-profits, individual GoFundMe campaigns, and memorial foundations that might make our dollars stretch further without large overhead. It’s a matter of educating ourselves and our patrons about what kinds of tragedy responses can do the most good in our own communities and around the world and being intentional with our generosity.

Figure 7: An infographic that explains how the Cranes for Change app worked.



Source: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/d7h6bjd0hzke3fn/CranesforChange-landscape%20copy.png?dl=0>

Figure 8: Illustration by Natsko Seki from *The Story of the Stuff* – the grieving masses.



Source: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/4kq9qgwui3qvattq/Natsko-Seki-Illustration2.jpg?dl=0>

Perhaps the most generous donation is not our money but our time – as volunteers and as engaged citizens in our communities who work towards positive change and prevention efforts. In 2015, I attempted my own alternative response through the creation of a pre-resist bot app called *Cranes for Change*, to encourage more dialogue between politicians and their constituents about solutions to gun violence.

This simple web app (active from 2015-2017) allowed individuals from a wide range of political viewpoints to select factors they believe are contributing towards gun violence. Those selections along with their zip code would then generate a printable PDF complete with origami crane folding instructions, pre-addressed envelopes, and space for their custom message to stakeholders associated with the selected issues, such as the user's members of congress. The goal was to flood the mailboxes of stakeholders with messages urging specific action instead of flooding victim communities with well-meaning but useless stuff.³³

Conclusion: Weeding Our Way Back to Joy & Ourselves

In the decade since the tragedy at Virginia Tech through both my scholarship and grieving process, I have made my own personal discovery about the energy needed to live life with an eye constantly towards the past.

Our hearts and minds are not endless archives – the space therein is more limited than a tiny museum – something, I believe we begin to grasp more and more as we age. We're more like a library with limited shelves – we have to weed our collection³⁴ and make way for an influx of

new ideas and emotions to be published in our niche collection of autobiography.

I'm not necessarily advocating an approach as rigorous as the Marie Kondo *KonMari* mania that is currently taking over Netflix and lifestyle blogs at the present moment³⁵ – sparking joy³⁶ would be a hard criterion for someone curating a grief collection. But curation, a fundamental activity of the archivist, not just of what we save and keep but a more careful selection of the methods and ways we engage with our communities, might be in order. We should ask questions about whether or not collecting is the response that will best serve the present and the future. Sometimes the answer may still be yes, sometimes, I suspect, not.

*

When the collecting is over and a few anniversaries of the tragedy have come and gone, we may find ourselves needing to shift out of the role of archivist – the keeper of all things, the preserver of history – an experience that might be disorienting to the most committed in our profession. At this moment, we'll be called upon to allow ourselves, as individuals, to conjure our innermost ruthless of librarians who's willing to make room, to clear out, yes, and even to forget. Because in those tiny and brief moments of forgetting, that's where the release is to be found – that's where the joy and a lost piece of ourselves finds its way back in.

¹ Erika Lee Doss. *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 63.

² "About Our Marathon," Northeastern University, accessed January 17, 2019, <https://marathon.library.northeastern.edu/home/about/>.



³ Doss, 2010, 71-75.

⁴ “No Way To Prevent This,’ Says Only Nation Where This Regularly Happens,” *The Onion*, last modified February 14, 2018, <https://www.the-onion.com/no-way-to-prevent-this-says-only-nation-where-this-r-1823016659>.

⁵ For instance, Greg Zanis, the man who places the well-recognized white crosses at sites of tragedies around the country, told the *New York Times* that his only motivation is “helping people remember,” yet he brought in nearly \$240,000 in 2017 to his non-profit which supports his travel and cross-making. Read the interview: Emily Rueb, “He’s Made Thousands of Crosses for Victims. These 5 Were for His Neighbors.” *The New York Times*, last modified February 17, 2019, <https://www.ny-times.com/2019/02/17/us/aurora-shooting-crosses-greg-zanis.html>. Also see: “Financials,” Crosses for Losses, accessed January 17, 2019, <https://zaniscrossesforlosses.org/>.

⁶ Ashley Maynor, “The Story of the Stuff – An Interactive Web Documentary,” published April 16, 2015, <http://thestoryofthestuff.com>.

⁷ Ashley Maynor, “Response to the Unthinkable Collecting and Archiving Condolence and Temporary Memorial Materials following Public Tragedies.” *Handbook of Research on Disaster Management and Contingency Planning in Modern Libraries*, ed. Emy Nelson Decker and Jennifer A. Townes, 582-624 (2016). doi:10.4018/978-1-4666-8624-3.ch025

⁸ For an explanation of autoethnography in the research library context and an argument for why that approach matters, see: Anne-Marie Deitering, Richard A. Stoddart, and Robert Schroeder. *The Self as Subject: Autoethnographic Research into Identity, Culture, and Academic Librarianship*. (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association, 2017), 1-22.

⁹ For more details about this decision, see the full case study I wrote in Maynor, 2016, 588-89. While some individual researchers have been granted access over the years, the collection itself is not publicized and special permission is required to see any of the objects. For a brief mention of those using the collection, see: Emily Wilkins, “Impromptu bonfire memorial from 1999 meticulously archived by Texas A&M,” *The Eagle*, last modified November 18, 2014,

https://www.theeagle.com/news/local/impromptu-bonfire-memorial-from-meticulously-archived-by-texas-a-m/article_03846be0-ee63-57d4-b731-307899af93c9.html.

¹⁰ Maynor, 2016, 589.

¹¹ “Core Values of Librarianship,” American Library Association, accessed January 17, 2019, <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues>.

¹² One of the most frequently taught protocols, “run, hide, fight” emphasizes individual survival and does not advise helping or looking for others before fleeing.

¹³ James Hablin, “What Are Active-Shooter Drills Doing to Kids?,” *Health, The Atlantic*, last modified February 18, 2018,

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2018/02/effects-of-active-shooter/554150/>.

¹⁴ See, for instance, the critique of lockdown in the Parkland shooting: William Cummings, “Why active shooter training didn’t help in the Florida high school shooting,” *USA Today*, last modified February 19, 2018,

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/02/16/active-shooter-training-florida/343641002/>. Or John P. Blair’s 2013 book, *Active Shooter Events and Response* (Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis), which also argues that individuals need more options than lockdown.



¹⁵ My perspective on campus safety and how student carry would negatively impact such is based on empirical evidence, including two key studies: A 2014 Stanford study debunks the “More Guns, Less Crime” hypothesis with updated statistics and information, leading to the conclusion that the year-by-year impact of right to carry laws suggests that such laws increase aggravated assaults and that such laws “may be associated with large increases in this crime, perhaps increasing such gun assaults by almost 33 percent.” (Abhay Aneja and John J. Donohue, and Alexandria Zhang, *The Impact of Right to Carry Laws and the NRC Report: The Latest Lessons for the Empirical Evaluation of Law and Policy*, September 4, 2014. Stanford Law and Economics Olin Working Paper No. 461. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2443681> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2443681>). A North Carolina study confirms that just as residents of households with guns are more likely to become a victim of a homicide in the home, workers who work in places that allow guns are more likely to be killed while at work. (D. Loomis D, Marshall SW, Ta ML. “Employer Policies Toward Guns and the Risk of Homicide in the Workplace,” *American Journal of Public Health*, 2005;95(5):830-832. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2003.033535. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1449263/>).

¹⁶ See one recent article discussing this issue in libraries: Romeo Rosales, Jr., “The Opioid Crisis and Administering Narcan in Libraries,” *Public Libraries Online*, last modified September 17, 2018, <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2018/09/the-opioid-crisis-and-administering-narcan-in-libraries/>.

¹⁷ The nature of first responder work is also one I have experienced close-up: my mother and sister are both trained EMT paramedics, the former a retired District Chief of the Nashville Fire Department, the latter currently employed as a first responder by the same.

¹⁸ There is, however, some limited scholarship in psychiatry that touches on this issue, including this study: James E. McCarroll, Arthur S. Blank Jr, and Kathryn Hill. “Working with traumatic material: Effects on Holocaust Memorial Museum staff.” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 65, no. 1 (1995): 66-75. More recently, the Society of American Archivists has formed a Tragedy Response Task Force that aims to take up some of this important work. However, they do not have any formal publications or resources to date. See: Society of American Archivists, “Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force,” November 2017, <https://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section8/groups/Tragedy-Response-Initiative-Task-Force>.

¹⁹ Two panels at the 2017 National Council on Public History addressed this topic within larger discussions on grief archives. View full recordings of “Documenting Resilience: Condolence Collection Projects in the Wake of Violence” and “Exhibiting Sorrow: Memorial Tributes to Victims and Community Healing in the Wake of Violence” here: <http://www.ashleymaynor.com/griefarchives>.

²⁰ The record-breaking death toll in Blacksburg has since been surpassed by the Orlando Pulse nightclub shooting and the Las Vegas concert shooting. See “Deadliest Mass Shootings in Modern US History Fast Facts,” CNN Library, last modified December 15, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2013/09/16/us/20-deadliest-mass-shootings-in-u-s-history-fast-facts/index.html>.

²¹ The Federal government does not currently compile such data. The non-profit group Everytown for Gun Safety has compiled maps and data available for 2013-present on their website: “Gunfire on School Grounds in the United States,” <https://everytownresearch.org/gunfire-in-school/#>.



²² Sean Coughlan, "2018 'worst year for US school shootings," *BBC News*, Education, December 12, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-46507514>.

²³ "Gun Violence in America," Everytown for Gun Safety, last modified January 4, 2019, <https://everytownresearch.org/gun-violence-america/>.

²⁴ Many groups have declared gun violence to be a national health crisis in America, including the American Medical Association as of June 14, 2016 in this press release: <https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/press-releases/ama-calls-gun-violence-public-health-crisis>.

²⁵ "Gun Violence in America," Everytown for Gun Safety, last modified January 4, 2019, <https://everytownresearch.org/gun-violence-america/>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ For one example of the power of providing a place to go, see this article about Ferguson Public Library's reaction to civil unrest and a city shutdown: Timothy Inklebarger, "Ferguson's Safe Haven: Library becomes refuge during unrest," *American Libraries*, last modified November 10, 2014, <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2014/11/10/fergusons-safe-haven/>.

²⁸ Ashley R. Maynor, "Places of Refuge, Keepers of Memory." History@Work, The National Council on Public History Blog, May 16, 2018, <http://ncph.org/history-at-work/places-of-refuge-keepers-of-memory/>.

²⁹ Ashley R. Maynor, "Five Ways We Can Do Better to Respond to Crises in Our Communities." History@Work, The National Council on Public History Blog, February 5, 2018, <http://ncph.org/history-at-work/five-ways-we-can-do-better-crises-in-our-communities/>.

³⁰ There have been numerous articles reporting on this reality, including: Pam Fessler, "Thanks, But No Thanks: When Post-Disaster Donations Overwhelm," NPR, All Things Considered, last modified January 9, 2013, <https://www.npr.org/2013/01/09/168946170/thanks-but-no-thanks-when-post-disaster-donations-overwhelm>.

Julia Brooks, "Want to help after a disaster? Give your cash, not your clothing," *The Guardian*, last modified September 25, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/sep/25/disaster-aid-cash-not-clothing-relief-hurricane-harvey>. For guidelines on how best to donate or assist, FEMA and NVOAD have suggestions available online here: <https://www.fema.gov/volunteer-donate-responsibly> and <https://www.nvoad.org/how-tohelp/>.

³¹ Cindy Watts, "How Dolly Parton mobilized country music for wildfire victims," *The Tennessean*, last modified December 14, 2016, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/entertainment/music/2016/12/13/how-dolly-parton-mobilized-country-music-wildfire-victims/95339632/>.

³² Cindy Watts, "Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountains Rise telethon raises nearly \$9M," *The Tennessean*, last modified December 15, 2016, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/entertainment/music/2016/12/14/dolly-partons-smoky-mountains-rise-telethon-raises-nearly-9m/95453636/>.

³³ Ashley Maynor, Cranes for Change, <http://www.ashleymaynor.com/#/c4c/>.

³⁴ Weeding is a familiar concept for most librarians, a way of pruning one's collection to allow room for new growth and acquisitions. For more on the concept and a bibliography of resources, see: "Weeding Library Collections: A Selected Annotated Bibliography for Library Collection



Evaluation,” American Library Association, last modified December 2015,

<http://www.ala.org/tools/libfactsheets/alalibraryfactsheet15>.

³⁵ Tim Chan, “Marie Kondo on Turning Her ‘Life-Changing’ Book Into a Hit Netflix Show,” *Variety*, last modified January 10, 2019,

<https://variety.com/2019/tv/news/tidying-up-with-marie-kondo-book-netflix-show-1203104380/>.

³⁶ Kondo advocates a kind of gleaning and weeding based on only keeping items which “spark joy” for the owner.