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This article explores the role of archival research in understanding and generating social histories from the perspectives of four different doctoral students as they reflect on their archival research experiences. We argue that archival research is complex, subjective, contextual, and at times, incomplete. Our various perspectives address ideas of privilege, representation, what it means to remember (or forget), how archives are constituted and reconstituted, and where we can make meaning in archival spaces. This article demonstrates that although archival research has had a presence in Composition and Rhetoric for some time, that presence is continually shifting, and even when embarking on archival research with comparable exigencies, the undertaking and experiences of that work is inconsistent. This article, therefore, explores the inconsistencies present in archival work, arguing that part of understanding archival research is understanding varied archival research experiences, perspectives, and understandings.

Since the 1980s, scholars of rhetoric have found archives to be productive sites of inquiry (Balif 2013). Rhetoricians have often examined the stories we tell from archives and how those stories inform present conditions; they have also looked at how our collected histories and the constitution of the archive determine the available means. Consequently, scholars of rhetoric have often taken an interest in revisionist and social histories that encounter the limitations, gaps, and constructions of the archive.

As scholars and students of rhetoric, we have spent time in archives attending to social histories, an area of study which we believe explicitly draws our attention to how archives and archival research practices are structured. We understand social histories as an examination of how the past is used to tell stories which have been excluded from dominant narratives of history. This examination also offers other ways of reading more traditional histories.

Working with social histories offers ways to complicate our understanding of the archive. However, we understand that the telling of social histories does not escape the archive itself. The Derridean figure of the archon and the power behind the practices of archival work already structure what is held and what is not held and determines what we have access to in terms of points of departure (Derrida 1998). However, social histories allow us as researchers to disrupt the "thick layer of events" of traditional historical narratives (Foucault 1982, 3).

Carolyn Steedman reminds us that "Archives hold no origins, and origins are not what historians search for in them" (Steedman 2001, 1175). Indeed, she argues that "[T]hey hold everything in medias res, the account caught halfway through, most of it missing, with no end ever in sight. Nothing starts in the Archive, nothing, ever at all, although things certainly end up there" (1175). When doing social histories, archives cannot provide us with beginnings—only dusty glimpses into the contexts in which those documents appear in both their pasts and their presence. It is for this reason, for the "double nothingness" of social histories "about something that never did happen in the way it comes to be represented" and "made out of materials that are not there," that rhetoricians are situated well to engage in archival work (Steedman 2001, 1179).

An archive scripts modes of being and knowing, both materially and textually, that provide affordances and limitations to telling the past. Our methodological approach involved examining our personal connections to underrepresented communities and the ways in which histories constitute communities. This multivocal piece assembles our encounters with different archives, different experiences, and different projects to show how our relationships to the past and to the archive determine what we can tell from them in the present.

Our article is divided into four sections. In the first section, "Ideas of Archival Privilege," Alex Hanson recounts her experience visiting a university archive and the privilege inherent in such an action. Such privilege raises questions about what it means to visit and have access to an archival space, as well as what can be uncovered in that space. In the second section, "What Happens When Understanding is Deferred," Stephanie Jones considers the question of what can be uncovered, as she creates and examines African American social histories to identify a thread between nationalist patriotism and the historical commodification of African Americans through archival research. In the third section, "Queer Remembering," Thomas Passwater reflects on how archives and archival scholarship sustain our attention toward certain relationships to the past and argues that scholars should call specific attention to how their works are being structured. While Thomas argues that scholars give attention to how their work is being structured, Noah Wilson explores what is accounted for in that structuring. In the fourth section, "(Un)Intentional Archival Spaces," Noah reflects on his engagement with an online community's nontraditional digital archive and suggests that archival research can benefit as much from attending to the construction and maintenance of archival spaces as the archival objects themselves

Ideas of Archival Privilege (Alex Hanson)

I ended up in the archives for reasons similar to Stephanie, Thomas, and Noah; I was doing a research project in a class we were all taking. My project focused on the position of mothers in an international literacy organization's materials. Despite our shared impetus, my focus in this section is not primarily on that project, but on what I took away from my archival research experience—the ways institutional archives can function as exclusive spaces that require various facets of privilege for access. I understand archives as storage

spaces of history, as collections of experiences, stories, memories, and artifacts stockpiled in a specific location. A location, in this case, is not defined by its materiality but by the ideas, identities, and experiences it contains. Defining archives in Composition and Rhetoric is not without its challenges. As Lynée Lewis Gaillet (2010) acknowledges: "Most disciplines agree the word *history* involves the study of the past and that the term *archives* includes non-replaceable, valuable items, but in the field of rhetoric/composition defining *rhetorical history* while determining what legitimately constitutes *archives* is often complicated" (30). While Gaillet's own definition of archives centers on the materials that constitute an archive, the definition from The *Glossary of Library and Internet Terms* she references in the chapter centers on the place where these materials are stored. This juxtaposition demonstrates how the two are not mutually exclusive—where archival materials are located relates to whether or not something counts as an archive. More than what constitutes archival research, I am interested in the privilege associated with much of archival research, particularly when archives are stored in an institutional repository rather than in a space that makes them a community resource.

Archival privilege relates to ideas of access to time, money, and materials, as well as access to a specific way of knowing. Barbara L'Eplattenier (2009) recognizes how "the time, money, and access to archival texts (our primary sources) are difficult to come by" (73). These are not the only aspects that position the archives, and specifically institutional archives, as a privileged space. There is also a certain set of knowledge and understanding that is expected to enter and access archival materials, as Malea Powell (2008) writes about her own experience:

> Access required knowledge of a very specialized type: how to find and identify the documents within catalogs and holdings lists and finding guides, and to do so in such a way that your simple request would pass unimpeded through the system's many gatekeepers; how to fill out forms, pay for things, use the physical space of the archive—all of these an elaborate maze each time I visited someplace new, all designed to keep the knowledge safe, protected, away from the prying eyes of the uninitiated and uninformed (116).

As a PhD student, I have what I think of as a certain amount of archival privilege, and it is that understanding of privilege and the intersections of my identity that I intend to explore here. My experience with the archives is the result of various aspects of my identity—I am a PhD student, a mom, a first-generation student, and a white, able-bodied woman. In my year and a half of coursework as a PhD student, I have taken three courses that have encouraged my exploration of the archives. This encouragement, along with introductions to various works of scholarship on archival research, meant that I was given the ways of knowing necessary to begin archival research. I learned before I entered the archives that there are rules—a list of guidelines, or "Visitor Policies," as the university designates them, comprising 15 items. This list can be found on the website and is available upon your first visit to the Special Collections reading room, where you must sign-off, much like a medical waiver, that you have read and understood the policies. My being a PhD student also meant that I knew that archival research entails a certain amount of meandering through materials, meandering that may be incredibly valuable or confusing; I knew before I embarked on my research

project that I would probably request a box of archival papers, only to realize that a single page among them might inform my research. This meandering also meant that I spent almost ten hours reviewing three boxes of materials before walking away with five pages of typed notes. I learned I could bring my laptop into the reading room, and I recognize the privilege in this access to technology; having a laptop and being able to type notes meant my time in the reading room was substantially less than if I had only been able to handwrite my notes. While money is not something I have a lot of, and I do not know many PhD students who do, by being at a private University I have access to materials because the University has money. What I have is the time and knowledge. I would not have this time or this knowledge without my education, and without small classes which have explicit instruction in archival methods and methodologies and carve out space to conduct archival research projects. This class time is a substantial part of why I even entered the Special Collections at my University.

All of the reading I had done before considering archival research had me intimidated: *so many rules*, I thought, *what happens if I can't get to my boxes in the two-week window they're available?* One of the classes I took involved spending half of a class period reviewing parts of the special collections relating to social histories that the University archivist had pulled before our visit. As the class waited to go outside, the archivist kindly asked me to wash my hands before entering and then explained how no food or drink was allowed in the reading room. "Including gum," she said as she scanned our small group of six but clearly directing her comment towards me, the only person nervously working away at the spearmint. I said goodbye to my gum as I dried my freshly washed hands and entered the archival space reserved for classroom discussions. Materials were spread out across tables, and as we began to peruse them, I found myself drawn to ones from a local literacy organization because of how the materials related to parents. The child-rearing aspect was what initially intrigued me, but as I began to look through the pamphlets the archivist had pulled, I was even more drawn in because of how the materials positioned mothers. As a mom, I felt anger, guilt, and sadness about the pamphlets that seemed to blame mothers for children with intellectual disabilities. I was struck by how an organization providing literacy education was also providing education about social values and beliefs. The archival materials made me curious about how women who were developing literacy skills must have felt as they read about how they were responsible for intellectual disabilities in their children and how they should return to their pre-baby figure as soon as possible. I could not ignore how the literacy organization seemed to be using guilt as a rhetorical tool to persuade mothers to make certain choices, especially regarding children with intellectual disabilities. If I were not a mom, I have no doubt that my interest in those materials would have been markedly different.

The more I interacted with materials about disability, and the more I talked with colleagues about their archival experiences, the more I began to realize how my status as an able-bodied woman relates to my level of archival privilege. I have no trouble physically accessing the special collections reading room where archival materials must be viewed. Located on the sixth floor of the library, the special collections reading room already distinguished itself by being at the top most spot; the primary means of access is an elevator. Once on the floor, the reading room is entered through dual heavy glass doors that have no activation button. The only way to open them is by planting your feet and pulling hard. Once I physically accessed the space, I also needed to be able to physically interact with materials that require careful and delicate handling in a silent room. I needed my eyes to be

able to see the materials, and I did not see any indication of accommodation for those who may not have this same means of access. I needed to be able to flip the materials slowly, gently, and carefully without a tremor or uncontrollable motion of my hands. I was given specific instructions to carefully review the materials, to not tap them on the desk when I was finished, to clearly place a marker in the box to indicate where the materials had originated. I needed to be able to walk back and forth as I finished one box and went to collect the next. I needed to be able to lift the three to five-pound boxes, carry them quietly, and set them gently back onto the reviewing table. I needed to be quiet, and I needed to have a certain amount of control and ability over my body. My able-bodiedness was one part of the privilege I needed to inhabit the archival space and access the materials.

Understanding what is meant by archives depends on the source. Robert J. Connors (1992) defines an archive as "a storehouse of data about the past," located in libraries and institutional spaces (17). According to Connors, "Archives are specialized kinds of libraries that usually contain materials specific to one institution or activity" (20). In "The Things They Left Behind: The Estate Sale as Archive" (2015), Jody Shipka proposes that "flea markets and estate and yard sales be treated as archives of sorts." Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch (2010) encourage readers to think of "lower-case-*a* archives…archives that don't immediately promise insights into the practices or histories of our field. [They] can range from small, local archives run by community members…to boxes of materials found in someone's office, garage, or even in a relative's attic" (17). Despite the varied interpretations of archives in Rhetoric and Composition, the archival privilege needed to access said materials, particularly archives as understood by Connors and Gaillet, and as written about by Powell, is consistent. Christopher Phelps (2007) in "My Dream Archive," writes that despite the privileged requirements necessary to access archives, "the traveler is sustained by the prospect of discovery and the insight, the perpetual hope that the next box, the next folder, the next life, will contain the elusive find that will afford a window to the past." I agree with Phelps that the thrill of the search makes archival work enticing, but I wonder what happens when the window cannot be opened, when the panes are fogged over, when the glass is broken. How can a traveler be sustained by a journey that she cannot even begin? The archives need to be a space where individuals with disabilities feel welcomed. The archives need to be a space where individuals with schedules that do not allow for 9 a.m.5 p.m. access can still visit. The archives need to be a space where a single parent whose child may be in daycare and who needs to be reached during the day can have a cell phone on and nearby. If archives are a space for individuals to look into the past, that space should not be limited to a select group who fit a specific identity.

What Happens When Understanding is Deferred?: Examinations of the Ethics and Efficacy of African American News Outlets (Stephanie Jones)

I am often inspired by the people around me. Witnessing the projects of Alex, Thomas and Noah unfold pushed me to engage with how I understand and am excluded from the social histories typically taught in the field. My purpose in my research was to bridge what is commonly known about rhetorical ethics and efficacy within American news outlets, the stories often found and examined in coursework, and trace the thread between nationalist patriotism and the historical commodification of African Americans through archival research. If American economic history is our activity system, then slavery is the process it explicates.

All my previous experiences with archival research have been secondhand. The weight of the importance of the work I examined was just as heavy as the subject matter I planned to dive into. Nothing I read before really prepared me for this. Black publications produced a lasting black identity, and it is thus irrefutable because black identity exists or is tangible now through our historical and legal records, such as the 13th Amendment and *Brown v. Board of Education* (Logan 2008). The well-documented work towards establishing black culture as a rich, diverse, and folkloric society became a generative feature of African American humanity.

For this project, I am looking through the George S. Schuyler Papers, specifically anything classified as unpublished. While most of this collection contain old scrapbooks, there are very interesting bits of prose to examine, an unpublished obituary, parts of a play, and published articles. Schuyler was a satirical writer and reporter during the Harlem Renaissance. He was a problematic but necessary voice in the black community in the 1930's who became particularly polarizing during the Civil Rights movement when he broke away from the mainstream completely and denounced anything to do with Dr. King or Marxism (Ferguson 2005). One reason I chose this archive is because the library's description of Schuyler mentions that his change in views might be linked to the Scottsboro trial in 1931. This is particularly fascinating because I am interested in how black communities are educated about events in their communities through news media. Another reason I chose to look at Schuyler is that I am interested in how influential he was at the beginning of his life. When I began going through Schuyler's archive, something that struck me as significant for understanding how his work was received in the larger community was the congenial way other reporters constructed their assessments of his work.[1] The rhetoric describing his early journalistic pursuits is starkly different from those used to describe his later works, which I believe is due to him being on the wrong side of history as a result of his belief that there was no need for African Americans to fight for their Civil Rights. However, when he is read in light of the Harlem Renaissance writers, an interesting attitude and rhetorical treatment emerges (Schuyler 1994). I begin with an examination of the reception and history of Schuyler's work in his archive as my method of identifying and constructing his narrative and its contribution to black identity formation. In addition, I document places where the shift from process to product of black identity occurred.

Now that I have read through the bulk of his earliest writings from the archive I think I have more questions about Schuyler's life and motivations than I do answers. Some of this is unsurprising—traditionally, many things go unsaid in the black community. However, from what I have read so far, my conclusions about his motivational shift will only fuel a different project and perhaps the plot of a dime store mystery novel, but none of the questions I had in this experience were answered by the folder I pulled. Even though I found the reading interesting, any theories I had about it had been mostly speculation based on what was missing from his archive after 1931. I hope readers come away from my research with a more layered understanding of how working with documents and experiencing firsthand the history of my own community strengthened my relationship to the field. How important archiving Schuyler's work was to him should be mirrored in how important all stories are to our collective knowledge. While thinking about his personal history is heavy, it is also inspiring to see the quintessence his publications had in the black community.

Queer Remembering (Thomas Passwater)

Alongside Alex, Stephanie, and Noah, I walked into the archive with a particular way of reading texts to understand the past. As with the telling of any history, queer relationships to the past are structured by the archive and how it organizes collective memory. However, to be queer may be to not have a history, but to participate in the invention of a history that is never truly one's own. Indeed, queer archives have often had to attend to the silences and erasures of queerness, making the archives spaces for rhetorical and historical invention (Morris 2006). As a site of contesting histories of erasure, queer histories are often made from working with ephemera and taking up ephemerality as an epistemic orientation toward queer histories (Cvetkovich 2003). Jonathan Alexander (2012) and Jacqueline Rhodes write, "We can only catch a glimpse of its trajectories, its possibilities. But doing so, no matter how provisionally, offers us a challenging sense of queer rhetorical strategies" (13).

I became interested in the rhetorical practices of ACT UP—how queer rage provided promising potential for rhetorical theory. Forming in the late 1980s to respond to government inaction on the AIDS crisis, ACT UP played a critical role in queer history and remains one of the best-known LGBTQ activist organizations. Queer historians often write the history of AIDS in the U.S. alongside the rise of American conservatism from the post-war period to the 1980s and posit ACT UP as a central player in creating queer visibility.[2] Additionally, early queer theorists drew on ACT UP as a grounding for their work. These scholars draw on the affective dimensions performed by the organization's activism: queer outrage, pain, and shame (Jagose 1996). However, this grounding poses that radical queerness emerges as a response to the AIDS Crisis, allowing 1990s activism and scholarship to travel. Further, early queer theorists abstracted their theory from late 1980s and early 1990s experiences, but favored queer as something universal and not tied to the specific experience of being bodied queerly (Rand 2014).

As I worked with the papers of Robert Garcia, founding member of ACT UP and chair of its Latino caucus from 1987-1991, I found that my ways of reading the texts were challenged. To be sure, his papers showed the outrage and pain I had expected to find—certainly, ACT UP's rejecting rhetorical situations and appropriating them is a site of productive inquiry—however, what was evident throughout his papers as well was hope, a commitment to building coalition and community, and a deep desire to preserve a queer history. His texts were so abundant and overflowing with different affective responses to his present conditions and to his ideas of a queer past that the queer archival methodological orientations that I had been trained in did little service to his experience and the work that ACT UP sought to do.

Championed by Leo Bersani (1995) and Lee Edelman (2004), queer theory's antirelationality schools of thought advocate that the critical potential of queerness is located in embracing abjection from normative society. Antirelationality's centering of negative affects can become a means of structuring queer collective memory (Castiglia and Reed 2012). Shame, loss, and failure are the resources of the queer archive. Heather Love (2007) writes, "These feelings are tied to the experience of social exclusion and to the historical 'impossibility' of same-sex desire" (4). Archival queers, then, become those that tend to these affective relationships across temporalities and spaces (Morris and Rawson 2013). These affective responses become rhetorical strategies for telling queer histories. Because the archive so often fails queer people, Jack Halberstam (2012) positions forgetting as a resource for queer survival—a refusal to participate in the construction of histories that could only

be told in straight time and spaces. But, I, to echo Mari Ruti (2017), find myself hesitant to believe "ignorance is somehow intrinsically politically subversive" (37). We might need to ask who or what we can afford to forget?

Jessica Enoch (2013) asks us to consider work that does more than recover lost voices, but work that asks how our collective attention is rhetorically oriented toward remembering some bodies, some identities, and forgetting others. Similarly, Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed (2012) argue that queer theory and queer histories have engaged in cultural forgetting around AIDS. They argue that this cultural forgetting only silences the productive activism, sexualities, and lived experiences of queer people who lived during and before the AIDS crisis—instead taking up a need to perform shame or distance from the crisis and more radical sexualities that preceded it. This is also seen in Patrick Moore's (2004) assertion that the politics of shame erases queer histories of sexuality and, by extension, queer cultures, calling us to preserve LGBTQ histories and reclaim AIDS. Ruti describes the antinormativity arguments in queer theory that underpin the structuring of queer archives as "a politics of negativity devoid of any clear political or ethical vision: it wants to destroy what exists without giving us much of a sense of what *should* exist." These authors critique the antirelational paradigm of queerness, embracing the abjection and shame imposed on queer people by normative society—or that one can simply refuse to participate or remember our entanglements with histories, social institutions, and bodies that are not always our own.

Put differently, queer theory's "various romances of negativity" are only possible if "one can frame queerness as a singular abstraction that can be subtracted and isolated from a larger social matrix" (Muñoz 2009, 12; 94). This means that doing queer rhetorical work structured only by our negative affects is to only do a history of queerness-as-abstraction, as somehow universal, and to forget the very bodies that ACT UP fought to ensure were not erased. Further, what is at stake is what it means to be queer, whose queerness is evoked when we describe our work as such, and what doing queer work means. By turning to queer bodies and refusing to give abstraction primacy in inquiry, we might be able to remember differently—perhaps queerly—and provide new avenues for queerness's critical potential to radically influence our scholarship and activism.

Robert Garcia, with many of the founding members of ACT UP, authored a document in 1989 called "A His and Herstory of Queer Activism." The document provides an introduction of LGBT rights activist time-periods, such as the homophile movement, gay liberation, and ends with the chapter "Right-Wing Reactionaries, AIDS and Renewed Queer Militancy."[3] The text shows their commitment to preserving queer histories as well as the ways in which they saw their radical activism as directly connected with the histories in which they participated. They write in the introduction,

> [I]t is our common belief that the act of elucidating the struggle for homosexual liberation is, in itself, a political act. The AIDS crisis—allowed to run rampant because of institutionalized homophobia—far from being a distraction in the pursuit of liberation, is galvanizing us once again into political community.[4]

Two years after their formation, ACT UP took an interest in documenting their history in accessible ways for their members in this document. The chapter "ACT UP,"

written by Mark Bronnenberg, states that ACT UP "has sparked a new kind of political activism, reflecting similar ideologies and concerns of earlier lesbian and gay political organizations, refracted now through the context of the AIDS health crisis."[5] ACT UP drew on long histories of LGBTQ activism and LGBTQ activist ideologies rhetorically refracted and adapted to new and shifting contexts.

Bronnenberg is also careful to note that the Zaps, the disruptive demonstrations that ACT UP was possibly most known for, "have taken the form of noisy picketing, phone calls, letter-writing campaigns, sit-ins-die-ins, kiss-ins, and other unimaginable acts."[6] However, he also adds, "Zaps did not originate as a concept with ACT UP; they had been used successfully by the Gay Liberation Front, from which ACT UP has borrowed some of its tactics."[7] Indeed, he writes, "This kind of highly theatrical protest traces its lineage back to the Sixties, the New Left and the civil rights movement."[8] As ACT UP wrote their own histories, they were careful to show the traces of inheritance that they saw themselves as participating in as much as they were responding to a new, if refracting, context and crisis.

To be sure, Robert Garcia and the founding members of AIDS experienced loss, outrage, and trauma that can never be fully representable, and to elucidate even some of the experiences of that loss is important work. And, further, there are still endless insights we can learn from ACT UP's approach to activism. However, taking up a queer remembering of ACT UP challenges positioning of the organization within theorizing queer histories. To challenge their position within queer theory's archive is not to undermine the importance of the organization—far from it. Instead, what this challenge does is allow the organization to speak back to our assumptions. My interest here is to suggest that how we remember matters and that being in the archive means attending to how our attention is being structured, which, in turn, structures the histories we tell.

By allowing Garcia's papers to confront the assumptions I brought with me into the archive, my reading of his work changed the way that my attention had been structured. He wrote, "So, I would whisper to myself as I was marching, shouting, demonstrating, fighting back: 'Robert, every step is a tear you don't want to cry, every arrest is an act of hope'" (Bytsura 2014). While I entered the archives at Cornell to study queer outrage, I walked out of that space with renewed interest in the promise of how queer bodies reorganize the world around us and a deep desire to demand more from queer histories. Indeed, a queer remembering asks us to not only remember our losses and our trauma, but to preserve our pride and our desire for more than what this world has given us.

(Un)Intentional Archival Spaces (Noah Wilson)

Stephanie, Thomas, Alex, and I each entered the archive with the same anxiety that comes with a lack of expertise. Having only cursory experience of them, I often regarded archival stacks as merely the "physical stuff" of history; the gold-standard referential material backing every academic assertion. The materiality of the objects themselves grant a particular credibility to our claims; we create "good scholarship" by sifting through the archival stacks. Before actually working through an archive, I found the scholarly exercise quite intimidating because it seemed impossible to ever assert a claim confidently. I held onto that impractical image of the ideal archive that Michel Foucault (1997) critiques:

> The idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all time that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place (334).

I cannot help but find Foucault's description reminiscent of what digital spaces such as the internet claim to be. Foucault argues that archives are far from objective and to treat them as such ignores important additional layers of meaning built into their respective stacks. In my project, I was interested in exploring this rhetorical activity and labor that remains wholly necessary but mostly unseen.

I wanted to delve into Glenn and Enoch's (lowercase 'a') archival spaces that Shipka explores in her contribution to *Reconstructing the Archive*. Not unlike Shipka's question of what "becomes of the experiences, written texts, and other material artifacts associated with the not quite so famous," I found myself drawn to the artifacts that were not intended to serve a traditional archival function and yet whose construction requires similar rhetorical activity. Shipka's project ultimately calls for a "social turn" for the archive, an attention to "mundane" archival activity. As an answer to her call, my project looked for similar traces of the "mundane" online by tracing the rhetorical genealogy of a webpage. Mary Queen (2008) describes *rhetorical genealogy* as "a process of examining digital texts not as artifacts of rhetorical productions, but rather, as continually evolving rhetorical actions that are materially bound, actions whose transformation can be traced through the links embedded within multiple fields of circulation" (476). Queen asks that we look at digital texts as constitutive rhetorical activity: never truly static, digital artifacts like webpages are instead *active* rhetorical actions playing out in real-time. Rhetorical genealogy asks that we regard digital texts' seemingly minute changes, such as word choice alterations from one webpage iteration to the next, as a visible trace of the rhetorical activity that prompted said changes. In my project, I focused on the asynchronous online community,[9] Piratebox, as they continued to develop their open-source software project. Piratebox's ongoing collective project is developed largely through community forums and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) pages. The FAQ page functions as a central hub and public face for their project; I therefore traced the changes to this page over time using the Internet Archive's *Wayback Machine*. Chronologically aligning these "change traces" with conversations pertaining to the projects' development across its community forums allowed me to map out the project's rhetorical genealogy: not only could I *identify* specific changes to the community's webpage but I could also explore *why* these changes happened.

Not unlike sifting through the archival stacks at my university hoping to find unarticulated connections, I culled countless forum posts in hopes of excavating Piratebox's larger network of activity. The value in working with digital texts is what they reveal about more traditional modalities, the seemingly hidden features of our daily writing practices we have grown accustomed to ignoring. Tracking conversations about bugs and installation instructions between a lead developer and his community provided me with a far richer picture of communal rhetorical activity. Similarly, I think we can learn a great deal from the often-ignored record keeping practices of the archivists we rely on. These records would

allow us to see the rhetorical decisions made in curating and maintaining an archive in addition to the new connections between visitors we would not be able to trace otherwise: connections between institutions, scholarship, and the archival material itself. In completing this project, I have come to realize that what is just as important as the objects themselves, digital or otherwise, is their origin and movement. The archival nature of the internet makes tracing these movements far easier to follow if you know where to start; these traces have always been there waiting to be discovered.

My project began with a focus on seemingly insignificant alterations to two lines of text from one version of a Piratebox webpage to the next. Tracing the social activity leading to these two changes on Piratebox's community forums, I was able to track important communal rhetorical activity. I saw the long-term discussions between the lead developer, the public face of the project, and the larger Piratebox community that provided him the insights and software testing that indirectly drove the project. In charting the contours of this online community, I learned that the relationship between a project's developer and its community is symbiotic, the project truly needs both to continue. I also learned that it is not an ideological alignment between online community leaders and members that sustains this asynchronous, decentralized, open-source software project. Contrary to my assumptions, when an open-source project lacks the commitment and involvement of its base it may not solely be the dogged persistence of its lead developer that sustains collective action but rather the frequent, inconsistent, incidental community contributions. This scatter plot of actions is easy to ignore because these connections are hard to see. It is easy to dismiss a one-time action from a single user, but when I examined twenty, one-time user actions as the movements of a single collective entity, the larger picture changed and I paid attention differently. I observed that what kept Piratebox going was collective action across a larger time-frame and with far more users than I expected. I had to shift from pinpointing individual actions towards attending to the aggregative action of a larger group: it was not one person inspiring others to action; rather, the community functioned together as a single entity. As Shipka would suggest, in peering into the mundane I found small but recoverable traces that led me to hidden archival depths. In complicating what I defined an archive to be, I had peered into the scattered and seemingly unrelated actions of an online community and found traces of something far more interesting.

My work examining internet communities made me realize that our regard of archival engagement might be incomplete. As Jennifer Clary-Lemon (2014) concludes in her "Archival Research Processes: A Case for Material Methods," there are important layers of rhetorical accretion embedded within the construction of the archive itself, that

> approaching our archival research processes with heuristics aimed at combining object selection with ongoing interpretation of accreted layers of understanding – to listen differently to the archives, as it were – give us a richer base from which to make meaning out of the histories we read (339).

If we are to embrace Foucault's critique, we need to not just look at the *gold* in our vaults, the objects themselves, but where that gold came from, where it was mined from and what processes and decisions allowed it to wind-up where it did. It is easier to see this frequently

ignored activity when we disorient ourselves; for me this was averting my gaze from physical stacks towards digital spaces and then from individual contributions towards aggregated action. The internet is often viewed as the ultimate repository, a vessel capable of holding all of our accumulated knowledge, and yet I found that it, too, was not without its own issues of access and representation. Perhaps in the same way that Shipka previously called for us to move *Toward a Composition Made Whole*, we might now call for a move toward an "archive made whole." I argue that rather than trying to develop the perfect system for the preservation of history, an archive that secures our current standards of objectivity, we might instead peel back the more "subjective" archival layers and see where the messy and problematic aspects of archival construction we wish to ignore actually fit in. We can learn about the rhetorical nature of knowledge and history if we unfreeze the archive from our illusion that it could ever be that "place of all time that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages" (Foucault 1997, 334). Attending more to archival objects' histories before their arrival in the stacks provides insight into the rhetorical activity that led to demarcating someone's personal material as important enough for preservation by people who never knew them. In short, attending to an archive's rhetorical accretion and its rhetorical genealogy not only provides knowledge of archival functioning, it also restores the important layers of meaning that we have been conditioned to ignore.

Contemplating *Everything*

As graduate students, the archive serves as our window into forgotten bits of history. We seek what has been passed over, left behind, and forgotten to connect us with the untold stories of the past. We then tell the rhetorical histories of those stories in order to make better sense of our positionality. This is "contemplating everything" (Steeman 2001, 1177). When we come to sit with the materials, the dust, the undifferentiated *Everything* of the past and wonder where to start our telling. Steedman reminds us that "the historian must start somewhere, but starting is a different thing from originating, or even from beginning" (1177). Social histories and rhetorical histories remind us that the archive forgets just as much as it remembers. As Toni Morrison (2004) says—it is through the process of re-memory that we articulate the power of the archive into stories. Additionally, Derrida (1998) notes frankly, "There is no political power without control of the archive, or without memory" (4). With the words of these scholars in mind, we set out into our archives to seek the truth. Collectively, the process taught us that our varied archival research experiences, perspectives, and understandings bridge the gaps between us and allow for more complex ways to see the past and see new pathways to future projects.

Reflecting on archival practices highlights means of interrogating power—that we might remember differently, know what it is that we have forgotten, encounter what we cannot access and speak back to what has been denied, or provide new ways of accessing and knowing how archives act on what they gather. Steedman adds, "And while there is closure in historical writing, and historians do bring their arguments and books to a conclusion, there is no End—cannot be an End, for we are still in it, the great, slow-moving Everything" (1177). We argue that it is not the goal of archival projects to make the past known, to make the Everything knowable; in fact, our project is the opposite. Our work is not trying to make the past known. We, as rhetoricians, as historians, are trying to see the unseen, to sift through the dust of the past without necessarily any tidy outcome.

Endnotes

1   George S. Schuyler Papers, Reel 1. Vol. 1&2, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries. Syracuse, NY.

2   See Michael Bronski, A Queer History of the United States (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2011); Lillian Faderman, The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

3   "A His and Herstory of Queer Activism" by ACT UP, 1989, Box 2, Folder 15, Robert Garcia Papers, Cornell University Human Sexualities Collection, Ithaca, New York.

4   Ibid., 1.

5   Ibid., 69.

6   Ibid., 69.

7   Ibid., 69.

8   Ibid., 69.

9   Asynchronous Online communities are those that do not communicate in real-time via technologies such as instant messenger but instead on forums on their "own time."

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