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Trust Matters¹

Anne J. Gilliland

Introduction

Collectively and separately, *documenting the present*, *archival conscience*, and *proactive archives*, the themes so presciently set for the 2017 Society of Georgia Archivists' conference, speak not only to key challenges facing the archival profession but also to concerns and confrontations over truth, history, identity, and collective memory that today are tearing this country apart. Archivists have always struggled for the public recognition and resources that would allow them to carry out their role optimally even though internally the archival field has its own history of debates over how best to carry out that role. Today's confrontations, however, have direct and immediate implications for archivists and the institutions and communities they serve or would like to serve.

This is a time when we see the leadership of this country actively engaged in taking down government data; promoting conspiracy theories; deliberately not creating records or creating records that obfuscate key issues; refusing to accept factual rebuttals based on existing records; and scorning the archival processes by which the reliability of those records is measured and their authenticity guaranteed. It is a time when we see similar and additional kinds of disregard, dismissal, and open distrust of records and of the roles that archivists and archives play in society steadily rising across this country and in many other places around the world. It is a time when we see archives in many countries increasingly unable to promote critically needed pluralization, citizen protection, redress, and reconciliation needs because they are being infiltrated, controlled and manipulated for nationalist and populist political ends.² It is also a time, as commentators have recently put it when

¹ This paper was first presented as a keynote at the Society of Georgia Archivists' Annual Meeting, November 3, 2017.

² See Trudy Huskamp Peterson, "The Nasty Truth about Nationalism and National Archives," Proceedings of the 5th General Conference of EASTICA, September 19, 2001, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58a5af9886e6c0200405a5b5/t/594d695b2e69cf9244b64e43/1498245467332/Nasty+Truth+Korea2.pdf>; and Gilliland, "To What Lengths the 'Physical and Moral Defence of the Record' in Times of Conflict and Exigency," *Archives and Records: The Journal of the*

discussing Poland's controversial new memory law, when many states and communities are actively engaged in "weaponizing memory."³ Former Acting Archivist of the United States Trudy Peterson has argued that national archives always face the possibility of being subverted in service of nationalism. By their very nature and history, they are implicated in the development of nation states and the construction of national identity and memory. They preserve not only government records, but also nationally symbolic documents, and they promote national historical narratives that are not necessarily inclusive of the experiences and perspectives of all groups in society. While we should not forget, as South African archivist Verne Harris incisively pointed out, that archives of any type may only capture a sliver of heritage and collective memory writ large, the roles that archivists and records managers play vis-à-vis the creation, preservation, validation, and dissemination of records and other forms of recorded evidence that make up that sliver—the roles that lie at the heart of our business—are not played by anyone else; not by data scientists, not librarians, not museum curators, not historians, not anthropologists, not digital humanities scholars, not lawyers or aid workers, and certainly not by politicians. It is essential, therefore, that as a profession we figure out ethically and morally as well as practically where we place ourselves and how we act in the face of such developments.

I have chosen in this paper to focus, therefore, on an aspect that I believe is axiomatic in the archival field, and that is trust. Implicated in the wider public debates on matters of trust, archivists are at the same time being pulled in multiple directions by questions of trust within the profession that emanate from technological developments and from epistemological and ethical contestations. For example, how is trust established in the digital realm? Whose

Archives and Records Association [UK],

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2017.1348940>.

³ Leonid Bershidsky, "Poland's Holocaust Law Seeks to Weaponize Memory," *Bloomberg*, January 31, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2018-02-01/poland-s-holocaust-law-seeks-to-weaponizememory>; Ishaan Tharoor, "A Right-wing Government Turns the Past into a Weapon," *Washington Post*, February 2, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/02/02/a-right-wing-government-turns-the-past-into-a-weapon/?utm_term=.e8c57a7b819e.

trust is most important to archives and archivists? Who distrusts archives and archivists and why? And why and when does trust really matter? Most archivists have been taught that archives must be inviolate spaces that follow closely defined practices in order to guarantee the continuing trustworthiness of their holdings. Doing so means that archivists must conduct themselves in such a way that they cannot be accused of partiality or partisanship. If they do not, creators will not trust them enough to allow them to preserve their records, courts will not trust their records when they are presented as evidence, and the general public will not believe the facts that those records contain. To these ends, exhortations to neutrality and objectivity were built into archival codes of ethics and other statements of professional best practice, and sometimes were also built into conditions of employment for archivists in certain kinds of institutions. But inasmuch as this stance simultaneously reassured and privileged the institutions whose records are held by archives and other powerful interests, it has not earned archivists and archives universal trust. In fact the stance has also been critiqued as an excuse for archivists and their archives not to be proactive, not to advocate, and not to listen to their own consciences and act to redress the inequities, injustices, and silences perpetrated and perpetuated by the records and recordkeeping practices of those institutions whose records they preserve.

In the past fifty years, there has been a succession of changes in the professional landscape of trust, and archives and archivists have repositioned themselves and their practices several times in response. In its own time each archival response was seen as paradigm shifting and was often controversial, but this can be hard to appreciate or even remember in hindsight. In this paper, therefore, I will begin with a brief review of some of these shifts and the kinds of recommendations that emerged out of them for the field. I will then briefly address the state of trust in archives and records in the U.S. today, before focusing on three current examples that speak directly to the themes of the 2017 Society of Georgia Archivists conference. Each revolves around issues of trust and distrust in the record, the archive, and the keepers or stewards of the archive, and is of global as well as national import. I will again indicate the kinds of recommendations that are being made in each of these cases. To conclude, I will sum up strategies and attitudes that have repeatedly

surfaced as being necessary if archivists are to act practically, ethically, and morally on these matters of trust and distrust.

The Shifting Professional Landscape of Trust

In 1966, in a speech in Cape Town, South Africa, Robert Kennedy referenced the supposed ancient Chinese curse: "May you live in interesting times." "Like it or not," he said, "we live in interesting times. They are times of danger and uncertainty; but they are also more open to the creative energy of men than any other time in history." This was certainly true of the 1960s globally, and of apartheid South Africa in particular, but with hindsight today we can discern and appreciate the social and intellectual transformations that resulted from that era in the United States: in civil and women's rights, in organized labor, in new kinds of personal freedoms, and in new intellectual movements. Among these movements was the rise of history "from the bottom-up" that called for putting communities and experiences into the historical record that hitherto were missing. These new approaches to history engendered the use of non-traditional documentary methods such as oral history, and the establishment of new forms of archives to collect the materials generated by social movements and under-represented groups. They challenged the authority and utility of existing methods and repositories and received a critical reception from the broader historical and archival professions as a result.

That archivists had a moral obligation to step up and actively transform their practices was brought directly home to them on September 30, 1970, when the late radical historian, playwright, civil rights activist, and former Spelman College professor Howard Zinn addressed the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists (SAA). Just the year before, Zinn had unsuccessfully tried to persuade the American Historical Association to pass an anti-Vietnam War resolution. Critical of so-called "neutrality," at SAA, he argued for historical research that was based on "ultimate" or "human values" and subjectivist questioning. He insisted that "neutrality is a fiction in an unneutral world:" "There are victims, there are executioners, and there are bystanders ... [the] objectivity [of] the bystander calls for inaction while other heads fall."⁴ In a

⁴ Howard Zinn, *The Politics of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 40.

1977 article in the *Midwestern Archivist* Zinn addressed archivists even more directly:

The archivist, even more than the historian and the political scientist, tends to be scrupulous about his neutrality, and to see his job as a technical job, free from the nasty world of political interest: a job of collecting, sorting, preserving, making available, the records of the society. But I will stick by what I have said about other scholars, and argue that the archivist, in subtle ways, tends to perpetuate the political and economic status quo simply by going about his ordinary business. His supposed neutrality is, in other words, a fake. If so, the rebellion of the archivist against his normal role is not, as so many scholars fear, the politicizing of a neutral craft, but the humanizing of an inevitably political craft. Scholarship in society is inescapably political. Our choice is not between being political or not. Our choice is to follow the politics of the going order, that is, to do our job within the priorities and directions set by the dominant forces of society, or else to promote those human values of peace, equality, and justice, which our present society denies.⁵

Zinn suggested several strategies for counteracting the negative effects of archival neutrality that are quite familiar to archivists today, although at the time there was considerable pushback from archivists. They included placing less emphasis on “important and powerful people,” creating oral histories of the oppressed, collecting papers of social movements, and focusing on the capture of current information necessary for ensuring government accountability. Most importantly, he exhorted archivists to “engage in a campaign to open all government documents to the public.” “If there are rare exceptions,” he stated, “let the burden of proof be on those who claim them [i.e., exceptions], not as now on the citizen

⁵ Howard Zinn, "Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest," *The Midwestern Archivist* 2, no.2 (1977): 20.

who wants information.”⁶ University of Wisconsin Archivist Patrick Quinn, who himself had been a civil rights movement activist, remarked on the reaction of many of his colleagues to Zinn’s exhortations in an article the same year in *The Georgia Archive*:

While there was a certain general agreement that archivists had indeed been remiss in not devoting sufficient attention to the task of collecting documentation pertaining to women, Blacks, and other minorities and the working class, the reaction to Zinn’s call for the opening of governmental records was decidedly adverse. Adjectives ranging from ill-advised to ludicrous peppered much of the post-session commentary.⁷

Vladan Vukliš and Anne J. Gilliland note, however, that:

Still, there was some resonance. A number of archivists, seeking to create an informal caucus, gathered during the SAA convention the following year in San Francisco and adopted objectives and commitments to: “1) initiate actions designed to democratize the SAA; 2) increase rank-and-file participation in the affairs and policy-making decisions of the SAA; 3) encourage the recruitment and advancement of minorities within the profession; and 4) improve the status of women within the profession” (Quinn, 1977: 26). This became the basis for the Society of American Archivists' Archives for Change Committee, which later became “Activist Archivists” or “ACT,” and then Progressive

⁶ Zinn, "Secrecy," 21-25.

⁷ Patrick Quinn, “The Archivist as Activist,” *Georgia Archive* 5, no.1 (1977): 26. Quinn talked about his participation in the civil rights movement and how he was almost killed in Selma in an interview with Nancy Deneen upon his retirement as archivist at Northwestern University in 2008. Nancy Deenen, "Patrick Quinn, Archivist, and the 'House' that Patrick Built," *Weinberg Magazine*, Spring/Summer 2008, <https://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/after-graduation/weinberg-magazine/crosscurrents-archive/2008-spring-summer/quinn.html>.

Archivists. As the 1970s progressed, although failing to reduce white over-representation, ACT made some impact towards procedural democratization of archival associations and the inclusion of women in professional bodies. At the same time, various social movements influenced the collecting policies of some archival institutions and historical societies ...

However, the upward-downward spiral of US politics was felt in the 1980s when previous “counter-trends” were suppressed by rightward leanings and authoritarian policies. The “boom” ended, and active documenting of labor and protest movements and marginalized communities was faced with new challenges (Blake, 2007: 143-146; Quinn, 1987: 4-5).⁸

Although 1993 saw the revision of the 1939 Hatch Act that placed certain restrictions on advocacy and political engagement for Federal employees and technically provided more space for action and leadership on the part of the U.S. National Archives, the 1990s overall could be characterised by a reassertion of what Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook called the “professional myth of impartiality, neutrality, and objectivity.”⁹ These concepts underpinned and were underpinned by the 1992 version of the SAA Code of Ethics for Archivists that called for “impartial judgment” and reflected an authority-mandated professional mentality. That Code of Ethics in turn was highly influential in the production of the 1996 International Council on Archives (ICA) Code of Ethics, ICA's first code of ethics, which still serves as the formal guidelines for archivists and archives worldwide. The reassertion was also

⁸ Vladan Vukliš and Anne J. Gilliland, "Archival Activism: Emerging Forms, Local Applications," *Archives in the Service of People - People in the Service of Archives, Proceedings of the Alma Mater Europaea 4th International Scientific Conference: All About People: Society and Science for Integrated Care of People*, (Maribor, Slovenia, March 2016): 14-25.

⁹ Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz, “Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 1.

fueled by a techno-determinism and myth of systems neutrality that resulted from archivists' increasing engagement with electronic records and information technology. Moreover, the digital world had introduced a different rhetoric of trust—one that focused on the need for parameters that would ensure the creation and preservation of reliable and authentic electronic records, and the implementation of trusted digital repositories to maintain those records as well as other born-digital and digitized materials.¹⁰ However, the kinds of archival regimes associated with these parameters simultaneously encouraged a narrative of distrust in smaller archives, community spaces, and personal collections that were not resourced to meet standards and professional best practice guidelines that were never designed for their circumstances. A stronger professional emphasis on standards development and implementation in records management, digital preservation, and especially in description was another factor. Standardization is designed to promote best practices that support rigor, consistency, and hence trust in archival activities. However, standards also tend to privilege the interests, needs, and modalities of major institutions, from whom standards developers are often drawn or emerge, and they can simultaneously squeeze out or even delegitimize other cultural, and alternative activist, resistive, or by-any-means-necessary practices such as those we increasingly have seen in community-based archiving.

By the turn of the twenty-first century, archival thinkers, based on their experiences in practice, on what they had taken from the intellectual movements that had begun to flourish from the 1960s onwards, and on research carried out in the growing and change-oriented graduate archival educational programs, again argued for a paradigm shift in archival orientations to trust. Over the past two decades, they have eloquently and unequivocally pointed out many of the reasons why the archives that were designed to be trusted by government, academia, science, business, and other powerful sectors in society, have been and continue to be much less trusted by those whose experiences of such institutions have been negative or exclusionary ones. For them, many developments and procedures

¹⁰ See, for example, the work of the successive InterPARES projects, www.interpares.org and <https://interparestrust.org/>.

supposed to inspire and demonstrate trust and trustworthiness have not universally reassured, and they point to official records, recordkeeping, and archives as both legacies and mechanisms of oppression. Consider, for example, the following assertions made by leading archival thinkers over the past fifteen years:

Archives ... are not passive store houses of old stuff, but active sites where social power is negotiated, contested, confirmed.¹¹

All power is trust ... There is no lasting power of any kind without the legitimizing role of the archive ... Archives of the people, by the people, for the people.¹²

Distrust in the archive: Reconciling records ... the conventional positioning of individuals as the subjects of the official archival record has had a particularly disempowering effect on Indigenous peoples whose lives have been so extensively documented in archives for the purposes of surveillance, control and dispossession.¹³

Community archives provide an empirical base of evidence on which to assert communities' historical presence ... in the face of silencing, marginalization and misrepresentation ... mainstream archival repositories and professionally trained archivists would do well to take a page from the community archives movement to counteract more profoundly the effects of symbolic annihilation and instead to work to invoke feelings of representational

¹¹ Cook & Schwartz, "Archives, Records, and Power," *ibid.*

¹² Eric Ketelaar, "Archival Temples, Archival Prisons: Modes of Power and Protection," *Archival Science* 2, no. 3-4 (2002) 221-238.

¹³ Sue McKemmish, Shannon Faulkhead, and Lynette Russell, "Distrust in the Archive: Reconciling Records," *Archival Science* 11, nos. 3-4 (2011): 211-39.

belonging for the communities and individuals they exist to serve.¹⁴

We need to center on justice and not be afraid of politics. Archives have never been neutral—they are the creation of human beings, who have politics in their nature. Centering the goals of liberation is at the heart of the issue.¹⁵

Such declarations speak to the political nature of the archival enterprise that Zinn pointed out in the 1970s, and especially to the complex of relationships between trust, power, and distrust that are at work in records and recordkeeping; and they echo Zinn's words for the need "not to politicize a neutral craft, but to humanize an inevitably political craft." These and many other recent publications argue for several attitudinal and practical shifts that the archival profession needed and in many cases still needs to make, including the following:

- Practice in full awareness of archival power and potential to empower.
- Acknowledge mission-driven relationships and interdependencies between archives and the institutions, programs, policies, and actions that generate records. In privileging these interests traditional archival practices do not document, empower, or serve all people and interests equally.
- Be cognizant of the ways in which archival practices shape the historical record and the ways in which the record might be subsequently be used.
- Reject the possibility of neutral/value-free archival practice and commit to professional and personal reflexivity and the centering of presence, equity, liberation, and empowerment.

¹⁴ Michelle Caswell, Marika Cifor, and Mario H. Ramirez, " 'To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing:' Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives," *The American Archivist* 79, no.1 (Spring/Summer 2016): 56-81.

¹⁵ " 'Archives have never been neutral:' An NDSA Interview with Jarrett Drake," February 15, 2017, <http://nds.org/2017/02/15/archives-have-never-been-neutral-an-nds-interview-with-jarrett-drake.html>.

- Promote more inclusive understandings of provenance, e.g., co-creation, and associated rights in records.
- Free those such as Native Americans, who have been made “captives of the archive.”¹⁶
- Commit to mutually respectful, informed, consultative interactions between archives and communities of record.
- Support the development of counter-narratives and counter-archives.
- Acknowledge the presence and impact of records and archival-related trauma, affect, and imaginings.

The first decades of the twenty-first century, and particularly the last few years, have seen enormous growth in the numbers and prominence of community archives, many born out of distrust and unhappiness with the kinds of archives that professional principles have traditionally supported. Although what has come to be called “the community archives movement” is gaining traction in many parts of the world, it is strongest in the United States, where it has evolved far beyond the “heritage projects,” community-centered historical societies, and collecting projects of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as the thematically focused archives and scholarly documentation initiatives that were initiated in the 1970s and 1980s. Many community archives today, taking a variety of forms and positions, have developed bottom-up as a result of grassroots activism, a quest for voice and presence and to “set the record straight,” and an overt agenda of augmenting and even countering the holdings and narratives of more traditional history and memory institutions. Community-based archives speak to the presence and experience of those who cannot find or fully find themselves in the official record and archives, and grassroots archival efforts aspire to become the catalyst and provide the evidence needed for social change. In other words, many community archives have a directly political agenda.

As I indicated earlier, however, this movement has engendered another kind of mistrust, or at least a wariness, that has

¹⁶ Henrietta Fourmile, “Who Owns the Past? - Aborigines as Captives of the Archives,” *Aboriginal History* (1989): 1.

limited the ways in which these often radical changes in outlook and practices by community-based archives might positively influence or at least complement more traditional archives. Beyond a concern about archival initiatives that have overtly activist agendas, many professional archivists worry that community archives do not have the necessary expertise, facilities, or funding to safeguard their holdings. There is a tension on both sides around acknowledging that there might be valid roles for professional and for community expertise in archives of all types. Where mainstream archives try as far as possible to implement what the profession has identified as best practices in acquisition, preservation, and description, for example, there are many community archives that do not, cannot, or perhaps most controversially, will not employ those practices because they do not trust or believe that they are designed or implemented in the best interests of the communities they serve.

Most recently, two additional trust discussions have emerged, both exhibiting the potential to address many of the above interests and concerns regarding trust, records, and archives. One relates to the use of blockchain technology as a distributed form of trust assurance, potentially implemented through networks of cooperating archives as a way to support the continued integrity of born-digital and digitized records in the face not only of accidental damage, but also compromise that might occur as a result of hacking attacks, or interference, interception, or alteration by malicious entities or hostile governments.¹⁷ The other concerns archivists' roles in the sharing and re-use of digital data and the balance that needs to be struck between trust, risk, and consent in supporting both efficiency and cost-effectiveness in data creation and management and public good.¹⁸

¹⁷ Victoria Lemieux, "Trusting Records: Is Blockchain Technology the Answer?" *Records Management Journal* 26, no.2 (2016): 110-139.

¹⁸ Anna Sexton, Elizabeth Shepherd, Oliver Duke-Williams, and Alexandra Eveleigh, "A Balance of Trust in the Use of Government Administrative Data," *Archival Science* 17, no.4 (December 2017): 305-330.

Distrust Matters: Post-Truth, Alternative Facts, and Archival Imaginaries

The critiques already mentioned suggest why official archives would understandably be distrusted by certain communities, why indeed they have completely failed some, and why those communities have increasingly turned to developing their own archives and associated practices. I would be remiss, however, if I did not also note the continual struggles of mainstream archives to manage and prioritise their work with the resources available and the missions assigned to them; and the immense commitment, labor, and special skills of their archivists that often go unrecognised, unvalued, and underacknowledged. Ironically, however, a downside of increased public awareness of the archival role can be unwelcome or adverse political scrutiny of what archivists do and the ways in which the records they steward might be used to expose and hold accountable powerful figures and administrations, programs, and policies. In some countries this has resulted in even tighter government control over the activities and openness of archives. But what happens when the institutions that mainstream archives sustain and privilege in accordance with their stated missions, as well as their associated publics, become distrustful of the record and its keepers?

In the U.S., recent political challenges, "post-truth assertions," and the presentation of "alternative facts" have undermined public trust not only in the findings and motivations of scientists, government agencies, mainstream media, ordinary citizens, and non-citizens among others, but also in the preserved record, its keepers, and even in the most stringent archival evidentiary practices. In 2008, so-called "birthers" asserted that Barack Obama, then running for the U.S. presidency, was not a natural-born U.S. citizen, and thus was not eligible under the U.S. Constitution to serve as president. They claimed that Obama's birth certificate was a forgery and that he was born in Kenya and not in Hawaii. The birthers continued to press the issue until in 2011, President Obama released a copy of the long form of his Certificate of Live Birth, certified by the Hawaii Department of Health. In addition to that document, the Department of Health provided a description of the conditions under which such records are kept to ensure their authenticity. An announcement of the birth in a local

newspaper was also tracked down. Nevertheless, a subsequent 2011 Gallup poll found that 13 percent of the American people still did not believe that President Obama had been born in Hawaii. One of the prominent figures in the birther movement was Donald Trump who, not satisfied by the birth certificate, called for President Obama to produce his college and past passport applications. Guerilla conservative filmmaker James O'Keefe recently stated that in 2013 Trump asked him to try to gain access by subterfuge to Obama's sealed student records from his time at Columbia University to see if at any point in his college career Obama had claimed that he was an international student.¹⁹ During his own presidential campaign in 2016, Trump reversed himself, however, declaring that Obama was indeed born in the United States, but this time falsely claiming that it was his opponent Hillary Clinton who had begun the birther controversy in 2008. Nevertheless, in 2015, Alabama Republican Senate candidate and controversial judge Roy Moore insisted that he still did not believe that Obama was a natural-born U.S. citizen and again called for public examination of his birth certificate.²⁰ When Moore himself was accused of a past sexual assault where part of the evidence presented was an inscription on an old high school yearbook, Virginia Republican Senate candidate Corey Stewart tweeted: "@TheDemocrats got cocky forging @BarackObama birth certificate. Thought they could slip phony #AllredYearbookFraud by on @MooreSenate. Sad!!"²¹ Notwithstanding that Moore and other Republicans had refused to accept the expertise of the authorized recordkeepers in the case of the Obama birth certificate, Moore's campaign attorney challenged the chain of custody of the yearbook and called for its release so that the handwriting could be analyzed by "an expert" to determine whether

¹⁹ Oliver Darcy, "James O'Keefe Says Trump Asked Him to Go on a Birther-Linked Mission," *CNN Media*, January 12, 2018, <http://money.cnn.com/2018/01/12/media/james-okeefe-trump-obama-columbia-records/index.html>.

²⁰ Andrew Kaczynski and Paul LeBlanc, "GOP Senate candidate Roy Moore has said he doesn't believe Obama is a natural-born citizen," *CNN Politics*, August 22, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/22/politics/kfile-roy-moorebirther-comments/index.html>.

²¹ "Republican Senate Contender Corey Stewart Revives Obama 'Birther' Claim," *The Guardian*, December 9, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/09/republican-senate-contender-corey-stewart-revives>.

it was "genuine or a fraud."²² Moore lost the Senate race and public interest in the case diminished. However, only a few days later, former Maricopa County, Arizona, Sheriff Joe Arpaio, once more brought up Obama's birth certificate, stating that, "I'm going to tell you again that that document is a forgery document." He continued, "I wanted to get it to Congress so they can pass some type of law--regulation — that when somebody runs for president you ought to check their background, so this won't happen again."²³

This rather absurdist backdrop indicates the climate within which challenges to archival holdings, processes, and expertise are occurring in the U.S. I want to turn now to three examples that are certainly relevant in vital ways to our local and national contexts, but are also central to the health and wellbeing of our planet and all the peoples on it.

1. Documenting the Present: Climate and Environmental Change

Being in a beautiful natural space such as this in the Blue Ridge Mountains is a reminder and a warning about how essential it is to keep track of and understand what is occurring with the climate and environment locally and globally, and to make sound decisions based up on that knowledge. Keeping accurate records and being transparent about how those records are analyzed are both essential components of doing so and they promote the trust of governments, industry, and the general public around the world. In 2009, a controversy known as Climategate resulting from the leak of leading scientists' own emails from the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit led to an investigation of climate data analysis and archiving practices. As other scientists, politicians, and the media all weighed in, the trust that is traditionally accorded to science and scientific data was very publicly ruptured:

²² Jessica Taylor, "New Allegations Surface Against Moore As His Campaign Tries To Discredit An Accuser," *NPR News*, November 11, 2017), <https://www.npr.org/2017/11/15/564398024/moore-campaigntries-to-cast-doubt-on-accuser-as-new-allegation-reported>.

²³ Max Greenwood, "Arpaio: Congress Should Examine Presidential Birth Certificates," *The Hill*, January 1, 2018, <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/368440-arpaio-congress-should-examine-presidential-birth-certificates>.

Astonishing ... that it had been left to individual researchers to police access to the archive of global temperature data collected over the past 160 years.

The primary data should have been properly curated as an archive open to all.

It is clear that the scientific community will have to respond by being more open and transparent in allowing access to raw data in order that their scientific findings can be checked.

Trust has been damaged ... People now find it conceivable that scientists cheat and manipulate, and understand that scientists need societal supervision [just] as any other societal institution.

Following Climategate, controversy and lack of trust in climate monitoring research spiraled around the world, engaging not only politicians, but also fellow scientists and self-appointed public watchdog groups on both sides:

The handling of temperature data is a red-hot issue with claims and counterclaims dogging the world's premier meteorological agencies including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA in the U.S., and Britain's Met Office ... BoM narrowly escaped a forensic audit of its temperature handling methods for its national temperature data set ACORN-SAT after concerns were raised. Anomalies highlighted at the time included missing data and changes to temperature trends at some stations and areas from cooling to warming after homogenisation in 2014 ... Anecdotes and evidence of manipulation have fuelled a deep

mistrust of BoM's national data record among some people, as exists in other countries.²⁴

Much of the criticism has focused on the management and analysis of archived data and has exposed distrust in those who currently curate it:

After data is collected we need an independent team to manage and store it, who are not the same people publishing climate papers and lobbying for different energy systems ... We audit banks, companies, government departments, energy flows, and projects, but we don't officially audit science.

Whenever big money is involved we assume things need to be checked. When it's just the planet at stake, who cares? The auditors need to be outside the climate science industry and outside academia. ...

[the blogger] suggests the job be given to independent scientists and engineers, much like the small army of enthusiastic amateurs who have made a habit of keeping BoM on its toes.²⁵

In February 2017, John Bates, a climate scientist who recently retired from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), accused his former colleagues of "flagrant manipulation of scientific integrity guidelines." He claimed that Thomas Karl, the former director of NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information, and his co-authors had rushed to publication to influence the Paris climate talks, mismanaged data, and introduced a series of biases into data that gave the impression that human-caused climate change was occurring faster than it actually is. Bates' claims rest not on the data, however, but on whether the researchers followed the processing and archiving

²⁴Graham Lloyd, "BoM Faces Storm Over Weather Inaccuracies," *The Australian*, August 3, 2017, <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/inquirer/bom-faces-storm-over-weather-data-inaccuracies/newsstory/375538d5c05310727b6a4154f841cfe2>.

²⁵ Lloyd, "BoM Faces Storm."

procedures called "Climate Data Records" or "CDR" for archiving operational data sets that he himself had helped to develop:

One of Bates' main criticisms of the Karl study was that it used land temperature data that had not gone through a CDR-like process. The researchers could have used an older, fully processed version of the dataset, but that would have meant throwing out most of their land data. Alternatively, they could have waited for the dataset to be formally updated. NOAA is working on the update, said Karl, but as of February 2017, it's still not ready.²⁶

This skepticism has had important and immediate consequences. In September 2017, President Trump announced that the U.S. would withdraw from the Paris climate accord, and in November the president's appointed head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Scott Pruitt, barred anyone who had received EPA grant money from membership of EPA advisory boards, thus disqualifying many academic experts from serving. Mr. Pruitt argued that this would ensure that the agency would receive data and advice free from conflicts of interest or any appearance of a conflict. With echoes of concerns not dissimilar to those underlying archival codes of ethics he stated, "Our focus should be sound science, not political science ... We want to ensure independence."²⁷ Since the Trump White House administration took control, the EPA

²⁶ Nala Rogers, "Retired NOAA Scientist Doubles Down on Climate Data Controversy," *Inside Science*, February 9, 2017, <https://www.insidescience.org/news/retired-noaa-scientist-doubles-down-climatedata-controversy>.

²⁷ Lisa Friedman, "Pruitt Bars Some Scientists from Advising E.P.A.," *New York Times*, October 31, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/31/climate/pruitt-epa-science-advisory-boards.html>; Brady Dennis, Juliet Eilperin, and Chris Mooney, "Trump Administration Releases Report Finding 'No Convincing Alternative Explanation' for Climate Change," *Washington Post*, November 3, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/11/03/trump-administration-releases-report-finds-no-convincing-alternative-explanation-for-climate-change/?utm_term=.ca8552fb35e2.

has also actively been taking down and dismantling archived data. This in turn has resulted in new forms of data activism. For example, our own doctoral students at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) who are working in the area of big data have been involved in guerrilla data rescue operations, as have many others in ischools and science programs across the U.S. and in Canada. Others have been assisting the National Park Service in "rescuing" their own environmental data against the possibility of other parts of government removing it. The National Park Service and its archivists have been adamant in pursuing their environmental mission in accordance with their own charter, regardless of external mandates to the contrary, and thus are being proactive in trying to secure their own data and archives.

Some of the recommendations that emerge from these concerns are likely familiar to any archivist who works with digital records because they are already considered to be best practice. There needs to be increased professional transparency and opening of data to public scrutiny; systematic archiving, including data validation, contextualization, description, and preservation processes according to best practices and using appropriate and up-to-date software; and regular auditing of scientific activities, the resulting data and archival practices. However, two other needs that have been raised suggest new roles for archivists, most likely not aligned with existing kinds of institutional archives. One is for independently administered archiving by a watchdog agency or a party that does not have an interest in the findings of the research or an open trusted network of universities, non-profits, and others that could collaboratively maintain the data and ensure its integrity.²⁸ The other is the need for proactive data rescue and data sanctuaries. A key concern in "rescue" endeavors, however, is that rescuers may not be aware of requirements for the information or in a position to keep rescued data in accordance with the trust regimes that the archival profession itself has endorsed and worked to develop. This in turn raises the questions: will rescued data meet scientific and legal evidentiary tests over time (i.e., will it be trustworthy and trusted), and will it be able to withstand other potential challenges from those

²⁸ For example, the Environmental Data & Governance Initiative (EDGI), <https://envirodatagov.org/>.

who are sceptics or deniers of climate change and predisposed to distrust?

2. Proactive Archives: Records and Archiving Needs for Children in Care

This brings me to my second example, this time of a growing worldwide movement for proactive archives for some of the least empowered people in our society—children who for all sorts of reasons are not in the care of their own homes, and sometimes were transported from their native lands and countries. Many children formerly in care were subject to various abuses or experienced other kinds of traumas; were systematically documented in records of various agencies and institutions, often negatively, without the ability to see or to respond to their own records; were denied the opportunity to find out about their parentage or receive or read letters from their own family members; and were never in a position to keep even the smallest kind of record or mementos of their own lives. Archivists and archival academics have been engaged in multiple, parallel, and increasingly interconnected movements addressing official investigations into historical removal, institutionalization, and abuse of children in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Canada, as well as in Australia and other countries, and the harmful legacies of these institutions and experiences.²⁹ Institutional records and recordkeeping have been prominent in these investigations as evidence, as a source of abusive practices, and as a means of reconciliation and healing.³⁰ In May 2017, a summit, *Setting the*

²⁹ A very moving session held at the 2016 FARMER (Forum for Archives and Records Management Education and Research) Conference: Activation and Impact: The Societal Role of Records and Record-Keepers, featured three archivists from Canada, Nichole Vonk, Marianne McLean, Nancy Hurn, who shared their experience working with aboriginal survivors of the largely church run residential schools as part of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission that investigated abuses inflicted on children in the Indian residential school system, the system's harmful legacy, and the need for reconciliation; See the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Final Report*, December 2017, <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/final-report>.

³⁰ See, for example, articles by Jacqueline Z. Wilson and Frank Golding, both Australian care leavers and activists themselves. Jacqueline Z. Wilson and Frank Golding, "Latent Scrutiny: Personal Archives as Perpetual Mementos of the Official Gaze," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (March 2016): 93-109; and Jacqueline

Record Straight for the Rights of the Child, was held in Melbourne.³¹ At this summit, which brought together care leavers, academics, archivists, and representatives from many different organizations and institutions, there were calls for new kinds of participatory archives that would take away control over the records relating to children in care from the original records creators—those government agencies and institutional care providers that have lost the trust of the public and particularly of those who were in their care. Instead, summit participants wished to see some kind of third-party archiving infrastructure that is not aligned with those entities and that is committed to implementing archival regimes that recognize, support, and work collaboratively with multiple co-creators of, participants, or interests in the record. The summit report provides details of what the attendees envisioned:

[They] imagined a future of a distributed participatory recordkeeping and archiving regime based on principles that recognize:

- rights of multiple co-creators of the archive (individuals, families, carers, case workers, service providers, government agencies, regulators, etc.),

and

- rights of the individual over the management and access to these records for each of the co-creators.³²

Z. Wilson and Joanne Evans, "Inclusive Archives and Recordkeeping: Towards a Critical Manifesto," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 24, 8 (February 2018): 857-860.

³¹ The Setting the Record Straight for the Rights of the Child Initiative is a partnership of Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN), the Child Migrants Trust, Connecting Home, CREATE Foundation, Federation University's Collaborative Research Centre in Australian History (CRCAH), Monash University's Centre for Organisational and Social Informatics (COSI) and the University of Melbourne's eScholarshipResearch Centre (ESRC), <https://rights-records.it.monash.edu/summit/>.

³² *Setting the Record Straight for the Rights of the Child: National Summit 8-9 May, 2017 Report*, <http://rights-records.it.monash.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ReportFinal-1.pdf>.

Attendees also recognized that to be able to achieve this vision would require a radical redesign of recordkeeping and archiving frameworks, processes, systems, and technologies; that past perpetrators should not continue to be the maintainers or sole creators of the records; and multi-country and multi-community coordination of research and development would be necessary.

3. Archival Conscience: Refugee Records and Recordkeeping Needs

My final example is drawn from some of my own current work. It addresses an issue that, like climate change, has become a major source of political contestation within the U.S. and in many other countries, and throws into relief all sorts of tensions between human rights and humanitarianism on the one hand, and national and international security and economic and social interests on the other. Like the previous example, it speaks directly to the archival humanitarian conscience and the altruistic as well as mission-driven roles that archival practices and archives expertise might play inside and outside their immediate institutions.

Unprecedented numbers of asylum seekers and former refugees—over 65.6 million in 2016—must navigate an increasingly capricious and technologized universe of trust and distrust that revolves in large part around records/documentation. The collaborative project between the UCLA Center for Information as Evidence and Liverpool University Centre for Archival Studies (LUCAS), *Records and ICT at the Boundaries of the State: Refugee Needs, Rights and Uses*, investigates what can be done by archivists and other recordkeepers to ensure that bona fide refugees, as they seek asylum as well as in their lives after resettlement or return, can produce records that can make it across legal and bureaucratic thresholds of trust, such as the United States' complex asylum processes and so-called “extreme vetting,” and at the same time reassure the court of public opinion.³³ Records, recordkeeping and bio-based recordkeeping technologies are deeply implicated in what has become the largest global migration crisis since World War II.

³³ Refugee Rights in Records Project, accessed September 17, 2018, <https://informationasevidence.org/refugee-rights-in-records>.

Among the needs of refugees are trusted copies of records that would help to identify them or verify their own citizenship or that of predecessors; support claims of prior or potential persecution; provide evidence of particular rights; establish familial relationships and reunite families; establish property ownership in order to reclaim, exchange or sell; certify veteran or other military status; establish prior education or other qualifications/credentials; and provide important medical history. Refugees may be unable to obtain or carry necessary certified personal copies of records before or during flight, however. They may make and carry digital images of records on their phones or upload them to cloud spaces, but images created and carried in this way are not only susceptible to damage, loss and theft, they also do not meet official trust requirements when presented to border and asylum authorities. Physical records as well as phones may be removed from refugees at borders by hostile authorities or be taken for vetting by border security or immigration agents. Required records may be destroyed, lost, or withheld in their homelands, especially when there is conflict or persecution, and corroborating records may be difficult to track down from other sources and locations. Refugees themselves may destroy their own records out of fear of being harmed because of their identity while they are fleeing, or sent back to where they were in danger by other countries' asylum or immigration authorities. Babies born along the way may not be issued birth certificates and children often become separated from their families. Children now comprise the largest percentage of refugees, and in several countries are required to produce their documentation if they are not accompanied by adult family members. Many of the aid agencies, asylum advocates, and lawyers who seek to assist refugees do not have the expertise or resources to locate, obtain, and validate records to support cases.

Trust issues sit at the heart of these problems. Documents produced by refugees are trusted as authentic “on their face” even less than are those of anyone else crossing a border or making a claim of a government. This is in part because of fears of terrorist and war criminal infiltration into refugee flows and the use of documents that are forged, altered, or belonging to others. However, it is also because fleeing people, in desperation, have often resorted to such forms of “irregular records” to survive. Today's identity documents increasingly use biometric encoding and digital

signatures that can make such irregular records useless for border crossings, regardless of the circumstances of those who are carrying them. DNA collected from refugees entering UN camps—seemingly incontrovertible and thus trusted evidence of identity—is being used to recreate a base identity record and reunite families. However, DNA-indications of nonblood relationships may split up non-traditional family units traveling together and it is far from clear to what purposes the gathered DNA might be put in the future.

The archival field, and especially archives holding the kinds of records needed by refugees, have a humanitarian obligation to do more to support the survival, resettlement, recovery, and agency of these individuals and families through the location, protection, and provision of needed records. Doing so, however, will require a fundamental reorientation of how most archival practices, policies, and services are traditionally conceived, prioritized, funded, and carried out, especially appraisal, description, digitization, privacy measures, and reference. As with the previous example, a range of policy, practice, technological, and educational interventions are required. So too is transnational archival institutional collaboration and multilingual services.³⁴ Elsewhere I have suggested that:

Archives could offer, or co-design and manage, cloud-based, extra-national "keeping places" to which those contemplating or even in flight from their homes and homelands could upload digitized copies of personal records. The parameters for digitizing, dating and uploading the records could be set by archives to support the generation of the most reliable possible copy, but additional verification services could also be supported, for example, by facilitating archival comparison and corroboration between

³⁴ Anne J. Gilliland, "Evidence and Exigency: Reconstructing and Reconciling Records for Life after Conflict," in *Emerging Trends in Archival Science*, ed. Karen F. Gracy (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, December 2017), 1-26; and Anne J. Gilliland, "A Matter of Life and Death: A Critical Examination of the Role of Official Records and Archives in Supporting the Agency of the Forcibly Displaced," *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies*, 2, no. 1 (2017), <http://libraryjuicepress.com/journals/index.php/jclis/issue/view/2>.

uploaded digital images and other known copies of and metadata for corresponding official records in the original or other countries, publicizing when previously unknown or unaccessioned records become available, submitting official requests for such copies and metadata from that country or those who now are officially responsible for those records, or by certifying inability to obtain a more reliable copy than the one digitized by the refugee.³⁵

A recent symposium organized jointly by the project with the Blinken Open Society Archives at Central European University in Budapest identified several specific concerns and questions that relate to trust and trustworthiness, including the following:

- The transnational nature of the refugee crisis and all the involved parties and concerns requires transnational strategies and solutions. Records offices, archives, and recordkeeping, however, remain largely bound by the structures, interests, and priorities of individual institutions, organizations, jurisdictions, and nations and are not incentivized to work collaboratively. How can such transnational strategies and solutions be pursued and implemented?
- Archivists responsible for creating, managing, and preserving records operate under many political and economic pressures in countries that are engaged in conflicts, or have a record of human rights abuses and/or of oppressing particular communities. How can the global archival community help those archives to protect their records from destruction and/or political interference and to make copies available (together with attestations as to the authenticity of the copy) to former citizens now residing outside the country?
- While it would be inappropriate of archives and other records offices to issue assurances as to the admissibility of records that they hold, or copies that they provide, they do make value judgments as part of records appraisal and many also

³⁵ Gilliland, "A Matter of Life and Death," *ibid.*

certify copies that they make of their own records. Could they also provide expert testimony as to the circumstances behind the production of the record or record copy and their expert opinion as to its trustworthiness or status as the best available evidence?

- Could archives in countries of asylum or settlement act on behalf of refugees in issuing requests for certified copies of relevant records held about them (e.g. birth certificates, marriage records, diplomas) in archives or records offices of their countries of origin? If the latter archives or records offices were unable or unwilling to produce such copies, could the requesting archives provide the refugee with an affidavit or testify in a hearing to that effect?
- Could a platform of rights in records for refugees be identified and promoted? For example, full, free, and informed consent for data collection and limitations on future use of data; preservation of relevant records held in place of birth and any subsequent locations; guaranteed safe and low-cost access to relevant records about oneself; a right to know about classified data about oneself that might impede obtaining asylum; a right to a records advocate upon request; a right to a secure way to preserve one's own copies of one's records; a right of input regarding how and where records are managed, preserved, and made available; rights in relevant records of family members for descendants of refugees.
- What best practices should be used or are feasible to use when archival physical content is digitized, often under less than ideal circumstances, and transmitted either to sanctuary archives or data havens for preservation purposes, or provided to those who are preparing to flee or who are already displaced, to ensure and certify the most reliable possible copies of the original material?³⁶
- Lawyers, social workers, aid workers, and data rescuers need

³⁶ For further information on the project and its recommendations, see Refugee Rights in Records Symposium: Summary and Research and Development Questions Arising, Report on the Symposium held at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives, January 10, 2018, <http://www.osaarchivum.org/press-room/announcements/Final-Report-Symposium-Refugee-Rights-Records-Published>.

to be trained by, and maybe with, archivists in the identification, preservation, production, and challenging of archival evidence.

Conclusion

While there are clearly discernable common threads running through all of the examples, each speaks to spaces where archivists need to come together across national, sector, and disciplinary boundaries and think and act both locally and with a sense of global responsibility and conscience. Archivists need to take their expertise out of the archives and into new roles that draw upon their knowledge of recordkeeping processes and how records work. They must also be prepared to work in new kinds of archives not aligned with the interests of only institutional records creators and scholars. All of these require some major shifts in archival priorities and practices, but most of all in attitudes, infusing them with a humanitarian sensibility.

As we work towards those shifts, we must continually demonstrate and support our trustworthiness to our various publics by committing to transparency through documentation of all decisions and actions; by exercising personal and institutional reflexivity, compassion, and altruism, for example, by speaking up on behalf of those who cannot and by sharing resources and expertise freely; by approaching participatory developments with an open mind and through a mutually respectful, consultative process; and by refusing to participate in problematic projects. I believe that this is exactly what Zinn meant when he talked of "the humanizing of an inevitably political craft." We are indeed again living in interesting times, but if we can rise to the moment with passion, and, in Robert Kennedy's words, creative energy, we may emerge from all of this a stronger field, and more importantly we will have contributed to a more caring, inclusive future built on a more transparent and accessible past.

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