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Academic librarians' varying experiences of archives: A phenomenographic study

Abstract

This article reports on a study investigating academic librarians' varying experiences of archives in order to promote understanding and communication among librarians and archivists. A qualitative, phenomenographic approach was adopted for the study. Three different ways of experiencing archives were identified from analysis of interviews. Archives may be experienced by academic librarians as 1) a place which protects collections; 2) resources to be used in accomplishing tasks such as teaching, research, or outreach; or 3) manifestations of politics. The third way of experiencing archives is the most complex, incorporating both the other experiences. The results of this study may help librarians, especially academic librarians, and archivists communicate more clearly on joint projects involving archival collections thereby enabling more collaboration.

Keywords

Archives

Academic librarians

Phenomenography

1. Introduction

There is a renewed interest in the literature for collaboration and integration of services and resources among the Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums (GLAM) fields in recent years (Leresche, 2008; Trant, 2009), which necessitates clear communication and understanding among these professions. There is current discussion about how the missions of libraries and archives could overlap, promoting work together on various projects, especially online (Clement, Hagenmaier, & Knies, 2013; Trant, 2009; VanderBerg, 2012). These online projects, such as institutional repositories and digital collection sharing, are of great interest to both academic librarians and archivists. However, in order to make such collaborations possible, there needs to be a shared understanding of differences in perspective as well as a shared vocabulary to improve communication in collaborative ventures. While the archives has been written about in fields such as sociology, history, and literature (Derrida, 1998; Manoff, 2004), less is known about archives as they are experienced by librarians. The few articles on librarians' work with archives are not empirical research articles; they typically provide narrative descriptions of librarians working in archives (H. Cook, 2005; Dill, 2008; Morris, 2009). Understanding librarians' experiences of archives using an appropriate research framework is an important gap to fill if the professional and research communities are to better achieve mutual understanding and use this information to better initiate collaborative efforts between libraries and archives.

Libraries and archives are often conflated as being the same entities and librarians and archivists as having the same qualifications and duties. In many cases this may be true; however, librarians and archivists have maintained their own professional organizations and own standards of practice. Many archivists in the United States complete schooling within a School of Library and Information Science and therefore take coursework on librarianship. However, there are students who attend a School of

Library and Information Science, but do not focus any course work on archives and only take courses on librarianship (Manning & Silva, 2012). This contributes to a lack of shared vocabulary.

There are many opportunities for librarians and archivists to collaborate and share in the goals of dissemination and preservation of information and connecting communities to their histories; for example, through library-archive relationships, archives contained within libraries, or via integrating archives into information literacy instruction (Sutton & Knight, 2006). However, there are sometimes misunderstandings amongst librarians about archives and the work of archivists (Dill, 2008; Salvatore, 2012). The situation is not wholly remedied when new librarians begin working.

Despite ample opportunity, and some librarians who have shared experiences of working in archives, there seems to be little professional cross-pollination between librarians and archivists, a situation clearly reflected in the literature. Many of the same issues (e.g. digital preservation, access, metadata standards, and instruction) are seen being discussed at conferences (Herkert, McAninch, Trent, & Weddle, 2013; Lee, Miner, & Thomas, 2013; Paradis, Farrell, Speer, & Brooks, 2013) in workshops (Bishoff, 2013; Smith, 2013), and publications (Boock, 2008; Rudersdorf, 2012), but few are applying the results of projects undertaken by the other profession.

The Society of American Archivists' *Glossary of Terms* has six definitions of archives, showing that even among archivists, there are varied ways of defining archives. These include: 1. Materials created during affairs and preserved due to enduring value, 2. Division responsible for maintaining valuable organizational records, 3. Organization that collects records, 4. Professional discipline, 5. Building that houses collections, and 6. Published collection of papers (Pearce-Moses, 2005). However, in common parlance, the term "archives" may be used in many ways that are not considered proper by archivists, such as the conflagration of archives and special collections (Perry, 2011). Whereas archivists often see the two as separate entities, the archives for institutional records and the special collections for manuscripts and rare books, others may view them as the same. The looseness of the term archives can cause considerable confusion and necessitates the definition of terms in all research about archives (Lemke, 1989). These misconceptions and misuses of the term "archives" may contribute to the division in understanding of archives by archivists and librarians in the eyes of many archivists.

The results of the research presented here describe the varying ways that academic librarians experience archives. This starting point of understanding may provide a platform for conversation between librarians and archivists, so they can have a common framework and shared vocabulary on which to build and strengthen both disciplines and professions. A more nuanced understanding may also contribute to future collaborations, such as may arise from the renewed interest in GLAM organizations working together to provide better access to information and more engaging experiences.

2. Problem Statement

There has been no research on librarians' experiences of archives. The lack of research is an obstacle to understanding the experiences that librarians have of archives and using this understanding to promote better communication and collaboration among librarians and archivists. This study sought to determine the usefulness of phenomenography to explore the varying ways in which academic

librarians experience archives. This investigation provides initial findings, offering new insights into academic librarians' varying experiences of archives.

3. Literature Review

Contemporary scholarship associated with librarians and archives consists mainly of stories of what librarians have learned when thrust into the role that would otherwise be occupied by a professional archivist (H. Cook, 2005; Dill, 2008) and beginner's guides to the archives for librarians (Etheredge, 2012; Morris, 2009). Through sharing their experiences, these librarians provide a sense of how some librarians view archives, especially with respect to how archives compare to libraries (Dill, 2008; Morris, 2009). For example, Dill (2008) notes that organization is of obvious importance to both, as is discoverability and preservation, while writing that some archival procedures seem "excessively time-consuming" to librarians not well-versed in archives procedures. Morris (2009) argues that the archives profession is "truly distinct" from librarianship and provides some general examples for librarians, such as differences in processing and description. For example, archives collections are usually not described at the item level while in libraries item-level cataloging is routine. These differences in processing and describing collections influence the access and use of collections. Some authors report that there are still misconceptions about archivists and archival work on the part of librarians, although these misconceptions may be decreasing as archival functions become better known to others in the information professions (Salvatore, 2012). Others note how librarians can incorporate archives into information literacy sessions (Sutton & Knight, 2006). One of the few cross-disciplinary research articles is a survey of academic archivists who also had librarian roles. Results revealed some functional overlap of work in archives and libraries (Manning & Silva, 2012). Cook (2005) conducted a similar study six years prior on the training and experiences of dual-role librarian/archivists. He found that there was much overlap in usefulness of training, especially in terms of cataloging/controlled vocabulary and reference work (H. Cook, 2005). Manning and Silva (2012) corroborated these findings and also suggest that more research is needed on librarians with archival duties.

One focused area of research is on effects of the online environment, especially investigating how the online environment is changing the public's perception of libraries and archives, along with museums and galleries, and how GLAM institutions could collaborate digitally (Clement, Hagenmaier, & Knies, 2013; Trant, 2009; VanderBerg, 2012). Trant (2009) notes that the similarities among these "memory institutions" are seen most easily in the online environment. The online environment contributes to the loss of "uniqueness" of materials when presented online as there is no longer one copy of the material but many, and it becomes challenging to maintain, at least in the public's mind, the differences among the institutions (Trant, 2009). This is especially true if Lemke's (1989) assertion is accepted that the differences between libraries and archives are in the physicality of the collections and in "traditional concepts." Clement, Hagenmaier, and Knies (2013) similarly note a "perceived blurring" of archives and libraries in the online context.

The new Archival Cycle model proposed by Paulus (2011) furthers this idea of libraries and archives becoming more intertwined, especially in relation to digital materials, and advances the need to work together to curate information. Likewise Clement, Hagenmaier, and Knies (2013) call for

“community building” among librarians, archivists, and scholars in order to make the most of the possibilities of having collections and scholarship available online. Furthermore, Trant (2009) explains how the user base expands in the online environment. It naturally follows that this new expanded user base will have differing expectations of online collections and access points from traditional user groups, like history scholars, which librarians and archivists will need to take into consideration when making collections available online. Trant (2009) believes that this re-convergence calls for changes and more collaboration in the curriculum to train future librarians, archivists, and curators. The current lack of overlap in curriculum and training is a disadvantage to those librarians called on to perform archival duties which could ultimately affect the preservation of the cultural record (Manning & Silva, 2012).

This small research base, and the growing need for libraries and archives to work together, especially online (Leresche, 2008; Trant, 2009), suggest it is important to extend our knowledge of how librarians experience archives. Through understanding the varying ways in which librarians experience archives, both archivists and librarians will have a better understanding of how archives are seen outside of the archival profession which may lead to clearer communication. This in turn may allow for more fruitful discussions of collaborations between librarians and archivists in preserving, using, and promoting archival collections.

4. Methodology

This reported study is the first phase of a two-part study comparing academic librarians’ and archivists’ experiences of archives. The study adopted phenomenography, a research approach typically used to study the differences in people’s experiences of phenomena. Phenomenography has been used successfully in other studies in library and information sciences (Bruce, 2001; Diehm & Lupton, 2012; Edwards, 2006; Maybee, 2006; Maybee, Bruce, Lupton, & Rebmann, 2013; Partridge, Edwards, & Thorpe, 2010). Led by Ference Marton, phenomenography was developed by a research group at the University of Gotenburg, Sweden in the 1970s, and is typically used to investigate people’s varying experiences of a phenomenon. A basic tenet of phenomenographic research is the adoption a second-order perspective, where the researcher describes people’s experiences of phenomenon and not the phenomenon itself (Marton, 1981). Marton’s work has evolved to the present day, clarifying the research approach of phenomenography and the variation theory of learning, which maintains that learners must encounter variation in order to become aware of phenomena in new ways (Marton & Booth, 1997; Marton, 2014). In this study, librarians’ experiences of archives are the object of research, rather than archives themselves. Bruce (1999) notes phenomenography’s strength in studying variation in the “experienced meaning of LIS [library and information science] elements” of which archives can be considered a part, for the purposes of this study. The research methodology further assumes that the ways in which people experience phenomenon differently are “relatively limited” (Marton, 1981) and allow for phenomenographers to describe these different categories of description through working with a relatively small sample size (Bruce, 1997; Limberg, 2000). There is no set sample size; however, the purposive selection of individuals should allow for finding variation in conceptions and rich descriptions of these categories (Yates, Partridge, & Bruce, 2012).

As phenomenography adopts an interpretive approach to research, the quality of such a study is achieved through maintaining “interpretative awareness” (Sandberg, 1997). This means the researcher must acknowledge her own subjectivity and seek ways of minimizing bias in analyzing the data. Minimizing bias is done by describing rather than explaining experiences of a phenomenon, not applying the researcher’s own theories of the phenomenon, and treating everything that the interviewees’ express as equally important (Sandberg, 2005). The researcher should also provide precise description of the research process and excerpts from the interview transcripts to support the analyses and designation of categories (Partridge, Edwards, & Thorpe, 2010).

4.1 Participants

There were five academic librarians interviewed for this study. Prior to interviewing these participants, fifty-two librarians completed surveys that piloted the interview questions and three librarians who were interviewed to further refine the interview questions after the analysis of survey results. The participants were self-selecting. This article reports on findings from the five interviews with academic librarians who had also completed a survey and expressed willingness to be interviewed for the main study.

4.2 Pilot survey and pilot interviews

Qualitative questions via survey were sent to six email listservs in order to test the questions that would be used in the interviews. Two surveys were used to test differently worded questions to determine which forms of the questions solicited the most useful responses. The first survey was sent to University Libraries (ULS) and Information Literacy Instruction (ILI) listservs in March 2013 which had a combined total of 6,818 subscribers at the time. The second survey sent to California Library Association (CALIX), ACRL Digital Humanities, Spectrum Scholars, College Libraries (COLLIB) listservs, which had a combined total of 6,454 subscribers at the time. There were a total of fifty-two responses. From the surveys, refined questions were created for the pilot interviews. Surveys also allowed for gathering of contact information from librarians who were willing to be interviewed. Three in-person interviews were conducted in June 2013 as the second part of the pilot study to again refine questions and confirm that the questions would elicit responses that were valuable for understanding the experiences of the phenomenon under study: archives.

4.3 Main study interviews

From analysis of the pilot interviews, it was determined that useful information was gathered from the three pilot interviews and adjustments were made to the final interview questions. Specifically a question about comparing libraries and archives was removed because it was considered leading and presupposed that the interviewees differentiated between libraries and archives and this avenue would be explored only if first brought up by the interviewees.

The final interview questions were:

1. Please describe your background and experience with archives.

2. How would you describe archives?
3. How would you describe an effective archives?

Follow up questions asking the interviewees for more detail or explanation of answers to clarify their thoughts were used, as is standard practice in phenomenographic interviewing (Yates, et al., 2012). The five interviews used in this study were conducted by phone as the academic librarians were located throughout the United States, which made in person interviewing impossible. The interviews lasted between twenty-five minutes and one hour and were audio recorded and transcribed.

4.4 Analysis of interview transcripts

Multiple iterations of analysis were undertaken in order to construct the categories of description and outcome space from the interview transcripts. After reading through the transcripts to become familiar with them, useful sections of the transcripts were identified as the researcher looked for sources of variation or agreement in the experiences (Bruce, 1997). The transcripts were analyzed for meaning, also known as the referential aspect of phenomenographic analysis, which refers to looking for similarities and differences in how the interviewees experienced the meaning of archives. The transcripts were also analyzed in terms of awareness, also known as the structural aspect of phenomenographic analysis. In seeking the structure of the different experiences, the focus of attention for each category of description is sought. Wider aspects of awareness that are not primary, but still important to the understanding of phenomenon, are also sought. These broader aspects may be referred to as the thematic field. Also, throughout the analysis, “dimensions of variation” were identified. These dimensions are present in all categories but vary qualitatively across the categories. These meanings, foci, thematic field and dimensions of variation were combined in order to create the categories of description of the experienced phenomenon (Bruce, 1994; Yates, et al., 2012). It is important to note that the categories of description are not intended to classify individuals as the categories describe collective experiences and individuals’ experiences may shift among the categories (Marton, 1981). The categories of descriptions are arranged in an “outcome space,” which graphically depicts the relationships among the categories (Marton & Booth, 1997) and shows any hierarchical relationships among the categories.

5. Results

Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed three categories of the varying ways that academic librarians experience archives. These categories are:

1. Archives are experienced as protected collections.
2. Archives are experienced as resources to be accessed and used.
3. Archives are experienced as manifestations of politics.

Each category has 1) different meaning structures, 2) different awareness structures, including foci and thematic field, and 3) qualitatively different dimensions of variation (each of these analytical terms is explained in the methodology section). The three dimensions of variation, aspects which varied across the categories, are: the purpose of archives, technology, and collections. Table 1 shows an overview of

the three categories and the text presents a more detailed explanation of the categories and their variations along with direct interview quotes which illustrate the categories. The number following the quote denotes from which interview the quote is taken.

Table 1. Categories of academic librarians' varying experiences of archives.

Category	Meaning: Archives are...	Focus	Thematic field	Dimensions		
				Purpose	Technology	Collections
Protected Collections	Guarded collections	Protection	Balance with access	Different from libraries and museums; protect collections for future, serious researchers	Print is preferred, but acknowledge digital; worry about protection of digital	Original, unique materials valued by creator or collector
Resources to be Used	Resources to be accessed and used	Access and use	Librarians need to know more to use archives more	Archives are made to be accessed and should function more like libraries	Digital archives and online resources are superior to physical	Define archives and are unique
Political Manifestations	Manifestations of politics	Politics of archives and archival work	Larger context of pressures and constraints	Created and preserved to influence present and future; different from libraries	Digital archives have possibility of greater access, but can be a danger	Unique, evidence, unlike libraries, context and relationships are important for understanding

5.1 Category 1. Archives are experienced as protected collections

Meaning: In this category, archives are experienced as places that guard collections. Archives protect collections from harm, both environmental harm and harm by people's mishandling of the materials.

But the primary place of archives holds those documents to keep them safe, they're not supposed to be a place where everyone can create a connection with them and they're not on loan and they're not going to be something that just anyone can go in and see. (4)

Focus: The focus is on protecting collections from harm. Included within this focus on physical protection of the materials is preserving the materials through controlling the environment in which they are stored and applying archival preservation principles to storing and handling the materials.

Thematic field: Expanding outward from this primary focus on guarding and protecting the collections is the idea that the provision of access to the materials needs to be considered while still maintaining guardianship of the materials. Provision of access is clearly a secondary consideration to protecting the collections.

We've got all of this physical stuff, before this stuff dies or is thrown out or is moldy or before anything befalls that and it's lost to history, let's make a stab to do what's right by those collections and get those papers at least in an environmentally sound place so we can get those things available and accessible at some point in the future. (1)

Dimensions of Variation: This category is driven by the idea of protecting collections and all dimensions of variation revolve around protection. The purpose of the archives, in this category, is to protect collections for future researchers. Their purpose is also seen as contrasting with that of libraries and museums in that archives are focused primarily on protecting collections and limiting access to the collections while libraries and museums provide access to their collections to a large number of people. Technology is acknowledged as being able to promote and provide access to collections and potentially protect collections by providing a digital surrogate which will negate the need to handle the original, physical documents. However, physical collections are seen as superior to digital collections. The collections themselves are seen as original, unique items that are significant to the creators and/or collectors. Physical records are superior to digital records in terms of authenticity and contextualization of information.

Going back to the digital archives and born digital, I think, I worry about how engaging the archives can be and how much protection the archives can offer for items that aren't in a paper or physical form. (4)

5.2 Category 2. Archives are experienced as resources to be accessed and used

Meaning: In this category, archives are experienced as resources to be accessed and used to accomplish a task, such as teaching or outreach.

Our archives tended to directly support our book collection and our graduate programs and things like that, as well as our undergraduate programming. (3)

Focus: The focus of this category is heavily on the access and use of collections.

We're talking about accessibility and making it easy for the user. ...basically I think that if it is not going to be used we should really think twice, long and hard about keeping it and using resources for it. (2)

Thematic field: Awareness is also on the archives as one of a group of collections and the need to understand archives in order promote and use them in the same way as other collections through activities such as instruction, reference, and outreach.

Dimensions of variation: This category is underscored by a focus on the access and use of archives as opposed to preservation and protection. The purpose of archives in this category is to be open and readily accessible for use by anyone. While archives are seen as different from libraries, archives should function more like libraries in order to be more open and usable. Technology is an important tool to archives for providing outreach and access to finding aids and collections, with digital access being preferred to physical. Archival collections are seen as unique and important in determining the use of the archives and who would use the archives.

Another fact of an effective archives is one that has been processed and has a useful, rich, searchable finding aid, preferably online, and searchable, which again is a big push going on now to get things processed and available so people can search the finding aids from wherever and make use of it [sic]. (3)

5.3 Category 3. Archives are experienced as manifestations of politics

Meaning: In this category, archives are experienced as political arenas and are manifestations of politics. While the collections themselves may not be intended to be political in nature, the librarians experienced the archives as a political space where there were competing interests that could influence what was collected and how it was made accessible.

I'm just thinking of the political environment in which we're operating and the way that we're going about things, I think every move that we make has political repercussions written all over it and that's not the case in library land. (1)

Focus: The focus of this category is the political nature of archives and archival work, especially in collecting, curating, access, and obtaining support for archives. In this category, the term 'politics' refers to the power relations, and other contextual features that influence all decisions and future outcomes for work in the archives.

So it's always curatorial which means it is always political because people are deciding, choosing. So it's an activity of deciding, choosing to keep things probably with an eye towards posterity and research. (2)

Thematic field: The expanded awareness in this category focuses on archives being situated within a larger context of pressures and constraints that are outside of the parent organization, such as economic issues and politics on a larger scale (e.g. national political focus on archives and records access). Outside influences affect how the archives operates; information in the archives can also influence outside politics, as noted by an interviewee.

Dimensions of variation: This category is all about politics and how politics influence the archives. The purpose of archives is seen as preserving materials from the past to influence the present and the future. This purpose of archives is seen as distinct from libraries and much more political in nature, given that the materials are often created by the parent organization and can influence present and future actions. Technology is seen as being able to provide greater access to materials, but also with potential issues in terms of privacy, access, context, and preservation. Collections are seen as unique pieces of evidence and history that derive meaning from their contexts and relationships with other collections, which are crucial for interpreting the materials held in the collections. Online technologies are seen as being able to potentially show these relationships to help aid in understanding context.

... we have to identify and collect as much as we can from the past, however, with that forward look [that] the reason that we are doing this is so that we can have an impact in today's world and that we can tell a story about ourselves and that we can learn about ourselves and can continue that story going forward and that certainly involves digitization. (1)

5.4 Outcome space

The three categories that were uncovered through the analysis of the transcripts from this study are hierarchically related to one another. In phenomenography, the depiction of an interrelationship between the categories is called an outcomes space (see Figure 1). The Protected Collections Category and Resources Category do not appear to overlap significantly; the Protected Collections Category is focused on protecting collections while the Resources Category is focused on accessing and using collections. The Political Manifestations Category incorporates the understanding of protection, preservation, and access from the other two categories, as well as a focus on the political forces that shape the archives and the overall political contexts in which the archives exists. In this sense, the Political Manifestations Category it is a more complex way of experiencing archives than the first two categories.

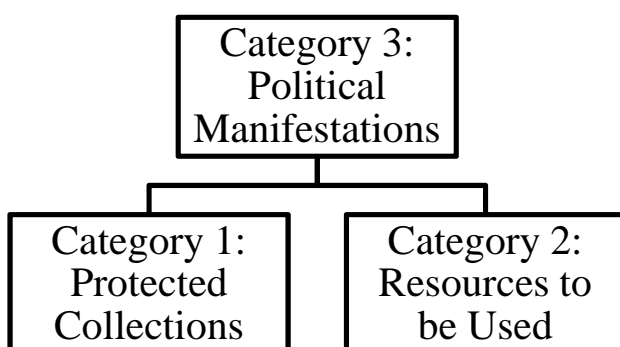


Fig. 1. Outcomes space showing the hierarchical relationships of the categories.

6. Discussion

This section considers the categories of description in terms of possible implications, along with the limitations of this study. There is clear variation in meaning assigned to archives, the academic librarians' focus of attention, and also the interpretations of the archives' purpose, as well as the role of the technology and the way in which the idea of collection is constructed in each category. The clear evidence of variation indicates that the methodology shows promise for further investigation of librarians' experiences of archives. Also discussed are possible implications for communication between librarians and archivists and for LIS education based on the results of this study.

6.1 Possible implications for communication

Understanding how academic librarians collectively experience archives is key in creating a shared vocabulary to foster collaboration between librarians and archivists. Of note is how academic librarians experience archives in different ways as similar or different to libraries. All categories saw the purpose of archives as to be different from libraries. For example, in the Resources Category archives were seen as needing to be more like libraries and more public service oriented, "I stressed the importance of actually having an archivist who believed in outreach and public access" (3). With some librarians wanting a more public service focus from archives and more alignment with libraries, this may be a good place to start to a discussion of working together to find similarities while acknowledging differences in experiences. Of course, differing levels of staffing in archives and libraries must be accounted for when trying to expand archival outreach as many archives have limited staff resources that may influence the amount of outreach that can be accomplished. However, outreach and public services may be an especially opportune place to work on further integration of archival sources into information literacy sessions, which would provide an avenue of communication and collaboration between archivists and academic librarians. While archives and libraries have different histories in the United States—and these differences should be articulated—the professions also need to discern commonalities and complementarities in order to develop a collective awareness of archives.

The categories describing how academic librarians experience archives show some resemblance to the definitions of archives given by the Society of American Archivists (Pearce-Moses, 2005); however, they also deviate from these definitions and show some striking similarities with more recent scholarship by archivists challenging traditional views of archival purpose. The Protected Collections Category clearly fits with in the traditional definitions of archives as repositories for records that are considered valuable in some way. While the preservation and protection of collections is still a central and important aspect of archives, there is a growing literature on increasing access to collections, outreach to increase the visibility of archives, and the political nature of archives and archival work (Flinn & Stevens, 2009; Grimm & Noriega, 2013; Harris, 2002). These matters are reflected in the second and third categories. While there is still some controversy over the purpose and definition of archives within the archival profession, as seen in the article debate between Greene (2013) and Jimerson (2013) a recent issue of *The American Archivist*, it is important to note the broadening of how archives are seen

within the archives literature and how this is also reflected in the variations seen in librarians' experiences of archives. This is a hopeful development, along with the continued interest in GLAM and collaborative programs among libraries and archives, especially in regards to expanding shared digital resource and service initiatives.

While there is overlap between the ways in which academic librarians experience archives with archival literature, especially with more activist archival scholarship and programs (Cook, 2011; Harris, 2011), it is important to acknowledge the need for sharing of research and literature between the two professions. Better understanding of both the similarities and differences in how librarians and archivists view archives should enable better communication and collaboration. However, without dissemination of research and discussion, it will be difficult to find common ground. The prejudices revealed in these interviews may hinder further work on preserving and providing access to information within varying contexts and with varying constraints, ultimately to the detriment of the populations served by academic librarians and archivists. However, there is great potential for increasing understanding through dissemination of research and creating working relationships among librarians and archivists.

6.2 Possible implications for LIS education and practice

An issue that arose in the interviews concerned how librarians who did not choose an archives concentration in their course work had no exposure to archives in their graduate school curriculum. As one librarian stated, "I don't remember ever hearing the word archives in library school, whatsoever" (1). Archival studies is often viewed as a specialization in LIS education (Lynch, 2008; Markey, 2004), students who do not opt for an archives specialization often do not take a single course on archives during their schooling (Hall, 2009). The lack of required archives study in graduate school may contribute to the lack of communication among librarians and archivists, as it was noted that "It's [archives] sort of very closely related to the library world and yet totally divorced from the library world" (1). Including at least an introductory course on archives to a graduate school curriculum has the potential to decrease the misunderstandings and prejudices that seem to color views of archives at times. As a librarian said, "I confess that before that job I hated archives. I asked questions about them [archival collections and finding aids] when I first started the job and I didn't know anything about them. But the more I used them [archival collections], the more I would encourage people to use them. ...So yes, I started as an archives hater and became a booster" (3). Understanding archival practices and how they may differ from libraries are keys to creating a shared vocabulary to draw on during discussions and collaborations.

Having exposure to archives during graduate education would also alleviate the unknown and intimidating factors of archives non-experience for librarians, which may make them more confident in working with archival collections. A nice feedback loop is created: "the more people use it [archives] the more the librarians will understand the collections because they will be helping people negotiate the finding aids" (3). Multiple interviewees brought up the issue of archives being unknown or "very intimidating to use ..." (3), especially for undergraduate students. This latter finding has been noted previously by Johnson (2006). It is important for librarians and archivists to consider that many people have no experience of archives and will be non-users until a way is found to introduce them to archives.

Therefore the focus on public service and access in the Resources Category may be what needs to be emphasized by archives in order to decrease this intimidation factor and create an atmosphere that is welcoming for people to have first experiences of archives.

6.3 Limitations

This study provides an initial picture of academic librarians' experiences of archives based on a sufficient, but small sample. A larger follow-up study will explore the experiences of librarians more broadly as phenomenography has shown to be useful in successfully exploring librarians' experiences of archives in the academic library context. Also, while it was possible to compare the results of this study, the categories of description, with the descriptions/definitions of archives written in archival literature, it was not able to compare librarians' experiences with archivists' experiences via the same phenomenographic process.

6.4 Future research

Further research on archivists' experiences of archives and a larger study on librarians' experiences of archives will build upon this study in order to provide a more detailed description of librarians' experiences of archives and a framework of archival experience. The second phase of this project, which has been commenced by the authors, is required to explore archivists' varying experiences of archives in order to provide a description of archivists' experiences of archives, to enrich the literature's definitions of archives, and to compare the experiences of librarians and archivists. Furthermore, investigation via a larger study of librarians will serve to determine if there are other ways of experiencing archives and to develop a fuller picture of the outcome space of this phenomenon of archives. Research into archivists' experiences of libraries and librarians' experiences of libraries would also enrich our understanding of the commonalities and differences in the experiences of archivists and librarians.

Further research would also be possible into exploring how the results of this and future related studies might influence practice, including professional practice, professional education, and professional development. Methods such as action research would be useful for such directions.

7. Conclusion

This study focused on uncovering the qualitatively different ways that academic librarians experience archives and the preliminary implications of these findings. As academic librarians do in fact experience archives in different ways, it is important to understand these collective ways of experiencing in order to have a base for communicating about archives and collaborating on projects that involve archival collections. The results of this study may be of interest to librarians and archivists who are contemplating joint projects and those who have had less than positive/challenging experiences when trying to collaborate. By understanding that there are different ways of experiencing archives, which can lead to misunderstandings if not made explicit and understood, librarians and archivists may be able to avoid or lessen talking and acting at cross-purposes and increase positive interactions and collaborative efforts.

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